

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance no. 199, October 3 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

Strike to defend our unions

By John O'Mahony

TWELVE trade unionists from Cammell Lairds are in Walton Jail. The leaders of the NUM - Scargill, Heathfield, McGahey - are threatened with heavy fines or jail for contempt of court because they insist that no court will tell their union how to run its affairs.



They agree with what Lairds occupation committee secretary (and Socialist Organiser supporter) Lol Duffy said in the message he sent from Walton Jail to the Labour Party conference:

"The Tories' class law does not frighten us. The occupation will continue. We will not be browbeaten with threats of prison or with courts".

This is the spirit that will beat the Tories.

Right now contempt - open, avowed, belligerent, unpurgeable contempt - for the courts is the beginning of wisdom for the labour movement.

Neil Kinnock can go on as he did last Tuesday about sticking within the strict limits of legality and ballot-box politics. He doesn't want to fight the class struggle as it has to be fought. He wants to play parliamentary games and to waffle.

He should listen to the representatives of the ruling class. They know what's what and some of them even say it out loud.

Listen to the Master of the Rolls - and former chairman of the anti-union Industrial Relations Court, set up by the Tory government in 1972 - Sir John Donaldson, speaking last November:

"The legal system (is) not in practice even-handed as between employers and unions; current functions put the courts almost entirely in the business of restricting and penalising the latter, and not of remedying their grievances."

Class war

Exactly! The law and the courts are - like the armies of lawless, scab-herding policemen in the coalfields - now being used in industry as a naked weapon on the bosses' side in a class war that becomes more open, more embittered, and more uncompromising - on both sides - with every day the miners' strike continues.

We owe naked class law no deference.

We owe the courts neither respect nor obedience when they are playing this blatantly partisan role in industrial affairs.

But, cautious people will say, we should beware of the damage the courts can inflict on the labour movement. Yes, we should. But the worst damage the courts can do to the labour movement is to break our spirit and make us docile and pliable towards an outrageous, vicious, and anti-working class government. That is what they are trying to do.

To be cowed by the fear - or the certainty - of fines or imprisonment is to let the courts peacefully do what they have been brought into industrial relations to do - neuter and house-train the labour movement.

Nothing the courts can do to us would be worse than that. The movement will survive fines and jailings. We can even survive a serious defeat. But the labour movement we have now will not survive if it surrenders peacefully to the rule of blatant class law in the court rooms and of a licensed bully-boy police force in industrial disputes.

Fight back

The labour movement has no responsible alternative but to resist and fight back, defying the Tory government and the law courts.

Not to fight back is to open the way for a full spate of Tory attacks on every section of the working class - on wages and conditions, on the welfare state, on democratic rights.

If the labour movement rouses itself and mobilises we can defy their law and break its back like we did in 1972.

The movement is in worse shape now because of mass unem-

Continued on page 3

TO HELL

WITH



Lol Duffy

THE

"The Tories' class law does not frighten us. The occupation will continue. We will not be browbeaten with threats of prison or with courts."

Lol Duffy

Jailed secretary of the Cammell Lairds shipyard occupation committee

COURTS!

Socialist Organiser

Taking sides

THE LABOUR Party conference was right to condemn police violence and not to condemn violence by picketing miners. In a class war — and this miners' dispute is a class war — the job of the Labour Party should be to side with the workers in struggle, not to pose uselessly as an umpire between the workers and the bosses.

The mining communities are fighting for their livelihoods, and for the life of effective trade unionism.

They face a vengeful boss-class government which started the strike by closing pits — without consultation, elections, ballots or democracy.

The miners face anti-union laws — passed by an elected parliament, to be sure, but laws which aim to stop the very lifeblood of real democracy, the right to resist of the working people.

And where the laws are not harsh enough, the police make up new ones.

The miners face a national riot police, organised outside the control of Parliament or the local authorities, making up the law as it goes along.

Through roadblocks, arbitrary arrest by snatch squads, and bail conditions, the police have hit against the miners without any due process of law.

The police are trained, highly paid, heavily equipped, and tightly organised.

The miners try to defend themselves as best they can.

Are they right to do so? No, if you believe the claims of profit, which require pit closures, should dominate. No, if you believe that the working class should not resist whatever is decreed by a government in office.

Yes, if you believe working class livelihoods should stand above profits and the profit system. Yes, if you believe we have a right to resist the government and its scab-herding police force.

From the rest of the working class, the miners need full support. If rash or inappropriate tactics are used in the struggle, then that's a problem that the miners — who are sober, serious, responsible people — will sort out among themselves.

Pious even-handedness, condemning 'violence on both sides', is a sneaky way of helping the Tories.

Usually it is quite hypocritical. On Tuesday Neil Kinnock said that he was against all violence, "without fear or favour".

If he seriously meant that, then on Wednesday he would have been proposing that Labour pledge itself to scrap all armed forces and police. For armed forces and police are certainly no use unless they employ violence.

Democracy

In fact Neil Kinnock wants more conventional armed forces. He supports British troops in Ireland. He supports NATO. He supports the police. He accepts violence for British national defence or defence of the established order. All he doesn't accept is violence in defence of working class interests.

No ruling class and no police force was ever won over by speeches against violence. They are bold, confident and immovable in their use of violence to defend the rights of property.

The only effect of preaching against 'all' violence can be to weaken the self-confidence of working people who are already pushed towards submission, subordination and deference by thousands of pressures.

Rule of law? Yes! But whose law? All law, ultimately, is class law. And there is no force standing above classes to administer law impartially or to settle disputes by giving prizes for good behaviour.

Democracy? What sort of democracy?

Democracy, for the Tories, means a cross on a piece of paper every five years for most of us, and between times rule by 'the people who know best' — the judges, police chiefs, bankers, and top civil servants who run the state machine while Parliament talks.

The rule of law, in the Tory version, means that the only people permitted to use violence are the police and the armed forces — special forces, separated off from the community, and trained in unquestioning allegiance to the established order.

The prime civil right, for them, is the right of property — and they subordinate every other right to that. For example, they have scrapped miners' right to the rule of law in order to make it easier for the police who now make up 'the law' as they go along.

For the Tories, when Ian MacGregor tries to take away the livelihoods of thousands of miners without any voting or even consultation, it is quite democratic. It is 'the right of management to manage'.

The miners' dispute is a head-on clash between the rights of property and the rights of labour.

The police uphold the 'right to work' of scabs, by violence. The miners defend the right of every worker to a livelihood, as something more important than the claims of profit.

And between equal rights, as Karl Marx put it, force decides.

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Undermining unilateralism

By Joy Hurcombe,
chair, Labour CND
(writing in a personal capacity)

THE National Executive defence statement, 'Defence and Security for Britain', is to be presented on Wednesday, 3rd, to be voted on without amendments.

It will not be taken in sections. No major debate on it will be allowed.

This is highly undemocratic. The statement reverses much of Labour Party policy on disarmament. It is a sell-out aimed to silence the Left and CND activists in the Party.

In exchange for a half-hearted commitment to Party policy on nuclear weapons, we will be forced to agree to:

1. Unconditional support for NATO and NATO's war-fighting strategies.

2. No reduction in defence spending for the foreseeable future.

3. Massive spending on modern conventional weapons, greater than that planned by the Tories.

The document contains an obvious subservience to US control and agreement to the continued presence in Britain of the US bases and the US army of occupation. It also retains all the trappings of the capitalist war machine, including the assumption of a Soviet threat.

There is no commitment to release money and resources for alternative jobs for defence workers. There is no commitment to release money for hospitals, schools,

states that the £11 billion for Trident will now go on more weapons. Some of these are more deadly than many battlefield nuclear weapons.

There is no commitment to end the arms trade to the Third World, and no acknowledgement of the causes of world poverty.

The document talks of Labour adopting a non-nuclear defence policy, but within NATO, and this clearly is a nonsense, for NATO is a nuclear alliance.

NATO generals would find the document's cold war rhetoric quite acceptable. And its commitment to conventional weapons would fit in quite nicely with their plans to fight the next war in Europe with conventional, nuclear, and chemical weapons.

Labour activists should not be taken in by the concessions on removing Cruise, cancelling Trident, and closing some (half a dozen) US bases, the ones which are presently nuclear.

This is just a holding position to get the statement through without opposition.

The point of the document is not the bits from established Labour Party policy which remain in it, but the new policies which are added. Once the document is Party policy, the way will be open for unilateral nuclear disarmament to be ditched.

It is one of those 'inconsistencies' which Roy Hattersley will dispose of as soon as he can. Don't let him do it.

LABOUR BACKS



Arthur Scargill got a standing ovation

CLP makes plans

STOKE North Constituency Labour Party last week decided to waive subscriptions for striking miners for the duration of the strike.

Technically this involves breaking the Party constitution, but CLP secretary Anna Lis argued that miners cannot pay £7, and rules sometimes need to be broken.

If we are challenged on it, she said, then we'll fight it.

The decision was taken at a specially convened General Committee meeting to discuss the miners' strike. The meeting also took a number of other decisions to support the miners.

The constituency is to:

- organise a kids' party,

- ask Party members to adopt a miner's child, and be responsible for buying clothes, etc,

- establish a constituency coordinator to organise the CLP work round the strike, with coordinators in the branches, too,

- to organise regular street collections in the main towns,

- to organise a house-to-house collection-cum-canvas for the miners' case,

- produce a press statement setting out the CLP's support for the miners.

The constituency will also write to the District Labour Party insisting that the Labour controlled city council meet full demands recently presented to it by the North Staffs miners.

These include a request for £100,000 donation.

The chair summed up at the end of the constituency meeting by saying that it was the best meeting he had been to in years.

One delegate, Neil Dawes, commented that it was a pity it hadn't happened six months earlier.

But the job now is to make sure that the decisions carried out energetically.

ANDREW WARD (REPORT)



Labour CND rally in Blackpool

'The police created violence'

"I think this miners' dispute has shown two totally unprecedented things in the history of industrial disputes.

One is the involvement of women in this dispute — I think it is disappointing that the resolution doesn't make much more of that, because I am sure that Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and the rest, would agree that without the support, which has been magnificent, from the women in the mining communities, this strike would not have had the strength that it has today.

I think the other unprecedented thing which is very shocking to us, is the scale of police violence. People always start handing out these even-handed comments, we condemn violence from wherever it comes, and they

Gerry Byrne, delegate from Putney CLP.

won't distinguish between the organised violence of the police — thousands and thousands of police poured into an area, where people can't walk along their own streets without being picked up and harassed, where certain areas of the country are completely no-go areas.

I think that is something very different from the reaction, the frustrations of miners who have travelled 30 miles to go and support pickets at other pits — when their cars are turned back.

I think this government is quite clear there are two sides in this dispute. They're going to throw all their weight behind

breaking this strike. I think we should be equally clear, equally united the other way.

When Neil Kinnock or any one is questioned about the violence, the answer we must give is when the police are taken out of these areas, when people can move freely, when women and children aren't dragged off picket lines for calling someone a scab, then we might condemn violence by the miners.

The police created this violence — they were called into this dispute before anything had happened, I think we should have a very clear stand from the people on the platform behind me.

CONFERENCE THE MINERS

ANDREW WARD (REPORT)



Eric Heffer addressing conference. To his right, Labour Party general secretary Jim Mortimer and Neil Kinnock

Now recruit!

Paul Whetton at SO meeting

"Monday was absolutely brilliant. I thought Tuesday was pretty good as well. Kinnock was absolutely fantastic — he's shown exactly where he stands. He said, in no uncompromising terms, that he had no intention of implementing what conference said on Monday."

"It's obvious to me that the leadership are living in another world. You can spend all day explaining what is happening in Notts, but they don't understand."

"It's alright to stand up in the pulpit and talk about turning the other cheek, that's fine when you're sitting in a nice blue suit in a conference hall."

"But when you are standing on a picket line and the front line of coppers is stood with linked arms, and the second row of coppers is kicking you in the goolies, and thumping you in the mouth, you have a right to protect yourself."

"If Kinnock had stood on a picket line he would damn well understand that message."

"We could go on all day about the stories of violence from Notts. Most of you know about the guy from Rufford, who received a knock on his door late at night, and there was a working miner stood there. He'd got a four foot cross-cut bow saw in his hand, and he commenced to try and saw

70 people last night [Tuesday] attended the meeting organised jointly by the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee and Socialist Organiser, to hear about and discuss the miners' strike and the Cammell Lairds occupation from a rank and file view."

The miners speaking agreed that the collection should go to the representative of the Cammell Lairds occupation, a great gesture of solidarity."

