

# A Socialist ACTION

No more NGAs!

No. 73 12 October 1984 30p

## All out to defend the NUM

THE HIGH Court has declared war on the trade union movement. Its decision to seize £200,000 of the assets of the NUM, and threaten to sequester the entire funds of the union, is the greatest attack on the trade union movement since 1926.

It means that the Thatcher government and the entire ruling class, acting through the courts, have decided to try to break the miners' strike through repression. It is the naked use of class law.

No one should have any doubt but that this legal attack is a *calculated* decision by the ruling class to try to smash the NUM.

The reasons for the decision are clear. The NUM is winning the strike. Already power stations representing 40 per cent of the coal-burning capacity of the Central Electricity Generating Board are now operating the TUC guidelines not to handle new coal. More such decisions will come through in the coming days. The government must win the strike quickly or its defeat is certain.

There must be no illusions whatever regarding the scale of the attack which has now been launched on the NUM or the scale of reply which is needed to defeat it. The court's decision that, after eight months out solid, the NUM cannot call the strikes in Yorkshire and Derbyshire 'official' is simply grotesque. The NUM cannot back down on that even if it wanted to. No democratic self-governing union could.

The courts aim to smash the power of the strongest industrial union in the country. If this decision is forced through the internal affairs of no union in the country will be free from the continual intervention of the courts. The attack on the NUM is a direct and immediate threat to every trade union, every shop stewards committee, and every group of workers in the country.

The decision which the trade union movement faces today is far more serious even than the one it confronted, and failed, a year ago with

the court attack on the NGA. That humiliating defeat was followed immediately by the banning of unions at GCHQ, and the government forcing the miners out on strike through its provocation at Cortonwood. Any defeat of the trade union movement now will see a wave of reaction by the employers against every group of workers in the country.

The response of the TUC and entire trade union movement must be the exact opposite to the decisions of the General Council when the attack was launched on the NGA. The victorious fight against the Industrial Relations Act, the freeing of the Pentonville Five, shows that the law can be successfully defied and defeated.

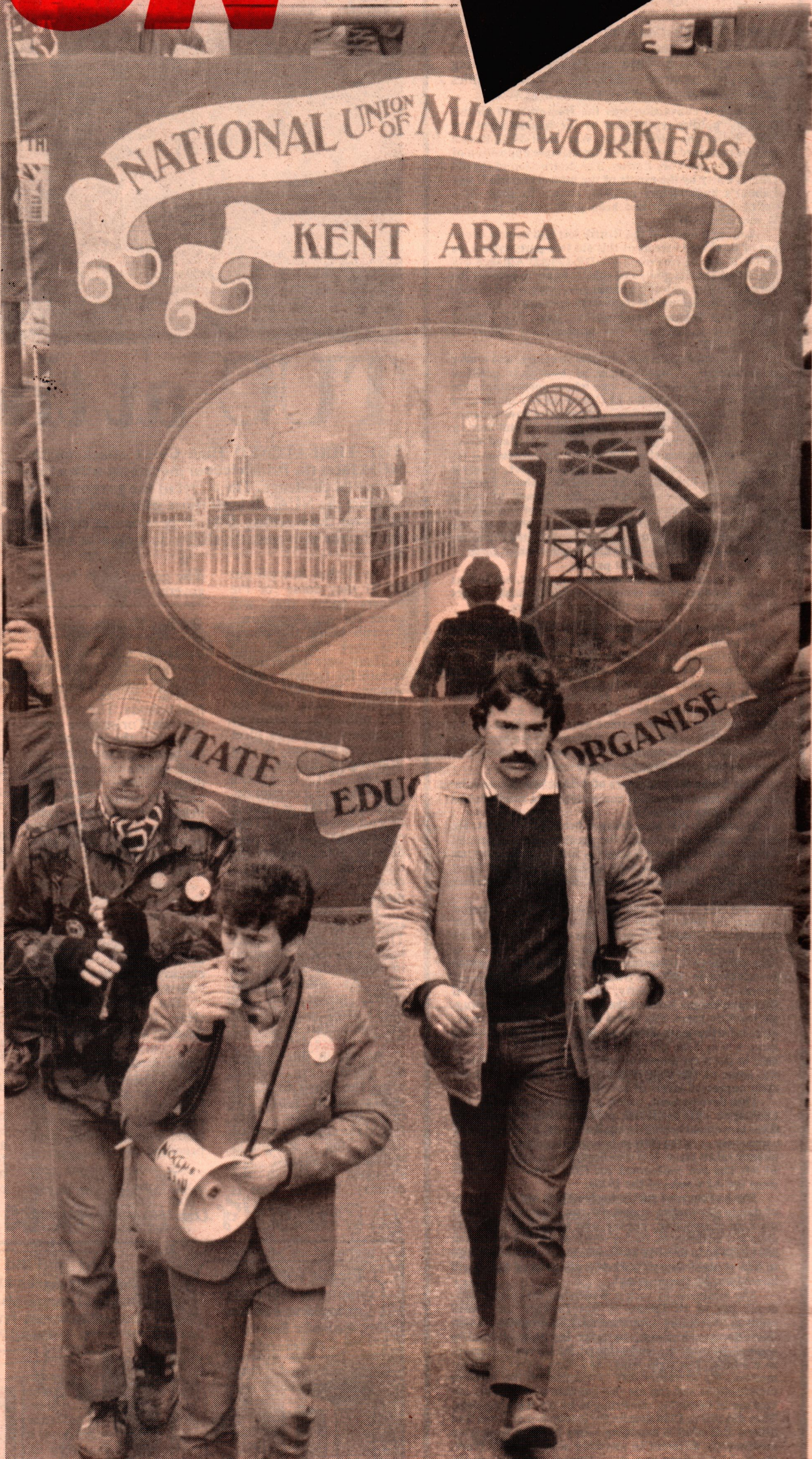
The condition for victory is that the movement acts now to take industrial action to support the miners and the TUC is forced to give full backing to the NUM. If that is done the courts will be defeated — and the backbone of the Thatcher government will be broken.

There are fourteen days from Monday, set by the court, to ensure that the government knows if it acts against the NUM it will face the biggest mobilisation in the history of the working class. Sheer brute power, not law, will decide the outcome of this struggle. The urgent steps now are:

- Every branch, every shop stewards committee must meet and declare that if the assets of the NUM are sequestered, or its leaders imprisoned, immediate all out strike action will start from Monday 29 October — the day the court action to seize the assets of the NUM commences.

- The executives of trade unions must meet to decide that from Monday 29 October indefinite strike action will be taken if any attempt is made to sequester the assets of the NUM or imprison its leaders.

- An emergency meeting of the TUC General Council must be called to declare its support for the NUM and to declare that if the assets of the NUM are sequestered, or its leaders imprisoned, the TUC will call a general strike in defence of the NUM.



TUC MUST CALL A GENERAL STRIKE

Photo: GM COOKSON

# Socialist ACTION

## Scargillism?

SINCE THE election of the Thatcher government two enormous convulsions have shaken political society in Britain. Their results are the beginning of the greatest structural change in British politics since the aftermath of the First World War.

The first convulsion was the fracturing of British capitalist politics represented by the formation of the SDP. From the First World War until 1979 British politics remained confined within a simple opposition of the Labour and Tory Parties. The destruction of the old Liberal Party by the events of the inter-war period, and Labour's huge victory in 1945, simply finished off a political process that had been produced by the First World War itself.

Although much of the British left still cannot break out of thinking in terms of this old two-party system, in reality it is gone forever. The SDP-Liberal Alliance will not disappear. Its goal, and role, is to try to prevent the formation of a majority Labour government and to exert a new form of powerful right-wing pressure on the trade union and labour bureaucracy. The SDP-Liberal Alliance is a structural and fundamental feature of British politics.

To encompass this new political structure, and render it permanent, a new system of bourgeois political organisation is required — one whose cornerstones are British membership of the EEC, and the introduction of proportional representation, and coalition governments.

To create that system in turn British capital needs a thorough-going reorganisation of the politics and structure of the working class movement. In particular it requires a radical change away from the direct, intimate and exclusive links of the TUC and the Labour Party, a consequent major change in the nature of trade unionism, and a change in the structure of the Labour Party — one moving away from basing Labour activity and membership directly on its mass affiliated organisations and towards the 'individual membership' basis of the West European socialist parties.

'New realism' and Kinnockism, in short, are just as much a product of the reorganisation of British politics as are Thatcherism, the SDP, and the Tory wets.

The aftermath of the First World War however produced another feature of British politics. The defeat of 1926 eliminated an authentic left bureaucracy, basing itself directly on mass class struggles, as a force in the labour movement. The bureaucracy as a whole came to play the role not merely of derailing the working class struggle historically but one of literal day to day sabotage. The type of current once symbolised by AJ Cook, and the politics of 'not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day' disappeared for two generations as a force within the British labour movement.

This is why the emergence of Arthur Scargill, and the forces he represents most completely, is a fundamental shift in British politics.

Scargill has not been dragged behind the miners. He has for seven months led the greatest mass industrial struggle since the general strike — and in that period has confronted, and fought back against, the greatest direct assault of the bourgeoisie against the working class since 1926.

That type of force, and leadership, necessarily begins to mark the entire left of the Labour Party which could once be described as 'Bennite', but which is today much more accurately summed up in the press as 'Scargill/Benn/Livingstone'. A current which gained prominence in 1979-81 overtly around constitutional reform in the labour party, has today had added to it the supercharged force of the greatest trade union struggle for fifty years. The social base it is beginning to acquire is furthermore not simply the cadres of the working class, whom Benn always dominated, but a mass social base in the most powerful industrial union in the country, some of the biggest cities in the country, and the most oppressed layers of society.

That development, which is only just beginning, is a qualitative shift in British politics within the working class movement which is equivalent in its impact and consequences to the shift in bourgeois politics which has already taken place. It is a leadership of a type the Marxist left has not confronted for fifty years — precisely since the AJ Cooks of the 1920s.

The weakness of such a leadership is not at the level of day to day tactics — and nor can it be confronted at the level of moaning, sniping, and frequently childish ultra-left criticism on tactics which much of the Marxist left has liked to dress up as 'Bolshevism'. No one need go to bed at night worrying whether the miners' strike will be sold out by the morning!

The weakness of such a leadership on current problems lies in its failure to put forward an overall political, including organisational, alternative to the right bureaucracy, and to fight for that alternative through winning the leadership of the labour movement as a whole. The right wing, and their direct capitalist masters, are therefore left in control of the workers organisations and can use this position to increasing advantage in betraying the struggles of the working class. They did this in 1926 despite the leadership of Cook and others. But what is emerging today is still a leadership qualitatively different to anything seen for fifty years, the first beginnings of a class struggle leadership in the labour movement.

Fighting to organise the forces which are emerging in the working class into class struggle left wing in the labour movement, within that fighting for leadership and on the key political questions it confronts: it is on these basic questions that battle has to be joined in the entire next period in the workers movement.



# TUC at the crossroads

THE THREATENED High Court attack on the NUM faces the British labour movement with a fundamental challenge. The target of the government is not just the NUM. It is all those who resist Tory attacks on the working class. It is aimed at crippling the labour movement's ability to organise and to fight.

As Arthur Scargill put it: 'If they come for the miners today they will come for you tomorrow'. To rub home the point, this week Cammel Laird workers were jailed for a month for fighting redundancies. The NGA is also currently being sued for £2.5 million as a result of secondary action in Fleet Street arising out of the Warrington dispute.

The TUC is at the crossroads. If it cannot defend the NUM, it cannot defend anyone. The 1984 congress gave a clear mandate of 'total support for the NUM'. The general council must act on this mandate.

The reason for the court's attack is simple. The eight months of strike have achieved a situation in which the miners can win. As winter comes closer, power cuts are weeks away — and when the lights start to go out the Tories are defeated.

So far in this dispute the Tories have avoided using the courts to attack central NUM funds for only one reason. They feared the consequences of using the anti-union legislation against the strongest union in the country. But the time is

now getting... for the government

By Pat Hickey

The fact that the attack comes under common law, and the so-called rules of natural justice, should fool nobody. The reality is that the Tories have been preparing the ground for the growing use of the law and courts in industrial disputes ever since they came to office. First Jim Prior, then Norman Tebbit, now Tom King, have been steadily tightening the legal shackles on the trade unions.

Unlike 1974, when the Tories set up special courts for dealing with the unions, this time they merely provided enabling acts, which allowed employers to use the civil courts.

But the intention was clear. It was to steadily develop a climate in which the courts and the law could become a central part of industrial disputes. Then, the state could be brought to the aid of employers faced with any trade unions which were prepared to fight.

