

# A Socialist ACTION

# VICTORY TO THE MINERS!

Solidarity with the miners must be the order of the day. The government has launched an incredible and vicious police-state type strike-breaking operation through the use of 20,000 police. The police have illegally turned back cars carrying miners, they have threatened action against coach firms who carry pickets, and now they are stopping 'legal' picketing.

The government is determined to break this strike and with it the leadership of the NUM. The miners who have struck and gone on the picket line have matched the government in determination. Their fight in defence of trade union rights and their stand against the King/Tebbit Laws and the police violence that goes with these laws, merits the support of all the labour movement.

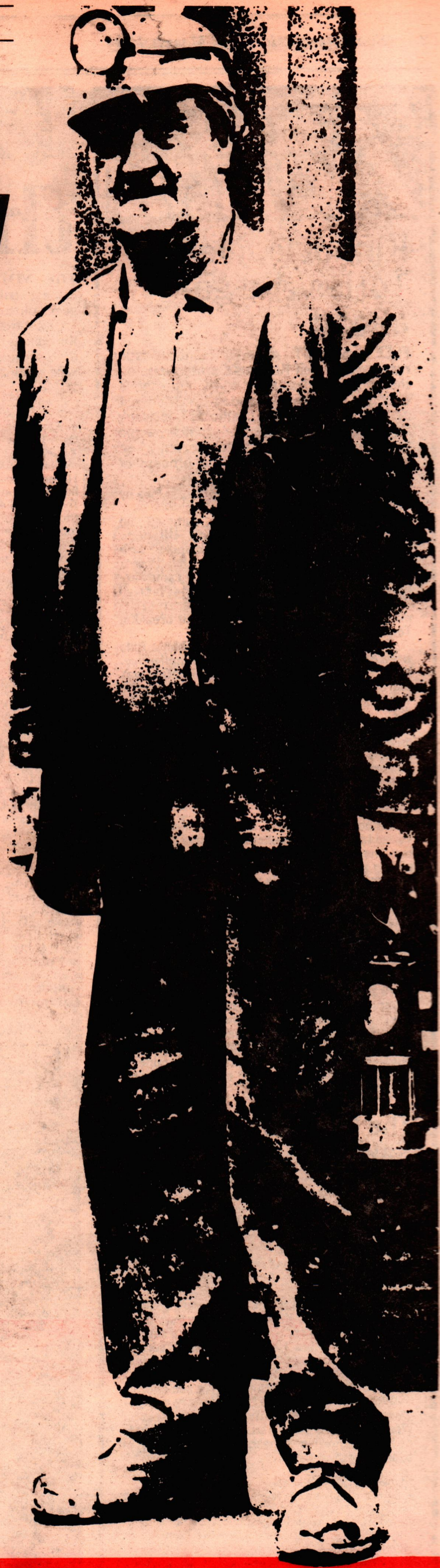
Twenty thousand police can stop four or even five thousand flying pickets. But they cannot stop the organised might of the labour movement. The TUC has maintained a cowardly silence but if they did call for ac-

tion the strike would be won in days. Now is the time for the union leaders to act. In conjunction with the miners' pickets at power stations, coke and coal depots, and at the railyards, the other unions could make sure that no coal is moved.

This means that the coal turned out in the scab pits would simply be stockpiled. The left trade union leaders must also make it clear that if the government attempts to use the army to shift coal then they will call an all-out stoppage.

This strike can and must be won. But to win it means that the unions must join alongside the NUM in openly defying the government and its laws.

- The Triple Alliance and TUC must organise the blacking of all movement of coal!
- Unconditionally support mass pickets at the pits and power stations! No recognition of Tebbit's laws!
- Labour councils must extend practical support for the miners and pickets!
- Name a day for solidarity action with the NUM!



# NO POLICE STATE - DEFEND THE NUM!

# Socialist ACTION

## Kinnock gives Tories the go-ahead

FLEET STREET gave an enthusiastic response to Neil Kinnock's statements on the miners' strike. After a week of silence Labour's leader responded to the first police invasion of the coalfields last week by saying: 'The law does not prohibit people trying to influence other workers, but when people become violent in the process of picketing I condemn it'.

The Sun seized on this saying: 'Peace Plea by Kinnock'.

Leon Brittan had already summed up Labour's parliamentary leadership's attitude to the miners strike, before Kinnock spoke, with the cruel, but correct comment, that it was 'ritual hand wringing'. Exactly. Then came Kinnock's disowning of the 'violent' pickets. Yet Neil Kinnock and his advisors are well aware that the miners can't stop pit closures without breaking Tory laws.

They know only too well that Tebbit's Bills were drafted to make strike action ineffective. Kinnock knows that the police mobilisation was there to physically force the miners to obey the Tory legislation. So why did he respond like he did?

Kinnock knows what is going on and doubtless he is concerned about the loss of 20,000 jobs in the coalfields. But unfortunately he cares much more about establishing Labour as Her Majesty's Respectable Opposition. If Neil Kinnock gives his support to the NUM then he jeopardises that policy.

Kinnock's statement last week helped the Tories to pursue the policy of massive police action they used from Monday onwards. It completely gives the political initiative to Thatcher.

If miners picketing is wrong then it has to be stopped. The inevitable conclusion which people must draw from Kinnock's statement is to support actions such as Thatcher's. Why bother with Kinnock's half hearted approach when Thatcher will mobilise the police to ensure the job is done properly? Either there are miners fighting for their jobs — who must be backed, or there are hooligan boot boys unjustly preventing miners going to work. You can't have it both ways. Neil Kinnock's statement has a bitter irony. The miners did more than any other union to create the Labour Party. Now the Labour Party's leader turns round and attacks the miners. But that is always the price of placing respectability before class.

## The (non) revolting Kaufmann

WHILE NEIL Kinnock's statements on the miners are to be criticised those of the Parliamentary Party's Home Affairs spokesperson Gerald Kaufmann are beneath contempt. Kaufmann went out of his way to condemn violence, 'even when it occurs among people who feel impotent in the face of the destruction of their homes, their jobs, and their communities.'

If Kaufmann had had his way, every struggle from the Luddites, through the Chartists up to the hospital workers must be seen as a sinister provocation. There has never been a serious working class struggle in history — not to speak of the Suffragettes — in which a policeman didn't get a bloody nose. Nor will we ever see one.

What does he imagine the police are doing — 'peacefully persuading' the Yorkshire pickets? We suggest Kaufmann's best contribution would be to fall down a mineshaft. Non-violently of course.

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# Thatcher against the miners

THE VOTE in the Nottinghamshire coalfield against strike action triggered a plan the Thatcher government had drawn up long ago.

Last week the government hung back as the flying pickets flowed into the coalfields. They wanted a division in the NUM itself, like the area majority vote against strike action, before they moved.

Now, encouraged by the vote the government have moved against the pickets. From an office on the 13th floor in Scotland Yard — with its 'hot line' to Leon Brittan at the Home Office — the word has gone out to 'get the flying pickets'. Twenty thousand police have been mobilised in a military-style operation. Roads have been blocked. Cars with miners have been turned back at the Dartford and Blackwall Tunnels which are miles away from Nottingham.

If their drivers insisted on the right to go on, the police threatened them with arrest. Coach firms have been told that if they transport pickets their driver's vehicle keys will be impounded. Whilst we have not yet arrived at the police state this 'stop the pickets' operation gives us a nasty insight into what a future Tory Britain is going to look like.

The government must have cast a grateful glance in the direction of Neil Kinnock when he denounced violence — which needlessly to say was an admonishment of the pickets and not a criticism of the police. They know now that Labour's Front Bench isn't going to give them any trouble.

They are even more confident that they won't get any trouble from the

TUC. They are confident that the TUC leaders who did nothing to oppose the debacle at GCHQ and Warrington, will hang on to the anti-strike vote in the areas of the NUM which voted as a lifeline to 'cop out'. Most of the TUC right wing hate Scargill and the left leaders of the NUM more than they hate the Tories. They reckon a defeat for the NUM militants strengthens their grip in the TUC and weakens the left opposition.

By Pat Hickey and Bob Pennington

The miners are fighting for the right of the trade unions to defend their interests without the threat of police interference, provocation and intimidation. Mass picketing and open defiance of the Tebbit laws is the only way the unions can defeat the government's anti-trade union legislation. Last week's successful picketing showed this and was in glorious contrast to the humiliating climbdown of the TUC over GCHQ and NGA.

By saying no to MacGregor, the NUM leaders and their rank and file have given a message of hope to all working people. They have said there is nothing inevitable about



Pickets stopping cars at Agecroft pit

unemployment. It can and must be fought. The miners have, shown by their militancy and courage that they have an alternative to the policies of class collaboration meekly offered by the TUC.

This is why Thatcher and her cabinet are hell bent on defeating the NUM leaders. The labour movement must also recognise this. The left-wing leaders of the TGWU, ASLEFF, the NUR, the POEU, NUPE, and the FBU etc have to draw some conclusions about what is happening

and what is at stake.

If the miners go down, then these unions will be next in line. And they will be in a much worse position to defend themselves. This is why they have to support the miners. Unfortunately Murray's TUC has no intention of doing that.

A rallying cry should go out from the NUM headquarters in Sheffield calling on these unions who support the NUM to attend a conference to discuss solidarity strike action with the miners. This

has also got to be the main message coming out of this weekend's BLOC conference.

The trains must be stopped, the water supplies should be cut off, telecommunications should be cut — especially those from Scotland Yard — and not one ounce of coal should be moved. This is a serious situation. The miners face the possibility of a big defeat — or gaining a huge victory.

A victory can still be won. But it can only be won by the united action of the left trade unions.



Police clash with pickets at Agecroft colliery Salford

Photo: JOHN SMITH (IFL)

Photo: JOHN SMITH (IFL)

# Yorkshire: the pit that sparked the strike

**THE CORTONWOOD strike was the spark that fired the national dispute. The statement issued by the Cortonwood strike committee tells the story of the NCB's duplicity in their own words — a warning for all miners of what to expect from MacGregor's pit closures programme.**

The men of Cortonwood are on strike because they feel rejected, cheated and angry. Angry at the way the National Coal Board has so contemptuously treated them by declaring out of the blue, that their colliery is to close in five week's time, leaving five years' safe workable reserves of some of the finest quality coking coal in the ground.

They feel cheated that the Board by their own admissions and actions had them believe that the pit would be worked to exhaustion in 1989-90.

The Board say Cortonwood is to close because the coal they mine is too good and cannot be sold. Markets, they say are gone and nobody wants the product.

The South Yorkshire Area Director said that capacity in the area had to be reduced by 400,00 tons and manpower by approximately 1,000 during the next year. Cortonwood had consistently lost money over the last five years, and the Area Director has decided rather than spread the reductions over the area, Cortonwood was to cease production on 6 April 1984 — closed at the stroke of a pen.

The men's case is this. The union agrees that the pit has lost money over the last five years. Many hundreds of yards of drivages have been developed in

order to open up the remaining reserves during this time. Drivages are expensive and non-productive.

In the last two years, the colliery has been worked on a *planned* loss due to this work being carried out. In order to now work the coal, further drivages will be minimal and there is every possibility that Cortonwood could finish on a winning note.

It sounds ludicrous when the Director says he cannot sell the coal. It is known that other areas are currently making attempts to open up workings in the Silkstone seam. In April 1983, union officials were told that Cortonwood's future was reasonably safe because of the product. Plans were produced showing that mining would continue to exhaustion in 1989-90.

During the last 18 months:

- A generator plant was installed to utilise methane extracted from the mine;
- As late as January this year, men were transferred from neighbouring Elsecar colliery, men who were told they would be secure to retirement on closure in 1989;
- In October, expensive refurbishing of the pithead baths was undertaken at a cost of £40,000.
- Other work on surface improvements still remain half finished.

This shows that no pit is safe whether it has plans, whether it has reserves.

We feel that by fighting this closure, we can expose the folly of false economies and inhuman, and contemptuous attitude of the Coal Board. If any miner considers himself safe, he should consider our case carefully.

● Extract from the Cortonwood strike committee's statement.

