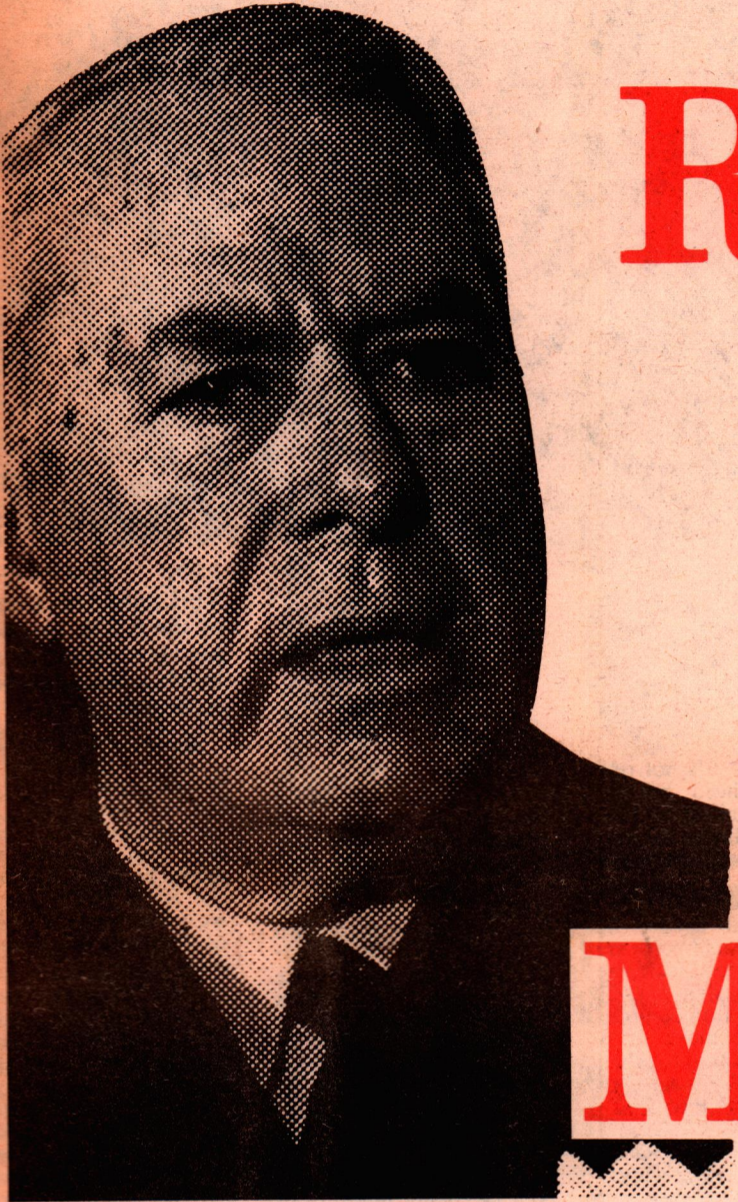


A Socialist ACTION

INSIDE

- Miners' strike countrywide pages 2 and 3
- Defend Greenham from eviction page 5
- JOAN MAYNARD on the miners' strike and the law page 7
- WALTER CAIRNS opens a debate on the socialist approach to the EEC page 8
- DAVID BLUNKETT on the attack on local government page 10



ROUND ONE TO THE MINERS



THIS week has begun to reveal the lies of MacGregor and the National Coal Board.

After three weeks of struggle the miners' strike is already taking its toll on coal stocks.

● Domestic suppliers admit they may start to run out of coal in the next few days.

● British steel at Scunthorpe has cut production by a half due to coke shortages and pickets are moving out to other steel plants.

● Many foundries may run out this week, others now openly admit stocks cannot last more than three weeks.

● At docks up and down the country miners have succeeded in preventing imported coal being unloaded.

● British Rail admit that only 10 of the 'merry-go-round' trains linking pits and power stations have been running.

So much for MacGregor's lie that coal stocks could sustain a pro-

longed strike.

And the hope that divisions within the NUM would end the dispute has also foundered.

The court action against Yorkshire was dropped in the hope that the 'moderate' areas would deal with the situation themselves. Instead, after a week of picketing, the decisions not to go on strike have been reversed in every area except Nottingham and South Derby.

The tide is running with the NUM. For the strike to bite as rapidly as possible the urgent need now is for the maximum solidarity from other unions.

The NUR has done a superb job in many areas in stopping the movement of coal by rail. Now the pressure on movement of coal by every means should be stepped up. The docks must be tied down, the picketing of power stations extended still further.

The miners are winning the battle so far, but they are still a very long way from victory. The suc-

cesses of the last week provide a firm basis for the future, but major obstacles still remain to be overcome.

The miners have so far paralysed the Tories anti-union laws. But these laws are too important for the Tories strategy to allow them to be continually flouted. *The Times*, the *Mail*, and other papers, are urging a return to court action — quite possibly against unions taking solidarity action as well as against the NUM.

The government is also relying on the TUC. It was the role of Len Murray that handed Eddie Shah his victory in Warrington.

So far the TUC has kept totally silent on the dispute. Given its role over the NGA some might think that no bad thing. But in reality it is a disgrace to the labour movement.

The NUM is not going to win this dispute by itself — especially if other unions begin to find themselves in court. The NUM has to step up the



Sarah Tisdall

pressure on the TUC to come out openly in support of the dispute. The TUC must endorse the solidarity actions being taken by other unions and make it clear that it will call general strike action against any attempts to use the courts against the unions involved in the strike.

The entire course of the trade unions is going to have to be turned round

now, in this dispute, not waiting for the TUC Congress in September.

As the strike begins to bite the TUC and trade union movement must:

- Build solidarity with the miners
- Name the day for solidarity action with the NUM
- Make clear any attempt to use the courts against the unions will be met with general strike action.

Release Sarah Tisdall

THE JUDGE sentencing Sarah Tisdall to six months in jail gave three reasons for his harshness.

First, her action had undermined confidentiality in Whitehall — in other words, it upset Heseltine. Second, it undermined our allies' confidence in our security — that means it upset the USA. Finally, it increased the likelihood of a clash between anti-missile demonstrators and the police. The Cruise arrival date had to be secret in case the majority that oppose them protested!

None of them really very acceptable reasons for the document being secret in the first place.

Sarah Tisdall is an unlikely hero of the peace movement — a career civil servant, and not opposed to nuclear missiles. But hero she is, because she had the courage to make public what Heseltine wanted secret.

Greenham women at her trial gave flowers to 'Sister Sarah'. But the most meaningful gift is for the peace movement to put massive energies into the campaign for her release. Press statements are not enough, protest actions should be organised up and down the country. CND and the labour movement must act.

Inside: *Why the Guardian copped out.* p 6 & 7.

ALL OUT FOR VICTORY!



Miners' Strike

'ROUND One to the miners' has to be the assessment of the first three weeks of this struggle. All the Lancashire pits are closed, and the pressure is increasing in the Nottingham and South Derby areas.

The efforts of the Tories and the NCB to break the strike by exploiting divisions in the NUM have failed, through the determination of the miners from Yorkshire, South Wales, Kent and Scotland.

But the Tory government and NCB aren't the only problems facing the miners. The right-wing in the TUC are likely to fall behind the bosses' press campaign for a national ballot. The left must bury this campaign.

By Paul Parry

Mick McGahey explained clearly, all those calling for a national ballot today are in reality calling for an end to the dispute.

The campaign for a national ballot is designed to play on the divisions between high and low pay areas, secure and threatened pits. Workers' democracy is not simply a question of the right to vote, but the right to form pickets, the right to argue with colleagues who still work, and the right to conduct the struggle. The miners in the threatened pits were correct to strike and correct to ask their colleagues to support them.

No government would

'Labour must support any methods the NUM is forced to use'

By Tyrone O'Sullivan (secretary Rhondda, Aberdare and Merthyr joint lodges of the NUM.)

THE law is being used to turn Nottingham into a police state because they are out to destroy first the miners then the other trade unions. If they succeed it will be the end of the Labour Party and any hopes of socialism.

Since 1974 successive governments have worked to establish a moderate area in Nottingham. They have been given extra wages, bigger houses and the area has had massive investment. Notts is the teacher's pet in the classroom.

Now pressure from the Nottingham labour movement is needed to change the situation. We have got to get other people like nurses out on the Nottingham picket lines.

The local councils in Wales have given us lots of help. They are providing free school meals for miners' children and holding back on council rents for strikers. Community support has been even better than in '72 and '74.

Somebody asked me, will it be a long strike and I could say — Twelve months won't be long, if we win in the end!

call a general election in the middle of a war. It's hypocrisy for the Tories to demand the NUM should hold a ballot in the middle of its most important struggle since 1926.

The miners in Nottingham by working are falling into the trap laid by the NCB and the Tories. If the NUM is defeated they will suffer too. The strikers are acting in the interests of all miners and the working class.

In the next days miners will be increasingly turning their attention to the movement of coal to the power stations. The first victory has already come at Scunthorpe where British Steel production is down by a half. And coal stocks at power stations are much lower than government claims.

To prevent this and to move towards victory, the miners need the biggest possible campaign of solidarity.

This means demanding the TUC names the day for national support action. It means building up local support committees like Manchester and other areas have done. It means meeting any attempt to use the law, with the united action of the entire movement.

The miners are acting in the interests of the entire working class. They deserve the support of the entire movement.

Pulling the TUC's teeth

RAILWAY workers have been at the forefront in extending solidarity to the miners. JIMMY KNAPP, General Secretary of the Railway Union, explained the importance of this solidarity at a London meeting last week.

What we are seeing around the miners is part of the scenario planned for every public industry. We've already seen similar policies pursued in rail, steel and the health service. The miners are in the forefront, but their fight is for us all.

We saw legislation first come into play with the NGA. It was a disgrace and a disaster that the TUC did not make a stand against it. No trade unionist in their right mind would have refused the NGA their support.



Over 5,000 miners mourned their dead comrade David Gareth Jones

KEN CAPSTICK, Yorkshire Area Council of the NUM, explained his view of the dispute to Manchester Socialist Action supporters.

The Coal Board have been provoking this situation for a long time, but I think they have overstepped themselves. But even so, the Tories might be able to take on the NUM, so that's why we are seeking the support of the whole labour movement.

The Tory press makes a lot of fuss about a ballot. We've had three ballots in Yorkshire in the last three years, and each one produced a majority for a fight. As far as Yorkshire is concerned we've had a mandate for a long time.

The time has passed for the niceties of a national ballot. We've gone beyond that point now, there's no room for faint hearts looking for a way

showing that it's not new realism we need, but the good old realism of 1972 and 1974. That is the only language the government understands.

We are absolutely determined to defend the miners. If coal imports are brought in to break the strike the transport unions have made a firm commitment not to move it. If that's against the law, then so be it. They'll have to take on the NUR and take us to court.

Half of Nottingham's coal is stopping at Sheffield as the railworkers and miners make sure it goes no further. We've said our members won't cross picket lines — and picket lines are turning up in the

strangest places. The Chair of the Rail Board has already declared those pickets illegal — he's now judge and jury. Members refusing to cross will be sent home. That's proof of the determination to crush the miners. But our members will ignore these threats. If the Board sends anyone home then we might be on strike ourselves to defend them.

I'm not one of the new realists, I'm an old realist. The new realists say, stay out of the Labour Party and all that. But we need the maximum unity of all wings of the labour movement against this government. Anything else is the wrong road to follow.

NOTTINGHAM

THE barrage in the press about the police sealing off Nottinghamshire didn't stop thousands of pickets getting in.

At one village, Welbeck, the police sealed off every road, but a large group of pickets still emerged at the pithead, frost in their hair, after spending the night in Sherwood Forest.

Welbeck miners from one face walked out in protest. At a nearby pit the union official led his men out after being stopped by police four times on the way to work.

Mark, one of the Welbeck miners supporting the action, explained what he'd seen: 'The Yorkshire miners were marched from the pit down to the river and into the swamp. When one of them tried to get out he was arrested.'

During the week rumours were circulating as to whether the area executive was advising Nottingham miners to respect picket lines. On Thursday two-thirds of the Blid-

worth colliery refused to cross the picket lines.

Increasingly there are signs in the Nottingham pits that the ruling of their executive may be challenged, and the picketing is having an impact. The Coal Board's daily pronouncements that all Nottingham pits are working normally is far from the truth.

Miners' wives from near Blidworth colliery last week brought food and drink to the Yorkshire pickets showing some of the local people do support the strike.

