

A Socialist ACTION



MINERS A FIGHT TO THE FINISH

The breakdown of the ACAS talks has confirmed what has been clear since the miners' strike started in March. That there is no way the Thatcher government can be seen to back down, or even compromise, with the NUM.

Having committed itself to the most brutal strike since 1926 the Tories *must* win or the backbone of the Thatcher government will be broken.

And if that was true seven months ago it is even truer today. If the Thatcher government is defeated by the NUM after a confrontation on this scale, it is a government without credibility or future.

Exactly for this reason this government is never more dangerous than when cornered. For today, more clearly than ever, the government is *losing* the strike.

There are two weapons to hand either of which the labour movement can use to win the dispute beyond question. The first, which would win the strike in only a few weeks, is for NACODS to come out on strike in line with their ballot decision — a move which, as we go to press, the NACODS national executive is delaying. The second is for the TUC guidelines on the power stations to be implemented.

It is exactly for the reason that it now feels so threatened that the government, through the courts, is

going all out to try to break the strike. The £200,000 fine on the NUM is just a foretaste of the legal attacks which, if the High Court is successful, will be directed against unions taking solidarity with the miners.

The power unions, the rail unions and the seafarers are all in line for a legal attack. If it can break the solidarity with the NUM then the government can still win. Sequestering the funds of the NUM under the High Court order on 29 October would be the decisive step in that attack.

This is why stepping up the action by the labour movement in support of the NUM is a vital step to victory. The TUC statement on Monday night, blaming the National Coal Board for the breakdown of the talks, is a step forward. But it is actions, not words, that are crucial. The entire movement now has to be mobilised to defend the NUM in what has now become a fight to the finish.

This means fighting for:

- An all out strike by NACODS.
- Full implementation of TUC Congress decisions on handling coal — in particular at the power stations.
- A national Labour Party/TUC demonstration in support of the miners.
- A national solidarity conference called by the NUM.
- An emergency meeting of the TUC General Council to decide on general strike action if the funds of the NUM are sequestered on 29 October.

PREPARE A GENERAL STRIKE!

Socialist ACTION

It is a moral question

The deaths and injuries resulting from the bomb at the Grand Hotel in Brighton will provoke no tears in the Catholic ghettos of the North of Ireland, nor in the mining communities of this country. Nor should they!

The Tory cabinet, whose core came so close to being wiped out, is an organisation of mass murderers in the most literal sense. They are the people who cold bloodedly condemned hundreds of Argentinian sailors to death when they torpedoed the Belgrano. Their policies on health, safety, old age pensions and international policy kill more people in a month than have been killed in the entire fifteen years since the troops went into the North of Ireland.

The Tory Cabinet are the people — and they come from a long line — who every day organise the military occupation of the North of Ireland and the killing and repression that flows from it.

If someone wants to weep for victims of violence we can give them a very much better list to start with than those who died at Brighton — any pensioner dying from the effects of Thatcherism would do for a start. It is pure hypocrisy of the press that they present these cynical organisers of violence as 'martyrs'.

Needless to say this same Fleet Street press, and the government, have moved rapidly to exploit the Brighton bomb in their war against not only the Republican people of the North but also against the British miners. In this they are greatly helped by Neil Kinnock and the right wing of the labour movement. Kinnock's handwringing about 'all violence' simply allows Thatcher to pass herself off as a defender of democracy. He helps the government pass over the violence which it exercises daily in the North.

And those who most rapidly ran to condemn 'terrorism' are those in the British Labour movement who most readily support violence themselves. Gavin Laird had this to say on the bombing at the AUEW conference at Brighton 'Even although we disagree on economic policy you are assured of the support of this union for any actions needed to catch the perpetrators of this foul outrage.' Laird's own position on Ireland at the Labour Party conference was to uphold the Diplock non-jury courts and the use of plastic bullets — all of course in the name of non-violence!

While the leadership of the labour movement takes the positions of Kinnock and Laird Ireland will continue to be an achilles heel of the British labour movement. Our moral sympathy is one hundred per cent with the Republican population of the North of Ireland and not with the Tory Cabinet who received just a minute proportion of their own medicine.

But in addition to the moral question there is also a straightforward political issue. On that the Brighton bomb was a big mistake — and a retreat from Sinn Fein's developing policy of waging a mass campaign for British withdrawal from Ireland.

It needs to be said honestly also that there are illusions in Sinn Fein if the statement attributed to Danny Morrison in the *Observer* that, 'if the IRA had wiped out the Cabinet that would accelerate moves towards withdrawal,' is true.

In the North of Ireland it is undoubtedly true that the armed struggle has mass support because the majority of the nationalist population see the British government and its army as an illegitimate occupation force.

In Britain these conditions do not exist. As a result the political effect of actions like the Brighton bombing is to allow the true criminals to portray themselves as the victims of 'terrorism' and 'attacks on democracy'.

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Blockade of Barnsley NUM headquarters following MacGregor's first writ

TUC must prepare for action

THE BREAKDOWN of the latest round of talks between the NUM and the NCB, virtually eliminates the possibility of a compromise solution to the miners strike. The government has decided on a fight to the finish. The battle now facing the labour movement — not just the NUM — is twofold: to bring the power cuts into play as rapidly as possible, and to defeat the High Court attack on the NUM.

By Pat Hickey

At the ACAS talks the NCB made important retreats from the position they had adopted at the start of the dispute eight months ago. Then, MacGregor was demanding NUM acceptance of 'management's right to manage' in whatever way it saw fit. MacGregor's demand was for a blank cheque from the NUM which would allow the NCB to get rid of 70,000 jobs and 70 pits.