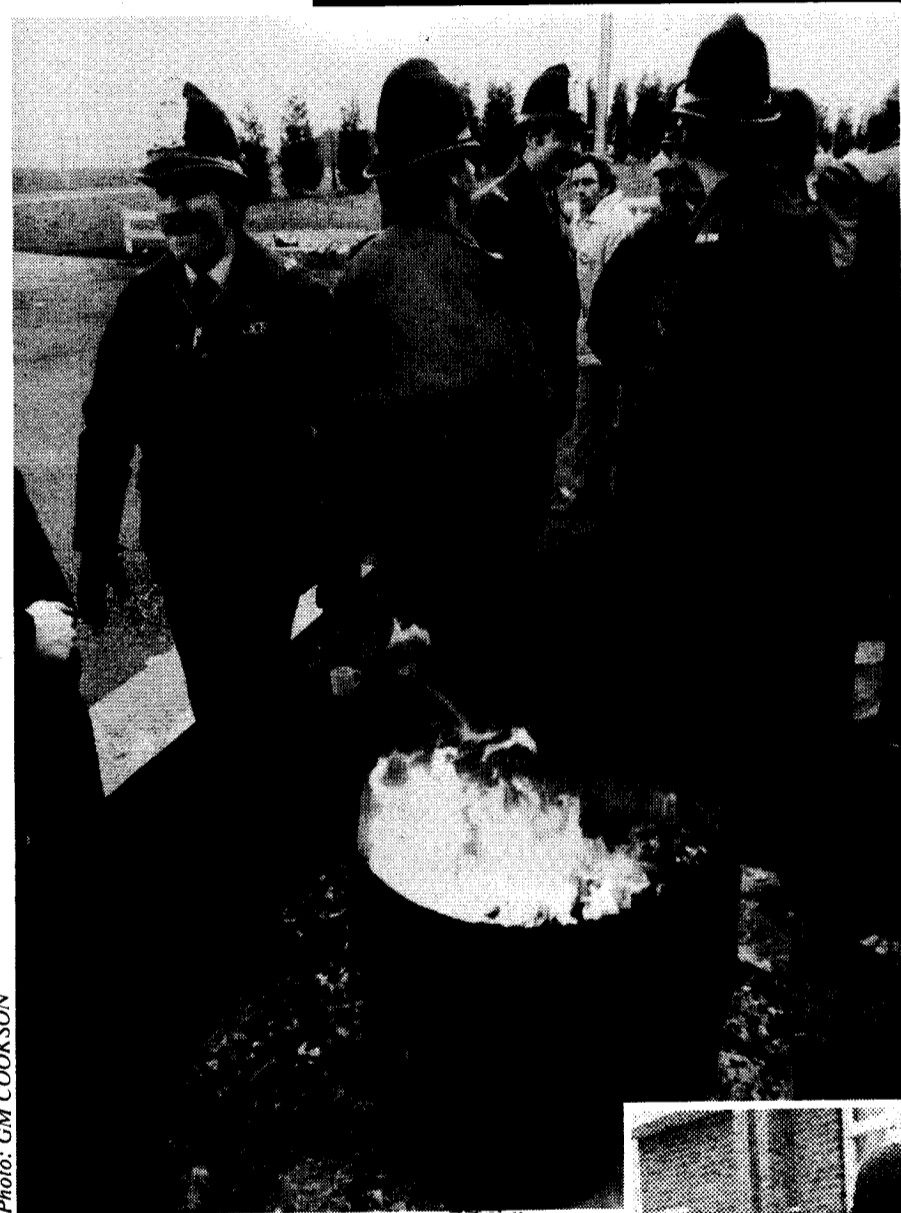
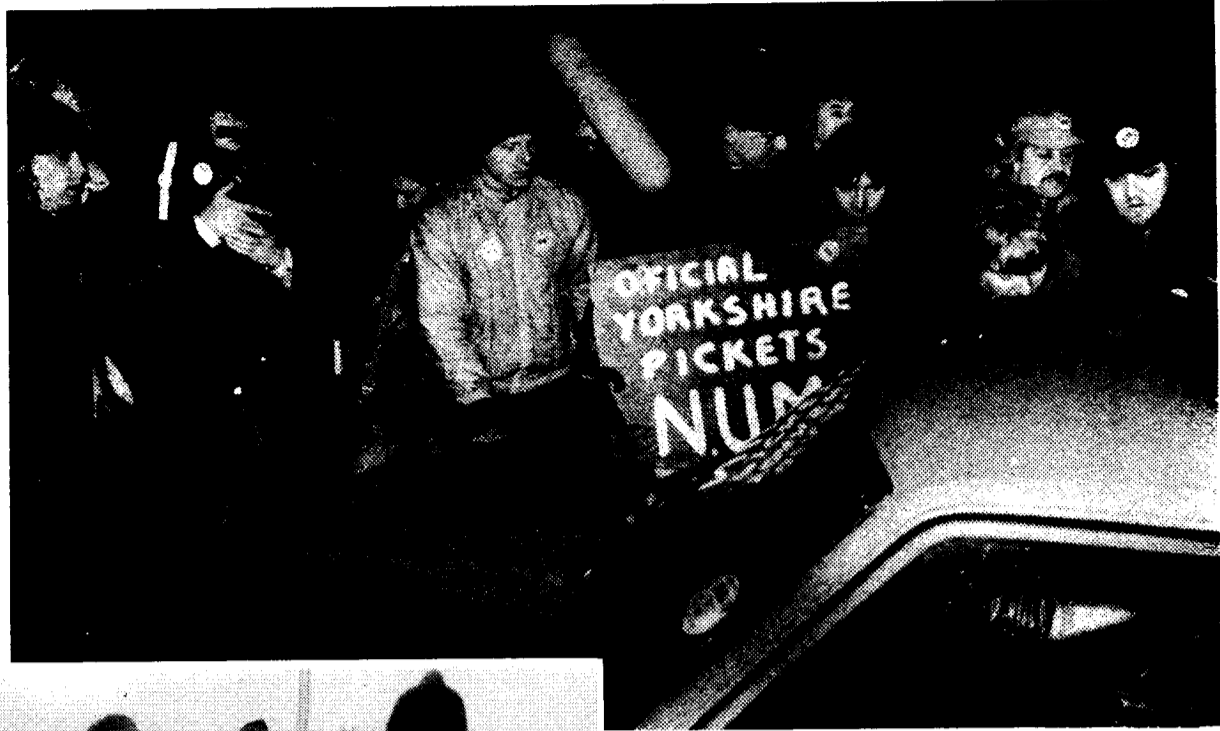


Photo: GM COOKSON

Ollerton on Thursday — all quiet on the picket line

desperate measures. Miners are moderate people. They're not raving lunatics dashing about from picket line to picket line. They're fighting for their very existence. It's sad to see what's happening, but understandable at the same time.

Most of Ollerton is back at work now. We have about half a dozen Yorkshire pickets at our gate, and that's why I've not gone in this morning. I think there should be a national ballot — we'd have won it a fortnight ago, now I'm not so sure.

**Mal Howarth, delegate to the Nottingham Area Committee (personal capacity)**

*It will be a terrible day if the strike loses. If the strike fails I am convinced the Coal Board will give every area manager the go-ahead to attack miners and conditions on a wide scale. The big question on Monday will be if the police allow the Yorkshire miners down. They stopped several coaches last week. We know a lot of Nottinghamshire miners crossed our official picket lines on Friday and that's a sad day for the union.*

**Denis Brown, branch executive Blidworth colliery Nottinghamshire.**

*I think the press has blown up the violence here in Nottinghamshire. It has been very peaceful in all of the pits I know of, except Ollerton. We had a good relationship with the Yorkshire miners — standing side by side with them at the pithead to persuade our fellow Nottinghamshire miners not to cross. No-one worked at Blidworth on Friday and we just lost our pit ballot by 22 votes.*

## Nottingham: 'An ostrich syndrome'

**JIMMY HOOD** is the NUM secretary for Ollerton colliery, Nottinghamshire, where miner David Jones died on the picket line last week. Speaking before the results of the Notts strike ballot were known, Jimmy told Socialist Action:

There's an ostrich syndrome here. The men would rather bury their heads in the sand. Ollerton isn't threatened with closure, but that doesn't mean to say we're not going to lose jobs. And it's the sort of jobs you have — the grades, the wages structure. There's lots of people who are going to catch a cold.

Technology is being used to run down manpower. We're facing a tremendous diminution of jobs. Computers won't do everything, but the work will be completely deskilled of course.

In years gone by, this pit was a bit of a barometer of national opinion. Our vote was more or less in line with the national trend. Recently, our pits has voted in significant numbers against recommendations from the union. I can't simply put this down to the fact that they don't want to support the union — it's pressure and it's fear.

Young marrieds can't get mortgages, so they fall into the hands of money lenders. There's some real

heartache in this village for that reason. And that's one of the main reasons for not coming out in favour of a strike.

The reports I've been getting about this new redundancy payment is that the union is having trouble because workers want to sell their jobs. It happened in the steel industry. I'd like to take the miners who think the payment is wonderful to Consett — they'd see what lump sum payments really are. But people who've never had money before are saying 'oh well, let's have it'.

£20,000 is two years' wages. Young men will be working for the next 30 years. If they've big mortgages now, they will still be big in five years' time.

This union has always been strong, in the vanguard of the labour movement. Now we're in danger of being completely annihilated. We're going through a very trying period. That's why we're seeing the scenes we saw at this pit last week.

People are desperate, and they're taking

## On the spot in Nottingham

**OLLERTON: Thursday. Miners are collecting their pay and casting their votes in the pithead ballot.**

The pit is quiet after the last two days. Only a token picket is maintaining at the gate — the pit has been closed since the death of David Jones.

By Carol Turner

Reactions on the ballot are grimly muted. Many miners refuse to say how they voted. 'It's a secret ballot luv, I don't have to say.'

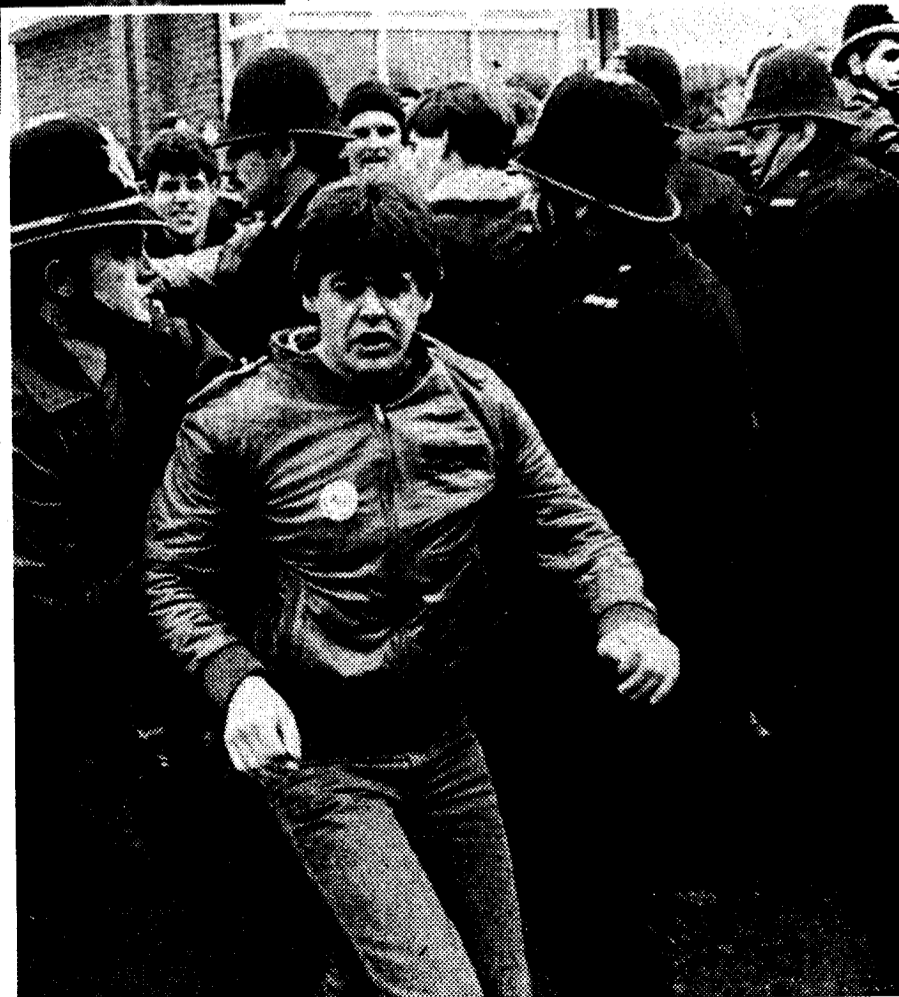
Those who *have* voted for a strike are clear why. 'Definitely. I believe in supporting the union.' 'To stop pit closures.' 'To have a job next year and the year after.'

But many *haven't*. 'The pits will close just the same, whether you go on strike or not. If a young man doesn't want

to be redundant, he can always find another pit.'

Everyone already knows it will be a 'no' vote.

One miner explains it's the behaviour of the Yorkshire pickets which changed his mind. 'I'm against the Yorkshire pickets, not against the principle. They've forced me into making a totally opposite decision than I'd have made in the first place.'



Ollerton picket on Wednesday morning

# Miners wives back fight for future

A LOT of publicity has been given to a small number of miners' wives in Nottinghamshire who oppose the miners strike.

The media has ignored the tens of thousands of women who support the strike.

Miners from Yorkshire Main, Manvers and Kilnhurst have now been out for three to four weeks, and villages like Conisborough, Mexborough and Wath are feeling the financial hardship already. But contrary to the images in the media that women are anti strike and anti union, in these communities women are solid in support of the strike. They know what is at stake.

Quite a few miners' wives work in the Sheffield engineering industry and some in my factory.

