

# Socialist Organiser

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# Stand by the miners!

Unions must  
deliver on  
TUC promises

TUC chair Jack Eccles has blurred it out. The TUC leaders are not committed to a miners' victory. They just want to end the strike.

They want a settlement — any settlement, just so long as it ends the risks and agitation of the dispute.

In a radio interview on Tuesday 30th, Eccles said that the TUC should pressurise the miners to settle on terms similar to the pit deputies' deal.

That deal committed the Coal Board to nothing but "considering" concessions. But BBC Newsnight on Tuesday revealed that seven top union leaders had said they agreed with Eccles.

Because of rank and file support for the miners, six of those seven spoke only "off the record". And TUC general secretary Norman Willis said Eccles was "not speaking for the TUC. I do not share his views".

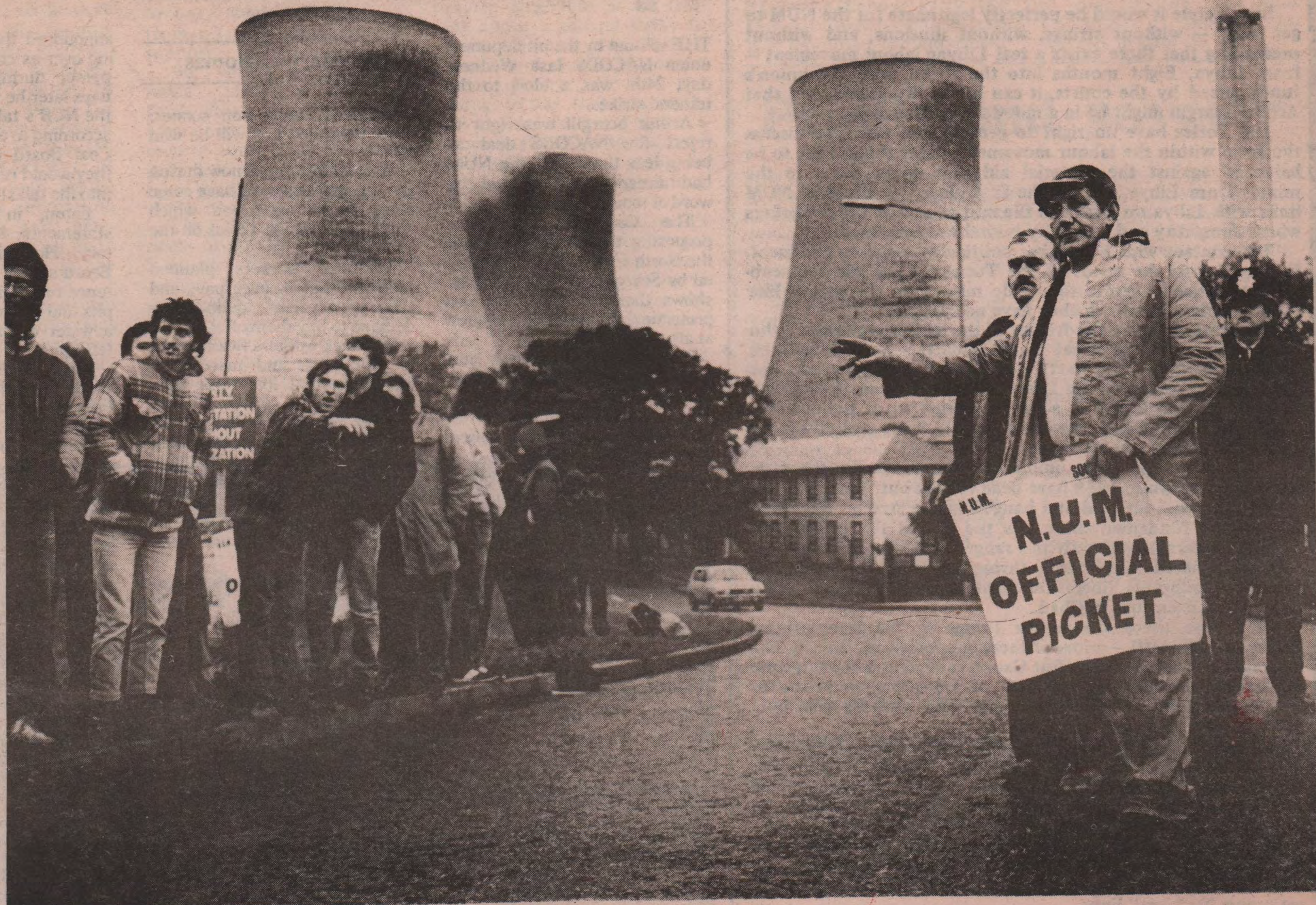
But Eccles' statement showed clearly enough why the TUC promises of support for the miners have remained largely a dead letter. At the TUC Congress in September union leaders promised to stop movement and handling of coal and of substitute oil. They have done almost nothing to keep that promise.

Eccles is an official of the GMBU, one of the crucial unions in the power stations.

Rank and file trade unions have to call our leaders to order, and demand that they deliver on their promises.

Militants must organise in every workplace and every trade union branch to make sure that the TUC decisions are actually implemented. No coal or coal substitutes must be allowed to move; picketing must be spread, especially at power stations, and the rule of not crossing them must be enforced. Trade unionists have to be convinced of the urgency of the tasks before us now to win support and victory for the miners.

The Tories are not just trying to close pits. They are out to break the back of effective trade unionism. Every union should back the miners.



Miners on picket of Didcot power station

Photo: John Harris (IFL)

## BACK THE PICKETS STOP ALL COAL AND OIL



# Editorial

## NUM and Libya

FOR THE Tories and their police, it's a bare-knuckle fight against the miners.

The bosses and the government are fighting like people who know that this is the battle of their political lives. And it is. The outcome of the miners' strike will shape industrial — and, probably, political — life in Britain for a long time to come.

So, for the Tory propaganda machine, anything goes.

Since NUM official Roger Windsor visited Libya, the press has piled in on the miners' leaders, kicking, spitting, biting, butting and eye-gouging like the gang of ruling class hired thugs that they are.

The politicians have joined the scrum, and Neil Kinnock has vied with the Tories to denounce Arthur Scargill.

Norman Willis, the TUC's general secretary, who should be organising support for the miners, took the chance to have a go and crack the TUC's whip over the NUM. He announced:

"I have asked for, and been given, Mr Scargill's categorical assurance that no financial support has been sought for, received by, or will be accepted by the NUM from the Libyan regime, which he, like myself, regards as an odious tyranny".

The purpose of the Tory hate-mongering against the NUM is to turn other workers against the miners, and — they hope — turn rank and file miners against Arthur Scargill.

The miners could win a complete victory in a very short time if enough workers took action in solidarity. The propaganda war is aimed to stop that.

The Tories are disgusting hypocrites.

Tony Benn pointed out in the House of Commons that the Coal Board itself has contracts with Libya, making money by training Libyan technicians. Other British businesses continue to have lucrative links with Libya. The Tories' close allies in the US capitalist class have big oil interests in Libya, and US firms together with South Koreans have just started a huge \$11 billion man-made river project there.

The hypocrisy is worse than that. Of course it is true that there is nothing in Libya deserving of the name 'trade union'. The so-called Libyan trade unions are rubber stamps for the government. It is a pity that Arthur Scargill allowed himself to talk as if trade unions exist in Libya independent of the government, with which the NUM could have links.

But who is Thatcher to condemn the NUM for this when she depends so heavily on scab coal from Poland to break the miners' strike? Thatcher weeps public tears for the banned and outlawed Polish trade union movement, Solidarnosc, but she is very happy to use the coal produced by Polish miners under martial law conditions described by some of them as slave labour.

When Thatcher uses the lack of free trade unionism in Libya as a weapon in her battle to beat down the miners and destroy effective trade unionism in Britain, the labour movement must rally to the NUM.

Socialists should also be clear on the political issues involved. Two things need to be separated out when we discuss the rights and wrongs of a British trade union having links with Libya. Two types of 'links' need to be distinguished.

Hard-pressed trade union leaders looking for material help wherever they can get it: that is one thing. Pretending that Gadaffi is politically on the workers' side, or his regime is socialist, is another.

### In principle

In principle it would be perfectly legitimate for the NUM to get help — without strings, without illusions, and without pretending that there exists a real Libyan labour movement — from Libya. Eight months into the strike, with the union's funds seized by the courts, it can be readily understood that Arthur Scargill might be in a mood to 'try anything'.

The Tories have no right to protest: but when we discuss the issue within the labour movement, other things have to be balanced against the material aid that might come to the miners from Libya, and in the first place the effect of NUM links with Libya on rank and file miners and on other workers whose sympathy and solidarity is vital to the miners.

The contact with Libya was politically mistaken and inept. It played into the hands of the Tories. It has allowed scab-herding police in Notts to needle miners on the picket line about a regime for which they have no sympathy.

There are those on the fringes of the labour movement who glorify Libya and its 'great man', Gadaffi — notoriously the 'Workers Revolutionary Party', which is widely believed to be subsidised in some way by Libya, but also Labour Herald; and Ron Brown MP, leader of a recent delegation of Labour MPs to Libya. In fact Libya is what Kinnock, Willis and others say, it is: a vile and odious tyranny.

The independent trade unions that existed under the monarchy overthrown in 1969 have been rooted out. Dissidents are condemned without trial and hanged in the streets. Reactionary Islamic fundamentalism sets the norms for public life. Gadaffi's international activities range from having his opponents assassinated in London, through helping the Ethiopian regime to suppress liberation fighters in Eritrea, to petty imperialist adventures in Chad.

Of course there are nastier things in the international jungle than Gadaffi — some of them supported by the US, like the regime in El Salvador. But Gadaffi's regime is the opposite of socialism. To be an advocate of Gadaffi's 'socialism' or 'anti-imperialism' is to part company with working class politics and with socialism.

Arthur Scargill plainly does not believe that Libya is a socialist state. It is regrettable, however, that he has talked as if there are real trade unions in Libya. Labour MPs have tabled a motion in the Commons asserting the NUM's right "to receive aid from trade unionists anywhere in the world". Yes, indeed. But the official trade unions in Libya are government fronts — like the official unions in Stalinist states like the USSR and Eastern Europe, with which the TUC shamefully maintains 'fraternal' links.

After all the hullabaloo, the Tories have their own problems. The sequestration of the NUM's funds has not cowed the miners or their leaders. The Coal Board is openly split. The revival of militancy among car workers shows that the example of the miners is catching.

The crescendo of denunciation against Arthur Scargill is designed to cover that over. But it won't work. The miners will win. Victory to the miners!



NUM rally in Motherwell. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

# Time to turn TUC policies into action

By Martin Thomas

THE sell-out by the pit deputies' union NACODS last Wednesday, 24th, was a blow to the miners' strike.

Arthur Scargill was right to reject the NACODS deal as being less than what the NUM had already been offered by word of mouth in July.

The Coal Board hit-list, proposing the closure of 11 of the North East's 15 pits, revealed by Scargill on Tuesday 30th, shows that NACODS won no protection against pit closures at all.

The NACODS deal says that Cortonwood and the other four pits scheduled for immediate closure "will remain open to be considered...under the modified colliery review procedure."

The NUM points out that they "have already extracted a verbal promise from the board that the five pits will be kept open".

According to the NACODS deal, the NCB's March 6 plan to cut four million tonnes capacity "will be completely reconsidered." As regards the NACODS proposal of a third-party tribunal on closures and other matters: "The Board are very ready to re-examine the review procedure..."

### Definite

In short, the NCB conceded nothing definite at all.

After eight months of strike, the very minimum the miners can settle for is complete withdrawal of the closure plans and reaffirmation of a commitment to expand the industry. Militants are also arguing for a four-day week, so that new technology benefits the miners and not just the Coal Board.

Most miners had put little faith in NACODS. If the deputies had come out, the strike

could have been won sooner; since they didn't, it will be won later.

At least four times now during the miners' strike we have come close to an escalation which could have got the Tories on the run.

The rail workers planned industrial action over pay, and the government deliberately decided to buy them off.

The dock workers twice struck to save jobs, and twice their leaders settled for vague promises.

After the South Wales area NUM's funds were seized, area president Emlyn Williams called for a general strike. A proposal for a 24-hour general strike went to the TUC Congress from FTAT, but was not voted on.

Each time the escalation stopped short of a full-scale explosion of working class action. But each time the miners remained determined to win — on their own if necessary.

It is impossible to assess the economic effect of the miners' strike exactly. It has certainly cost the government dear through increased purchases of oil and damage to the balance of payments.

Soon — probably in December — the Tories will have to start a huge operation to move coal from strike-bound pits. They will need 50,000 lorry-loads a week, or else face power cuts. Probably they will have to bring the army in.

The extraordinary rise and fall of Michael Eaton is evidence that the Coal Board is feeling the strain.

On October 21 the NCB

announced that Eaton was taking over as chief public spokesman during the strike. Two days later he was excluded from the NCB's talks with NACODS: according to the press, other top Coal Board officials had said they would resign if Eaton came into the talks!

Eaton, in his first public statements, had been conciliatory. He said that the Coal Board should abandon its insistence on closing "uneconomic" pits and instead try to negotiate a wider definition of "exhausted" pits.

Then, on Monday 29th, Keith Harper of the Guardian was interviewing Eaton and another NCB official, Geoffrey Kirk. "Kirk was summoned from the meeting by Mr MacGregor... The briefing was hurriedly brought to an end because Mr Eaton realised that something was wrong from the attitude adopted by Mr Kirk when he returned."