This the NUM has steadfastly refused to accept.

MacGregor's withdrawal of this demand is a considerable step forward for the union. It means that the NCB has been forced to abandon MacGregor's plan for the rapid, wholesale restructuring of the coal industry. The sting in the tail, however, was the Board's attempts to secure agreement around piecemeal, and slightly longer term approach to the same end.

MacGregor's com-

plaints about the union's unwillingness to accept a compromise are intended to conceal these facts. His statement that the 'sad thing is that, despite our efforts to reach a compromise, nobody else seemed to be interested. It is like running up against a brick wall', is a real tribute to the principled stand of the NUM Executive.

The Board's insistence that market forces would continue to be the operating criterion for the industry was the introduction of 'economic' under another name. The 'independent' review body, even without powers of binding arbitration, was intended to achieve the MacGregor plan by a step by step approach. This piecemeal approach cost 20,000 jobs in the two years before MacGregor.

Struggle

If the NUM were to have returned on this basis it would be extremely vulnerable. The Board would be in a position to press for closures, while the union would be exhausted and have great difficulty in responding.

It would be like winning the game, and losing the prizes. For the facts are that the NUM is winning. This is the 'brick wall' that MacGregor ran up against in the talks.

In the power stations the TGWU and the GMBATU are delivering support and it is clear that power cuts are on the way. Even if the Tories can move some of the 22 million tonnes of pithead stocks by road, it will be

no use to them at the power stations, given the solidarity action being taken there.

A further problem for the NCB is the ballot decision of the pit supervisors union NACODS. The failure to reach agreement on the review procedure puts NACODS under new pressure to deliver on its pledge of strike action.

With 82 per cent for a strike in the ballot, NACODS can stop the production of coal in Nottinghamshire and other areas. This would eliminate the 700,000 tonnes of coal currently being produced. NACODS has a clear interest in fighting alongside the NUM against the closure plans.

But the Tories are not going to roll over and die. The battle is running against them, but they will fight all the more desparately for that.

The High Court action against the NUM is the next weapon they will use. If they succeed in sequestering NUM funds without meeting a response from the labour movement, they will quickly consider moving against other unions who are supporting the miners.

The key question for the Tories now is breaking the solidarity actions. The attack on the NUM is not a side-show. The labour movement must meet the challenge.

Victory

From the beginning, the government has relied on keeping the miners isolated from the rest of the movement. The lessons of the NGA



Young pickets support the strike

dispute were very much in their minds.

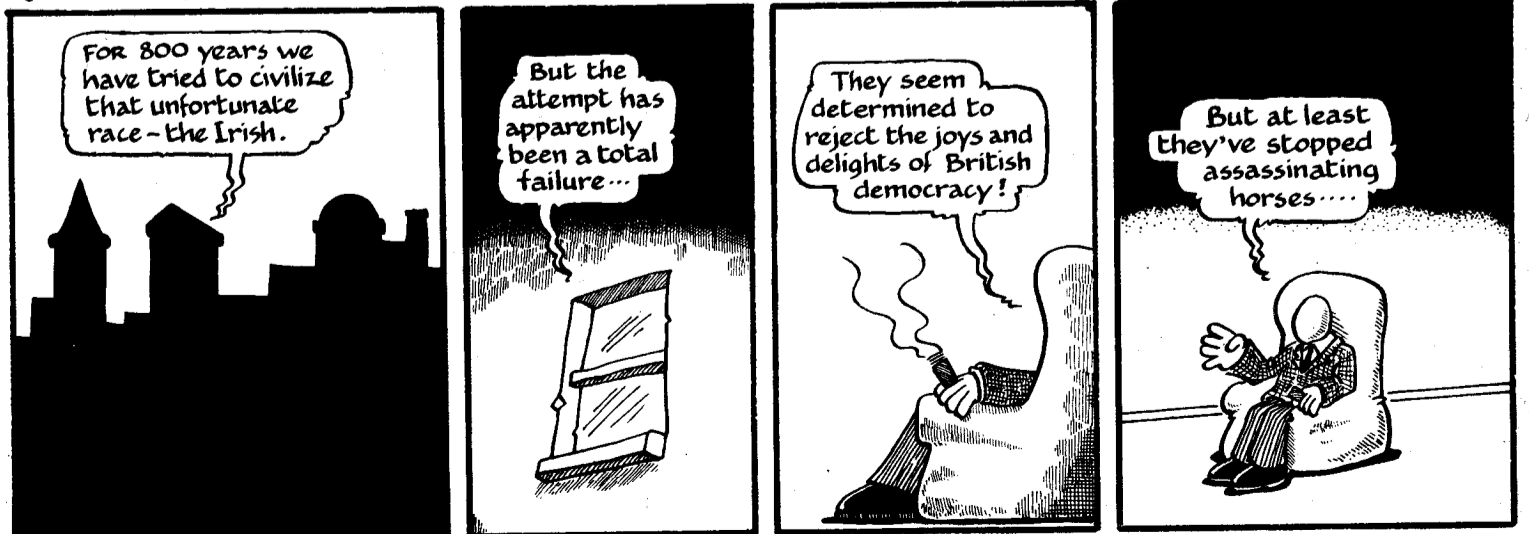
The Tory strategy of breaking solidarity action without legal moves has failed. The decisions at the TUC, and at Labour Party Conference, have seen to that. But the government still hope that the TUC will back off in the face of a major legal attack.