Women Support the Miners Benefit

Narrowboat Inn Canal St, Nottingham

Fri 30 March 8pm Late bar Adm: £1.50/75p

Organised by: Nottingham and Carlton Labour Party Women's Section

BRISTOL

SOUTH Wales miners arrived at Avonmouth Docks last week to prevent imported coal from South Africa being unloaded. The pickets were withdrawn pending discus-

sions with the dockers, but they were back on Monday.

Bristol West Labour Party has passed a resolution of support for the striking miners and is offering food and shelter to South Wales miners picketting the docks.

DERBYSHIRE

THE North Derbyshire NUM Council decided to reverse the narrow ballot vote against the strike. Dave Crowther, a council member from Warsop Main pit, explained the change around:

'The ballot was never seen as binding on North Derbyshire. It was clear that only the big Shirbrook colliery, voting 70 per cent against, had tipped the scale. But the tide has been turning towards the strike and most other pits were determined to come out.'

'After a thorough discussion the council voted by 12 to 2 to recommend strike action throughout the area. After that we convened mass meetings in all the large pits to get active agreement to this decision.'

'At Shirbrook we had over 800 miners in the hall, and after a long discussion we finally convinced a narrow majority to support the strike. We're spending the next two days firming up our support then we'll be on the road.'

With North Derbyshire solid almost every pit in the area sent large delegations down south and by Thursday morning the pickets had begun to bite.

SOUTH WALES

THE Welsh National Bus Company have been forced to back down after refusing to accept NUM bookings for travel to other coalfields.

When they heard this, bus workers in the Rhondda brought services to a halt. A mass meeting of drivers, local councillors and the NUM protested the decision, made under police pressure.

Dai Jones, TGWU secretary on the Swansea buses, explained the action:

'We want the leadership of the Labour Party and the TUC to get the movement mobilised in support of the miners. The TUC should name the day now for a day of action. If the law has to be broken for the working class to get through — then that's how it has to be.'

Welsh nurses will also be joining the picket line at Port Talbot Steel, against the unloading of

imported coal. NUPE has put out this call and is asking members in

coalfields to call special branch meetings to decide on support action.

Bernard Reagan, Stockport AUEW District Secretary.

IN every town, village and community we should establish support committees for the miners. This is particularly important because of the betrayals of the national leadership.

I don't think the TUC can sell out the NUM as easily as it did the NGA.

The TUC will have to be dragged kicking and screaming into supporting the miners.

Brendan Dawson

(Allerton Bywater colliery in Yorkshire picketting in Lancashire.)

'WE were coming over the M62 in Lancashire last Monday when we were stopped by police Range Rovers. They threatened us with jail if we didn't return to Yorkshire with them as escort. We turned back and then came another way.'

After the Lancashire ballot we came across to picket them out. After a few days of effective picketting Agecroft was the only pit in Lancashire still working.

On Thursday the area NUM met and decided to bring the whole area out after all. A mass meeting at Agecroft decided to ignore the instruction, so there's still work to be done. But support has built up during the week and nowhere else will work.'

Spread the strike! Support the miners!



Photo: NEWSLINE



Photo: NEWSLINE

Police roadblocks surround Ollerton colliery

Miners' wives march: don't stand aside

LAST SATURDAY 200 miners' wives marched through Coalville in Leicestershire. They came from Kent and they wanted to talk to Leicester miners' wives about why they should encourage their husbands to join the strike.

A leaflet they put out explained their view. 'We are proud to stand alongside our men', it said. 'We are engaged in the most important struggle of our lives, for your future, our future and our families' future. And for the continued well-being of the mining industry and our communities. Don't stand aside.'

In Yorkshire wives have organised support groups and are setting up welfare centres to help other families involved in the dispute claim social security.

The depth of feeling involved in this dispute is indicated more than anything by this high involvement of the strikers' wives.



Dai Davies

Nottingham is 'bandit country'

THIS WEEK we are going to try and tie up the South Midlands and Staffordshire coalfields, to isolate Nottingham.

Dai Davies (South Wales NUM)

It's very difficult to get to Nottingham from South Wales — the police presence there is unbelievable. Nottingham is 'bandit country' like South Armagh. We have to slip into the county and then when we get there we

are herded to one side of the road behind the police.

They won't even let us talk to our colleagues. If you step out of line you are arrested. Nottinghamshire is like an armed camp.

Support for the strike here in South Wales has been outstanding. The NUR, ASLEF and the TGWU have stopped all movement of coal.

A ballot is a non starter for us. We have had too many already. After the last failed we lost five pits. Either we fight now or it's the end of the pits.

Photo: GM COOKSON

Around the country with the miners

MANCHESTER

YORKSHIRE miners picketing Lancashire pits started out the week rather down in the dumps. There was immense hostility on the Agecroft picket, where 80 per cent had voted against strike. But after a week touring labour movement meetings in Manchester their spirits had lifted. Especially once the Lancashire NUM decided to reverse its decision and support the strike.

Within a few days they had raised £500 hardship money. Lancashire NUR District instructed all branches not to move coal from pits that were being picketed. The FBU and the AUEW were mailing all their branches.

The District Labour Party agreed to organise a solidarity rally, and many CLPs supported it after hearing miners speak at their meetings. A support committee has been established.

In Stockport a support committee has been launched by the Trades Council, the LPYS, the Stockport Six NGA members, and supported by the secretary of the AUEW District. At one Stockport factory, Mirlees, 100 workers came to a factory gate meeting, and most major engineering factories in the area are organising collections.

SHEFFIELD

ENGINEERING workers in the Sheffield area showed their support for the miners at a packed lunchtime meeting last week.

Len Crossley, chair of the Confed no 28 called for turning the 'TUC General Council into a council of war'. Peter Heathfield, NUM national secretary, spoke out against those calling for a national ballot, and explained that freedom and democracy had always been won by the struggle of the whole trade union movement.

In an interview, Jack Taylor explained that the NUM was not contemptuous of the law, but that

it 'Won't abide by laws that are laid down to cripple the working class.'

Silverwood, near Rotherham is one of the main centres for organising the pickets into Nottingham. South Wales and Yorkshire miners organise together for picket duty. Robbie Hughes from Cym colliery in Wales talked about violence on the picket line. 'If the cops keep out of the way our pickets can be successful without using any violence. Miners will respect the picket lines. Where we've been miners turned back from the picket line and then they've been arrested. They will not be faced up.'

LEICESTER

SOLIDARITY in the area got off to a good start when the trades council organised a meeting and donated £250. A resolution was also adopted for circulation to other labour movement bodies, establishing support committee of all trade union and labour movement bodies, and student unions, that support the miners.

A leaflet explaining the miners' case is being funded by the trades council, which is also organising demonstrations for jobs and pay. 'We've got our own money and we'll see it fixed up.'

Ian Ferguson

(chair Doncaster area panel)

THE rumour is they are paying pickets £28 a day. If that were true no one would ever go back to work.

It's management not us that are doing the intimidating. At Ollerton, miners were told they'd be sacked if they didn't turn up for work. And the police told us we'd be arrested if we kept talking our heads at the miners going in. So instead we chanted 'festered sore'.

EAST LONDON

A solidarity campaign has been launched in East London. The Kent Area NUM has allocated two miners to live in East London to build solidarity for the duration of the dispute.

Several coachloads of supporters will be going to the Kent coalfields to show solidarity on 14 April. Tickets for this visit available from Frank Gorton, Hackney North TU Liaison Officer, 73 Albion Rd, London N16.

Socialist Action Forum
Victory to the Miners

Let NUM members
Hacking Trades and
Labour Club, Doncaster
Lane E3
Sunday 1 April 8pm

Socialist ACTION

Kinnock flops on the EEC

FEW events so illuminate the forces involved in British politics like last week's row over Britain's EEC budget refund.

In the miners' strike you see only the coarse grain of positions. The Tories, Liberals, SDP — not to mention the right wing of the Labour Party — can all unite to condemn the miners. Over the EEC the fine detail of political currents shows up clearly.

Take first the Tory wets. The revolt of this feeble crew is regularly predicted in the editorials of the *Observer* and the *Guardian* — not to mention in the columns of *Marxism Today*.

Entire strategies of the TUC and Neil Kinnock are based on waiting for Edward Heath to revolt against Margaret Thatcher, or urging Francis Pym to rebel against Patrick Jenkin.

State

Needless to say these 'crucial' and long predicted revolts never take place. The 'wets' vote against the government only when they know its measures are going to be passed anyway.

But on the EEC there was a real 'revolt'. Heath and Pym were right into the breach announcing that under no circumstances whatever should Britain's contribution to the EEC budget be withheld and they would never support such a measure.

The SDP and the Liberals were equally rapidly into the breach. Jenkins said he would have accepted what was on offer from Brussels. Owen claimed Thatcher was wrecking the EEC. David Steel urged that Edward Heath should be sent as a special emissary to sort out the problem.

Urgent

The real character of the Tory wets and the Alliance — the 'EEC Party' within British politics — could not have been more clearly seen. The Alliance and the wets are not going to rebel against Thatcher on anything in the interests of the British working class. But they are prepared to put up a staunch defence of capitalism's interests in Europe.

And where was Labour in this mess? A MORI opinion poll last week showed 55 per cent against membership of the EEC. The same week *Labour Weekly* ran a centre spread 'Making the EEC work for us.' Part of Neil Kinnock's new realism is to change the Labour Party's position on the EEC just at the moment it was in one of its biggest crises and the majority of the population were against membership. That's realism!

We had the disgraceful spectacle of Powell in the House of Commons correctly accusing Labour of having abandoned its election pledge to take Britain out of the Market. Meanwhile Kinnock appeared more conciliatory on the EEC than Thatcher did.

Labour has got to get its policy right on the EEC. The Tory wets, the SDP, and the Liberals are the pro-EEC party. Thatcher likes to engage in a little Tory Gaullism to get the maximum concessions while staying in the Market. Labour under its new Eurosocialist line runs the risk of being outbid in the political popularity stakes by Thatcher — and behind her the figure of Powell.

Labour's policy should be clear. Get out of the thieves' kitchen of the EEC altogether. Now.

Editor: ALAN FREEMAN
Published weekly except two weeks in August and the last week of December.
Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent Socialist Action's views. These are expressed in editorials.
Send all correspondence regarding subscriptions, sales and receipts to Socialist Action Distribution, 328 Upper Street London N1 2XP. (Tel: 01-359 8180)
Send all material for publication (including advertising) to Socialist Action Editorial at the same address.
We regret that due to the high cost of postage we cannot return or acknowledge unsolicited copy or photographs unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

A chance missed



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

BLOC must build a broad movement

THE BROAD LEFT Organising Committee in Sheffield attracted almost 2000 delegates from all parts of Britain and every major union. This makes it a rival in size to the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions when the latter was at its height.

It was, however, far from its equal in influence. The LCDTU could, and did, launch calls for action which it could be confident of achieving. BLOC was in no such position. This reflects the weakening of the rank and file leadership of the labour movement over the past ten years. Despite this, the conference was an outstanding success for the organisers. The last conference just over a year ago, drew only 100 plus delegates.

By Pat Hickey

BLOC's ability to build so large a conference showed two things: firstly the existence of a large minority of activists at the base of the unions who understand the need to organise the left in order to fight the Tories. Secondly, it shows the decisive weakening of the political influence of the Communist Party in the trade unions, and their replacement by new political forces based on the left in the Labour Party. These two facts gave BLOC a golden opportunity to, on the one hand, organise that minority on a broad united front basis to take on the Tories and the right wing in the unions.

And on the other to break with the CP policy of subservience to the trade union bureaucracy.

From this point of view BLOC failed.

The platform, organised by *Militant*, kept a careful control of the debate. There were eight platform speakers and only 24 from the floor. Alternative resolutions were not discussed, or put to conference. There was plenty of anti-Tory rhetoric and innumerable denunciations of the TUC right wing. But there was little about organising campaigns that could unite the left and provide a way forward for building a broad-based opposition in the unions.

The resolution on the miners, for example, called on the 'entire labour and trade union movement' to give solidarity, but said nothing about how this could be done. The vagueness of the resolution rivalled the LCDTU in the days of its decline. The second part called for industrial action 'if necessary' in the event of NUM funds being seized. A campaign to force the TUC to name the day for national action in support of the miners would have given the delegates something practical to organise around.