Their's is the only income to the household while the strike lasts.

By Pamela Holmes

'Scargill said there was a hit list two years ago. He has been proved right', one miner's wife explained. 'One thousand pounds a year doesn't last long'.

Talking of the women in Nottinghamshire, I was told 'They must be stupid, they should be ashamed of themselves, so should their husbands'.

There are no illusions about the effects of the strike. TVs and videos are already being returned or rentals rescheduled.

Miners' coal has been stopped to all except the elderly. Holidays aren't getting booked and the Barnsley Chamber of Commerce is already seriously worried about the effects of the strike on shopkeepers.

Women over at Barnsley have set up a support group. Others have contacted NUM officials expressing their willingness to go down and sort out the women in Nottingham: 'Let us get down there and we'll have the men blushing', one woman told me, 'I don't

care how long my husband has to be out on strike if he has a job at the end of it. You've got to think of the future'. Another said

'They told Cortonwood that they had another five years, and closed them just like that. Nobody's job is safe'.

**'WOMEN IN SUPPORT of Miners' was formed by six wives and miners' mothers at Woolley and North Gawber pits last week and membership is reported to be growing rapidly.**

Joan Davison spokesperson for the group told the local press: 'the vast majority of miners families support the present action. The women in Nottingham are stupid and showing their husbands up. Aren't the men capable of going to work on their own?'

The groups main role is to unite strikers' wives. 'Many women feel isolated. This group was formed to show that wives are backing their husbands.

'We think this strike is the only course of action and we want to prove that we are 100 per cent behind the men.'



## Wife-beater expelled

ALAN SWAIN was expelled from East Lewisham Labour Party in February, but for once it was a case for the left to applaud. Swain was expelled for wife-battering when it was discovered by activists in the local women's section of the Party that his wife was in a local refuge.

The GMC voted for his expulsion by 34 votes to one, with three abstentions.

Swain was a delegate to the GMC from the local electrician's union, the EEPTU. He joined the Labour Party after Frank Chapple had appealed for EEPTU members to join up and defeat 'extremist' policies.

Members of the women's section in East Lewisham said in the March issue of *London Labour Briefing*:

'Initially, some women felt anxious about raising this subject, out of fear for the individual woman concerned and for ourselves — we actually felt very threatened. It has not been an easy discussion to raise. We've been accused of wanting to vet potential members and putting people off joining the Labour Party. Our retort is that unless sexism and racism are openly confronted in the Party those who will be put off will be women and black people.'



Women delegates at this year's TUC

# Women's TUC gagged

The most important event at last week's TUC Women's Conference in Torquay wasn't on the agenda. The Women's Advisory Committee had ruled out of order an NGA motion and NUJ/NGA amendment advocating defence of trade union rights, by breaking the law if necessary.

The NGA and NUJ used guerilla conference tactics to challenge the ruling first thing on the first day of proceedings, with the clear approval of many delegates. The chair, Marie Patterson, repeated her ruling that the matter wasn't specifically to do with women or young people, and was out of order.

After a very well attended evening fringe meeting organised jointly by the NUJ, SOGAT and the NGA, all of which have this year engaged in 'illegal' disputes, a

SOGAT delegate returned to the attack next morning, speaking to the non-existent amendment.

Conference unanimously passed an emergency motion on the

GCHQ union membership ban, and sent a message of support to those fighting it. Women from Greenham saw an emergency motion on peace passed by acclamation.

By Elizabeth Frost

Conference rejected an NGA motion that the TUC withdraw support from Youth Training Schemes, which the proposer argued did not provide proper training, undercut established rates of pay and were intended

solely to massage unemployment statistics. The NUJ's motion on women's unemployment which called for a special category of TUC membership for the jobless was lost.

The only motions that were defeated concerned the structure and status of the conference. One called for rotating the chair — Marie Patterson has been chairing conference for 12 years now. After a heated debate this was lost by seven votes.

The call for three motions from conference to go on the TUC Congress

agenda fell (again), as did a proposal for the election of a separate conference organising committee to leave the Advisory Committee free to deal with the growing amount of work generated by the event. Nearly 300 delegates attended the biggest TUC Women's Conference yet.

It's obvious that motions to democratise it will be back on the agenda next year, and that Marie Patterson who came within a whisker of having to concede the rotating chair, was disconcerted by joint assaults from the print unions.



Postcard showing Alexandra Kollontai in London in 1913, produced by Socialist Worker. Available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1, 20p.



## Who'd be a boy?

'LARA DENTON lived in the year 2100 in a world where women had complete power over men. Lara decided that this was unfair and decided to try to improve the lives of boys. She arranged a secret meeting with a boy known as 727C and gave him a note as he left her house ...'

So reads the introductory blurb of a story in the girl's comic

Mandy entitled 'Who'd be a boy?' (see illustration for a taste of the action).

The heroine, Lara, is a complete washout, but the other women have distinct possibilities ...

Compiled by Hilary Driver. Send contributions (to reach us one week before publication) to: Male Order, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Photo: MORNING STAR

# 75 per cent of miners out

ON THE FIRST working day after ballots in Nottinghamshire and other less militant NUM areas, the majority of the British coalfield was at a standstill.

All the pits in Yorkshire, Scotland, South Wales, Kent, Durham and traditionally moderate Northumberland had stopped work — 115 in all.

In Durham, the one pit to vote for a return, Dawdon, could not begin work when winding engineers refused to do so.

With all the 25 Nottinghamshire pits returning to work, there were still only 44 pits working normally. The remaining sixteen pits across the country could not produce coal as significant numbers of miners refused to cross picket lines. This included pits in Lancashire and the Midlands.

In North Derbyshire the ballot went against strike action by only 16 votes. But the majority of pits voted for a strike. Seven out of 10 pits voted for action with the individual ballot result shifted by the count in one large colliery. As a result the North Derbyshire executive met on Monday 19 March and agreed by 12 votes to two to call their members out on strike.

Miners in the so-called 'moderate' North East have reacted strongly in favour of the strike call. Easington, one of the biggest pits in County Durham walked out solidly as soon as the strike was announced.

Militant campaigning in the North East against unemployment — which stands at above 25 per cent — has boosted support for the strike against pit

closures. Only three weeks before the ballot there was a mass demonstration through Easington against unemployment organised by the Labour Party and led by Neil Kinnock.

## We're backing the miners!

AS PICKETING miners tie down most of the British coalfield they are turning their attention to coal movement and power stations.

Vital here will be solidarity action from rail, transport steel workers and dockers. Miners are also relying on broad solidarity from the labour movement to win.

The solidarity machine is beginning to roll.

● **Railworkers** in South Wales have refused to cross miner's picket lines at the Aberthaw power station which has only six weeks supply of coal. Four deliveries of coal were stopped on the first day of picketing, despite British Rail Board threats to lay off the railworkers.

Other depots, such as Dover and Faversham in Kent have pledged not to move any coal that undermines the strike.

These actions follow an official NUR instruction not to cross miners' picket lines. The NUR press officer told Socialist Action 'We fully support the action of the miners to save their industry. In the terms of the Triple Alliance we will respond fraternally to any requests from the NUM'.

● **Transport** Forty delegates and shop stewards representing TGWU drivers in the Northern area voted on the weekend not to cross picket lines.

This solidarity will be followed countrywide after the decision of the TGWU executive that their members should not break the strike.

● **Solidarity rallies** The South East region of the TUC and London Trades Councils have taken the lead with a rally in Congress House at 6pm on Wednesday 21 March.

The case for the miners will be put by a Kent miners' leader, who will be joined by rail union secretary Jimmy Knapp, and MP, Dennis Skinner. Similar rallies are being planned across the country.



Jack Taylor addresses miners outside their Yorkshire HQ.

## Yorkshire miners defend NUM HQ

A THOUSAND MINERS were massed outside Yorkshire headquarters in Barnsley on Monday waiting to hear the result of the NCB's contempt action order against Yorkshire NUM picketing in Notts.

By Paul Hodgkinson

There was no doubting the miners' determination to prevent any bailiffs entering the building. Police were greeted with chants of 'Seig heil' and 'go home you bums'. And miners aired their distrust of the media on a camera crew which was chased from the scene.

Scuffles broke out.

and the jeering of the crowd increased when one miner was arrested.

Jack Taylor appeared to calm the situation by confirming rumours that the NCB's court action had been adjourned. This news was met with chants of 'Nottingham, Nottingham'.

Finally the arrested miner was released to the cheers of the miners who showed their determination to continue picketing other areas.

**Defend the NUM**  
Hazel Grove LPYS public meeting  
Stockport Tech College Fri 23 March 7.30  
Speakers: Andrew Bennett MP, Bernard Reagan Stockport AUEW District Secretary, Stockport 6 NGA. Miners invited from Lancashire and Yorkshire.

## Support the Miners

Socialist Action public meeting

Speakers: Ken Capstick, Yorkshire Area Council NUM, Tom Watkin, convenor Phillips Rubber, and from NGA and NUR.

Black Lion, Chapel Street, Salford, Manchester. Thursday 22 March, 7.30pm

## 'Together we can win'

OUR PEOPLE were stopped by the police at Dartford tunnel and turned back. They were told that they were not allowed to travel to other parts of the country to carry out mass picketing.

By Paul Verril (Kent NUM)

At the moment we are engaged in peaceful picketing in Leicester. We're asking miners to come out in support of other miners, trying to persuade them of our case.

We've got support from other trade unionists through the Triple Alliance. They've said they won't take coal from pitheads and they're committed to give us practical support.

Our message to all miners is stand with us, defend the right to work. Don't allow the media to divide us and don't allow the police to divide us on the picket lines. Together we can win'.

## ... strike round-up ...

### Welsh miners turn sights to coal stocks

PAUL O'SULLIVAN from Trelewis Drift in South Wales told Socialist Action about their plans.

'All the South Wales pits are shut down now. A number of pits that first voted not to strike have re-voted to stay out. We've only got token pickets now.'

'We'll be having South Wales pickets in Nottinghamshire and Lancashire and we'll try to picket them out.'

'We're fighting for our survival and we don't recognise the Tories' laws. The only law we recognise is "don't cross picket lines".'

'Now the pits are sewn up in South Wales, we'll be concentrating on other things, like coal stocks and power stations. There have been pickets at Cwm Bargoed blending plant and Aberthaw power station and the NUR members have refused to

cross our picket lines. We've had enormous help from the NUR.

'We'll have to picket oil as well. A number of power stations use oil and coal, they are preparing to substitute oil for coal, which will be kept over. We're going to stop this.'

### Scottish miners fight for their lives

EVEN BEFORE the Yorkshire strike began, only eight of Scotland's twelve pits were working normally. Polmaise and Seafield were on strike against closures and job loss and two Fife pits were laid off as a result.

Within 24 hours of the Scottish executive's call for an area strike, all

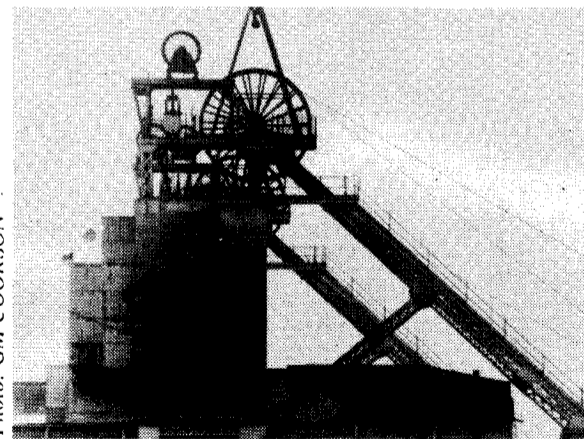


Photo: GM COOKSON

Scotland's pits were at a standstill.

By Matthew Forde (Pollock Labour Party)

The strike at Polmaise was the latest in a series of bitter struggles against closures and provocations over working conditions. Most recently miners at Monktonhall fought

redundancies with a lengthy strike.

The Polmaise pit near Pallin, Stirlingshire is typical of the decline of Scottish coal mining. Only 25 years ago 10,000 miners were employed near the village — now only 250 miners remain and they are fighting closure.

Scotland now faces another six pit closures. For Scottish miners, the strike call isn't a minute too soon.



LANDLORD Louis Goldthorpe shopkeeper in Yorkshire who has pledged not to increase a single price while the strike lasts. Doncaster and Mid Glamorgan councils have promised free school meals to miners' children.

# Thatcher's war on the NUM

The Tory press this week ranted on against the 'extremism' and 'violence' of the miners. The Thatcher government was supposedly ordering in thousands of police to defend the right of ordinary workers to go into the pits. The government claimed it was simply enforcing 'the same law which applies to everyone.'

These statements are hypocritical lies even by the standard habitually set by Thatcher, Brittan and Lawson. The Conservative Party planned its confrontation with the NUM in detail more than five years ago. The miners are fighting one of the most premeditated attacks ever launched against the trade union movement.