During his speech, Paul Whetton, secretary of the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee, and delegate from Newark CLP described his reaction to some of the events of the first two days and what he sees as the main implications."

the head off this striking miner, who had to have 132 stitches in his head. That didn't get on the front page of the Sun."

"It's obvious why they don't want you to pass resolutions about controlling the police, making them answerable, doing away with riot gear — because if they are elected as a new Labour government they want to make damn sure they've got the same police facilities in the event of you Bolshie bastards starting the same thing with them."

"We're not going to see

the police force and all their gear done away with just like that. They're going to resist at every turn."

"The response to Kinnock? Yes — while a lot gave him a standing ovation, there were a hell of a lot who didn't."

"The message for us was there: Kinnock said that the Labour Party has four years in which to campaign to get a Labour government. That means we've got four years to make sure that the Labour government we get is the one we want, deserve and need — not like the past ones which have closed pits, jailed workers, and turned back on their founding ideals."

"There have been 200 applications to join the Party in Notts as a direct result of what the grass roots — not the leadership — have been doing."

"All the grass roots contacts we have made during the strike have to be kept going after we have won this tremendous battle. We need a rank and file shop stewards movement."

"After this conference let's take the message back to our areas, our factories and workshops. Recruit like hell. Build on what we've won so far this week. And make sure the next Labour government is going to go down the correct path."

To hell with the courts!

Continued from page 1

ployment. But the miners — and the mining communities — have shown what can be done by militancy and determination."

Over the last six months the miners have convincingly answered the pessimists in our ranks."

The miners and their families have produced miracles of courage, fortitude and working class resilience: their example is the best answer to those who now want to preach defeatism before the Tory onslaught on the legal front."

If one section of the movement can do what the miners are doing then the whole movement can certainly defeat this filthy government and its partisan courts."

If the labour movement fights it can win."

Thatcher has appeared strong and unbeatable these last five years because the labour movement has been on its knees. Most of the trade union leaders are still on their knees."

The miners have shown what can be done if we get up off our knees and defend ourselves."

When five dockers were jailed for defying the courts in 1972 a

quarter of a million workers struck and the TUC called a one day general strike. The government capitulated and released the dockers."

Thatcher may not cave in so easily. But she can be made to cave in."

The TUC should call a general strike. Dockers, railwayworkers, seafarers, and others who have been indirectly involved in the miners' strike don't have to wait for a TUC call for action. They should strike to defend our unions."

Release the Cammell Lairds workers! Hands off the NUM leaders! Victory to the miners!

John Bloxam sums up the Monday of the Labour Party conference in Blackpool.

What a start — four clear victories on the first day — unequivocal support for the miners, condemnation of police and state violence, proposals to break the role of the police as strike-breakers and defeat for the attempt to start breaking up the federal trade union based structure of the Party."

Kinnock just couldn't push back the democratic gains we've seen won for and by the rank and file."

In the reselection debate the Glasgow Pollok delegate rightly pointed out that it was the working class content of the Party that was at stake. Either the party would be relevant to and usable by the working class or it would be a waste of time."

The four separate decisions establish where the majority of conference want to stand. How often was it repeated that we must start fighting with the same conviction and lack of equivocation for our class that Thatcher fights for hers?"

David Bassett played the Labour statesman while 12 of his members at Cammell Lairds were grabbed by the police and thrown into Walton Jail. He cautioned about not "overpoliticising the miners' dispute" and lectured miners not to be "provoked into violence". What does he propose miners do after seven months of police brutality and intimidation? Say prayers with the Bishop of Durham?

There could be no clearer indication of the different world he lives in than talking about overpoliticising the miners' dispute on the day when they talk about imprisoning Arthur Scargill and his comrades."

Everyone knows that Eric Hammond supports scabs but it is the attitude of other trade union leaders that needs scrutiny. What kind of support is it to talk generally in favour of the NUM and only to talk about practical action after six months in order to get negotiations going. If there had been a campaign in support of such action from day one, the strike would have been won by now."

The miners' strike is clearly political and there is no need to apologise or equivocate on it. There should be no holding back in our response to the use of the laws against the NUM and other unions."

In 1972 the slogan was "One in, all out". That should be the slogan now that party members as well as trade unionists can campaign for if the law is used against the NUM and its officers."

The miners' strike has transformed the situation. Monday's victories owe a lot to it. It's one thing winning victories on the floor of conference, it's another thing putting them into practice."

The right wing and Kinnock have been defeated in the vote on reselection, but we now have to make sure that the democratic procedure is used after December to get genuine Labour and class representation in Parliament. And we have to stop the new NEC making moves to gut the process as they did last time with the "shortlist of one."

We need to follow the example of many party members by translating support for the miners and condemnation of the police into practical action — fundraising, on the picket lines, campaigning for solidarity action, stopping payment for police actions, and the Party leadership should get off the fence. Victory to the miners!

When the miners hit back

The press has been spluttering with anger about the events at Silverwood colliery. Two miners who were there tell what really happened, and why.

This account of the events last Friday, September 28, at Silverwood and the day before at Allerton Bywater is given by two miners who, for obvious reasons, wish to remain anonymous.

"At Allerton Bywater there were about 4,000 of us and about 2,000 police. It was peaceful for about three hours until they brought in 3,000 police — a lot of them in riot gear — after most of the pickets had drifted away."

They started knocking us about and then laughed and taunted us as we went away, waving their pay slips at us and saying "You'll never get us down". One of our lads said there'll be one day when we catch you asleep."

Well it happened next day at Silverwood.

We arrived and met at the bottom of the hill because the police had blocked the road. So we all marched up together — about 500 of us. We got to the police and they said we can't go through. All the lads went bananas and the police jumped in the van while it got stoned."

They kept saying 'Leave us alone, leave us alone'. We put all the windows through. They were all crying."

They then set off trying to knock people down and we ran into the woods while they drove down to the bottom of the hill. We built a barricade at the top."

Later, three vans and two dog patrols came up and had to stop at the barricade. All of us then came out of the woods and knocked seven bells of shit out of them."

"A policeman shouted: Get that camera"

Barry Metcalfe, Wath Main, gave this account of his experiences at Maltby, Monday September 24:

"Police attacked from both ends of the road and forced us over a wall and into the wood. I jumped over the wall and was confronted by one riot policeman and a dog handler."

I said "Keep that dog there, I'm not going to shift". Then I was kicked in the face, then in the stomach, and I tried to protect my face. I was hit on the back of the legs by a truncheon, then attacked by a separate dog handler who let his dog attack my legs."

I put my hands up to my face. Three of them were trying to pull my hands away as one shouted 'Get his hands away from his face'. I could see he was teeing up to boot me. They couldn't move my hands so one said 'Let the dog have him'. And it did."

Meanwhile one of the dogs went for a riot policeman who

We turned the dog vans over with the dogs inside. Dogs don't half bark funny when they are upside down."

Police got out of the vans and let the dogs out but they bit the police first and then some of the lads."

Every window in every van was put through. They couldn't do a thing about it."

When their reinforcements came we got off home."

Nobody likes violence but I lapped every moment up because of what they have done to us. It was worth waiting for. It's been coming for weeks and I think it's going to get worse. If they would let us peacefully picket they wouldn't get this aggro."

At the top, Ravensfield, end:

"What set it off was the police vans coming down on the wrong side of the road at speed, narrowly missing the lads."

They started indiscriminately hitting us with truncheons. They don't seem to need a reason to use truncheons anymore. We started fighting back and all hell broke loose; stones started being thrown."

One inspector shouted 'Give 'em what we gave 'em at Maltby' and it was mayhem. Nearly all the police coaches got their windows put through. One copper on a police bike on the causeway got kicked off it. They released police dogs into us at the top end. Barricades were erected when the horses were fetched."

was going to hit me with a truncheon. They then got both dogs under control as three policemen knelt on me and another put handcuffs on me."

Then one said "We're going for a walk in the woods". I asked him why and he said "Out of sight, out of mind": a photographer came into the wood and a policeman shouted "Get that camera!"

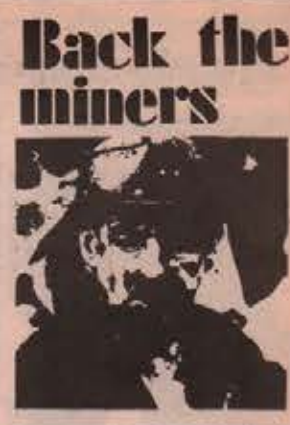
Bricks

They then took me back onto the road and across the back of the police lines because he told me that if any bricks came across I was the new shield."

After that I was frogmarched backwards to a police van. There three of them asked me, on my own, if I wanted another go. I was handcuffed and dazed so they must have thought it was a fair contest."

I was taken into the pit yard, photographed, and later charged with threatening behaviour".

sit



Back the miners



Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) have been raising money and collecting food for the miners amongst lesbians and gay men. So far LGSM has collected approaching £1,500, through collections in lesbian and gay pubs and clubs.

Clive Bradley spoke to Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson about their own feelings about LGSM and what needs to be done in the future.

LGSM can be contacted c/o 39 Chippenham Road, London W9

Out of the ghetto

Why was LGSM set up?

MA: It was months into the strike, and I was feeling dead frustrated because I knew loads of gay people who supported the miners but there was nothing specifically aimed at them. So I thought I'd just stick a letter in 'Capital Gay' and call a meeting. I thought, well, it's not going to be just another strike this time, because it obviously isn't. The miners' strike has directly influenced people in a way that other struggles that have been going on didn't seem to.

MJ: Mark bumped into me just before the Gay Pride march and suggested we do a collection for the miners. So we took a bucket and collected quite a lot on the march — which certainly made me feel good. And at the end of the march there was a rally called by the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, and it was brilliant. For the first time a member of the NUM spoke to a lesbian and gay audience.

To be honest I didn't expect him to acknowledge that it was a lesbian and gay audience. But he spent a good two-thirds of his speech very self-consciously — and I don't mean embarrassed, I mean aware — that it was a lesbian and gay audience. And I thought that was brilliant. He didn't apologise for anti-gay prejudice in the past. And how else are we going to change that except by people like him and us getting together and fighting together? It is changing now.

MA: We've got to the stage now after fifteen years so-called liberation where we've got a nice little ghetto. Yes, you can have, this and have that, but shut your mouth and stay in the ghetto because that's as much as you're going to get. There are a lot of complacent so-called gay liberationists who think we've achieved some-

thing in 15 years — but we haven't actually achieved anything.

Hearing that miner talking like that at that meeting made me think there must be millions of other people in the organised labour movement like him. And they need to be bounced, basically. One of the aims of LGSM apart from supporting the miners financially and morally, is to put a lesbian and gay angle and say 'look, we're here, we're supporting you. And there are thousands of lesbians and gay men organising invisibly to support you as well.'

We don't want to be in the same ghetto in 15 years time, with the same police raids and the same straight landlords ripping us off, and now is the time to do something about it, by linking up with the miners.

Some gay people can buy their liberation — but working class people like me can't afford to do that. So where does that leave me? I can't do it on my own. The people who are speaking for me haven't done anything worthwhile in 15 years.

The only way to break that down is to organise with my own kind of people. That's not necessarily lesbians and gay men — that's working class people. You do have to identify as gay, but that's not the be all and end all. We'll never get our liberation until the heterosexual majority want that as well.

So you think it's important that the support that lesbians and gay men give the miners is visible, so we can 'reap the benefits' of it?

MJ: It would be an arrogance if LGSM was to say we are lesbians and gay men. We are an openly lesbian and gay group. But there are hundreds and thousands of lesbians and gay men who've supported workers'

struggles since the year dot. But lesbians and gay men aren't visible unless we care to say so.

There's a problem in London, because life's a bit easier here. So people come here from all over the place and are cut off from their roots. It can have a bad effect on working class gay people.

The places gay people go are predominantly middle class. It's only by meeting other working class gay people that I started to think 'how dare these middle class people dominate my life-style'.

What sort of political links has the group made between the miners' strike and the struggle for lesbian/gay liberation?

MA: When I came over from Northern Ireland I thought England would be different and that it was quite acceptable to be lesbian or gay. But when I went on my first gay pride march, three people were arrested. You come over here and it's the same police force arresting the same people — and for what reason? What is wrong with being lesbian or gay? It shocks and frightens me.

Six weeks ago we have 50 police raiding a gay pub for no other reason than that it was a gay pub, and the same in hundreds of others. You have plain clothes policemen who go into pubs, say 'I want to pick you up', then you go round the corner and you're piled into the back of a police van.

What the miners and class conscious workers have realised now — and I hope to get it's not too late — is that the police are our enemies. They're on the side of those who've got power.