The declaration put to conference was equally vague. While denouncing the Tories and the TUC right it set out its objective as campaigning to commit the 1984 TUC Congress

to:

- (1) Co-ordinate the fight back of the unions against the Government's anti-union laws, so that no union cooperates with any section of those laws and that no funds are drained one penny further by fines imposed under these laws.
- (2) Call a 24-hour general strike as the first step in solidarity action in the event of the seizure of union funds or the arrest or fining of any individual trade unions.

While unexceptional in itself, it gives no campaigning focus, and little basis for organising the left in the next few months. Present attacks, on the political funds and the closed shop, were ignored.

The opportunity to join with forces in the Labour Party to launch a massive campaign on this issue was missed. BLOC should have joined with the LCC to build such a campaign in every town and every work place in the country. This would have put BLOC at the centre of a struggle to unite the broadest of forces in the labour movement. Similarly, the question of district or regional BLOCs was left deliberately vague. The dominant force in BLOC, the *Militant* tendency, has learnt little from such experiences as the LCDTU or the Rank and File Organising Committee.

They are determined to retain BLOC under the control of one tendency, rather than building it as a genuine united front. And that policy can not be a way forward for the labour movement as a whole.

TUC abstains

DESPITE THE ENORMOUS trial of strength between the government — backed up by 20,000 police — and the NUM, the TUC has stayed on the sidelines. This abstention takes place when the miners are in the forefront of the struggle to defeat the Tebbit/King laws, thus rendering a service to all the trade union movement, and by their stand against pit closures are showing unemployment is not inevitable and can be fought.

The stance of the TUC comes as no surprise. As unemployment has steadily mounted and government attacks on working peoples' living standards increased, so the TUC retreated before Thatcher's onslaught.

It has stood by while unemployment has driven its affiliated membership from an all-time peak of 12, 172, 508 in 1979 down to under 10 million in 1983.

By Bob Pennington

For years the TUC relied on a policy carried out through a myriad of bureaucratic committees of collaboration with government. In a period of high unemployment concessions could be gained through these committees, the use of the lobby and particularly when Labour was in government, by personal contact at ministerial level.

This strategy now lies in ruins. The facade of power and influence has collapsed. From 1979 the worsening economic situation has

left little or no room for class collaboration — except if it is wholly on the government's terms.

A government which relies on monetarist policies has to take on trade unions and that is exactly what the Tories have been doing since 1979.

Before the Tories took office in 1979 they prepared a plan for dealing with the unions which was drawn up in a report by Norman Ridley the present Minister of Transport.

This was a plan of action for dealing with and breaking the power of the unions. It is a plan that the government has carried out with determination and enthusiasm since the day it got its majority. And it is a plan that the TUC have failed to resist.

On every single issue and whenever there has been a showdown the TUC

has either capitulated to the government or even worse sold out the workers who have taken the government on.

When ASLEF opposed flexible rostering the TUC stabbed the railworkers in the back by refusing support. In 1982 the health workers went into dispute with the government. Throughout this dispute workers like miners, dockers, postal workers, print workers and others downed tools in solidarity with the health workers.

People saw the need both to defend the NHS and also the chance to inflict a blow against the government's attacks on the union. But the TUC restricted solidarity to a one-day Day of Action and then toned it down to so-called days of regional action.

The great wave of opposition to Thatcher ebbed back. The health workers were forced to accept the government's pay award and the way was opened for even bigger attacks on the health service.

In the NGA dispute it was Murray's insistence that the Tory laws should be observed that won the day for Thatcher. Again was the failure of the TUC to fight for strike action at GCHQ backed by solidari-



Dockers support is needed by miners

ty action from other unions that weakened the position of the civil service unions and opened the way to a witchhunt in Whitehall.

The TUC has failed on all these matters because it sees its role as a mediator between the working class and the government. Its members are there to be negotiated for in committee and the boardroom. But they are not a force to be brought into action. When this policy fails because the government is no longer prepared to play by the old rules the TUC left high and dry.

It can either change course or it can do little but make ineffectual protests about its right to consultation. For Murray and company it has to be the latter course. This is why it stays on the sidelines in the miners' strike. In fact Murray and his circle are utterly opposed to the 'unlawful' picketing but are not keen to come out and say this.

The reaction therefore of the NUM in telling the TUC they are not 'requesting an intervention or assistance from the TUC' is understandable. A friendly pat on the back from the TUC right-wing is akin to a football manager getting a vote of confidence from their chairperson.

But the TUC should not be allowed off the hook. The NUM has every right to demand its support and in fact the NUM needs the support of ASLEF, the NUM, the TGWU and others in the TUC. The NUM should insist on physical and financial support from the TUC.

The NUM should therefore approach the TUC for this. Equally the leaders of the left unions on the TUC must respond to their request. If Murray and company refuse or equivocate on this appeal as is likely then the left must act independently and give full support to the miners.

CND must... Mobilise against Reagan!

AT THE beginning of June, US President and war criminal Ronald Reagan is coming to Britain for the economic summit of major capitalist powers. The visit of the arms race supremo should be a major focus and opportunity for the peace movement. A massive demonstration to coincide with Reagan's visit will get world-wide publicity.

Ronald Reagan is not just the leader prosecuting the war in El Salvador, attacking Nicaragua and backing South Africa. His administration is responsible for Cruise, Trident, Pershing and the huge escalation of the arms race.

To coincide with his visit there should be a gigantic turnout of the peace, labour and anti-imperialist movements. Only a strong national call by CND can guarantee such a demonstration.

So far, however, we have only the 9 June demonstration called by London Region CND, which is 'backed' by National CND. But this will not mobilise the 400,000 people who turned out for the demonstration last October.

It is difficult to understand the reason for Na-

tional CND's reluctance to make Reagan's visit the focus for a national mobilisation. Perhaps it is a refusal to acknowledge that the butchers of El Salvador and Vietnam are the prime culprits in the new arms race and a reluctance to get tarred with an 'anti-American' brush. If so, such caution is completely misplaced. Every stage of the new arms race has been orchestrated and conducted by the Pentagon and White House.

London CND has now written to CND National Council calling for an all-

out national demonstration on 9 June. It has done so because of the very favourable response from CND groups around the country at the grassroots level for the idea of a national demonstration.

By Kevin Jones (CND London Region council — personal capacity)

London Region CND states in its letter that only national CND has the resources and ability to bring about a truly gigantic demonstration against the warmonger-in-chief.

The London Region meeting three weeks ago passed the following resolution: 'In view of the national support for a national demonstration on 9 June we call on National CND to build this event as a national demonstration in conjunction with London CND'.

The slogans which are being put forward by London Region are the follow-



ing: For a nuclear-free Europe; no Cruise, no Pershing, no Trident; US bases out.

The visit of Reagan is not just an issue for those whose primary political focus is opposition to American policy in the third world — it is an issue for the peace movement as a whole. The mass peace movement in Europe owes its very existence to the decisions of the United States government and military to put Cruise and Pershing missiles into Europe, thus making our continent the number one target in the event of nuclear war.

The continuing role of the United States in British nuclear policy is illustrated by the government's banning of trade unions at GCHQ, in direct response to a demand from the Americans, and the 102 US bases in this country.

All CND groups should now write to CND National Council at 11 Goodwin St, London N4 3HQ demanding a national demonstration, to arrive before the next meeting on 8 April. They should also make their own preparations for transport to the demonstration on 9 June.



Greenham: still going strong

NEWBURY COUNCIL AND the Ministry of Defence have not succeeded in their attempts to evict the Greenham women. Despite the dismantling of the camp at the blue gate the other three camps are still going strong. The benders (tents) are still in use and women are sleeping out in Gortex sleeping bags.

But the battle for Greenham Women's Peace camps right to exist continues.

Evictions continue and on 22 March Newbury Council is once again attempting to get the women cleared from 'their' land once and for all. Spirits are high among the women.

On 8 March Labour Women MP's visited Greenham and women arrived spontaneously from all over the country to express their solidarity with the camp.

In London 500 peace women demonstrated,

chaining themselves to the railing, outside a promotion conference of the Technical Marketing Society of America. Eighteen women were arrested on charges of obstruction and criminal damage. Paint was thrown on the ground as the names of delegates and the cry of warmongers penetrated the length of Picadilly.

Solidarity action has been forthcoming from various unions involved.

The National Bakers' Union has refused to deliver bread to the base and UCATT has offered to supply the women with wood for their fires.

By Valerie Coultas and Kay Bastin

The peace camps were attacked with mechanical excavators. After a visit to the workers of the firm which hired them to Newbury Council, by Bristol CND, these machines have not been used again at Greenham.

In Manchester a demonstration against the evictions took place in which there were 13 arrests. There have also been

'You are my sunshine'

By Maria Welsh (Manchester Greenham Support Group)

THE RECENT evictions made me feel that I ought to spend some time at Greenham, so I went down for a week.

The pressure of the evictions has made life there harder and I found that the women were physically and mentally tired. But their morale is still high and they are determined to stay.

When the bailiffs arrived at Violet gate women decided to save their energy for the future and so they deflated the tents and removed their personal possessions. Meanwhile they sang 'You are my sunshine' to the bailiffs.

All the bailiffs got away with was food and wood. And that had been replaced three times over by the next day.

The Greenham camp is there to stay. Visitors are coming to the camp from all over the world, and the more support the camp gets the harder it will be for the bailiffs to destroy it.

demonstrations in Bradford and Manchester.

However despite the militancy of the Greenham women CND has done little in their defence so far. When the missile launchers came out of the base CND did not use the 'telephone tree' to start the protest. Only Southern Region CND was alerted.

CND council coming up must take a major discussion on Greenham and decide how it can encourage women to go to the camp on a more

organised basis. International Women's Day for Disarmament is on 24 May. The TUC and the WTUC are committed to supporting Greenham. The labour movement should turn words into action and demonstrate their support for the women at the camp that day.

The Women's Peace Movement is organising a national meeting to discuss what next on Saturday 31 March at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square London WC1

MALE ORDER

Encouraging women?

'MEN and matters' is the very appropriate name of a column in the *Financial Times*. Even when the column reports on women (who presumably don't matter that much) it reports from an uncompromisingly male point of view.

Consider this little gem from a report on the election of Brenda Dean to the general secretaryship of Sogat:

'Male rivals in Sogat,' reveals the *FT*, 'have been taken by surprise that this good-looking, smartly-dressed blonde, who tries to avoid controversial argument has barnstormed her way to the leadership of Sogat in less than a year!'

Ms Dean, who was formerly president of the print union Sogat 82, is the first woman to lead a major TUC-affiliated union. Unfortunately, Ms Dean is to the right politically of Bill Keys, the outgoing general secretary.

Ms Dean is also one of the 'I pulled myself up by my own bootstraps and there's no reason why other women can't do the same' school. She made a point of being quoted in all the papers on the day after her election as saying 'I have never sought any favours or special consideration because of sex and I do not intend to start now,' and 'I hope I have been elected as a person capable of doing the job on ability never mind the gender.'