The intention right from the beginning was to

face the trade union leaderships with 'the rule of law', and with a confrontation with the state. The entire hope and expectation of the Tories was that the TUC would back off under this pressure.

And now that is the government's last hope. The sole basis on which the government can win the dispute is that they can get the TUC, and the rest of the trade union movement, to abandon the miners.

The single greatest campaign of the labour movement today is to prevent that happening. The policy of retreat and betrayal of the trade unions under this government must be reversed.

This policy, under the misnomer 'new realism', was what led to the attack on the NGA. The retreat on the NGA in turn led to GCHQ. The failure of the TUC to back the train drivers and the health workers led the Tories to believe that the time might be right to settle accounts with the miners.

Every retreat has led to fresh attacks. The realism that now needs to be grasped is that, to quote Ray Buckton: 'If we stop running, they can't chase us.'

Any retreat on this issue would open the labour movement to an assault even more ferocious than any that has occurred under Thatcher to date. The NUR,

ASLEF, the TGWU, and the power station workers will all face legal action if this legal action succeeds.

The fight to defend local government, and to retain political funds would be immeasurably more difficult. The government's legal attack on the NUM is not just about the miners. It is an attack on the entire labour movement. This is the lesson that must be hammered home in the coming days.

There are plenty of people in the labour movement who are only too happy to stab the miners in the back. Duffy, Hammond, Sirs and Lyons have been doing so throughout the strike. Others, such as Neil Kinnock and David Basnett, with their 'even-handed' condemnation of violence, encourage the courts to proceed.

A determined stand by the labour movement and the labour leadership will stop the courts, and prepare the way for a historic victory for the working class. Far from being a sign of strength the use of the courts against the NUM today is a desperate gamble by Thatcher to try for the victory that eight months of police intimidation has not delivered.

The steps to stop this attack are clear and simple.

● The general council

must meet immediately, to act on the mandate given at congress. They must state clearly that if the NUM is attacked, there will be an immediate general strike. The TUC should be recalled to plan the campaign.

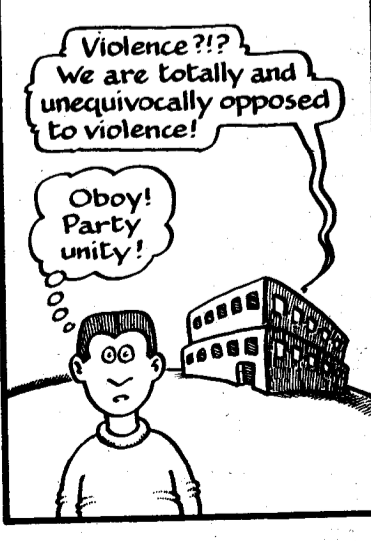
● Those unions which have supported the NUM have a particularly great responsibility. They must provide a lead. The TGWU, the NUR, the NUS, and ASLEF should now call emergency executive meetings and declare their intention to take solidarity action with the NUM, if any attempt is made to seize its funds or imprison its leaders. They must demand that the TUC act now.

● Key groups of workers — in Fleet Street, the docks, transport, engineering — must pledge immediate industrial action if there is any legal attack on the NUM.

The decisive thing now is for commitments to action in support of the NUM. Physical support as Arthur Scargill has demanded.

This is the best way to force the courts to back off. The best way to prevent the right wing from trying to stab the NUM in the back and set back the labour movement by decades. The best way to secure a total victory for the miners.

## A PIECE of the ACTION



THE COMIC STRIP THAT ESPOUSES MINDLESS PACIFISM??

CORMAC



Photo: ANDREW WIARD (REPORT)

# Labour's new left

**THE REACTION** of sections of the press to the left wing at last week's Labour Party conference was almost frenzied. The *Daily Telegraph* on Friday carried the lead into its centre page analysis of events that its commentator had seen, 'Labour turned its back on constitutional behaviour and pinned its faith in the future on the rule of street mobs.'

The article concluded that, 'Labour, with few backward glances at constitutionality or legality, has opted for extra-parliamentary action and insurrection,' and that, 'When the main opposition party in the land turns it back on legality and democracy there is something rotten in the body politic.'

While the *Telegraph* specialises in articles for retired Tory colonels nevertheless the more serious press also understood that something fundamental was going on. The *Financial Times*, in its editorial on Saturday, declared, 'The fact that Mr Scargill can win a personal triumph in Blackpool is bad news for Mr Kinnock and the Labour Party, which looks more than ever like a rabble. But it is also bad news for the government.'

The *Guardian*, under the title 'The two parties of Blackpool', explained in its Friday editorial column that there was on one side the respectable right wing party of Kinnock and Hattersley, and then 'the newer, restless, impatient Labour Party, the Scargillite party,' which is 'strong in conference and growing stronger in the unions.'

Even given Fleet Street's normal distortion and hysteria something very fundamental did happen during the week. The Monday of Labour Party conference was the best day the left in the Labour Party had had for a very long time. The miners were backed. Police violence in the miners'

strike was wholeheartedly denounced. Neil Kinnock's attack on reselection was defeated for this year in all its forms.

## Defy

During the rest of the week a decision to defy the law over the defence of the cities was passed. On Ireland the conference took serious steps forward by calling on Labour to mount a campaign of opposition to the use of plastic bullets, calling for the ending of non-jury Diplock courts, and demanding the end of strip searching of women prisoners in Armagh gaol.

Indeed something fundamental broke out at this year's Labour Party conference — or more precisely was brought to a head by the miners' strike which acted as the driving force of the entire left. For the first time for fifty years, since the Minority Movement of the 1920s, the elements of real class struggle forces, and a real class struggle leadership, are clearly beginning to emerge in the labour movement and certain of its key struggles.

Above all, dwarfing all else, is of course the

miners' strike. The sheer power of this conflict makes it the greatest mass working class industrial struggle since the general strike. And out of it has emerged a leadership which in Arthur Scargill's words genuinely 'stands and fights'.

It is not a revolutionary leadership. It is not a Marxist leadership. It is a section of the left bureaucracy. But it is a force which is authentically leading, and not following, the greatest direct working class mobilisation for fifty years.

However while the miners' strike overshadows everything else in its power nevertheless it is far from being the only such force which is stirring in the labour movement today. A Labour left which five years ago was still grouped mainly around constitutional reform, with only CND as a mass campaign driving it, is today beginning to take on quite a different colouration.

## Miners

What were the issues and groups which dominated the conference? First the miners. But then a whole series of Labour Parties in the big cities, backed by unions, pledging their willingness to violate the law to defend services, jobs, and local government. Most important several of them meant it. Liverpool already showed the power of a Labour Party resting itself on the resistance of an entire city.

Also fundamental for the future was the fight

over black sections, women's self-organisation in the miners' strike and in the party, the demand for the first ever debate on gay and lesbian rights, and the effects of the dialogue with Sinn Fein.

Miners, the big cities, women, gays, blacks, lesbians, the Irish are not the 'middle class constituency parties' or the 'bed sitter/polytechnic lecturer brigade' who the press like to portray as the Labour left. They amount to the most militant, most powerful and most oppressed groups in society.

## NUM

The NUM in particular set an incredible record during the week. In addition to its own struggle, which dominated the proceedings, the NUM backed illegal action on the cities, moved against Kinnock on reselection, backed black sections, supported the demands of the Women's Action Committee and sent a message of solidarity to the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

So much for the sneerings of the *Guardian*, *New Statesman*, and their hangers-on in attempting to present the choice for the oppressed as the 'advanced' middle classes versus the 'backward' workers. It was the most powerful industrial union in the country which took the most consistent position in support of the oppressed throughout the week.

Finally there was a huge advance on an absolutely basic question for the future — and the one that above all others led the Fleet Street press to

foam at the mouth.

Britain has for more than a century been the major country in Europe in which the weight of philistine legalism and parliamentary cretinism has been the greatest. Since Chartism there has been no mass current that openly rejected the legitimacy of the bourgeois state — no British equivalent to the Communist Parties of Europe or the anarchists of Spain.

Very slowly, extremely unevenly, this is what is beginning to change. What is developing in the labour movement are precisely currents which base themselves on mass struggles and which do not accept that the law is supreme above all else, who do not accept that the violence of the working class is to be placed on the same level as the violence of the police and state.

## State

The state was once well defined as claiming 'a monopoly of the means of legitimate violence'. A relatively large layer of people are beginning not to accept that legitimacy on all issues. A small number are no longer prepared to accept its violence. Both developments are completely unacceptable to capitalism.

'Scargillism', and all that goes with it, is not a political current the bourgeoisie can accept as legitimate in British politics.

There should be strictly no exaggerating as to the size of what is developing. The types of left which are

now emerging in the labour movement are a *minority* — contrary to the fears of Fleet Street. The Labour conference boosted the left but it is still Kinnock who remains in the saddle.

Kinnock controls the NEC and cemented still more firmly his relations with the GMBATU, AUEW and other union bureaucracies. He won fundamental political victories in the debates on defence and economic policy.

The left, in short, is a

powerful *minority*. It can win on some individual issues but not yet take the leadership of the party. That is going to be a question of years of struggle before the position of Kinnock can be overthrown. Enormous tasks lie ahead of it.

But something very profound indeed did begin to take first shape at this year's Labour Party conference. Fleet Street exaggerated the tempo. But it got the direction dead right.

## Declaration of contempt

*THE FOLLOWING* declaration was circulated at Labour Party conference — with an invitation for other figures in the labour movement to sign it:

**We, the undersigned, in our personal capacities but with the full intention of involving where possible the organisations we represent, do hereby declare the present industrial action by the National Union of Mineworkers to be an official strike. By signing below we jointly repeat, with Arthur Scargill and the executive of the National Union of Mineworkers, the so-called 'contempt' of the High Court, by repeating collectively that this strike is official.**

Signature

Address

Organisation

When completed please send to Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Rd, London N17.

# Solidarity wins on rail

FOR THE third time since the start of the miners' strike, rail workers were poised to take official action on 9 October. The rail federation — NUR and ASLEF — had called a one-day strike in Yorkshire, to protest against intimidation faced by members who are refusing to move coal. For the third time, management made a temporary retreat.

In mining areas, rail workers are deeply affected by the miners' strike. Many depots exist solely to transport coal from the pitheads to the power stations.

TOMMY DOYLE, secretary of Tinsley NUR, writing in personal capacity, explains his views on the issues behind the call for the strike.

OUR 9 October strike call was a direct result of management discrimination against Federation members at Shirebrook "ra" depot, who have followed union policy and refused to move coal.

The Shirebrook depot is split, just like the Notts coalfield is split. Our latest figures show something like a quarter of the drivers, and 40-50 per cent of the guards, are scabbing.

Those who are working normally are breaking every national agreement. They are coming into work as management requires, not according to agreements. They are working long hours of overtime.

Signalmen who are supporting the unions are being replaced by unqualified workers. Train crews who were refusing to move coal had their rosters torn up.

The flexible rostering agreement was dispensed with. They were given an emergency tax code — code 22. This is a strike

code. It meant they were not allowed to book on duty, and so were in arrears with National Insurance and pension payments. And they weren't getting all the other allowances that make up our wages.

In Shirebrook, this sort of intimidation is made worse by the fact that an emergency unit of storm-troopers has been set up right in the railway. These police units are at the entrance gates.

Two caravans are stored there with riot gear, which is being used against striking miners at Warsop and Shirebrook. It's also a source of intimidation against our members.

But it's gone even further. Every now and then, police go round Shirebrook village knocking on doors for striking miners, and on occasion, rail workers get caught up in this police net.

It's this situation which led those of us in South Yorkshire to call for

solidarity action. We wanted to show two things. One, that our members at Shirebrook are not isolated, and two to show management that as far as we are concerned we are no longer going to tolerate this situation.

The call for action was fully supported in South Yorkshire, Worksop, Doncaster, and the Sheffield areas. The Shirebrook workers have

now received a commitment that tax code 22 will be withdrawn; they will be able to book on; all allowances will be paid, and these will be backdated.

Management have been clearly informed that any repeat of these attacks will lead to immediate industrial action.

The solidarity shown by South Yorkshire railway workers made management retreat in

Notts for the time being. But BR will continue, through the pressure of the government, to try to ensure miners and rail workers don't take joint action.

Even if we have local retreats or temporary retreats by management, it will last only until the next crisis. If it's not one week, it will be the second week. It won't go away until the miners win, and this dispute is resolved.