A fight must be waged to force the TUC to defend the NUM, and to prepare for general strike

to defeat the courts. The movement must also swing behind the task of building and reinforcing the solidarity with the miners. The blockade on the movement of coal needs to be strengthened, as does the action in the power stations.

Finally to get political support for the miners there is the need to build a Labour Party/TUC demonstration in London to build solidarity.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



#73 10/84
CORMAC

Tories before that bomb

BEFORE THE bomb went off last week at Brighton clear signs of nervousness were showing up in the British political establishment.

The media headlines were grabbed by the statements by the Bishop of Durham and the Archbishop of Canterbury. But suitably coded messages were also being put out by Peter Walker and other sections of the Tory Party. JOHN ROSS looks at why the ruling class 'wets' decided to speak out.

Two fears have always haunted British capitalism's support for the Thatcher government. The first and by far the most serious, is that the government's policies would lead to a major breakdown in public order.

When unemployment began to soar after 1979 Heath made the accusation against Thatcher that her policies would lead to workers occupying their factories to save jobs.

Undoubtedly the worst moment in the entire life of the government was in 1981 when the riots shook Britain's cities — rarely has a government looked so much in a panic as when Whitelaw appeared on the television in the middle of the Brixton riot.

The signs of violent and growing hostility to the police, and the clashes with them, in the miners' strike has genuinely worried members of the political establishment. Looked at from a long term point of view there is concern whether it is worth shutting quite so many pits if it would genuinely lead to increasing opposition by major sections of the working class to the law, the police, and all the other key institutions of the British state. There is also concern that prolonged mass unemployment would lead to mass disaffection from conventional Parliamentary politics.

This political concern regarding Thatcher's policies links up with an

economic critique however.

The five years of the Thatcher government have been a very good time indeed for certain specific groups within the ruling class — in particular for the most powerful groups of British capitalism.

British banking and finance has undergone a huge boom. The overseas earnings of British banks alone increased ninefold, from £224 million to £1,842 million, in the five years from 1979 to 1983.

A huge outflow of capital from the country has also taken place — with the overseas assets of the British private sector tripling between 1979 and 1983 from £56,000 million to £153,000 million.

Other specific sectors, such as the producers of North Sea gas and British farmers, have also benefited greatly from the Thatcher years. Taken together all these groups make up the most powerful bloc with British capital.

But in order to keep the entire capitalist class happy Thatcher had to produce economic growth within Britain itself. Those firms in sectors such as manufacturing, with their production base primarily in Britain, can for a certain period improve their profitability simply by cut-backs and redundancies. But over a longer term they need to increase output as well.

It is here that the Thatcher government is demonstrably failing to deliver the goods. The



Photo: GM COOKSON

worst received speech of the entire Tory Party conference was that of Chancellor of the Exchequer Lawson — who failed to gain even the most ritual of customary standing ovations.

British manufacturing output is now completely stagnant — even leaving out of account the effects of the miners' strike. Economic growth last year

Output

was three per cent, this year is scheduled for two per cent, and is projected, without confidence, to increase to three per cent again next year. But all this is scarcely enough to make up for the huge fall in output that occurred between 1979 and 1981.

Overall the rate of economic growth under

the Thatcher government has been less than one per cent a year — the lowest recorded economic growth, outside war and its effects, in the 20th century. Any idea that Thatcher's policies could, by themselves, get the economy moving again are disappearing.

What is therefore being increasingly floated in ruling class circles are elements of short term alternative economic policies to Thatcher's. These would naturally maintain in place all the measures of 'privatisation', laws against the unions and so on passed by Thatcher, and depend upon a defeat of the miners, but would involve some substantial public investment.

CBI

The CBI has for some time been advocating substantial 'infrastructural investment' — measures such as the electrification of the railways, increased public construction etc. David Owen has now launched what he terms a National Jobs Plan — whose stated objective is to create a million new jobs but whose real emphasis is £1,000 million of 'industrial infrastructural improvements' in construction and road programmes. Robert Maxwell's *Daily Mirror* has launched a publicity campaign for similar measures.

It was to these types of policy that Tory 'wet' Peter Walker referred in his much publicised speech to the Tory Reform Group 'criticising' Thatcher's attacks on all forms of public expenditure.

There is however a proviso to all these measures. This is that British employers are now becoming increasingly worried by the increase in working



Prior, Pym, Disraeli and puppets.



class struggle that is occurring with even a small economic recovery taking place. Increases in real wages in particular are now running about four per cent ahead of inflation and sectors that capital thought had been totally defeated, such as car workers, are showing rapidly recovering militancy.

To control this situation David Owen put it very bluntly, in his ruling class code, in his 'How to put a million to work' in the *Guardian* on Monday: 'If wage costs are rising fast at such an early stage in the present weak recovery, then it becomes abundantly clear that for an expansionary programme to succeed in securing a sustained reduction in unemployment without triggering off inflation, the rate of increase of incomes in the private sector, as well as in the public sector, must be severely restricted.' In short 'wage controls here we come again!'

Owen in fact, logically, also makes it clear that in his opinion capitalism requires the assistance of the trade union bureaucracy to accept wage controls to make sure that struggle doesn't take place. Meanwhile Roy Hattersley has been producing new economic policies proclaiming the need for economic expansion coupled with... wage controls.

A curious coincidence isn't it!