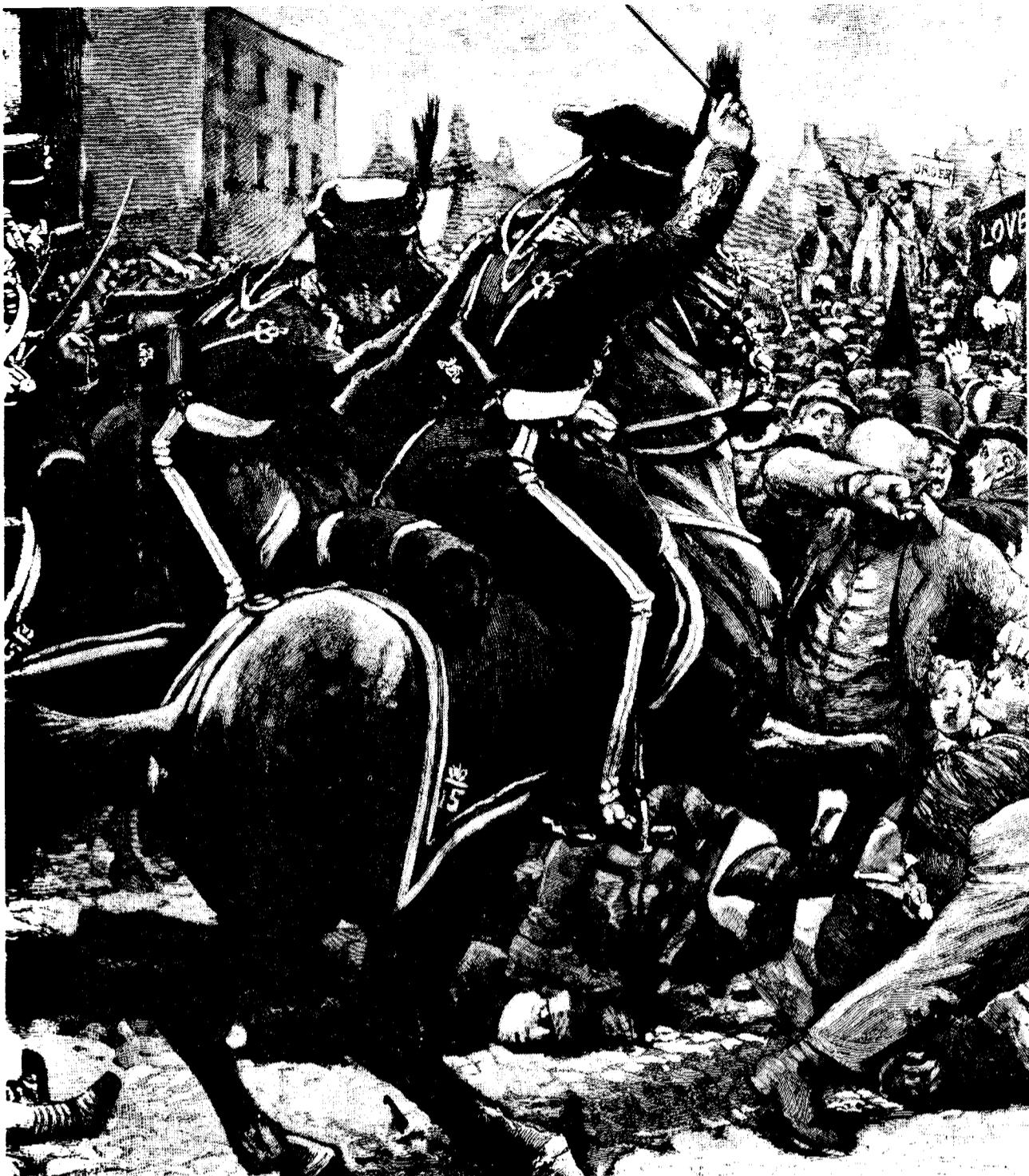
Brenda Dean

Male bureaucrats and the right wing in the labour movement will be rejoicing, no doubt, at this assault against positive action. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. One woman general secretary is hardly in proportion to the number of women in the unions. So does Ms Dean think they're all thick and incapable? And if not, then what is the explanation for the appalling representation of women in the leadership of the unions and the TUC?

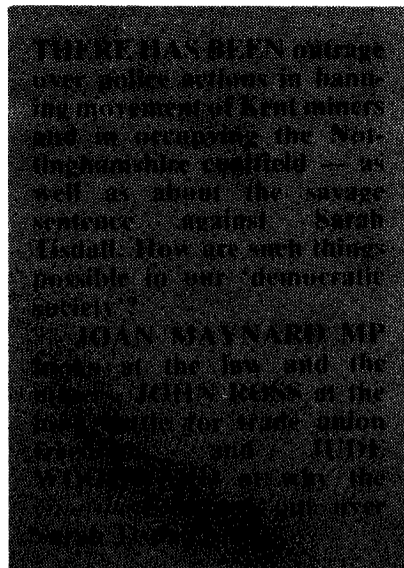
Ms Dean hopes that her success 'will encourage other women to come forward'. But without positive action to help to overcome relentless personal and institutionalised discrimination against women, Ms Dean's hopes will stay just that.

COMPILED BY Hilary Driver. Please send contributions to reach us one week prior to publication. Send to Male Order, Socialist Action, 23 Upper Street, London N1 2UP

Democra



The Peterloo massacre of 1819. Protestors demanding parliamentary reform were cut down by the cavalry



Clerical workers demand the right to form

'JUDGES give decisions on the law and the evidence before them. They do so totally impartially.'

No wonder Margaret Thatcher's description of the role of courts was met with derisive jeers from Labour MPs in 1981. It appears even more ridiculous in 1984 when police are arbitrarily inventing new laws against Kent miners in the Dartford tunnel.

It is astonishing that Labour MPs, and the *Guardian* newspaper still claim that it is a principle of democracy that the law must always be obeyed.

Reality shows this is nonsense. Every major democratic freedom was won because people were prepared to disobey the law. The founders of freedoms were not the judges but people in the dock.

The struggle of the Suffragettes, the struggle for the working class right to vote, Gandhi's campaign of civil disobedience to gain independence for India are just the best known examples.

But nowhere has the struggle for democratic freedoms been so long and

so illegal as that for the elementary right of working people to form trade unions.

While the labour movement and the press talk of trade union rights, and the right to strike, no such right has ever been recognised in law. What has happened is simply that Parliament has been periodically forced by working class action to intervene and 'decriminalise' certain aspects of trade unionism.

The fundamental and basic right to join a trade union can still be denied by any employer who has the forced to do so. Grunwick showed that and so did the Stockport Six. The simple democratic liberty that every worker has the right to join a trade union, and that the employer must recognise that union, is still not accepted by British law.

Concern

The explanation for that is simple — British laws is *capitalist* law. The owner of property, of capital, has the right to dispose of that property in any way they choose unless that is specifically limited by law. A worker confronted with capital on the contrary has no rights unless they are specifically granted to her or him by law.

The British system of law can accurately be described as the 'dictatorship of capital' — a dictatorship restrained, but never fundamentally challenged, by law. Democracy is something which very firmly, and at best, stops at the factory gates or the workplace door.

For example the Tories agitate about the NUM not having a ballot on a strike, but the right of MacGregor to cut 20,000 jobs without the miners having any right to vote on their jobs is taken as obvious and never questioned.

In a company it is a ten or fifteen person board of directors — sometimes a single person — who can decide to sack ten, twenty, or even a hundred thousand people who are totally dependent on those employers for their livelihoods. The 'employees' have no right to vote on that decision.

The law enshrines the democracy of the owners of capital. Not the democracy of those who work.

In fact, it is necessarily built into the foundations of capitalist society that what should exist is not democracy but the *limitation and denial of democracy*. For democracy and private ownership of capital are totally incompatible.

If the private ownership and control of capital are to be maintained then the

The Guardian of liberty?

SARAH TISDALL'S CASE is a fitting epitaph to the final decline of the radical democratic tradition in British establishment politics. It is also appropriate that the *Guardian*, self-styled banner bearer of that tradition in British journalism, should bear the responsibility for her imprisonment.

Why did the *Guardian* give in to the Tory government's obsession with secrecy and let a young woman go to jail for doing what she believed to be morally right?

The *Guardian* explained the reasons last Saturday:

'The *Guardian* is, and had stated in court that it was, a law-abiding newspaper. Only that week, in its editorial columns, it has expressed the view that it was not for the NGA to take the law into its own hands simply because it did not like the law.'

'The *Guardian* advocated campaigning to change laws of which it disapproved, not selective breaking of them. It would have been inconsistent with the *Guardian's* regularly published material to break the law then. It would have weakened the paper's authority in the future, and made it very difficult for the *Guardian* to argue against the selective breaking of laws which others found disagreeable.'

At least the *Guardian* is honest. When it made the NGA Six hostages to their boss Eddie Shah on the Warrington picket line in the name of legality, they made themselves and Sarah Tisdall hostages to the Tory government's attacks on press freedom — also in the name of legality.

The run up to the Sarah Tisdall case proves the hollowness of the *Guardian's* liberal outrage over the harshness of her sentence.

'Why weren't we in the dock as well?' moans *Guardian* editor Peter Preston. But the question is, why wasn't the *Guardian* in the dock in-



Sarah Tisdall

stead? If the *Guardian* editors had destroyed the document Sarah Tisdall would never have been convicted. Instead they wrung their hands, wept crocodile tears, and handed it over.

So much for the courage of liberal and democratic convictions!

Liberalism and democracy in Britain did once have a genuine radical, and even revolutionary, tradition. It was born in the Civil War, and was reinforced by the French revolution and American war of independence — none of them exactly legal acts.

But that tradition was buried long ago. It really died in the streets of London in 1848 when the city was occupied to smash the Chartists. Ironically, Sarah Tisdall goes to jail, finally proving it is dead, as thousands of police oc-

cupy the coalfields to smash the miners.

The origins of the *Manchester Guardian* were as the tribune of the radical 'millocracy', the vanguard of industrial capitalism in its fight for 'democracy' against the power of the landowners in the nineteenth century. From 1848 it was obvious what kind of democracy they wanted. Having got their own grubby hands on the vote, their new political power was bent on ensuring that the workers' movement never threatened Capital's new liberty.

Today the *Guardian* reflects the same interests and the same hypocrisy — for freedom, for democracy, as long as it does not conflict with the interests of property. Inside the factory, managers have the right to manage, and companies have inviolable rights to

make profits. Police have the right to fight pickets, but pickets don't have the right to fight police.

The only force in this society that can defend democracy even for the *Guardian* newspaper, is the force that tried to defend the NGA. The force that would defend people like Sarah Tisdall.

Thousands of miners braving police violence on the picket lines have no interest in halting the democratic process at the doors of the *Guardian*, or in the corridors of Whitehall. The labour movement can and will defend democracy for all. The *Guardian* abandoned that struggle a long time ago.

Neil Kinnock, who claims to always uphold the law, should take note of where this left the *Guardian*. Harriet Harman got it right in *Labour Weekly* saying:

'Sometimes democracy is defended better by a principled objection to the law rather than an unquestioning adherence.'

'What about Greenpeace, breaking the law to prove that Sellafield nuclear waste was poisoning our oceans?'

'What about parents blocking traffic and illegally obstructing to protest at the death of a child on a dangerous school crossing?'

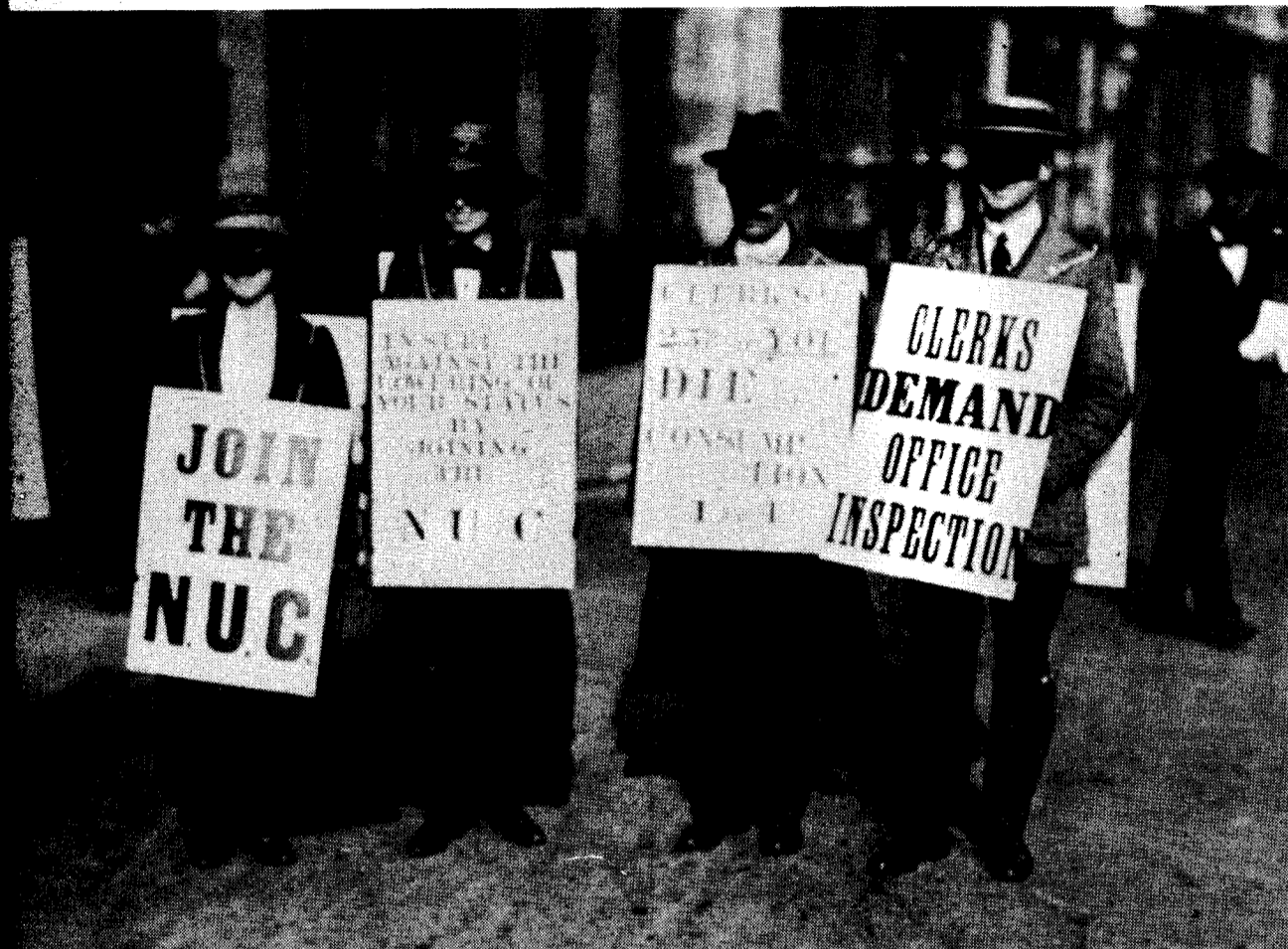
'How is democracy improved by stamping out such protests as these?'