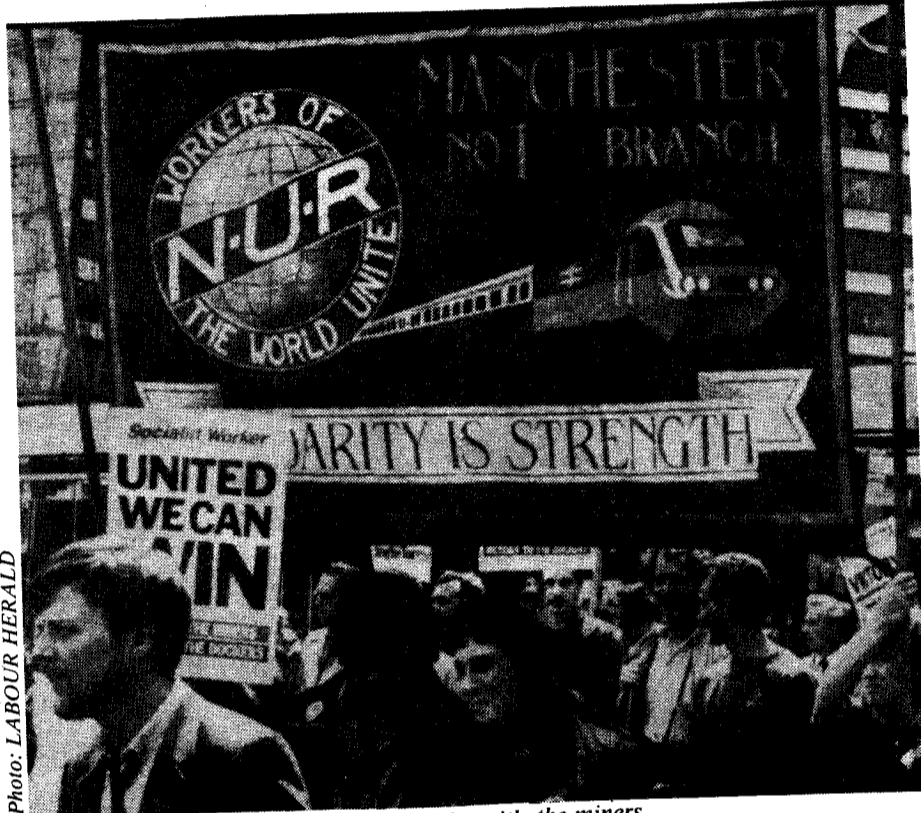


Photo: LABOUR HERALD  
Manchester rail workers march in solidarity with the miners.

# Teachers pay lesson — beware ACAS

By Bernard Reagan  
(NUT Executive, personal capacity)

THE NUT special salaries conference, meeting in Scarborough on 29 September agreed to submit a claim for 1985 which would increase the total wage bill by over 40 per cent. Over the last ten years teachers pay has declined by 30 per cent, and this year's derisory settlement added insult to injury.

Throughout this year's pay campaign teachers showed they were prepared to fight. The right-wing union executive side-tracked this militancy into a campaign for arbitration. The Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA), the largest left group in the NUT, argued against this strategy, and they were proved right in the end.

The events surrounding arbitration are a warning to all trade unions — NUM and NACODS in particular. ACAS is not an independent body, and not to be trusted.

Terms of arbitration in education are governed by

the Teachers Remuneration Act, which provides for an arbitration panel of three people, one nominated by each side, and an independent chairperson nominated by ACAS.

The employers vetoed

the first three names put forward by ACAS, on the ground that they were too pro-employee. The chairperson finally agreed on was a monetarist professor of economics, from the Manchester School of Business. He was the only one of the three members of the panel to sign the agreement. The teachers nominee refused to sign — yet despite this the Act gives the government the power to impose the arbitration decision — which is exactly what they did. It is little wonder that the NUT executive were forced at conference to accept an STA amendment that next year's pay claim should not go to arbitration.

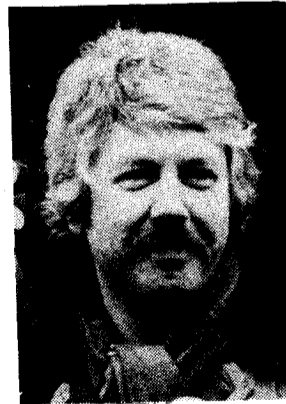


Photo: GM COOKSON  
Bernard Reagan

The main weakness of the special conference was the absence of any serious discussion on how to fight for the claim — particularly in the view of the fact that over 60,000 teaching jobs are threatened under rate-capping.

Teachers are increasingly aware of the importance of the miners' strike to their own issues. Over £1000 was collected for the miners at conference, as a result of initiatives by STA members on the executive.

Two important conferences are now being prepared which will give militants a chance to organise. Lambeth and East London Associations

are organising conferences to prepare the fight for next year's pay claim. On 20 and 21 October the STA AGM will be discussing and planning for future action.

## Socialist Teachers Alliance Annual General Meeting

Agenda:  
1) Pay;  
2) Rate-capping;  
3) Education;  
4) Building the left.  
Sat. 20 & 21 October.

Robert Montefiore School, Valance Rd., E1. (Whitechapel underground)

# SOVIET ACTION

## Students support the miners!

By Karen Talbot (NUS Executive, Personal Capacity)

IT'S THE start of the year now for most students who, if they're lucky, will have got a grant, somewhere to live, and will be wondering how to survive until Christmas on next to nothing. That's the students. Then there are the thousands on slave labour 'training schemes' with no hope of real jobs — an exercise which conveniently hides the unemployment figures. All in all it's another typical year for the education system under Thatcher.

These facts on their own should be enough to make socialist students realise the importance of building fighting and campaigning student unions — and that's without even considering the major struggles going on in the whole of the working class and labour movement at the moment.

There are many parallels between the student world and wider struggles. Student unions are having battles over *ultra vires* (illegal payments) for 'political' purposes such as transport to demos. Trade unions come up against Tory attacks on the unions that clearly have the same philosophy behind them. Unions must be powerless or smashed on Thatcher's logic.

Arguments about economics don't stop at the pithead. Plenty of small colleges, a valuable resource for their communities, are threatened with closure or have been shut for being 'uneconomic'.

At another level the growth of racist and fascist activity in the community is mirrored by the frightening emergency of the National Front and other fascists at many places as well as North London Poly.

What is clear is that students can't see their situation and problems in isolation. The need for unity between all groups under attack from this government, and the sort of society it breeds, is greater than ever. At the moment students have an urgent need to support the miners. Whether this means breaking the *ultra vires* laws or not, we must get involved in all struggles going on around us.

As part of a fighting movement we have some power. We must use it, turn outwards and campaign — and campaigning doesn't mean lobbying parliament and letter writing. It means direct and concrete action, mobilising financial and physical support for workers' disputes.

We mustn't be afraid of confrontation, even if leaders may sometimes say otherwise. As socialists we have an active role to play in all the struggles against this government. We should start the year as we mean to go on — building a mass, campaigning force in the student movement working with the miners and the labour movement to defeat this government.

## ACTIVISTS DIARY

Apart from freshers' weeks, at which support for the miners' strike should be raised, prepare now for:

- National CND demonstration, Barrow, 27 October. Make sure transport is booked. Posters available from local and national CND.
- National CND conference, Sheffield, 23/24/25 November. Deadline for delegates is 5 November. Don't hesitate, make sure your delegation will attend.
- NUS women's conference, Birmingham

University, 10 November. All women supporters urged to attend.

● Founding conference, 'Further Education Labour Students', Liverpool Polytechnic, 10/11 November.

Want to advertise meetings or events in the activists diary? Write to 'Activists Diary', Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

## London supports the miners

A MEETING in London on 8 October for miners' support committees was attended by over 40 delegates. The meeting discussed the problems facing the work in London, including police harassment.

It was called by

GLATC, SERTUC, GLC Police Monitoring Committee, and NCCL.

It agreed that a London conference of trade unions, CLPs, support groups, women's committees and so on would be a big boost to the work of building support.

Delegates were urged to send resolutions to the next meeting of SERTUC,

on 20 October, from their labour movement bodies asking it call such a conference.

*This (name of body) requests SERTUC to organise a conference, at the earliest possible date, of trade unions, CLPs, Support Committees, etc., to discuss further steps in building solidarity with the NUM.*

# STUDENTS

# Black sections: the first skirmish

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK at Labour Party conference the *Militant* denounced the black section for being 'divisive', for taking black people into a 'ghetto'. Diane Abbott, moving one of the resolutions, explained where the real divisiveness comes from.

'We're accused of creating apartheid in the party,' she said. 'But the real apartheid that exists is an all-white parliament, an all-white NEC, all-white councils, and a nearly all-white conference.'

MIKE WONGSAM assesses the impact of the debate on black sections on the party and on black people.

THE DUST is settling after the black community's first assault on the Labour Party conference. Now we need a sober assessment of the events of Wednesday afternoon in particular, and the week's intervention in general.

Many people watching the debate and voting on Wednesday afternoon will have come to the conclusion that the Labour Party is indeed a hostile place for blacks. That it proves that blacks should have nothing to do with the Labour Party.

The more politically astute however will reason differently. Approximately half a million votes were cast in favour of black sections, including the NUM — the most advanced trade union leadership this country has seen for fifty years. Since most other unions voted against, or abstained, the black sections must have got a sizeable section if not a majority of the constituency votes.

This is in a situation where the conference debate confirmed that racism is alive and kicking in the Labour Party, where campaigning has only just started in the trade unions, and where only 26 constituency black sections yet exist.

It is not usual for issues like the self-organisation of the oppressed to even get on to the agenda of a Labour Party conference after only a year of campaigning and discussion.

In this sense then the black sections' lobby must be seen as an unqualified success, a great moral victory although in actual voting the first skirmish was lost. The essential point is that black self-organisation is now very much on the political agenda, black sections will grow in the coming year, and there are many more skirmishes to come.

But the greatest moral victory was the flimsiness of the opposition's arguments — exposed to

the whole black community on national television.

After the case for black sections had been persuasively put, the trade union bureaucracy wheeled out its real 'token blacks'.

The carnival of reaction was led by the EETPU which led out its first ever black speaker at Labour Party conference, closely followed by *Militant* stool pigeons. But they didn't seem to realise the irony of their position.

The fact that the opposition felt that only black speakers had a legitimacy in the debate is a powerful argument for the black section. Once the argument that only black people are really qualified to speak on black oppression is accepted, then the main argument has already been won.

Similarly one of the filthiest arguments put against the black section was that they 'assume blacks are not capable of taking their rightful place in the party'. This without explaining why blacks have been self-evidently unable to take that place in the past.

The argument of the Luton South delegate, that black sections would start a tidal wave of black segregation throughout the labour movement, flew in the face of the experience of the biggest attendance of black people at a Labour Party conference ever.

Alongside this high at-



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Not the Labour Party conference! This year saw the biggest attendance ever of black people at conference — galvanised by the black section debate

tendance by black people, conference also saw the emergence of a new layer of black activists in the party, who are destined to play a large role in 'rebuilding a new Labour Party' in the words of conference delegate Elaine Foster.

But is a sad fact that in this debate, and in this debate alone, naked rightism was sufficient to squash the left on black sections. This despite the fact that the opposition was so weak in arguments, and disproved its own case through its actions.

There is a point at which opposition takes on a particularly putrid stench, and in this case it was the intervention of *Militant* that evinced most disgust.

The daily spectacle of young blacks pleading with the fat, white bureaucrats to deny black people the right to organise and be represented was surely the most nauseous memory from conference.

*Militant's* black youth will have gone home confident that they have done a good job of work. But

hopefully they will only find that they have helped the left understand *Militant's* real role in this issue more clearly — as a left cover for reaction in the party.

As such *Militant* is an

obstacle to sweeping away all that is rotten and stinking in the labour movement.

We lost and gained in this first skirmish. Black sections are here to stay.

**Black Sections Yes!**  
A Socialist Action pamphlet. Price 40p (plus 17p p&p), from PO Box 50, London N1. Why Labour needs black sections, with articles by Russell Proffitt, Ben Bosquet, and others...



**Black Sections Here to Stay: the Vauxhall Experience**

A Vauxhall Labour Party pamphlet. Price 35p (plus 17p p&p), from 1 Alverstone House, London SE11 5TS. Produced by Vauxhall party members as a contribu-

tion to the debate on black sections and how to set them up...

## Labour's defence policy A shift to the right

IT WAS ALL very low key and predictable. At the end of the defence debate, on Wednesday afternoon, the BBC commentator said that the Labour Party had made a 'slight shift to the right'.