Miners international solidarity meeting

organised by Socialist Action
Saturday 20 October 10.30 - 5.30

- How can the strike be won?
- The women's movement in the strike
- International solidarity with the miners and the struggle for a socialist Europe

Speakers include (in a personal capacity): Alain Krivine, Ken Capstick Yorks area NUM exec, Dai Davies South Wales area NUM exec, Phil Sutcliffe Kent area NUM exec, Ann Jones South Wales Women Against Pit Closures

For registration and details contact Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1 or Phone 01-359 8371

The lessons of 1972

THE TORY Employment Acts are the direct descendants of the 1971 Industrial Relations Act. That Act attacked trade union power on many fronts. It allowed individual scabs to challenge the closed shop. It allowed unions to be sued for causing a 'breach of contract'.

It gave the government the power to order the postponement of strike action ('cooling off periods') while secret ballots were organised. It called for agreements between unions and employers to be legally binding.

There was a proviso that unions which registered under the Act could gain a certain protection under the law (e.g. employers could sue them only up to £100,000). A special court, the National Industrial Relations Court (NIRC), was set up. A special judge presided over it — former Tory candidate John Donaldson.

On 11 November 1970, 100,000 workers came out on unofficial strike against the Bill (as it then was) mainly in Scotland. On 8 December 1970 the number prepared to strike for a day had risen to 500,000. The stoppage was unofficial (except in the case of SOGAT, whose executive went into hiding for a day to avoid being served with an injunction ordering them to call off the strike). Early in January 1971 there were similar one day strikes in Birmingham and Coventry.

The TUC called a rally on 12 January 1971, which was well supported, and a TUC-led march on Sunday 21 February saw over 250,000 trade unionists demonstrating in London. The AUEW called an official strike on 1 March,

and 1.5 million workers downed tools. On 18 March 2 million walked out.

The majority of unions refused to register under the new law, but by the summer of 1972 the NUR had agreed to hold a secret ballot when ordered to, and the TGWU had paid a fine of £80,000 imposed by the court. It looked as if the Tories were getting away with it.

The dockers were the first to challenge — and reverse — this trend. They were engaged in a long and bitter fight to prevent their employers from diverting work away from the well-organised docks into container depots and cold stores employing poorly organised and badly paid workers. Their main tactic was to boycott firms whose lorries went across picket lines into such depots. It was this sort of boycott action that led the NIRC to impose the first £80,000 fine on the TGWU.

The struggle soon focussed on the Midland Cold Store, a London depot owned by the giant Vestey company. London dockers established an effective picket and resisted

every attempt by the NIRC to remove them. The court ordered shop stewards leading the picket to appear before it! The stewards simply ignored the summons. On Friday 21 July five leading stewards were arrested by the police for being in 'contempt of court' and sent to Pentonville jail.

Within hours every port in the country was closed as dockers walked off the job. By Sunday 23 July Fleet Street was shut down as the printers came out, and in the next two days more and more workers joined the dispute. The TUC called a one day general strike for the following week, but by the Wednesday it was clear who was winning. The Law Lords let the five shop stewards go.

The government and its legislation had been dealt a mighty blow, but the court continued to function. In late 1973, 33 AUEW members at Conmech went on strike for union recognition. They refused to obey an order from the NIRC to stop the picketing and were fined for contempt of court. The NIRC ordered the sequestration of money from the AUEW's funds. The AUEW called a national one day stoppage in protest.

The Commission of Industrial Relations, a new body set up under the Industrial Relations Act, was called in to investigate the dispute, and it recommended union recognition. The employers refused. But the numbers on strike gradually dwindled



Police clash with miners in 1972

and in April 1974 it was called off.

However, the next month the employers' case came to court for its full hearing (you can only get a temporary injunction if you are actually issuing proceedings, which usually takes several months to come to court). An award of £45,000 compensation was made to the employer. Again the AUEW refused to pay.

The court threatened

to sequester all the union's funds. The AUEW called an unlimited stoppage of all its members. Within 24 hours an anonymous businessman had paid the fines.

The Industrial Relations Act was discredited, made unworkable by direct action by trade unionists. The Tory government had not been able to shackle the unions. Reprinted from CIS Report 'Assault on the unions', 95p.

Rule 41 and Tory laws

LES GASSOR is the lodge secretary at Nantgarw coke ovens. We talked to him about the legal threat to the NUM's funds.

What will happen to the NUM's funds if the fine remains unpaid?

Only the national union's funds are threatened. We have two separate funding systems — the national union funds and the area funds.

The writ only affects the national funds because it was taken out against Arthur Scargill and the national executive. The South Wales area, of course, has already has its funds sequestered.

The strike is not a national strike. It's an area strike action which has been made official by the national executive under rule 41. The national union is in fact a federation of areas.

If they seize the funds of the national union there

will still be the area funds. They are usually topped up by contributions from members after national dues have been paid but they've been frozen because of the strike.

If they go for the area funds that will be an even bigger problem.

What exactly does the judge's ruling mean?

The judges have ruled that the picket lines in Yorkshire and Derbyshire are illegal and that it's not

an official strike.

Our rule book says that each area can take action under rule 41, with the permission of the national executive which has been done.

What should the rest of the unions be doing?

They should be considering strike action in support, because if the NUM loses its case they would be the next to be attacked.

There've been guide lines issued by some unions to respect picket lines but it's a bit early to see what effects that will have.

What about the decision to fine Scargill personally for contempt of court?

I could respect their decision fining him for contempt if they made a similar ruling on the Lord Chief Justice. He was on Radio 4 before the High Court made its ruling giving advice on how to deal with the NUM.

He was just as much in contempt as Arthur Scargill. Nothing has happened to him.

Now the national executive have given us per-

mission to take strike action as individual areas against pit closures. the

courts have ruled that it's illegal.