The origins of the present confrontation lie in the Tories period of opposition from 1974 to 1979. At that time the Conservative Party spent a large amount of time and resources running over the lessons of its defeat at the hands of the unions in 1972 and 1974.

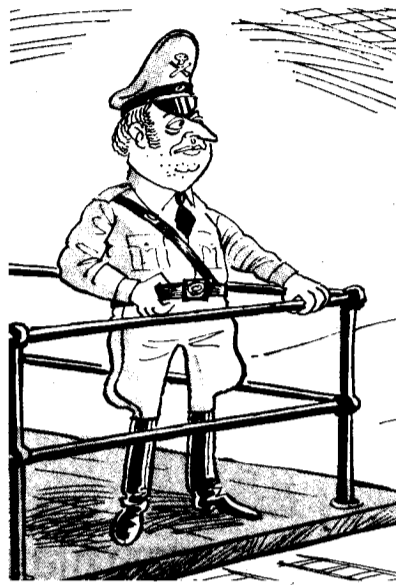
Tory thinking was drawn together in a report authored by Conservative MP Nicholas Ridley. Ridley is now Minister of Transport.

Ridley's Conservative Party report was supposedly secret but it was leaked to *The Economist* magazine. It laid out a step by step blueprint which has since been followed by the Thatcher government.

The Ridley report recommended that each nationalised industry should be instructed to achieve a 'totally inflexible' rate of return on capital. Directors of nationalised industries would be instructed to achieve this target even if this, 'might mean that men would be laid off, or uneconomic plants would be closed down, or whole businesses sold off or liquidated.'

The report warned there must be no retreat on the strategy, 'there is no point in undertaking it unless we are prepared to go through with it.'

Nationalised industries were then divided into different groups according



Scargill as smeared by the Sun

to how easily the Ridley report believed it would be to take on and defeat a strike.

By John Ross

Education, road transport, telecommunications, air transport and steel were singled out as areas where a strike could be defeated most easily.

Railways, docks, mining, and rubbish disposal were identified as areas of 'intermediate' difficulty.

Severage and water workers, electricity, and gas were defined as areas of maximum difficulty for the government. To give the government tactical flexibility it was explicitly stated that where industries, 'have the national interest by the jugular vein the only feasible option is to pay up.'

From the general analysis detailed recommendations on tactics for a future Conservative government to follow were drawn up.

A series of structural changes

should be introduced into industry and wage bargaining to split up the working class. Privatisation was the core of this. Telecommunications and the post office should be separated. Any measure of comparability in pay settlements between industries should be ruled out.

To weaken the overall position of the unions the advice was 'to cut off the money supply to the strikers, and make the union finance them.'

The government should provoke confrontations early in its term of office with groups of workers in sectors where the employers had a particularly strong position. British Leyland, the railways, civil service workers, and steel were singled out as particularly suitable targets.

## Provoked

Confrontation with stronger groups of workers should be postponed until later in the government's term of office. This should be secured by rigging figures on profitability so that at first, above average wage claims could be paid in 'vulnerable' industries.

Fights should at all costs be avoided with gas and electricity workers. But here the Ridley report believed the government could manoeuvre successfully because no major redundancies would be needed in those industries.

The final confrontation which would be provoked would be the mining industry. This struggle should be carefully prepared by building up maximum coal stocks in the power stations, by making emergency plans for importing coal, and by encouraging the recruitment of 'good non-union drivers' who would be paid to cross picket lines under police protection.

Above all the police should be carefully prepared for large scale strike breaking. Large mobile squads of police, centrally organised and with communications equipment to back them up, should be organised for smashing picket lines.



Miners supported the Health Workers. Now they need solidarity.

## BLOC and the miners

This weekend, in Sheffield, the Broad Left Organising Committee will assemble the largest gathering of left trade union activists for more than ten years. The conference meets during the most bitter miner's strike for a decade. It is vital this opportunity to hammer out a line of advance for the left in the unions is not lost.

The BLOC conference must not be simply a rally. Nor simply a platform for one or other political tendency. It must be an opportunity for the left to draw a sober balance sheet of the difficult situation confronting trade unionists and to begin to map out a plan of action and organisation to meet them.

by Redmond O' Neill

The first and most urgent task is obviously solidarity with the miners. The NUM cannot today simply rely on spontaneous support from other unions. The record of the TUC on the ASLEF strike, the health workers dispute and the NGA is one of open sabotage.

Therefore it is vital for the left to organise a struggle within the unions to win action, and the membership, to support the miners. The contribution BLOC can make to this is beginning to establish an organised left wing movement in the unions.

This would be in practice a new departure for BLOC. Unfortunately, following its spring 1983 conference, BLOC virtually disappeared from view. It never appeared publicly to organise support for the NGA, GCH-Q, or other workers suffering the brunt of the Tory attack.

It would be criminal to assemble together more than 1500 union activists and again fail to build from this a campaigning left wing in the unions.

So the first task from the conference is to launch an open and democratic organisation of BLOC, actively campaigning in the movement. Starting with an all out campaign in support of the miners would be the way to launch that. BLOC should encourage broad left organisation in every union.

The second key issue the conference must act on is defending political trade unionism and the links of the trade unions to the Labour Par-

ty. The TUC, led by Murray Chapple, Duffy, and Graham, are trying to impose a new model of non-political business unionism on the movement. This is the strategy which has brought the American AFL-CIO to such a disastrous situation. It is vital to organise the forces in the union movement who oppose this line.

Linked to that is the assault on political funds. The Tory government is seeking to exploit the fact that only 39 per cent of trade unionists voted Labour at the last election in order to break the links between unions and Labour. The ballots on political funds which are coming in 1986 are going to be sabotaged by people like Frank Chapple — who quite openly proclaim the need for the trade unions to weaken their links with the Labour Party.

The 'new realism' line of the General Council is quite incapable of dealing with this level of political attack. Indeed it plays into the hands of the Thatcher government — not least because a whole series of General Council members proclaim they are in favour of non-political unionism.

BLOC is capable of working for a united left campaign to reverse the direction of the TUC and to defend the political levy. There is an ideal opportunity to do this during this summer's trade union conferences — good arenas for BLOC to organise and gain support.

The Labour Coordinating Committee has already launched a campaign to defend political funds around a 'Labour Party and Trade Unions Charter'. This appeal is endorsed by figures such as Ron Todd, Arthur Scargill, Alan Sapper, Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, and David Blunkett.

BLOC, and the BLOC conference, should endorse the LCC campaign and approach its organisers to discuss how to build it. If the campaign on political funds is built during the next year through local conferences, workplace meetings, and at the trade union conferences then it can really begin to turn round the tide on political trade unionism.

These three steps — campaigning to defend the miners, building broad lefts in every union, uniting to defend political trade unionism, are the practical goals which the BLOC conference can and should set itself.

If it carries out these campaigns next year's BLOC conference will be even larger and more representative than this one. A major step forward can be taken for the union left.



Photos: JOHN HARRIS (IFL)

Tory police organise to smash picket lines

ar

These plans have been followed to the letter. During its first term in office the Thatcher government laid down its overall framework of law for confronting the unions. It took on and defeated the steel workers, the civil servants, and SLEF.

At the same time, as recommended by Ridley, the government backed down in 1981 over pit closures. It philosophically accepted a defeat at the hands of the water workers. Meanwhile the entire framework of the Tebbit-King laws was being quietly put in place.

Now Thatcher is getting into order the final part of the plan. The first step was to take on and defeat the NGA at Warrington. This effectively destroyed the chances of smaller groups of workers taking on and defying the Tebbit laws.

Now the real target has come in the Tory sights: The Yorkshire NUM. The group of workers that organised the defeat of Heath in 1972 and 1974.

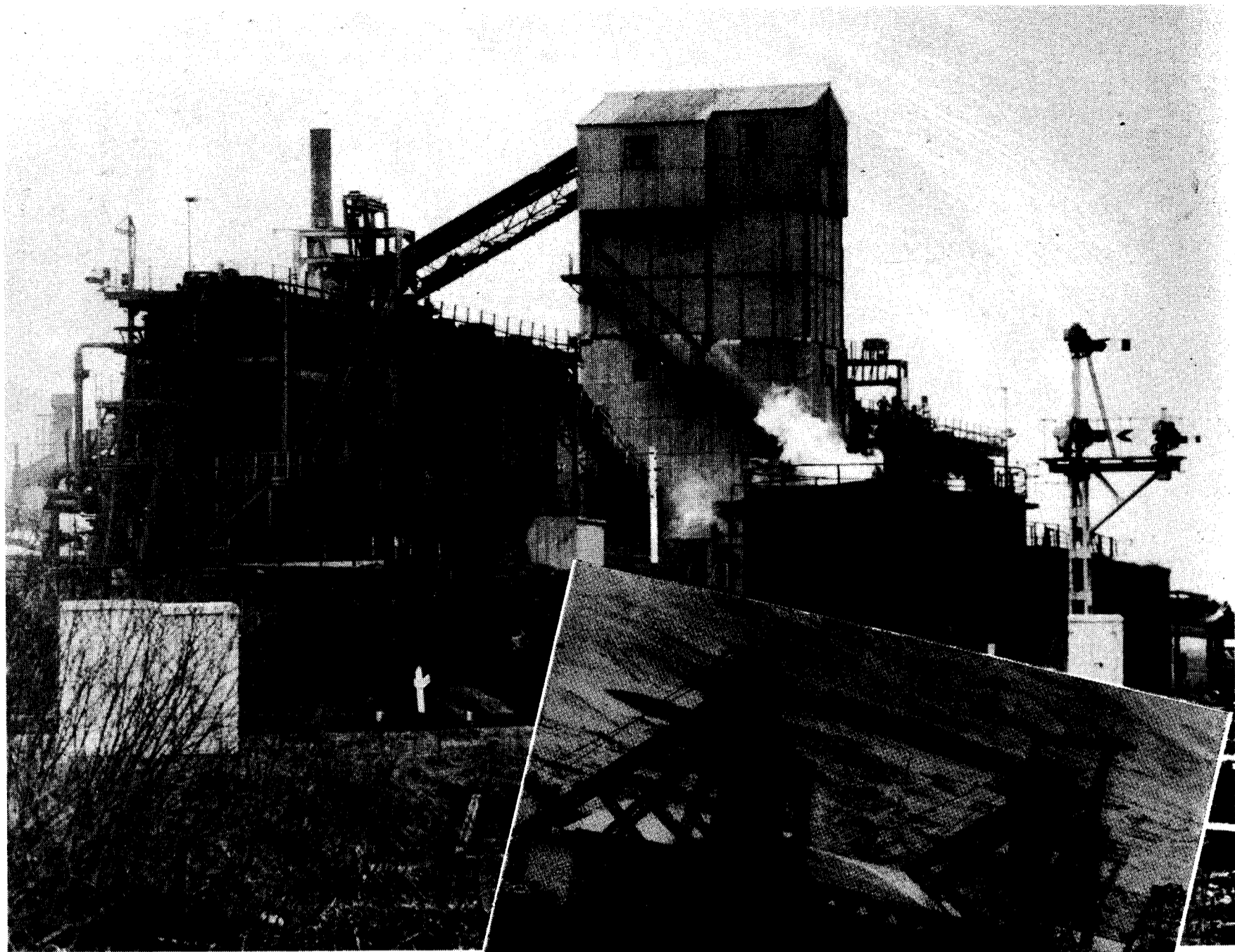
The National Union of Mineworkers has been the backbone of the British Labour movement for a century. These are the real targets of Thatcher's government.

Those clashes on the picket line have nothing to do with 'miners violence'. It is the NUM fighting against the most vicious and coordinated assault on the trade union movement since 1926. If the Tory government defeats the NUM it will turn on any group of workers which dares to fight for its job, its wages or its conditions of work.

It is the Thatcher government which is responsible for violence in the coalfields. Not the NUM.

Thatcher is responsible for every loss of jobs, every injury and every death. She profits from the death of the Yorkshire miner David Jones. She planned this showdown.

The place of every trade unionist, every member of the labour movement, every person who believes in elementary human rights and justice is out there on the picket line with the miners.



Miners at modernised Ollerton think they're safe while starved pits in Wales close.

Photos: GIM COOKSON

# The great Coal Board massacre

**'LEANER BUT FITTER' was the Tory banner for industry at the 1979 election. This meant a major shake up of the nationalised industries — parcelling them up for private buyers, squeezing more profits out of less workers and destroying union opposition to the cutbacks.**

Thatcher had a particular score to settle with the miners who had brought down the Heath government in 1974. So her ministers set to work with plans to close pits and break the NUM.

Thatcher got a bloody nose on her first try when Welsh miners struck against pit closures in 1981 and threatened a national strike. The government retreated in a humiliating 'U turn'.

By Celia Pugh

The Tories have now turned to butcher MacGregor, his axe still dripping with 100,000 steel jobs.

The prospect for the mining communities is devastating.

● **Jobs and closures** Between 1979 and 1983, 36 pits shut with the loss of 27,000 jobs. In the last year 23 more pits have closed and 20,000 jobs have been scrapped.