And one could add, how has the *Guardian* improved democracy by aiding the Tory government in sending Sarah Tisdall to jail?

One of the greatest writers in revolutionary capitalism, Voltaire, put his views in the immortal phrase, 'I disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.'

For the *Guardian* that has become 'We will defend your right to say it ... but if it turns out to be illegal we may turn you over to the police anyway.' Thus has liberalism trod its historical path.

cy vs. the law



a union at the turn of the century

most people can be permitted to vote for are candidates once every five years for Parliament — and a little more for local government.

Of the things that most directly concern the course of their lives — their job, their wages, how their neighbourhood is organised — people have no democratic right to vote whatever. This is despite the fact that whether a person has a job or not affects them far more than the abstract right to decide once every five years which Party will misgovern them — and which will ignore the Manifesto they were elected on.

If people were entitled to vote on their jobs, their wages, or the functioning of the economy, then necessarily the rights of capital would be eliminated. You can have democracy or you can have the private ownership and control of the means of production. You cannot have both.

Trade unionism has been savagely resisted by capital not only because it affects profits and production. It also has to be resisted because it represents the beginning of the extension of democracy out of the realm of pure politics into the field of economy and society.

Support

Trade unionism represents necessarily and inevitably a challenge to the 'right of management to manage' — or more precisely the right of owners of capital to dispose of it as they will (and regardless of the effect on those who work for them). That basic fight has been going on for over six centuries.

As early as 1351 the *Statute of Labourers* denied any workers the right to join together to pursue their common aims. In 1721 it was reaffirmed that 'conspiracy to raise wages' was a criminal offence.

The Combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 prohibited any collective organisation of workers. The supposed relaxation of these acts in 1824 and 1825 was shown to be meaningless in the famous case at Tolpuddle in 1834.

But the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs shows not simply the brutality of the law but its chiefly arbitrary character. The actual crime involved at Tolpuddle was organising an agricultural workers' benevolent fund. But the charges were technically brought under not simply Common Law but the 1797 Mutiny Act — which was not directed against trade unions at all but against members of the armed services!

The same patterns continued during the latter part of the nineteenth century — by which time the unions had become too powerful to be banned. Acts of Parliament in 1859, 1871 and 1875 specifically gave immunity from prosecution for those organising peaceful pickets. These laws were then in practice overturned by court decisions which declared that while those 'imparting information' had the right to do so, anyone attempting to 'persuade' someone not to cross a picket was acting illegally.

The famous *Taff Vale* judgement of 1901 solemnly declared that trade union activity was legal ... but that unions must pay the losses sustained by employers during any strike.

The right of trade unions to have political funds was ruled illegal by the 1909 Osborne case, legalised by the 1913 Trade Union Act, changed from 'contracting out' to 'contracting in' by the 1927 Trades Disputes Act, reversed by the 1945 Labour government, and is now under attack again by the Teb-

bit/King laws.

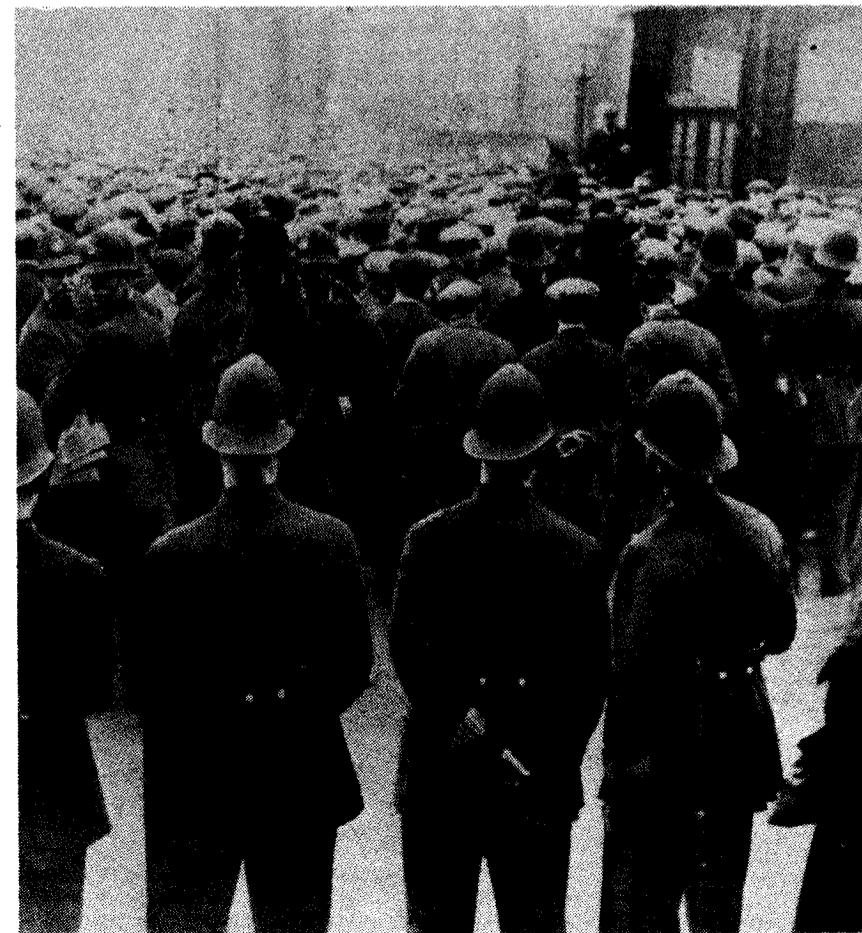
In each case the change involved was not 'legal arguments' but simply shifts in the relation of forces between labour and capital.

When capital was on the defensive it was forced to grant democratic rights. When it was confident and powerful, it took them away again. Power and force, not law, always decides.

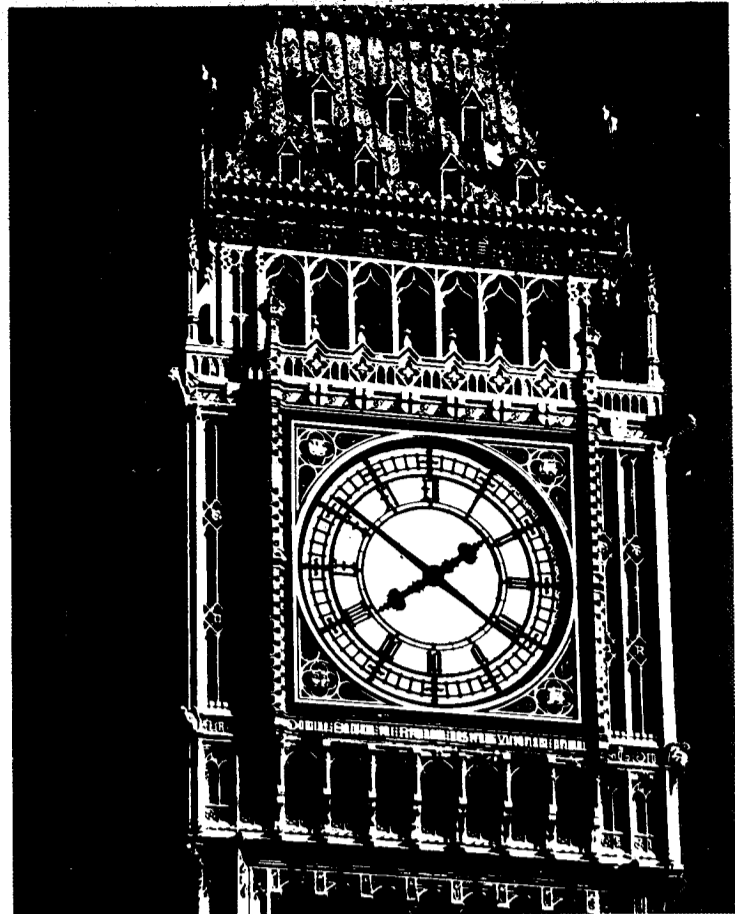
The French Marxist Etienne Balibar put it brilliantly. The bourgeoisie hates the Marxist term 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'. That is because it wants at all costs to conceal the fact that the society in which we live is the dictatorship of capital.

The long struggle of labour against capital, the long fight for elementary trade union rights, is just one of the clearest expressions of that reality.

Democracy and capitalism are incompatible. If you want proof of that just look at the Nottingham coal field today, into a workshops like the Stockport Messenger, or into the mind of a man like MacGregor.



Police confront strikers during the 1926 general strike



It's them today and us tomorrow

By Joan Maynard (MP for Sheffield Brightside)

MRS THATCHER AND her government are working to a strategy of attacking the workers on all fronts: through attacks on local government democracy, and through attacks on trade union rights.

Rate capping and the threat of abolishing the GLC and metropolitan counties is a fundamental attack on democracy. In effect, what the government is saying is that it no longer accepts people can choose their own representatives who will determine what rate to levy.

This is a direct attack on socialist councils like Sheffield, whose way of redistributing local wealth is through the very popular cheap fares policy. The government can't afford this form of local democracy because if it's seen to work — as it does in Sheffield and London — then people will continue to support it. Hence the Tories have decided to stamp it out.

At the same time, they are attacking the rights of trade unions. Cheltenham was a try-on because the labour movement allowed the NGA to go down. And the NGA went down following the change in the TUC general council at last year's annual congress. It's a TUC rather too prone to talk with this government, rather too prone to be 'moderate'.

This Tory scenario is aimed at destroying the things we've fought for over the years — civil and political liberties and the welfare state we've built in Britain. It is the background to the latest attack on the miners.

State intervention into the miners' dispute and the attempt to stop pickets moving about the country, is almost akin to introducing pass laws. One of the issues that creeps into this dispute is the question of breaking the law.

My own background is with the agricultural workers, and it's ironic that all this is happening on the 150th anniversary of the Tolpuddle martyrs, who were deported for breaking the law. Times haven't changed that much. Workers have got to make that sort of decision again.

The Tolpuddle martyrs made the right decision. If the law is bad and obviously against the interests of working people, then we have to say it's anti-democratic and we're going to break it. That's what the miners are doing when they picket.

The Tolpuddle martyrs made the right decision. If the law is bad, obviously against the interests of working people, then we have to say it's anti-democratic and we're going to break it. That's what the miners are



doing when they picket.

I was hopeful that the court action by the Kent miners would win, because the police, I'm sure, are exceeding their powers. But there aren't many times when we win in the courts. The way to win is by encouraging other workers to come out in support of the miners. The old adage, an injury to one is an injury to all, was never truer than it is today.

At their conference some years ago, the miners voted against bonus schemes. They ended up with them just the same, because Gormley and the right wing leadership were determined to have them. Arthur Scargill was bitterly opposed to this, and he's been proved right. This has been a significant factor dividing the union in today's dispute, a significant factor in dividing one area from another.

The Yorkshire miners, by their flying pickets, are attempting to say to the Nottingham miners, even though you are alright now, don't forget it will be your turn next. The flying pickets are an important way of building unity amongst all miners.

It's tremendously important that the labour movement, like the Tories, should have a strategy and not treat each attack as an isolated incident. There must be large numbers of working people waiting for just such a lead. That's why I support the Yorkshire miners.

And it's why I support Liverpool council too. They are carrying out their mandate in difficult circumstances. They aren't being 'extravagant'. Far from it. They're just holding the line. And the miners are holding the line for the rest of the trade union movement.

What happens in Liverpool today will face many Labour councils next year. What happens to the miners today will face many trade unions in the future. It's Liverpool and the NUM today, and us tomorrow.