We, as lesbians and gay men, black people, the organised working class, are a threat to the power of the state — and their main weapon is the police and they use it.

What we've got to say now to the organised labour movement is 'look, we've been going through this for years, and you are experiencing it now. Don't ever forget it.'

We've got to fight together because there's no way we're going to be able to beat them if we're divided.

MJ: The miners from Dulais valley who've met us have said just that. They've said that they are now outcasts of the state — we've seen what the police and the media are like. So they know what it's like.

What response have you had from lesbians and gay men themselves?

MJ: Mixed. But lesbians and gay men haven't had the chance before to voice an opinion on class lines. People are mostly gay Tories, or they support the miners. Very few have equivo-



Cops attack protestors outside San Francisco's City Hall. Violence by the state against lesbian and gay communities happens all over the world. In the US, the communities — which unlike in Britain are often concentrated in whole areas of big cities such as San Francisco — have organised to defend themselves against attack. The modern gay movement was born after militant defence of the Stonewall bar in New York against the police in 1969.

"We don't want to be in the same ghetto in 15 years time, with the same police raids, and the same straight landlords ripping us off, and now is the time to do something about it, by linking up with the miners."

cated.

MA: You can get dragged into the idea of 'defending' ourselves on 'lesbian and gay' terms — but it's a class question. It's working class lesbians and gay men who get queer bashed because you can't afford a taxi back home, you don't have your own transport or live in nice Belgravia-type areas.

For some gay men their life is one big joy-trip and everything is great until someone rocks the boat.

But once you realise it's a class question you see that it's not a question of defending a privileged minority of middle class gay men. I don't have much in common with the clones who go to Heaven on £10,000 a year. I don't have a vested interest in defending them.

LGSM has shown me that I have more in common with these miners than I have with those lesbians and gay men.

But do you think LGSM and the response it's had would have been possible without the independent organisation of gay men and lesbians that have existed over the past decade or so?

MJ: No. For all the criticisms we've made, we're obviously indebted to the efforts that liberationists have made over the years. But the middle class gays, living in their ghettos, don't realise that what has been achieved was achieved by the left. A dialogue with the miners would have been impossible 15 years ago.

MA: The old Gay Liberation Front etc achieved some short term gains, but didn't achieve anything in the long term. We've won places to meet, etc. But this group, LGSM, is achieving a real interaction with the working class. That's a long-term thing. When it comes to the crunch, the old GLF-types aren't interested in a dialogue with the working class.

What response have you had from the miners themselves?

MA: Brilliant. MJ: Once people meet you as a person they can accept you as a person. Despite all the rubbish from the media, people can see you're just like them, you're not a stereotype, so their prejudices melt away.

The community in Dulais

valley where we've been sending most of the money, have invited us to stay with them for a weekend. I can't think of any better solidarity than that.

We've focused on one particular community because we felt that by establishing a real relationship we could achieve a lot more than just by issuing a few press releases.

Now the people in Dulais valley have said they want to keep in touch after the strike is over.

MA: A miner from Dulais came up in person to get the first cheque off us, because it was the largest single cheque they'd received. The thing he said really stunned me, because he'd obviously really thought about the problems we've got.

What's been done outside London?

MJ: Groups are being set up in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Leeds. We're offering as much support as we can. We don't think we have the resources to be a national organisation. We can help, but we'd waste our energies trying to run a national organisation.

MA: Our group's been a spark, to say look we've done it, so can you.

What about Women Against Pit Closures?

MJ: We went to the Women Against Pit Closures demonstration quite nervous, not knowing what to expect. There was an explosion of clapping and cheering when we took our banner out. It was marvellous. MA: Now you've got women on picket lines it is changing a lot of men's attitudes towards women. If it hadn't been for Women Against Pit Closures, the strike would have collapsed months ago.

What activities have you got planned?

MJ: In the short term it's collecting.

MA: And we've got a public meeting. It's a way of getting people into a hall and saying 'lesbians and gay men are here. We support the miners and here are our problems... why we're supporting the miners and what you can do for us as well.'

The purpose of the public

meeting is to bring to the labour and trade union movement the idea that lesbians and gay men are its allies, not its enemies. We're not something to be frightened of or shunted away into a cupboard. We're useful people who've done a hell of a lot of good work.

MJ: We are part of the labour movement, and most of us are part of the working class. It suits the boss class very well to fuel prejudices and ignorance. They can use prejudices about people's sexuality to divide the working class.

Take the Sun article. The background is that Rugby Council was presented with an equal opportunities policy worked out by the unions that included a clause on sexual orientation, which they rejected.

A councillor made a statement that actually went on the offensive against gays and lesbians employed by the council. It's just blatant prejudice.

MA: The Sun's jumped on this and applauded Rugby Council — saying they're giving a lead to what other councils should be doing: these queers have been annoying us for years. The Sun says that the reforms we've won should be taken away — these people are perverts and something's got to be done about it.

But then the day after, the Sun didn't appear because of an article attacking the miners. So the day after they were bashing the queers, they were bashing the miners. The Sun can obviously see what it's got to do with us, even if a lot of lesbians and gay men can't.

Do you think the issue of sexual liberation can be pushed up on the agenda of the labour movement?

MA: The left and the labour movement has got to realise that the working class is made up of lesbians and gay men, of black people, of old age pensioners of women, of young people, and it's not just white heterosexual fifty year old men.

MJ: One of the miners who came to an LGSM meeting couple of weeks ago said that since the strike their ideas have really changed, and that perhaps now the 'traditional' labour movement should go to black people and lesbians and gay men to relearn what socialism is all about. And we all need to fight together, of course.

At the end of the day, I find gay liberation incredibly boring. At the end of the day I want to see an end to all this fighting and an end to all these labels.

MA: And the only way we can end the struggle is if we win.

MJ: And that means working class people taking power collectively and overthrowing the interests of the capitalist class.

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



Diethelm Lazar, a reader in West Germany, reports. He is a member of the Internationale Sozialisten Deutschlands

IN LATE April a few comrades of the National Union of Mineworkers, from the Sheffield area, came to West Germany to tell trade union activists about the great miners' strike against pit closures.

Spontaneous solidarity activities were organised. For example, in Cologne, at the demonstration to celebrate May 1, after a short speech by one of the miners, about £500 was collected.

Since August the NUM has had an authorised representative in Wuppertal, near Cologne, in the office of the Education and Finance trade union GEW. In accord with Arthur Scargill, this representative, Joe Holmes (secretary of the Kent NUM), has the task of organis-

Support in W.Germany

ing solidarity among trade unionists in West Germany.

A lot of rank and file bodies or individual members have organised meetings, at which nearly £20,000 has been collected, to be sent to the central miners' solidarity fund in Sheffield.

The official so-called solidarity has been quite the opposite. As Socialist Organiser has reported, high-quality West German coal is being imported into Britain with the help of unorganised workers in small private harbours.

Neither the West German miners, nor the transport workers or dockers, have been mobilised by their leadership to stop

the export of the coal. The leadership of the Mining and Energy trade union, IG Bergbau und Energie, has forbidden Joe Holmes to ask for solidarity from rank and file members of the union. To guarantee this, the leadership has paid DM20,000 — nearly £5,000 — to the miners' solidarity fund.

We do not know whether Joe Holmes is trying despite this to make contact with rank and file members of the union.

The solidarity of the strongest union, the metalworkers' union IG Metall, is similar. Before the TUC Congress, the leadership was discussing organising transport of food worth DM100,000

(nearly £25,000). A delegation was sent to the TUC Congress to get more detailed information.

After the Congress, the only move from the metalworkers' leadership was a decision to open a central solidarity fund. As in Britain, the main solidarity will therefore come from the rank and file members.

A campaign has now been started to get union members to contribute monthly an amount equal to their union dues. Other groups, including anarcho-syndicalists, are organising holidays for children from striking miners' families.

A special kind of so-called solidarity has been initiated by the *Militant* affiliate in the Young Socialists of the Social Democratic Party, the *Voran* group. In a meeting last week, they appealed to people to contribute a quarter of their monthly income. But who can pay that today? After some protests, they appealed for contributions of a day's income.

This kind of lottery provoked protests from nearly half the meeting. Ten or 15 people left the meeting in protest.

The *Militant* tendency is collecting money for two villages in South Wales (Maesteg) and in

Back the miners



South Yorkshire (Great Houghton). This separate support could be a danger for solidarity and for the striking miners as a whole.

The donations cannot be properly distributed to the miners' families in most urgent need if they are not centralised.

Some areas would be better provided with money and food than others. Splits could arise among the miners. That cannot be our task in organising full support for the miners.

A workers' answer for coal

John Douglas discusses how the coal industry needs to be restructured to save jobs

A SECRET letter leaked to the Liberal Assembly regarding the government's plans for the nationalised industries reveals the concern of the ruling class to make those industries even more profitable for capitalism.

Nothing new in this. The secret agenda of the Thatcher government dates back to 1978 when Nicholas Ridley drew up a plan later revealed in the pages of the *'Economist'* magazine.

And the previous Labour government's efforts to make nationalised industries, like the National Coal Board, provide a greater return on investment were broadly similar.

Productivity

Their first concern was to keep wages trailing behind. The 1975/6 NCB Report was enthusiastic about the planned Selby complex, where productivity would be five times the national average, but it complained that the national bonus scheme must be judged to have failed.

The NCB under the Labour government went for technological mining and a new bonus scheme based on performance close to the point of production. This local bonus scheme was imposed on the NUM nationally by the Labour government in cahoots with the present Lord Gormley who was then national president of the NUM.

By offering local bonus deals to profitable NCB areas (Nottinghamshire, for example), against NUM national policy, the Labour government set the precedent for the divide-and-rule tactics ably developed by Edwardes at BL and MacGregor at British Steel in 1980, and followed through by Thatcher in 1984.

The imposition of this bonus scheme accompanied the rapid introduction of new technology in the pits, particularly in the most profitable areas, with pit closures and redundancies.

The new technology was seen as forming "an important part of the industry's long-term plans for increasing efficiency. So was the introduction of Manpower

Savings Schemes and retreat face working which increased productivity to 50% per face per day by 1978.

The NCB presented the new technology to the NUM as a means to increase productivity and also to "lessen the exposure of men to danger". Yes, the new systems could detect dangerous build-ups of methane gas or coal dust — but they could also assist pit management to control more effectively the work of the men.

17,000 jobs went in 1978, the period of the last Labour government. In 1980, 10,000 jobs went in the last year of the Labour government.

Now the Thatcher government wants more automation with a smaller workforce and widespread automation in fewer pits.

If they win the fight over jobs, then they hope the coal industry will then be highly profitable and a plump pigeon for privatisation. Behind their determination lies the knowledge that their investment of £2,815 million during the last four years will cause the rate of profit to fall drastically, if they cannot increase the rate of exploitation of their workforce by combining

automated coal extraction with fewer miners.

And here lies the lesson of the current struggle for the Tories and their class. This method of combining the new technological means of production with a highly exploited smaller workforce will provide a general model for capitalism which in Britain is suffering from a general crisis of falling profitability.

However, the crisis of falling profits not only affects British capitalism but capitalism world-wide. It forces capitalists to look for new markets and new sources of raw materials.

The Thatcher government's new strategy is the 'Alternative Economic Strategy'. Could this be the reason why the leaderships of both the TUC and the Labour Party refuse to endorse the demands of the NUM for a four day week now?

The current fight by the NUM challenges implicitly the right of the state to control the coal industry. The NUM, by demanding the "elimination of computer-based work moni-

oring" and the "expansion of coal demand through Combined Heat and Power Schemes, fluidized bed combustion, substitution of coal for imported fuels, liquefaction and use as chemical feed stock", caters for the needs of the miners and other working people but not for the need of capitalism for increased profits!

And the demand of the NUM for 'Consolidation of incentive pay into basic rate' surely flies in the face of those who would control the means of the labour process and the distribution of the product.

It is clear that the NUM's demands are a direct challenge to the capitalist state in an attempt to defeat the miners, would be replaced by the spectre of a confident section of the working class prepared to use its power for an advance towards socialism.

That is the logic of the NUM's current demands. All Labour Party members and trade unionists should support these demands as part of a first blow in the battle for socialism.

Maxwell's not welcome!



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

At a fringe meeting in Blackpool, John Sutton (speaking) said that the anti-union print millionaire Robert Maxwell (on platform, right) should not be in the Labour Party. Sutton is a SOGAT member sacked after 23 years service by Maxwell when he took over the Radio Times

Increasing our sales

THE best bit of paper-selling this last week has been by student comrades at the London School of Economics.