It was more than that. But even he recognised that the party's commitment to nuclear disarmament may be on record but, in other respects, the party has made fundamental compromises on defence.

Many delegates had not read the NEC statement before the debate. All Labour Party members should send to Walworth Road, get the document, and discuss it — now.

We must insist the party campaigns for its policy to: refuse cruise missiles, cancel Trident, close all US nuclear bases, send all US weapons back, and scrap Polaris and all other British nuclear weapons. We must begin to put these

policies to the voters.

There was confusion during the general election. This document will not clear it up. Many speakers in the debate made this point.

**By Joy Hurcombe, vice chair CND (personal capacity)**

But one thing was clear: the right has not, and will not, give up their attacks on unilateralism for the sake of unity.



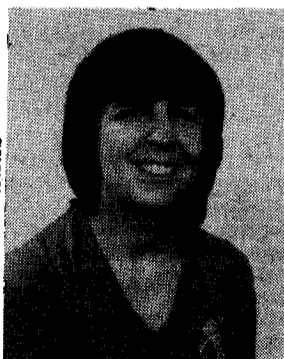
Photo: JOHN HARRIS

**RON TODD**  
Gavin Laird of the AUEW called for the rejection of the document from a right wing point of view, and made a vitriolic attack on the Soviet Union; and Dennis Healey spelled out his opposition to removing US bases.

The document's unconditional enthusiasm for remaining in NATO has strengthened his hand.

In the debate, Healey warned against actions which 'through lack of forethought make it more difficult to produce conventional strategy for NATO by making the Americans, for example, take their troops out of Europe, because then Europe on its own could not produce effective conventional deterrence.'

He still opposes unilateral action to remove



**Joy Hurcombe**  
US nuclear bases. He would do a deal with the US to retain their forward bases for nuclear weapons here, and no doubt that would mean that cruise missiles would also stay.

The statement compromised on removing all US bases — despite the fact that those bases are part of NATO's nuclear strategy. This has allowed Healey to call for negotiations. He supports stronger conventional defence for NATO, and total commitment to subordination to the US.

Even on Polaris, Healey has not given in. A section of the document states that the Tories should phase out Polaris by negotiation in the next few years. Healey says rather than decommission Polaris (which is also a

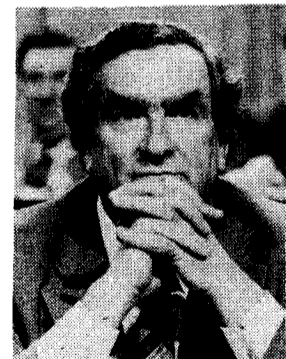


Photo: DAVID FOWLER

**DENIS HEALEY**  
fudge), we should put it into negotiations since we are more trustworthy than the Tories.

Composite 41, calling for the removal of all American bases, was rejected, and the NEC statement given a five-to-one majority on a card vote.

Our task now is to press for no compromises on unilateralism. In particular we must take up the issue of NATO, and insist that past policy on reduction in defence spending is put into the centre of the document.

Reducing spending on defence and using that money to create socially useful products has always been party policy. We demanded that Trident's £11 billion could be better spent on 450 new hospitals, or 9000 new schools.

or 300,000 new homes.

The Labour CND resolution — composite 40, moved by Ron Tod — was also passed by conference on a show of hands. It retained these commitments and spelled out that cutting military spending must be a priority during the lifetime of the next Labour government.

CND has its part to play. It has adopted the anti-Trident campaign as a priority.

The arguments against Trident have always included the economic and social consequences of defence spending, both here and in the Third World. They are not the only arguments, but they do relate to the lives of ordinary workers. Without them, the military establishment can find alternatives and continue their hold on the economy, in partnership with the capitalist state.

Under Neil Kinnock, the Labour Party has already stated it will transfer the Trident money to more conventional arms spending.

The leadership does not tell voters that this country already spends more than any other in Europe on defence — twice the average of the

rest of Europe. They do not tell voters that defence spending cripples the economy and increases military tension.

Fenner Brockway, the Post Office Engineers' speaker, and the delegate from Wallsend CLP all pointed this out.

Neither CND nor the Labour Party must equivocate on Trident. We owe it to the miners, the unemployed and those dying for want of basic medical care — Trident must be cancelled, and that money invested in welfare not warfare.

At the same time we have to take up the issue of removing all US bases and all US troops from Britain. This is the key to removing cruise and directly challenging the US domination of Europe.

We should also demand the removal of all US bases and troops from Europe — we don't need a central front in Germany or a standing army, British or American. They are all part of the nuclear alliance and its war-fighting strategies.

The sooner they go, the sooner we can have a peaceful future. As a speaker at conference said: war is a class issue and workers have to unite together to demand peace.



Cartoon: TUCND

# 'A leaders stands &



Photo: GM COOKSON

On Thursday at Labour Party conference Arthur Scargill, speaking at a meeting organised by Labour Briefing, replied to the court action against the NUM.

We print here the major part of his speech. The editing is by Socialist Action.

**Chairman, colleagues,**

I must confess that last night must have been a worrying time for some people. Listening to that worker Lord Denning giving forth on television when he said: 'It will 'ave to be the use of the law against these trade unionists.'

And of course we've got a whole series of unelected judges dispensing not justice but class law against our people who are involved in a struggle to maintain jobs, and to maintain the communities in which they live.

There's been a gauntlet thrown down. That gauntlet is being picked up. The miners' union has been told after seven months of official strike action that the strike is no longer legal or official. What utter nonsense!

In 1981 there was an unofficial strike of the miners' union and the president of the union was Joe Gormley. There was no action at that time, no suggestion that there should have been a ballot.

I understand from reports on the media that the High Court today has been hearing an action brought against the National Union of Mineworkers, and the NUM president, seeking the sequestration of the union's funds and seeking to commit the president of the NUM to Pentonville prison.

We're also advised by reports in the media that the case has been adjourned allegedly in order that the union and its president can reconsider the position. In order to get clarity that we were aware of the decision of the High Court I thought we'd made our position clear. But if there's any ambiguity or any doubt: on the part of the BBC or ITV, then in order to dispell it let's specifically state the union's position.

The national executive committee of the NUM meeting on Monday 1 October 1984 were told that a writ had been issued against the NUM. Following a full discussion the national executive committee unanimously agreed the following steps.

One, to fully endorse and support the views and comments expressed by the national president during the interview on Channel 4 news on Friday 28 September.

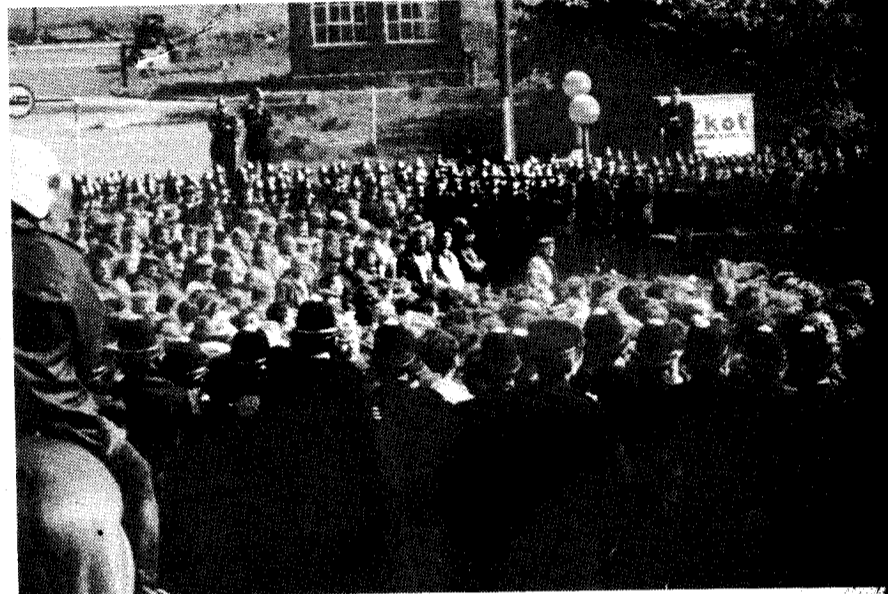
withdrawn, pits currently threatened with closure are kept open, and the Coal Board honours the Plan for Coal signed by the government, the National Coal Board and the trade unions. They must withdraw their insistence that pits should be closed on economic grounds, which is a clear violation of the Plan for Coal.

I'm not someone who wishes to go to Pentonville prison. I'm not someone who relishes the thought of being committed in that way. But I want to make it absolutely clear that if the choice facing me — and I would hope facing any other responsible trade union leader — is to be committed by a high court to Pentonville or any other jail for standing by this trade union or our class, or alternatively having to live with the imprisonment of one's mind for betraying one's class, then there is no choice as far as I'm concerned. I stand by my class.

There seems to be a blind spot on the part of the judiciary, the government and the Coal Board. The miners' union did not go out on strike on Friday, we've been on strike for seven months. We've suffered appalling hardship during the space of that time. We've come too far, we've suffered too much, for there to be any compromise.

**'It is more important to stand by one's class, and to stand by one's members, than to cave in and accept the decisions of an unelected judge, or the dictates of a government that can't even spell democracy.'**

On the basis of the NCB official figures of the 43,141 miners made redundant over the past two years, only 72 (only two per cent) have found alternative work. It's nonsense to suggest that miners would be in a position to



Police picket at Orgreave

have an alternative job, particularly with four and a half million people unemployed.

The figures show quite clearly that for one miner to be made redundant, with all the factors to be taken into consideration, such as the redundancy payments scheme, the loss of tax, the state benefits, the unemployment benefit for his son or daughter who cannot have a job, the total cost at the end of seven years is over £91,000. To keep that person employed, to keep that job available for his son or his daughter as well, would only cost £48,000.

It doesn't make economic sense, let alone social, political or moral sense, to create redundancy in this or any other industry.

The cost of the strike described by Neil Kinnock in his speech on Tuesday as approximately £2 billion, has been made to look infinitesimal according to the study by Andrew Glyn for the NUM. By September, irrespective of what Nigel Lawson has said, £3.5 billion has been the cost to the British

taxpayers of this damaging and costly dispute. There has been £2.3 billion or more in lost production. Fifty four million tons of coal have been lost in the space of this dispute.

The Coal Board claim they wanted to take only four million tons of capacity out of this industry. They wanted to bring supply in line with demand — the capitalists' maxim of the market concept.

Even if one were to accept this approach, rather than the social and sensible one of the NUM, even on that basis the current dispute with the Board, and the fact that they are now prolonging it — with the government aiding and abetting them — does not make sense.

They've got 14 times the capacity reduction that they themselves claim they required. They themselves suggested they wanted a total coal output by 1989 of 497 million tons. That programme would have included pit closure, a programme of about 70 pits and 70,000 jobs.

The Coal Board themselves now



# ship that & fights'

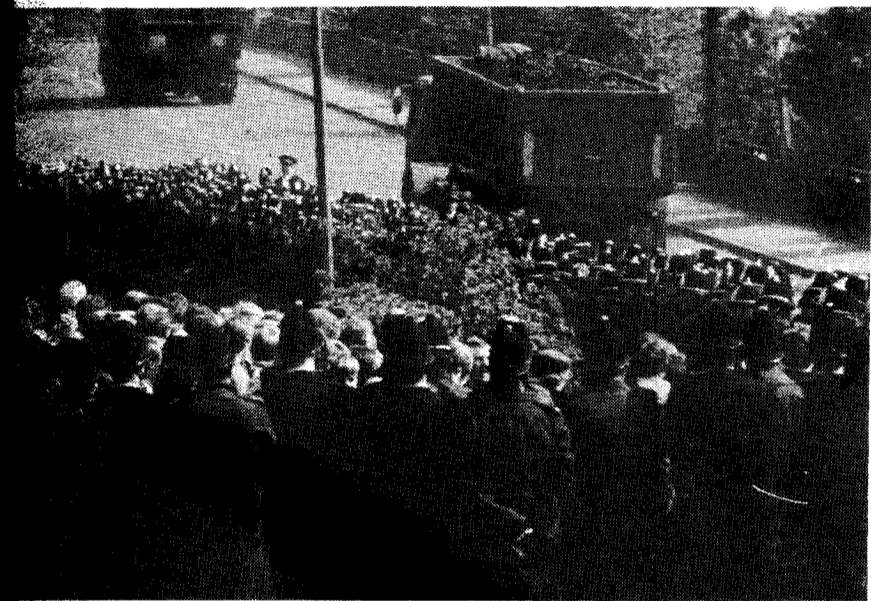


Photo: JOHN HARRIS (JFL)

concede that due to five million tons of lost production, the maximum coal output that they can achieve in the next five years, by 1989, is no longer 497 million tons. It is only 480 million tons. And that can only be achieved with not one single pit closure on any count.