Secret government documents leaked by the NUM in November 1982 show that the Coal Board plans to throw up to 95 pits on the tip in the next eight years and 70,000 jobs with them. One in three mining jobs would

disappear.

● **Profit and loss rules OK** In the 1970's, pits were closed when coal ran out or when geological conditions made it impossible or too dangerous to work the seams.

Now the NCB insists on profits and productivity alone deciding the fate of pits and jobs. No matter how much good coal is in the ground — or how needed this is in hospitals and homes — if a pit is not economically viable, without subsidy, then it should be shut.

● **The age of the super-pit** The NCB plans for a smaller number of super-pits, stuffed with computerised technology to replace the coal produced across the country today.

Super-pits like Selby in north Yorkshire are capable of producing the equivalent of 70 per cent of the entire production of Wales and Scotland, with only 10 per cent of the workforce.

The Board hopes to close all but a handful of the pits in Wales, Scotland and the North East and to carve away large sections of the Lancashire, Midlands, Yorkshire and Kent coalfields.

Instead of using new technology to shorten the dangerous working hours of miners it will be used to increase output from a decimated workforce.

● **Investment starvation** Leaner but fitter has meant slimmers disease for whole coalfields as they are starved of investment.

Without investment funds, new seams cannot be mined or difficult geological conditions overcome. Areas like South Wales fare badly in the new tables for profit and loss — so the NCB

proposes closure.

In 1982 South Wales — employing 24,000 miners — received £14.5million for major capital projects. North Yorkshire — employing 14,600 miners — got £452.5million, that's 30 times more. Promised new pits like Margam in South Wales, which could provide hundreds of new jobs are refused funding.

When Welsh miners went on strike in March 1983 it was for investment to create more jobs.

● **Divide and rule — bash the unions** The Tories cannot get away with these plans unless the back of the NUM is broken. The union bashing operation has taken many forms.

After decades of bitter battles, the miners union has won a certain control and veto over work practices. This has now been flagrantly disregarded by the NCB in pit after pit, leading to bitter flare-ups over quotas and conditions.

In the first five months of 1983 one in five miners took strike action against these provocations.

The incentive bonus scheme, introduced over miners' heads by Joe Gormley in 1977, has been used to divide miners. Miners in higher investment and higher bonus pits are conned by the NCB and union officials into believing that harder work and less strikes will secure their future.

● **The nukes are here** In an attempt to break the strength of the miners as a force for social change the Tories are prepared to replace coal with dangerous nuclear power and limited supplies of oil — which are 35 per cent more costly. The intention is to increase the nuclear energy used, by between

500 and 800 per cent by the year 2000.

The government has turned down NUM proposals for new ways of using coal which are more efficient, environmentally sound and would allow cheap energy for the poor and the elderly.

A 1979 Cabinet paper laid it on the line when it said 'But a nuclear programme would have the advantage of removing a substantial portion of electricity production from the dangers of disruption of industrial action by coal miners or transport workers'.

No matter what the social cost, profits rule supreme.

● **Leeches and their friends** Aside from previous private owners still paid compensation, many of Thatcher's friends are leeching off the coal industry.

Last year £366 million interest found its way to the pockets of the banks and speculators — that's a drain of £2million on every pit.

Between 1981 and 1982 there was a £54million increase in mysterious expenditure items like 'payments to private contractors', depreciation and 'expenditure on other items'.

Anti-union employers like Arthur Snipe of Mining Supplies and Laurence Scott Electro-Motors — the scene of a bitter jobs occupation in 1981 — are the beneficiaries. So too are the private cowboys who are encouraged to take over open cast mining and workshops.

With their determined strike action the miners are saying enough is enough. They are fighting for a safe and secure future for themselves, their communities and all those suffering under the Tories.

# Behind the South Africa-Angola disengagement agreement

**LAST MONTH** Angola and South Africa entered into a 'disengagement agreement' in Lusaka which provides for the withdrawal of South African troops from southern Angola, where they have been giving aid to the pro-Western, anti-government UNITA guerrillas.

The western press has been quick to interpret this agreement as a prelude to imminent 'independence' for Namibia — the former province of 'South West Africa' which lies between South Africa proper and Angola.

But a closer look at the Angola/South Africa agreement and the circumstances surrounding it, show that Namibian independence, and indeed peace between Angola and South Africa, is still far away.

Angola entered into the discussions with South Africa on the basis of four conditions laid down in August last year. These included a) unconditional withdrawal of South African troops from Angola b) implementation of UN resolution 435 (1978) for Namibian independence c) the cessation of all South African aggression against Angola and d) the end of all military and logistical support for UNITA.

While South Africa has agreed to a four week pull-out from Angola, it has given no indication that it will break off support for

UNITA, and commitment to implement resolution 435 has not been met. Indeed the day after the Lusaka agreement South African foreign minister Pik Botha stated that he did not know whether the resolution could or would be implemented.

**By Anne M Hudson (Namibia Support Committee)**

For the Namibian liberation movement SWAPO, and the United Nations, the only outstanding issue is what electoral system would be utilised in the elections leading to independence. But the South Africans have consistently refused to give any answer on what electoral system should be used, thus showing that they want to avoid the question of in-

dependence, at least until it can impose its Namibian puppet organisation, the 'Multi-Party Conference' (MPC) as the government.

A second essential factor not covered by the Lusaka agreement is the armed struggle within Namibia itself. The Angola-South Africa 'disengagement agreement' has no bearing on the activity of 100,000 South African and allied troops who continue to terrorise Namibia's black population. SWAPO president Sam Nujoma has expressed fears that troops withdrawn from Angola will be used to further terrorise Namibia's 1.2 million people, 80 per cent of whom are living under martial law.

Likewise, the People's Liberation Army in Namibia is not bound by any of the conditions of the Lusaka agreement. While SWAPO has some refugee settlements and other facilities in Angola, none of its combatants operate from Angola, but from within Namibia itself.

Pretoria has however attempted to portray recent SWAPO attacks, for example the one at Blomfontein, as a threat to its own transparent 'peace moves', and perhaps an



SWAPO fighters prepare for action

excuse for another attack on Angola.

In Namibia the South African government is furiously promoting the MPC. Their brief is to establish an 'interim government' and draw up a new constitution. Pretoria has recently declared that the MPC must be a party to negotiations over Namibia's future, a condition rejected by SWAPO as giving fake legitimacy to South Africa's stooges.

Britain and the United States, although anxious for a Namibian settlement, fear the consequences of a SWAPO victory. With massive investments in South Africa, they fear that instability inside apartheid's heartland would be massively increased by such an event.

This explains why Thatcher, although not being as open as the US for fear of alienating the Commonwealth lobby, has passively concurred with

Washington's attempts to secure an agreement beyond the bounds of the UN resolution.

With Namibian independence still a long way off, British capital continues to exploit the country's mineral and other resources, in defiance of rulings by the UN and the International Court of Justice. Despite the government's announcement that the British electricity industry will end its contract for

uranium from the Rossing mine after 1984, the evidence in the hands of the Namibia Support Committee suggests that the importation of Namibian uranium into Britain will continue — for re-processing for foreign customers and perhaps for military use.

On 29 February Alun Roberts, a British citizen and member of the Namibia Support Committee who wrote the book *The Rossing File* exposing Britain's plunder of Namibian uranium, was arrested in Namibia. He was held under special South African legislation which enables people to be held incommunicado for 30 days.

For two weeks the Foreign Office refused to take any actions to secure his release. Supporters of Namibian independence are asked to raise the matter of Alun Roberts' arrest in their union, Labour Party or other organisation, and to send telegrams to the Foreign Office, demanding that it calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

● For further information contact the Namibia Support Committee, 53 Leverton St., London NW5. Telephone 267 1941/2.

## DIARY

These listings are free for all major labour movement and campaign activities — up to maximum of 50 words. Semi-display advertisements cost 5p per word and must be paid in advance. Send to: *Diary, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP* to arrive not later than Thursday, one week prior to publication.

**Labour Movement**  
● Broad Left Organising Conference Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield, Sat

24 March 11-5.30. Credentials from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place London E9 6EH.

● **Defend London democracy.** Public meeting, Thur 22 March, 8pm, Kingsgate Community Centre, 107 Kingsgate Rd, London NW6. Speakers include Phil Turner, leader Camden Council and John McDonnell, GLC finance chair. Organised by Hampstead and Highgate Labour Party-Kilburn branch.

● **Haringey GLC campaign day** 24 March, events all day. Tottenham Green Education Centre, Town Hall Approach Rd, London N15, 10am.

● **Funeral for local democracy** starting at Lordship Lane, Peckham, 9.45am, Friday 23 March. Ending at County Hall.

### Anti-cuts campaigns

● **London Health Service Campaign.** 34 Dalston Lane, London E8 3AZ 01-249 8086.

### Disarmament

● **Labour and NATO** Labour Briefing discussion conference. Sat 24 March, 10.30-5pm County Hall, London.

● **Youth CND Easter march** organised by Neath and Swansea YCND. April 26-29. Free food and accommodation for marchers. Contact Rachel Burch, 8 Eversley Rd, Sketty, Swansea. Tel: 0792 299360.

### Ireland

● **Labour and Ireland** day school for budding writers, workshops with trained journalists. London, Feb or

March, £1. Write to Labour and Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

### International

● **Sri Lankan Research & Information Group** will provide speakers on the current situation there for meetings. Write to 9 Grays Inn Buildings, London EC1.

● **Anti Apartheid Action.** Demonstration 24 March, Assemble Hackney Town Hall, Mare St, London, 11am, march to South Africa House, Trafalgar Square. 21 March, anniversary of Sharpsville massacre, picket SA House, Trafalgar Sq, 1-2pm. 21 March, lobby of MP's. 12 noon to 8pm. 29 March lunchtime picket of Barclays Bank Head Office, Lombard St, London EC1.

● **El Salvador day of action** national day of activities against British government observers to Salvador elections. 24 March Hunger strike in London, St Martin in the Fields, 24 hrs.

● **Nicaragua study tour** 8-24 April, 1984. Information from NSC, 20-21 Compton Tce, London N1.

● **Hands off Grenada** public meeting. Thur 22 March, 7.30, Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square, London NW1. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Nadine Finch, Tony Gifford, Carol Davis, Sarah Burton.

### 25 Years of the Cuban Revolution

● **Britain-Cuba Resource Centre** Information about activities, subs to Granma

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weekly review and newsletters from 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

● **Cuban workers** trade union commemoration. Organised by UCATT building workers. 19 April, County Hall, London, 7pm. Tickets £1 from Britain Cuba Resource Centre, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

### Civil Rights

● **Action Group on Immigration and Nationality** Conference on the case for reform of the law, Sat 24 March, 10-4.30, AUEW House, 43 The Crescent, Salford.

● **Immigration Widows Kit** information and advice on organising against the immigration attacks on women. From Women Immigration and Nationality Group, c/o 44 Theobalds Rd, London WC1. 85p (inc p&p).

### Lesbian & Gay Liberation

● **London Labour Campaign for Gay Rights** new office at 39 Chippenham Rd, W9 2AH 01-286 9692, open Tues-Thur 11am-7pm. (Westbourne Grove tube. Bad access, help available).

● **Labour Movement Lesbians** is a new organisation of lesbians in the labour movement to support each other and organise initiatives on issues that affect lesbians. Further information from Sarah c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embk, London WC2.

● **Glasgow Labour Campaign for Gay Rights** meets second Thursday every month in AUEW halls at 7.30. Info from LCGR Box 35 488 Great Western Rd, Glasgow.

### Miscellaneous

● **GLC workshops** Employment and training for the future. 22 March Migrants in the NHS, County Hall. 7-9.30 pm, 5 April Migrants, black women and trade unions, County Hall, 7-9.30pm.

### New pamphlet: Politics in the 1980's — The British Crisis.

Articles reprinted from Socialist Action and *International* — John Ross, British politics in the 1980's; Alan Freeman, How Labour Can Win; Steve Marks, the 1983 Election; John Ross, Facing 1984; Alan Freeman, Rebuilding the Labour Party. Available from PO Box 50 London N1, price 35p. (plus 16p, p/p).