In one hour outside Holborn tube they sold 29 papers. They report that sales increased noticeably when they started mentioning the Tony Benn interview in last week's issue.

The Islington SO group has also recently started a tube station sale at Highbury Corner. Over the last three weeks their sales have increased from four to 13.

SO sellers have also been round colleges and universities for the start of term. Sales include 30 at Glasgow University, 15 at Kings College London, and 12 at Central London Poly, where an SO student society is being set up.

Estate sales continue to increase. Southwark's estate sale shifted 43 papers this week (same as the previous week); Islington's 16 (up from 13), and Manchester comrades started a new estate sale, on which they sold 18.

papers in three-quarters of an hour. They report that sales were helped by the fact that they had flogged the area with the SO poster supporting the miners.

Over the past few weeks SO has also spread to new areas. We have new sellers in Hastings, in Worthing, and in Salisbury and the Glasgow comrades have decided that they are now too numerous for a single group, and will organise separate Glasgow and Motherwell groups.



Battersley and Kinnock

JB: You've said that the miners are near victory.

TB: I don't necessarily say that the miners are going to win in a very short time. It would be foolish to predict.

But if the Government have an accurate understanding of what is happening, someone must be telling them that they will not get the miners back to work on their terms. They just won't succeed.

All the indications now are that they are really desperate. Leon Brittan's speech about a life sentence for miners involved in picket offences was a desperate speech.

I think the expectation that they will have to use troops to move the coal from the pits to the power stations is very great. As this goes on, it becomes clear that they are really desperate, and therefore they are making one last throw to break the miners.

But there is no indication that this is succeeding. Miners and their families are holding firm. They are not being beaten — the drift back to work, MacGregor's letters, the threat of a ballot which never came off, and so on, have all failed.

Labour and

Tony Benn talked to John Bloxam and Martin Thomas about the miners' dispute and the call for a general strike. The first part of this interview, covering other issues, was published last week

lines and calling for a general strike. It is not for people not directly involved to call for something, but to support it when it happens.

There is always a danger of calling for what can't be delivered, and unnecessarily exposing a weakness.

So although I fully understand why a number of papers, including Socialist Organiser, have been calling for a general strike, and it is certainly true that the depth and extent of supportive action that can be made available will contribute to victory, you've got to bear in mind that these actions have got to be taken by people consciously knowing what they are doing.

But there is a danger of complaining too much — and in particular of suggesting that if only you could do this then everything would be solved. You have to be careful.

But supportive action, and the principle, 'Do not cross a picket line', are very important to the success of the dispute.

General strike

MT: In a discussion we had before, you described the general strike as 'an industrial short-cut to socialism' which you opposed.

But if you have spreading industrial action — trade unionists refusing to cross miners' picket lines to an ever-

widening extent — that will have a tendency towards a general strike, whatever we call for. General strikes can indeed happen without anybody very influential calling for them — that's what happened in France in 1968...

TB: It depends what you mean by a general strike — a day of stoppage or a continuing action. The only thing I would say is: Don't leap ahead from the comfort of a non-striking household into a position where you're making demands on people which go beyond what they themselves are ready to do and what would be likely to succeed.

Don't cross

I think the principle, 'Do not cross a picket line', if applied, would have a tremendous effect. Now, under certain circumstances — and I think this might very well have happened over sequestration of the funds of the South Wales miners — it seems to me that it would have been quite appropriate for the TUC to have made a call for a one-day strike.

I was chairman of the Labour Party in 1972, when the five dockers were arrested. The TUC General Council said to the government: if you don't release them there will be a general strike. As chairman of the party I put a similar motion forward. It was carried unanimously, and in those specific circumstances that is right.

But I think also that you have to take account of the strategy of the miners themselves. I don't think it is right for people to develop a wholly different and parallel

strategy that might not be effective.

But I've also said that this whole dispute has become a rather broader struggle. It's a revolt, really, not a dispute in the ordinary sense of an industrial argument.

The question, really, is how far should one step outside the strategy that the NUM executive themselves have adopted. They're carrying the heat and burden of the day in this dispute.

MT: Obviously it's not possible for Socialist Organiser to call a general strike, or even call for it, in the way that the TUC or the Labour Party National Executive could.

But we're trying to say that if we get the solidarity action the miners call for, that could develop into a general strike — and we would like to assist that development as much as we can.

What we're also saying — which, I think, relates to the 'short cut to socialism' argument — is that a general strike is not something that we plot as a short-cut. It develops by the logic of the movement itself — by the increasing awareness of trade unionists that they can take action, that if they do take action it will have an effect.

It has a logic of its own, convincing trade unionists that the government is not as invincible as it seems, that demands that previously did not seem winnable can be won.

TB: I don't disagree with that. You're now putting a formulation very much like my own.

What you're saying is that an understanding of what is at stake is growing, and that the no-picket-line-crossing for coal and oil is important. You can see an accumulating movement.

But it's important to recognise that those who are not directly involved are in a supportive role, not running a campaign of their own which is separate from those in struggle. That's very much in line with what a good socialist should believe: that the change in our circumstances will come from working people themselves, and not from people sitting in editorial offices or MPs' offices.

You've got to provide a supportive role — and that support has got to be 100% — and also an explanatory role, an analytical role, which is what you've done and I've tried to do.

As the level of understanding grows, and more and more people are drawn in, more and more people respond to what the NUM wants, then the movement has a rolling character, as you described. I'm not sure how far your formulation and mine are different, but what I am saying is that you've got to be careful you don't sit somewhere safe and come out with plans which aren't necessarily in line with people's perceptions or the strategy of the unions which are actually involved.

JB: There's also the propaganda role. You referred to 1972. The whole campaign against the Industrial Relations Act did prepare the way for what happened in 1972.

It happened on two differ-

MARTIN SHAKESHAFT (JFL)



The principle 'Don't cross a

ent levels. When the five dockers were jailed, something like 250,000 or 300,000 workers took action immediately, and then you had the response from the TUC.

In other words, the call for a general strike came from the bottom first, moving upwards.

But that could happen because the idea was in the air at the time, it was being discussed. There is a role of preparation and propaganda.

Supportive

TB: There's an educational and an analytical role, but I also think that it's very important when people aren't actually involved in the struggle themselves their prime role is supportive and explanatory, not running a separate type of strategy.

Now if the NUM itself were to decide that the point had been reached when it should issue a call, that would be a different situation.

But the situation has moved. The TUC Congress decision was a very significant step forward.

The fact that the NUM was not prepared to go to the General Council and have its strategy taken over by them, but was prepared to make an appeal to the Congress, and will make another appeal to the Labour Party conference — where it will get, I think, even more overwhelming support — is an indication of the pace and timing of the struggle. It now goes well beyond the question of Cortonwood.

It's a very, very much bigger struggle. And that's why the blacks, and the gays, and the Irish, and the women, and the local authorities are all being drawn into this campaign. It's got an impetus and direction of its own.

MT: But always somebody has to say it first. Before the TUC called for a general strike in 1972 there had to be months of papers like ours agitating for it, raising the idea. Somebody has to come first, and it seems to me that is the role of socialists.

Obviously you've got to be careful about the way you do it, and not counterpose yourself to the actual struggle.

TB: I'm only saying that there are different roles to be



Kent miners collecting funds in London

the miners



Picket line 'could have a tremendous effect'

performer. Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey are representing the NUM executive. The strike committees are doing their work. I'm doing my work in a supportive role. You're writing as a socialist journalist and giving an explanation.

I'd also say that if the principle of not crossing picket lines is applied we'll be in a much stronger position than we are now. So why jump head of what the NUM has said, and I've been saying: do not cross a picket line?

The Police

JB: One of the big questions recently has been picket line violence. The leadership in the NUM have taken a very forthright and clear position.

Arthur Scargill has said that he will not condemn his members on the picket line, and he takes, as he described it, "a class position".

But there is a massive pro-

paganda campaign against the NUM on this issue. And it has been reflected in our own movement, including in Neil Kinnock's speech at the TUC.

TB: I've taken the same view as the NUM leadership. I've given a press conference every week in Chesterfield, and I've said that the issue is the violence of government policy, the violence of the media, and the violence released by the police.

If picket line violence is raised, you have to be absolutely clear that the responsibility rests 100% with the government and their use of the state apparatus to do violence to people who are then being criminalised in the public mind by the media.

But we don't want to fall for the Tory argument that this is a law and order problem. The emphasis has to be on the other issues, which are of civil liberties, human rights, democracy, rights of trade unionism, rights to full employment, rights to welfare and so on. You mustn't be diverted *only* into the law and order argument, because that is only a secondary part of it.

On what other people have said - I'm not naming names - I don't think we want to be

diverted into internal discussion about what other people in the movement are doing. The important thing is that those who support the miners should be 100% clear in their presentation of the argument.

I do not want to get diverted from a comment on the Coal Board and the government, and supporting the miners, into a secondary argument about what other people should be doing that they are not doing.

Controlling the police

MT: What conclusions do you think we should draw from the dispute in terms of the policy of a future Labour government on the police?

TB: There are enormous lessons. The national police force under the Home Secretary's control is wholly unacceptable and has not been authorised by Parliament.

The police chiefs must be under the control of the local authorities - properly under control. I'm not suggesting that the police committee decides where to put their effort in particular operational cases, but there must be total accountability.

Indeed, I think the argument for the police authorities appointing and being able to change the local police chief is unanswerable.

I also think that the election of magistrates is very important. I've been pursuing the question of the appointment of magistrates.

I wrote to Lord Hailsham, and he said they were appointed by a committee. I asked who were the members of the committee - 'we're not allowed to tell you', was the reply, 'because they don't want to be known'.

It's a sort of medieval structure, and the magistrates are being forced into becoming administrators. They're imposing punishments, by the bail conditions, before the case has been heard.

The other thing, obviously, is the repeal of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. There should also be an amnesty for the miners involved in the dispute.

The question of the appointment and selection of

judges should be raised. We should look at a retirement age for judges and a Parliamentary confirmation of judges comparable to the Senate's confirmation of Supreme Court judges in the United States.

The law and order aspects of all this - including plastic bullets and water cannon and so on - are very important.

Here is a case where experience develops understanding, and bit by bit as the dispute goes on you can raise these matters and they are seen to be relevant. If at the beginning of the dispute you jumped too far ahead people would have said: 'We're fighting on pit closures, why are you raising the magistracy?' Six months later people regard these issues as directly relevant.

I have no doubt whatever that a Labour government will have to deal, and will deal, with these matters.

MT: It appears that the present police operation has been planned and built up for since 1972 - and the build-up was going on continuously during the last Labour government.

TB: I have no doubt that it was.

MT: Doesn't that make the case for a much closer, more extensive system of accountability over the police?

TB: Oh yes. I'm not even sure the Home Secretary is told very much.

If you take the question of bugging of telephones, for example, successive Home Secretaries have sworn blind in the House of Commons that every interception is done by a warrant. But is totally contradicted by the statement issued, I think, in February last year, in an answer to a parliamentary question which revealed the guidelines given during the last Labour government on the interception of telephones.

It turns out that any Chief Constable, or an authorised officer, can intercept a telephone. It is quite untrue that the Home Office controls it.

I also think that the Northern Ireland experience has fed into the Home Office, and the appointment of Sir Kenneth Newman [former head of the RUC, to command of the Metropolitan Police] and various other things confirm it. In Northern Ireland they have been practising for what they intend to do here.

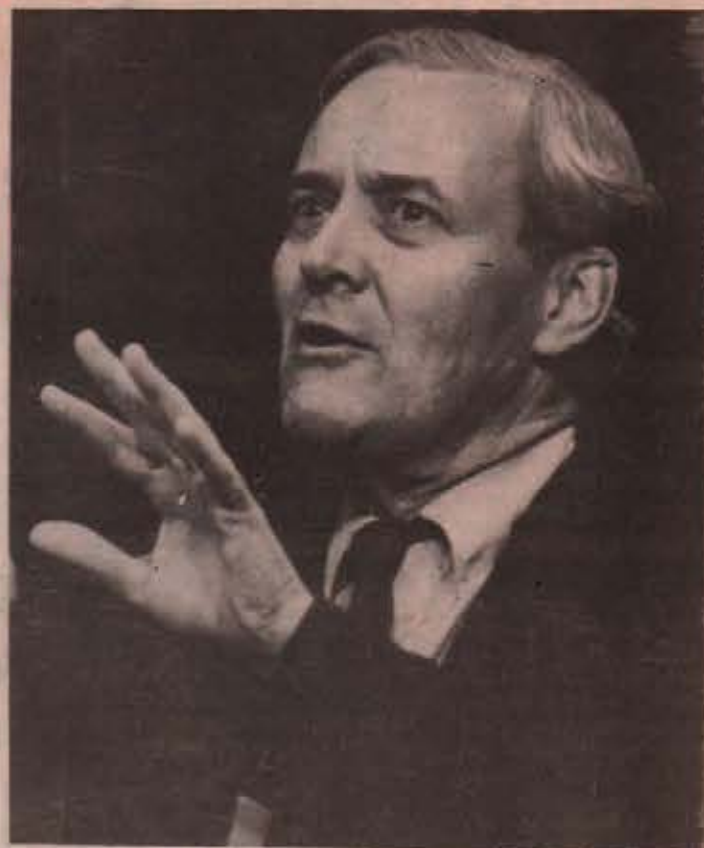
All this developed under successive governments.

