

Socialist Organiser

Miners' solidarity conference Dec 2

Called by the Mineworkers' Defence Committee. Speakers include Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn. At Camden Town Hall, London NW1 [opposite St. Pancras Station] from 11.30 to 4.30. Delegates and obser-

vers invited from all labour movement organisations. Fee: £2 for first delegate, £1 for each additional delegate and for observers. Write to Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Road, London N16 or phone 01-981 3289.

TUC must back miners and carworkers

UNIONS ON TRIAL

SPEAKING at a miners' rally in Shirebrook, North Derbyshire, last Friday, 9th, NUM vice-president Mick McGahey appealed for support "over the heads of the trade union leaders."

"The NUM will win this strike", he said, "but we will win it quickly if the movement responds to our demands".

This week Austin Rover are having the TGWU and five other unions hauled up for contempt of court, because they called a carworkers' strike on the authority of mass meeting votes rather than the Tory-prescribed secret ballot. It's clear that the Tories are out to break effective trade unionism across the board.

But the TUC leaders are doing nothing. After two meetings last week with the NUM, they did no more than plan a trip to Holland to try to halt coal imports.

The defence of trade unionism rests in the hands of the rank and file.

At power stations in the

**By John
Bloxam**

south-east — West Thurrock, Tilbury, and Kings North — workers are refusing to accept coal or substitute oil. Seafarers are also refusing to deliver. West Thurrock has been switched out of the national grid.

It was reported at the NUM delegate conference that power shop stewards in Scotland have agreed to implement the TUC guidelines. And there is solid support in the big coal-fired Yorkshire stations, which are still being picketed by the Yorkshire area NUM.

In the Trent Valley power stations there has been a poor response so far, but the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee has decided to mount 16-hour, 7-day pickets on all of them. Up to now there have

been pickets on some of them irregularly.

This is a difficult period for the miners' strike — and the TUC and Labour leaders are helping to make it difficult. But a tremendous potential for victory is still there.

The great turn-out by London council workers last Wednesday for a strike to defend jobs and services, for example, shows that under the surface there is a fund of militancy, built up by the inspiration given to other workers by the miners' heroism over eight months.

At the NUM rally in Sheffield on Thursday 8th, angry miners shouted tauntingly, "Where's Kinnock?" Neil Kinnock — and most other TUC and Labour leaders — clearly agree with the Tories that the miners are losing, and they want to distance themselves as much as they can.

Even the TGWU — left-wing in TUC terms — has just sat quiet and said nothing while Austin Rover moves towards getting its union funds seized.

Continued on page 3



Mass picket at Cortonwood

JOHN HARRIS (IFL)

Thatcher threatens new police powers

SPEAKING at the Lord Mayor's banquet on Monday, 12th, Margaret Thatcher threatened new powers for the police.

In her own language she made it plain that justice had nothing to do with it. The police will be given *any powers necessary* to defeat the working class.

"If the police and courts are lacking the powers necessary to keep order in a free society, and necessary to protect the weak against the strong, then we shall introduce measures which give them what they need."

While declaring themselves that they will use "any measures necessary", the Tories make an outcry about the violence of miners trying to defend their picket lines against masses of police.

In this doublespeak 'the weak' are Ian MacGregor, the Coal Board, the Tories, and the whole ruling class; 'the strong' are the miners, equipped with nothing but their own courage and determination and the solidarity of other workers.

But the warning is unmistakable: let the miners lose, and the whole working class will face a fierce new array of police measures.

INSIDE

**Workers' control in
the mines.
Why Africa is
starving.
Centre pages**

**John McIlroy:
Debate on the
state of the class
struggle
Pages 8-9**

**The Tory anti-
union laws
Page 5
Miners' strike
Pages 3-4**

**South Africa:
the new labour
movement
Page 11**

Rugby gays

By Richard Bayley

ON Saturday November 10 the "Stop the Lesbian and Gay Ban Campaign" held a march and rally in Rugby, principally to protest at the removal of a "no discrimination" clause from the Tory-controlled council's employment statutes.

From the point of view of the labour movement, it was a very significant rally. Besides the presence of many lesbians and gay men, there was a strong response from NALGO branches.

The demonstration was 1,000 strong and the campaign has no intention of going away until this monstrous piece of legislation has been reversed by Rugby council.

Police behaviour during the march was nothing short of disgusting. They announced to the rally that they could not guarantee our safety if we marched back through the middle of the town.

Quite rightly the rally made it plain that they were

not going to be dictated to by the use of veiled threats.

Once outside the rally, the police tried to insist that no banners were to be unfurled, and made a particular point of harassing the holders of the Gay Youth Movement banner.

After continually trying to pull it down, the police regrouped and sent in snatch squads, in the manner now all too familiar to miners, and ripped up the banner, arresting those who protested.

Altogether 18 people were arrested and held for over six hours in Rugby police station. All were charged with obstruction, to which all the defendants are pleading not guilty.

No doubt the local press will have a field day, but brutal police actions such as this will only fuel the campaign's determination to stop discrimination in the workplace.

The labour movement must build this campaign and defend the 18 who were arrested. The first court appearance is at 10 am on Friday, 16th and a picket has been called.

Hive-off strike

TGWU stewards Ivan Bennet (senior steward) and Tom Dipple (deputy steward) spoke to Alan Fraser and Alasdair Jamison about the latest strike by Basingstoke dustmen.

EARLY this summer Basingstoke Council commissioned a report into the waste disposal services in the area. The report came out basically in favour of continuing with the Direct Labour Organisation but implementing proper charges for commercial users.

However the Tory majority on the council saw it as a privatisation charter, and although there was opposition from the Labour Group they pushed ahead with the tendering process. The usual promises were made to the DLO that they would be assisted with preparation of a tender and they would undoubtedly be awarded the contract.

At the time the Trades Council held a meeting with the dustmen and pointed out the dangers of pursuing such a course. There was unfortunately little response from this meeting. Perhaps this is explained by the fact that the two stewards then are now supervisors with the private contractors.

Despite the cost to the council of nearly £1 million in redundancy payments the contract was awarded to Wastecare — a division of Grand Metropolitan.

Needless to say the conditions of the workforce suffered. The report had recommended 13 rounds — Wastecare cut this to ten and reduced the number employed from 78 to 43. Wage levels were reduced by £40 per week and fringe benefits such as pensions, sick pay and holidays suffered.

The shortfall in the provision of service was to be made up by high levels of overtime working.

Now Basingstoke dustmen are taking strike action against Wastecare for the third time since August 6. This time the strike is about the sacking of a driver who had refused to work with the non-union labour crews currently employed by Wastecare.

Previously the union had an agreement with local management that all trade union members would be kept in separate crews from non-trade unionists. Management broke the procedure, and the local branch

decided that they were left with no alternative but to strike.

Wastecare employ 40 dustmen. Five of those are non-union, two are temporary workers. The other 33 are all TGWU members, and are all out.

The union demands are clear. We want the immediate reinstatement of our driver who was sacked, the workloads to be reduced, manpower to be increased, vehicles increased and the wage review that was agreed and has now been broken by management. We also need to get improved working conditions and job security.

Since Wastecare has taken over there have been several sackings and industrial relations have deteriorated. Recognition of the union was won just over a month ago — the dustmen recognising the need to stop management's hire-and-fire attitude.

The morale among the strikers is high. They are fed up to the back teeth of being made to work to schedules that they cannot possibly meet. Most of the dustmen are working 12 hours a day and still cannot complete their rounds.

We're organising a leaflet for mass public distribution outlining our case and the background to the dispute. The Trades Council and the Labour Party have already offered support. We're approaching trade unionists in other privatised refuse services to ask for solidarity.

The way we look at it, if the contractor successfully kicks us around this will convince the ruling Tory Group on the council to privatise other council services and chop jobs and services there.

STOP PRESS

A mass picket on Monday was supported by Basingstoke Trades Council and Labour Party, the GMBATU, UCW, Socialist Organiser supporters and other labour movement activists.

After the picket dispersed seven pickets were arrested in two separate incidents for alleged breach of the peace. They were kept in the cells for nine hours and released at 7pm.

On Tuesday the dustmen were joined on the picket line by striking miners from North Wales and South Wales.

Open letter from 'London Bridge'

Stewards' appeal to Labour councils

London Bridge resolution to rate-capped London Boroughs.

"This.....supports the Council's stand of non-compliance with rate-capping, and we pledge support in line with Labour Party policy, to mobilise the maximum forces to defend the Council's stand on socialist principles.

"We realise that there may be individuals in office who are unable to carry out policies which could lead to surcharge and imprisonment. We ask Labour Groups to identify those unable to carry out the policy of non-compliance, and in conjunction with the ALA, to set a London-wide date for any new elections, which would have as their rallying point the fight against rate-capping.

Reselection should be agreed on the following basis:

1. Not to make cuts in jobs and services, and not to comply with the rate-capping legislation.
2. To prepare a budget based on the needs of the ordinary people of the borough, in order to highlight the difference between real need and the government's attack on local communities.
3. Not to set a rate or raise the rates.
4. Not to raise council house rents.

Dear Comrade,

London Bridge, the Joint Shop Stewards Committee of the London Boroughs, has discussed the role of local councillors in the fight ahead against rate-capping.

We welcome the position you have taken against rate-capping, and your willingness to stand up and be counted provides the basis for a real alliance of working people against the Tories. A united front of councils, council employees, tenants and communities, will have the most powerful mobilising effect within the working class.

Such a movement, we are confident, will give us victory against rate-capping.

For the vast-majority of us, in

public employment, there is no option but to fight. If we are defeated by failing to fight, the dole queues and the impoverishment of our communities will be our fate. For you, choices exist.

The implementation of Tory cuts by Labour Authorities, would be unthinkable, particularly as the Labour Party conference "supports any council which is forced to break the law as a result of Tory government policies". (Composite 43). If cuts were made by Labour Authorities, they too would be engaged in a fight with the trade unions, and those who elected them. Therefore Labour Groups have to make a fight of it also.

We realise this action will

place considerable strain on individuals. There is a real threat of banning from office, surcharge, and imprisonment.

The decision of individual councillors to resign in these circumstances, would be understood and respected, and if co-ordinated will provide an important impetus to our campaign, the basis of which is the Resolution passed at the mass shop stewards meeting of October 17 1984 (below). This matter is of some urgency, if a united front is to be guaranteed.

We ask you to consider the attached resolution at your future meetings.

EDMUND HALL,
Secretary, London Bridge

Nov.7: firm basis for a fight

By Mick O'Sullivan,
[chair, 'London Bridge',
in personal capacity].

THE November 7 strike against rate-capping and abolition of the GLC by local authority workers in London was a major success.

The London Bridge committee initially endorsed the strike call with extreme reluctance. The quite valid argument was that there had been many one day strikes which did not achieve much and drained the energy of the membership.

Meanwhile the official movement, i.e. the TUC, didn't want any action at all until about February next year, when, undoubtedly, we would have all been well on the way to being sacked.

However, once the decision was taken by the London Bridge committee, it was pursued in a disciplined fashion. The results went far beyond anyone's most optimistic estimates.

The fact that the strike call was organised by shop stewards, and the importance of the issue, mobilised major new forces who had little or none of the inhibitions and disappointments that trade union activists have accumulated over the past few years.

November 7 has provided a firm foundation on which a mass movement can be built, provide that the London Bridge organisation doesn't squander the opportunity.



A demonstrator is arrested and charged with obstruction on a picket of the East London Advertiser last Friday, protesting against racist articles and in particular an article on a racist organisation called Fairplay who are "opposed to multi-cultural and multi-faith approaches to education" and believe "whites are being swamped in housing and education" and are "treated like second-class citizens in our own country". The advertiser is reportedly referring all enquiries about the article directly to Fairplay itself. This is tantamount to acting as a recruitment agency for an openly racist group.

SCOTS TEACHERS PLAN BATTLE OVER PAY

By Ian McCalman

MEMBERS of the EIS, the main Scottish teachers' union, rallied on the streets of Glasgow on Saturday November 10 in a major public show of support for the campaign for a pay review.