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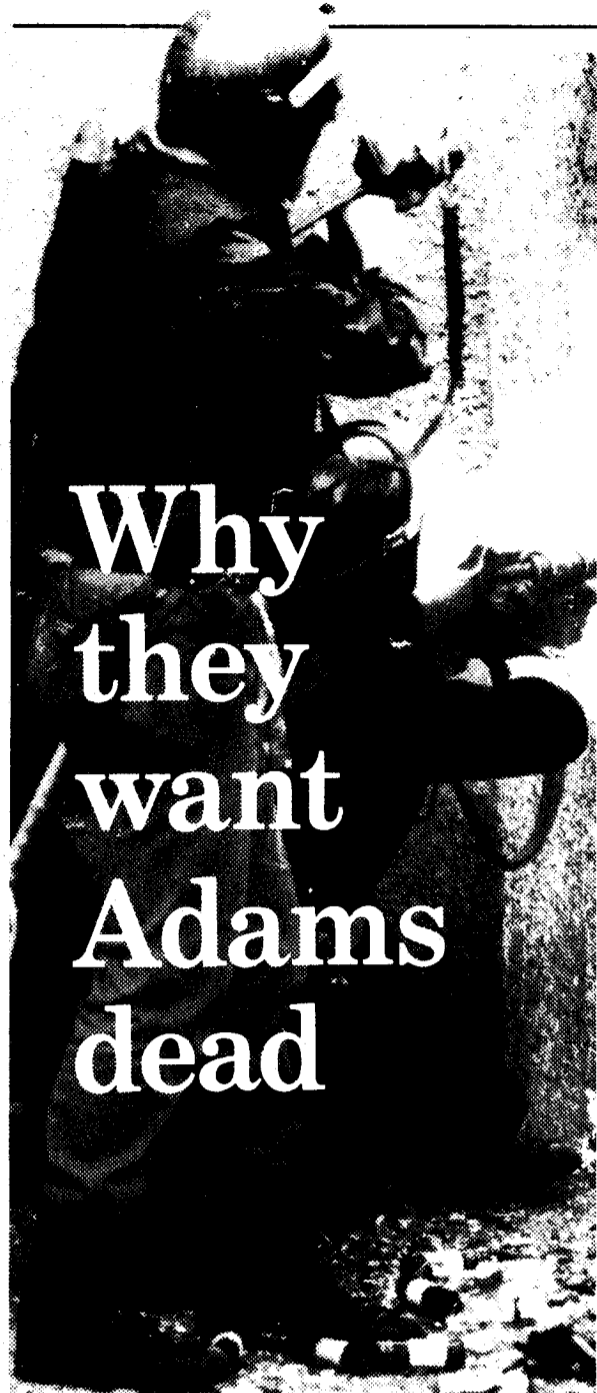
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# Why they want Adams dead

**IT COMES as no surprise to anybody that there has been an attempt on the life of Gerry Adams. Both the Loyalist paramilitaries and the British state have good reason for wanting him dead. During the last decade he has emerged as the most determined and clear-sighted leader of socialist Republicanism in the six counties.**

Adams was arrested in 1973 and not released until 1976. During the mid-1970s after the trauma of Bloody Sunday in 1972 the Republican movement went through a period of a loss of direction. The Sunningdale 'power-sharing' agreement negotiated by Northern Ireland minister William Whitelaw gave a lease of life to the middle-class Catholic SDLP.

The Provisionals on the other hand concentrated on the economic bombing campaign in the Six Counties, and a bombing campaign in Britain which resulted in the Birmingham bombings in 1974. From prison Adams called for a change in direction. His central theme was that the military and political struggle had to be united. This approach was given expression by the launching of the relatives' campaign for the political prisoners, and eventually most dramatically in the mass mobilisations around the hunger strike.

The increasingly powerful left wing in Sinn Fein, spearheaded by Adams and a group of younger leaders in the Six Counties, re-opened the strategic discussion on what kind of Ireland the Republican movement was fighting for. Was it the federal Ireland outlined in the Sinn Fein programme of James Connolly? This struggle, concluded at the 1982 and '83 Ard Fheis was fought against the

more traditional right wing republican leadership based in Dublin, around Daithi O'Connell and Ruadhri O'Braudaigh.

Adams has shown over the years an ability to learn from the experience of the struggle, in particular in relation to the electoral tactic, which has increasingly made Sinn Fein the dominant political force in the nationalist community. The electoral victories of Bobby Sands, and then Owen Carron after Sand's death proved Adams' effective strategic leadership of the Republican movement.

By Andrew McIntyre

The prestige of the Adams team was used to reaffirm the democratic socialist orientation and change the programme of the organisation, for example by deleting references to Christian principles. Women were given a much more substantial role in the movement, for example by creating a women's department in Sinn Fein run by women — a development which found its repercussion in the increasing involvement of women in the mass campaigns in the Six Counties.

Sinn Fein was given a much more open daily political profile through the advice centres created in Belfast, as a means of building mass electoral support through directly addressing the daily pro-

blems of the local people.

An *Phoblacht*, the Provisionals' weekly paper, was turned towards mass politics, concentrating much less on simple news of the military struggle but rather turning towards working class issues and struggle.

The new mass strategy which led to the election of six Sinn Fein members to the Assembly and the election of Gerry Adams as the MP for West Belfast were further consolidated by the 1983 Ard Fheis. Adams insisted on something which gave Republican strategy a new dimension — a turn towards mass work in the southern Irish working class above all in the trade unions.

This is crucial to any socialist strategy for Ireland — the understanding that the reunification of Ireland on a socialist basis can only be achieved within a 32-county perspective, and by breaking down the idea that the solution to the national question is the struggle of the nationalist community in Six Counties alone.

Traditionally Sinn Fein has had a sectarian attitude towards work in the Southern trade unions. The break from this is an essential prerequisite for building Sinn Fein as a mass party throughout Ireland.

Sinn Fein has come through a dramatic political evolution which has led it from its former impasse. It has made a real turn to the mass movement, and much of the credit for this lies in the clear-sighted leadership given by Gerry Adams.

## IRELAND UNFREE

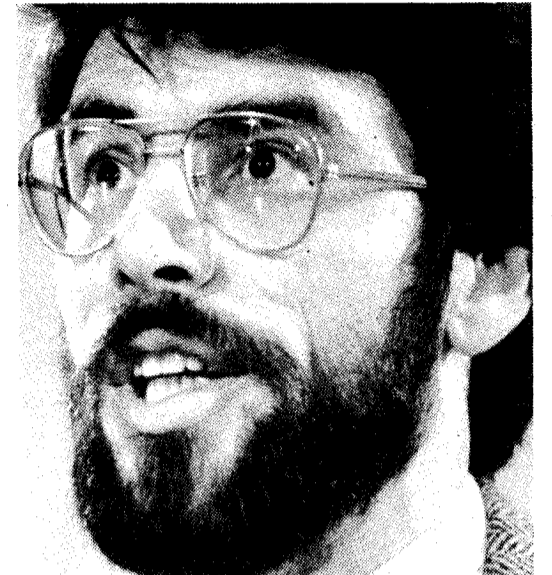


Photo: GAT COOKSON

### The Gerry Adams murder attempt

**SOCIALIST REPUBLICAN** leaders in Ireland do not have a very high survival rate. Seamus Costello and Miriam Daly, both leaders of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, were assassinated by persons unknown. Bernadette MacAliskey survived the attempt to assassinate her by a virtual miracle.

The attempt to murder Bernadette and her husband, and last week's attack on Adams and his companions, have one striking thing in common — the rapid arrival of the security forces to the scene. In both cases suspicions arose that the proximity of the security forces and their prompt arrest of the would-be assassins was something more than accidental.

Gerry Adams said last week: 'I don't think that it was an attack carried out by the British or planned by them, but I think they were aware that it was going to happen. The people who have got the most to gain from my execution — the execution of any Irish Republican — is the British government'.

The chain of events which led to the Adams shooting and the arrest of his assailants were extraordinary. As the car in which they were travelling approached Belfast City Hall a car drew up along side and fired dozens of shots. The getaway car was intercepted three hundred yards away from the City Hall by security forces.

At first the police stated that the gunmen's car had been intercepted by 'an off-duty member of the Ulster Defence Regiment'. Later the regiment of the 'off-duty soldiers' (note the plural) became unidentified.

Moreover given that the attack took place in a one-way system behind the City Hall, there is no way in which someone pursuing the attackers could have any reason to chase them unless they were travelling behind the Adams car and witnessed the shooting. Or to put it another way, it seems very obvious that a car with plain clothes soldiers was following Gerry Adams.

The attack on Adams was claimed by the 'Ulster Freedom Fighters' the cover name for the Loyalist UDA. The UDA later claimed that Adams had been under surveillance by a group of SAS soldiers. Either this SAS squad witnessed the attack on Adams and did not intervene until after the shooting, or even worse they were there because they knew the attack was coming — and were present to arrest the attackers, so that the British government wouldn't take the rap.

After the attack Adams expressed his confidence that there would be no retaliatory attacks by Republicans against the Loyalists for the murder attempt. Democratic Unionist leader Ian Paisley virtually gave his blessing to the attack by saying that Adams had 'reaped what he has sown' and had personally 'glorified murder' in the past. Paisley's comments are in line with the campaign by the British media, and in particular the *World in Action* TV programme, to portray Adams as a gunman and not the popular mass leader that he is — in other words a suitable case for assassination.

Gerry Adams and his comrades had a lucky escape. But the British state and the Loyalist thugs are unlikely to give up their attempts to get rid of him.

*'The Armagh women deserve every accolade laid on them. They suffer and endure resolutely continual strip searches, cell raids and internal lock-ups. They expect nothing less. They deserve so much more'.*  
Republican woman prisoner

**A DELEGATION** of over 170 women travelled to Ireland to join this year's picket of Armagh women's prison. The picket in support of women political prisoners has now become an annual event, supported by growing numbers of women internationally.

The delegation, organised jointly by the London Armagh group and Sinn Fein Women's Department, brought together women from Scotland, Wales, England and abroad to demonstrate for International Women's Day that the struggle for women's liberation in Ireland is part of the struggle for Irish self-determination. It was particularly pleasing to see a group of women from Greenham Common on the delegation.

Women political prisoners in Armagh are subject to a humiliating and degrading form of sexual harassment by the prison regime, namely strip searching. One woman prisoner was strip-searched five times within a 48-hour period, although she was under constant surveillance, and came into contact with no one except the prison officers.

She said of this ordeal: 'I saw my nakedness as an indictment against them. They thought my womanhood would serve to help to defeat me. They didn't understand that the strength of ideals cannot be stripped from one's mind'. The strip searches are most frequently used on remand prisoners — some of them are strip searched up to four times for a court appearance that might last only five minutes.

The remand prisoners are those held under the infamous paid perjurer system — people convicted on the uncor-

roborated evidence of one person. The system has introduced a new style of internment for Republican prisoners.

By Steph Green and Ros Young

Information on plastic and rubber bullets was explained to us by a woman who had been blinded by a plastic bullet fired at short range by a British soldier. She told of the deaths and horrendous injuries caused by these lethal weapons.

In one nine month period from November 1981, the British army fired 26,000 plastic bullets on the streets of Belfast! The picket at the prison had a larger turnout than in previous years with people from all over Ireland north and south, as well as the delegation. But as Sinn Fein women pointed out, we need to build this in thousands, not hundreds, next year.

Solidarity greetings

## Stop strip searches in Armagh



Women on the 1980 Armagh delegation

Photo: DEREK SPIERS (IFL)

were read out from organisations such as Outwrite, Spare Rib, Labour Committee on Ireland, Women for Palestine and many more from Irish solidarity groups and sisters in struggle throughout the world. At this point the RUC were beginning to look distinctly uncomfortable.

The London Armagh group, Sinn Fein's Women's Department and local people from West Belfast put a lot of effort into organising the delegation — effort that was much appreciated. It was

not however appreciated by the authorities, judging by the amount of harassment the delegation received in a pathetic attempt to stop us showing our solidarity.

### New pamphlet 'Strip searches in Armagh Jail'

Women behind the Wire no 2  
By the London Armagh Group  
75p from 374 Gray's Inn Rd., London WC1

\* Books are urgently needed for our sisters in Armagh and for the Falls Road Womens Centre. Send to: Falls Road Womens Centre, 170a Falls Road, Belfast.

# Arguments for more democracy

*Parliamentary Democracy and the Labour Movement*, the new pamphlet by the Campaign group of MPs, has been given wide publicity in the press. It was officially launched at a press conference last week.

Socialist Action asked Tony Benn, one of the members of the Campaign group, to introduce the pamphlet's arguments. We review the pamphlet next week.

The pamphlet looks at the parliamentary system to see how working people can use their powers as voters to meet their needs, and draws attention to the fact that Clause IV of the Labour Party constitution makes the establishment and maintenance of a party in parliament one of its primary objectives and affirms our commitment to parliamentary democracy.

Indeed, the labour movement has led the long struggle to achieve universal franchise precisely because working people were not prepared to be excluded from representation in the House of Commons. It was we in the labour movement, whose history is rooted in the Chartists and Suffragettes who campaigned for the vote for men and women. And we only achieved votes for everyone, men and women at 18 as recently as 1970.

But having said all that, the fact is that the movement has never forgotten that its main strength lies outside parliament. Under capitalism, even when Labour has the majority, the real levers of economic and financial power are outside parliament and are not subject to the direct — or indeed for that matter indirect — control of the electors of the MPs they've elected.

This of course has always been the case. And it seems truer today when the power of the multinationals and the bankers, the military, the civil service and the mass media has increased significantly and become more internationalised.

The pamphlet confirms our commitment to the principle of government and social change by free consent.