### MacGregor

Ian MacGregor announced that all Eaton's appointments were cancelled.

If the Coal Board does as it has indicated to the press, and now refuses to budge an inch beyond the deal it offered to NACODS, the hard front will not be very impressive after all this disarray!

Secret negotiations have meant complete control for the media over what miners hear about the talks between the NUM and the Coal Board. It would be far better if the NUM proceeded like Solidarnosc in Poland — with negotiations broadcast live over closed circuit television to thousands of rank and file members.

The immediate prospect is more hard slog for the miners

THE deputies have responded in exactly the way predicted.

It was to be expected. We told the lads not to build their hopes up too high, and our prediction was borne out, but still a lot of the lads feel disappointed, and we know that some of the rank and file deputies are disappointed.

That may well rebound on the Coal Board should the rank and file deputies decide to take the issue into their own hands.

Certainly there hasn't been an increase in scabbing on a noticeable scale since the deputies' strike was called off. There are no fresh starters. We've been looking for evidence from the Coal Board and I've no doubt that if there had been a significant drift back, they would have been shouting it from the rooftops.

Our objectives and aims are still the same as they were before, and NACODS is totally immaterial to any negotiations that we've got with the Board. And the rank and file in the NUM have accepted that.

The Coal Board tried to kick our legs from under us, the NUM leaders didn't respond by collapsing and neither will the rank and file.

and their supporters — more picketing, more fund-raising, more leaflets and meetings to raise support.

But the possibility of the miners' strike sparking a broader working-class mobilisation still exists.

A general strike seems a very remote prospect to most trade union activists today. But that could change quite quickly.

The seizure of the NUM's funds will not have a huge effect on the struggle immediately, so it seems, because most of the money being used to run the strike is at local level.

But the courts are not going to stop at that. There is a very long string of legal actions against the NUM waiting to be heard.

The government has clearly been organising the legal battle cautiously, choosing the cases to be heard and controlling the pace. Each success will encourage it to press further.

More funds will be seized, more penalties will be imposed — squeezing the miners tighter and tighter unless the trade union movement hits back with solidarity action.

If Austin Rover strikes, it will not be directly connected with the miners' dispute in the way a rail, docks or pit deputies' strike would have been. But it will still boost the morale of the miners and increase the pressure on the Tories.

And it could lead to a lot more. Many groups of workers are coming up to their annual pay review.

A wages revolt could open up a second front against the Tories.

In the meantime there are two priorities: collecting money, and forcing the union leaders to put the TUC promises into action.

# 'Now



# call in the promises'

## Paul Whetton's strike diary

I would be surprised if this week's talks at ACAS last beyond tea-time, unless the Board are prepared to make big concessions. If the message hasn't gone home by now that we are not prepared to compromise, that we are not prepared to accept any sell-out, then I don't know what they need to convince them of that.

If the leadership of the TUC can't see how intransigent the Coal Board is now, then I don't know when they will. I would hope they can see it and the promises from the TUC conference and from the Labour Party conference will now be called in.

### Court

Now that the Court has decided to sequester the funds of the NUM I would hope that the response of the labour movement will be to immediately come up with the promises they made at the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

It would be the easiest thing in the world for the sequesterator to get that £200,000, all he's got to do is take every official's car away.

But what the sequesterators are after is a full assessment of what we've got, where it is and how they can get hold of it, so that they can assess the size of the next fine they are going to levy against us.

Basically they are out to bankrupt the union.

If the unions can't come up with the goods as fast as industrial action is concerned, I'm quite sure they could come up with the goods in terms of financial assistance, both in running the union and financing the strike.

We need a large push for money and union leaders should be getting round to their members and urging that kind of support.

We had a slump in income during the holiday period which worried us. It picked up again, but now, of course, people are starting to think about Christmas, so a fresh impetus needs to come from

the leadership to the rank and file.

We realise the difficulties that exist within the trade unions in the power stations in the Midlands, and we can see widespread poaching of members by the EETPU, with mass resignations from the other unions.

We recognise the problems they've got with their members saying that we're putting their jobs in jeopardy yet the miners in Notts are still working.



However, we will continue to pursue the argument at grass roots level. We have got support, and that support will be built on, and we shall do whatever we can to achieve some measure of support within the power stations, however small that might be.

MacGregor is looking for ways of pulling back the tarnished image that he's got and he's trying to use the Libyan thing as a way of removing Eaton and saying that I'm still in charge and I can crack this, and therefore, they should never have put me out to grass in the first place.

I still think MacGregor will have to go. The politicians recognise that, and everybody else does and he's obviously scrambling to try and restore his tarnished image in the eyes of the general public and the politicians.

MacGregor's personal style has been exposed to all and sundry, and they are looking for a much more softly-softly approach, but the end result is still going to be the same.

As far as the Libyan thing is concerned, personally, if the devil popped up and waved £1000 from the trade unionists down in hell we'd snatch his hand off.

Support from working class people, from trade unionists, will be accepted wherever it comes from. I expect we'd draw the line at accepting it from fascists, but then I don't imagine that fascists would offer it in the first place.

Just because people have gone to Libya and sought support, whatever the criticisms of the regime anyone has, the fact remains that we've gone to trade unionists and working class people, and appealed for assistance and we don't mind where that assistance comes from, so long as it's from the working class.

Maggie Thatcher has no compunctions about approaching the Polish regime who she condemns out of hand in order to get coal to smash this strike. If she practiced what she preached, she would have nothing whatsoever to do with Polish coal because of the regime. The same goes for South Africa, which provides coal. But nobody condemns the Tories for that.

We would accept money from South Africa if it came from the rank and file miners, our black comrades, the trade unions, wherever it came from, if that was seen as support.

We would accept assistance — food or money — from Poland, Libya or anywhere else, so long as it was seen to come from the working class and the organised trade union movement.

The other event of the last week, of course, has been the elections to the shadow cabinet. I was very disappointed with the outcome. I think Kinnock's given the tip and the Parliamentary Labour Party has just carried it out.

They ought to realise what they're doing. They are, in effect, snubbing their noses at the NUM and at the rank

and file of the Labour Party.

They want to be very, very careful or it could be them that's answering for it. Labour Party activists will look closely at the voting record and actions of quite a few of our "comrades" in the Parliamentary Labour Party and make them answer accordingly.

It's heartening to see workers in the car industry preparing for a struggle against the employers. In the present situation they stand a good chance of getting more than they could otherwise have expected out of the bosses. The government are in a bit of a Catch 22 situation. If they don't give in to these so-called exaggerated claims, then they could face a situation where things are building up towards a general strike.

The only way to head that off is to pay the workers what they are demanding. I would hope that many more sections of workers realise this and go for their wage rises, better conditions or whatever.

### General strike

I think it's still realistic to talk about a general strike even though, after eight months, it still hasn't actually happened. And I don't want to talk about a 24 hour general strike, because to the capitalist class that is only the equivalent of a day off for, say, a Royal wedding.

To suggest a 24 hour general strike to workers who have been on strike for eight months is, quite frankly, nearly laughable. We're talking about a general strike to bring about a radical and meaningful change in government policy. You're not going to do that overnight, it's going to take quite a considerable time to build up and you are not going to achieve that just by calling for a 24 hour strike.

The government won't give in easily. We've still got a situation where troops could be brought in to move coal from the pits to the power stations. I don't see that happening except as a very last resort, but it's still on the cards.

If it comes to that, a general strike will be a distinct possibility.

## Solidarity conference London Sunday December 2

THE first national labour movement conference on solidarity with the miners has been called by left-wingers in the Labour Party for Sunday December 2 at Camden Town Hall.

Arthur Scargill will be speaking. Socialist Organiser has decided to cancel our own conference on 'Socialist Answers to the Tories', planned for December 1, and urge all supporters and readers to mobilise for the solidarity conference.

The Mineworkers' Defence Committee was launched at this year's Labour Party conference in response to the legal threats against the NUM and Arthur Scargill. Ken Livingstone is the secretary of the campaign.

So far the Mineworkers Defence Committee has circulated a model resolution getting Labour organisations to share the 'contempt of court' committed by the NUM in declaring the strike official.

The conference will be a major demonstration of solidarity and an opportunity for important political discussions on the experience of practical solidarity over the last nine months and how to strengthen it in the near future.

There will be workshops as well as plenary sessions.

Letters are being sent out inviting delegates from Labour Party and trade union bodies, women's support committees and miners' support committees. Observers may also attend.

Conference fee: £2, £1 for any additional delegates or for observers; free for miners' delegates or observers.

The Defence Committee will also soon produce the first issue of a regular Information Bulletin.

For copies of the Bulletin (10p each) and/or information about the Solidarity Conference, contact the Mineworkers' Defence Committee, c/o 31 Cranwich Road, London N16 or ring 01-981 3289 (Tuesday-Friday).

## Scottish support

ARTHUR Scargill received a tremendous ovation from about 1500 miners and other workers who attended a march and rally in Motherwell on Saturday 26th.

The turnout was a show of solidarity in the town which is dominated by the Ravenscraig steelworks, and the convoys of police-herded scab lorries.

But how much better it could have been. Publicity for the event was too little, too late. If only the Scottish TUC, the Labour Party and Communist Party bureaucrats had mobilised the movement

half as much as some of their words suggest they want to, numbers at the rally could surely have been doubled or trebled.

I hope there were workers from Ravenscraig present to hear Scargill remind them that MacGregor is still on the board of British Steel and that scab coal and oil will not save the plant, only workers' solidarity will do that.

He called on all sections of the labour movement, including the Labour Party, to practice the first basic principle of support for workers in struggle.

## Profits and poverty

TOO much coal being produced? Arthur Scargill has already suggested that if the Coal Board has a surplus, it could distribute it to old people and reduce the numbers who die from cold each winter.

International inequalities are even worse. The US consumes an average of 7,540 kilograms of oil equivalent per head per year. Ethiopia's energy consumption is 23 kilograms per head.

Inequality in Britain is increasing. According to the 1982 figures, just published, the richest one per cent of the population in Britain owns 21% of all marketable wealth. The top 10% owns 56 per cent — more than the remaining 90% put together.

The bottom 50% of us own just 4% of the total wealth.

35 million people in the US are now officially in poverty. More than one-third of all blacks are below the poverty line.

Because of the US's very

patchy welfare system, many people are completely destitute. In Washington alone, between 5000 and 10,000 people are homeless, sleeping on the streets.

Difficulties with airlifting food? It depends who you are.

When the Queen Mother visited Italy recently, she had a pint of milk flown in from Britain each day specially by the RAF. Buckingham Palace explained: "The Queen Mother doesn't quite trust Italian dairy products."

Morocco is not quite as desperate as black Africa, but there were food riots there last year.

Just across the sea, in Marbella, southern Spain, a hotel has just opened the most expensive hotel suite in the world — £5000 for bed and breakfast.

The average income per head in Morocco is about £14 per week. Or, to put it differently, a relatively well-off worker in Morocco would need seven years' pay for a single night in the Marbella hotel.



TUC conference 1984. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

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## Back the miners



Residents of Grimethorpe in a meeting with police committee to protest at aggressive policing. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

# Determined to win

*By Jenny Dennis*

IF this article could be written in the manner in which it was spoken, then, like me, perhaps you would shed a tear or two.

This is the text of speeches delivered by Jenny Dennis, on a tour in South London. In those four days she has roused many, many more people into activity, helped us raise £425, and made us treble our efforts for the miners' struggle.

She is but one woman determined to win and enduring the harsh realities of the miners' strike in Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

"WE know best how to relate events by our own experiences. Therefore what will be related here to you are real events that I have witnessed or where I have spoken with those involved.

You cannot rely on the TV, papers and media to tell you the truth about the miners' dispute. Many women like me used to rely on the media.

When we read about those women at Greenham we learned they were "filthy lesbians" and more such distortions. We never dreamed of the day we'd be marching side by side with Greenham women. Well we are, and I'm proud that we march together.

It is because of media untruths that women like me are moved to come out to the big city and tell you "Don't believe them, this is really what's happening..."

Kiveton Park is a small rural community of three and a half to four thousand people. 450 of the 800 men working at the colliery live in the village.

Our village is built round that colliery. The first houses built

were by the colliery owners for miners' families.

The colliery plays a big part in providing jobs and subsistence — and not just for men directly engaged in pit work. Shopkeepers also rely on us buying from them. If the pit goes, a lot more livelihoods go with it.

Money is not the issue behind the current miners' strike. We are fighting for a future for our sons and daughters.

It is a fight for our community's right to stay here, where we are, with jobs. Some people in our village have already moved four, even five, times from other pit villages before this strike. They are miners from Durham, Wales and Scotland.

### Uproot

They have been very militant in our village. They don't want to move yet again — uproot their families, find new schools.

Why should we? This is where they belong. We respect their right to decide to stay.

Our women came together as a support group in week three of the strike. Women suddenly felt motivated.

During that week a handful of us went and borrowed the lodge banner. A march began.

Armed with our voices and songs we marched the length of the village. At the end many more women had joined.

We decided on a date for a

public meeting and within the week had launched a group. We now have our own banner.

The local NUM banner is an heirloom. As you stand on big demos, along come the modern, fancy banners with pictures and such, then tucked behind them appears "Kiveton Park NUM". And I smile with pride. It's very old and has been passed on through generations.

At our first meeting we decided to organise food parcels. As you may know, we have a shortage of food.