A Freedom of Information Act would have a part to play here. If you knew more about what was happening, then you would be able to monitor more correctly what was going on when Labour was in power.

JB: Some police authorities with Labour majorities have taken some important steps during the dispute, though I've been disappointed this hasn't been more extensive.

But there are two issues. There is the cost of the policing, and there is the whole role of the police as basically to defend property.

I don't think there is enough explanation of that



LAURIE SPANHAM (IFL)

basic role of the police, which is not something new.

TB: The issues do go well beyond local control. It is a fact that the police are there primarily to uphold the law, which is itself related primarily to the protection of property and not of labour rights.

Why weren't the police there to stop Mr MacGregor sacking 100,000 steelworkers? The right to work - where were they? If the people at Cortonwood had turned up the day after it had closed, would you rely on a big police force to get them into work?

This is the way the contradictions are presenting themselves to people through their actually daily experience.

You can also relate it to other questions. If this force of police were devoted to preventing violence against women on the streets, or racist violence against the black community, then these problems could be solved.

MT: Doesn't the experience make a case for operational control of the police by elected authorities?

TB: Operational in the sense that the guidelines for operations should be laid down by the police committees. They should be able to ask, for example, what the police call a subversive and who they put on their records.

There must also be accountability after an operation. But clearly you can't have a committee determining that that particular night you will have a raiding squad sent in for drugs or whatever.

You can't have that operational control, but there must be full accountability and responsibility to an elected body, and the policy of the police must be determined in advance.

JB: Paul Whetton, the secretary of the Notts rank and file strike committee, writes a regular diary for Socialist Organisation, and recently he made the point that we can thank Margaret Thatcher for creating a situation which makes for tremendous political education and people learning very quickly.

In Ollerton, Notts, they had 43 new applications for membership at their latest most of which were from striking miners and their families. From the National Executive of the Labour Party, how have you seen the Party relating to the strike?

TB: The National Executive has come back to the strike every month. We've sat down

and worked out what was the appropriate resolution at each stage. On the principle that we didn't want to divide the Executive on the miners' question, we've put forward as strong a resolution as we could and got it carried, culminating in the July decision to have a joint campaign.

We have to recognise that there is a majority on the Labour Party NEC of trade unionists who have to keep in step with the policy of their own unions. That's where the TUC Congress will have made a difference.

Polish coal

One issue that has been discussed during the miners' strike is Poland and Solidarnosc. With the Polish government and the official trade unions in Poland sending in scab coal, and the messages of support for the miners from Solidarnosc...

TB: What about Walesa's interview where he was reported as attacking Arthur Scargill and praising Mrs Thatcher?

MT: That was a personal interview. But there has also been an official statement by the Solidarnosc miners' union supporting the NUM, and a statement by the central bulletin of Solidarnosc condemning the sending of the coal...

TB: I didn't see the interview with Walesa, but I understood he did make a sharp criticism of Arthur Scargill, and give warm praise to Mrs Thatcher.

MT: He attacked Arthur Scargill, saying that Arthur Scargill was taking on the State and Solidarnosc had never gone for confrontation with the State.

But I think we should realise that he said that as an individual. The relevant bodies of Solidarnosc have come out in support of the NUM, whereas from the Polish government coal imports to Britain are now 316% of what they were before.

TB: Well, that shouldn't have happened. But I assume that Solidarnosc in Poland is a mixed bunch, isn't it?

MT: A movement of millions of workers usually is.



JOHN HARRIS

'The use of the state apparatus to do violence to people who are then being criminalised in the public mind by the media...'

Review

Gerry Ben-Noah reviews Lenni Brenner's books 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators' and 'The Iron Wall'

DENIAL of the holocaust has become the stock-in-trade of the far right in Europe and the USA. From Richard 'Harewood's' 'Did Six Million Really Die?' to Arthur Butz's 'The Hoax of the Century'. That pro-Nazi should seek to excuse their heroes of one of the greatest crimes in history can hardly be surprising.

What is remarkable, however, is the recent emergence of a 'left-wing' version of holocaust revisionism.

At the most extreme, a French Trotskyist defends Robert Faurisson's right to deny the existence of gas chambers and extermination camps. More often, though, the 'left' revisionists do not deny that the holocaust happened: they merely argue for a redistribution of responsibility for the tragedy. They suggest that the Nazis were not solely to blame for the disaster that befell the Jewish people. Zionism, too, must share the guilt.

Now, in fact, various Zionist leaders *did* calculate that anti-semites would for their own reasons collaborate with them. They understood that there was logical common ground between Zionism and anti-semitism — old-fashioned, central-European, pre-Nazi Christian anti-semitism — in that both rejected assimilation.

Zionism was generated by anti-semitism. Then, once embarked on their project of removing the Jews to Palestine, out of reach of the anti-semites, the Zionist leaders made hard-headed calculations and assessments of the world they lived in, seeking to find ways of realising their programme.

Thus Zionist leaders had discussions with ministers of the viciously anti-semitic Tzarist government, with Von Plehve, for example.

In the same way the Zionists have allied in succession with Turkish, British and then US imperialism. Brutal realism and cynical real-politik in the service of their central goal of creating the Jewish state has always characterised the central leadership of the Zionist movement. It has led to shameful episodes and unsavoury contacts.

The realpolitik of the Zionist leaders — together with a slowness to realise that older strains of anti-semitism had evolved into the lethal, genocidal Nazi variant, with which there could be no accommodation — may well have helped blunt the response of European Jews to Nazism.

Identify

But to go on from this tragic confusion to identify Zionism and anti-semitism, to place the moral or political responsibility — or any share of it — on the Zionist Jews for Hitler's holocaust of European Jewry — that is hysterically and obscenely stupid.

Yet that is what the new revisionism — at its sharpest when it stops playing with hollow, abstract logical identification between Zionism and anti-semitism and bases itself on the historical facts — concludes and now proclaims to the world.

It is important to recognise that, whilst holocaust revisionism is absolutely central to the ideology of the far right, 'left' revisionism remains — so far — a marginal and aberrant belief within the socialist movement.

Until now, it has been propagated only by scattered articles in the 'Workers Revolutionary Party' press, or by quaintly-titled pamphlets such as Tony Greenstein's 'Zionism: Anti-semitism's Twin in Jewish Garg'.

Rewriting the Holocaust



Until now, it has looked like the work of cranks.

Until now, Lenni Brenner, 'left' revisionism's newest recruit is a Jew, whose books have all the appearance of serious works of history and are published (expensively) by commercial publishers.

Both the books argue, with apparent authority, that Zionists did not fight back against anti-semitism because they were in sympathy with it. According to Brenner, the Zionists saw anti-semites as nationalists like themselves, with a common objective in the removal of the Jews from Europe and a similar evaluation of the intrinsic worth of diaspora Jewry.

Where does one begin to review work like this? The revisionists of the right have shown how easy it is to contest and even subvert what had seemed unassailable historical facts. For, of course, very little history can survive scepticism of this kind, based on the rejection of any evidence one does not like.

Now Brenner does not, by and large, engage in this kind of revisionism. Brenner's unique contribution to historical revision lies in the *sense* he makes of events.

Most of the events he refers to are real and publicly known. They have been described before by pro-Zionist writers, notably Hannah Arendt in 'Eichmann in Jerusalem'. (This is not to say that a sizeable catalogue of inaccuracies and contradictions within the Brenner corpus could not be assembled — but such an exercise would miss the point).

Congruence

Brenner's 'theory' of Zionist-Nazi congruence rests upon two sets of phenomena: the actions of individual collaborators who were Zionists, and the policies of Zionist organisations which, for him, were lacking in anti-Nazi resolution.

With the benefit of hindsight it is, of course, easy to see that many Zionists underestimated the Nazis. They thought the new anti-semitism would be like the

old; brutal, humiliating and dangerous for individual Jews. They could not and did not conceive of the annihilation that was to come. Thus, their strategy was based on a series of assumptions about the immediate prospects for Europe's Jews which was horribly wrong.

Inner logic

To move from this tragic confusion, however, to the suggestion that they were unconcerned about the fate of those Jews is absurd. To argue that they were therefore in sympathy with the Nazis is bizarre.

It would be foolish to deny that there were Zionists who collaborated. So, no doubt, did some Communists, Bundists and liberals. In the nightmare world of Nazi Europe many people did bad things to save their own lives or those of people they loved.

For Brenner, though, these individual acts of collaboration are expressions of the inner logic of Zionism. Individual or

collective acts of anti-fascist resistance by Zionists on the other hand, are dismissed as merely historical accidents, exceptions that in some unexplained way prove the rule.

It would be trivially easy to write a similar account of the 'inner logic' of capitalist democracy, or of Marxism, which proved to this standard their affinity with Nazism. Such accounts have little to do with serious history.

Brenner claims to be opposed to Jewish, Arab and every other kind of nationalism. Perhaps he is so far from nationalism that he does not feel the need to avoid racial slurs, which he sprinkles throughout his writing. Thus, the inter-war Palestinian Arab leadership were not only 'a parasitic upper class' but also 'classic levantines' (*Iron Wall* p.57); and the Palestinian Arabs as a whole had a 'low level of culture' (*ibid* p.65). As for the Jews:

...the old Jewish slums were notoriously filthy: 'Two Jews and one cheese make three

smells' was an old Polish proverb. Karl Marx was only being matter-of-fact when he remarked that 'The Jews of Poland are the sneeriest of all races'." (*ibid* p.11).

For a self-proclaimed socialist to repeat anti-semitic Polish proverbs as matters of fact is simply incredible. Such remarks are frequent in Brenner and range from the paranoid: the suggestion that rich Jews control the US Democratic Party and thus American foreign policy — to the merely unpleasant — Agudat Israel demanding from the Likud 'their pound of flesh' (p.207) as the price for parliamentary support.

There is, then, a curious ambivalence in Brenner's writing. He censures Zionism for despising Jews and on the other hand he clearly despises them himself. Similarly, he characterises the Zionist-Revisionists as near-fascists, and cites quotes from anti-revisionist Zionists to establish this. But he also argues that the Revisionists were the most authentic Zionists, closest to the inner logic of the movement.

Therefore, the opposition of the Labour Zionists to Revisionism, of which good use is made in proving the latter to be reactionaries, is then dismissed as either bad faith or false consciousness. Either Labour's disagreements with Jabotinsky's followers were entirely tactical, a contest over who should control the colonialist venture — or the left simply did not appreciate, as Brenner can appreciate, that they were really just logical Zionist-Revisionists.

For a Marxist, Brenner places enormous weight on his own ability to critically examine other people's psyches across the years. (This ability is not restricted to the minds of Labour Zionists; Brenner also 'shows' that Betar was Fascist by reference to the mental states of a hypothetical 'average Betari' (*ZAD*, p.114).

Psychoanalysis

We are also offered a psychoanalysis of Jabotinsky:

...there was nothing ambiguous about Jabotinsky's oral fixation...he hated mathematics and was always undisciplined as a student: the infallible signs of oral fixation...He had other stigmata of the fixation...he became hopelessly addicted to detective stories and westerns." (*Iron Wall*, p.6).