**'Mr Scargill I was the owner,' says MacGregor, 'Your friend Castro, Fidel Castro, took them off me.'**

We are entitled to ask therefore why have the government and the NCB still determined to press ahead with their proposals announced in March of this year? I'll tell you why. It is not about closing a few pits, it goes to the very heart of the economic philosophy of this government.

You can either choose the balance sheet mentality of this government — of producing a political and economic solution that considers profits rather than people — or you can accept the social and sensible approach from the NUM and the labour and trade union movement that puts at the very centre of its argument the benefit of human beings rather than statistics in the balance sheet of the Coal Board or the balance sheet mentality of Ian MacGregor.

They can tell us there is insufficient money for investment, but then they should stop the cruise and Trident missiles programme.

This fellow MacGregor, he really takes the biscuit. I remember during the negotiations, one Saturday evening, Mick McGahey, Peter Heathfield and I thought we were on our way to settlement. We'd reached a point where we thought seriously that the Board were going to concede, and we adjourned for the night.

We began to drink a cup of tea in the Coal Board office. Mick McGahey says to MacGregor: 'I went to the Soviet Union in 1954 and the pits had been devastated, but development was their aim, and people were regarded as the most important thing. Today the industry has been developed in a most unbelievable way.'

MacGregor says: 'You know, Michael, I was there in 1956, and I agree with you. Those Russians have done a great job. Not as well as I would have liked, but pretty good, pretty good.'

Peter Heathfield then says: 'I'll tell

you what, I went to China. The Chinese have got coal where previously there were only paddy fields. Terrific. Marvellous.'

And MacGregor says: 'You know, Peter, I too have been to China. And those Chinese are doing better than those Russians.'

And I thought, I'm not going to be left out of this. 'Do you know the country I think's the best I've seen? Cuba. Do you know,' I said, 'I've visited the mines in Cuba, in the Oriente province, and to compare those mines today, under the socialist system, with the divisions and the problems they had under the private owners before the revolution was fantastic. Did you ever see them?'

There was then what's called a pregnant pause. And finally it wasn't 'Michael' or 'Peter'. 'Mr Scargill I was the owner,' says MacGregor. And he said: 'Your friend Castro, Fidel Castro, took them off me.'

McGahey says: 'That's bugged it.' And MacGregor changed his mind next day.

What kind of a head of the National Coal Board is it who has no concept of



Photo: GM COOKSON

the British labour and trade union movement? A man who, in the USA, was head of a mining company which was quite openly in association with the development of mines that employed non-union labour. I have no doubt that this will be the kind of policy and philosophy which he will attempt to pursue here in Britain today.

The miners' union today are fighting for their jobs. They're fighting for their communities. They're fighting for a way of life, for a culture.

Someone said to me 'do you believe the resolve of miners is beginning to weaken?' But there is one phenomenon over all others which in this dispute has made mineworkers absolutely determined to win. The involvement of women.

I went to a meeting in South Wales, and in the course of that meeting one woman got up and said: 'We want to make it clear no matter what anyone says it's no longer a question of whether the miners feel that this or that can be negotiated. You're not negotiating for the future of your pits, you're negotiating for the future of our livelihood, our communities. No compromise. You'll not resolve this until the Board withdraw their pit closure programme.'

I don't know what's going to happen next Wednesday. I do know that since the announcement of the writ being issued on Monday there has been the full meeting of the NUM executive committee. It declared that its intention is to continue to declare this strike official.

And the Yorkshire area NUM council have also unanimously agreed that the strike must continue to be declared official. They too are refusing to accept a decision of the High Court.

**'there is one phenomenon over all others which in this dispute has made mineworkers absolutely determined to win. The involvement of women.'**

This High Court refused to accept that the NUM should have time to prepare a defence against their application for an interim injunction. It was argued that as a matter of urgency an injunction should be granted because some miners wanted to work.

Urgency! After the NUM, in accordance with its rules and its constitution had been on strike for seven months, and been in a national overtime ban for 19 weeks prior to that! There can be no compromise as far as that basic principle is concerned!

Make no mistake this national executive of the NUM is not prepared to betray its members. Often in the past workers and trade union members have pointed to leaders and said: 'They sold us out. They betrayed us. They said one thing before they were elected and another thing once they got their nice job as a full-time trade union leader.'

When I campaigned for the job of national president of my union I made clear that if the members of the NUM wanted a president who was intent on becoming a lord, then don't vote for me. I said it was more important not to prostitute one's principles, or to com-



Photo: PAUL MATTSON

promise the policies of the national conference of my union than to have a seat in the House of Lords. I gave a pledge that throughout my trade union career I would do everything I could to take forward the aims and aspirations of the members of my union.

I suggest comrade chairman, that so far I have tried my very best to live up to my pledge prior to my election. I only wish that people in the movement would take on board the way of Jimmy Knapp.

We are facing a crunch. We are facing a government that is becoming increasingly fearful and angry. And the twin effects of anger and fear are showing themselves in the wild hysteria of their attacks upon our class and in their attacks upon this union.

It's no accident that thousands of police have been drafted in from all over to turn our villages into places where people can't enter without a passport. If people don't understand, they should go and have a look.

We've had public service buses turned back on the public highway because 10 miners pickets have been on board. We've had football teams turned back because they might have been pickets in disguise. We've had people arrested while they were travelling to court. Civil liberties and human rights are systematically being dismantled.

Those of us who do not take warning at what is taking place will do so at our peril. They've come today for the National Union of Mineworkers, and they'll come tomorrow for the rest of the movement.

We are going to resist with all the power we can muster. And if that means that we have to suffer, if I am sent to jail, that is something we will have to accept. We will accept the consequences of our actions because it is more important to stand by one's class, and to stand by one's members, than to cave in and accept the decisions either of an unelected judge, or the dictat of a government that can't even spell the word democracy.

Over the next period we're going to be involved in possibly the most major

confrontation that we have witnessed. We're now facing the full might of the judiciary. We've got so many writs we could paper two rooms the size of this one with them.

We've got the South Wales area that's had all their funds sequestered. We've got an action against the South Wales NUM, North Wales area, Durham area, Yorkshire area, Lancashire area. We've had actions pursued against the Scottish miners. And no doubt writs to come against all the other sections that are involved in this historic dispute.

There are two options available. We can either accept the imposition of the organised might of the state. Or we can stand firmly by the policies not merely of our union but the policies of the Trade Union Congress, and the policies of this party.

**'we too have the right to demand your support. Given that support we are invincible.'**

Let me remind you that the TUC are on record demanding that there should be no loss of jobs. This party is on record arguing against redundancies. The TUC is on record arguing against the anti-trade union legislation in all its forms. And so is our party.

Now is the time to turn those words into deeds.

I speak not for myself. I am not speaking for the executive of the miners' union. I believe that I'm speaking for the entire trade union and labour movement when I say that there is an obligation on each and every one of you to stand up and be counted.

Time and time again people have said we need leadership. If we had proper leadership we could win. Well, you've got leadership. Leadership that is prepared to stand and fight, whatever the consequences. Comrades, given that leadership, we too have the right to demand your support.

Given that support we are invincible.

# Nicaragua at Blackpool

THE RAPTUROUS welcome given to Sandinista leader, Carlos Nunez, was one of the high points of last week's Labour Party conference. It showed just how deep the potential for active solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution does run in the Labour Party. On the surface it even seemed that this was one issue which could unite all sections of the party.

Unfortunately, you only have to recall some party leaders' contributions to the defence debate — 'the great care needed not to upset our American friends' — to see how skin deep this consensus solidarity is. Huge contradictions are going to arise when the US government's intervention in Central America, and its need for allies, becomes more open and public.

For the time being, however, there is a more immediate danger. Whilst the Labour Party is still on paper quite solid in its support for the Central American revolutionaries — even if often it's not much more than words — a major move is already under way to prise the Socialist International away from its positions of support for Nicaragua.

Mario Soares, socialist prime minister of Portugal, has been parading the counter revolutionary contra-leader Eden Pastora around Portuguese TV. Spanish premier, Felipe Gonzalez, has been fraternising with similar ilk.

The governing French Socialist Party has also been backing off from the important stand it took in 1981 when it signed the Franco-Mexican declaration recognising the FDR in El Salvador.

The same week as our own Labour Party conference, the Socialist International held its biggest ever meeting, and the first outside Europe, in Rio de Janeiro. Central America was a major item on the

agenda.

## By Stuart Piper

Even before the meeting opened, Socialist International president and former Venezuelan premier, Carlos Anres Perez, announced to the press that whilst the Socialist International still supported the revolution in Nicaragua, 'we are very unhappy about the Nicaraguans' arrangements for the coming elections'. (See Carlos Nunez' remarks on this subject on this page.)

All this is a lot more than just a diplomatic game. One of the most crucial obstacles to increased US intervention in Central America is the reluctance of a wide range of European capitalists and social democratic governments and parties, to face the repercussions of imperialist escalation in Central America. This is a fear shared with most Latin American bourgeois states.

The backbone of this 'passive opposition' to the United States is unquestionably the stand taken



Fine words are not enough, a campaign of active solidarity by constituencies and affiliates is needed

by European social democracy, with all its influence on the Latin America 'Contradora' group of countries.

Carlos Nunez himself referred indirectly to the vital importance of continued support from the social democratic parties: 'If Europe does dissociate itself, the US government will be free to take the military option.'

The message is clear.

We in the Labour Party have a fundamental duty to ensure that our party's position on Central America is maintained and strengthened; and to ensure that this stand is carried into the Socialist International and fought for every inch of the way.

But for this to happen we cannot rely on conference motions and fine words from the Parliamentary Labour

Party. The only way is to develop a concentrated campaign of active solidarity in the constituencies and affiliated trade unions. The campaign must take up the practical tasks outlined in the conference resolution — sponsor Work Brigades to Nicaragua, collect financial support — and build up a head of pressure throughout the movement which cannot be ignored

by any section of the leadership.

This is the best way, and the only adequate

way, to respond to comrade Nunez' appeal. All of us must now work out the nuts and bolts of how to do that.

# The FSLN speaks

THE LABOUR PARTY conference was addressed by Carlos Nunez, president of the Nicaraguan Council of the State, and member of the nine-strong national directorate of the FSLN. The following are the key points of his speech.

Carlos Nunez speaking at Labour Party conference



COMRADES, the Central American region, forgotten and almost ignored by the world for decades has been dramatically transformed in the last few years into one of the regions of the world where an extremely dangerous and serious conflict is underway.

Everything to date confirms the fact that the revolutionary victory of the Nicaraguan people was considered by the current US administration to be an unacceptable situation with regard to its traditional hegemony and control over the region. We can only find in this attitude hatred for a people who won and are now defending their right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty.

Nicaragua does not accept this logic. Hidden in the Reagan administration's supposed arguments are the echoes of a decadent nation. If Nicaragua knelt before this imperial pressure, everything would be as it was before and the rejection, the indifference towards Latin America and to those peoples who are struggling for their liberation, would once again become the rule.

Everyone expects everything from us. Nicaragua would have no moral or political credibility if it defrauded the interests of other peoples, still less those of its own peoples.

The US government has tried in a sustained way to bring about the collapse of the national economy with the aim of improving the conditions

for its plans of military attack. How else but as an interventionist war can the foreign financing sources' boycott of our country be explained? How else but as an interventionist war can the externally imposed military situation which is forcing us to direct large quantities of human, economic and financial resources into national defence, affecting the plans for education, health, housing and the feeding of our people, be explained?

The total amount of damage to the productive sector from 1981 to June 1984 has risen to \$200 million. The loss of human life in the same period stands at 2311 dead, 1900 wounded and 3720 disappeared — which comes to 7931 Nicaraguans, the majority of whom are civilians.

Nicaragua in the midst of this interventionist aggression is ready to hold the first free elections in its history on 4 November, with the participation of seven political parties of different political ideologies and practices, which in itself demonstrates the pluralism and democracy we are constructing.

Once again we clash with the interventionist policies of the Reagan administration, which is trying to de-legitimise those elections, promoting the abstention of some political groups in order to make the international community believe that the elections are a farce.

The elections are part of the fulfillment of the commitments made by the FSLN to the people. It is the firm decision of the revolutionary government to convert the electoral process into a great civic education school, in an evaluation of the five years that have gone by.

The people will choose whether or not they are in agreement with the continuation of the revolutionary process by voting for the FSLN or, if they opt for change, by electing another party. The electoral process will be a true example of democracy at work on the continent.