Kinnock supports Llanwern scabbing

JUST ONE week after the Labour Party conference backed the miners overwhelmingly, Neil Kinnock sanctioned the coal convoys passing through NUM picket lines at Llanwern steel works.

By Valerie Coultas

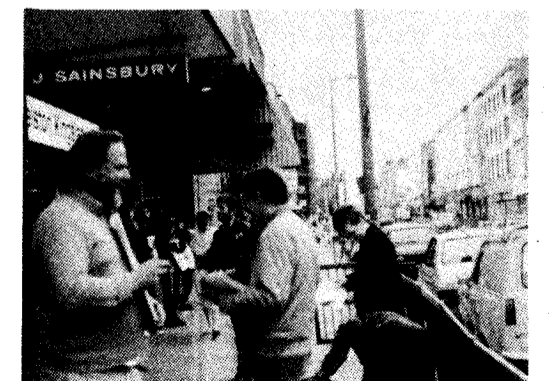
Defending the agreement reached at the beginning of the strike he said: 'What's essential is that the steelworks is kept in

sufficient production so that the market remains for the coalfields.'

This statement provoked a sharp reaction from the president of the South Wales NUM, Emyln Williams who is now putting the pressure on for a total blockade. 'It is disgusting that Kinnock should take a stand totally out of line with his own party, which is supposed to be wholeheartedly backing our struggle.'

Keeping steel plants workable and keeping them working were always two different things.

Collectors arrested



THE HACKNEY Miners' Support Committee organised a mass collection last Thursday (27 October) outside Sainsbury's, Dalston, where two members of Hackney Young CND had been arrested collecting for the miners two weeks previously.

Polly Vittorini and Tom Silverlock, both supporters of the youth paper *Revolution*, were arrested and charged with obstruction. Tom said: 'The police are obstructing the miners and their supporters. This is political policing.'

At the mass collection 25 people raised £50-96½p by selling *The Miner*, the NUM newspaper, and collected 2 large carrier bags of food.



The High Court attack

A declaration of war

'WAR HAS been declared on the whole trade union movement. That is the meaning of the £200,000 fine against the NUM. It is a calculated attempt to smash organised labour in this country'.

With these words the current issue of *The Miner* reaffirmed the determination of the NUM to continue its defiance of the High Court.

Mr Justice Nicholls imposed the fine because, as he puts it, the union and Arthur Scargill had 'wilfully, deliberately, knowingly and repeatedly' broken his order that the strike in Yorkshire should not be described as official.

The NUM's 'contempt' relates not only to the Yorkshire and Derbyshire areas, but also to Nottinghamshire, North Wales, North Western and Midlands areas. Obeying the court order would effectively mean calling off the strike in those areas, and surrendering to the NCB.

That is the reality behind all the noble talk about the rule of law.

The move by the court to sequester NUM funds is aimed at crippling the union's ability to continue the fight. If the courts can get away with imposing the fine, and seizing the assets of the union on this issue, they will certainly return for more.

The unions which are supporting the NUM will also be attacked. The NUR, ASLEF, TGWU, GMBATU, and so on will all be liable to court action for 'secondary' industrial action.

The fine is therefore a serious blow aimed at the strike. The Tories are losing the battle with the miners and action in the power stations is beginning

ing to bite. The legal action is an attempt to weaken the NUM, and break the solidarity actions.

By Pat Hickey

It is a challenge to the right to strike that the labour movement must defeat. A 'business as

usual' attitude is not sufficient.

If the courts proceed to seize the assets of the NUM there must be widespread action to stop them.

The general council of the TUC should be recalled to declare its support for the NUM and to prepare the movement for a general strike. The High Court must be left under no illusions as to the response of the movement, if it proceeds.

The left leaders have a particular responsibility in this regard. Left to itself,

the general council will happily bury its head in the sand and, in the case of the right wing, will stab the miners in the back.

A fight needs to be waged to ensure that this does not happen.

The executives of these unions should meet and declare their intention to take action in support of the NUM, and to call on the TUC to act.

The silence of the labour leaders on this issue must be ended. There will have to be a fight to prepare the movement for action. That fight needs to start immediately.



'It's class law'

Jack Collins Kent
NUM

THE DECISION to fine the NUM £200,000 and Arthur Scargill £1000 was taken by a class judge enacting class law.

'We're all in contempt'

Bob Clay, MP for
Sunderland North

AT LABOUR Party conference several hundred party members were prepared to sign a declaration of contempt, saying that if Arthur Scargill and the NUM were in contempt of court, so were they.

Most party members don't want any equivocation on the law — they are class laws, designed to emasculate the trade union movement. We will not accept them.

I agree with Neil Kinnock about civil law — if people wish to defy it and

Every society in the world makes laws to defend and perpetuate itself. We live in a capitalist society, so we have laws to defend capitalism.

Not a single judge comes from the working class. They are all from the ruling class, elevated by the ruling class, to enact ruling class law.

It is the judges who should be democratised. The working class should have a ballot to say who the judges are.

I am not surprised at the court ruling. Of course, the NUM should continue its official strike and ignore the decision of the courts.

We don't recognise class laws as these are, and we appeal to those miners still not in line with the ma-

majority to examine their decision. It's *their* union under attack.

The rest of the labour movement should rally round, and continue their financial support to the miners, so we can continue our official strike. And now they must become more involved in our dispute.

When one section of the movement is on strike, the rest should pile in to support them. We need days of action, weeks of action, and months of action if necessary.

If everyone woke up tomorrow, got out of bed, and just sat on their hands — the strike would be over, the government defeated, and the whole trade union movement would be stronger for it.

take the consequences, it's up to them. But what concerns me is the *context* of his statement, which implies that under no circumstances should anyone break criminal law. It's a dangerous distinction.