It costs £600 a week to provide food parcels for 450 families.

A food parcel usually contains half a pound of sugar, four eggs, half a pound of margarine, 12 tea bags, half a pound of sausages, half a pound of lard, a tin of beans, a tin of tomatoes, and a tin of soup.

We lay out the items left over on a table, and each family can choose one extra item.

Finances are bad now but you would do well to remember the overtime ban before this strike. Contrary to media lies, the overtime ban meant that my husband, for example, who is a grade A surface worker, brought home £55-£65 a week, depending on shifts, so resources were already tight before March 3, when we were officially locked out.

Our situation with DHSS is not very good. The DHSS dock £15 a week from our social security because they assume

we get that as strike pay. There is no strike pay.

This means we get very extreme cases of hardship and suffering. On top of that the DHSS are deliberately obstructive to strikers' claims.

They set up a special hall to deal with claims. It has no telephone, it is a long walk away and when you finally get to make a claim, it is held up for at least six weeks and sometimes longer.

My family, that's a husband and two children, get £13 a week family allowance and £16.26 social security. That's £29.26 which has been our income for the past eight months.

Luckily our council has been quite helpful. It provides free school meals even during holidays, for all strikers' kids. It also made available one item of clothing for all kids receiving free school meals.

Most of us got the kids shoes for the winter. Unfortunately, due to legalities, kids under five couldn't get it.

### Toddlers

During the strike babies have become toddlers, and learned to walk. They have no shoes.

The parish council stepped in and through the rates gave a one-off £10 grant to all the under fives. They have now given another grant — winter coats.

We have babies being born that were conceived before or during the strike and we didn't know about. This has caused immense difficulties for some young couples.

Being on strike has meant now to save up with. Cots are moving fast. They're still warm

from one baby as they get passed on to another.

The worst hit, though, are our single men. Single men receive nothing. Their sole income is £1 a day picketing money and £2 hardship from the local union funds.

### Honour

Single men are suffering most. To our shame we are losing some — not to the scabs, mind, they've too much honour.

Some lads have been forced to leave home because they feel a burden, they feel guilty and their families are not sympathetic.

Some have made their homes in picketing huts. We're very worried, especially with the winter coming round.

We've lost one lad already. I'm afraid to say. He's completely disappeared from the village. It's been a constant worry to us all.

Locally help may have arrived. NALGO are so concerned they are currently investigating the possibility of a central care station for these lads.

You will appreciate that, try as we might, families on strike cannot stretch to another mouth. Many of us feel guilty that we cannot help enough.

That's why it is so important that other people do — to take away some of the burden the community is unable to carry.

Guilt has had tragic consequences. Recently, one young man was admitted into hospital suffering anorexia, directly caused by feelings of guilt. He was no longer able to provide for his family and felt unable to take from them.

Such are the sacrifices made during this dispute.

The blame lies firmly at the feet of this government and the NCB who want to starve us back to work.

Our community relies heavily on the women organising food parcels, as you can well imagine.

In the past four months, our local doctors reckon the number of people taking sedatives and tranquilisers has doubled. The social effects of hardship are quite stark.

I'm sorry to say it often reflects on the weaker of our community, the women and children.

We have problems but we try and overcome them. They'll not starve us.

We're lucky, see, being a rural community. Things grow by us, cabbages, potatoes and carrots. We can get them and we do.

There are orchards, too. I know how to scrimp. We've got boxes full of pears and apples for Christmas.

When you lot are tucking into turkeys, we'll be supping the best pear and apple wine around. Meat is a luxury, but we can shoot crows and catch rabbits'.

**Midlands Women Against Pit Closures conference**

**Saturday November 3**

**2-5.30 at County Hall, Lancaster Circus [by Aston fire station], Birmingham. Further details: Sue, 021-236 8323. All women's support groups welcome.**



## Policewatch

# Police attack NHS picket

"They'd had too much practice against the miners"

WE were a peaceful picket aiming to persuade the contractors not to go in.

Trent Regional Health Authority is the first and so far only NHS building in Sheffield to move private contractors in. Thirty-seven NHS domestics have lost their jobs and been replaced by only a handful of contractors.

The contractors were to arrive at about 5.00 p.m. Ten minutes before they arrived, one of the police inspectors informed us that they would be arriving in a mini-bus, and that only two pickets would be allowed to speak to them.

The rest of us should stand on one side of the road.

We were all from different hospitals in Sheffield, all working in different departments — some from portering, nursery and domestic services — all of us fighting for our jobs and the jobs of our fellow workers. Altogether there were about 20 of us.

Of course there had to be a police presence. They wandered down towards our picket at the time drew nearer to five o'clock. Again the police inspector came to tell us now that the contractors did not want to speak to us.

This didn't seem to make sense to us, as we believed we had a right to speak to them. We

Andrea Warner, a NUPE shop steward at Northern General Hospital, Sheffield, describes a police attack on a health workers' picket line last month.

"It seems," she writes, "that the police had had too much practice on the miners' picket lines."

NUPE regional organiser Paul Dainton was in hospital for two days after the police action. The police had arrested him but brought no charges.

COHSE Sheffield organiser Bob Quick was also arrested, and has made an official complaint against the police.

decided that we would not move and we would talk to the contractors.

Before we had time to form a strong line, one of the area officers had been arrested and the police were pushing and swearing at us. We were on Crown Property, so the police could not object to our picket.

As one policeman was pushing me out of the line, I was asking him if he did not think we had a democratic right to talk to the contractors or at least ask

them if they wanted to speak to us, instead of having the inspector inform us that we couldn't.

It struck me that the police were only getting aggressive with the men on the picket, so I thought it would be a good idea for the women to get in the front and slow things down. Before anything could be organised I saw one of the women from my hospital being carried off by a young copper, and COHSE's area officer being half strangled by his tie, as a policeman was dragging him off.

Things were developing quickly and we were all just bewildered by what was going on. None of this was provoked by our picket. It seems that the police had had too much practice on the miners' picket lines.

Before we could get the picket back together again, I saw our area officer being pushed up the street by two policemen, then he was on his back on the floor.

I ran up to him. The policemen had picked him up, one arm each, and were dragging him with his back scraping on the floor.

He was very pale, and his lips and ears were blue. Obviously he was unconscious. They continued to drag him in the hope of getting him in the transit van.

I shouted to the police that he

was unconscious but they pushed me to one side and carried on. Finally they dropped him on the floor.

Paul began to convulse. Two of us went up to Paul to try and stop him from harming himself. The police were terrified.

One of the women said she was going to call an ambulance. She was stopped by a police inspector who said they would 'radio through' for one.

The people working inside the building could see what was happening, and a doctor came to help out. It wasn't until the doctor came that the police began to move away from Paul.

It seemed to me that it was quite likely that Paul had received a blow to his head for this type of convulsion to occur, and during Paul's lucid periods he confirmed that had happened. Unfortunately no-one saw it, but one woman said he had been thrown against a tree and knocked his head.

Finally an ambulance did arrive, twenty-five minutes after the call was made. The police obviously wanted Paul 'dead or alive'.

Paul was accompanied in the ambulance by a colleague, not a policeman, as they had wanted. We said that a policeman would probably frighten him more.

We rejoined the picket and were allowed to speak to the supervisor, who was driving an 'A' registration Sierra. It seemed pointless trying to stop them, as they had seven transit vans full of policemen parked round the corner, and there had been one policeman to every one of us.

Many of the people there had not witnessed police violence before and had learned the truth about the British police.

We all decided never to treat them in our hospitals again, but sadly we may never get the chance, as they are all probably in BUPA.

The experience left me feeling very insecure and weak, as they could even destroy a small picket like ours and 'beat us up'.

It will not stop us from defending our jobs. But in the course of our fight we will be prepared for police harassment.



Police arrest picket of Cadzow coal stockyard, Hamilton, Lanarkshire. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

## N Staffs miners start power pickets

MEAFORD power station is about 15 miles outside Stoke-on-Trent. It is an old, mainly coal burning power station, due for closure, which is now being brought back into use. Arthur Bough spoke to two pickets, Terry and Alan Lockett, at the power station.

When did you start to picket?

Terry: Meaford was picketed at the beginning of the dispute, but we were told that nothing was going in, so we just picketed for a few hours each day.

Then we heard one day that 100 lorries had gone in, so we started a 24 hour picket. That started three weeks ago.

How is the picketing organised? Alan: It's done by Hem Heath and Florence NUM branches. One does it one day, the other the next day.

There are just two pickets on at any one time. We are taking numbers of unidentified lorries. We've tried to stop scab coal

lorries, but we just get abuse.

The main aim is the oil, and we haven't seen any for a while.

Have you approached the power workers for support in line with the TUC's decision?

Alan: Not yet. When we've sorted out the monitoring we'll approach the power workers, maybe with a leaflet.

How much is going in to Meaford?

Terry: Meaford was scheduled to close, and they haven't had coal for months. It had been taken off the grid. Now they've started coming in again.

On Wednesday this week 124 loads came in, 103 on Thursday, and this morning 56 came in between 6 am and midday.

Most of the lorries are overweight, and one lorry came in dragging its engine, but the police never do anything.

What's your reaction to the Court taking all the union's

assets?

Alan: As the courts can't get money from the regional funds we hope the union has spread the money about. The court's decision should get us support from other unions. It shows that it's a political strike now.

Anyway, Arthur didn't seem worried, so why should we be?

What do you think about NACODS not coming out?

Terry: We didn't expect them to do anything else. They jumped on the bandwagon and got what they wanted.

Yesterday Stoke City Council voted to buy £1200 worth of food a week and distribute it to the food centres. What do you think about the Council's decision?

Terry: It's very good of the Council to give us support but it's long overdue.

Alan: The Council's been dragging its feet for too long, and a lot of blokes have lost all faith in the local Labour Party.

## Students answer Tories

PHILIP GORSKI, Notts South LPYS

LAST week at Nottingham University the Coal Minister, David Hunt, was due to speak to a gathering of Tory students about his plans for the future (read "butchery") of the coal industry.

The meeting was closed to non-students, which angered local miners who felt that they had a right to put their views about their industry.

So on the day, striking miners from Cotgrave, with Labour and Socialist Workers Party students and local Labour Party Young Socialists members, turned up to picket the lecture hall.

Tory students tried to stop us getting in. We forced the doors and swept the Tories aside.

Triumphantly, the Cotgrave striking miners' banner was set

up on the stage, amid cheering and singing, and we waited for Hunt to appear. The sight of those plummy-voiced reactionaries running around in a park and bumping into each other really cheered us up.

The cowardly Hunt refused to appear. We asked a miner to speak instead. When he mentioned that miners' children were going without food, the Tories laughed, demonstrating their well-known contempt for the suffering of other people.

Central TV were there to film although on the evening news they distorted the facts and claimed that we tried to stop Hunt speaking, which was untrue. All we wanted was to allow into the meeting to put our views, but that was obviously too much for Hunt and his student sycophants.

## BR rats on promises

NUR and ASLEF have forced management to back down at Shirebrook rail depot.

Both unions threatened a 24 hour strike in South Yorkshire on October 9. Management had been victimising staff at Shirebrook who refused to handle coal by stopping all payments to them, including tax rebates. Workers following union policy have also been harassed by letter and by personal telephone calls.

Management agreed to stop this victimisation if the strike was called off — which it was.

But now that the heat is off BR management have shown what their promises mean. They

are making some small payments but not what was agreed and they are maintaining pressure of posters and leaflets showing lorries taking coal to power stations and claiming that the unions' action is destroying the rail industry.

Local officials have told management that these should be removed as part of the agreement. Management say they are there for the "information of the staff".

It took the NUR and ASLEF leaders two months to set a date for action over this issue last time. They should respond much more quickly this time.

## Lesbian and gay group visits Welsh miners

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) spent the weekend in Dulais Valley mining villages last week (27-28 October). It was a historic and moving event.

On the Saturday night, the LGSM contingent were taken to a social at the Miners' Welfare. It was packed and friendly, and we all got thoroughly drunk. As the effects of the alcohol took their toll, and people began to waltz around the dance floor together, you might have expected a few raised eyebrows: but there didn't seem to be any. It is difficult to know exactly what effect we had on the miners and their families — no doubt this was the first time that a whole group of openly lesbian and gay people had been there with them.

But the acceptance of us, and enthusiasm for the work we have done to support the miners was clear to all of us.

And this was a historic event, therefore, both for lesbians and gay men — especially, of course, those present — and for the labour movement.

To those people in the lesbian and gay communities who have endlessly asked us "what have the miners done for us?" there

is a clear answer: they have taken us into their homes, shown solidarity with us.

And to those in the labour movement who have tried to keep us quiet, deny the importance of our struggle, we have shown what changes can be made, how working class people can come to see our point of view, if lesbians and gay men organise alongside the working class in struggle.

There is no doubt in fact that it was the LGSM visitors who got the shocks. A tour round a pit Sunday morning was an eye opener to us all. It was, as a comrade said, like going through the gateway into Hell.

Dave Donovan, at the supper committee meeting, expressed their feelings towards us very clearly: "In 1926, 1972 and 1974 we learned who our enemies are; in this strike we are learning who our friends are."

And we learned something very important as well. Lesbians and gay men have become accustomed to being treated outcasts — something society ignores, ridicules or represses. Taken into people's homes in Dulais valley, it was clear that our days as outcasts are numbered.