We've never been afraid that the democratic process might prevent us from realising our objectives, but that British institutions may not be sufficiently democratic in practice to allow the will of the people to be translated into action.

The pamphlet deals with a series of obstacles which stand in the way of the full development of democracy in Britain. First of all the constitution. Although we say we have the 'Mother of Parliaments', the fact is that we are only allowed to elect one-third of the constitutional bodies, namely the House of Commons and not the Crown or the House of Lords.

We look at the state apparatus — how the prime minister is really supreme. We go to look at the House of Commons and draw attention to the limitations that are placed on members of parliament when they try to do their work.

Then we look at the difficulties faced by the parliamentary Labour Party, particularly when

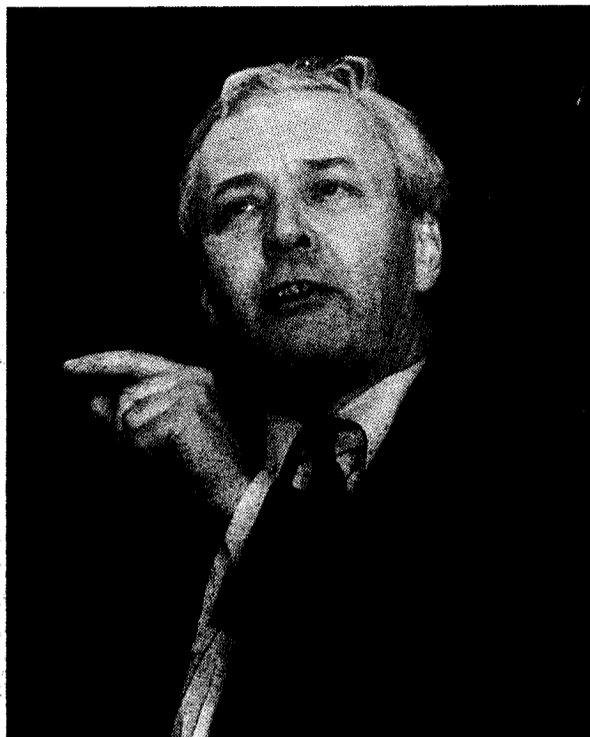


Photo: PETE GRANT

## By Tony Benn

Labour is in power. We look at the mass media,

the role that it performs, and then make a number of recommendations and conclusions, for improvements.

There are about 20 recommendations in all. They begin with the idea that crown prerogatives should be subject to the House of Commons — particularly the power to dissolve Parliament which is of great importance.

We cite from the case of the dismissal of Gough Whitlam's Labour government in Australia.

The pamphlet argues for the abolition of the Lords, the abolition of the 1972 European Communities Act so that British legislation can't be frustrated in a British court by an Act which transfers supremacy to the Common Market.

We look at the question of American nuclear bases in Britain. We argue for a Freedom of Information Act. We suggest that all major public appointments should be submitted to the Commons for approval. We take up the theme of Fred Jowett who wrote before the First World War that when Labour is in power a committee of Labour MPs should go into civil service departments so that ministers are not isolated.

We also look at the relation of the Labour Party to the state. The pamphlet argues for the election of the shadow cabinet ministers and cabinet ministers by the electoral college. We say that all state funds to political parties should be paid to the parties, and that staff should be seconded to help the parliamentary Labour Party. Finally there are one or two matters that relate specifically to parliament itself. That the advantage that privy councillors enjoy, should be ended and that the House of Commons should be televised so that you can actually see what happens.

We call for the drafting of standing orders for the parliamentary Labour party and their submission for the approval of the party conference. We suggest that the life of parliament should be reduced from five years to four. We say that the parliamentary party should be consulted when Labour is in power and before Labour governments reach decisions.

We call for more rational hours of sitting and proper facilities for members of Parliament and we say something about how the pay of members of parliament should be settled.

And we say that Westminster, where we work, should be under the control of the House of Commons so that people can actually make it more accessible to electors. There should be creches for those who work in the building.

And finally we say that any MP who leaves a political party for which they were elected must contest their seat at the earliest date.

We argue that these changes really are a call for radical, democratic reform and that they will win a great deal of support. Obviously such changes will be resisted by those who are opposed to democracy and believe that democracy is a barrier to the maintenance of their power and privileges.

That is a summary of the pamphlet. It is collective in character, it was discussed by the Campaign Group on a number of occasions, and I think it will arouse a great deal of interest.



# Save London Transport

**THE LONDON Regional Transport Bill is being rushed through Parliament well in advance of the final onslaught on the GLC. By the end of 1984 London Transport may be controlled by its enemies.**

**As yet the government hasn't decided what it will do with London Transport when the Tories get control of it. Certainly they will increase fares, cut staff levels and reduce services, but nobody can be sure how far they will go, or how soon.**

Official government advice to London Transport is that the subsidy for 1984 should be £125 million, which is £100 million less than the GLC plans to provide. The difference is so big that it is hard to see how the government could get away with following their own advice.

By Ivor Evans

Even with savage cuts in services and jobs, there would have to be a 40 per cent rise in fares and the abolition of pensioners' passes for the government guidelines on spending to be met. In the short term this would be political madness for the government, especially as it would still be in the throes of a fight against the campaign to save the GLC.

Nevertheless, these are the sort of policies the Tories are committed to. These attacks on the public transport service and its workforce will go hand in hand with the introduction of private business and the break up of London Transport into a series of subsidiaries. London Regional Transport — the new setup proposed to replace LT — would even have the power to make grants of loans to firms taking over parts of LT. It is not enough to hand over public services to profit-making concerns, the government is even going to pay them to make a profit.

Privatisation can take various forms, the most obvious being the introduction of private minibuses on the 'cream' routes. To fight off the

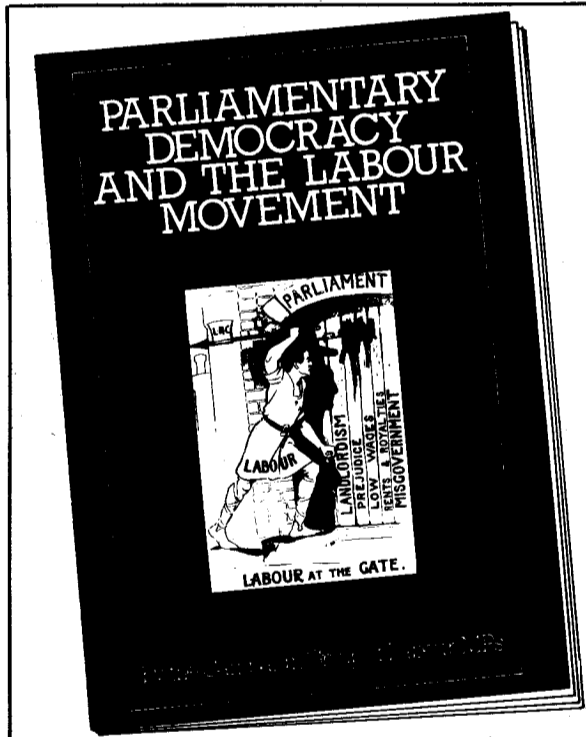
competition, London Regional Transport will have to concentrate its own services on the popular routes — especially as LRT itself will be run along business lines. The effect on residents of outlying areas can easily be guessed.

There will be private investment in parts of the system. There are already reports of merchant bankers lining up to put money into the Victoria and Piccadilly lines. Investors will profit from the most popular parts of the Underground, leaving the ratepayer holding the leftovers. How far this process will go is open to speculation at the moment. It will depend on how successful the unions and the Labour Party are in leading a campaign to defend London's transport system.

## Support

But if LT operated on a fully commercial basis, the use of buses would drop to an estimated 38 per cent of present levels and the use of tubes to 23 per cent. Fares, would shoot up. Staff levels would be drastically cut. Services would be decimated.

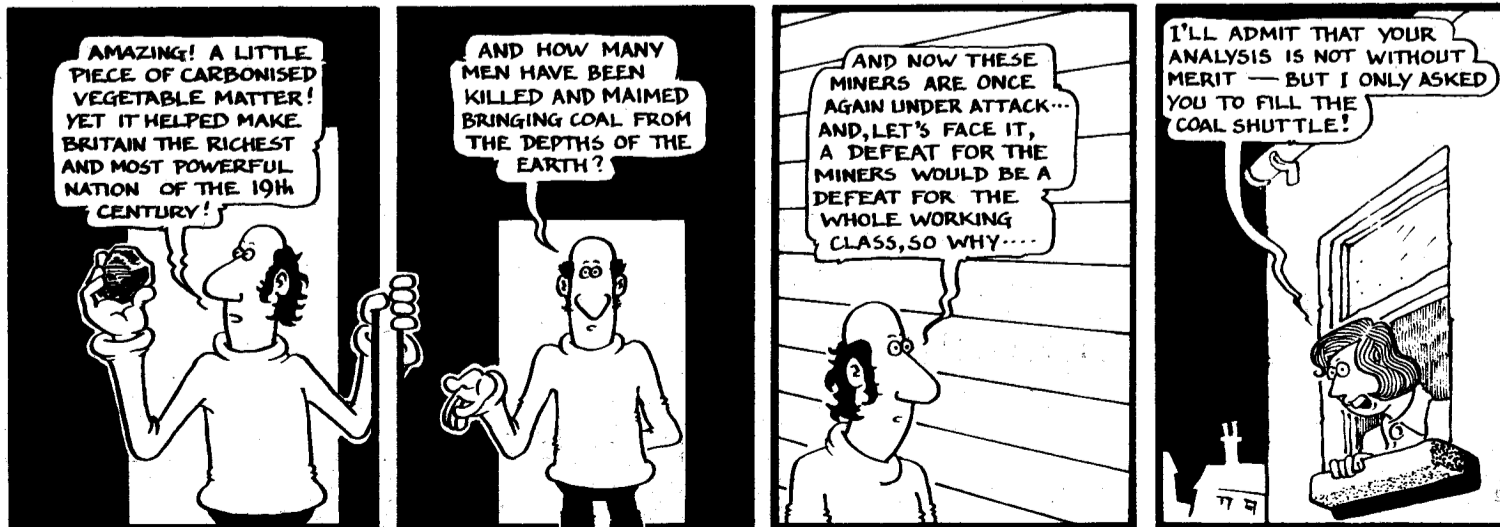
To stop the London Regional Transport Bill now would mean industrial action by bus and tube workers with the active support of much of London. Although this is unlikely, provided a strong campaign to save London Transport is maintained, the government will find it very hard to carve up the service as they want to.



**Parliamentary Democracy and The Labour Movement** is published by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. Price 50p, it is available from the Campaign Group, c/o Joan Maynard, House of Commons, London SW1. This is a must for every Labour and trade union activist's bookshelf.

## A PIECE OF THE ACTION

BY CORMAC #49 3/84



# LIVERPOOL

## 'The fight is just beginning'

AS LIVERPOOL ENTERS its final week before rate-making day, the District Labour Party still holds out hope of welcoming back the 'sensible seven' — Labour councillors so dubbed by the press for refusing to vote for an illegal budget — into Labour's fold. Over the weekend, party members held mass canvasses in the rebels' wards in the hope of bringing to bear the pressure of local opinion.

With a Labour majority of 51 on a total council of 99, the votes of the seven are crucial. The District Labour Party has censured the seven for their anti-democratic behaviour in refusing to uphold the policy of the Liverpool Labour Party.

But Liverpool has gained a breathing space from its latest meeting with Neil Kinnock. While still refusing to come out in support of the city council's stand, he appears to have changed his position from advocating that Liverpool stay within the law by fixing a 60 per cent rate, to a general expression of sympathy with the city's plight.

This is an inadequate lead from the national party leader, but it goes some way towards cutting short any media claims that the party is openly divided on the Liverpool strategy. Whilst Kinnock is guarding his back, labour movement support for Liverpool is growing.

The recent North West Region Labour Party conference carried almost unanimously two resolutions in support of Liverpool council's fight against the Tory govern-

ment's refusal to allocate the £30 million needed by the city. And support from the trade union movement is still coming in.

By Carol Turner

It seems less likely than ever that 29 March will see an end to Liverpool's confrontation with Thatcher's government. It is possible that no budget — Labour's or a Liberal/Tory stitch up — will get a majority on budget day. With the law as it stands, Thatcher will be unable to step in under the new rate capping legislation is made law.

Technically, no budget needs to be made until the final day of the financial year, giving Liverpool a potential 'reprieve' of 12 months. Whether the banks and financial institutions would refrain from calling in their debts in such circumstances is yet another question.

As Liverpool prepares for battle though, one thing is clear. In the words of a Liverpool party member: 'What ever happens on the 29th — Liverpool's fight is only just beginning'.