If the law says you shouldn't shout 'scab' then we're quite right to break it. If the law says we shouldn't intercede when someone on the picket line or in the community is being tortured by the police, then we should break it.

The pickets should carry on doing what they're doing. What infuriates me is the silence about widespread, direct police violence.

The Labour Party, as a political organisation and an alternative to the pre-

sent government, should say loud and clear that it stands with the NUM, that it identifies with them and agrees with them that they should not be bound by decisions of Tory judges.

At a local level, the party can act as a catalyst and a coordinator for more widespread action, which is certainly going to come if the court proceeds. Many trade union branches, trades councils and workplaces are already beginning to organise for this.

The Labour Party is in a good position to give political cohesion, provide political leadership and bring together those people prepared to stand solid with the NUM. It should do so — now.

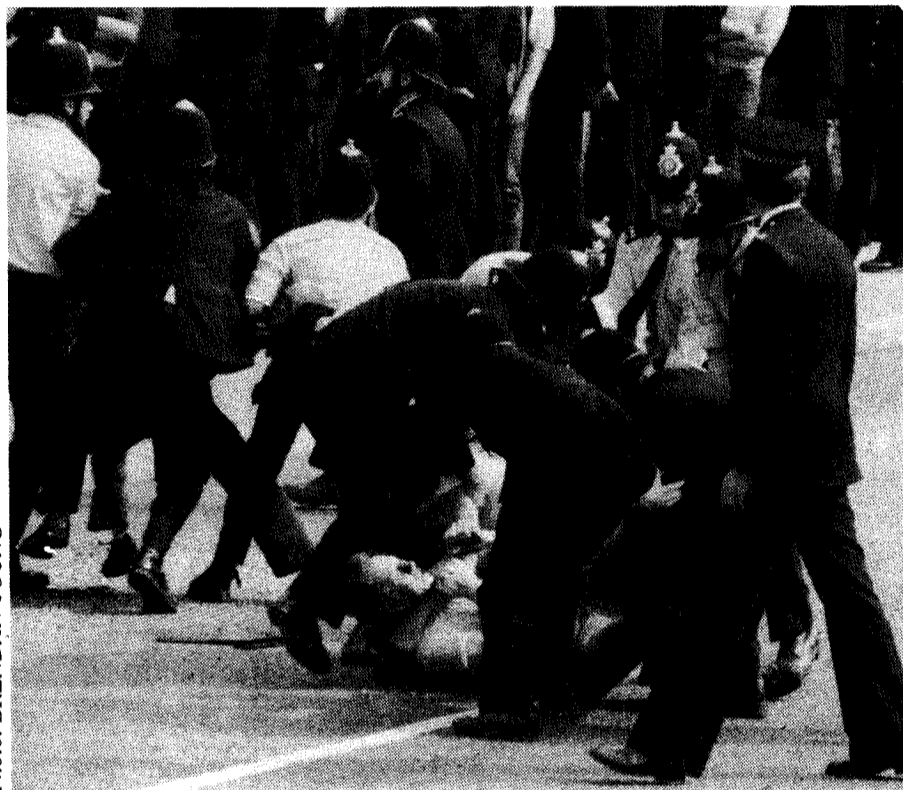


Photo: BRENDAN YOUNG
Police in action

Railworkers: no coal will move

RAILWORKERS at the Coalville Freight Depot in Leicestershire have been united in their refusal to shift coal since April. Their unity has forced management to retreat on more than one occasion since then.

However, faced with the onset of the cold winter months, management is again up to its dirty tricks to try and get the trains carrying coal back on the road.

Last week, Roy Butlin, leader of the Coalville guards, and local miners' leader, Malcolm Pinnegar, were warmly welcomed in East London by local miners' support groups, and by rail union members. Butlin explained why moral and financial support for Coalville's 150 railworkers is more than ever needed, and why he plans an urgent return trip to present his members' case to wider labour movement audiences.

'For seven long months,' Butlin said, 'Coalville railworkers have had to exist in our tightly knit community where many of our next door neighbours are working miners.' And with only a handful of the town's 2500 miners on strike — warmly referred to as 'The Dirty Thirty' — it's not surprising that railworkers and striking miners collaborate closely. Coalville Freight Depot has strategic impor-

tance in Butlin's view. 'My members shift 135,000 tonnes of coal each week. We supply coal for power stations throughout the Trent Valley, including all the British coal used at Didcot power station. We shift other things — like rock from a local quarry — but our mainstay is coal'.

By Doreen Weppler,
NUR guard.

Butlin insists that if management gets a single coal train on the road at this stage of the struggle, it will have a devastating effect on morale in the area. 'And it will put off a bit further, the day of victory which will come with the first power cuts'.

Management knows this only too well. From Day One of the dispute — when NUR members were getting only £1 a day strike pay management tried to

send home men who refused to move coal, rather than giving them alternative work. Four days of strike action forced a retreat. This same issue led to the threat of a 24 hour strike on 24 August by both major rail unions at Derby. It was averted only when management backed down.

Closure

The latest efforts are the most serious. In the past few weeks management has tried the old scare tactic of presenting closure plans for the depot. 'Shift coal by Monday,' Coalville's railworkers were told, 'or a five point closure plan will be implemented'.

Separate meeting of drivers and other railworkers considered this threat. Both came up with the same verdict: 'We'll continue to support union policy'.