## Back the miners



### Socialist Organiser NOTTS DAY SCHOOL

General sessions on women socialism; fighting the Tories; organising to win. Workshops on the Labour Party; South Africa; the Newham 7; Solidarnosc; Class law; Ireland. Videos, creche.

Sunday November 11, 10am to 5pm. Contact: Nottingham 414941 or 788108.

### Labour Party Black Sections fund-raising social

November 17, 8 til late, at East Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove, London SE13. Tickets £2.50 and £1.25 unwaged.



# Guarantee food aid, cancel Africa's debt

STARVATION does not happen suddenly, like an earthquake or a hurricane.

Millions of people in Britain learned about the famine in Ethiopia for the first time from their television screens last week — and they promptly wanted to do something about it.

But the rich capitalist governments of the West have known about it for a long time. They have received countless appeals from relief agencies, from UN bodies, and even from such organisations as the World Bank, for over a year now.

## Coldly

They knew what they could do to stop people dying from starvation. They even knew that doing it would in no way harm their fundamental interests.

They coldly chose to do very little, and not to publicise the suffering.

Charles Elliott, who was until last month director of Christian Aid, told the Observer last Sunday that Britain and the US had withheld aid to Ethiopia because of political calculations.

"Their long hostility to the regime caused them to refuse to release adequate funds or food... They thought that if there was a major catastrophe, it would probably change the regime... They took the view that, if there was another famine, it would serve the Ethiopian government right..."

Such an attitude would certainly fit in with what US government officials have long said about food aid. "To give food aid to countries just because people are starving is a pretty weak reason", according to Dan Ellerman, when he was a member of the National Security Council. Earl Butz, as Secretary of Agriculture, explained further: "Food is a weapon. It is now one of the principal tools in our negotiating kit."

Last year, when the shape of the famine was clearly visible, the US forced a big reduction in the funds of the International Development Association, the main body giving loans on easy terms to Third World countries.

## Forced

IDA needed \$24 billion between 1984 and 1987 to maintain its previous spending levels. Its officials asked for \$16 billion from the contributing governments. The US forced it down to \$9 billion.

The result is that African governments, those most dependent on IDA loans, have had to take high-interest short-term loans from commercial banks instead.

Where the big capitalist powers have given aid, usually it has been of limited benefit to

# Stop the millions starving!

**Nature has brought drought to Africa. Capitalism brought the famine. But even now, lives could be saved.**

the most needy. Some of it is military aid. The rest is mostly tied to exports from the donor countries.

Big construction projects, which draw in a lot of exports from the industrial countries but may or may not be appropriate for the recipient country's needs, are just the sort of thing the donor countries like. Small-scale, modest projects of essential assistance for peasant villages are not.

The USSR, with which Ethiopia has been closely allied in recent years, is not much better than the capitalist powers in this respect. It does not have the huge food surpluses that the US and the EEC have, but it has enough to help Ethiopia. Instead it has sent massive military aid to preserve its political alliance.

The problem, however, is not just the governments.

Labour front-benchers are now criticising the Tories for

giving too little aid, too late. True: but why weren't those Labour leaders campaigning on the issue before? They didn't have to wait for a television programme to know what was happening in Africa.

Blaming the established leadership isn't the end of the story, either. The Left has not been campaigning to make the leaders speak out. Hardly a word was said about the issue at the Labour Party conference in September.

Most of the left press has blandly ignored the developing catastrophe in Africa. Socialist Organiser has had more coverage than other papers, but even ours looks feeble in hindsight.

Perhaps there are inbuilt limits in human psychology which compel us to shut out certain horrors from our mind for more than brief spells. For sure, capitalist society — a society that throws us all into the market economy as individuals and warns us that the devil takes the hindmost — reinforces these limits.

Even socialists who consciously reject capitalist rat-race economics find it difficult to keep the terrible reality in focus. Something like eight hundred million people live on the edge of malnutrition or starvation: but we push that fact to the corners of our minds and concentrate on matters that seem more manageable and close to hand.

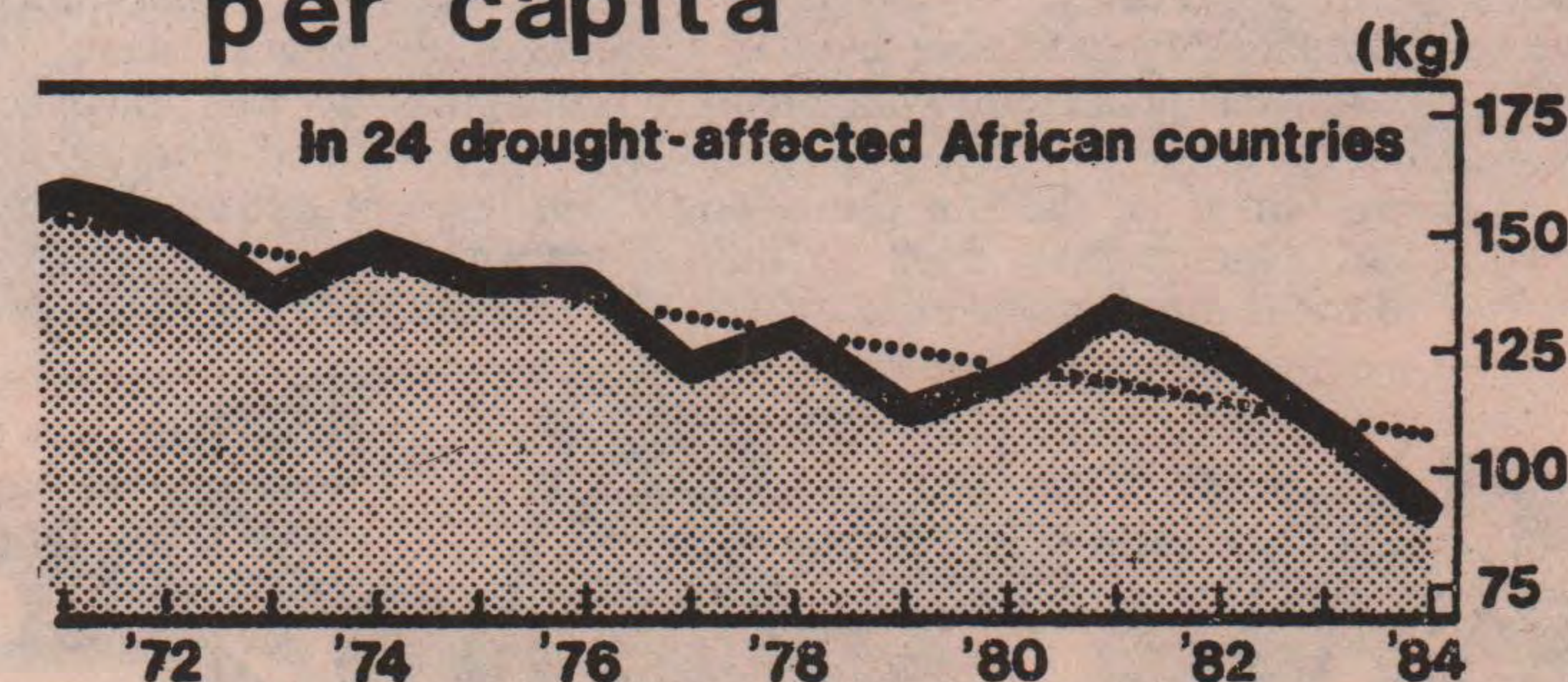
In a television interview about Ethiopia, Dennis Healey pompously declared that starving children were "far too important for party politics".

True, Labour leaders like Dennis Healey have reduced party politics to an affair of Parliamentary debating tricks — and the rest of us have allowed them to do that. That, in a sentence, is the reason why children still starve.

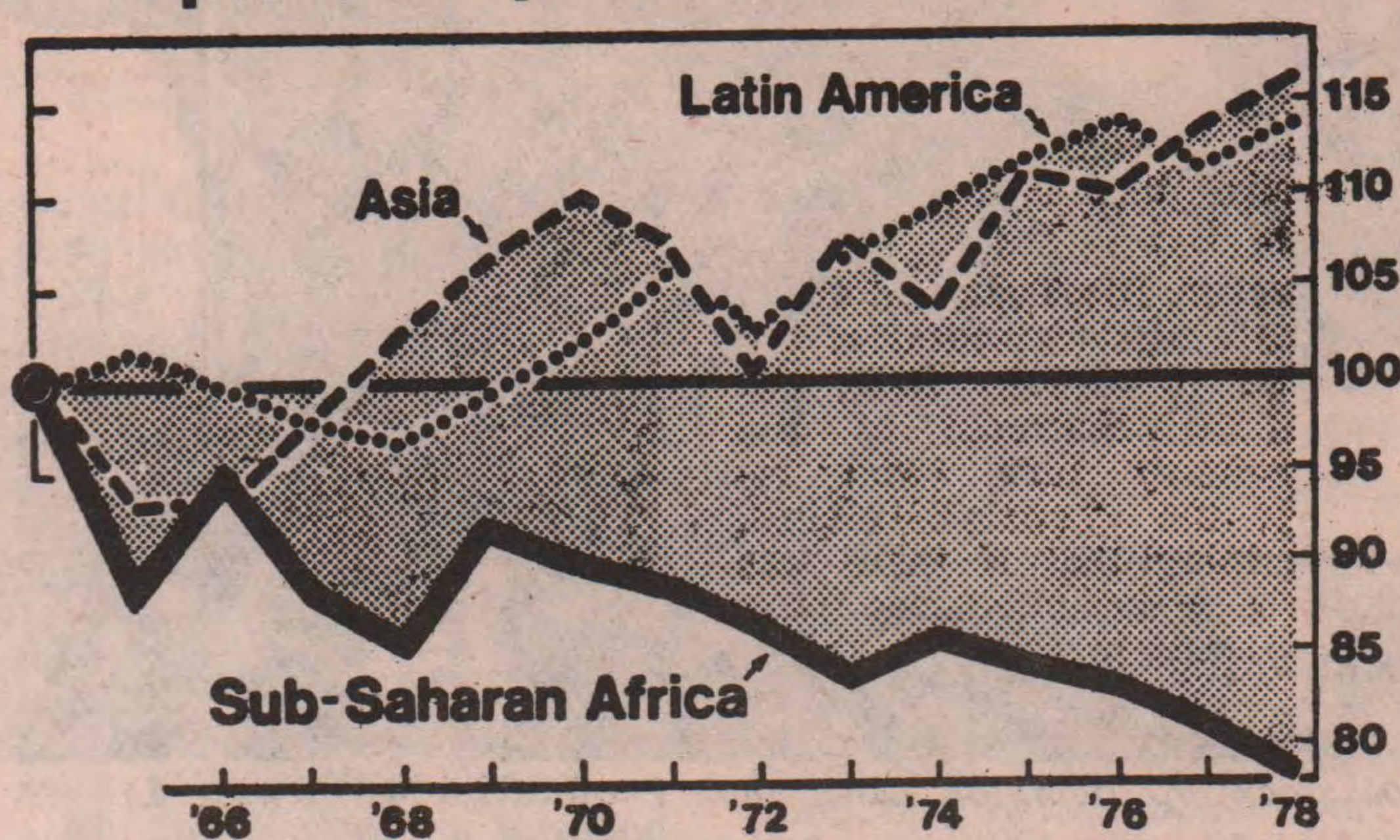
For a working class party that deserves the name, starvation in the Third World should be absolutely central to "party politics".

Socialism is not about Neil Kinnock's television commercials or Roy Hattersley's

## GRAIN PRODUCTION per capita



## FOOD PRODUCTION per capita



schemes for slightly rejigging the capitalist management of the British economy. It is about replacing a world of starvation and hopelessness and luxury and waste and cynical individualism with a world of equality and comradeship.

The capitalist class lives by

the rule of grabbing profits as it can. The working class, insofar as it stirs itself as a class, lives by the rule of solidarity. Socialism means establishing that rule of solidarity across the world.

It is futile tinkering to fight for anything less.

## Ethiopia: revolution and repression

ETHIOPIA is one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world.

Almost alone of the countries of Africa, it resisted all attempts to make it a colony. It remained, however, a weak and dependent unit in the capitalist world economy, further held back by the medieval social structure headed by the Emperor, Haile Selassie.

Haile Selassie was overthrown after a previous famine, in 1974. It was a genuine people's revolution, which opened with a general strike by Ethiopia's tiny working class.

But power came into the hands of the army — the only sizeable body of people in the country who were technically skilled and more or less attuned

to the needs of capitalist development.

Like other state-capitalist regimes in the Third World — Syria, or Egypt under Nasser, for example — the Ethiopian military has allied with the USSR and declared itself socialist.

It has introduced land reforms and greatly expanded services like education.

But autonomous socialist groups which developed during the revolution have been crushed. And the regime has thrown huge military resources into trying to suppress the fight for independence in Eritrea — a fight which started decades ago but was given a new boost by the overthrow of Haile Selassie's empire.

Ethiopia is not untypical.

One person is dying from starvation there every 20 minutes, and some seven million of the country's 33 million people are said to be at risk.

Similar horrors exist in almost every country of black Africa, and also in north-east Brazil and Bangladesh.