## THE NORTH LONDON CENTRAL AMERICA GROUP'S WHAT NEXT FOR

EMERGENCY CONFERENCE:

- The air-war in El Salvador
- The elections in Nicaragua
- Guatemalan refugees
- Consequences of US election

13 OCTOBER 11-6  
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## CENTRAL AMERICA

Speakers: Maxine Molyneux, James Dunbarley, Jeremy Corbyn.  
FROM 6PM - LATE PEÑA WITH FOOD AND MUSIC

In Europe an attempt has been made to portray the political groups which make up the Democratic Coordinating Committee as the only opposition, to the point where the following conclusion has been reached: that the Sandinista government is not allowing the opposition any opportunity to participate. We invite the Socialist International to come to Nicaragua and to find out for themselves if these accusations are true.

We have affirmed in the recent meeting of the world's parliaments held in Geneva that Europe cannot dissociate itself from the Central American conflict. If Europe does dissociate itself, the US government will be free to take the military option.

We hope that Neil Kinnock, soon to visit Nicaragua as leader of the opposition, will in the near future visit Nicaragua again, this special and trusted friend of the people of Nicaragua, as prime minister of Great Britain.

The National Directorate of the Frente Sandinista and the people of Nicaragua thank you for the declarations of support for a political solution to the conflict of Central

America, and especially the conflict of Nicaragua. We thank you for the twinning of British towns with Nicaraguan towns. We thank you for the outstanding support shown by British trade unions towards the Sandinista revolution, and for the unambiguous condemnation expressed by the Labour Party for the policies of destabilisations of the revolutionary process.

Nicaragua is anxious for peace and respect for her independence as a sovereign country. We will not back down. We will continue to go forward.

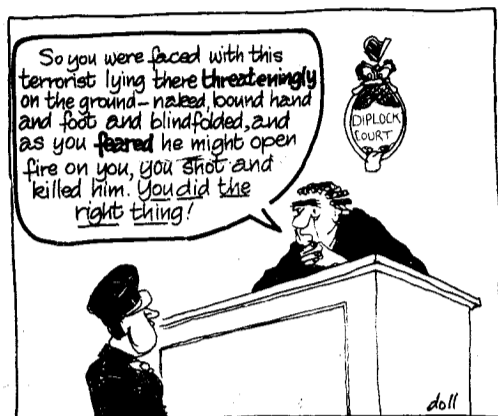
Today we are in a conference, tomorrow we may be on the battle field, but there is one thing you can be absolutely sure of: we will win, or we will die in the attempt to keep our national independence and sovereignty intact.

If Europe abandons us, it will never be able to say that we didn't fulfil our duty and our responsibility to defend every centimetre of our national territory. Therefore, let me leave you with the cry of Sandino himself: PATRIA LIBRE O MORIR, FREE COUNTRY OR DEATH!



## IRELAND UNFREE

### Labour's progress on Irish policy



FOR THE FIRST time since the 1920s, Labour conference defied an NEC recommendation and adopted its own Irish policy. Strengthening opposition to plastic bullets and the PTA, the party is now committed to campaigning against strip searching and against non-jury Diplock courts.

Progressively, the wielders of the block votes are coming to see that whatever the problem is in Northern Ireland, it is not one of law and order.

Plastic bullets, the security forces say, are needed to contain riots. The truth is they create riots; they are lethal weapons to intimidate the nationalist population off the streets.

The PTA, they say is to prevent bombings in Britain. It has not prevented bombings. It has been used to maintain surveillance of Irish people and prevented their participation in legitimate political activity.

Strip searching is supposedly needed to prevent arms being smuggled to prisoners. The facts are different. Remand prisoners who are strip searched each week as they enter and leave prison for court appearances have no contact with outsiders. Those receiving visitors are supervised the whole time.

Strip searching is more important as routine sexual harassment. It is used to try to break morale and lower resistance.

Diplock courts, the RUC and the NEC say, are necessary because of the threat of jury intimidation. But jury intimidation was never widespread.

The problem for the authorities is what they call 'that of securing a conviction'. No jury would convict on the uncorroborated evidence of a paid perjurer. A just legal system would not allow 'internment on remand' — detaining prisoners for periods of up to 18 months before trial.

The party is building up a policy in bits and pieces. At a snail's pace, it is progressively opposing more aspects of the unreformable Northern state.

The trade unions have still to be convinced of the fundamental solution — that of British withdrawal. But here too, progress is being made.

From a time when Ireland was undiscussable, this year's conference saw eight fringe meetings on Ireland — from the Fabians, leftward. It is from the 'fringe' that the impetus for change is coming.

Note the contrast between Alex Kitson's NEC reply this year, to that of two years ago. Then, policy was posed as a means to defeat the 'men of violence'. Tainted with anti-Irish racism, it scarcely broke the bi-partisan mould.

This year, from the platform, he was promising a new NEC report which would 'take us further', reiterating the leadership's stand on democratic rights, and saying basically that the problem was not whether we should reunify, but how to do it.

Amusingly, Martin Flannery MP was forced to invoke the authority of the 'legal expert' Gerry Adams MP for his endorsement of the NEC line. 'You can't have troops out now,' he said, 'because we have to disarm the RUC and UDR first.'

Slowly but surely the terrain of the debate is shifting. What will be in this new NEC report?

One thing is certain, if we who have worked to advance discussion in the party now stand aside, it will be useless. Only by openly campaigning around existing policy will it be maintained.

Only by pushing the dialogue with the republican, feminist and labour movements in Ireland still further can the discussion advance. By taking this campaigning approach and pushing the dialogue into the unions, we can help shape this NEC report. The withdrawal position can be won.

# Who's afraid of Tatyana Zaslavskaya?

THE DISAPPEARANCE from view of Soviet president Chernenko during the summer led to widespread speculation in the western press about a new 'leadership crisis' in the Soviet Union. OLIVER MACDONALD, editor of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, argues that far deeper forces are stirring in the USSR than doubt about the health of one corrupt bureaucrat.

If there was any doubt about the existence of a sharp struggle within the Soviet leadership then it was removed in September with the sudden fall from office of Marshall Ogarkov — the chief of the Soviet general staff. The crisis of leadership in the Kremlin, which began in the last 18 months of Brezhnev's rule, continues as deep as ever. And the longer that Messers Chernenko and prime minister Tikhonov cling tenuously to life and power, the most likely development is that this leadership crisis will assume a convulsive form.

The reason for this is plain enough. The top leaders may approach the succession problem mainly as a contest among cliques for personal power, but for the Soviet establishment as a whole the crisis is about something much more fundamental. Within the official intelligentsia there is a widespread awareness that the entire system of power as it evolved under Brezhnev cannot continue and must be substantially changed.

One of the first public symptoms of deep disenchantment within the party intelligentsia was the arrest in 1981 of a group of young, successful, and rising experts working in plum jobs in Moscow social science institutes. They were charged with forming an illegal, leftist political group. When people in such positions feel the necessity and have the energy to produce clandestine political publications, this is a clear signal both of the bankruptcy of the ruling elite and of the fact that some circles with access to that elite feel it cannot be changed from within.

And in the spring of this year another little incident cast a shaft of light deep into the intellectual circles of the Soviet establishment. A paper presented to a seminar involving economists from the Central Committee, the Academy of Sciences and Gosplan (the central planning agency) was published in the West. It was presented by Tatyana Zaslavskaya, a sociology professor and full member of the Academy of Sciences. And it calls for a sweeping change in the entire mechanism for controlling economic and social life in the USSR.

Zaslavskaya's paper is not a blue-print for reform. Instead it is an attack on some fundamental principles of Soviet orthodoxy and its central point is that economic revival in the USSR

## Blue-print

depends upon tapping the spontaneous creativity of Soviet workers while the present system — as a system — crushes and stifles this creativity. And her argument is carried through onto the social plane by her insistence that

the current system is buttressed by the interests of social groups which are antagonistic to the needs of industrial workers.

She argues that there is a profound contradiction between a system of production relations established in the 1930s under Stalin, involving a regimentation of a poverty-stricken and passive working class, and the great development of productive forces — and above all of the workers themselves — in the fifty years since the present system was set up.

## Anti-social

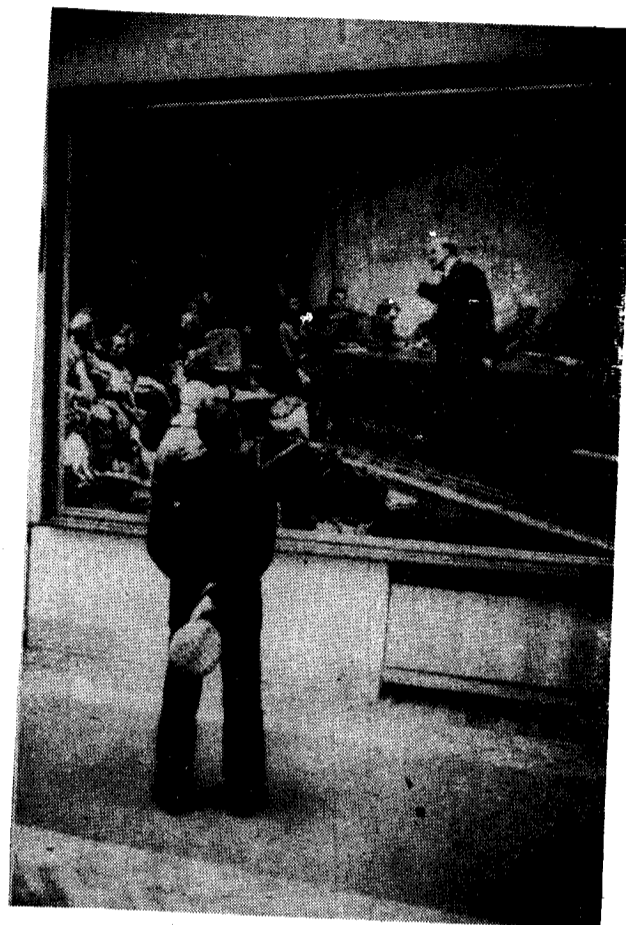
She points out that the present system seeks to raise output by ever stronger administrative controls over the workers and adds: 'Is it, indeed, that the more strictly controlled the workers' activity, the more successful its results? For a whole series of reasons, this question has to be answered in the negative.' She then shows how the workers respond to these controls by directing their creative impulses into 'anti-social modes of behaviour'.

Zaslavskaya then polemicalises directly with both the *Encyclopaedia of Political Economy* and with the *Dictionary of Philosophy* for their failure to link economic problems with social problems, and for 'openly affirming that under socialism there is no group interested in the preservation of outmoded production relations and therefore their perfection takes place without social conflict.'

As she puts it, with, in Soviet terms, breathtaking frankness, 'we must express doubt about this point of view', and puts her finger on the central problem of Soviet reformists, namely 'that the reorganisation of the existing system of production relations is given over to social groups that occupy a somewhat (!) elevated position within this system and accordingly are bound to it through personal interest.'

In other words, the forces that people like Zaslavskaya must turn to to reform the present system are the one who are making a packet out of the present system! Such a dilemma makes many Soviet reformists try to convince themselves that perhaps the whole system does not have to be changed, perhaps one can tinker with it piece-meal.

But Zaslavskaya herself rejects this in the following words: 'The fact is that production relations are an integral system, all the elements of which are interconnected. This shows itself in their ability to 'reject' those more effective but qualitatively different elements of economic relations which were experimentally grafted on to them.' This leads one to the conclusion that it is im-



possible to improve the mechanism of economic management arrived at many years ago, by gradually replacing the more outmoded of its elements with more effective ones', but she ends wistfully by saying that this raises a 'complex and deep matter'.

The only hope, she says, for overcoming what she calls 'the degeneration of the social mechanism of economic development' which 'at present... is 'tuned' not to stimulate but to thwart the population's useful economic activity' is through the working out of a new 'socialist strategy' for the Soviet Union.

This is indeed the problem. Zaslavskaya, naturally enough, hopes in her paper — addressed to some seventy establishment intellectuals — that this political problem can be turned into a technical task to be carried out collectively by the party intelligentsia. But she gained ample proof, both of the correctness of her diagnosis and of the naivete of her political approach by what happened after she read her paper. Her enemies leaked the document to the *Washington Post*, it was published by Radio Liberty and *Survey*, and she lost her teaching job.