Since the start of the session, teachers have been boycotting curricular development, with the result that the implementation of the new 'S' grade courses to replace the old O grade and Higher exams is now seriously threatened. This action has been supplemented by bans on extra-curricular activities and administrative "duties" in different areas.

The next stage of the campaign will unfold after the likely negative response of Secretary of State George Younger later

this month. One day council strikes, followed by area one-day strikes, followed by a ballot on sustained industrial action are promised by the leadership.

A most curious role in this whole campaign has been played by members of the Socialist Workers Party. Having boycotted the activities of the Broad Left groups in the union, such as Campaign for a Fighting Union in Glasgow, they are now performing a series of somersaults on the wages campaign.

Having initially poured scorn on the pay review strategy, they found themselves at a recent Special General Meeting in

Glasgow in the weird position of advocating all-out unpaid strike action to gain — no, not a wage claim, but a pay review.

Then one of their members, at a subsequent meeting of reps in Glasgow, proceeded to hold up to ridicule — yes, you've guessed it, a pay review.

We welcomed the decision of the SWP nationally to abandon their sectarian stance of recent years and to cooperate with other left forces in the Labour Party and the unions.

Is it too much to ask, however, that in return for our willingness to cooperate with those who have treated other socialist groups with lordly disdain, that they practice a modicum of consistency and honesty?



JOHN HARRIS



Police landrovers charge at pickets, Cortonwood

Turn back the NCB offensive!

THE Tories believe that they have cracked the miners' strike. But in truth they are far from that yet.

The government's economic statement on Monday made no provision for the strike continuing after the end of 1984. The Coal Board, and serious commentators in the Fleet Street press, are more cautious.

John Lloyd in the Financial Times writes: "The totals (returning to work) make the strategy on which the government now relies — a continuous drift back ultimately breaking the 36 week old strike — credible for the first time".

Determination

But the Tories will not defeat the tremendous determination shown in the NUM rallies round the country as easily as that.

The Coal Board figures on returns to work are, for a start, exaggerated. They claim 53,000 scabs now — but they were already claiming 60,000 in June! In any case, their present area-by-area figures only add up to 50,117.

The figures often include NACODS members, other non-NUM employees, and strikers doing safety work with NUM agreement. As Mick McGahey puts it, "they're even counting the pit cat".

They also assume that 98% have been working in Notts from day one!

John Bloxam assesses the Coal Board's renewed offensive to break the miners' strike.

The present numbers going back — whatever they are — will not continue after the deadline for the Christmas bonus passes. The Coal Board may postpone that deadline, but they can only postpone it once.

Whatever the Coal Board say, they cannot get around the fact that roughly 80% of the miners are still on strike — as they have been since the start of the dispute.

Police

Look at the key area of South Yorkshire. Despite a huge police presence, there were only four returning to work at Kiveton Park on Monday, 20 at Manton, and 60 at Shireoaks. There is no production: deputies are not crossing picket lines.

When Kiveton Park NUM met on Saturday 10th to hear a report-back from the NUM special conference, the vote to continue the strike was 206 to 2.

The Coal Board has made a special effort in North Derbyshire. Its wild predictions have

not been borne out, but about 350 did go back at Warsop main on Monday 12th.

Picket lines have also increased. About 250 turned out at Warsop Main on Monday. When one new scab complained to a picket that he "had given 120% to the strike for eight months," he was told sharply:

"There's no measurement in this strike until it's all over".

The NUM recall conference voted with only one abstention to endorse the national officials' rejection of the latest Coal Board offer.

The NUM executive is meeting on Thursday 15th. Right-winger Trevor Bell has already given notice that he will re-raise the issue of a ballot on the NCB's offer.

This proposal was defeated by nine votes to eleven at the last meeting. It should be thrown out again. The conference decision was clear.

Retreat

And whatever could be said about the tactical advisability of a ballot at an earlier stage in the strike, the call for a ballot now is certainly an attempt by the right wing to sound the retreat and get the strike wound up.

The NUM is mounting a campaign to counter the Coal Board's campaign.

On Friday there was a mass meeting in Shirebrook, North Derbyshire, with the national

NUM leaders, and there will be a series of such meetings around the country between now and Christmas.

This programme needs to be tied in with plans to visit all the strikers who don't come to the meetings. The Coal Board knows how to play on isolation. In North Derbyshire they targeted miners one by one, starting with those who lived in outlying areas.

The increased turnouts on the picket lines must be maintained. Support committees can help to build morale by coming out to help.

Conference

The campaign to support the miners need not just be defensive. We must, as Mick McGahey put it, "appeal over the heads of the union leaders" to the rank and file in other unions.

The national support conference on December 2 will be particularly important. The South Notts miners' strike committee has already decided to send 12 delegates, and large contingents are expected from many parts of the labour movement.

Continued from page 1

TGWU leaders have done nothing to organise solidarity or to link their fight to the miners'.

But the unions are more than the leaders.

While EETPU general secretary Eric Hammond applies to join the CBI and takes Tory money for ballots, EETPU members at West Thurrock are backing the fuel boycott. EETPU members are supporting the strike in Austin Rover.

The situation is still explosive. Further moves by the courts — maybe even jail for NUM leaders — or the start of a massive operation to move coal from strikebound pits, could spark sympathy into widespread strike action.

We must keep up the solidarity, continue arguing for support, intensify the pressure on the union leaders. And if we do, the miners will win!

Drive the TUC

Paul Whetton's strike diary

Paul Whetton is secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee, writing in a personal capacity.



Back the miners



But if Kinnock goes on like this, neither are the strikers.

So by sitting on the fence and trying to appease everybody, all he has done is to ensure that the miners will write him off.

I've heard that they're getting quite a good response in the power stations down south. We're still hoping to make some headway with various unions in the Midlands.

Rail

We had a meeting on Saturday in Nottingham, called by the County Association of Trades Councils, and ASLEF and the NUR reaffirmed their support.

I've also been down in London over the weekend. I went to a meeting of the West London support committees about how to step up the support work. I certainly got the impression that a great deal more effort is going to be put into support work. That's cheered us up quite well.

There was a debate on twinning. There are arguments on both sides, I can see, but I think the personal approach of twinning with individual pits has got a lot to be said for it.

In any case, it exists, and to sever it now would do irreparable harm. It helps when people have got the personal contact — they can go to the welfare and see where the money is going.

I should have thought that the reaction of the other unions who have been taken to court must drive the TUC into doing something. They certainly haven't come up with the goods that were promised at the TUC congress and at the Labour Party conference.

The longer they hold back, the worse the position is going to be. Sooner or later they've got to make a move. That move wants making now. If not they could find themselves with a situation they can't control, and the rank and file may take it over.

Settlement

We're not going to allow the TUC to take charge or force any settlement on us. Basnett and Co. are obviously trying for some sort of settlement that will get them off the hook because they can see what's coming.

We've received information that certain government offices have been told to prepare for power cuts. We've also been informed that quite a lot of army personnel are being trained in coal handling and we know that lorries are being assembled that are capable of carrying coal.

I'm convinced that the government are likely at any movement to try to move the coal from the Yorkshire pit heads. But we're not going to sit by and let that happen.

Scots gays support miners

By Jim Wharrel

OVER the past six weeks, supporters of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and members of the Gay Youth Movement have got together to collect money for the miners. We've collected regularly in pubs and outside discos in Glasgow.

Our total has exceeded £150. We've been able to take the arguments of the NUM and the socialist movement into the gay community, where an appreciation that the miners' fight is our fight is growing.

Often we've started these collections over and above our

activities in Labour Party branches and unions. We must pull out the stops now for a miners' victory.

Oppressed groups are organising their support for the NUM throughout the country. Likewise the NUM is taking heed of this support and helping other groups in their own struggles. This was amply demonstrated by the NUM's position at the Labour Party conference.

We think these developments are vital to the successful conclusion of the socialist struggle in Britain.

Lesbian and Gay Socialist Conference Edinburgh November 24-25

Workshops on: Class; lesbian/gay at work; unions; lesbians and gay men working together?; Sexuality; sexism; racism; and more. Plenary on "Strategy for Lesbian and Gay Liberation."

Details from Lesbian and Gay Community Centre, 58a Broughton St., Edinburgh EH1 3SA.

Back the miners



Lol Duffy, one of the 37 Birkenhead shipyard workers jailed last month, spoke at a Socialist Organiser dayschool in Notts last weekend.

AFTER what we've been through at Lairds — 14 weeks of occupation, the jailings, the abuse, the threatening letters — despite all that we've seen people organise themselves to see that we win. It's shown to a lot of us what needs to be done to get people to support other sections of the working class.

I was sent by the occupation to speak at miners' meetings. I said that we wanted to see supportive strike action for the miners.

The miners may have had problems in not being able to get all the men out. But we can argue for supportive action, and we can build the links that are necessary for the working class.

The nationalised industries, like British Telecom, the NHS, the National Bus Company, are all placed in exactly the same situation as the miners yet they are not organising in one body to fight back against that. That is what should be done.

We can build those links. Despite the negative example of Cammell Lairds, we are hopeful of building those links.

Cardiff docks deal

THE TGWU has done a deal with the head of Read haulage companies to get a writ against Cardiff docks withdrawn.

The Read companies — the ones that took the South Wales NUM to court and got its funds seized — were boycotted by the

Cardiff dockers. But last Friday Reads agreed to withdraw their writ.

The Financial Times reported: "This follows an undisclosed peace formula worked out... under the auspices of the conciliation service, ACAS."

LETTER

This is a cutting from our local evening paper. What do you think of it? I think it is evil.

"A Clitheroe shop worker has launched a scathing attack on striking miners, saying they should starve."

"Mr Barry Sharples, manager of the Foster menswear shop in the town centre, has warned that any collectors

going into his shop will get short shrift from him."

"In a letter to his union paper, DAWN, this week, he says the miners have had fantastic wages. 'Why did they not save like normal people do? It is because they spend it in pubs'."

Yours faithfully,
Mrs Pat Quinn

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

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

Name

Address

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

'We can build links'

The working class has the strength to win. It has the strength to defeat the Tories and their system.

We also have to organise in the Labour Party and the trade unions for more democracy. If we had a union leadership in British Shipbuilders that was only half as good as the leadership in the NUM, we would have seen a victory at Lairds.

They have isolated us from the rest of the shipyards. They've said that your interest lies in letting Cammell Lairds shut down, because you'll get orders then, which is a joke.

And to the yards that face privatisation they've said your interest lies in being privatised. But even in the long run it's been shown up to be wrong.

A Scottish yard that was privatised two years ago has now been shut down.

Cammell Laird occupation sparked off another occupation on Merseyside. It wasn't as well organised but they said that it happened because of Cammell Lairds.

Although certain parts of the miners' strike are weak, nevertheless, it inspired us, the way they've been carrying on the struggle and facing up to hardships. We got strike pay in our dispute, but there are miners living off nothing.

The working class is willing to fight. The miners have stuck it out for 36 weeks and the militants are carrying that strike. It's only a question of breaking through in the other unions.

THE NUM rally in Sheffield on November 8 was a huge reaffirmation of the miners' will to fight on to victory.

The City Hall and the two annexes were packed with an energetically vocal audience, but one person was conspicuous by his absence — Neil "I'm too busy" Kinnock.

Jim Mortimer's words sounded empty and hypocritical when he said that the NEC were "honoured to be asked to be represented at each of your rallies."

His words were met with shouts of "Where's Kinnock, then?". "Kinnock scab" was the audience's reply to Stan Orme's attempts to excuse Kinnock's absence. The message from Mick McGahey was clear. "Get your eyes off the

opinion polls and onto us."

One highpoint of the rally was the speech by a representative of the mining section of the French union, the CGT, and the tremendous response he received. The CGT general council member with responsibility for organising solidarity with the NUM described the British miners as "the flag-bearers" of the international fight for jobs. He spoke of the British government's attempts to break the trade unions — "no worker can accept this anti-working class strategy. They won't succeed. This government is unacceptable to the British working class. It isn't acceptable to the French working class."