Mozambique — where railways and roads have been cut off by the South African backed MNR guerrilla movement — parts of Angola, and the countries

## Biggest export as % of total

|            | 0 %          | 20 | 40 |
|------------|--------------|----|----|
| Uganda     | COFFEE       |    |    |
| Zambia     | COPPER       |    |    |
| Somalia    | LIVE ANIMALS |    |    |
| Burundi    | COFFEE       |    |    |
| Niger      | URANIUM      |    |    |
| Rwanda     | COFFEE       |    |    |
| Botswana   | DIAMONDS     |    |    |
| Mauritius  | SUGAR        |    |    |
| Ethiopia   | COFFEE       |    |    |
| Bangladesh | JUTE         |    |    |

White racist notions are so deep-rooted within capitalist society that the failure of African agriculture to advance was put down to the inherent inferiority of the African. It would be much truer to say that it was due to the white intruders, although the basic explanation is to be found not in the personal ill-will of the colonialists or in their racial origin, but rather in the organised viciousness of the capitalist/colonial system.

Failure to improve agricultural tools and methods on behalf of African peasants was not a matter of a bad decision by colonial policy makers. It was an inescapable feature of colonialism as a whole, based on the understanding that the international division of labour aimed at skills in the metropolises and low level manpower in the dependencies. It was also a result of the considerable use of force (including taxation) in African labour relations. People can be forced to perform simple manual labour, but very little else.

Walter Rodney,  
"How Europe Underdeveloped Africa"





the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, are particularly hard hit. In Brazil, people eat rats, or hunt rats and birds, to ease their starvation, and women walk more than ten miles to get water.

According to United Nations calculations, 2.7 million children aged under five in Africa suffer from severe malnutrition, and over 16 million suffer severely. In South Africa — a country with gleaming, prosperous cities — 50,000 children die of hunger each year, according to figures compiled by a white professor of medicine.

**Total exports, 1983**

| Country      | Exports (Million US\$) |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Algeria      | ~95                    |
| Libya        | ~85                    |
| Chad         | ~75                    |
| Niger        | ~65                    |
| Mali         | ~55                    |
| Senegal      | ~45                    |
| Gambia       | ~35                    |
| Sierra Leone | ~25                    |
| Liberia      | ~15                    |
| Ivory Coast  | ~10                    |
| Ghana        | ~5                     |
| Upper Volta  | ~2                     |
| Benin        | ~1                     |
| Nigeria      | ~0.5                   |

Many African countries depend on a very narrow range of exports

country with gleaming, prosperous cities — 50,000 children die of hunger each

year, according to figures compiled by a white professor of medicine.

## Appeal from 'War on Want'

War on Want is launching a three point plan to ensure that food reaches the six million people facing death by starvation. Three actions are essential to secure sufficient food and to cut through the political barriers to its effective distribution.

1. Food must reach people in their own villages. The feeding centres like Korem and Makele are swollen to crisis point. Epidemics are rife.

Treks of often hundreds of miles, with people dying by the roadside on the way, are required to reach them at all. And by abandoning the land, the seeds of future famines are being sown.

2. British and other European governments must give an open ended guarantee that sufficient food will be made available from Europe's 30 million tonne grain surplus — as well as the transport required to move it.

3. An independent international commission acceptable to all military forces must be established to oversee the safe passage of food into the vast areas outside Ethiopian government control.

War on Want has received telexed assurances from our long-standing partners, the relief wings of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front and the Tigrean People's Liberation Front, that they are ready to negotiate such an agreement if a mutually acceptable guarantor can be found.

War on Want is mobilising its 10,000 members and supporters in a massive lobby of British and European MPs to gain support for the plan.

General Secretary George Galloway said today, "Every penny of public money that can be raised by relief agencies is essential.

"But the time has come in this crisis where concerted international action by governments is needed if appalling tragedy is to be avoided. We are calling for huge pressure by the British people to ensure the British government plays a full part."

For further information contact War on Want, 467 Caledonian Road, London N7 9BE. Tel: 01-609 0211.

DROUGHTS in 1983 and previous years are the immediate cause of the mass starvation.

But the reason why droughts have this effect is the social system of exploitation and inequality.

There is no world shortage of food. Very often there is not even an overall shortage of food in countries suffering famine.

But capitalism recognises no human need unless it is expressed in hard cash. If you are penniless, then, as far as the capitalist market economy is concerned, you do not exist. If you have plenty of the printed tokens called "money", then you can have whole industries pampering your tastes and urging you on to consume more and more.

Droughts and famines killed many people before capitalism ever existed. But the technical progress generated by capitalism has made it possible for humanity to conquer droughts and famines.

We have fertilisers, machinery, and irrigation techniques to increase food production massively. We have transport and communications to identify areas of need quickly and get supplies there promptly. We have medicines to conquer previously deadly diseases.

In many parts of the world, though, capitalism has made people less able to deal with problems like drought. Within a system where relations between people are reduced to cash exchanges, they are the people without cash.

When the European powers seized parts of Africa as their colonies and introduced the elements of capitalism there, they did so mainly by developing cash crops.

The European capitalists, usually, did not employ the African peasants as wage-workers. The peasants remained, on the face of it, independent small farmers, working on the land individually or collectively.

### Colonial

But the colonial administration demanded taxes from the peasants in cash. To get cash, the peasants had to produce the crops that the colonial trading companies wanted to buy.

In many colonies, this economic compulsion was backed up by physical compulsion — the use of forced labour.

Thus the best land was taken away from subsistence farming and put to producing cash crops for the European market. The trading companies made fat profits by paying low prices to the peasants and keeping them in constant poverty. Agricultural methods remained primitive.

Different African countries — divided from each other by arbitrary lines drawn on the map by European powers in their scramble to carve up the continent — became dependent on a narrow range of cash crops or other primary products.

Independence, which came for most African countries between the 1950s and 1975, changed some things, but not others.

More of the profits from the cash-crop economy have gone into industrial development projects rather than flowing abroad. Education has been greatly expanded.

But the growth of the cash-

# Victims of the system

crop economy at the expense of subsistence farming has continued. And most African countries have been unable to shake off their dependence on a narrow range of exports.

The problems are linked. Black African countries have seen the prices they get for their exports declining relative to import prices in the long term, and varying wildly in the short term. They had an especially bad period during the severe recession in the richer capitalist countries in the early '80s.

So they have balance-of-payments problems. They run up debts with the international banks, and then the debt service payments make the balance-of-payments problem worse.

Bigger, more developed, Third World countries like Brazil or even India have become major manufacturing exporters. But the African nations, as smaller countries with limited resources, are not easily able to develop new industries on a scale to compete in world markets.

Therefore the only short-term option is to try to increase exports of the traditional cash crops. The international debt crisis is perhaps even more devastating for Africa than it is for Brazil or Mexico.

Though many of the problems in Africa exist also in the rest of the Third World, neither in Asia nor in Latin America are they so stark, so concentrated and so severe.

Uganda gets almost 100% of its export earnings from coffee, and Ethiopia 60%. Senegal depends on peanuts, Chad depends on cotton.

As an Oxfam report puts it, "while people starved, production of crops for export went from strength to strength" after independence.

As a result of the priorities both of local governments and international capitalism, the bulk of the funds available for improving agriculture has gone to the cash crops. In the Sahel — the eight countries on the southern edge of the Sahara — just 16% of the aid money received since 1975 has gone towards the basic food crops.

The cash crops get the best land, machinery, fertiliser, irrigation. "Meanwhile", as Oxfam puts it, "the poorer food-producing peasants were left to manage as best they could on marginal and overexploited lands".

In the Sahel, the result is that the poorest peasants have no choice but to over-use the land — and the desert creeps further south each year.

Unequal distribution of wealth, power and income within the poor countries make things worse.

Overstaffed and inefficient bureaucracies eat up a big proportion of the national income and waste more on bungled projects. The inefficiencies, and poor communications and transport, also allow private traders to make big profits.

"In Upper Volta this year", the UN Children's Fund reports, "the harvest has failed completely in the north, while in the south barns are overflowing. The surplus, however, is not feeding the hungry northerners because they cannot afford to buy it from the private traders."

Imported food — which is already 20% of the cereals eaten in black Africa, despite the region being mainly agricultural — goes mainly to the cities. Miserable though the condition of the millions in shanty-towns outside the big cities of Africa is, they are at least a concentrated force, able to strike, riot or demonstrate to win concessions from the government.

The peasants, dispersed across the countryside, do not have the same power.

The way out of this horror depends on the growth of an independent workers' movement in the cities of Africa. That movement could make links both with the poor peasants and with the labour movement in the richer capitalist countries.

### Compensation

Massive aid without strings to Africa from the West — or, to give it a better name, compensation for the damage done by imperialism — should be demanded by the international labour movement.

In most of Africa there are few large landowners. There — in contrast to Latin America, for example — the problem is not so much to redistribute the land, but to give the peasants, organised individually or in co-operatives, access to machines, irrigation, fertiliser, communications, credit, education, health care, and fair prices.

All that is possible. It demands governments really controlled by the people, not the bureaucratic capitalist regimes (sometimes calling themselves socialist) which dominate Africa today.

The class that can create such governments is the small but growing working class. In Russia in 1917 a working class proportionately smaller than that in some African countries today was able to take power from the capitalists and liberate the peasantry.

Even the best government, however, would be severely limited in what it can do by the division of Africa into a multitude of small, weak states. The unification of the countries of Africa, on a continental or even a regional scale, is an essential condition for progress.

It would give those countries a broader economic base; it would strengthen their bargaining position in the world market; and it would give them a broad enough arena to develop substantial industries under workers' control.







Far left: home of Bengali family on Lincoln estate, South London. Inset - pigs' trotters posted through letter box. Left: Mukith Miah after being attacked by racists with a Stanley knife.

# Racist attacks

ON FRIDAY July 20 Mukith Miah went to get some chips during his school lunch break in Stepney Green, East London.

On the way back he was ambushed by twelve or thirteen white youths. They kicked him unconscious. Then, as he lay on the ground, they slashed his back with a Stanley knife.

Mukith lost a lot of blood and had to stay in hospital for five days. Now he will bear the scars of racism until he dies.

In Newham, also East London, homes of black families have come under siege from stoning and firebombing.

In August five Asian women fought a running battle for half an hour with twenty white thugs who threw stones and concrete blocks at their homes.

## Tip of iceberg

Racist attacks have also increased in Deptford and Catford (South London). In Woolwich an Asian man recently had his eyes gouged out.

This is not even the tip of the iceberg. Black communities in Britain today face physical threats every day from racist thugs, both organised and unorganised.

In Newham, the local Monitoring Project deals with an average of ten racist attacks a week. In Greenwich, South London, the local anti-racist group has an average of 14 cases reported each week.

Sheer racial hatred by whites is behind many of the attacks.

In Greenwich an Asian woman with her child entered the lift on her estate. She was met by three white women who declared their hatred for 'Pakis' and hit her on the head with a brick.

A group of skinheads had a £5 bet that one of them that he would not go and 'stab an Asian'. An Asian medical student was stabbed and had 'NF' tattooed on his chest with a knife. The student survived, but a similar bet in 1981 resulted in

OVER the past few months there has been a big increase in racist attacks, especially in London. Lal Chanda looks at the extent of these attacks and how to organise against the racists and fascists.

the death of Dr Dharmy in Coventry.

In Birmingham, a man crossing the zebra crossing turned to find a car full of whites accelerating towards him. He ended up in hospital with extensive injuries.

In addition to the everyday racist abuse and attacks from individuals and gangs, organised racist groups are also active.

Back in 1976, one of them, the British Movement, sent a representative over to France to pick up the components for a bomb. The suppliers were a French fascist organisation known for terrorist attacks on the Jewish community there.

The plan was to blow up the Notting Hill Carnival, an event in West London where thousands of black people would be present.

A 'defection' from the British Movement to the anti-fascist movement, and the subsequent tip off to the police, fortunately prevented the bombing.

At that time the National Front was concerned with vote-winning, and cautious about wholesale racist murder. Not so now.

The NF leadership has recently been taken over by a new group. They have turned towards terror politics, and formed hit-squads such as the so-called 'Instant Response Units' in Newham.

Already this group has smashed up labour movement, Irish and black meetings. How many of the hundreds of attacks in Newham they are responsible for, no-one knows.

In Bradford, fascist organisations such as the British National Party have been leafletting and recruiting at schools.

Their propaganda is based on 'white supremacy'. They say

that white kids are being swamped by black kids who because of their colour are obviously mentally retarded and hence hold back white kids who have to share the same classroom. The end result is organised

'Paki-bashing' in many Bradford schools.

At least two headmasters in Bradford schools are known British National Party members.

The record of violence by racists against black tenants on council estates is horrifying, particularly in Tower Hamlets, East London.



Asian youth defend their community: Brick Lane, 1978

# Self defence is the only way

The black communities find themselves victims of racist attack, left to their own resources by the inactivity of the police, the passivity of local Labour councils — and the failure of the organised labour movement to take the black communities' struggles seriously.

The East London Campaign Against Racist Attacks and Police Harassment recently called a conference on the theme, 'Fighting Racism Today — Building a Mass Movement'.

Over 200 anti-racists from London met to discuss the problems facing the black and Asian communities. Sheffield Asian Youth Movement, and black

activists from Birmingham, also contributed.

The first part of the conference was given over to reports from activists around London describing the situation in their localities. There were also speakers from the Newham Seven Defence Campaign, the Campaign Against the Police Bill, and the Campaign Against Criminalisation and Deportation.

The workshops discussed three main topics — attacks on the streets; schools; and housing estates.

It is very difficult directly to prevent racist attacks from happening. Unorganised attacks, like being beaten up walking down a street, are

impossible to anticipate. Organised attacks by fascist groups are also difficult to prevent because of their clandestine nature.