## Selfish

If we wish a more precise characterisation of the social group that Zaslavskaya mentions as being hostile to reform, we can use the following definition: 'The concentration of enormous power in the hands of bureaucrats has most serious political implica-

tions, and leads namely to the acquisition by that special social stratum of a relative autonomy in relation to the ruling class as a whole, and to its being in certain circumstances even in conflict with it, thrusting upon it selfish interests of its own.' These are the words, not of Trotsky but of a prominent Soviet political scientist, V.G. Kalensky, in his book *The State as an Object of Sociological Analysis* (Moscow 1977).



Chernenko

Faced with this bureaucratic caste, the Zaslavskayas in the Soviet intelligentsia placed great hopes in Yuri Andropov, believing that perhaps he might be the enlightened strong man who would break the grip of the Brezhnevite bureaucracy from above and usher in a renaissance of Soviet life. It was very likely such a hope that prompted Zaslavskaya herself to 'come out' at the Novosibirsk seminar. If the Kremlin clique cannot soon produce another figure who can give hope to the Soviet Fabians like Zaslavskaya, then such people will have to look elsewhere — in search of a Soviet equivalent of Arthur Scargill.

The torpor, corruption, waste and petty brutalities of the Brezhnevite era cannot go on for ever.



# Defend local government

THE LABOUR PARTY conference in Blackpool last week endorsed a strategy of confrontation with the government over its proposals on local government.

By Valerie Coultas

The first resolutions passed. It called for a joint Labour Party/Trade Union conference to formulate strategy. The second resolution, from Liverpool Broadgreen and Walton CLPs, gave support to any council

which was forced to break the law as a result of Tory policies and also argued against massive rate rises. This resolution was passed against the advice of the NEC, which argued for remission. Two other resolutions called for national demonstrations, a lobby of Parliament, and non-cooperation with the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties.

The issue before Conference was what kind of

opposition the Labour Party would endorse. Derek Hatton, leader of Liverpool City Council, had the support of delegates when he pointed out that Liverpool had given Mrs Thatcher a bloody nose, by taking her on openly.

Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of NUPE, accused the Tories of double standards in campaigning for a ballot in the miners' strike while simultaneously abolishing local council elections. He argued that 'The question is not do we break the law? But what laws to we obey?'. He won the trade union vote on this issue.

Conference had no doubts about the need for head-on confrontation with the government and the Rates Act. Neil Kinnock and Shadow Environment Secretary John Cunningham were not in favour of this. Even after the debate, Cunningham was pointing out that this was 'not what Neil and I have been arguing all along.' It is clear that any council which breaks the law will not have support from this quarter, except to get them back within the law.

Activists must campaign all the harder to implement conference policy on this issue.

## Who supported black people in the Labour Party?

THE DEBATE on black sections was one of the sharpest at conference. This was not simply a debate about positive discrimination for black people but about recognising the right of blacks to have their own section within the party.

The British labour movement is not going to overcome its past racist prejudices easily — if the reaction against black sections at this conference is anything to go by. The *Militant* united with the EETPU to pass a resolution opposing any form of conscious or unconscious discrimination within the Labour Party by 4,108,000

votes to 2,019,000 votes. Only 500,000 votes were cast in favour of black sections.

Three trade unions did vote for black sections — the NUM, the ACTT and the Dyers and Bleachers. NUPE abstained because they had not consulted their working party.

In the NEC elections Diane Abbott won sup-

port from NUPE, ACTT, ASLEF, the Dyers and Bleachers, the Furnacemen, the Loomoverlookers and the National Union of Mineworkers.

Interestingly, even 36 London CLPs, including Richmond and Barnes and Putney CLPs, which have their own black sections, did not vote for Diane Abbott for the NEC. Hampstead and Dulwich Labour party submitted resolution on black sections and proceeded to elect delegates who opposed black sections.

10 CLPs voted for Keith Vaz, the black sections steering committee candidate for the NEC. They were Lewisham East, Birmingham Ladywood, Ealing / Southall, Hackney South and Shoreditch, Norwood, Richmond and Barnes, Guildford, Reigate, Surrey North West, Bristol East. This amounted to 12,000 votes.

Whatever the constitutional position of the Labour Party, black people are on the move and black sections are here to stay.

## Make the Act unworkable

IN THE PAST two issues of Socialist Action Ted Knight and Hilda Kean have debated tactics for the campaign of opposition to the Rates Act. BILL HAMILTON looks at the options.

The complete failure of the parliamentary leadership to fully back the cause of local government was personified by John Cunningham, Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment, in his speech at Labour Party conference. Cunningham advised local councils 'to hang on at all costs until a Labour government is returned at the next General Election'. That would mean three years of the Rate Act, at least, and existing provisions in the Act will allow the Government to force further cuts on every local authority.

This strategy is the reverse of the one we need. The main objective of labour councils and trade unions must be to confront the government and make the Act unworkable. Tactical questions must be considered within this framework.

By Bill Hamilton

Hilda Kean has reservations about the 'set no rates' position, and is right to point to the lack of clear commitment for mass action, in this position. This would lead to dependence on manoeuvres in local council chambers.

However, it is clear that the particular financial situation of Hackney has led councillors and local parties to consider deficit budgeting.

There is little chance of uniting the 17 rate-capped authorities on this line.

Ted Knight has argued that the refusal to set a 'Tory' rate can unite not only rate-capped councils but others faced with cuts in Rate Support Grant and government penalties. One problem here is that this can appear to be a fight around the councils' right to raise the rate — a policy which can be used to hit the local communities. Sliding over this problem is an attempt to unite those who want to fight the Tories and those who don't.

In reality, the emphasis must be placed on the budget-making process, and campaigning on a budget to meet the needs of the community. If this is not done, weaker local

authorities may break ranks and negotiate deals with Jenkin.

This campaign to defend local government will, after the miners' strike, be the single most important struggle with this Tory administration. Local Labour councils must take the lead in defending the working class from this attack. If Labour presents a united front on this issue, the Tories will find it impossible to carry through their plans.

### Reaction

Councils must state categorically that they will make no cuts in jobs or services, will refuse to recognise the Rate Act, and will campaign in the local government unions and the community for a budget based on this position. It will be necessary to develop a national strategy of solidarity action with any council which Jenkin tries to pick off.

Tactics must remain flexible, but one thing must be paramount. Never again must working class communities be forced to bear the burden of Labour Council's refusal to face up to Tory attacks. And there is no solution which remains within the law.

### The councils rate-capped for 1985-86

On 24 July Patrick Jenkin, secretary of state for the environment, announced the list of councils selected for rate-capping in 1985. They are:

**Greater London Council**  
**Inner London Education Authority**  
**London Boroughs:**  
Brent  
Camden  
Greenwich  
Hackney  
Haringey  
Islington  
Lambeth  
Lewisham  
Southwark

**Metropolitan counties**  
Merseyside  
South Yorkshire  
**Metropolitan district:**  
Sheffield

**Non-Metropolitan districts:**  
Basildon (Essex)  
Leicester (Leicestershire)  
Portsmouth (Hampshire)  
Thamesdown (Wiltshire)

This list was arrived at by picking out councils which in 1984-85 are budgeting to spend more than 20% above GRE and more than 4% above their targets.

The councils listed have been given expenditure levels for 1985-1986. Fifteen of the eighteen are allowed to spend no more in cash terms than the amount provided for in their 1984-85 budgets: the Greater London Council, Inner London Education Authority, and Greenwich are deemed to be worse offenders, and have been set a level requiring a cut of 1.5% in cash terms below their 1984-85 budget.

## Briefing at conference

GRAHAM BASH, Editor of *Labour Briefing* gave us his view of *Briefing's* intervention and the results of conference.

'Briefing managed to organise with a broad alliance of hard-left groupings and we clearly managed to have a positive effect throughout the conference with the daily bulletins and above all with the organisation of the meeting on Thursday night in defence of

the NUM.

'I think conference was contradictory. It was very positive because it was dominated by the class struggle outside conference and also showed in its decisions that the leadership could not get away with ignoring the will of the delegates, both from the CLPs and the trade unions.

'But conference avoided the critical question of how it was going to respond to the

High Court writ challenge to the NUM. The retreat of the TGWU leadership in particular on this issue was an utter disgrace.'

*Labour Briefing* hopes to hold a one day conference jointly with Target Labour Government in late January in Birmingham.

Next Labour Briefing Editorial Board meets Sunday 21 October at 12 noon, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Next *London Labour Briefing* Editorial Board Monday 22 October, County Hall, 6.30pm.

# Sisterhood is powerful!

YOU MAY have been surprised, watching the women's debate at conference, to see the second speaker called was a man. Indeed some delegates on the floor of conference booed and hissed.

But the NUM delegate spoke in favour of the composites arguing for women's greater participation in the decision-making process.

The women who prepared the debate first met at the composite meeting which is attended by all delegates to thrash out the final wording of resolutions and to decide who will move and second.

By Eve Oldham, women's delegate, Greenwich CLP

As new delegates most of us were unprepared for this procedure, unlike *Militant* supporters who came with a prepared composite.

The Women's Action Committee had done a good job in circulating the resolutions passed by women's conference but there was no organisation for the compositing meetings. From then on we had to do it ourselves.

The women decided to meet to prepare our speeches, but it quickly became clear that there were many other tasks to fulfill. We had to lobby delegates, get out a leaflet explaining our case, and even lobby the standing orders committee.

When it looked like the debate would be cut and not all the composites taken, we argued with standing orders that composite 56 should be the one to go. This was the resolution put in by the *Militant* supporters and didn't represent women's conference policy. On this issue we won our position.

Throughout conference we met daily, sometimes twice daily, and from no organisation at all, we developed an effi-

cient and effective lobby.

The NEC recommended opposing two of our composites, and reference back of the other two. We decided to have a card vote on all the composites as we needed to establish exactly where support was coming from.

But the card vote did not at all reflect the support that actually existed on the floor of conference. Many union delegates personally supported us but were bound by decisions taken at union conferences.



Mandy Moore

The AUEW delegation were 'passing the pad' to see the vote within the delegation as they had no conference policy. 12 members of the delegation were in favour of WAC's positions. Even though we lost on the card vote, the principles were not lost. We probably had a majority on the floor of conference itself.

Next year WAC will have to be much more well-organised right from the beginning. WAC did get involved in helping us from mid-week, but it was important for the women delegates to go through the experience of organising ourselves. We learned in practice that sisterhood is powerful.

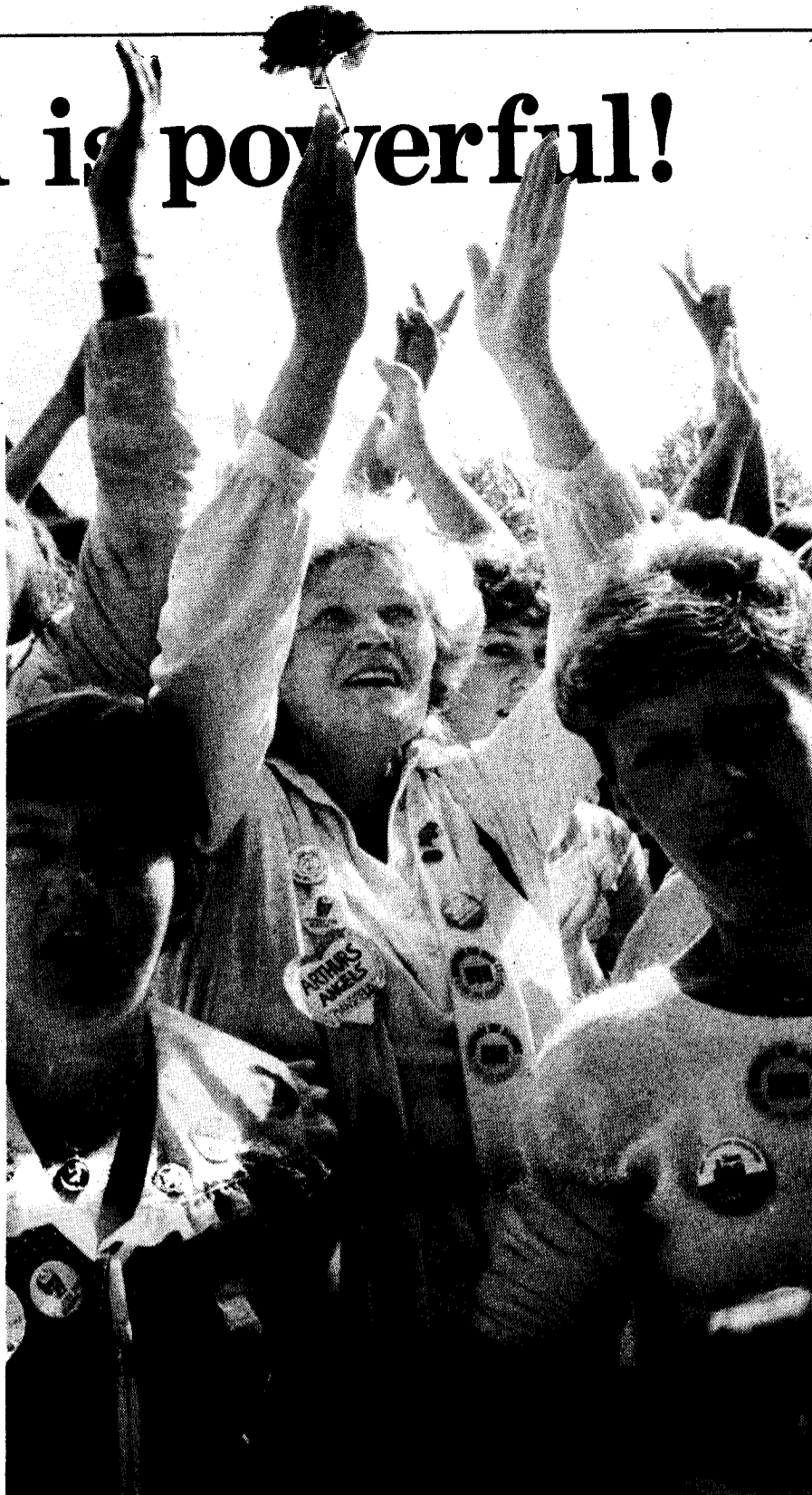


Photo: JOHN SMITH (IFL)

Photo: PAUL MATTON

## NUM says: 'Ignore women at your peril'

IN THE debate on women the NUM speaker got some of the loudest applause — including from feminists. We reproduce sections of his speech.