This scare tactic was even a bit too flimsy for BR's head office. National business manager for coal, Leslie Smith, in denying a closure plan existed, even had the cheek to imply the

closure plan was a figment of the union's imagination!

Hand in hand with these methods, management has targeted vulnerable members at the depot in attempt to break up the unity. For instance, a signaller with only a few years left was recently approached by the area manager as part of the campaign to get the coal trains moving.

A major source of concern to all railworkers is the use of scab lorries to shift the coal. 'Consider our signallers from their signal box, all they can see is convoy after convoy of lorries, queued up ready to shift coal,' said Butlin. 'It's soul destroying to be idle and see the work being done by scabs.'

Transport

'We have received assurances from the miners union that when they win, no NUM member will allow coal to be loaded on to scab lorries. All coal transport will return to rail.'

Butlin is convinced that rank and file miners who will be the ones to refuse to load the lorries

will be even more vigilant when they are back on the job if they know of the sacrifices railworkers have made in places like Coalville.

Until that time, as one striking miner advised the signaller, 'Don't look at the columns of scab lorries on the roads — look up to the sun. Because as the sun sets earlier each day, victory is in sight.'

Stop the trains!

Support the Miners
meeting

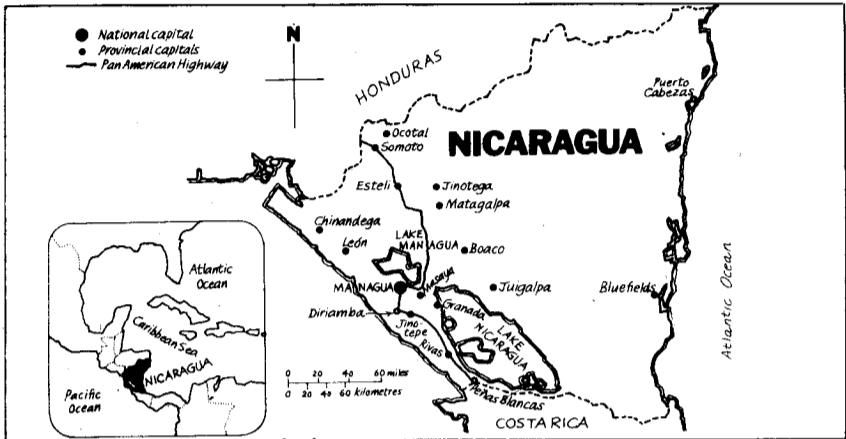
Hounslow Civic Centre
Lampton Rd, Hounslow
Tuesday 30 October,
7.45pm

Speakers:
Peter Heathfield
Whitwell Women's
Action Group

Organised by Hounslow
Miners Support Committee
● disabled access



Nicaragua: on the eve of the po



NICARAGUA is a socialist country about the size of Britain with a population of three million. Desperately poor, it faces regular US-backed military incursion. Next month it will hold the first free election in its history.

JOHN HARRISON, recently returned from Nicaragua, provides some background.

IF THOMAS COOK ran package tours to Nicaragua, its ads would feature 'a land of contrasts'. Once market research showed that all takers, aside from that asshole teddy bear Oliver, were social science graduates, it might add 'and of paradoxes and contradictions'. If so, it would be dead right.

Nicaragua comprises two coastal regions, separated by a mountainous backbone of hostile jungle. There are no through roads. English speaking inhabitants of the Atlantic coast refer to everyone from the Pacific side, including blacks, as 'Spaniards'. Many have hardly noticed the revolution.

In from the airport, billboards advertising American Express stand shoulder to shoulder with revolutionary propaganda. And, yes, there is a MacDonalds. Shanty towns flaunt more graffiti than Railton Road. Whilst up-front political, it exhibits as much flair and bad spelling as the New York subway.

The revolutionary hero Sandino — responsible for the S in FSLN (Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional) — is usually reduced to a stylised cartoon of his hat.

Downtown Managua is simply a modern bank building — the sole survivor of the 1972 earthquake — surrounded by wasteland. The eye of a human hurricane, ringed by seething barrios. Don't try and cross it by public transport unless you've got a couple of days to spare.

Uniforms are everywhere and more people carry Ak47 Kalashnikov assault rifles than briefcases or handbags. Yet the streets feel more like Amsterdam than Moscow.

Nicaraguans are devout Catholics who hate the Pope. A 55-year-old Jesuit priest, recently married, assured us that His Eminence was 'just another heretic'. The Nicaraguan version of the Lord's Prayer is part the usual gobbledegook and part a call to revolution.

Western marxists find one contradiction particularly hard to stomach. How can a revolutionary socialist government leave as much economic activity in private hands as Thatcher does? For many it is simply a contradiction in terms. Socialism im-

plies public ownership; most production remains in private hands; so Nicaragua is not socialist. QED, move next item, and all hail the local Suslov. Back in the real world facile syllogisms are a poor substitute for analysis.

Three financial groups dominated pre-revolutionary Nicaragua. Banco Nicaraguense comprised the more dynamic elements of the bourgeoisie, closely tied to US transnationals. Banco de America was dominated by the traditional conservative oligarchies who ran the estates producing agricultural exports.

The most powerful group was the Somoza clan's. Its personal empire ranged from prostitution and extortion through agriculture and mining to industry and finance. One of its more enterprising and profitable operations involved buying local human blood for resale in the States. It had close links with Cuban racketeers, Nixon's buddy Bebe Rebozo, and the Mob. It monopolised political power by rigging elections and controlling the National Guard.