The only real way of combating attacks is to pinpoint areas where there are known to be high levels of attacks, and for the community to organise to defend people in those areas.

There are possibly two ways of dealing with fascists' organised attacks. Firstly, to act instantly on information picked up by anti-fascists and organise a 'reception committee' for them. The other option is to go out and deal with them before they attack, where we know their names and addresses.

A lot of people will probably be horrified at the second option, but it should be discussed. These fascists have murdered people and got away with it through police inactivity. This option would also take anti-racists onto the offensive as a movement, rather than having small areas of resistance — responding to rather than preventing attacks.

For too long now anti-racists have not taken the initiative. As a movement, it's about time we did so.

I hope this article will start a debate on how we deal with racism and fascism, and what tactics we should employ to fight against it.

## Newham 7 Defence Campaign

### MASS PICKET of 'Duke of Edinburgh' pub

Green Street, Upton Park, London E13 (Tube: Upton Park, District Line)

11.00 am on Saturday November 3 1984

On a number of occasions this year white racists drinking in this pub have subsequently been involved in racist attacks on Asians in the area.

Fight back now! Support the mass picket!



## Letters

## Whose Poland?

JOHN O'Mahony (SO, October 11) needn't worry. There is no lack of "active support for Solidarnosc". Nor, despite the whitewash job of almost all Trotskyist groups, is there any mystery as to the source of most of it.

No less a figure than Radio Free Europe director James Buckley has obligingly revealed that "whenever Solidarnosc issues a declaration we broadcast it". It is true that since I only learned of this from the April 12 issue of Verde Olivo (journal of the Cuban armed forces) the disclosure may not have reached the ears of Socialist Organiser's editors, for whom learning a foreign language is an unbearable imposition, and reading any Cuban publication, even in the English language, is nothing less than a torture session.

The gist of the article seems to be that the Polish authorities are enemies of the NUM and Solidarnosc is its ally, therefore Scargill "owes Lech Walesa and Solidarnosc basic working class solidarity".

The first two claims are more than dubious. If large amounts of Polish coal were being sent here directly (it is, or should be clear, that the Polish authorities have no responsibility for the considerable amount sent here from third countries); if, contrary to the statement of its central leader, Solidarnosc actually supports the miners; and if Solidarnosc has anything like the "10 million" members it claims; the shipments would long ago have ceased.

## Progressive

That any figures in Solidarnosc have issued statements of support for the NUM is due to their (utterly unfounded) expectations of assistance from it for their own struggle. In the far more numerous cases where Solidarnosc has entertained no illusions as to the possibility of gaining assistance from progressive forces, its attitude to these forces has been clearly and unambiguously hostile.

This was made clear by the demand of the September 1981 Solidarnosc Congress for a cut-off of all Polish aid to Cuba, the support voiced in the same congress for US intervention in El Salvador and the declarations by Przetakiewicz, the top Solidarnosc representative in the Western hemisphere, denouncing the US air traffic controllers' strike ("I would not like to be involved in this kind of



RICK MATTHEWS (IFL)

## Glasgow protest at scab coal

DESPITE torrential rain, some 50 people turned out on October 24 for a picket of the Polish consulate in Glasgow.

The picket was in protest at the strike-breaking exports of Polish coal to Britain and the suppression of free trade unionism in Poland.

A statement calling for no coal exports during the miners' strike has attracted a wide range of sponsorship, including the mines' support

committees, four MPs, four Constituency Labour Parties and the Muirkirk miners' strike committee in Ayrshire.

But none of the Communist Party members and sympathisers approached were prepared to add their names. These included Glasgow Trades Council secretary Jane Lamont, Scottish TUC secretary Jimmy Milne and Scottish NUM leaders Mick McGahey, George Bolton and Eric Clarke.

thing") and the Western peace movement ("without American weapons, Europe won't last a day").

These are far from the only cases where Solidarnosc takes its line from its US benefactors, but reasons of space prevent me from detailing them all. The same reasons prevent me from commenting in detail on O'Mahony's revelation that "in the west" (which includes such democratic showcases as El Salvador, Guatemala, and South Africa) "there is personal freedom . . . the right of the workers to organise trade unions and political parties."

As to the "rule of law" and its supposed benefits, the most

appropriate — though unprintable — comments are best left to the increasing number of miners who are falling foul of it by hitting policemen on the boots and truncheon with their teeth.

O'Mahony suffers from what might be called selective myopia. The result is that he passes off the frequent and explicit declarations of mutual support by representatives of US imperialism and of Solidarnosc as sincere on the part of the former and "based on a fundamental misunderstanding" by the latter. The myopia is selective because O'Mahony has so far refrained from doing a similar whitewash job on the

And in miners' support committees in and around Glasgow, CP members had been to the fore in opposing the picket.

The picket must be followed up by a consistent campaign to break through the wall of silence on Polish coal erected by the Communist Party in Glasgow and elsewhere, and to counter the lying allegations (cultivated by Fleet Street) that Solidarnosc does not support the miners.

relationship between Washington and, for example, the Nicaraguan contras.

But the latter should not despair; for a "Marxist" newspaper, the capacity of Socialist Organiser for producing entertaining surprises deserves inclusion in the Guinness Book of Records and I wouldn't care to bet on the next beneficiary.

But one thing I can bet on, even now, is that Socialist Organiser could learn valuable lessons in class consciousness not only from Arthur Scargill, but even from the adherents of "devil worship" among the mediaeval peasants.

Comradely greetings  
MIKE WEBBER

## The Left

## The SWP's U-turn

Recently the Socialist Workers' Party — the largest, after 'Militant', of the far-left groupings in Britain — has made a 'turn'. From a stance which they themselves now describe as 'splendid isolation', they have moved to enter miners' support committees and trade union Broad Lefts, and they have called for united action with the Labour Left. Jim Denham comments.

A COUPLE of weeks ago Socialist Worker carried an interesting article on the Birmingham Trades Council Miners Support Committee.

It was informative and generally accurate but most interesting was its tone. It was quietly enthusiastic about the Committee, and indeed held it up as "one example of a support committee which has had some success in raising support for the miners and taking their case to local workplaces in Birmingham."

Trades Council secretary Mick Rice, and Geraldine Egan, Chair of the Trades Council Women's Group (who organise most of the local food collecting), are quoted approvingly.

Yet for the first five or six months of the strike, the SWP played virtually no role in the committee. A couple of individual SWP members turned up to the meetings, but the organisation itself took no part in the work of the committee and leading members privately dismissed its work as "left-wing Oxfam" (a reference to the food collections) and suggested that the leaders of the Trades Council were "minor bureaucrats" using the strike to further their careers.

Suddenly, all that has changed. SWP members now turn up in force at the Committee's meetings, and generally play a constructive role, taking on quite a lot of the day to day leg-work.

And it is the same with SWP members elsewhere. The paper now carries frequent articles praising the work of the once-despised "baked beans brigade" (food collectors), and emphasised the need for patient presentation of the miners' case to other groups of workers, using the TUC resolution where necessary.

In the Birmingham area, SWP members have been to the fore in establishing support committees linked to the Trades Council in NALGO, the NUT and amongst students.

All this is to the good. The more comrades who work constructively in united front support committees, (while, of

course, continuing to argue for their own politics) the better.

But what about some honest accounting for this dramatic change of position? And what implications does it have for the SWP's hitherto ultra-pessimistic perspectives for the class struggle?

Tony Cliff may privately say that some of the members took his pronouncements "too literally", but sometimes it does no harm to simply admit, "we were wrong".

Perhaps there was nothing very revolutionary and Bolshevik about the SWP's previous splendid isolation and lordly contempt for the rest of the Left. For instance, they always shied away from raising the general strike, even propagandistically, as "too advanced".

Several SWP members in Birmingham were genuinely surprised to discover that, once they got stuck into the support committee, they found themselves arguing for exactly the same perspectives as the "bureaucrats" of the Trades Council — patient, systematic presentation of the miners' case to other workers, using food and money collections to prepare for blacking and solidarity action, setting up support committees in particular unions and workplaces, etc., etc.

Now the SWP has "come in from the cold" what effect will it have on their overall politics? A cynic might point to the Socialist Worker sales report carried in the same issue as the article on Birmingham: "Birmingham SWP are actively involved in the miners' support group. When they first started they used to sell eight papers a week."

"Now that they have been working alongside other activists for a considerable time the sale has increased to 15." Good grief! Can the "upturn" be on the way?

Meanwhile, however, we should welcome the comrades in from the cold, and try to convince them on some other issues — like why they should be in the Labour Party, pursuing a united front approach on broader political issues, too.



Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega

I THINK on balance I agree with Martin Thomas's assessment of the decision of Nicaragua to sign the Contadora Pact, rather than with Paul Muddle's (SO 202).

Paul argues that we are not opposed in principle to compromises with bourgeois governments; and that the success of the Salvadorean revolution depends not upon arms supplies from Nicaragua, but upon international working class solidarity.

The Sandinistas signing the Contadora pact, says Paul, will "call Reagan's bluff" and "expose his hypocrisy" — since Contadora calls for all foreign military personnel to be with-

## Assessing Contadora

drawn, and an end to support for organisations seeking to 'destabilise' Central American governments. Obviously, Reagan will not be able to comply.

This may well be true. But it seems to me that our judgement on the Sandinistas' decision depends upon its real effects on the struggle in El Salvador. If it has no effect, there can be no major objection; but if it has a demobilising effect, I think it must be judged a wrong decision.

It seems likely that there is a connexion between the Sandinistas' action and the negotiations now taking place in El Salvador between the government and the FMLN. Again, negotiations are not ruled out in principle, but I think — on the basis of previous articles he has written in SO — Paul will agree that a 'negotiated settlement' with the present regime is

the policy of the bourgeois right wing in the FMLN, rather than the Left.

Wider international solidarity is certainly needed. But it is also true that allies within Central America itself are vital to each other's success. The FMLN may not, as Paul says, need Nicaraguan guns, but they do look to Nicaragua for political assistance and as a model for their own future.

They do need some base outside El Salvador: and a declaration by Nicaragua that it will dissociate from any moves to 'destabilise' El Salvador's rulers cannot help.

Paul writes: "If the FSLN are not Marxists... this isn't because they don't export arms... but because they have not attempted to build an international party." I think this poses the issues wrongly. The FSLN are not Marxists because they do not have a working class pro-

gramme. And tactical compromises by people fighting for a different programme cannot simply be assessed in the same way as tactical compromises by people fighting for our programme. They are compromising for different ends.

An agreement between the Sandinistas and various bourgeois regimes seems to me potentially more than just a compromise. The wheelings and dealings of Reagan are one thing: but what about the aims of the Mexican, Venezuelan, Colombian or Panamanian bourgeoisies who worked the plan out?

The relatively powerful Mexican ruling class surely aims for a consolidated bourgeois alliance in the region — under their own domination. Nicaragua's support for Contadora strengthens their aims; and their aims conflict with ours.

EDWARD ELLIS

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Back the miners

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## Our history

SEVENTY years ago this autumn, the First World War began — and the international socialist movement, as it was then, fell apart.

Almost all the Social Democratic and Labour Parties built up over decades of working class efforts supported their own capitalist governments in the war.

Ever since then, socialists have been fighting to rebuild the movement.

The first great attempt was the creation of the Communist Parties after 1917. Within a very few years the CPs had been corrupted, and by the 1930s they had been completely wrecked as instruments for socialism, by the rise of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR.

### Value

Nevertheless the work and the discussions of the first few years of the Communist movement are still of great value. Especially important was the Second Congress of the Communist International, in 1920, where the basic issue of how socialists should organise was argued out.

Trotsky declared:

"I proceed from the assumption that there is a rather sharp contradiction between the march of historical events and the opinion expressed here with such Marxist magnanimity (by Paul Levi of the German CP) to the effect that the broad masses of workers are already excellently aware of the necessity of the party."

"It is self-evident that if we were dealing here with Messrs Scheidemann, Kautsky [the German reformist leaders] or their English co-thinkers, it would, of course, be unnecessary to convince these gentlemen that a party is indispensable to the working class. They have created a party for the working class and handed it over into the service of bourgeois and capitalist society..."

"Just because I know that the party is indispensable, and am very well aware of the value of the party, and just because I see Scheidemann on the one side and, on the other American or Spanish or French syndicalists who not only wish to fight against the bourgeoisie but who unlike Scheidemann, really want to tear its head off — for this reason I say that I prefer to discuss with these Spanish, American and French comrades in order to prove to them that the party is indispensable for the fulfilment of the historical mission which is placed upon them — the destruction of the bourgeoisie."

### Party

"I will try to prove this to them in a comradely way, on the basis of my own experience, and not by counterposing to them Scheidemann's long years of experience and saying that for the majority this question has already been settled."

The class struggles in Russia

# Socialist organisation and socialist theory

**How should socialists organise? What relation is there between the theoretical arguments on the Left, and day-to-day trade union battles? Stan Crooke reviews some lessons from history.**

and Hungary proved, in different ways, the need for a revolutionary party. The October Revolution and the overthrow of capitalism in Russia would have been impossible but for the existence of the Bolshevik Party.

"If we had not had a centralised, military, iron-disciplined party, which we organised for twenty years, we would have been beaten twenty times over," said Zinoviev.

In Hungary, on the other hand, the numerical and political

In fact the Bolshevik party never had the organisational rigidity credited to it in Stalinist myth. It was a party of lively internal controversy and often ramshackle organisation.