The EEC — a new approach

THE failure of the EEC summit in Brussels once again raises the attitude of socialists to the Common Market. WALTER CAIRNS continues Socialist Action's series of discussion articles on the EEC by arguing that Labour must go beyond the 'membership' or 'withdrawal' argument.

TWO schools of thought have from the very beginning dominated socialist thinking in this country on Europe. On the one hand, there are those who have always opposed British membership of the EEC and look likely to continue to do so.

They argue that all that is needed to transform such a policy into a vote-winner is a proper explanation of the detrimental effects of membership on the country's economic and social structures.

This camp is by no means restricted to the Far Left, since Austin Mitchell and Peter Shore find themselves on this issue linked in an uneasy alliance with Dennis Skinner and the Militant Tendency.

At the other end of the spectrum there are those who claim that now that the UK is firmly attached to the Common Market, we may as well make the best of it, try to reform the set-up from within, and use the various European institutions as a forum for Socialist debate and policy-forming.

Roots

Here again this approach is not being advocated exclusively from the point of view of one particular faction of the Left, uniting as it does such diverse political thinkers as Roy Hattersley, Stuart Holland, Richard Balfe and Eric Hobsbawm.

Both sides of the argument must also remain mindful of the likely state in which the EEC will find itself when the Labour Party forms the next government. On the one hand, the trade patterns into which membership of the EEC has artificially propelled this country will have become even more reinforced.

Also, the EEC as a corporate entity of which the UK forms an indelible part will have taken strong psychological roots in the minds of the electors.

Radical

I am of the opinion that the Party could sidestep the question of withdrawal simply by announcing that under a Labour Government the UK will continue to be a member of the EEC, but that it will not allow the Common Market to impede its radical programme. In more concrete terms, the relevant clauses in the 1988 Election Manifesto should read something like this:

The Labour Party recognises that at the present stage of this country's membership of the EEC, withdrawal can no longer be regarded as a practical proposition. A Labour Government will, however, fundamentally review the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Community on the following points:

(a) The Labour Government will proceed with its plan for jobs regardless of any provisions in the Treaty of

Rome which may obstruct its implementation. Unemployment having risen at a much faster rate in the UK than in the other EEC Member States as a result of nine years of disastrous Tory policies, the Labour Party considers that it is fully justified in contemplating such measures.

(b) Henceforth all regulations, directives and decisions issued by the EEC authorities will be subjected to approval by Parliament. In so doing, the Labour Party merely intends to restore the democratic process to Community decision-making, in view of the present situation under which elected EEC bodies are given unconstitutional powers to supersede the wishes of the electorate as democratically expressed through their representatives in Parliament.

(c) The present Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC is designed to satisfy the needs of countries with a labour-intensive agricultural industry operating through relatively small farming units.

As such, it is totally unrelated and even detrimental to the structure of agriculture in this country, and consequently the Labour Party will cease to apply it forthwith.

In its place, a Labour Government will reinstate the system of deficiency payments to farmers with a view to achieving agricultural production which provides low prices for the consumer whilst at the same time guaranteeing a regular and fair income for the agricultural industry.

(d) As a result of this discontinuation of the Common Agricultural Policy, a Labour Government will only contribute to the EEC such funds as are necessary for its everyday administration with the exception of agriculture. This will reduce the net contribution by the United Kingdom by approximately 70 per cent.

The EEC authorities and the other Community countries would hardly be dancing with delight when faced with this proposition, but what effective action could they take against a Labour government prepared to embrace such a policy.

Thus the fundamental objective which gave rise to the policy of withdrawal would be realised — if we can arrive at the same result by less perilous means than a policy of withdrawal, why should we not pursue it?



Karantina 1976. The fascist Christian militias who perpetrated this massacre are now on the defensive

Lebanese Christians refuse to budge

LAST MONTH'S bitter fighting in Lebanon dealt a harsh blow to the right-wing Maronite Christian forces, backed by the United States. The main losers were President Gemayel's Phalangists — the biggest force among the Christians. Since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 the United States and the Phalangists have attempted to construct a Phalange-dominated state, with a powerful national army keeping the Muslim factions under control.

This US project — a strong, national pro-Western government — collapsed under two massive realities, Syrian opposition and the real relationship of forces on the ground.

The pro-Western Maronite community is no longer the largest. Rather, the Shi'ite Muslims are now the biggest, and the fastest growing, community. Syria, with 30,000 troops in Lebanon, continues to have an effective veto over political developments.

Last week's conference in Lausanne aimed at re-dividing power in the country on the basis of a 'new realism' about the real relationship of forces. The leaders of the Shi'ite *Amal* and the Druze Progressive Socialist Party demanded a bigger say for their communities — in effect a re-writing of the 1943 National Pact which divided power among the different confessions.

Despite the near-collapse of the Lebanese

army and the terrible beating which they and the fascist Christian militias received at the hands of the Muslims, Syria insisted on keeping Amin Gemayel as President.

will remain the puppet-master. In fact the scene was all set for a deal at Lausanne. Amin Gemayel had already been to see Assad, to be told that the Phalangists would have to give more power in the government to the PSP and *Amal*. In return Gemayel would remain president.

Rivals

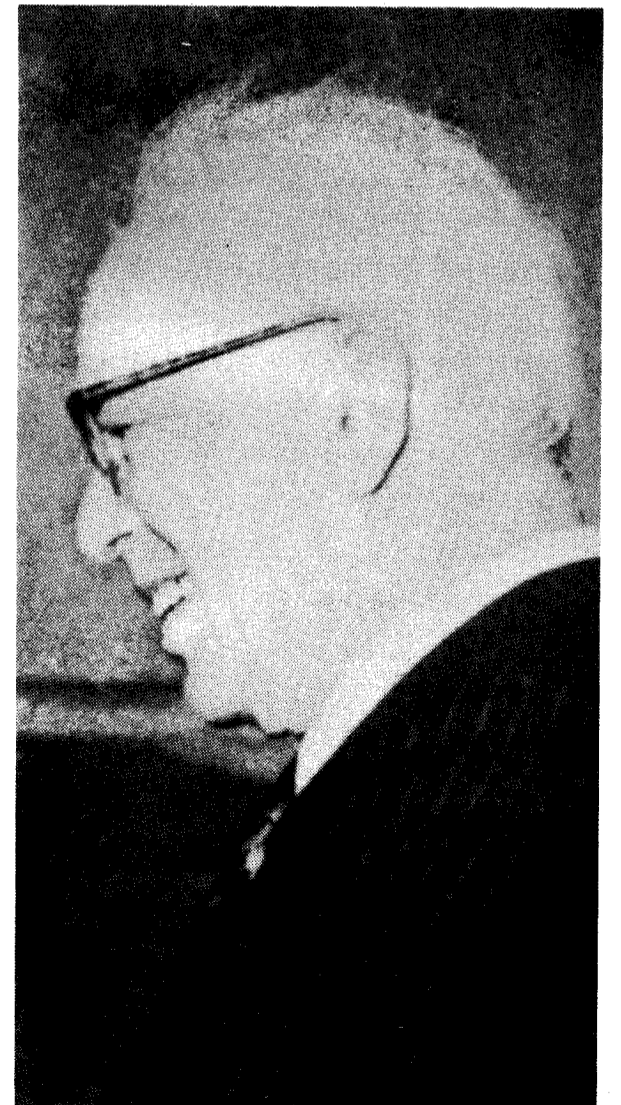
Gemayel had difficulty however in selling this deal to his more militant Phalangist militia commanders. It opened him up to attack among the Maronite community in general. Both Gemayel's main political rivals in the Maronite community — Chamoun and Franjieh — upped the ante in Lausanne, demanding less concessions from the Maronite community.

In the end Franjieh, whose militia controls the area around Zghorta and who in the past has sided with Syria, refused to go along with any further concessions to the Muslims. By ensuring the failure of the reconciliation conference, he also gravely weakened the position of Gemayel, making another round of fighting and Gemayel's departure more likely.

Control

PSP leader Walid Jumblatt commented that the Christians would have to take another beating before power could be re-divided.

A footnote to the Lausanne conference was the battle which erupted in



Franjieh

West Beirut on 21 March between the Druze PSP and the *Murabitun* 'Nasserist' militia. The *Murabitun* is a left-nationalist group, supported mainly by Sunni Muslims, and much more independent of the Syrians than the PSP and *Amal*.

Two days after the liberation of West Beirut they fought a brief battle with *Amal*. It seems that the *Amal*-PSP alliance decided to try to crush the *Murabitun* once and for all, to ensure that West Beirut remains under their own control.

Labour Movement Conference on Palestine

Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Peter Tatchell, Moshe Machover and Palestinian trade unionists
19 May County Hall
Details from PSC, Box BM PSA,
London WC1 N3XX
Organised by PSC and LMCP

How the media lies about Ireland

Ireland: The Propaganda War.
The British media and the 'Battle for hearts and minds'.
Liz Curtis, Pluto Press, £5.50.

IN HER new book Liz Curtis carefully documents and analyses how the British media have distorted information from the North of Ireland over the past sixteen years. She explodes the myth of press and broadcasting freedom and clearly shows how on such 'sensitive issues' as Northern Ireland the media quickly falls into line and follows government thinking to the letter.

This undermines many assumptions that are made of our democratic society. She says 'In Britain, the broadcasters' appearance of independence from government had been carefully cherished; this not only maintained their credibility, but also, because of the BBC's international reputation, sustained Britain's image abroad as a free society'.

Pravda might well be referred to as the official paper of the Communist Party, but heaven forbid that anyone should make such an inference about the British media. In reporting Ireland, with very few and highly controversial exceptions, the British media have acted as the official mouthpiece of the British government.

By Phil Casey

When the brutality inflicted on civil rights protestors by the RUC and B'Specials was finally plastered over our screens and in the press, after a long period of silence over Northern Ireland, the media could not help but portray the bigotry and prejudice inherent in the six county state. TV and press coverage was sympathetic in that it por-

trayed what was happening, nothing more, nothing less.

Things soon began to change dramatically when British troops were sent to Derry in August 1969. The British media immediately identified with the troops. As Liz Curtis remarks 'With the arrival of British troops on the streets of Derry and Belfast in August 1969, all that changed (any sympathetic coverage of the Nationalist community's struggle). Britain was now openly and physically involved, and British observers could no longer regard the situation with detached distaste. The media's identification with the troops was instant and total.'

Attitudes in government circles were changing; stability rather than reform was the uppermost priority for the government.



THE MAN IN THE HOOD

This is illustrated by Liz when she cites an article by Christine Eade in *The Guardian* as troops arrived in Derry; 'Certainly the British are now taking seriously reports that both the Irish Republican Army and Catholic extremists within Northern Ireland are being influenced by anarchists, Trotskyists, and Communists.'

Bernadette Devlin, whose election to Westminster in 1969 had been greeted with headlines such as: 'She's Bernadette, she's 21, she's an MP, she's swinging' (*Daily Express*), now became the 'leader of a sinister army' of 'revolu-

tionary extremists', who were now said to be in complete control of the civil rights movement.

Colony

Britain was now becoming openly involved in yet another colonial war. However this one was on her doorstep. Liz Curtis explains: 'The supposed effects of television coverage of the war in Vietnam on the American public were fresh in the establishment minds. A *Sunday Express* commentator, heavily critical of television for showing the British army in Ireland 'in

a bad light', noted 'it is only now that we in Britain are running up against the problem, it is one that has assailed the United States for nearly a decade.'

'There can be little doubt that television coverage of the Vietnam war was largely responsible for sapping the moral fibre of the American people to continue the struggle.'

The British government had no intention of letting the media 'sap the moral fibre' of the British people.

The reaction of the media to allegations of torture by the security forces was simply to ignore them!

It was over two months from when the allegations were made that any report of them reached Britain. When the story did break it was openly attributed to IRA propaganda.

The media dutifully reported, as the prime minister of Northern Ireland, Brian Faulkner, put it 'the IRA had poured out propaganda aimed at undermining public morale, confusing the issues and discrediting the government and security...'

Truth

The *Daily Express*, that bastion of truth, claimed that the IRA were torturing their own men to discredit the army. Under a small headline the *Express* announced 'Army tells how IRA beat up their own man after he was freed'. The story began: 'A dossier is being compiled by police and army in Ulster of IRA terror against its own men'. It went on to allege that McAllister (who had been interrogated for 26 hours) had been beaten up by the IRA after his release, then presented at the hospital as a 'victim of injuries sustained during interrogation'.

The doctor who examined McAllister, James Wilson, remarked: 'The allegations in the *Daily Express* leave me breathless. They are quite fantastic. What makes them completely absurd is the suggestion that he was beaten

up by the IRA before he was brought in here. The damage was psychological not physical.'