'DON'T cheer too loud lads, you might be making a mistake ... John Burroughs, National Union of Mineworkers, moving support for composites 58, 59 and resolution 12.

'I'm not doing this to experience the sensation of being the 'token male'. But seriously to support our female comrades in this movement, their struggle for equality in society, and for positive action to extend their activity in the party.

'That support is not because of our indebtedness to our wives, mothers, sisters and daughters for their shoulder to shoulder struggle with our members while we are on strike, valuable as that obviously is. To assume that our struggle alone has awakened our women to political consciousness is only perpetrating the sort of patronising attitude that we males have used throughout history.

'I want to give an example in relation to the comment of David Bassett the other day: "Don't let them provoke us." I want to do this for two reasons. One, to show that people who haven't experienced directly the picket line violence that the male and female members of my union experience shouldn't give advice. Two, to demonstrate the chauvinistic attitude of the British police force.

'A picket line in Derbyshire, jointly organised by male and female members, wives and mothers. A senior police officer, speaking in a loud voice so that everyone could hear, said: "You don't actually breed off of them cows, do you?"

'That's the sort of reason why my members are provoked into the sort of actions that sometimes you might see on television.

'The miners do not support this section because of the miners' strike. In fact the women's action group in Chesterfield was not formed directly as a result of this strike, but out of the by-election that successfully returned Tony Benn to Parliament.

'They campaigned on the shopping precincts, on the knocker and elsewhere, so effectively that they soon became labelled the 'A' team. That 'A' team campaigned on issues such as education, unemployment and trade union legislation. Their successes then are reflected in the ever increasing numbers of women coming into our membership in Chesterfield at the present time.

'Conference, it's time to read these resolutions. For the males to forget their natural bias, read the resolutions, act upon them, and support our sisters — 50 per cent of the population. 'Ignore them at your peril!'

## Miners support lesbian/gay rights

AFTER 83 years of silence and neglect the Labour Party conference decided against debating lesbian/gay rights, albeit by a narrow majority. Heterosexuality still rules but cracks are beginning to show.

By Frank Elvy

The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights (LCGR) and Labour Movement Lesbians organised one of the biggest fringe meetings at conference with 250 people in attendance. They were to experience some surprising events.

The NUM executive sent a statement which read, 'Support civil liberties and the struggle of lesbian and gay people. We welcome the links forged in South Wales and other areas. Our struggle is yours. Victory to the miners.'

Gerald Kaufmann, shadow Home Secretary, spoke out in favour of

'homosexual rights', and deplored the recent state attacks against the lesbian/gay community.

Chris Smith, MP for Islington South 'came out'. Thus we have our first openly gay MP in Parliament. Will others follow?

Finally the chairperson of Rugby Labour group, Jeff Coupe, came to Blackpool specifically to speak at our fringe meeting in order to condemn his council's recent decision to ban gays from employment (lesbians in their view don't exist!)

These events were both exciting and important but don't compensate for the lack of a debate in the conference itself. We, and the black section, are intending to organise an 'alliance of the dispossessed', hopefully with WAC, to campaign in the CLPs and trade unions 'for a share of the power'. Together we constitute the majority of the working class.

White male heterosexuals beware! Or still better support us!



Photo: GM COOKSON

## Greenham eviction stepped up

NOW THAT the mass action in September is over women at Greenham are expecting a major assault on the camps at Main and Orange gates.

By Ilona Aronovsky

Building up to this the whole of the north side and the common land around the base was evicted on Saturday. Women's tents and possessions were removed.

There has been a virtual silence in the press and on the television about the mass actions at Greenham, nor is there any mention of the evictions.

London Region CND has unanimously passed an emergency resolution to go to CND council this weekend, calling on CND to maximise publicity about the repression of the camp and the police violence towards the women. It calls on CND to do all it can to support the women.

So far CND has distanced itself from any significant support. The

press office when informed of recent police violence, and the trampling of Dana Schuerholz by a police horse, refused to use its channels to inform the media.

It is hoped that Joan Ruddock will raise these issues, and the silence on the September mass action, at the joint public meeting with the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom on 'CND — What the papers don't say'. The meeting is in London this Friday.

Please send information about incidents of police violence at Greenham to London Region CND and to the GLC Police Committee Support Unit.

The current attacks on the camp make a national meeting of Greenham groups more urgent. In this light the decision by the Nottingham Women's Peace group to arrange a national conference of women's peace groups is particularly welcome.

All ideas for the conference should be sent to 30 Colville St, Nottingham, or phone 0602 473145/625363 for more details.

# WORK FOR PEACE



BEGIN AT BARROW

SATURDAY · OCTOBER 20

CND NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

BARROW-IN-FURNESS · CUMBRIA

Assemble Trident Dock 1pm · Ra. 7.30

# STOP TRIDENT

# Socialist ACTION

# 37 trade unionists jailed



Bill Albertina, chairperson of the Cammel Lairds occupation committee, speaking at a miners' rally earlier this year.

AT THE BEGINNING of last week, quietly and without fuss, 37 GMBATU members were sent to jail for a month for contempt of court. The Cammel Lairds workers had been in occupation at their Birkenhead shipyards for 14 weeks, in an attempt to stop the yard's closure and the subsequent loss of over 800 more jobs.

Their dispute is official. And perhaps the most disgusting aspect of the case is that the Basnett leadership has taken no action in support of its jailed members. Furthermore, the GMBATU delegation to last week's Labour Party conference refused to meet a three-person delegation from Lairds or to support a resolution to party conference condemning the jailings and supporting the occupation.

This Monday a mass picket of over 500 people was mounted at the Lairds yard. It failed to stop white collar and other workers entering. But the fight will continue. The whole labour movement must mobilise in support of the 37 and their just fight for jobs. JOHN NOLAN of the Cammel Lairds Occupation Support Group reports.

'WE'RE criminals, we expect to be here but you shouldn't be in prisons at all. You're workers fighting for your jobs.' This was what other prisoners said to the 37 Cammel Lairds workers in Liverpool's Walton jail last week.

So strong was the feeling against jailing the workers, that even a special meeting of Walton Prison Officers' Association voted by a majority of only two that the Lairds workers should be inside at all.

When even criminals echoed the support of the whole Merseyside labour movement, it was surprising that the workers' own union leadership and their local MP Frank Field were reluctant to back the Lairds workers, jailed for

refusing to leave an unfinished destroyer and — finally — an oil rig in Cammel Lairds Birkenhead yard.

They had occupied the yard in an attempt to prevent all Birkenhead's shipbuilding workers being sacked, and the yard being closed and privatised.

A judge has sent them to jail for a month for contempt of a bosses' High Court order to leave the rig and join the dole queue.

A massive police task force told them: either get off the rig or face long prison sentences for resisting the police attack.

So the workers were forced to end the occupation.

Despite the overwhelming support of the local labour movement — including Wirral and Liverpool Trades Councils and Birkenhead and Liverpool Labour Parties — the GMBATU leadership have failed to rally full support

for their Cammel Laird members.

The GMBATU is the biggest union in the industry, with getting on for a million members nationally. Although 37 of their members have been jailed for taking part in an official dispute, their support has been minimal.

At last week's Labour Party conference, the Merseyside delegation had to fight tooth and nail against the Basnett leadership to get conference to adopt a resolution in support of the jailed workers.

Birkenhead MP Frank ('Rainbow Circle') Field has played a most disgraceful role. At the September general committee of the constituency party every delegate voted to give unconditional support to the occupation — except Mr Field, who abstained and refused to join the mass picket at the

yard. At conference, he was conspicuous by his absence when Liverpool Labour Party leader Tony Mulhearn, MP Eddie Loyden, the NUM, SOGAT, the POEU, and many others got through a resolution condemning the jail sentences and supporting the Lairds workers.

Lol Duffy is chairperson of Wirral District Labour Party. He, and his fellow Lairds 'in-mates' have sent a message to the scabs who want to cross the picket line. It ought to cause Frank Field and David Basnett to hang their heads in shame.

● *Picketing will continue. A major picket is planned for every Monday. Offers of help and messages of support to: Cammel Lairds Occupation Support Group, c/o Wirral Trades Council, Argyle St, Birkenhead.*

Of the original 40 Cammel Laird workers occupying the Birkenhead yard, only three are not in Walton jail. At Labour Party conference last week they told TIM RIGBY:

At 4.10 on Tuesday, police boarded the gangways of the rig and issued an ultimatum: if the occupiers wanted violence they could have it, or they could come off peacefully. After a meeting they decide to come off and were taken to Birkenhead police station, and later to Walton prison.

They are only allowed out of their cells for two hours and day, and can have only one visit for the month while they're in prison. The food is appalling.

We are in the process of contacting other shipyards and asking for local support. We plan a major picket this Monday and subsequent Mondays, and will maintain a picket at the yard every day. The dispute is official but so far AEUW-TASS workers continue to work at the yard.

'We have been jailed for fighting for our jobs and against anti-trade union laws. Any staff members who enter the yard to work during the dispute is as responsible for jailing us as the prison wardens who lock us in our cells and the police who took us from the yard.'

'We appeal to all staff not to cross the picket line, to turn back and to join us in our struggle to save the yard.'

'The courts, the police, the Lairds management will not prevent us fighting for our jobs, the jobs of our children, and the future of our community.'

'Our fight is your fight, our victory is a victory for the whole yard.'

'Don't leave us in Walton. Support the occupation — save the yard — join the picket.'

## Support the paper Robert Maxwell loves to hate!

SOCIALIST ACTION made a big impact last week at Labour Party conference — even the *Daily Mirror* felt it necessary to mention us in an editorial. They knew what side we were on and who we supported.

Sales of the paper went quite well particularly in the second part of the week. The big success though was the pamphlet on black sections, the first part of our winter schedule of fund raising. Over £50 was collected by the middle of the week and there's more to come.

Remember all the money goes to the fund drive.

It's a pity that Robert Maxwell's concern doesn't extend as far as supporting the left press rather than

destroying it: he must spend more on cigars than we get in a week from donations!

Preparations for the move to the new building are well underway, now that we've seen one which suits our needs.

And our schedule of fund-raising events is well underway. The next one, later this month, is the Miner's International Solidarity Meeting. It looks like being a big success.

Preparations are also underway for an Xmas party — and while we're on the subject: when you're thinking about presents, think about giving us one too!

Southampton readers have come up with a small donation again. They're becoming our most consistent contributors, and their target will soon be

reached. Thanks also to Liverpool readers for £50 towards their target; and to Ealing for £40 as the opening contribution towards theirs.

We want to see the rest of our readers meeting their targets in the next couple of months. Get the money in now, support the fund drive.

## Miners' International Solidarity Meeting

organised by Socialist Action  
Saturday 20 October — 10.30 to 5.30

Bold Miners' Welfare Club  
Fleet Lane, Parr, St Helens, Lancs

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