He described some of the measures the CGT had taken in

support of the NUM, welcoming 200 children of striking miners to France on holiday, and sending 30 lorries carrying 400 tons of food.

He announced their decision to give a Christmas present to every striker's child.

The warm internationalism of the rally was demonstrated by the way his words received resounding applause — even before they were translated into English!

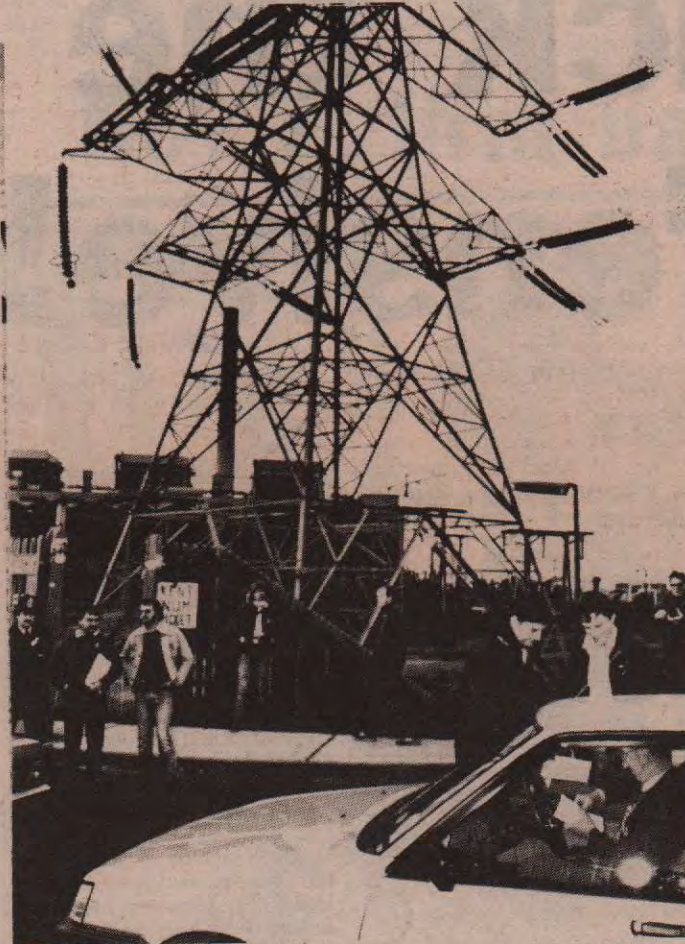
As he said in his final words, "your victory will be our victory."

Betty Heathfield spoke, representing Women Against Pit Closures. She described how her lifestyle had changed with women taking an active role in the strike. She called for more

women to join in the pickets, saying "the police don't know what to do." She also called for support from other workers, saying, "Give us more tangible evidence of your support. come on picket lines. You won't get into trouble, because we'll see that you don't."

Her appeal for solidarity action was echoed by Peter Heathfield and Arthur Scargill, calling for the TUC's policy to be implemented.

The rally was optimistic and defiant. In Arthur Scargill's words: "They can sequester our funds, they can imprison our officials, they can freeze our assets, but they can't sequester our minds, they can't imprison our principles and they can't freeze our will to win."



Mass picket at West Thurrock

Mass picket at West Thurrock

By Mick O'Sullivan

ON Monday, 12th, about 500 trade unionists turned up at a mass picket of West Thurrock power station, called by the South East Region TUC.

Since last week West Thurrock has been taken out of the national grid because the station workers have refused to accept scab coal or substitute oil. So in reality the picket was a rally.

Workers from the station punched several holes in the Tory lies about coal stocks. We were told in no uncertain terms how low they are. It is only a short while before they begin to reach a critical level.

Despite the lack of support for the miners from minority unions in the power stations, workers are beginning to take solidarity action and supporting the TUC guidelines.

It is absolutely essential that

picketing is spread not only in the London region but throughout the country's power stations. The lessons of the past months should be learnt and links must be made with workers within the power stations.

Leaflets and discussion with the activists are the best way to proceed in winning the active support of these workers.

Miners throughout the country should press for this action, mobilising the untapped reserves of places like South Wales to picket the power stations.

**MASS PICKET
of Littlebrook Power
Station**

**Wednesday November 21
6.45 am**

**For details of transport ring
582-0987**

Cortonwood cops rampage

By Helen Rigby

It was only after this offensive move by the police that any resistance began. And it was matched by an attack from the police side including missiles thrown from behind police lines at the pickets.

Only then did pickets retaliate with stones and milk bottles. The local people gave support to the pickets, bringing tea and sandwiches to the miners. Elaborate police manoeuvres backfired when the crashed two expensive Range Rovers into each other.

The police "defensive" action took the front line almost three-quarters of a mile away from the pit entrance.

The action of the police cannot be described as defensive. What they have tried to do physically is what Thatcher, MacGregor,

been trying to do since the start of the dispute — beat the miners to the ground.

Kinnock's pathetic performance and the lack of real action from the TUC can be as effective a weapon for the ruling class as police batons. The Labour Party and the TUC must give full physical and financial help to the NUM. All trade unionists should go to the picket lines and support the NUM.

Jail and terror in Leeds

By Alan McGauley

EILEEN Burke was arrested leaving a miners' benefit at a community centre in Leeds on October 12.

Throughout the evening the police had been hanging around outside the building waiting to harass people who were leaving.

Eileen was arrested on her way to get a taxi home to Chapeltown.

On the way to the police station police officers verbally abused Eileen and once inside

the station smashed her against the charge desk. Eileen was detained overnight at the station.

Twice during this period a male police officer entered her cell. The first time he threw water all over her, the second time he beat her up.

As a result of this totally unprovoked attack, Eileen suffered cuts, bruises, a black eye and a perforated ear-drum.

She was then charged with being drunk and disorderly. It is quite clear that this attack is part of a general policy of intimidation perpetrated against miners, their families and their supporters by the police.

Leeds women are asking people to support Eileen at her next court appearance which takes place at 10 am on November 21 at Leeds Magistrates Court, Leeds Town Hall. A creche will be available.



South Wales NUM HQ occupied at the time of the sequestration order. Photo: Martin Shakeshaft, IFL.

Class law against the trade unions

Clive Bradley surveys the armoury of laws being used as the Tories try to cripple the miners' and the car-workers' action

THE laws now being used against the car workers are from the latest round of Tory anti-union legislation — specifically the section of the Trade Union Act 1984 that came into force in September.

According to this law, it is unlawful to strike without first holding a secret ballot of all those workers involved in the action, not more than four weeks before the action is due to take place, and winning a majority.

The law specifies that the wording in the ballot must require a 'yes' or 'no' answer and must specifically ask if the individual is prepared to go on strike in breach of contract.

The law is directed at official strikes. If a strike is unofficial and the union dissociates itself, then it is not open to financial penalties. Or so it seems from the court cases last week.

The AUEW seized on this let-out clause last week. By 'proving' that the union had not given official backing, the AUEW leaders seem to have avoided confrontation with the courts, avoided financial penalties — and left the rank and file in the lurch.

This general principle — devising the laws so as to try to force the union leaders to police their own members — is typical of the Tory anti-union laws.

The laws do not aim to destroy the trade unions but to hobble them. They do not aim to crush and reduce to dust all the organisations of the labour movement, as often occurs under brutal military dictatorships.

They do aim to prevent trade unions from being effective, to isolate the militants in the rank and file, and to deter union leaders from organising action to defend their members' interests.

Europe

By now trade union law in Britain is probably the most reactionary in Western Europe. The Employment Acts of 1980 and 1982 codified and extended many of the attempts made by judges over the previous decade to weaken the power of unions to take industrial action.

The 1982 Act removed union immunity from legal action — i.e. being taken to court and sued for damages — unless the action was in furtherance of a trade dispute. To be a 'trade dispute', action must relate 'wholly or mainly' to: terms and conditions of employment; physical conditions of work; engagement or non-engagement of workers; sacking; suspension; work duties; discipline; trade union rights; negotiation and consultation machinery; industrial relations procedure.

That means, in practice, that industrial action is unlawful if:

*It is in support of other workers, i.e. if it is solidarity action.

*It is political, for example, against privatisation.

*It is to do with a dispute

overseas, i.e. if it's international solidarity action.

If workers persuade other workers employed in a different company to boycott supplies to their own employer — i.e. encourage those workers to break commercial contracts — it is unlawful.

'Secondary' picketing — picketing at a place other than your own place of work — is unlawful. And there are legal guidelines as to the size of pickets, which it is up to 'police discretion' to enforce.

Sue the union

Private individuals — meaning individual employers or individual scabs — have to take the initiative to sue the union. Their first resort is to get an injunction to stop the union taking action. If the union defies the injunction it is guilty of contempt of court and can be fined. If the fine is not paid the union's funds can be 'sequestered'.

Unions can also be sued for damages — i.e. employers' losses due to a strike — on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the union, with a maximum of £250,000.

Legal immunity from such damages was won by the unions in 1906 — the fight for it was an important part of the foundation of the Labour Party. So British labour law has now gone back to its state at the turn of the century in this respect.

The closed shop is also severely restricted. Anyone with a 'deeply held personal conviction' against joining the union is legally protected, and can sue the union, employer or named individuals in the event of reprisals for refusing to join.

To have legal status, a closed shop agreement must have been approved by 80% of the workers covered by it, and 85% of those voting.

In the new law — in effect since November 1 — if existing closed shops are not reaffirmed by 80% of those involved in a ballot, people who refuse the union cannot be sacked. If an anti-union individual is sacked, s/he will be entitled to compensation of between £12,000 and £17,000.

It has been called, rightly, a scab's charter.

The sum total of these legal restrictions is to make strike action more difficult, and effective strike action almost impossible.

Much of the real effect of the anti-union laws results from the threat of court action.

Timid union leaders are less likely to organise strike action that might result in huge financial penalties. Because they can

avoid such penalties simply by refusing to give official backing to potentially unlawful industrial action, it is an easy matter for the union leaders to save their unions' — and their own — skins by scabbing on their rank and file.

So strikes can more easily be isolated and made ineffective — with the collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy.

The rules on secret balloting further tie workers' hands. In mass meetings, the arguments and weight of rank and file militants and shop stewards can be decisive in generating confidence for militant action. By taking big decisions out of the hands of mass meetings, the laws are designed to isolate the militants.

To write laws and vote them through Parliament is one thing, however, and to enforce them is another. The actual implementation of the anti-union laws has been patchy.

And at least until now, the major weak link in resisting the laws in these test cases has not been individual union leaderships. (The AUEW and EETPU are exceptions, but Duffy and Hammond are the extreme right of the trade union leadership). The major weak link has been the central leadership of the TUC.

The NGA last year resisted the law, but was abjectly betrayed by the TUC.

The NUM leadership has

stood firm against several uses of the courts. These have generally not been to do with the anti-union laws — the sequestration of the national union's funds was not, for example.

The laws were used in South Wales, however. The NUM stood firm — but nothing was done to organise mass resistance to the sequestration.

A meeting of the national leaderships of the major left wing unions came to nothing.

That inaction paved the way for later court action. It gave the green light for a big Tory offensive — using the anti-union laws (as in British Leyland) or such other laws as suit their purposes (as in Cammell Lairds or with the NUM nationally).

It is significant that the new law on secret ballots has been used so quickly — by a major nationalised industry who almost certainly will have consulted the government.

Cautious at first

Employers were cautious at first about using the 1980 and 1982 Acts; but now they are emboldened by the trade unions' failure to resist court actions.

The Tories think — with some evidence — that the labour movement is not equipped to prevent them going in for the kill on the legal front.

Between the introduction of the 1980 and 1982 Acts, holding back on actually using them was an important element in Tory strategy. They had burned their fingers with the Industrial Relations Act — and so they moved slowly, choosing their moment.

In contrast to the late 'sixties (against In Place of Strife), and the early 'seventies (against the Industrial Relations Act) no action was prepared by the labour movement against the new laws.