The media coverage of Bloody Sunday — the cold-blooded murder of 14 unarmed civilians — was quite remarkable. Although reporters at the scene reported the indiscriminate shooting by the paratroopers, the media as a whole put the blame on the marchers.

Editorials contradicted eyewitness reports in so doing. The *Daily Telegraph* in a leader titled 'Death March', equated the civil rights movement with the IRA and blamed both for the carnage: 'It (the civil rights movement) does not murder: it simply creates conditions favourable to the murders attempted by others and leaves the army in the last resort with no alternative but to fire'.

It is immediately clear from this book that when 'sensitive' issues come into conflict with democracy it is the latter which is shelved. Undoubtedly the book raises the question as to what extent in this democracy of ours is 'news' really official propaganda? Strikes, riots, racist attacks, women struggling against nuclear arms and police violence can all in turn be labelled 'sensitive' issues.

This well-written and informative book is a must for all, not just those of us who are interested in the political conflict in Ireland.

Major Blowtorch heads for power

ROBERTO D'AUBUISSON, leader of the fascist ARENA party, seems to be heading for a major victory in the Salvadorean general election this Sunday. 'Major Bob' to his supporters, D'Aubuisson got the nickname 'Major Blowtorch' from his opponents because of his past activities as a National Guard intelligence officer responsible for 'processing' political prisoners.

D'Aubuisson was trained in anti-insurgency warfare techniques at the Washington International Police Academy, the US military school in Panama, Taiwan Uruguay and Guatemala.

The general election has turned into a race between the Christian Democrat former president Napoleon Duarte and D'Aubuisson's ARENA party. The third major right wing party the PCN (National Reconciliation Party) has faded. The PCN has traditionally based itself on strong support from the army. But ARENA has been boosted by a surge of support from the Salvadorean middle class which was obvious at the time of the last general election in 1982. The 1982 election established ARENA as a major national party and ensured the position of D'Aubuisson as president of the national assembly.

At that time his ambitions to become President of the Republic were thwarted by the vigorous intervention of the United States, and the pro-American faction in the army led by General Garcia. The US ensured that the PCN candidate Magana got the job — obviously fearing the impact on international public opinion of D'Aubuisson as President. This time round, D'Aubuisson may be strong enough to dictate his own terms.

The rise of middle class support for ARENA and the decline of the PCN represents a new stage of the war in El Salvador. The military successes of the revolutionary FMLN guerrillas over the past three years have created an atmosphere of hysteria among the wealthy and even moderately prosperous middle classes.

D'Aubuisson understood this potential when he founded ARENA in 1981. The people who attend his rallies are neither the peasants nor the urban workers, but the neatly dressed *nouveaux riches*, wearing the latest European fashions.

Former US ambassador to El Salvador Robert White has revealed that the US embassy had documentary evidence that D'Aubuisson acted as the commander of the right wing death squads, and the link person between the squads and the wealthy right wing exiles in Miami, who have poured money into his election campaign.

White also confirmed the persistent rumour that D'Aubuisson had personally given the order for the murder of San Salvador Archbishop Oscar Romero, murdered for his staunch defence of the poor.

By Paul Lawson

The Christian Democrat candidate Duarte is hardly the spokesperson of a 'liberal alternative', despite the efforts of the Western media to portray him as such. Throughout the election campaign he made it clear that if he wins there will be no talks with guerrillas and the war will be pursued until victory. As president between 1979 and 1982 he acted as the 'liberal' cover for the launching of all-out war and the rise of the death squads.

Voting is compulsory in El Salvador. Many opponents of the regime will participate in the voting because of fear of retaliation from the death squads if they do not. But the election will simply not take place in the large area of the country controlled by the FMLN-FDR. During the 1982 elections the FMLN-FDR called for a boycott.

This time they haven't bothered. On the one hand it is too difficult for many people to avoid voting, on the other the result of the elections will not have great legitimacy either internationally or in El Salvador itself. The left could not participate openly in elections without exposing their supporters to brutal repression. Everyone understands that the question is simply what political faction of the ruling class will take charge of the war from now on.



D'Aubuisson supporter at San Salvador rally

STOP PRESS

The United States has made it clear that it will work with whoever becomes president after the elections. Even if they prefer Duarte, D'Aubuisson has at least demonstrated his impeccable anti-communist credentials and his determination to use any methods to win the war.

As the elections approached the FMLN has stepped up its attacks on government military posts and cut the Pan-American Highway, the main means of communication with the east of the country. Whoever wins on Sunday, the main contest is taking place on the battlefield.

Sunday's election in Salvador was characterised mainly by chaos. Many fewer people voted than in 1982. First estimates put Christian Democrat Napoleon Duarte in the lead, but gave none of the main parties an overall majority. Now Roberto D'Aubuisson will have to fight a run-off with the Christian Democrats.

Defending democracy

DEMOCRACY DAY

DEMOCRACY DAY on 29 March highlights the government's many attacks on local democracy, especially when that democracy is administered by left wing Labour authorities. Sheffield and Merseyside councils are both under direct threat from the Tory plans. **DAVID BLUNKETT**, leader of Sheffield, and **KEVA COOMBES**, leader of Merseyside, told Socialist Action what the government policy means for their authorities, and how Labour must organise to combat the government threats.

IN SHEFFIELD we had an enormous rate increase, 40 per cent in 1981, to compensate for the government's redistribution of grant from the cities to the shire counties and for the penalties levied for not adhering to government targets. While we were in a relatively prosperous position, it was possible to ask people to bear the burden of Thatcherism.

Now it's simply impossible to keep on putting up the rates. This year we've managed — with Labour in control for 50 years, we've had a substantial base to cushion us. Next year we'll have to find £3.20 for every £1 we wish to spend.

We have launched a local campaign to build commitment to collective services and to democracy. We need to change people's experience of how public services operate, so that they genuinely believe these services belong to them, and they're running them.

We are campaigning not just to protect individual jobs and services, but to win people to a comprehensive view of the way the world's got to be organised. This differentiates us from social democracy, from paternalistic welfare attitudes. The socialist view is that people have every right to have their hands on the levers of power.

Of course, only a certain amount can be done at a local level. It would need a socialist government to put resources at people's disposal nationally.

Our local campaign needs to be linked to the national campaign to stop the legislation and to counteract the propaganda of the Tories. But the local campaign provides the essential springboard for action.

We provide work-time facilities for the unions to organise their campaign and discuss it with every section and department. And we've put a lot of money into supporting campaigns in the community — tenants and community groups, and voluntary organisations,

all of whom are dependant on stopping the Tory attacks to survive.

The local Labour Party and the council's Labour Group is standing firm. We're not in the business of giving up our democratic rights or cutting public services. Such a stand is only possible though if there's unity across the country, on a sufficient scale that an individual authority can't be picked off and wiped out as an isolated aberration.

Clay Cross, Lothian and Lambeth are all examples of individual authorities who weren't supported by anyone else anywhere. There wasn't sufficient momentum to enable them to succeed.

Unity is necessary because the Tories have a coherent strategy. Look at the steel strike, the attack on the NGA and the print industry, and the current

attack on the miners, not to mention privatisation.

Thatcher's government is deliberately restructuring the economy towards the market place. The labour movement must work out where to go and how to rally support rather than always responding to the cards the Tories play.

At last year's Labour Party annual conference I moved a resolution which made clear the need for a united campaign and recognised it might be necessary in the future to indemnify councillors for their actions in defence of democracy — a position subsequently confirmed, Labour's national executive.

Liverpool's position is difficult because it's unique. They are not only facing the worst conditions of economic deprivation and industrial decay, they're doing so after a Liberal/Tory administration left nothing to draw on. They are trying to find a way forward in extreme circumstances. We must all give whatever support we can.

SINCE LABOUR CAME to power in Merseyside, in 1981, we've altered our image — we've popularised our policies, and begun to get across what the council does.

We inherited a bad legacy. The county council was regarded as 'the local House of Lords'. But things have radically changed since 1982. We now have a solid framework in which to make radical and progressive policies. Within the limits of the capitalist system, we're delivering the goods.

Our campaign against abolition doesn't just rest on the organised labour movement. Until the end of the White Paper consultation period, in January this year, our method of opposing legislation to abolish the metropolitan counties has been to get the maximum support from Merseyside organisations.

This wasn't just labour movement organisations, it included for example the Chamber of Commerce, large private firms and churches. The government proposals inevitably depend on lowering public services, and the government assumes the county councils will easily achieve this by cooperation.

This is not the case. There has been substantial cross-party support for the council. Even Tories distance themselves from abolition. Our original reaction to the White Paper proposals was an all-party resolution calling for an independent public enquiry before abolition.

An opinion poll conducted by Liverpool Polytechnic shows the same results as the London one. Seventy per cent of Merseysiders want to retain or strengthen the powers of the council, only 20 per cent want it abolished.

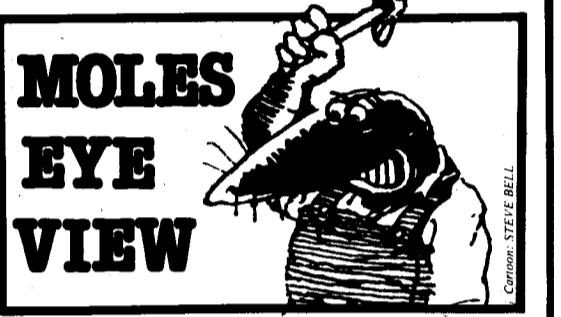
We have carried out an extensive advertising campaign: posters on the buses, and at Everton football ground, and we've put leaflets through every door, as well as advertising on local radio. We've spent £275,000 since October, and we'll be spending more.

We are explaining that abolition is wrong because it would stop Labour doing the things it's pledged



Keva Coombes

Photo: MERSEYSIDE COUNTY COUNCIL



A right to work

MRS THATCHER is right to say that the police are on the picket lines just to make sure that 'anyone who wants to work can do so.' To prove the point she is ordering Britain's largest ever police mobilisation outside Britain's dole offices.



Starting tomorrow thousands of police will escort the unemployed to their former workplaces. Any attempt by their old bosses to stop them working will be broken up by the cops.

She assured Socialist Action that her first target is those pits being closed down by MacGregor.

What's in a name?

SHOULD we keep our name or not, was the big soul searching exercise on the *Guardian*. The odd liberal on the editorial staff bleated 'after Sarah Tisdale can we really qualify as the Guardian of civil rights?'

Then a more agile-minded member of the staff had a brainwave. 'Surely', he said 'Guardian can also mean running the "nicks" so what's wrong with the name? Our record on Sarah Tisdale proves we have every right to use it.' The editor is said to have looked very relieved at this suggestion.

Russians is worried that he won't get a fair trial. Being an ex-member of the spy chasing mob should know about things like that.

But he is being a little unfair on his old chums who for the last few months have been secretly vetting jurors. All the spy catchers are doing is checking that the jurors don't have any subversive thoughts like being in favour of the Labour Party or belonging to a trade union.

You can hardly expect such people to reach an objective decision. Who knows they might go and reach verdicts the state don't want.

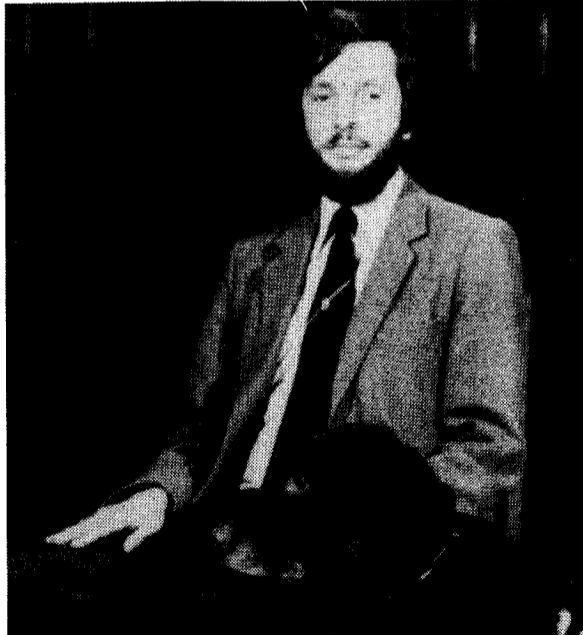
The rag and the facts

REPORTING the suicide of miner Ian Tarran the *Sun* told its readers 'The young miner defiantly carried on working for a week.' In its next edition it reported 'he even tried to work one day' and 'returned home when his bus did not turn up.'