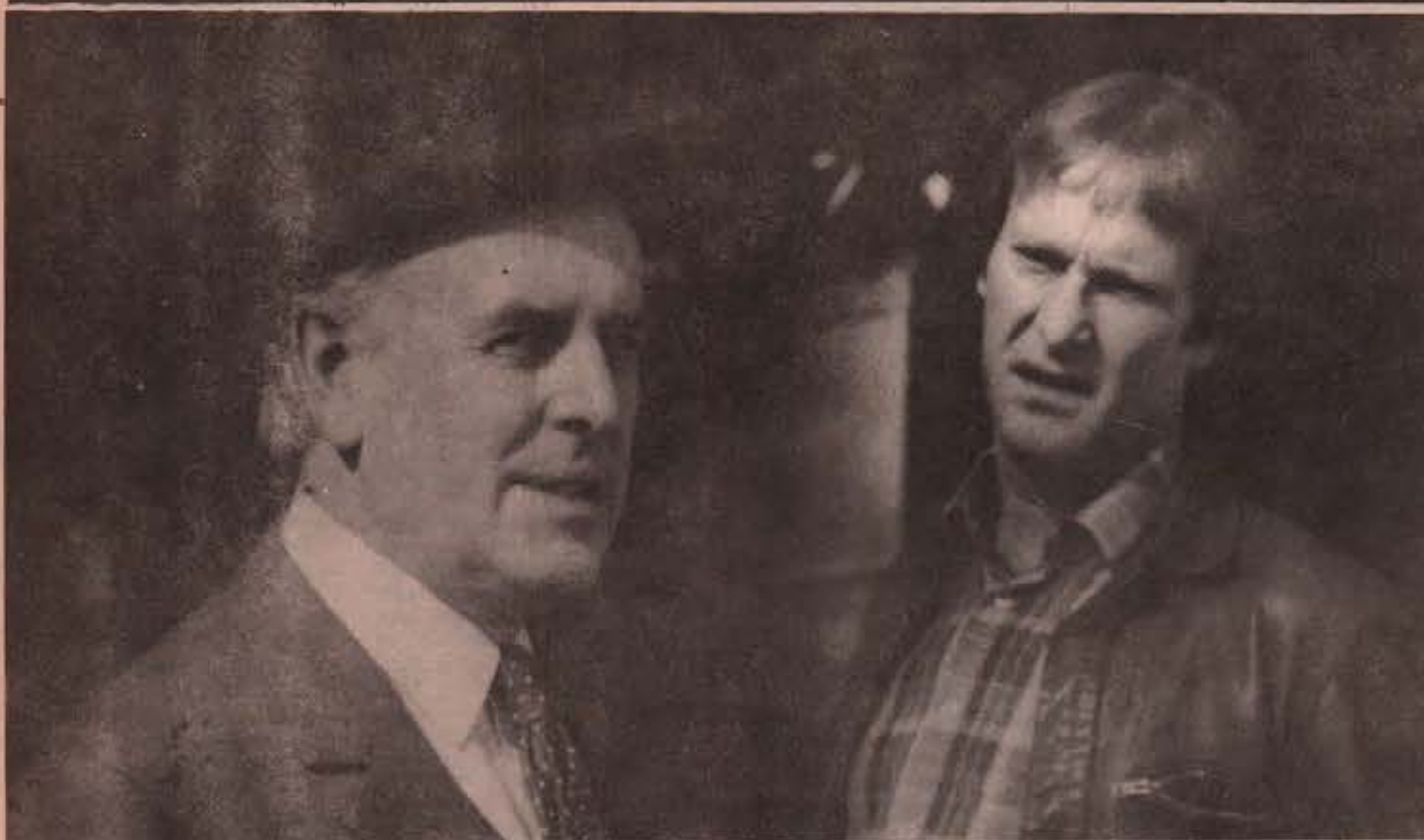
This is the sort of thing that gets psychoanalysis a bad name. It reveals, too, that underneath the glossy covers Brenner's work is every bit as crankish as former attempts to construct a 'socialist' version of historical revisionism.

Why, then, has it any credibility? A comment by Isaac Deutscher offers a clue:

"The anti-Zionist urged the Jews to trust their gentle environment, to help the 'progressive forces' in that environment...and so hope that those forces would effectively defend the Jews against anti-semitism...The Zionists on the other hand dwelt on the deep-seated hatred of non-Jews and urged the Jews to trust their future to nobody except their own state. In this controversy Zionism has scored a terrible victory, one which it could neither wish nor expect." (*The Non-Jewish Jew*, p.91).

Brenner, like most socialists, wishes that this victory had not happened. But instead of thinking seriously about what kind of socialist strategy could win the Jews away from Zionism, he constructs a fantasy-world in which the Zionists did wish for and expect the holocaust, and in which the most fanatical Jewish nationalists were, in reality, ardent anti-semites.

All of this would undoubtedly be an interesting case-study for psychoanalysts. Marxists would be better off by turning to Nathan Weinstock's *Zionism: False Messiah*.



Arthur and Terry. "a very male world"

A male world

BEING perhaps one of the first females to write a TV review for this paper I found myself in a bit of a quandary. Would the article become marginalised, seen to be a (typical) feminist's view of gender politics?

Women on the Left are still often faced with this circular reasoning — the issues are seen to be 'women's issues' and, like the tea and sandwiches, left entirely to the women. While we need space to work some things out on our own, gender politics are, patently, everyone's business. Unhappily, until most men have sussed this out it remains up to us to keep putting it on the agenda.

So here I am, asked to review *Minder*. Great! Love the programme — just as much as I love Corrie Street and get hooked on Brookside (how come these progs. aren't reviewed more often? Could it be that despite attempting to depict working class life and having a mainly working class audience they are seen to be silly women's programmes? No, surely not).

What makes *Minder* so popular? And popular it must be 'cos it's one of the privileged few with subtitles. For me it's initially the nostalgic (illusion of) realism; the accents, the overdone jargon, the London locations, the less than legit deals done with the flashy confidence of the, supposedly, up front City.

And then again there's the humour. Dear old Arfur, what problems he lands poor old Terry with. We laugh, or is it snigger, as yet again he earnestly defends some lost cause, adding that it's his money at stake. So used to Arfur's ways are we that we know that Terry's 'sensible' protestations will prove to be correct and, of course, will end up with lovable Terry having to physically 'mind' his boss.

Glynis Powell reviews
'Minder' (ITV, Wednesdays, 9pm)

It's the inevitability that makes the characters humorous. But it's also double-edged. It's the pathos of the loser. Arfur always loses and Terry always gets the rough bits. How many times have you seen a British cop series where the central figures always lose out? Even if in *Minder* the police are depicted, like the petty criminals, as lovable but stupid rogues, the message still seems to be that it doesn't pay (literally) to break the law.

But as I said it's double-edged. Watching *Minder*, like watching *Coronation Street* is not just a passive occupation. Think of all those little snide remarks, touches of satire, and little victories over the police, the bigoted and 'fate' in general. They might not constitute organised socialist resistance but it's the strengths and pleasures of these little oppositional practices of everyday life that provide the real basis for any social change. This is one of the reasons for the programme's popularity, I think. It gives us space to enjoy these practices and in seeing them on the screen kind of legitimises them for us.

I don't suppose the producers think of it in that way, but they're clever enough to know what will bring quite a few laughs from their audience.

Take this week's episode, a particularly juicy one for my purposes, all about the discovery and 'come-uppance' of a multiple bigamist. Of course decent Terry and Arfur are suitably shocked at 'Confidence' Cosgrove's caddish secret. Terry is rightly indignant at the shit the deception has put the women with children in.

Besides if it weren't seen as slightly unnatural, there'd be no pleasure in the fantasy, would there?

Again the double-edge. From the very beginning we're given the 'pleasure' of seeing Cosgrove as the desired lover of a number of women who he has also set up as managers of his business (what was that about women as exchange values?) On the other hand a moral stricture is hinted at as we see these very same women as harassed and over-worked.

Later, as our heroes are trying to help Casanova to lay low for a bit he's taken to a health club. He protests that he's not comfortable out of the company of women, "it ain't natural" to be in a totally male environment he says. Ho ho, says the viewer, that's a bit OTT, us lads down the gym are improving our masculinity.

At this point the writers risk losing the sympathy of these new fit bodies by indulging in a bit of homophobia. On his very first visit Cosgrove is approached by a gay bloke in the sauna, horror of horrors! Beyond the cheap giggle the implications are clear. If once you stray from the constant expression of virile heterosexuality this 'unmanly' fate lies in store for you. The 'unnaturalness' of the bigamist is transformed into the 'norm' in the face of 'unnatural' homosexuality.

But *Minder*'s world is a very male world. Usually very few women even appear. Daley's wife is present only in the awesome phrase, "her indoors". A touch of realism here perhaps? As a woman my public life seems to be dominated by having to take men seriously. Are men's daily lives so absent of women?

In this episode the fantasy/Les Dawson factor (voracious sex, dominating wife, etc) is set up at one end by the title, "A number of old wives' tales" and rounded

off by the last scene: all the five wives are brought together in the police station. Instead of rounding on the man they are made to enact a stereotypically bitchy scene and then run down the street, seaside postcard fashion, after their husband. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned" and this seems to be the only reprimand meted out.

Minder might have rid itself of its racist, anti-semitic 'jokes' but it certainly hasn't questioned its reliance on these boringly traditional clichés of the Benny Hill type.

But that's obviously still what the audience want, isn't it? A bit of fantasy in a realistic arena, an easy giggle and a bit of pathos and common sense values. A bit like a soap opera, really, that much maligned form!

Look at the adverts they show in the breaks. Two about building material suppliers, one about an exciting new magazine 'Car' and one about buying your council house. All concerns designated to the male.

Look at the opening sequence. We're not only given clues as to Daley's trade, but more importantly we're shown, via alternating shots of the two characters' faces, just exactly what kind of relationship they have. It's all really quite sentimental buddy stuff and that's why we love 'em, just like Bet, Marie and our Barry.

The advantage the 'feminine' soap opera has over the 'masculine' soap is that by openly privileging the domestic and the emotional it sometimes explores and confronts real social problems. I think the average male viewer could cope with a bit of revolutionary display of emotional interdependence between men. Or perhaps they're waiting for the revolution to do it for them.



-Robert Wyatt- Heartening

IT was heartening to read of Robert Wyatt's new songs in SO 197. However, your interviewer assumed that the readership of SO would automatically know who Robert Wyatt is!

Firstly for your younger readers, Robert recorded 'Ship-building' — the song about unemployment and the Falklands war — which was a hit for Elvis Costello who wrote the song and recorded his own version of it last year.

Secondly, for your older readers, Robert was the original drummer of the Soft Machine,

who brought the poly-rhythms of '60s jazz to the experimental 'underground music' (as it was then called) of the late '60s.

Robert's drumming was matched only by his singing style. I used to think some of the Soft Machine's material a bit twee, a sort of suburban 'Sittingbourne Sound'. But no-one could deny their musicality.

I read somewhere of an observation by Robert that the potential of drum kits has really still to be explored. The fact that the modern drum kit is a somewhat recent invention in musical his-

tory, and demands the use of four limbs, would seem to indicate that there are some remarkable rhythmic permutations around, still to be discovered.

This serious attitude to the gentle craft of drumming has been carried over by Robert into his songmaking (Robert lost the use of his lower limbs a number of years ago after an accident at a party). Try and hear his versions of the Red Flag and Guantánamo. I'd love to hear him do a version of the Internationale...

Comradely greetings,
JOHN DOUGLAS

From Keynes to the Sandinistas

By Martin Thomas

LAST week's Socialist Action carried a strange article by John Ross. In form it was an argument against Keynesian reformism, as proposed by Roy Hattersley in particular. In substance it was an attempt to define the economic policies of the Sandinista government in Nicaragua as socialist.

In my view it completely misrepresents the issues and ends up confusing socialism with state capitalist measures.

Ross's argument runs as follows. Keynesians and socialists can agree on the first step in an economic policy to tackle the crisis: increase demand for consumer goods by more state spending and/or by redistribution of income.

Where they differ is on the way to increase demand for investment goods. The problem is that this demand depends on high profits.

A socialist policy gets round the problem by government intervention to raise fixed investment, profitable or not.

"There is of course a way out of this situation. If the capitalists refuse to invest in the way that is needed then the decision is simply taken out of their hands. If this is done then the 'reflation' of the economy can be carried through on an ongoing long term basis.

Put in its simplest terms, and reduced to pure economics, that is exactly what the Bolsheviks in Russia did, Castro in Cuba did, and the FSLN is doing in Nicaragua. All simply refused blackmail from capital. They passed simple laws. Firms or capitalists which complied with the needs of the economy in increasing investment, output, particular needs of production and so on were left owning their companies. Those that did not had the decision taken out of their hands — through being nationalised."

Intervention

But a Keynesian policy, says Ross, rejects such intervention. And so disaster.

"Increasing demand for consumer goods, increasing public spending and so on will (where there are unused resources in the economy) produce a short term increase in output. But any sustained increase in output requires new investment — and the need for that new investment increases the nearer the economy approaches full employment and the limits of its existing productive capacity.