Socialist Organiser was an isolated voice trying to raise the alarm. We organised a Mobilis-

ing Committee in Defence of Trade Union Rights — to try to prepare militants for the action that would be needed. Many union activists at the time believed that the union laws would prove inoperable.

TUC inadequate

When the TUC did take action it was pathetically inadequate: they produced leaflets which argued that the laws were as bad for employers as for unions, since they would 'cause industrial unrest'.

And throughout the introduction of the laws, the TUC and many Labour leaders have maintained a 'respect' for the law — a respect that came home to roost with a vengeance last year when they scabbed on the NGA.

The majority of the trade union bureaucracy have been completely unprepared to fight the Tories. Partly this is in their nature. But the fact remains that in earlier battles for trade union liberty they have not been so timid.

The recession has taken its toll on what limited combativity the union leaders have had in the past. Also, the last Labour government co-opted the trade union leadership into administering an anti-working class policy to resolve the economic crisis in the interests of the bosses.

It healed a partial split between the Labour Party and trade union leaders that had developed in the sixties — when, in a better economic situation, the trade union leaders felt more room for manoeuvre, and when piecemeal bargaining could get some results.

Cowed by the Tories, the trade union leaders now put priority on restoring official collaboration with government.

They would prefer a Labour government, and think it can best be won by a show of respectability and moderation. If they

can't get a Labour government, they will try to cooperate with the Tories instead.

Inaction and open scabbing by the union tops makes it very difficult for the rank and file to organise the resistance that is necessary. When the TUC fails to call on strike action to defend a particular union — the NGA, the NUM, the car workers in the immediate future — it is very easy for militants who do want to fight to think there is no hope and nothing can be done.

A national union like the NUM making a stand makes a lot of difference. But just making a stand doesn't necessarily guarantee that the laws are defeated.

We need to work for strike action on a national scale against the anti-union laws and in defence of unions attacked through them or by any other use of the courts.

Rank and file

But we also need to build action now which can challenge present and future use of the laws in practice. That means organising the rank and file militants.

In the here and now, organising mass pickets of power stations is desperately necessary — and unlawful. Effective mass picketing can be a step towards challenging the laws and making them useless.

Any solidarity strike is unlawful. Militants must argue for such action and prepare the rank and file to keep on fighting when the laws are used.

We must be prepared for unofficial strike action. We cannot count on union leaders to stand firm.

And we need to prepare to combat the police who are used to enforce the laws on picketing.

A concerted campaign for union democracy is also vital to prevent the strike weapon being blunted from the top to avoid confrontation with the law, and to replace sell-out leaders with militant fighters.



NGA mass picket at Warrington. The TUC left them in the lurch. (Photo: John Smith, IFL)

Workers' control in the mines

Martin Barclay traces the argument for workers' control in the mines, as against bureaucratic forms of nationalisation, back to 1912.

"THE Bill [to nationalise the mines] must be judged not from the standpoint of the 'community' as at present organised, or 'our country' or 'nation', but from that of the working class militant."

"The Bill would place sections of the working class in the hands of a state servile to capitalist interests."

This was Noah Ablett speaking in a debate about the nationalisation of the mines in 1912. He was opposing George Barker, an executive member of the South Wales Miners' Federation (the 'Fed') and a member of the Independent Labour Party. Barker claimed that:

"The case for nationalisation will depend very largely upon the practicability of the financial proposals."

According to the proposals supported by Barker, the pits would be purchased from the private coalowners at a cost of £150 million because 'confiscation wasn't British'. The Minister of Mines would control the mines, the House of Commons would control him, and the people would control the Commons.

Savings would be made by having one management instead of many. Increased profits would lead to higher wages and better conditions.

Next Step

This version of nationalisation had been around for about 25 years. Not until 'The Miners' Next Step' was published in 1912 was it seriously challenged. This declared "That our objective be to build up an organisation that will ultimately take over the mining industry, and carry it on in the interests of the workers."

In the debate, Ablett, one of the authors of the pamphlet, argued that the mines must be run and controlled by the miners themselves. He pointed out that the Minister for Mines would be in the pocket of the coal-owners until they had been completely paid off.

In terms that are very familiar today, Barker accused him of arguing for 'industrial anarchy'. Ted Gill, seconding Barker, also attacked him for being 'parochial' — "It is in the endeavour to get away from conditions that made the Mid-Rhondda scenes [i.e. the Tonypandy riots of 1911] possible that we stand here tonight advocating this Bill."

Tonypandy and the year long strike of 15,000 miners of the Cambrian Combine Co. had

brought things to a head. On one side in the 'Fed' there was the old Liberal leadership, sitting on their hands as wages fell behind. On the other was a rising socialist and syndicalist Unofficial Reform Movement, calling for a democratic union with militant policies.

'The Miners' Next Step' was a declaration of war on the established leaders. The pamphlet played a large part in the agitation for a minimum wage and the first national miners' strike in 1912.

In the shadow of this successful strike, the debate from which I have quoted took place at the Judges Hall in Trelelaw in the Rhondda. It was a dress rehearsal for the debate on nationalisation around the Sankey Commission in 1919.

The Commission was set up by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, to look at the state of the industry and the question of nationalisation. In reality it was a successful attempt to buy time.

The pits had been controlled by the Government in the war, and the problem was to return them to the private coalowners without bringing the wrath of the Triple Alliance of miners, railway workers and transport workers down on the government's head.

The leaders of the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) were also afraid of trouble. They sold the Sankey Commission to the miners as a way of getting rid of the coal-owners without the hardship and upheaval of a long strike.

Efficient

The case they put to Sankey was basically the same as the one put by Barker in 1912. Robert Smillie, MFGB President, told the 1919 conference that: "We have no desire to do anything against the interests of the nation. We desire to do everything in our power to reconstruct the nation in order to make it possible for the people to live a higher and nobler life..."

The MFGB's main argument was that nationalisation would make coal production more efficient and thus benefit 'the nation', bosses and workers alike.

William Straker, the MFGB spokesman, stressed that worker representatives would be involved at pit, district and national level — with the job of pushing for higher productivity. "Pit will be compared with pit, district with district, system



"On behalf of the people" — but in the interests of capitalism

with system...in such a way that every part will be tested..."

So "...neither inefficient men nor unsuitable systems will be retained". Managers would only have to consult with union representatives — there was to be no direct control by miners themselves.

What would be the benefits to the working miner? The national wages structure, built up in the war, would stay. A six hour day and extra welfare benefits would improve conditions.

Vernon Hartshorn, a South Wales miners' leader, warned that if the proposals were rejected then 'bolshivism' would sweep through the rank and file.

In opposition to the MFGB's plan the Unofficial Movement published the pamphlet 'Industrial Democracy for Miners'. As a sequel to 'The Miners' Next Step' it put flesh on the bones of the arguments for workers' control of the pits.

It assumed that the MFGB's case would be accepted by the government, but argued that it had to be extended. The MFGB should take control of the actual running of the mines.

The Pit Committee, made up of miners, pit officials, and managers would be the heart of the scheme. The Colliery Committee would include delegates from this Pit committee and also from the surface workers and craftsmen. These two committees would be responsible for the day to day running of the pit.

The miners' lodge would supervise the running of these committees and lay down basic guidelines for them. Production targets would be set by a central plan, but responsibility for production would stay at the local level.

Union district executive

"After nationalisation... it was the same management with the same aptitudes for carrying out the coalowners' policy and not a socialist policy..."

committees would become 'boards of production' to co-ordinate each district. The MFGB national executive would supervise the districts and also advise the Minister for Mines.

All of these committees would be elected by the rank and file miners, and would be accountable to regular conferences.

This whole scheme tipped the official proposals on their head and placed power firmly at pit level with the working miner. The authors also argued that even if nationalisation were not accepted by the government, this direct control could and should be won by squeezing out the private coalowners, like toothpaste out of a tube.

It was the old idea of 'encroaching control', set out by Noah Ablett the syndicalist. Bit by bit, the rank and file could make it impossible for management to manage by restricting output, by nuisance strikes and, if necessary, by national strikes. Slowly management would

posals in the Sankey Report.

Interest in nationalisation and workers' control waned as pay packets grew. The government played for time and then, in August, rejected nationalisation.

Vernon Hartshorn commented bitterly that the miners "have been deceived, betrayed, duped".

Lloyd George did not hand back the mines to the coal-owners straight away — that would have been pushing it a bit too far. Instead he waited until the industrial depression in 1921 which would make strike action less likely.

In the meantime plans had been drawn up to move the army into the coalfields.

When the mines were handed back, the owners locked-out the miners and demanded a cut in wages. The MFGB called on the Triple Alliance to strike, but the railwaymen's leader Jimmy Thomas called off the action at the last minute. This was 'Black Friday'.

BlackFriday also put paid to Ablett's idea of 'encroaching control'. It was a strategy that could only work when the industry was expanding. With up to 50% of miners laid off in the Rhondda, in 1921 'encroaching control' was a non-starter.

Once again unemployment was used to drive down the pay and conditions of those in work.

After the defeat of Black Friday, the Unofficial Movement

Control



hadn't been revised...it was the same management with the same aptitudes for carrying out Powell Duffryn [the coal-owners'] policy and not a socialist policy...after nationalisation."

Across the coalfield, managers from the old and hated Powell Duffryn Group had been appointed to positions of management in the NCB. These 'PD men' even got their hands on the anthracite area, something they had failed to do before nationalisation. £375 million had been paid out to the coalowners nationally, and £260 million to modernise pits that had been worked on sweated labour for decades.

By 1950 31 pits had closed in South Wales, 43 followed in the 1950s and 74 in the 1960s. It was only in the 1970s that the NUM leadership began to take pit closures seriously.

Slipping back

On wages, the late '60s saw the miners gradually slipping back.

The two strikes in 1972 and 1974 pushed wages up, but they continued to slip back in the late '70s.

At an NUM forum on industrial democracy in 1977, Mike Griffin, then the secretary of Penrhynwceiber Lodge, commented:

"...to think we are gathered here listening to this subject that I have heard now for the last thirty years, at a time when the wages of mineworkers are in one of the lowest states they had been for the last five years."

"All we have ever had is what we have fought for, and the Coal Board as a nationalised concern have never given us anything..."

"If they want production committees let them say so. Don't dress it up in fancy clothes and call it participation and democracy..."

Miners, like any other workers, have nothing to gain from this kind of 'participation'. workers should have nothing to do with supervising their own exploitation.

The steel industry is the best example. 'Worker directors' sit on committees and scream just as loud as management for more production, more efficiency and more scab coal to keep the furnaces open. They have become management's right arm.

But, just as we need our own workers' plan for coal (and steel) so we need our own ideas about industrial democracy. Workers' control in the mining industry is a debate long forgotten — it needs to be revived.

Without it we will be forced to relive 1972, 1974 and 1984 time and again winning back the same old ground. With it we can set about building a real workers' government.

"In writing this article I have leant heavily on Mike Woodhouse's article 'Mines for the Nation or Mines for the Miners?' in *Llafur*, Vol 2, No 3, and also on Hywel Francis and David Smith's history of the South Wales miners, 'The Fed'.

IN LAST week's article I argued that Asia, Africa and South and Central America were not always 'underdeveloped'; on the contrary, until the rise of the capitalist world economy, many areas in those continents had more flourishing civilisations than Western Europe.

The decisive turning point in creating the present pattern of the world came in the 16th century.

A new economic system — capitalism, the system of wage labour and of continuous accumulation and reinvestment of profits — emerged decisively from the neo-feudal societies of Western Europe.

With it came a technological revolution, with printing, more developed firearms, and ocean navigation.

For centuries until then the central networks of trade had been the coastal shipping routes of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. But now the cities of the Arab world — until then the greatest cities on earth — and of Italy were eclipsed. The new centres of trade were the seafaring powers of the Atlantic — Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, England. They also established themselves in the Indian Ocean.

Karl Marx summed this up as follows: *'The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, and the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, are all things which characterise the dawn of the era of capitalist production [in the 16th century] ...'*

'The colonies provided a market for the budding manufactures, and a vast increase in accumulation which was guaranteed by the mother country's monopoly of the market. The treasures captured outside Europe by undisguised looting, enslavement and murder flowed back to the mother-country and were turned into capital there'.