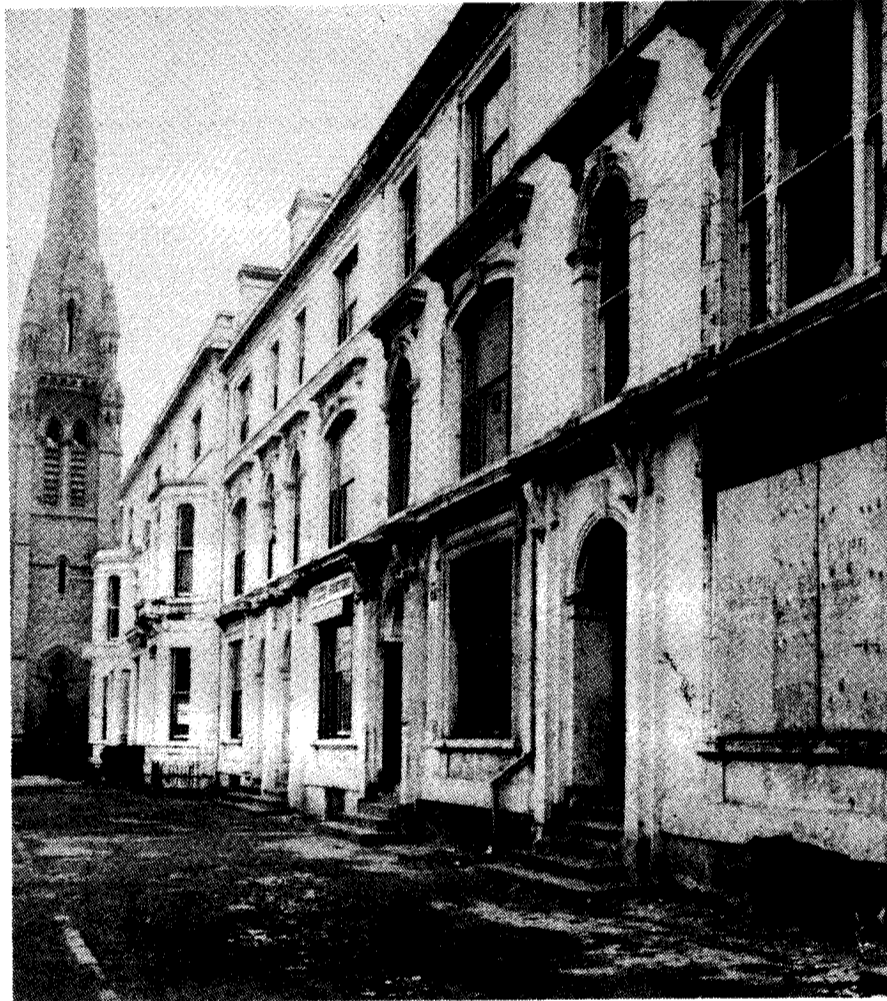


Photo: TIM RIGBY

## Council workers stand firm

AS LIVERPOOL'S budget deadline moves closer, PETE CRESSWELL, secretary of Liverpool City Council Joint Shop Stewards and secretary of NALGO, gave Socialist Action an update on events.

I think the demonstration on 29 March will be big — at least 30,000. We've asked local government unions to send delegations along to Liverpool for that day.

There will be a number of delegations from different parts of the country. Knowsley NALGO have voted to strike on that day. But the core of the demonstration will be from Liverpool.

The trades council has discussed it and taken a position of fully supporting the council, but the groups represented, like Fords and the dock workers, won't necessarily be able to deliver all their members out on strike.

Liverpool NALGO is now holding a ballot to be conducted at workplace

meetings; we'll have the results next Friday. The decision of the mass meeting was overwhelming. I'm confident the result will be the same as the mass meeting.

It's not yet clear what's happened as a result of NUPE shop steward's decision not to support a 24-hour strike. But at least one NUPE branch, NUPE markets, has voted in favour of strike action. NUPE have said they'll put the issue to their members at mass meetings, and that's all we're asking.

We won't be asking the majority of NUPE members to strike anyway: the home helps, the old people's homes, and so on. We're maintaining emergency services on the

29th. And we're allowing members to service the council meeting which starts at 1.30pm.

We have approached the six councillors to interview them for our newsletter and they've refused. Now we're writing to ask them exactly where they stand.

Every indication we have is that they're in favour of making cuts. They are against making an illegal budget and they've said they're against big rate increases. That only leaves one option.

The seventh councillor, Margaret Delaney is widely quoted as saying she's in favour of putting the city through what the government demands and 'letting the wounds bleed'.

As far as we're concerned, we're continuing to fight for the council to refuse to make any cuts.

## Tea and sympathy from Kinnock

SPEAKING AT a House of Commons press conference immediately after Monday's meeting between Labour leader Neil Kinnock and a delegation from Liverpool City Council Labour Group, Tony Mulhearn, chairperson of Liverpool District Labour Party made the following statement:

We have now had a discussion with Neil Kinnock in connection with the strategy adopted by Liverpool Labour Group on the city council, supported by the District Labour Party and the labour movement. What we received from Neil Kinnock was an indication that he recognises fully, and sympathises with, the situation that Liverpool find themselves in.

He recognises that it is a situation not of the Labour Group's creation, but caused by the action of the Liberal/Tory alliance

who controlled Liverpool for the previous nine years, and exacerbated by the policies of the Tory government.

He sympathises fully with the position that we find ourselves in, and obviously indicates that if there was a Labour government under his leadership, they would make the necessary resources available to resolve the crisis that Liverpool is forced to be in at the present time.

The delegation put the case in the clearest possible way that there was no attempt to strike a compromise which involved cuts or massive redundancies, and that the Liverpool Labour Group is determined to pursue this strategy and carry out its budget which will protect jobs and services and avoid massive rate increases into the council chamber on 29 March.

The campaign will continue to mobilise the maximum possible support for that budget on which the Labour Party was elected at the last May elections.



## GMBATU supports the council

THE ONLY WAY forward is for the national party leadership to give an unequivocal support to Liverpool. Introducing legal budgets with massive rate increases and consequent job losses will mean a defeat for Labour on Merseyside. But it will also mean defeat for all those other Labour councils who will face the Tory axe next year.

If the Labour leadership stands firm behind Liverpool as the rank and file have done, then the Tories can be defeated. Labour has no alternative but to stand firm on this, continue to build mass support, demand the £30 million from the government, and fight for a Labour victory in May.

The only course of action is to continue to build for the one day strike on 29 March called for by the Liverpool City Council Joint Shop Steward's Committee, and to prepare workers for industrial action to defend jobs and services. Opposition must continue to all budgets that entail massive rate rises and redundancies.

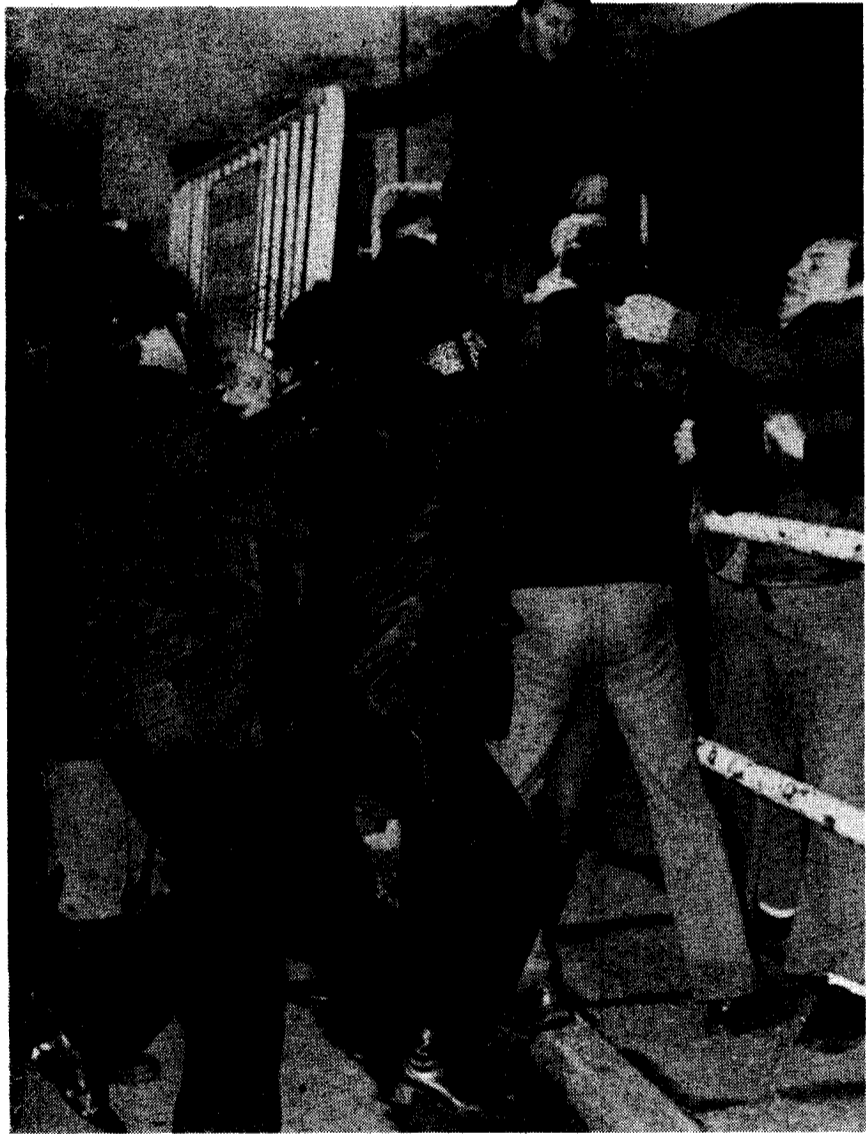
● From a statement by GMBATU senior stewards in Liverpool.

*Campaigning for Jobs & Services*

**LIVERPOOL-A SOCIALIST COUNCIL**

# Socialist ACTION

## 100 per cent support for the miners



IT IS the clear duty of the whole Labour movement to support the Yorkshire, Scottish, Welsh, North Derbyshire, Kent, and other miners on strike.

They are defending the industry and they are bringing out the true nature of the government's policy. The government wants to try to divide the union, to destroy the industry — or at least those pits which they choose to call uneconomic, with a view to the privatisation of profitable pits like Selby and ultimately the Vale of Belvoir.

by Tony Benn

They are doing this because they believe the NUM is the strongest trade union in the movement and in the Labour Party. They want to reverse the whole public ownership campaign which culminated in the 1946 Act.

The crucial questions at stake are whether the miners support MacGregor as chairman of the Coal Board, support the policy of mass closures, and support privatisation — not the other issues raised by the government to confuse the situation.

There is no doubt what our job is. It is to give 100 per cent support to the NUM executive.

# All out for Democracy

DEMOCRACY DAY on 29 March will take place amid widespread strike action to defend the GLC and metropolitan councils. London Transport has called a strike of the capital's buses and tubes on Wednesday 28. And NALGO GLC branch has decided to strike on the same day.

Many of the London borough NALGO branches will be stopping work to bring their members on the march and rally. During that week NALGO will be holding open days to try and win public support. In Liverpool there will be a mass demonstration in support of the city council's stand against the government.

Council Labour Group and NALGO have adopted a policy of non-cooperation with transferring powers to quangos and London boroughs. But a policy of lobbying parliament and creating a climate of sympathetic public opinion in insufficient to take on the Tory laws.

By Patrick Sikorski (London Transport NUR District Council)

Preparing the ground for all-out industrial action to stop abolition is vital now. Thousands of jobs will be lost if the proposals go through. London Transport alone will lose 10,000 jobs.

The focus must shift from 'fun days' to serious united action by the unions to defend the GLC. The Greater London

Neil Kinnock has already come out against defying the law, in an attempt to pull the rug from under Liverpool. The TUC is also against strike action. They have done their best to sabotage strikes by London Transport unions and others, claiming it will alienate public opinion.

This attitude is merely a cover for surrender. It will defeat the defence campaign. The only way to stop Tory plans is to mobilise all the unions and the Labour Party against the Thatcher government.

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## SUPPORT THE MINERS SUPPORT YOUR PAPER

THIS WEEK we've sent our reporters out into the coalfields to cover the events day by day. One went to South Wales — another has been in Nottinghamshire and South Yorkshire to be at the heart of the struggle.

For us to carry on producing the best articles, and point the way forward we need money. Money to pay our journalists' fares. Money to get good photographs to illustrate our stories. And money to guarantee the production of the paper at this very important time. There are other events going on which we've covered over the weeks. Liverpool Council's fight against rate capping will come to a head in the next week. Following our centre page spread we have had a reporter in Liverpool. We

want to keep producing quality coverage and put the paper at the centre of the action. To do that we need regular financial donations from our supporters. In the week where the miners take on the Tories, where Loyalist gun men try to assassinate Gerry Adams, and where Liverpool collides head on with Thatcher's policies, make sure Socialist Action is there with the news and with the views that you want to hear. Keep the money coming in and if you don't already give us any, send some today. A subscription is even better to guarantee your Socialist Action every week. The more solid the miners strike becomes the more the Fleet Street lies will increase. Help us get out the real story - Support your paper!