What distinguished it was its relentless struggle for theoretical and political clarity — its determined rejection of muddled consensus thinking, and its will to follow the principles later summed up by Trotsky: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be..."

Because the bourgeoisie controls all the means of propaganda, culture and information in capitalist society (schools, mass media, the church, etc.), the thinking and actions of the working class come to be dominated by bourgeois ideology. Only a party which has purged itself of all bourgeois influences and is a concrete embodiment of revolutionary socialist struggle can break the working class from bourgeois ideology and organise it to overthrow capitalism.

For the Third International the Communist Party was not just a collection of industrial militants. The party was a part of the working class, but also differed from the whole working class in that it had "an overall view of the whole historical road of the working class in its totality". It was "the organisational and political lever with whose help the advanced part of the working class can steer the whole mass of the proletariat and the semi-proletariat onto the correct road."

### Creativity and power

The working class has tremendous resources of power, creativity and courage. The basic forms and methods of the struggle for socialism — trade unions, mass strikes, factory occupations, workers' councils — have been developed not by any elite but by the masses of workers in struggle.

And the liberation of the working class must be the task of the workers themselves. The socialist revolution means the direct democratic rule of the working class through workers' councils (a sort of workers' parliament, with accountability and the right of recall over delegates) — not the rule of a party.

But spontaneous, uncoordinated struggle will not be enough to defeat the capitalist class — a cunning, centralised and well-equipped opponent. Time and again in working class history, promising broad movements have been sidetracked and dissipated for lack of a coherent and politically clear hard core.

Committed socialists need to continue in a coherent, effective movement which can integrate the struggle on all fronts, from the most complex theoretical debates to the most basic trade union battles.

In its approach to semi-revolutionaries and confused but militant leftists, the Third International combined absolute firmness of principles with flexibility of tactics. In his pamphlet, 'Left Wing Communism', written just before the Second Congress, Lenin argued: "Attacks of the German Lefts on the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany for entertaining the idea of a bloc with the 'Independents' (USPD)... appear to us to be



Lenin

ing of many workers who have joined the trade unions because their workmates are trade unionists, and to share the friendly benefits..."

"We must not dissipate our energy in adding to the strength of the Labour Party... We must concentrate on making a communist movement that will vanquish it."

At the Congress itself Tanner claimed that affiliation "would do great damage to the British Party, for the whole British working class is sick and tired of the tactics of the Labour Party."

### Affiliation

But Lenin argued, successfully, in favour of affiliation.

Pankhurst's argument was based on a superstitious fear of what might happen to revolutionaries in the Labour Party and therefore wanted Communists to keep a healthy distance from it. Lenin, on the other hand, wanted communists to fight for the leadership of the British working class inside the Labour Party.

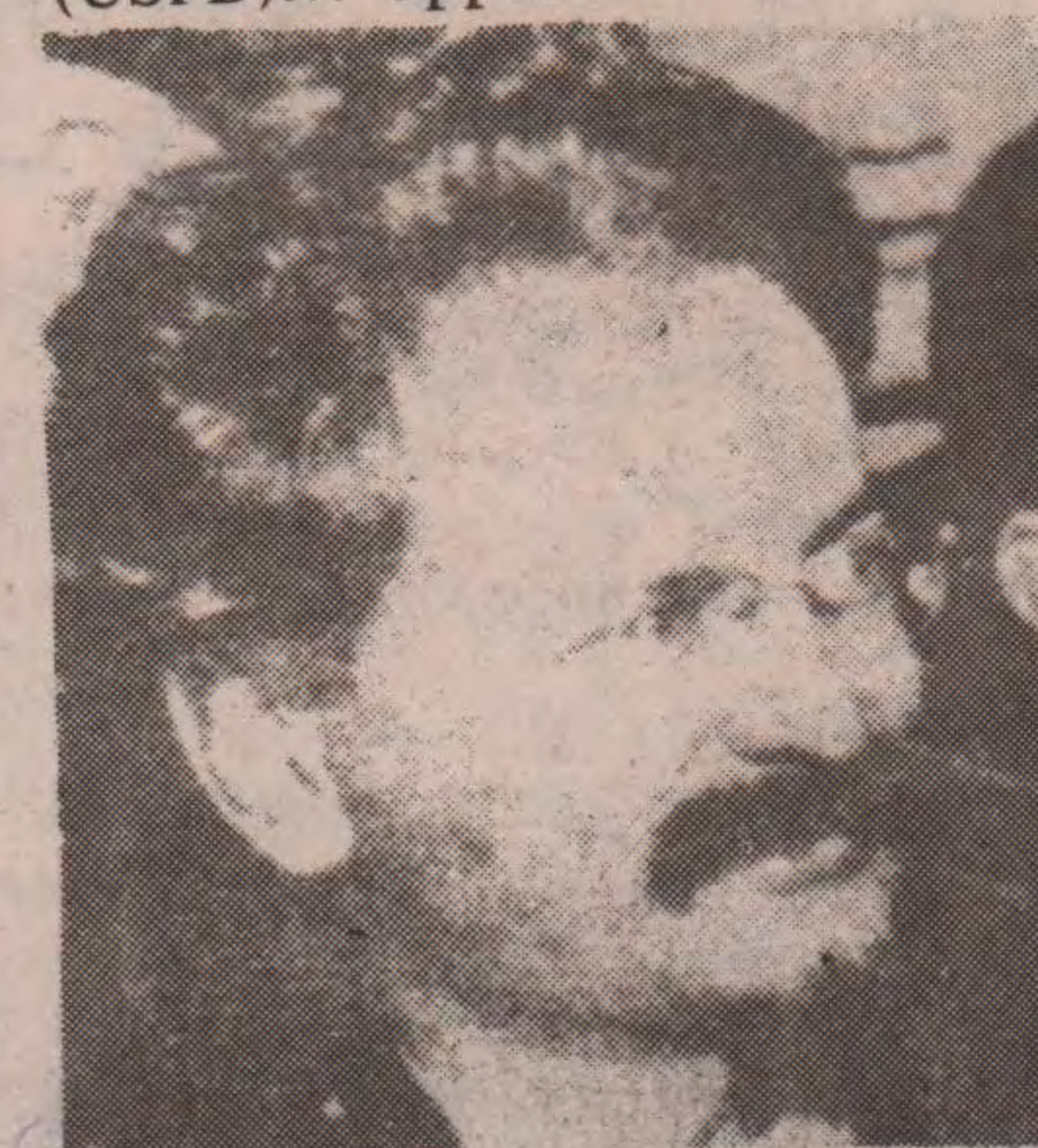
Lenin agreed that "The Labour Party is a thoroughly reactionary party, because,

although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries and the worst kind of reactionaries at that."

Even so, the Communists should join it in order to reach the workers in the Labour Party and the millions in the trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party. The British Communist Party could be a real workers' party only if it really linked up with the masses and fought against the reactionary, corrupt leaders of the British labour movement.

And it was possible to attack these leaders from inside the Labour Party: "a party affiliated to the Labour Party is able, not only to severely criticise, but only and specifically to mention the old leaders by name and call them social traitors... In such circumstances it would be a mistake not to join the party."

The British Communist Party was not to be a party of propagandists, but a combat organisation fighting to win support for their ideas and drive the agents of the bourgeoisie out of the labour movement. "When communists enjoy such freedom, it is their duty to join the Labour Party."



Leon Trotsky

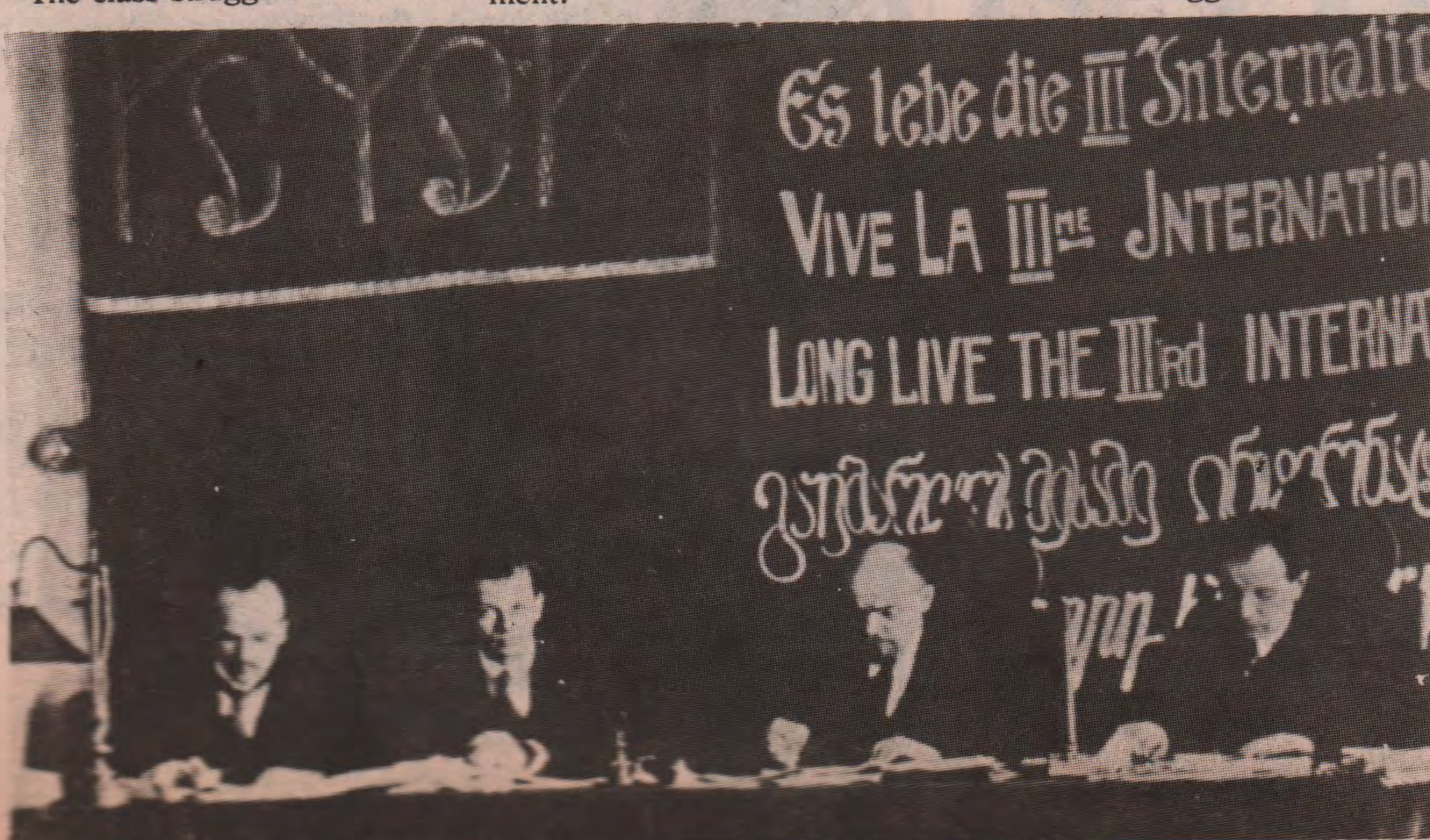
utterly frivolous and a clear proof that the 'Lefts' are in the wrong..."

"The German Independent Social-Democratic Party (USPD) is obviously not a homogeneous body: alongside the old opportunist leaders... there has arisen in this party a Left, proletarian wing which is growing with remarkable rapidity... To fear a 'compromise' with this wing of the party is positively ridiculous."

On the contrary, it is obligatory for the Communists to seek and to find a suitable form of compromise with them, such a compromise as, on the one hand, would facilitate and accelerate the necessary complete fusion with this wing and, on the other, would in no way hamper the Communists in their ideological and political struggle against the opportunist Right wing of the 'Independents'."

The thirteenth session of the Second Congress was dominated by the question of whether the various revolutionary groupings in Britain, at that time in the process of fusion to form the Communist Party, should affiliate to the Labour Party. Affiliation had been debated long before the Congress.

Sylvia Pankhurst's arguments against affiliation had a certain ring of familiarity about them: "The Labour Party is very large numerically, though its membership is to a great extent quiescent and apathetic, consist-



At the founding congress of the Communist International

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Miners demonstrate their support for health workers during the 1982 NHS pay dispute. Photo: John Harris

# A victory in hive-off war

By George McLean, District Staff Side Committee Secretary, Central Manchester Health Authority.

(about £300,000 in 1984-5) caused by the government's refusal fully to refund the NHS pay awards above their 3% limit.

With the promise of further cuts in the next year as the crisis of capitalism deepens it is hard to see how the joint vulture plan would offer anything to the DHA in the way of money to create more jobs and to improve patient services. Any 'saving' will be eaten up in paying for the callous underfunding of the Tories.

The two seats on the board were very dubious. Despite his assurances to the contrary, Ruane did say in his background paper to the DHA that they would be non-voting. However, considering that they would be swamped by the vultures from Spinneys anyway, it hardly mattered. How, then, was the DHA going to 'monitor and control' the joint venture in operation? No answers.

Chair of the DHA is fat boy and one-time socialist Kenneth (call me Councillor) Collis, a man noted for his ability to 'get things done' for certain friends when he chaired Manchester's Housing Committee. It was Collis's job to persuade the DHA that the joint vulture plan was the 'lesser of two evils' — that is, Spinneys (with 'our' two seats) or full privatisation.