Civilisation

The rise of capitalist civilisation in Western Europe thus went together with the destruction of previous civilisations in other parts of the world.

Black Africa's particular blight was the slave trade. "To discuss trade between Africans and Europeans in the four centuries before colonial rule [i.e. from the late 15th to the late 19th century] is virtually to discuss slave trade", as Walter Rodney* puts it.

Millions of Africans were forced into the status of human cattle and shipped overseas. Probably more than ten million arrived alive in the Americas or Europe; maybe as many again

TO BE SOLD & LET BY PUBLIC AUCTION.

On MONDAY the 18th of MAY, 1829.

UNDER THE TREES.

FOR SALE,

THE THREE FOLLOWING:

SLAVES,

HANNIBAL, about 30 Years old, an excellent House Servant, of Good Character.
WILLIAM, about 35 Years old, a Labourer.
NANCY, an excellent House Servant and Nurse.

The MEN to be sold to "LEITCH'S" Estate, and the WOMAN to Mrs. B. SMYTH

On the usual conditions of the Bazaar finding them in Food, Clo, &c. and Medical.

THE AUCTIONEER.

MALE AND FEMALE SLAVES,

ROBERT BAGLEY, about 30 Years old, a good House Servant.
WILLIAM BAGLEY, about 30 Years old, a good House Servant.
JOHN ARMS, about 30 Years old, a Labourer.
JAMES ANTON, about 30 Years old, a Labourer.
PHILIP, an excellent Fisherman.
HARRY, about 27 Years old, a good House Servant.
ELIZA, a Young Woman of good Character, good in House Work and the Nursery.
ELIZA, an excellent Washerwoman.
FANNY, about 15 Years old, House Servant.
SARAH, about 15 Years old, House Servant.

Also for Sale, at Eleven o'clock,
Fine Rice, Gram, Paddy, Books, Muslins,
Needles, Pins, Ribbons, &c. &c.

AT ONE O'CLOCK, A CELEBRATED ENGLISH HORSE.

J. BUCHER,

Why poverty?

The white man as cannibal

In the second article of a series on the causes of Third World poverty, Martin Thomas looks at the history of Africa

died en route.

The population of Africa stagnated from 1650 to 1850, while Europe's nearly tripled and Asia's more than doubled.

The industries and trade which already existed in Africa were destroyed and displaced by the new trade of human beings against European manufactured goods. The African peoples were split up into small warring groups and statelets, as rival chiefs would make war on each other in order to capture prisoners for the slave trade.

With the European traders, from their coastal forts and bases, also encouraging these wars and divisions, the African peoples had no chance of establishing relatively strong, large states such as had arisen in Europe.

The slave trade was also the underpinning of modern anti-black racism. Suspicion and fear of strangers dates back long before the 16th century, and anti-Jewish racism was already well established in Europe. But systematic, widespread prejudice and discrimination based on skin colour started with the slave trade.

The white slave-traders and slave-owners, adjusting the ideology of the 'rights of man' to fit in with their economic activity, declared that black people were naturally primitive and inferior. Even worse, some black people were bludgeoned into accepting this, or half-accepting it. Racism itself, in turn, became something of an economic factor in the underdevelopment of black Africa.

With the decline of slavery in the 19th century a new chapter opened. In a sudden 'scramble' at the end of the 19th century, practically all of Africa was

divided up as colonies for the European powers.

The economic system established under colonial rule had three main features: limited capitalist enterprise, cash crop farming linked to European trading companies, and forced labour.

Mines — gold and diamonds in South Africa, copper in Zambia, etc. — and capitalist farms or estates (especially in the areas where many whites settled, like South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya) employed wage-



Terror and torture were fundamental to slavery as a system

labour.

Railways and ports were also built. Rail networks were started in the 1880s and 1890s, and mostly completed by the early 1930s.

Capital investment in black Africa was, however, much lower than elsewhere in the Third World. Up to 1930, for example, only 2 per cent of British capitalism's overseas investment was in Africa, while 14% was in India, 43% in the rest of the Empire, and 22% in South America.

The wage labour was often casual labour; and the methods primitive.

The great majority of the African population were still formally independent peasants. But they were driven increasingly from traditional subsistence farming (i.e. producing mainly for their own consumption) towards cash crops.

"The African peasant", as Walter Rodney records, "went in for cash-crop farming for many reasons. A minority eagerly took up the opportunity to continue to acquire European goods... Many others... took to earning cash because they had to pay various taxes in money or because they were forced to work..."

"Examples of Africans literally being forced to grow cash crops by gun and whip were to

be found in Tanganyika under German rule, in Portuguese colonies, and in French Equatorial Africa and the French Sudan in the 1930s...

"The laws and by-laws by which peasants in British East Africa were required to maintain minimum acreages of cash crops like cotton and groundnuts were in effect forms of coercion by the colonial state, although they are not normally considered under the heading of 'forced labour'."

Forced labour was also used to build railways, roads and ports.

These elements were combined in different ways and in different proportions in different parts of the continent. But they meshed together in a single system — and one which had very little impetus towards raising productivity.

Force was required to tear Africans away from their traditional livelihoods and create a labour force for capitalist exploitation. But the forcible methods of the colonial regimes did not completely destroy the traditional structures of the African economy, nor were they intended to.

Collaboration with tribal chiefs provided the Europeans with a cheap method of administration. And the continuation of some subsistence farming allowed them to pay extremely low wages and prices for cash crops. Subsistence farming would keep the African workers alive, while wages or cash crop sales enabled them to pay their taxes and debts and buy a few European goods.

The companies which controlled trade in the cash crops, like Unilever, brought huge profits back to Europe. Capitalist profiteers geared themselves into pre-capitalist forms of exploitation. The Africans suffered the evils both of capitalism and of the pre-capitalist forms.

The Europeans certainly did not bring civilisation to Africa. Hardly any schools or hospitals were built for the black population until after the Second World War. In Nigeria in the 1930s, for example, there were 12 hospitals for 4,000 Europeans and 52 hospitals for at least 40 million Africans. Literacy was higher in Nigeria than in other colonies, yet only 12% in 1952.

There was a flurry of 'development' spending after World War 2. Partly the colonial powers were responding to the fact that the old colonial economy was breaking down (under the impact of the drastic decline in primary-product prices in the 1930s) and something of a permanent wage-worker class had emerged.

Also, they became convinced that independence was inevitable, and made efforts to create a reliable African middle class to which power could be transferred.

But it was too little, too late, and not very useful anyway. After winning independence the new African states had a terrible heritage to overcome.

* *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*

The 'New Realism' lives, it's still



Eric Hammond of the EETPU, a leading 'new realist'. Photo: John Harris

WHAT are we to make of the state of the class struggle after the TUC and Labour Party conferences?

The conferences themselves were all very confusing. On the Monday, the Labour Party was deciding that, "It fully supports trade unions drawn into confrontation with the police" and voting for 'police out of the coalfields'.

By the Thursday, the delegates were voting down support for industrial action in solidarity with unions penalised under the Tories' anti-union legislation, but supporting illegal action against rate capping!

There was the same vibrant emotional support for the miners at the TUC — combined with a heavy vote to get back into bed with the Tories on the NEDC.

Carte blanche

Criticism of Len Murray's handling of the NGA dispute was combined with reaffirmation of carte blanche for the TUC to do exactly the same again if another union was hauled before the judges.

At both conferences there were powerful ovations for Neil Kinnock...and for Arthur Scargill.

Certainly there has been a big change since this time last year.

Then, of course, Len Murray, Alistair Graham and Frank Chapple were lionised. The new realism was all the rage. The dream ticket was the talk of the town.

In the aftermath of the crushing defeat in the June election there was a lemming-like rush to the right in the top echelons of the Party, with holy water and Hobsbawm to exorcise the left.

By March of this year, the General Council had worn out the knees of several pairs of trousers. We had seen the renewal of talks with Tebbit, the retreat over the British Telecom privatisation fight, the production of a formal justification for collaboration in the TUC Future Strategy document and the casting of the NGA to the wolves.

"St Len Murray", crowed the Sun as Neil Kinnock took time off from playing the fool with Tracey Ullman to justify the witch-hunt, go on retreat in a Trappist monastery during the Stockport Messenger affair and do everything within his limited powers to undermine the struggle of Liverpool City Council.

This sharp turn right intensified the demoralisation which already existed at all levels of the movement. It gave the green light to the Tories and the

employers to put the boot in.

The GCHQ affair, the appointment of MacGregor, the pit closure plans, the provocation over Cortonwood, showed the total inadequacy of Murray-Kinnock politics in the face of Britain's crisis and Thatcher's strategy for its solution.

Beneath Murray's talk of the fruitful collaboration between TUC and Tory governments in the past and Kinnock's echoing of the Stalinist professor's cant about the 'new working class', they had taken time to understand neither.

For unlike them, Thatcher is serious, sophisticated and insatiable in her pursuit of the interests of her class. She is really determined to reduce the real wages of every worker in Britain and effect a cumulative deterioration in the way of life of the majority of its people.

She fully understands that central to this project is the task of decisively weakening the unions, which she sees as the main barrier to unleashing the energies of a new race of freebooters and pirates. The existing leadership of the labour movement has grossly underestimated the degree to which the present government is determined to transform that movement's practice and destroy its legitimacy as an accepted estate of capitalist society.

Thatcher has told them time and time again that she is going to tear their playhouse down.

She will have trade unionists who see their interests as identical to those of their employers.

She will have unions which perceive lower wages as essential to higher profitability; strikes as harmful to the national interest; involvement in politics

as minor and incidental.

She will create trade unions on the US model, with a small percentage of the workforce in membership, with power highly reined in the hands of a professional apparatus which sees its concerns governed by the bounds of industry, its role in government negligible, coming out once every five years for Reagan or Mondale-style politicians in return for the most specific and limited concessions.

Mrs Thatcher must have a working class that believes, like their American cousins, that what is good for General Motors is good for Joe Palooka.

That is why Thatcher is not prepared to formally use the union leaders to do the job of disciplining the working class. Even if you let them put their cloak over a puddle for you, you give them some legitimacy. You owe them perhaps a trifle.

Transformation

That is the old discredited policy of appeasement. Unemployment and direct appeals to the members work better.

A long-term fundamental transformation is required. And the leaders of the TUC and Labour Party are part of that transformation.

Their policies of playing a subservient role in the management of capitalism are therefore not on the agenda. Tripartism or a 1974-style Labour government are, at the moment, science fiction.

GCHQ vividly illustrated the bankruptcy of the new realism. No matter how much the General Council distanced itself from the Labour Party, dropped Alternative Economic Strategies in favour of piecemeal negotiations with the Tories, and offered formal 'no strike' clauses as well as informally orchestrated returns to work, the Tories granted no concessions and no return to even marginal influence on government.

The miners' strike changed the situation dramatically.

It showed, first of all, the élan and confidence of the Thatcher government in the aftermath of the election, the NGA and the past failures of the Scargill leadership to take the membership with it.

The Tories had retreated in 1981. In 1984 they were ready to take on what they saw as a

John McIlroy looks at the state of the class struggle after the TUC and Labour Party conferences, and takes issue with Socialist Organiser on the call for a general strike.

crucial group of workers whose defeat could lead to a breakthrough all along the line.

Secondly, the strike illustrated the potential for a fight-back which existed in the ranks of trade unionism. And thirdly, it showed the paralysis of the TUC and Labour Party leaders, standing around in the no man's land between the trenches.

The miners' strike is absolutely central to an understanding of class politics right now.

The strike has its weak side. It is important to assess that soberly. The most decisive left leadership of a national union this century has been unable to mobilise the whole membership of the country's most powerful union.

That the majority in a crucial coalfield could openly declare for the Tories shows the blows that not only the NUM but the whole movement have taken since the all-out struggles of 1972 and 1974.

That two sequestrations of NUM funds could take place without one single workplace striking in solidarity demonstrates harshly the limitations of the struggle. The Tories have won the battle for solidarity hands down so far.