With a rag like the *Sun* you pay your money and they make up the facts.

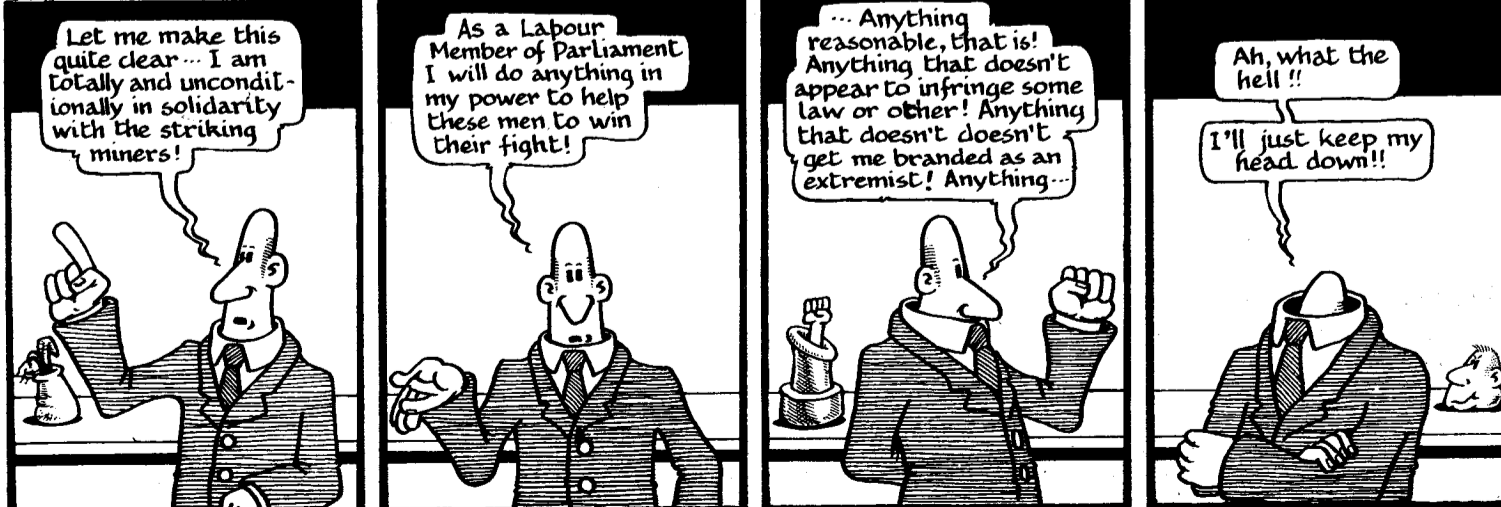
Pick the jurors

MICHAEL BET-TANEY the M15 officer accused of spying for the



David Blunkett

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



BY #50 3/84 GORMAC



Liverpool's pierhead

Labour Party democracy: round two

FOR THOSE who think the battle for accountability in the labour movement is over now, this new Campaign group pamphlet will come as a shock.

Having begun the process of tying down Labour leaders in opposition, the Campaign Group of left MPs have now turned their attention to Labour in power. If the radical reforms in the pamphlet were achieved, a Labour prime minister and cabinet would be directly elected by party conference.

The route the pamphlet takes to explain this proposal is somewhat circuitous. It rests on the view that Britain is not a country in which parliament is supreme.

By Valerie Coultas

The Campaign Group argue Britain is not a democracy but a 'constitutional monarchy' which is divided into three parts: the monarch, the House of Lords and the Commons. Consequently 'British people have only one: the right to elect one-third of our system of government'.

They point out the crown has the power to dissolve parliament, appoint the prime minister, and start and end wars. The pamphlet proposes to end these powers. But it is the proposals that challenge the power of the Labour leaders in office which will cause considerable controversy within the labour movement.

The Gang of Four left the Labour Party among other reasons because the election of the party leaders by an electoral college, and the reselection of MPs made it harder for the right wing to ignore the rank and file of the movement.

To have democracy and to carry out socialist

policies, Labour must have more power and control its own representatives. More power for Labour means abolishing the House of Lords, getting rid of the royal prerogative, and submitting all major public appointments to the Commons for approval, and by televising the Commons, and having a Freedom of Information Act.

Control

More control over a Labour government will be achieved if cabinet ministers and the prime minister are subject to yearly election by the party conference. The power of the prime minister would also be substantially reduced by giving more power to the parliamentary Labour Party. They also suggest that the law should be changed so that if an MP leaves a political party they should stand for re-election.

This pamphlet will not only shock the establishment, but also the present Labour Party leadership. It is a shock socialists should welcome

Major

There are major drawbacks in the pamphlet however. Most importantly, a series of partial demands, which socialists should support, are presented as ends that could secure the goals outlined. A particularly clear and extreme example is ending the situation where army officers swear allegiance to the monarch personally and not to parliament.

The present system makes easier the interference of the military in politics — a military coup. Historians always point to personal oaths of allegiance to the Führer as one of the most sinister measures taken by Hitler — but this applies to the

British crown.

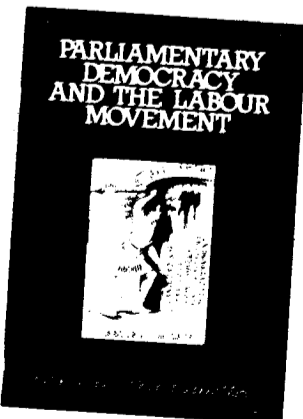
It is quite wrong to believe that altering the oath of allegiance would prevent the possibility of a military coup. It would simply make it harder to organise and legitimise.

This drawback relates to other weaknesses in the pamphlet, which approaches democracy in general but actually only deals with the relatively specific field of parliament. The whole problem of democracy and the state apparatus (the civil service, armed forces, and so on) is not touched, neither is democratic control of the economy.

Point

One final point. How can any socialist pamphlet accept the British monarchy? Surely the Labour Party could at least become explicitly republican? Or are we still aiming for a socialist monarchy?

Despite these provisos, almost every specific measure proposed by the pamphlet should be supported. It would be a great step forward for Labour if these proposals were adopted as party policy.



Parliamentary Democracy and the Labour Movement is published by the Campaign Group of MPs. This costs 50p and can be obtained from Joan Maynard, House of Commons, London SW1.

Liverpool: Kinnock - get off the fence

'THE DEAD WILL lie unburied on the mortuary slabs,' predicted Liverpool's district auditor, a melodramatic warning of the dire but as yet unknown consequences of the council failing to make a legal budget on 29 March. But Margaret Thatcher has different plans.

The government is treating Liverpool's firm stand seriously and preparing emergency legislation which will allow Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin to step in and run the city. And Thatcher is planning to spear Labour leader Neil Kinnock on the horns of his own dilemma by asking for all-party support for such legislation.

It is Kinnock's position of less than wholehearted support for front-line councils — his insistence, in the face of daily-growing attacks from the Tories, that Labour stay within the law — which allows the government to try a manoeuvre to split the Labour Party ranks.

Despite the pressure, Liverpool Labour Group voted 36 to six last Friday

to continue their strategy, making the most likely outcome for the 29 March that no budget at all is fixed, and leaving the city without a legal rate. Taking this step into the unknown has not prevented the majority of Labour councillors from supporting the only viable stand to protect the city's working class; and it has not prevented Labour candidates in May's city elections standing on the same platform.

The local elections will follow one day after the queen opens the Interna-

tional Garden Festival in Liverpool — not a good time for the Tories to be slogging it out on the city council's fate.

With the terms of Liverpool's rate-making meeting fixed, it seems unlikely that the battle for the city's future will end on 29 March. On the contrary, it will be only just beginning. It is not too late for Labour's national leadership to get off the fence and give the local labour movement the support it should and must have.



Action to stop abolition

GLC NALGO HAS mobilised for the week of protest from 24 March to Democracy Day, 29 March, culminating in a national march and rally in Central Hall, London. The action is aimed at building trade union support for the campaign against abolition of the GLC and metropolitan counties, and focussing public attention on the threat to services and jobs.

NALGO's national executive has authorised all NALGO members to participate in Democracy Day events. But what will this week of action really mean to our members?

By Lesley Catchpole (GLC/ILEA NALGO in a personal capacity)

Some NALGO members feel the emphasis should now move from 'fun days' to linking with other trade unions and labour movement organisations to create a coordinated and effective resistance to the government's policies. In particular, NALGO should ensure that the ban on members doing abolition work is effective throughout the GLC and local authorities.

The ban's success will

depend on the resolve of the membership to carry it out. But in some areas there has been little or no action to mobilise the membership.

It is imperative that joint trade union committees prepare now for joint action. The abolition proposals are part of an overall plan to destroy the public sector, thereby taking away our right to a job, education, health service and a decent standard of living for all.



The following resolution, passed by a GLC/ILEA NALGO branch, should be supported by all local government trade unionists committed to stopping the Tory abolition plans:

In order to build on the success of the day of action and avoid duplicating publicity work carried out by the council, the following programme is agreed as this union's main contribution to the fight against abolition:

- The plan for industrial action at key points within the GLC and ILEA. Shop stewards committees to identify areas within their own departments where selective action will be most effective. The defence committee to draw up an overall plan to coordinate such action by the end of 1984.
- The programme of selective industrial action to be initiated in response to any attempt at implementation of the government's abolition proposals. Any victimisation of members carrying out selective action to be met with a call to all-out industrial action.
- The implications of the policy of non-cooperation already agreed by membership to be considered in the context of the above.
- To launch a determined publicity drive to win the membership to the above proposals. To convene workplace meetings in pursuance of this objective; to seek the active cooperation of all shop stewards committees.
- To argue for this programme vigorously within the Democracy for London campaign. To organise departmental joint trade union committees to coordinate campaigning against abolition. To mandate all delegates to the Democracy for London Campaign and all other joint trade union committees to work for the adoption of this programme.
- To form close links with the campaign to defend London Transport and with other trade unions and sectors for joint action where possible.
- To convene a conference in the summer of 1984 to further the aims and objectives of this programme.

DEMOCRACY DAY

A Socialist ACTION

No. 51 30 March 1984 30p



Miners supported the healthworkers. Now the labour movement must support the miners.

Defend Democracy Support the Miners!

THIS WEEK we saw the brutal face of Thatcher's Britain:

- Eight thousand police occupying the Nottinghamshire coalfield in the greatest police action against a trade union since the general strike.

- Sarah Tisdall sentenced to six months in prison for having brought into the open the lies of Michael Heseltine.

- Opinion polls showing a three to one majority against the abolition of the GLC but the government ploughing on with its plans

regardless.

- Local government minister Patrick Jenkin exposed as suppressing elections to try to prevent 'a major public debate' on the abolition of the Metropolitan councils.

This was the track record of only one week for a government that in 1979 and 1983 was elected declaring it was going to set Britain free from 'socialist tyranny' and the 'stranglehold of bureaucracy'.

But the actions of Thatcher's government don't spring from misjudgements. Even less the mysterious

'spirit of the times' the *Guardian* editor bemoaned last week. Thatcher's attacks on democracy flow logically, as night follows day, from every policy pursued by this government.

When four million are unemployed they are going to want to fight back.

When 20,000 miners jobs are going to be scrapped the NUM is going to fight back.

When the National Health Service is attacked ninety per cent of the population are going to fight back.

When a city like Liverpool, or London, or Sheffield is going to see its services gutted they are going to fight back.

The Thatcher government has no answer to any of this except more and more repression and greater and greater suppression of democracy.

There is only one force that in Britain today consistently defends democracy.

It turned out in tens of thousands on 29 March in demonstrations throughout Britain to defend out cities. It is defending Sarah Tisdall. It is fighting on the picket lines in Nottingham to defend not only its jobs but the British economy and our political liberties from the attacks of this government.

Liverpool stands firm

Liverpool City Council will be holding out against the Tory government attacks on Thursday when it sets its budget for the coming year.

After Monday's council committee approved Labour's budget — a shortfall of £190 million on necessary spending in 1985-5 — Tony Benn who was speaking at a rally in Liverpool's St George's Hall, pledged his full support for the council. 'I have come to give 100 per cent

support,' he said, 'to the decisions of the Liverpool Labour Group. Labour was elected in Liverpool to protect jobs and services and it must keep faith with the people who put their confidence in the Labour council.'

The people of Liverpool agree with Tony Benn, that's why they'll be marching to the town hall in their thousands on 29 March, to show their determination to stand firm against Thatcher's attacks on their city and their council.