On the morning of the 23rd NUPE had a mass meeting and voted to lobby the DHA. DHAs are normally held in the Board Room of Manchester Royal Infirmary. Thoughtfully Mike Ruane (the evil of two lessers) had placed ten chairs for members of the public. Ten chairs

were not enough for 500 people!

The three new Labour councillors (who have taken over from three of Collis's pals due to the sweeping gains made by the Left in this year's elections) demanded that the meeting be transferred to a place where all the staff could hear the arguments and see which way the DHA members were voting.

Collis naturally balked at this Solidarnosc-style extension of democracy, but it was 'obey or abandon the meeting!' We all duly swept to the nearby nurses' home and the DHA meeting took place on the stage with its biggest audience ever.

Ruane presented his paper and it was attacked from all angles by the Labour councillors, who had met the unions on the previous day, with Kath Robinson laying down the principles and Joe Holly providing detailed objections. Two other DHA members — normally silent — also spoke against the plan.

Collis and the District Treasurer whined that 'there is no alternative'.

There followed a powerful speech by Mike Folliard, NUPE shop steward, who pointed out that in the joint vulture plan there was a clause which no sane person could accept. This was that if, after the initial collaboration between the DHA and Spinneys, it was decided not to go ahead with the plan, the DHA would pay compensation to Spinneys of £25,000...and then let them participate in any tendering that would then occur!

Never mind that by then the DHA might have sacked its staff

and would have given Spinneys a huge advantage over other contractors, plus a gift of £25,000 — but most importantly this clause said that if collaboration failed, the DHA would meekly accept the Tories' (as yet not legally-enforceable) demands on going out to tender! No mention of a fight anywhere.

At the vote seven hands went up in favour of the plan, including Collis's and a number of consultants (who are, of course, accountable to nobody). The hall exploded in cheering and whoops of delight when eight hands went up in opposition.

But!...this is only the start. All we've done is to say no to the joint venture.

## Campaign

Without an organised campaign inside and outside the NHS to force the government (any government) to fund the NHS adequately and to expose their every failure to do so, we will find Spinneys replaced by Grand Met or Crothalls or some other flock of vultures.

Links will now be made between all the unions on the hospital site, and with other local Districts — all of whom face attacks from underfunding and privatisation over the next twelve months.

We can and must oppose all cooperation with the privatizers. We must build to a position where health workers and others can by occupation and other means maintain their right to a job and to improve care to patients. The two go hand-in-hand.

The mood of the staff is positive and optimistic — partly due to the success of the miners in their fight, I suspect. We must seize that mood and turn it into a victorious campaign.

## Sheffield

# Call for all out

By Helen Rigby and Michael Morris

NALGO's dispute with Sheffield City Council has now entered its seventh week. On Friday October 26 the City Council chose to escalate the dispute still further by suspending a senior worker in Family and Community Services (FCS), so following the same course of action that provoked the strike in Housing.

In response, FCS NALGO members held a one-day strike on Monday October 29 and 90% of the workers obeyed the strike call.

At a departmental meeting it was decided to ballot the department on all-out indefinite strike action.

This would force the NALGO National Executive Committee to reconsider their position of escalating only in key areas, which has so far proved ineffective.

With the council setting up hotlines to report housing repairs, and encouraging strike-breaking in the works department, it is possible that the dispute could now rapidly escalate to include workers in more departments.

Throughout the dispute, the council's tactics — strike-breaking, suspensions and use of non-union labour — have brought into question its reputation as a "socialist"

employer. They have shown blatant hypocrisy in dealing with their own employees. While publicly supporting the miners and refusing to deal with companies that have crossed miners' picket lines, they have brought in private contractors to do the work of NALGO workers on strike.

Consistently, throughout the dispute, the council has tried to drive a wedge between NALGO and manual workers. They accuse NALGO of wanting to improve their employment position at the expense of others.

This is a complete fallacy since NALGO are demanding 'single status' for blue and white collar workers and are trying to secure a levelling up rather than a levelling down of conditions.

While the strike escalates among council employees, there must be a parallel increase of pressure from Labour Party wards and the District Labour Party. So far, the latter has been unwilling to apportion blame in the dispute.

It has to be made clear that rate-capping cannot be fought at the expense of council workers.

## CPSA

# Left could split

THE CPSA Broad Left — the largest union Broad Left in the country — could split at its conference in Manchester this weekend (Nov. 3/4).

The two main blocks dominating the Broad Left — Militant and the Labour Left — have been increasingly unable to work together in a constructive and comradely fashion. Many influential members of the Labour Left group are now saying that they can no longer work with Militant at all, and there is widespread talk of them leaving to set up a separate organisation.

The conference will also elect the Broad Left's candidates for next year's elections to the Presidency, National Executive Committee and other positions in the union. Well over a hundred motions have been tabled from regional Broad Left groups discussing a wide range of important issues: Northern Ireland, women's rights, the miners' strike, the 1985 pay campaign, etc.

But the danger of a split obviously overshadows them all.

The only real winners from any such split would be CPSA general secretary Alistair Graham and the right wing. The Broad Left has achieved substantial electoral success in recent years (the current National Executive Committee is very much Broad Left dominated), but such success could not con-

tinue after a damaging split.

Ironically, both the Labour Left and Militant have been happy to use the Broad Left as an electoral machine, rather than an active campaigning body and thus both groups would suffer badly from a break-up of the present Broad Left.

The Socialist Caucus, the hard left grouping which includes Socialist Organiser supporters, will argue against such a split, even though we are unhappy about the present Broad Left's lack of campaigning.

Some time ago the Caucus decided to call a meeting on the Saturday evening of conference to discuss a realignment of the hard left in the union. This meeting has now taken on a new importance.

The union faces a critical time in the next few months, with the Newcastle computer strike still continuing, next year's pay campaign to organise and more support for the miners needed: a strong rank and file organisation armed with socialist principles is perhaps more desperately needed now than ever.

It remains to be seen whether the Broad Left can be that organisation; or whether it will tear itself in two. All Broad Left members should attend the weekend conference, and help develop the Broad Left as a united, fighting movement with a rank and file orientation.

## Barking mass picket

AFTER over eight months on strike, the 87 domestics at Barking Hospital have won an important, though by no means decisive, victory.

An industrial tribunal last Thursday ruled that they had been unfairly dismissed. They are therefore entitled to redundancy pay and compensation for loss of earnings.

While this has given a boost to the strikers it is clearly not what the strike is about. They are still demand-

ing their right to work at Barking.

The pickets will continue and supporters are needed every morning, especially for the mass pickets on Tuesday, from 6.30 am onwards.

Further details can be obtained from the Strike Line — 01-592 5038.

OFFICIAL MASS PICKET  
Tuesday 13 November  
6.30am to 6.00 pm  
Barking Hospital  
Upney Lane, Barking, Essex

# Jobs action on railways

ON November 12, Signal and Telecommunication staff on British Rail will start taking industrial action in defence of jobs and conditions.

British Rail are trying to implement changes which would reduce safety standards. These

are:

- \*Reduced maintenance.
- \*Separation of maintenance and faulting teams.
- \*Abolition of contract telecoms maintenance.
- \*Reduction in signal maintenance staff levels.

At the moment, vital safety checks are done once a month. Under these proposals it would be once a year. Machinery which is in constant use would be left unchecked for an entire year.

With all four points BR 'promises' new jobs to replace the ones lost. However, BR's other 'promises' have failed to materialise, like higher wages in return for redundancies.

The action due to start on November 12 includes an overtime ban; work to rule; no call-out cover (except when a dangerous situation arises); no covering of higher grades; and all travelling to and from jobs will be done in works time.

While limited, such action will soon be noticed as trains begin

to run late and are re-routed.

The long and short of it is that the BR proposals are another part of the Serpell plan to run down the railways and must be fought.

The problems of sectionalising industrial action in this way are obvious. The NUR leadership seems hell bent on this style, though.

First it was BR workshops, then it was to be drivers and guards only, in defence of railworkers at Shirebrook, and now it's the signal and telecommunication department.

What we need is an all-out fight. The link with the miners' fight about who controls our industries has already been made by most railworkers. Let's use it now.

## Socialist Organiser

WITH a regular weekly estate sale now successfully established in Hulme, Manchester, comrades living in Longsight decided to start a second estate sale in their part of the city. They got off to an encouraging start last Sunday, selling 15 papers in just over an hour.

From Basingstoke, Angela Fraser writes: "We started a street sale this Saturday which brought in £5.50 and we hope to start the estate sales probably this week".

Send news of your local group's plans, successes and failures to so, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



# Socialist Organiser

## Strike on Nov 7

THROUGHOUT London mass meetings of council workers have endorsed calls for strike action on November 7.

It will be the first major show of strength by the combined forces of the borough councils' stewards' organisation London Bridge, GLC workers through 'Democracy for London' and ILEA workers, organised by the 'Save ILEA Campaign'.

For the first time the unions have organised at shop steward level in a united manner, across boroughs and services. This promises to make the 7th a major success, and bodes well for the future.

With a big turn-out for the one-day strike on November 7, the council trade union campaigns will have come a long way in a very short space of time.

We realise that a day's strike is not going to send Thatcher running for cover. But it can begin the job of building a mass movement of council workers in defence of jobs and services. Such a movement can hold the key to victory next spring at council budget-making time.

The London Bridge committee has already adopted a policy of total non-cooperation with the Tories' plans to be implemented by "all-out strike action, sit-ins and occupations", and is demanding that Labour councils refuse to make cuts or raise rents and rates.

While some union officials have been very helpful in organising for the 7th, others have dragged their heels, coming into line only after the 7th seemed a safe bet.

Rate-capped Labour councils have pledged support for a fight against rate-capping. But their actions so far correspond to a strategy of tough negotiations rather than confronting the Tories. Decisions made by small groups in Town Halls, largely cut off from the working class, can fade quickly when it comes to a test.

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

# Guarantee aid now!

When hundreds of millions of people live at the margin of existence — just getting enough to eat to stay alive — drought or war is bound to push millions over the margin into starvation and death.

For the hundreds of millions to draw themselves out of poverty requires a change in society. But to save the millions now is much easier.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation earlier this year, 1.6 million tons of food and £91 million aid were needed to save the immediate victims of starvation in Africa.

## Governments rest at token gestures while thousands die

The Common Market alone has *ten million tons* of grain in store. It would actually be cheaper to send this grain to Africa than to keep it in store — sending it costs £25 a ton, storing it could cost about £200 a ton.

There is plenty of food to feed the starving, and plenty of transport capable of getting it to them. It

should be sent now, not only to Africa but to other areas hit by famine.

Only the workers and peasants of Africa can deal with the local ruling classes that are directly responsible for their suffering. But the labour movement here could do a lot.

The Labour Party should

demand that the EEC, the US and other food-surplus countries put their surplus stocks under the control of an international famine relief agency, and provide that agency with its own transport pool.

Conservative, established bodies like the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and even the World

Bank have been pleading for aid for Africa for well over a year. But at present they are dependent for every penny on the year-by-year goodwill of governments.

Contributions to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

It's as if hospitals in Britain had to beg for funds every week there was an epidemic or a big accident.

The Labour Party has been slow to move on this issue. It should make up for it now by organising a mass demonstration with the demands for immediate aid to Africa, a permanent international famine relief fund, and cancellation of the debts owed to City banks by the African states.

# Car workers open second front

By Jim Denham

BY the time this issue of Socialist Organiser appears, carworkers at Austin Rover and at Jaguars should be out on indefinite strike over their respective pay claims.

The 7000 Jaguar workers voted last week to come out from November 1 in pursuit of their £25 across the board claim. The company's "final offer" is a two-year deal, supposedly worth 21% but actually worth only 7% per year, because it includes consolidation of bonus money already being earned.

Stewards at the three Jaguar plants — two in Coventry and one in Birmingham — believe that the rank and file are ready to fight for the full claim.

The main danger at the moment lies in the activities of full-time officials, notably the TGWU's national automotive officer Grenville Hawley, who have been holding last-minute secret talks with Jaguar bosses in a desperate attempt to head off the action.

Clearly Jaguar workers will have to take steps to ensure that the rank and file control the course of this strike and all negotiations, rather than leaving things to proven sell-out merchants like Hawley.

The 28,000 hourly paid workers at Austin Rover are preparing for their second round of mass meetings as we go to press. The first round of mass meetings endorsed the Joint Negotiating Committee's rejection of the company's initial offer (a two year deal worth only

Mass meeting at Austin Rover, Longbridge, discusses strike action. Photo: John Harris.



4.7% in new money) and called for "whatever industrial action is necessary" to win the £22 across the board claim.

The company's "new" offer is only worth an extra 50p for the first year and £1 for the second. It is unlikely to impress many Austin-Rover workers, and stewards

at the Longbridge plant are confident of winning a vote for an all-out strike from Monday November 5.

One senior steward told us:

"The members are ready to fight. The level of the settlement at Vauxhall's and the size of the rejected offer

at Jags, although we know it isn't as big as it's cracked up to be, have strengthened the resolve of the members.

The first mass meeting was notable for its high attendance, and for the unanimity of the vote. It was also made clear that the call for action wasn't just a negotiating ploy but actually meant being pre-

pared to strike.

Austin Rover stewards and activists should be drawing up picket rotas for the plants and car depots, arguing for rank and file strike committees to control the course of the action, and making sure all negotiations are referred back to the rank and file at every stage.