The steel unions and workers in many power stations are in the hands of the employers. TGWU drivers and dockers have ignored picket lines and unloaded coal.

The firmness of the railway workers in the Midlands has generated no wider response.

Docks

The two dock strikes were built on sectional problems, although intimately related to the miners' strike. As no attempt was made to build solidarity into the spine of these actions, they fragmented in limited compromise.

Not one union has linked its own pay claim to the miners' fight. Nor has there been strong pressure from the ranks for this.

The NACODS affair witnessed the normal rhythms of sectionalism temporarily disrupted, but reimposed as the prospect of a clear-cut and frightening break to the uncharted shores of solidarity presented itself.

It would be very stupid to ignore all this. The strike at the moment is on the defensive. It stands on the heroic principled endurance of the majority of the miners.

It needs to be given a new impetus and a new direction based on developing its strong side.

The strike has transformed the way of life and the way the world is observed in the coalfields and far wider. The role played by women is only the most important example.

The strike has opened up basic questions about the state, the government, the police, the judiciary — the capitalist system — to millions.

It has made thousands of socialists.

The demands of the strikers challenge not only the Thatcher government but also capitalist political economy. They are lodged deep in the consciousness of wide strata who have complete faith in their generals.

Among activists in the broader movement, support for this strike has been wider and more intense than for any comparable struggle this century. Its central demands have been taken up by a wide current of union and Labour Party activists, although they have not been able to take their members with them into action.

The strike has acted as a stimulus and inspiration for the women's movement, for black workers, for gays, and for those combating Thatcher's onslaught on Britain's cities.

Background

This is the essential background in which we have to locate what happened at Brighton and Blackpool.

The development of the industrial struggle since March has influenced and disturbed the balance of forces within the Labour Party and the TUC. It has not as yet transformed it.

The real position of Kinnock and Hattersley is well summed up in RW Johnson's description in this month's New Socialist, of the NGA, ASLEF and the miners' strike as 'alarms and diversions' from the essential task of putting on a responsible front and establishing adequate right wing credentials to get Glenys into No. 10.

Because of the strength of the strike and its support within the movement, Kinnock and Hattersley are not able to come straight out with this.

Nor are they able to accept completely Alan Watkins advice in the Observer. But they agree completely:

"Kinnock can still gain if he

stays on the touchline, a likeable spectator, deploring the violence on the field so regrettably displayed by Mr Scargill and Mrs Thatcher."

Kinnock has to ride two horses: condemn the violence of strikers and of police.

Similarly with the TUC. Just as after GCHQ they had to withdraw from the NEDC and call a day of action, so the miners' strike put a stop to any forceful formal articulation of the new realism at Brighton.

The General Council need to exemplify their independence and show they have something to offer the government. They want to keep in touch with the ranks by formally supporting the miners. That shows the strong side of the strike.

The gutting of the original resolutions to Congress and the compromise by which solidarity action would have to be agreed upon by individual unions represent the weaknesses of the strike.

In other words, it would be wrong to see the TUC congress as representing in any way a move to the left. It represented rather a limited pause in last year's rightward turn and a change in its form.

"It would be wrong to see the TUC congress as representing in any way a move to the left"

The compromise over the miners gave the right boltholes from solidarity and the General Council a limited role in the dispute. It also gave the left legitimacy on which to build.

But without the grandiose strategies of 1983, the piecemeal decisions on the anti-union laws, on NEDC, on no-strike deals and on NATO represented a continued right-wing drift.

This analysis is underpinned by wider developments in trade unionism.

The view that the 1984 Congress signified the leadership's acceptance of the Tory anti-union laws is reinforced by the collaboration in Tory-imposed ballots on political funds by unions like the T&G, in violation of past conference decisions.

The EETPU's strident advocacy of 'no strike' single-union agreements is being echoed in practice by the AUEW, GMB, ATU, and TGWU.

ASTMS exemplifies the dynamic of once 'left'-led unions. Weeks before the postponed conference, the National Executive voted to accept lock, stock and barrel the provisions of the 1984 Trade Union Act: secret postal ballots, ballot on the political funds, the lot.

They even decided to ask the TUC to reconsider its decision not to accept funds from the Tories for ballots. All this without any consultation with the Divisions.

Branches which don't hold the Tory strike ballots have been told that their action will be unofficial. Only two members of the National Executive voted against a circular branding the Broad Left in ASTMS as anti-



Taken picket at Ravenscraig as the lorries roll in day and night. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

the conferences

not only spreading

union.

All this was not on grounds of principle. The EETPU are stealing people who should be ASTMS members with their single-union agreements, so we are told.

We have to get in there — we are lectured — and recruit the £35,000-a-year 'worker'.

To this end, while organisations like the Broad Left are opposed, a Management and Professional Council is being established.

The New Realism not only lives — it is spreading.

Wilson

A similar analysis can be applied to the Labour Party conference. The spirit of support for the miners was irresistible. But under its cloak, the crucial ingredients of the old right-wing strategy of Wilson and Callaghan have been wheeled onto the stage.

The economic strategy document, 'A Future that Works', proposes essentially little more than mild reflation.

Incomes policy has been restored to the agenda. Hattersley speaks out against Clause 4 and public ownership. The motion on renationalisation without compensation is voted down, so is the 35 hour week.

Take the miners away, and the real themes of the week were responsibility and realism. The hidden agenda was the need for policies acceptable to the state and the employers.

The thrust of the conference over black sections and over Ireland was *reactionary*. The block vote played a big role, but only half the constituencies were for black sections. The right wing control on the National Executive was maintained.

Whilst Kinnock was turned back on re-selection — a stupid adventure by the leadership — the left made no progress on constitutional issues.

The resolutions on defence showed the limits of radical sentiment — get rid of nuclear weapons but increase defence spending and boost NATO!

This analysis is reinforced by events since conference. The MPs, for example, felt sufficiently emboldened to ignore the sentiments of the Constituency Labour Parties almost completely in the Shadow Cabinet elections. The low votes for Benn and Heffer demonstrate not only the majority of MPs' contempt for democracy, but also their increased willingness to take on the Left and to take risks on reselection.

The *Financial Times* acidly remarked: "Should Kinnock and his centrist supporters wish to vote with the Left they would find themselves outvoted 13 to six".

Similarly Kinnock's statement on the NUM's contact with Libya was an attack on Scargill, somewhat surprising in its speed and precision.

Take away the miners, and despite the strong Left sentiment — as at the TUC — the Labour Party conference reaffirmed the move back towards the old politics disrupted by the 'never again' radicalisation of 1979-81.

The voice of Hattersley telling the delegates that we "should not promise to do everything or

pretend we can do it all at once" was the authentic voice of Wilson and Callaghan. It was received with respect.

Of course, you can't take the miners away, nor the Left mood in many Constituency Labour Parties and unions they have engendered.

The strike is a permanent factor of dislocation for the existing leadership of the labour movement and their attempt to reimpose the domination of their pitiful politics. It is an opportunity for the Left. Deepening the strike deepens that dislocation.

The situation is more hopeful than last year. With our movement's best troops committed to the field, it is also more dangerous.

Despite the odds stacked against us, the next few months offer an opportunity for socialists that we have not had for years. Over the strike the right wing are on the defensive.

It would also be wrong to overestimate the coherence of their strategy in the unions. On the political level they are strapped by Thatcher's refusal to talk. There is as yet simply no significant evidence of a desire by the right wing union leaders to desert Labour for the SDP.

The collaborationist appetites of the EETPU may have a certain rationale, given the relatively protected nature of the core of their membership and their integration with the employers like the Central Electricity Generating Board. A union like ASTMS can expect conflict and more conflict, with employers withdrawing recognition and members deserting, even if they do opt for open collaboration.

The first task is to strengthen the miners' strike. If the miners go down there will be a blitzkrieg across industry, and a decisive move to the right.

Alternatively, of course, a defeat for Thatcher will blast not only her government but her



The 'new realists' commemorate Tolpuddle. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (IFL)

party to smithereens. Since 1945 the stakes have never been higher.

The strike itself is at an important stage. The right wing on the NUM executive is stirring from hibernation and calling for a ballot. The back-to-work movement has received an important small boost in recent weeks. As the Tories go ahead on the opinion polls, Labour and TUC leaders will redouble their efforts at a settlement.

Eccles

The comments of TUC chair Jack Eccles and Bill Whatley of USDAW were extremely revealing.

The Coal Board will pull itself together for a further offensive, led by hunger, the Christmas bribes, and the refusal to negotiate further. There will be a further assault on funds.

A main strand will be undermining the strike leadership. Even the cautious *Financial Times* recently headed an editorial, "Isolating Mr Scargill".

The strike must break out of its isolation. That's the priority.

To call for a general strike as an immediate demand is pissing in the wind. It is simply not good enough correctly to analyse a most unprepossessing general political situation, the need for patient work and a long haul, and then glibly to talk of short cuts which can potentially propel a workers' government into power in a matter of months

at most.

Such utopian dreaming distracts from the real problems, is symptomatic of what is wrong with the far left, and further weakens its slender influence.

The concrete steps forward are to stop deliveries of coal to power stations, to stop imports, and to stop coal being used to generate electricity. If just the last of these could be achieved, it would constitute an immense step forward.

It hasn't been achieved after nearly nine months, not because of bad luck but because of the overall unfavourable balance of forces, which cannot be conjured away by incantation.

The second main thrust in breaking the strike from its debilitating isolation has to be a struggle for other groups of workers to take advantage of the position and to strike now for their own demands.

The third thrust has three components.

TUC

The TUC has to be pressurised to deliver the goods promised at Brighton, but miners have to be warned against TUC involvement in negotiations. The question of a one-day general strike — a strike which would not break the bounds of trade union normality but which would constitute a demonstration of solidarity, hearten the miners, and take the struggle that bit further forward — should be raised.

Fourthly, the question of finance. The miners have never needed money more. The sequestrators are again filching funds. More legal cases are pending.

Collections are the sinews of war as resources dwindle in the coal fields. Regular collections and resolutions for large donations by the Labour Party and the unions provide the best opportunity to argue for the strike and for solidarity.

Intensified participation in the miners' support groups is vital.

Fifth, every Constituency Labour Party and every union branch should raise the call for Kinnock and Hattersley to come out the fence and for the entire Labour Party organisation to be placed on a war footing and at the disposal of the NUM.

The attempt to get Kinnock to speak at the NUM rallies is the right approach. It should be followed by pressure for a Labour Party/TUC march from the coalfields, culminating in the biggest demonstration London has ever seen. That would recharge the strike.

The solidarity conference in London on December 2 will provide a means of discussing these ideas and developing a new initiative.

While we can fully understand the position of Arthur

Scargill, what was lost by the Brighton agreement was the chance for the leaders of the NUM to appeal directly to members of other unions to boycott coal and to bring forward their own claims. We must now argue strenuously for this approach.

In this practical context of fighting for action, the Left must take up the battle of ideas.

Millions of workers, looking at the judgment against the NUM and the use of the Employment Laws, have seen class law, 'political law', 'bad law'. We have to develop this perception into a deeper understanding of the rule of law in capitalist society.

Many workers have had their eyes opened to the meaning of policing. We have to develop this, to analyse the nature of the police and their relationship to the state.

We have to take up Kinnock's very silly comments, "I condemn violence. I damn violence. All violence, without fear or favour". We have to explain the state monopoly of violence, its rationale and its use.

The ideological struggle is crucial. It is not only fear but consciousness which holds back progress in the Party and unions.

Vladimir Derer accuses the hard left of neglecting the constitutional fight. It has certainly neglected the ideological fight.

The limited use to which constitutional advances like reselection have been put illustrates the immensity of the task before us in reconstructing and developing socialist consciousness.

We have to deepen and develop the understanding of those radicalised by recent events, as well as learning from them ourselves. Big struggles are coming over the political levy and over local government.

Car strikes

The strikes in the car industry and the relative 'pay explosion', with average earnings moving away from the rate of inflation, show how far Thatcher has to go in transforming the ideas of trade unionists and the potential that still exists.