"If the investment does not take place then the result is raging inflation — as more and more money is pumped into the economy but the number of goods and services being produced does not increase (because investment and productive capacity is not increasing).

"This situation of rising or even uncontrollable, inflation is in practice the outcome of every reformist Keynesian experiment — as Allende found out in Chile and Mitterrand found out in France."

Now, for a start, the cause of inflation in Chile and France was not full employment of all the existing productive capacity!

Ross's economic analysis is completely garbled. He gets just about everything wrong; it would take far too long to disentangle it all.

His description of the different policies is also garbled.

He even gets Keynes wrong. Keynes himself proposed "a somewhat comprehensive socialisation of investment" — and thus, in Ross's scheme, should be placed on the socialist side of the socialist/Keynesian divide!

Management

The best sense that can be made of Ross's article is that he has reduced Keynesianism to a particularly crude and limited form of demand management. He is therefore able to identify socialism with bolder state-capitalist forms of economic management and still believe he is drawing a clear line between socialism and Keynesianism.

None of this should diminish our solidarity with the Sandinistas against the threat and bullying of the US. Such solidarity need not, and indeed cannot, depend on defining the Sandinista government as socialist.

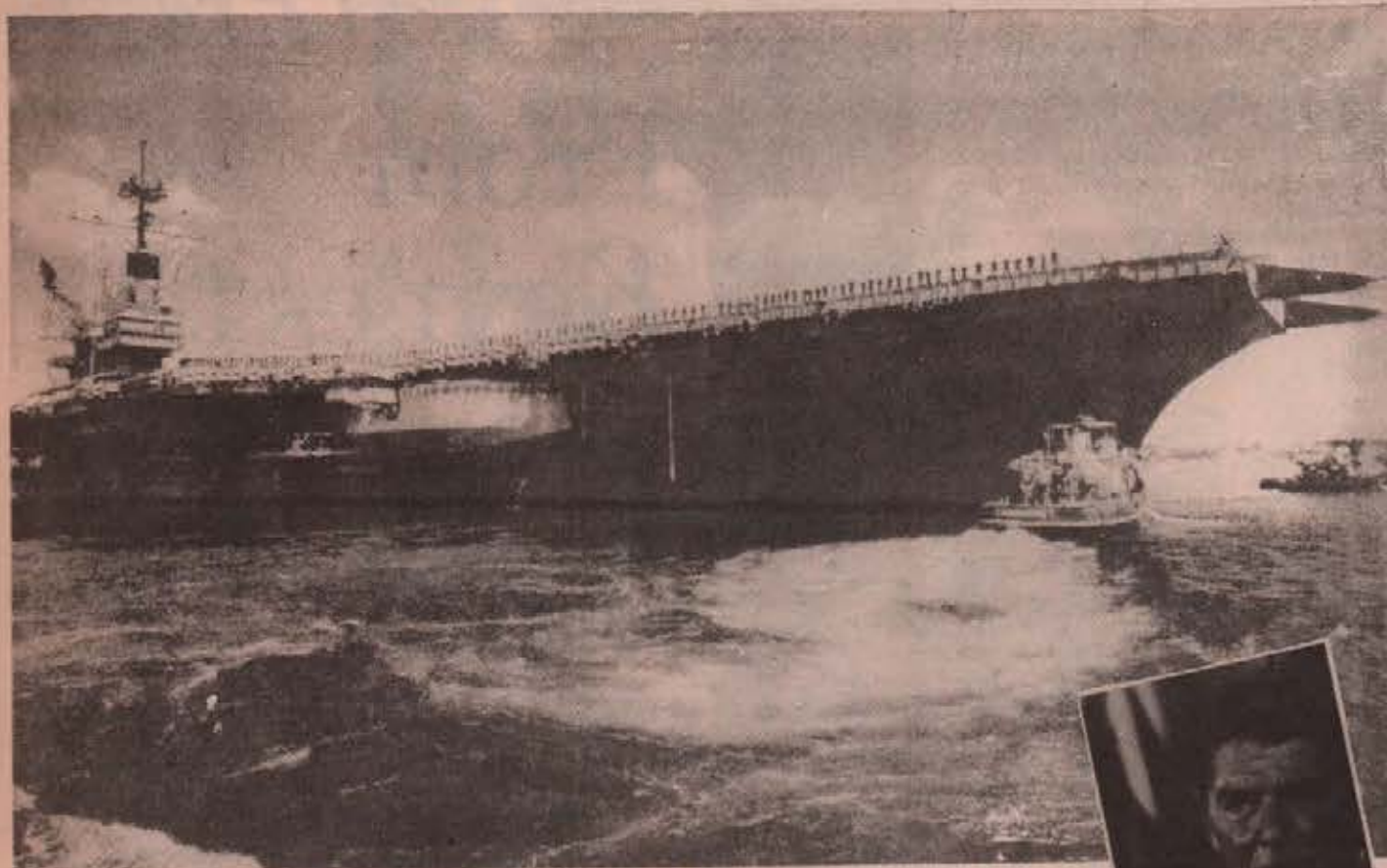
That the Bolsheviks did not nationalise industry until 1918 is not very relevant; power was held by workers' councils, not of a radical nationalist guerrilla movement.

Misplaced enthusiasm has driven Ross to a position from which it is impossible to distinguish socialism from radical state capitalism.

Socialism is not about getting the existing state to force capitalists to invest — be nationalised, or even about radically democratising the existing state. It is about raising the existing capitalist state to the ground and replacing it with new institutions of workers' democracy — and these new institutions taking control over the planning and organising of the economy and society.

The existing state is then to be used against the labour movement — as the action of the police and the courts now have shown — and they will resist with force any serious threat to the ruling class.

The Labour Party's commitment to nationalisation has to be defended against Hattersley's revisions, expresses the labour movement's commitment to changing society. But it is a confused commitment and limitations need to be recognised.



USS Ranger in manoeuvres off Nicaragua

STOP REAGAN DEFEND NICARAGUA!

Daniel Ortega, a leader of Nicaragua's Sandinista government, has accused the US of planning to invade Nicaragua on October 15.

US officials denied the charge, made in a speech at the United Nations, and the Sandinistas themselves have previously reckoned that the main danger of an invasion would come after the US presidential elections in November.

However, the US is undertaking major joint exercises with the Honduran army.

The US has had its bluff called by the Sandinistas' decision to press ahead with elections on November 4 and to sign the 'Contadora' treaty without reservations.

The conservative 'Democratic Coordination' in Nicaragua is still threatening to boycott the November 4 elec-

By Martin Thomas

tions, demanding postponement and a longer pre-election period. But the 'Democratic Coordination' has lost credibility by its previous insistence that it would not participate in elections unless the Sandinistas opened talks with the US-backed counter-revolutionary guerrillas, and six other opposition parties are contesting the election.

The US's campaign against the Nicaraguan revolution has been justified by claims that the Sandinista regime is undemocratic and — along with Cuba and the USSR — is backing 'terrorism' elsewhere in Central America, i.e. the armed struggle against the bloodstained regime in El Salvador (a regime which the US finds quite democratic enough!).

The Sandinistas' signature on the Contadora pact, and their insistence on holding elections before the US presidential poll, are intended to undermine the US's propaganda position. And they have succeeded to the extent that the US, having previously supported the Contadora pact, is now suddenly demanding amendments to it.

The problem is that the pact embodies the reformist solution for Central America proposed by the EEC countries and Mexico.

Drawn up by the governments of Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama, the Contadora treaty requires the Nicaraguan government to join with the government of El Salvador, and other Central American regimes, in renouncing "any military sup-

port to persons, organisations or groups which seek to destabilise the governments of Central America" and expelling all foreign military personnel.

Implementation of the treaty would mean the Sandinistas renouncing all active support to the Salvadorean resistance. The Salvadorean resistance has already moved its headquarters from Nicaragua to Mexico.

The Sandinistas' calculation, probably, is that they can safely promise such renunciation because the Salvadorean regime will never implement the clause of the treaty requiring them to expel US personnel.

But to make the struggle in El Salvador a pawn in diplomatic bargaining can only weaken it.



Mubarak

RIOTS against food price increases rocked the Egyptian state at the weekend. Attempts to increase the prices of basic foodstuffs — which are very heavily subsidised — sparked off fierce resistance, especially in the town of Kafr ad-Dawar in the Delta.

The government recently introduced a new two piastre price for bread, known as 'baladi' bread, which is brought from state bakeries, apparently as a first step to raising the price of all such bread from the 1 piastre it has been for many years. (A piastre is worth about 1/2 penny). The new round of increases raised the price of other foods such as butter and eggs.

The increases provoked a strike by some 2,000...

By Clive Bradley

workers in Kafr ad-Dawar which was supplemented by riots. Three people were killed and many injured when the army was sent in to put down the rioters. Forty people — according to official figures — were arrested.

President Mubarak immediately ordered that the increases be withdrawn and that other subsidised price levels be frozen. It is possible that the level of resistance was much greater than has been reported in the press in order to force such an instant climbdown by the government; but it is also likely that any sign of mass opposition would terrify the government — the attempt to...

1977 led to nationwide rioting and a major crisis that forced ex-President Sadat to back down very ignominiously. The memory of 1977 is very live to President Mubarak now.

Kafr ad-Dawar, near Alexandria, has a long history of militancy. The textile factory there (although the press reports here do not specify it, the striking workers were almost certainly at the textile factory) is the oldest in Egypt, dating back to the 1920s. One of the first actions of the Nasser regime in 1952 was to crush an occupation there and execute the strikers' leaders. There was a big strike there in the 1970s.

The inability of the Egyptian regime, which is heavily in debt, to lower its subsidies on basic foodstuffs, is one of its major

headaches. Food subsidies account for 15 per cent of budget outlays, and their impact is worsened by the fact that Egypt imports more than half its food, and is one of the world's largest importers of wheat. The regime is under pressure from both domestic capitalists and bodies like the International Monetary Fund to do away with the subsidy system.

In January 1977 they proved utterly unable to do so; and the event last weekend shows that popular resistance to any attempt to do so is still far too strong. For the mass of the Egyptian people, even an increase in the price of bread to 2 piastres pushes them towards starvation levels. They have shown their determination to prevent it.

Ill on the dole

Les Hearn looks at some recent findings about class and health.

BACK in the 19th and early 20th centuries, whole generations of working class children had their growth stunted by malnutrition and poverty. This only started to bother the ruling class when they found that some 40% of volunteers to fight in the Boer Wars were unfit.

Things were not much better when the Great War arrived. The average height of the A1 (thickest) recruits was only five feet, six inches, while there were brigades made up of bantamweights (men of less than five feet in height).

Average

Medical circles tried to encourage better nutrition by recommending healthy diets, but these were out of the reach of many workers, let alone the unemployed, whose numbers were above two million almost continually between the two world wars.

Things changed with rationing and then with the Welfare State and the post-war generations have in general been well-nourished. Average male height is now five feet nine inches (for all males, not just the A1 army recruits).

But now the picture is changing. The return of mass unemployment, coupled with the attacks on the Welfare State, has resulted in the fact that two year old children of the unemployed are significantly shorter than the children of working parents.

This malnutrition starts in the womb. The Maternity Alliance reported in June that pregnant

women on Supplementary Benefit or low incomes could not afford an adequate diet. One Hackney woman on Supplementary Benefit would have £3.23 left to cover all other expenses, except rent, including feeding her five year old daughter, if she ate the diet recommended for the pregnant.

The nutritional value and variety of the diets of mothers in Hackney was found to be inferior to that of mothers in Hampstead and whereas only one in six Hampstead babies were under three kilograms at birth, one in two Hackney babies were.

Deaths of babies around the time of birth are nearly twice as high for the unskilled section of the working class as for the professional class.

Other effects of unemployment and poverty are found in the rise of diseases of dirt (such as dysentery and food poisoning).

Children

A Glasgow study has found that children living in deprived areas are up to 100 times more likely to suffer illnesses requiring hospital treatment.

Finally, a government study has found a 20% higher rate of death amongst unemployed men and the wives of unemployed men. This is on top of the higher death rate of working class people. Suicide rates of unemployed men were twice those of employed men.

Unemployment is causing disease and death from the unborn to the adult.

IUD danger

THE Dalkon Shield intra-uterine device (IUD) is notorious for having caused thousands of cases of pelvic inflammatory disease which have led to spontaneous abortions and infertility.

The US drug company, A.H. Robins, which manufactured it, is now being sued by about 10,000 women and it has already paid out \$200 million in damages to 7,000 of these.