The 27-week strike of DHSS computer staff on Tyneside highlights the resistance that is there. The legislation will provide new challenges.

Employers like British Telecom are busy dismantling the closed shop. The laws on strike ballots are being used at Austin Rover.

Reads, the haulage firm which took the South Wales NUM to court, has sued the TGWU. The 'Working Miners' are now suing the NUM executive members personally for £200,000 damages.

Any of these situations could hold the seeds of a possible transformation.

The task of the Left is to link

up and develop these struggles — to link up and develop what the Tories call Bennism and Scargillism.

The elements of a new coalition and the elements of a new strategy are there. The NUM sets a marvellous example in its support at the Labour Party conference for the battle against rate-capping, for the demand for more autonomy by Labour women, for black sections, and for solidarity with gays.

They showed how the most powerful sections of the class can relate to the most oppressed sections, and how those in the industrial unions willing to fight can relate to those in the Party.

But of course the crucial cockpit is the unions. That is where the basic fight has to take place.

That, once again, is the lesson of the TUC and Labour Party conferences. *Bring all the struggles into the unions.* That is ultimately where the power in the party rests.

All of this involves a hard look at the Left.

Whilst the miners' strike has revived the Left in the Labour Party, the organised groupings represent a series of tiny warring ant-heaps — each proclaiming its 'openness', its desire to work with anybody except its closest co-thinkers, to build broad currents as long as the initiative is snatched from the competition, to encourage toleration and mutual understanding except for those with whom there are doctrinal differences hidden from the uninitiated.

Unity

This is all a tremendous barrier to development. Surely it is possible in today's crisis to cast aside illusions of grandeur, defunct organisational forms, and obsolete political totems, and maintain political differences within a more unified framework.

We need a looser but more embracing organisational form. There must and there can be greater unity.

One small step forward which would encourage minimal cooperation and provide a forum for much-needed debate and clarification of ideas would be if unattached members of the Left and those around groupings such as the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, *Tribune*, *Labour Herald*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Action*, *Briefing*, and *Socialist Viewpoint* were to come together to establish a journal to debate future strategy and consider joint initiatives.

Just now this may be blue-skying. But if the Left does not at least examine the possibilities of greater unity, opportunities will be lost.

If the Left is to make progress it has to sort itself out first.



Nottingham miners greet marchers from Kent. Photo: John Harris

SCIENCE



Sweet F.A.

By Les Hearn

FOOD is one of those products whose consumption is less affected by price — in countries like Britain, at least. Halving the price of wheat doesn't usually result in the doubling of bread consumption — a different result from halving the price of Hi-Fi or cars.

Now, the relative price of food has fallen as productivity has risen, particularly since World War II, presenting food companies with the problem of maintaining profits on a shrinking turnover.

They could have tried to develop new markets for basic foods among the hungry of the world. But they have found a less risky and more profitable way out through the food processing and additives industry, as Dr. Erik Millstone points out in *New Scientist* in "Food Additives: A Technology out of Control."

Thus the fall in the price of spuds doesn't mean that people eat vast platefuls of mash or chips. But you can see all sorts of people, young and old, eating "cooked, preserved, flavoured, packaged, advertised potato product" in the form of crisps, throughout the day, in all situations. And paying 12p for a penn'orth of potato.

Such products need a long shelf-life, so anti-oxidants are added to prevent the fat going rancid while jaded palates must be titillated with chemicals that create the illusion of such wholesome or exotic ingredients as cheese and onion, prawn cocktail or hedgehog.

Nutritional

Food additives (FA) are chemicals introduced to food to make it more marketable and can be divided into:

(1) *preservatives*. These slow down the deterioration of food. They can accumulate in our bodies and may slow down decay of human corpses.

(2) *flavourings and colourings*. These disguise our food and make it more attractive. Some of these may merely replace substances lost during the process of refining and preparing the product. Often the replacements have less or no nutritional value than the things they replace.

FAs don't include such things as pesticides, antibiotics and hormones, or sugar, which, though routinely added to products savoury or dessert, is classed as a food.

Nevertheless, Millstone guesses that the average person in Britain consumes between three and seven kilograms of FAs per annum with the top range being perhaps 15kg.

There are some 3500 FAs at present in use of which less than 10% are regulated ("Permitted Antioxidants", etc). The 3000 flavourings, far from being regulated, are considered to be trade secrets.

FAs are generally unnecessary since it is actually easier than ever before to supply fresh food to city-dwellers, while flavourings are often "necessary" merely to replace those lost in processing because intense farming methods have led to a bland taste. Sweetening is often required only because people have been brought up on high sugar foods and have acquired a taste for it.

Harmful

But are FAs merely unnecessary or can they be harmful? In the vast majority of cases we just do not know! The number of FAs being used makes it impossible for scientists to determine their long-term effects, even given the 40 years since the war. In any case, use of FAs has not been steady but has grown, doubling in the last ten years alone.

Meanwhile, animal tests for short-term effects (such as looking for mutations that may lead to cancer) are less reliable than tossing a coin. To highlight the problem, it was quite difficult to prove the harmfulness even of tobacco, which kills some 25% of users.

Despite this, it seems likely that FAs cause many allergies. For example *tartrazine* (E102), often added to custard powder, marzipan, cakes, ice-cream, etc., can cause asthma and skin rash, while children with eczema seem to improve when FAs are excluded from their diets. FAs may also cause migraine.

Evidence for FAs causing cancer is slender except in the case of nitrites added to many meat products such as ham, bacon and sausages. These are converted to carcinogenic nitrosamines in the stomach.

Some other additives seem to cause cancer or deformities in animal tests, but only at high doses.

So what should be done? At the very least, we should insist that all FAs be listed on food packaging and that information on these be freely available (despite trade secrecy). Food companies claim to be creating more choice with their flavourings and colourings, but they don't offer the option of "No additives".

And yet food could be supplied without additives and the additives offered for sale separately to be added according to taste. Somehow I feel there would be few customers.

THE Hamsin is a hot desert wind that blows across the Middle East for fifty days each year. It is often used as a metaphor for the conflicts and passions of Middle Eastern politics and society.

In this Israeli film — winner of various awards including best Israeli film of 1982, and nominated for an Academy Award as best foreign film — it is a metaphor for the conflicts and passions of a small patch of Israeli society.

A liberal-minded Jewish landlord, Gedalia, agrees with an Arab friend to buy land jointly to avoid government compulsory purchase. But his relationships both with his friend and with his Arab farmhand become soured and destroyed, caught in the clash of rising Jewish-Arab hostility in the area.

The Arabs attempt to protest at land confiscation; and in response the local Jewish community grows more and more belligerent, violent and racist — they begin to demand the expulsion of the Arabs. Polarisation between the two peoples eventually leads to tragedy.

It is an interesting and moving film. A sub-plot — which ultimately provides the focus for the tragedy — is the developing sexual relationship between Khaled, the Arab farmhand, and Gedalia's music-student sister, Hava. They also are caught up in the conflict.

But, to its great credit, the film completely avoids becoming an Israeli version of *Romeo and Juliet*: the relationship between Khaled and Hava is fraught with personal, as well as social tension, and is, until the climax of the film, no more than a sub-plot.

Hamsin was — unsurprisingly — a controversial film in Israel. It portrays the majority of the

Channel 4 TV is running a five part series on the Algerian war, one of the longest, most heroic, and bloodiest of the struggles for national liberation since World War 2.

It is on Mondays at 9pm, with part 3 next Monday, 19th.

Tory grant cuts

By Dave Brennan

"THE government's recently announced grants cuts are just one more indication of their stupidity and narrowmindedness," said Idris Griffiths, External Affairs Officer of Birmingham University NUS.

The minimum grant, which now no longer exists, was a safety net for students whose parents can't or won't pay their parental contribution to the student grant.

It was also the amount received by students where parents were not filling in grant assessment forms.

That group is not just made up of students on bad terms with their parents, but also some Asian women whose parents refuse as a point of principle to allow their daughters to go to college.

Behind the government's cuts lies the belief that students and young people in general should be dependent on their families and live at home.

With the abolition of the minimum grant, comes the reintroduction of tuition fees, £120 a year for a degree course for students with well-off parents.

Tuition fees for British students were phased out after the last war.

As Simon Pottinger, President of Durham University Students Union pointed out: "The introduction of tuition fees is clearly intended to drive working class students, especially women, out of higher education. Although the current proposals will only affect largely well-off students, this scheme must be regarded as part of Tory plans to privatise the entire education sector."

Review

Palestine: where it all went wrong

Edward Ellis reviews the film Hamsin, showing at the Phoenix cinema in London.

Jewish population as heavy-handed rulers, needing Arab labour but unprepared to mix with the Arabs, and prepared to intimidate and drive them out if they resist the confiscation of their lands.

Gedalia is more liberal — his family has a long-standing friendship with a local Arab family; and he is deeply disturbed by the growing belligerence of his fellow-Jews, and the response of his Arab friends.

But his relationship with Khaled — despite moments of clear friendship — is strictly defined. He is the boss; Khaled sleeps in the shed.

It is difficult to tell to what extent Gedalia's fury at the

sexual relationship between Khaled and his sister is determined by the racial element, and to what extent by a traditionalist sense of honour.

But it is a film set securely within a certain mould of liberal Israeli politics.

For many liberal Israeli Jews, the traumas of post-'67 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, or the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, have produced a deep feeling that 'something went wrong': liberal, social-democratic Israel at some point lost its democratic being and developed strong tyrannical tendencies.

This perspective rests on a mythological view of Israel's past. Israel has never fought a

genuinely defensive war; and its colonial logic has been present from the beginning.

Hamsin shares this mythologised and glorified view of the past. It is as if, in the Good Old Days, conquered and conqueror got along fine and it is only now that tension has arisen. And the conquerors are as much the moral victims of a historic tragedy as the conquered.

There is a real sense, of course, in which this is true. But whatever the truth of the human tragedy, such a view is profoundly limited. Above all it is limited because it reduces a real political conflict to that level of individual personal tragedy. As such it presents a view of hopelessness.

According to such a view, as the metaphor of the 'eastern wind' suggests, the cause of the tragedy is an impersonal, uncontrollable Fate — the possibility of human action to resolve the conflict is excluded.

Nevertheless, Hamsin is an impressive film (marred by B-movie music). It is worth seeing, and it is worth being seen by a wide audience.



The Jewish landlord (right) and an Arab friend

Barking: time for more action

By Tim Anderson

NINE months into the strike by domestics at Barking Hospital against their employers, Crothalls, the time has come for the NUPE leadership to take action.

There is support for the strikers among health workers. More people struck on the London day of action for Barking than did during the 1982 pay dispute, but coordinated and sustained action is vital both to win back jobs at Barking and against private contractors in general.

Moral support and little more

from Rodney Bickerstaffe and other NUPE leaders means that the pickets are still there and unless we wish them to remain, we should start to organise now.

Save St Andrews!
St Andrews Hospital has been scheduled for closure on November 22 and a demonstration has been called for this Friday. Assemble 1.00 pm at St Clements, Bow Road for a march to St Andrews.

South Africa



Protest by black children in the Cape area

Link up with the new workers' movement

THERE ARE now over 200,000 black workers organised into non-racial unions. These unions are on the whole young and fresh, with highly democratic and participatory structures.

They are a significant force in most of the major industries of South Africa — textiles, chemicals, automobiles, engineering, food and canning, docks, catering, etc. — and they have begun once again to organise in the gold, diamond and coal mines.

They have won scores of union recognition agreements with managements like Ford, General Motors, Volkswagen, British Leyland, Smith and Nephew, Dunlops — that is, with companies that are household names in this country too.

Gains

They have also won significant gains in terms of wages, conditions of labour, pension rights and even their legal standing with the apartheid state.

There are a number of different trade unions and trade union federations, which do not all share the same political outlook. By far the largest of the federations is FOSATU, the Federation of South African Trade Unions, but other significant bodies include the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), the General Workers' Union, the Food and Canning Workers' Union, and the South African Allied Workers' Union.

Most of these unions — with the exception of SAAWU — have recently held 'unity talks' with the aim of forming a new federation covering the bulk of

As a new wave of black workers' strikes — and of state repression — develops in South Africa, Bob Fine looks at the background and how to organise solidarity

the independent trade union movement. These talks could well bear fruit within the next few months.

The non-racial independent trade union movement is by no means the only force for resistance in South Africa. There also exists a large diversity of community organisations, student groups, women's groups, and three major political movements.

The most important of these is the United Democratic Front (UDF), which is a broad popular organisation — with close political ties with the African National Congress — and played a key role in organising for the boycott of the government's recent elections for a reformed, three-chamber (white/'coloured'/Indian) parliament.

Only a few independent trade unions have joined this Front, partly because of political differences and partly because its structure does not give a representative voice to workers' organisations. FOSATU said it was not joining because it wished to maintain independent working-class politics.

There is a left-wing black consciousness group called the National Forum, which also has a few trade union affiliates. Finally, there is Inkatha, a tribally-based and totally undemocratic group dominated by Chief

Buthulezi. This last group, despite occasional radical utterances, is not worthy of support.

In solidarity work in this country, we should support anyone who is seriously fighting against the apartheid regime. This means support for the unions, the UDF, the National Forum, etc.



Riot cop arrests youth

We should also support direct links between British workers and the non-racial independent unions, as requested by those unions themselves.

For ten years now those unions have been trying to build up solidarity with labour movements overseas and particularly with trade unions. They have joined international trade union bodies like the International Metalworkers' Federation and they have formed links with British unions both at top official and at grassroots level.

They have invited trade unionists over to South Africa to see the situation for themselves, they have sent representatives over to the UK and other countries to rally support, and they have called for practical

support from British workers in the form of pressure against multinationals, trade union boycotts of goods to South Africa, publicity for their struggles, direct links and so forth.

This kind of solidarity work has met with many obstacles. A current of narrow chauvinism running through British unions is most visible in the TUC international department, which works more closely with the Foreign Office than with any rank and file workers.

Some members of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the African National Congress and their trade union wing (the South African Congress of Trade Unions, SACTU, which is now almost entirely an exile grouping) have also opposed direct links between British workers and South African workers.

Motivated by political unease about a trade union movement independent not only from the state but also from the ANC, they have argued that direct links between South African and British unions are a violation of their boycott policy, according to which South Africa must be isolated.

They have also argued that if there are any links, they must be through the ANC's trade union wing, SACTU.

Solidarity

But the independent trade unions themselves call for direct links with unions overseas and see these links as an important part of their development. They argue that international solidarity of this sort is fundamental for the growth of an international working class movement, and that the boycott should be of the South African state and the capitalists who support it, not of those who are engaged in resistance against the regime.

SACTU cannot possibly mediate links between South African and British trade unions, for three reasons. Its illegality would make such mediation very dangerous. SACTU is now a very small organisation with few ties inside South Africa. And, because of political differences, non-racial unions inside South Africa on the whole will refuse to work through SACTU.

Direct links are a useful and specifically working-class form of solidarity, and should be supported.

Scargill condemns Jaruzelski

IN A LETTER last week to the Polish ambassador in Britain — and through him to the Polish government and the government-run 'trade unions' — Arthur Scargill expressed the 'disgust' of the NUM at the Jaruzelski regime's increased exports of coal to Britain.

In the past — wrongly, in the view of Socialist Organiser — the NUM leadership has sought links with the official state-controlled unions in the USSR and Eastern Europe; and it has attacked Solidarnosc and workers fighting for Solidarnosc-type trade unions elsewhere in the Stalinist states, for example the Ukrainian miner Vladimir Klebanov. But this miners' strike, with the Polish government sending coal and Solidarnosc expressing solidarity with the British miners, has shown who really represents the working class.

The NUM and other British unions should break links with the Stalinist state unions — which are in fact not trade unions at all, but government agencies — and support Solidarnosc.

This is the text of Arthur Scargill's letter:

"I am in receipt of your letter dated October 26 1984, along with the attached letter from the Polish Federation of Trade Unions of Coal Miners, conveying a message of support to the National Union of Mineworkers.

My advice to the Polish government and to you is to stop behaving hypocritically and in a way which can only be described as completely anti-Socialist.

The Jaruzelski government has dramatically increased the amount of coal imported to Britain and has totally ignored repeated requests from the NUM to stop exporting coal into Britain during the period of the miners' strike.

In doing so, the Polish government is giving direct assistance to Mrs Thatcher's government as it tries to defeat the miners' union.

The NUM has no intention of even considering the 'offer' to receive 100 striking miners' children for a holiday in Poland because we are aware that at the same time such an offer is made the actions of the Polish government are directly assisting the Tory government in Britain to do all in its power to smash the NUM and the miners' strike.

Please convey to your government and trade union movement our absolute disgust and — even at this late stage — convey to them our request to stop all exports of Polish coal either directly or indirectly into Britain".

Not so bad, so far?

A RECENT study of workplace trade union organisation and activity confirms that organisation has suffered severely since the late 1970s, but suggests that the impact of mass unemployment and Tory policies has been less than sometimes thought.

The most surprising conclusion from Eric Batstone's large survey, mostly covering manufacturing companies, is that the number of full-time shop stewards in 1983 was roughly the same as, or marginally higher than, in 1978.

Spearhead companies like BL/Austin Rover have drastically reduced full-time stewards' positions, and most people had thought that this was reflected generally throughout industry.

Batstone also finds that the total number of shop stewards has declined rather less than the overall workforce.

Other unexpected results are

a rise in the number of closed shops (though the number of management opposed to a closed shop had also risen), and an expansion of the check-system.

A number of the results confirm the general picture of trade union organisation under severe pressure. The proportion of plants with no trade union bargaining at all had risen from 5% to 11%, and the percentage of factories with no strike action during the year rose from 29% in 1978 to 43% in 1983.

Batstone finds that 20% of the companies surveyed had undertaken an anti-union offensive. But not all had succeeded. "Moves to 'put the unions in their place' appear to have been fairly limited in intent or consequence." So far, at least.

The report was summarised in the Financial Times last Friday, November 9.

Socialist Organiser

The East London SO group's estate sale in Limehouse Fields is finally starting to take off.

At first they had great difficulties. First time round they sold only two papers, while most other estate sales have produced at least a dozen sales in the first week.

But they stuck at it, and by last Sunday the sale had increased to nine.

It shows that with perseverance and a little effort useful estate sales can be established everywhere.

Write in and tell us what your local group is doing: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

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Socialist Organiser

CARS STRIKE STAYS STRONG



33 out of 44 countries in black Africa face severe famine

Ten million could die

but Tories cut aid

By Steve Hobbs

OVER ten million children face death from famine by the end of next year, relief experts have predicted.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources have also predicted that one million acres of agricultural land have been destroyed by drought, and an even worse disaster could hit the famine-stricken areas in the near future.

33 out of 44 countries in black Africa now require food aid. And famine on a scale similar to Ethiopia continues in Bangladesh and north-east Brazil.

Lawson

Meanwhile, the British government is cutting its aid programme. Nigel Lawson has passed the buck for it to the Foreign Secretary, Geoffrey Howe, but has nevertheless insisted that no more must be

Food and Agriculture Organisation to be needed to save those now threatened with death from starvation.

EEC

EEC grain surpluses are still sitting in warehouses. Neither the US nor the EEC will release significant supplies — resulting from government food subsidies — for fear of a possible trade war.

The calculations of profit and loss take precedence over the needs of starving people to live.

The world recession has meant cutbacks in aid programmes by the big capitalist powers for some years now. Often, such cutbacks have gone hand-in-hand with increases in military aid to imperialist allies.

The Reagan administration, at the same time as it has been reducing its food aid has been pumping military assistance into brutal dictatorships like El Salvador.

Imperialist governments never give anything for free. If money can't be made, or if a political alliance can't be bought, they will watch millions die. Public pressure has forced what little action that has been taken over Ethiopia. But the Tories know about the other famine-hit areas of the world, and are keeping quiet.

The aid that has been sent to Ethiopia has simply been docked from what might have been sent elsewhere.

Debt

Food aid must be guaranteed now. The huge debt of many African countries to City banks must be cancelled — its drain on the internal resources of those countries is an unbearable drain contributing to the disaster.

And the Labour Party must campaign on the issue. It must not be left to the Robert Maxwells of this world to make cheap publicity stunts out of it.

By Jim Denham

THE Austin-Rover pay strike continues and is supported by 21,000 of the company's 28,000 hourly-paid workers. The two major plants, Longbridge and Cowley have been out solidly since Monday November 5.

The company's attempt to break the strike through the courts has so far been completely unsuccessful. The Austin-Rover Joint Negotiating Committee (made up of delegates from the plant plus full-time officials) voted to continue the action despite a High Court order requiring them to lift the strike.

The AUEW and EETPU argued for compliance with the court order and stated that as far as they were concerned the action is unofficial.

Cowardly

This cowardly line has been rejected not just at the JNC but by rank and file members in the plants. At Longbridge 300 EETPU members have twice voted to honour picket lines and stay on strike despite instructions from their officials to return.

News of the electricians' 2-1 vote was greeted with cheers and jubilation by pickets on the gates at Longbridge on Monday, 12th.

But problems and dangers remain. The AUEW's "victory" over the company in court last week may seem like a clever move. But the "victory" was only achieved by declaring the strike unofficial — a move which could seriously undermine solidarity and embolden would-be scabs.

The company has already made great play of the AUEW's repudiation of the strike in its propaganda campaign.

The role of the AUEW and EETPU has undoubtedly been a major factor in the return to work votes at Swindon and

Llanelli. The fact that most of the small plants are working is not a crucial problem for the strike given the fact that the vast majority of the workforce is concentrated at Longbridge and Cowley and that finished cars are produced only at those plants.

But the situation in the small plants is a weakness and it could be dealt with if secondary picketing was organised.

At Longbridge the most commonly heard complaint among activists is the weakness and poor organisation of the picketing. No rotas were drawn up before the action began, with the result that a few hundred activists have been on the gates since day one of the strike while the bulk of the workforce sits passively at home. This situation makes the organisation of flying pickets to the working plants and to the depots virtually impossible as well as leaving the majority of the strikers isolated at home and vulnerable to company propaganda.

Organise

As a matter of urgency an expanded rank and file strike committee needs to be established to link up with Cowley and organise effective picketing of the gates, and flying pickets to the working plants and the depots. Such a committee needs to hold regular meetings open to all strikers and produce regular bulletins to counter the company's massive propaganda machine.

Workers turning up for Thursday's pay-out must be leafleted and encouraged to get involved in picketing. The rank and file must keep up the pressure on the TGWU, the GMBATU, AUEW-TASS and the other unions facing contempt of court proceedings: their officials must not be allowed to follow the AUEW down the bolt-hole of declaring the strike unofficial.

GEC strike

By Sally Page

230 striking workers at GEC Traction, Trafford Park, Manchester, were handed redundancy notices by management at the end of last week.

The strike was provoked by management's derisory offer of a £5 increase and their attempts to reduce the number of stewards by 50%.

Subsequently management have also offered a £52 lump sum payment if the workers accept new piece rates. The

strikers' demand is £10 a week increase to bring them into line with comparable grades at GEC Preston.

Picketing has been highly successful. Work which management have attempted to move to Switchgear Turbines or to Preston has been boycotted.

Although the strike has been made official, strike pay has not yet been paid, and donations are urgently needed. Send c/o AUEW House, The Crescent, Salford 7.

New times for SO

Socialist Organiser has changed its schedule. We will be appearing one day earlier each week in future.

This means that local groups will receive their bundles on Wednesday evening.

Articles should be sent in to arrive by Saturday morning. Last-minute reports can be phoned in on Monday evening.

Fund emergency!

We were very far indeed from completing our £800 emergency fund appeal last week. Indeed, it was about the worst week for the fund that we can remember: £1 from Bev Wood, £5 from Alan Johnson, and that's it.

Let's hope our readers can prove that their reactions may be slow, but still generous! Send money to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.