Many IUDs seem to cause infections of the normally bacteria-free womb by means of a 'tail' that protrudes through the neck of the womb. This allows bacteria to enter the womb from the vagina, much as a piece of string will soak up liquid.

Such infections can damage

the Fallopian tubes or ovaries resulting in infertility.

It would be interesting for the papers detailing Robins' own medical studies on the Dalkon Shield to be available to the courts to see if they suspected that their highly profitable product could have such an effect.

Unfortunately, such papers have been 'accidentally' destroyed, by the wife of one of the company's lawyers who was 'spring-cleaning'.

A.H. Robins are terribly sorry, no doubt!

Incidentally, many thousands of women in Britain are still wearing Dalkon Shield IUDs, unaware and uninformed of the risks.

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Defending London's services

Workers shut down the Sun

THE Sun has been put out of business by print unions. The dirtiest gutter rag in Fleet Street has not been printed for three days — since last Saturday.

The print unions took industrial action to stop a front-page article attacking striking miners as 'the scum of the earth'.

Once before, workers at the Sun refused to print a particularly contrived front-page photograph of Scargill. This time they have gone one better and halted production of the whole paper. Good for them!

This is precisely what is needed. The bosses squeal endlessly about the freedom of the press, the right to free speech and so on. And there should be freedom of the press, and free speech is a right that the labour movement should defend to the death. But to suggest that the Sun, pumping out vile propaganda against the miners is press freedom, or free speech, is hypocritical rubbish.

Now, in capitalist society, the freedom of the press means the freedom of the press barons to say what they want, regardless of the truth, regardless of its effects on the lives of ordinary people. It is the freedom to use their money and power against the interests of the working class.

The popular press has been conducting a vile propaganda war against the miners for the last six months.

For print unions to take action against the disgusting lies the press barons want to force down our throats is profoundly democratic.

People who rant on that this is totalitarianism, infringement of democratic liberties, talk as if a newspaper editor automatically printed everything he was given.

Of course, in fact, what they decide to publish is highly selected, according to what effect they want to achieve.

Print workers refusing to print are not challenging the right to free speech — they are challenging the right of self-opinionated, money-wielding professional scabs to decide. They have every right to do so.

In fact, the workers in the news industry, by any meaningful standards of democracy, have more right to decide what goes into a newspaper than the press barons do.

The press barons have the power they have purely and simply because of their wealth. Money gives them the right to decide who edits the paper, what editorial policy will be, and who will be sacked for breaking it. No one elects them. They buy their freedom. It is a travesty of democracy.

Print unions should step in more often. The Sun every day produces offensive filth. It is always offensive to women and has a deliberate policy to daily degrade them by printing pin-ups for its male readers.

Last Friday it had a disgusting editorial calling for the sacking of gay workers, denouncing them as 'perverts'.

The print unions should put a halt to this sort of anti-working class filth as well.

ANDREW MOORE



Unions unite

What is Democracy For London?

It is the joint GLC and Inner London Education Authority unions (excluding the teachers who have their own campaign) campaign against abolition of the GLC. This is the first time that the 16 unions have ever come together in any campaign.

How did this come about?

Primarily as a result of the Tory election manifesto which put forward the proposition that the GLC and ILEA should be abolished. The response from officials of the Witley Council (white collar negotiating body) and the TUJWC had a meeting which decided that a joint campaign would be appropriate encompassing all 16 unions. The Democracy For London was born.

So right from the start it was an official trade union body?

It was officially sponsored but it has no negotiating rights or any official position with this authority.

What has been your relations with the official GLC campaign?

We haven't had much to do with the campaign. Our contribution has been principled rather than active. It is in the second phase that the trade union involvement will be far greater because it deals with jobs and services.

What do you think of the GLC campaign?

It has been very effective from a propaganda point of view.

Jim Fitzpatrick, an FBU member and secretary of 'Democracy for London', spoke to Mick O'Sullivan.

They have transformed public opinion in London from one of apathy to active support and have justified the existence of the GLC and successfully exposed the Tories' undemocratic proposals.

What has been your relations with the Labour Groups in London?

The contact with the Labour groups has been difficult and even competitive in that we have not been able to establish a rapport. But this can be explained to a certain extent because the campaign so far has been centred around the democracy question rather than justifying staffing levels and where the unions must have direct access to the GLC campaign.

You have been in existence for 15 months. Do you have an overall strategy?

Yes. Initially we organised mass shop stewards meetings which built for the day of action on January 26. This was done in conjunction with the Save ILEA Campaign and was highly successful. Subsequent to our initiative the TUC called democracy week and democracy day which we supported with qualified success.

After this we entered into discussions with officials from the local government committee

of the South East Region TUC and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils in an attempt to plan a campaign and avoid any similar disruption. We worked out a briefing pack for stewards and activists about abolition and rate capping. There were a number of conferences to launch the pack within the movement and several other events which were all building for a day's strike in late autumn.

How did this joint approach work out?

Very simply, SERTUC proposals became compromised by the TUC decision to call a national rally against the attacks in local government timed to take place in the spring of 1985 as their sole effort when we expected a much earlier focus.

How will the campaign be won?

We cannot guarantee victory. What we can prepare is an effective fight and the way we envisage that can be organised is through our policy of developing shop stewards committees in each department and in each geographical area throughout London.

These committees will provide the vehicle for the rank and file to have direct access to the campaign and fully participate in its tactics and strategy.

These joint shop stewards committees will provide a base in the community to build the alliance between the users of our services and the workers who provide them.

Hold councils to their word

By Michael O'Sullivan, UCATT steward, Haringey DLO.

IT HAD proved impossible in five years of Tory attacks to bring the local authority unions together. But now, in a matter of weeks of the announcement of the government hit list for rate-capping, London local authority trade unionists have come together in a 'combine committee' to defend jobs and services.

It is called the London Bridge, because it links north and south of the Thames.

In existence just over a month it doesn't yet represent all London boroughs, but only the majority who are to be rate-capped along with three non-rate capped boroughs. However, in local authority terms, the committee is a unique achievement.

Those involved are confident that internal problems which mainly come from stewards bringing inter-union problems to the table — can be overcome. We believe the committee will embrace all 32 London boroughs in the not too distant future.

One striking feature of the new start is the 'realism' of the stewards. There is general recognition that there is a gap between the stewards and the shop floor and that it must be overcome if the membership are to be organised to fight.

Unions and Labour

And, just like the mine strike, the relation between the trade unions and the Labour Parties has come to the fore, which is not surprising, given the central role Labour councils will play in this fight.

London Bridge will neither kow-tow to the councils nor simplistically write them off as a bad investment. Our starting point is the fight to keep the rate-capped councils to their pledge not to comply with government directives.

RAIL STRIKE ON OCTOBER 9

By Rob Dawber

The National Executives of the rail unions NUR and ASLEF have finally decided to put into practice their oft-repeated promises that they will call action in support of members suffering harassment by management.

They have called a one-day strike on October 9 in Sheffield and Doncaster.

For nearly seven months now, railworkers carrying out union instructions not to handle coal, coke, or oil have been locked out. They have had tax rebates lopped by management defining them as 'on strike'. They have faced abuse, threats of sacking, and so on.

The conflict has been sharpest at Shirebrook depot, on the border between the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire coalfields, and among signalmen around Worksop.

These workers have blocked traffic to Cottam and West Burton power stations.

What has most angered railworkers has been the discriminatory nature of the harassment. Some areas have been left alone, while others which might be used to break

the NUM strike have suffered badly.

Also, the few staff who are prepared to handle coal at Shirebrook are being used to tear up all agreements and working diagrams, and throw out the Conditions of Service, and get as much coal out as possible.

Those signalmen prepared to signal coal trains have been given preferential treatment, overtime and so on.

Railway police make their presence felt by regular visits to individual signalmen.

On July 26 the rail unions met management. At first BR said they would end their discrimination and harassment, but next day they went back to it. The unions did nothing.

This weakness was seized on by management to increase the pressure.

Now, finally, we have been instructed to strike for 24 hours on October 9 in the Sheffield and Doncaster areas.

This has resulted from rank and file pressure and frustration.

If this action does not do the trick, then we will have to press for more extended action.



Above: Tory minister Patrick Jenkin. Below: Sheffield council leader David Blunkett.



Sheffield vs NALGO

By Michael Morris

AT THE expense of its own workforce, Sheffield City Council is trying to dodge the issue of rate-capping.

Workers in Sheffield City Council housing department are still on strike over the City Council's proposed new technology agreement, 'Responding to Change'.

The document destroys existing agreements, and was implemented unilaterally by the council, without negotiation with NALGO. Workers in the housing department refused to implement the provisions of the document.

They were suspended, and their colleagues voted overwhelmingly for supportive action.

As the strike enters its fourth week, support within the housing department remains solid, with well-attended meetings of the strikers.

Staff in other departments face similar threats of suspension, and already some have

voted to take action if workers are actually suspended. The Sheffield branch of NALGO has voted for escalation of the dispute through non-cooperation with councillors, a work-to-rule, and selective strike action by key groups of workers within the authority.

It is likely that more suspensions will follow, as workers refuse to cover for their striking colleagues. So far, councillors on 'the pinnacle of municipal socialism' have refused to negotiate in any meaningful way.

Instead, they have made irrelevant statements, and fully supported the vindictive style of management pursued in the housing department.

Manchester branch of NALGO, in a letter of solidarity, stated that: "Mr Gridley's time as an assistant director of housing in Manchester was

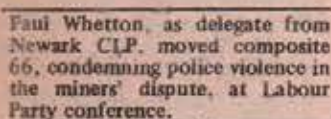
a period of unparalleled toil in industrial relations. An unminuted clause of housing strike return-to-work agreement was that Mr Gridley was given an ultimatum to seek alternative employment".

The National Executive NALGO has pointed out that read in conjunction with City Council's industrial relations framework, 'Responding to Change' amounts to a virtual no-strike agreement.

Indeed, council leader David Blunkett has still respond to the question why the document is so important, and why he and his colleagues on the Labour group are more willing to jeopardise any real investment by council workers fighting rate-capping by a high-handed attitude.

It looks as if ground already being laid for a clash down on a greater scale in Liverpool.

A miner speaks



I'm one of the thousands of Notts miners that came out on March 12 and have lived in a police state every day since. And when people talk to me about violence, if you want to know about violence ask a Notts miner who has lived for seven months in a police state. We can tell you about violence. We didn't read it in the newspapers, we didn't see it on the television, we were part of it.

And if you want to see it in the flesh, get your bodies up into Nottinghamshire and let's see where your solidarity lies.

Unions vs. police

"This conference is deeply concerned and deplores the police state tactics and involvement of the courts to assist employers to break industrial disputes. It particularly regards the increasing use of a national police force, the Public Order Act, and restrictions on the freedom of movement as part of the growing attack on democratic rights in this country."



Join the Labour Party
Write to: The Labour
Party, 150 Walworth
Road, London SE17
1JT

Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

We don't accept the violence I can tell you about — our member being dragged off the street; truncheoned to the floor in broad daylight; school kids — we had one school kid of 15 who objected to seeing his dad arrested for the third time. The police arrested

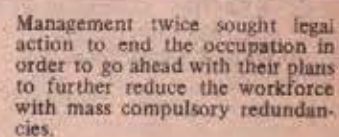
The NEC asked for this to be remitted, Paul refused, and it was passed on a show of hands.

Socialist Organiser number 184 in June featured the controversial picture (on the left) together with its sequel showing the mounted riot cop after he had just swung his club at Lesley Boulton, a woman from the Sheffield Miners' Support Group, who was seeking aid for a beaten-up miner. (Photograph showing the miner on page 3 of that issue).

We need £800, quickly, before we can start putting money aside for the premises fund again. We've made a start with £90 this week (details next issue). Send more to: 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

f) enact legislation to make the police play no part in industrial disputes."

"Comrades, you are spending all this week formulating Labour Party policy on how to fight back



in support of us and the miners".
Loi Duffy,
Walton Prison

When you leave the conference stop off at the Cammell Lairds picket which is on 24 hours a day.

Socialist ORGANISER

If they use anti-union laws – general strike!

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 184 June 21 1984 25p members and friends 15p

STOP STEEL!

The Government has given the companies an ultimatum: to continue to play in the NXM slot market will make it steadily clear that the Yankee suit is not just in that pit but to beat down the whole slide market movement. They should be rewarded for a renewed and more ardent campaign for a general market.

But the government could not accept the implications of even an arboreal future.

The breaking of the Glass meant that Chevrolet's N.M. customers morning and other

POLICE OUT OF THE COALFIELDS!