By the early 70s, the Somozas were openly flouting all rules of bourgeois competition to squeeze out rivals. In the wake of the 1972 earthquake they stole millions of dollars of foreign aid. In January 1978 they assassinated

Pedro Joaquin Chamorro — big wheel in Banco de America, leading bourgeois opposition politician, patriarch of the second most powerful Nicaraguan family and editor of the anti-Somoza daily *La Prensa*. Such mafia-like tactics hardened capitalist opposition. Sections of the bourgeoisie edged closer to the FSLN.

Twelve bourgeois notables — Los Doce — proposed including the outlawed Frente in discussions about political reconstruction. The FSLN responded enthusiastically, asking Los Doce to represent it. When it launched the insurrection, in September 1978, it asked the 12 to head a provisional government to expropriate Somoza's holdings and replace the National Guard with a less partisan, and less sadistic, standing army. A year after the seizure of power, two of Los Doce were in the ruling Junta. Seven other held senior government posts.

But the FSLN retained the initiative. The tens of thousands who flocked to see the Junta sworn in at an open-air ceremony in Managua heard the voice of Thomas Borge — sole surviving founder member of the FSLN, and its most charismatic Commandante — signing people up. For those at the back the match-stick figures on the podium were dwarfed by four gigantic silver letters which had appeared overnight on the hillside behind. No prizes for guessing which four.

As the Frente dug in, the bourgeoisie distanced itself from the revolution. *La Prensa* attacked the FSLN stridently and the alliance fractured. But other considerations weighed against widespread nationalisations.

Nicaragua is starved of technicians. Administrators, engineers, statisticians, economists and so on are all worth their weight in dollar bills. The FSLN's inclination to pamper this strata — most of whom can earn more in the private sector — was boosted by its foreign allies. The Cubans now regard their failure to integrate many skilled personnel into the revolution as a major mistake.

The Frente is also painfully aware that Nicaragua's growing and inexperienced bureaucracy is a drag on development. Full scale central planning would expand the bureaucracy exponentially.

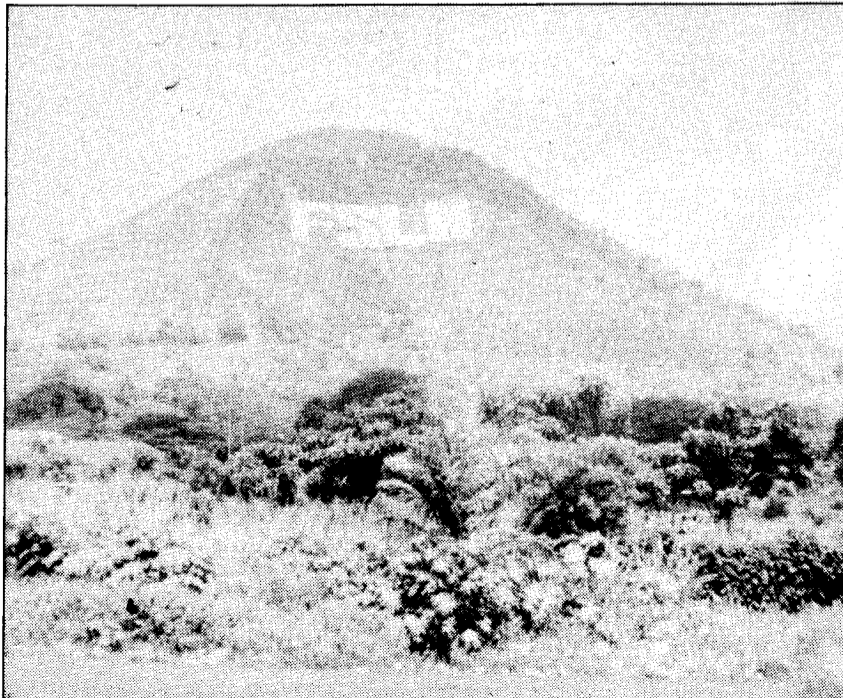


Photo: JOHN HARRISON



They shall not pass!

The biggest threat to the revolution is a US invasion. Nicaragua would stand no chance in set-piece battles with the marines. If uncle Sam's tanks roll down the Pan-American highway then the army, the people's militias, and the Comites de Defensa Sandinista (CDSs) will opt for the mountains and other guerilla war. A market structure will then offer a better chance of survival than a command economy.

The more senior the person you speak to in Nicaragua, the greater the emphasis on international solidarity. The Frente leadership sees Western public opinion as a major bulwark against US invasion. Wholesale expropriation would alienate both North American liberals and the Second International.

The private sector does create problems. Pockets of grotesque wealth remain, although most Mercedes are now discretely garaged. Income differentials are high. The director of Nicaragua's most pretigious investment project — a combined sugar refinery and power plant — showed us round the place. He was paid the public sector maximum of 10,000 Cordobas a month, about £2,000 at the official exchange rate. Electricians on piece rates earned up to 34,000. The minimum monthly wage in the countryside is 1200.

Destabilisation

CIA destabilisation experts, ensconced behind the electrified barbed wire ringing the US embassy, promote economic go-slows. Speculative hoarders exacerbate shortages.

The Junta uses a battery of measures to combat these problems. It fixes prices and minimum wages. It controls and taxes profits, limits dividends and requires reinvestment. It rations foreign exchange and employs state-purchasing agencies. It subsidises and rations scarce basics. It encourages trades unions and CDSs to root out speculators. These devices have so far prevented widespread disruption.

They may yet prove inadequate. If Reagan tightens the economic noose and hots up the war then the captains of industry may muster more effective production strikes. Further steps would then be needed. But the Nicaraguan people can thank their

lucky stars that the Frente, and not its 'marxist' critics, has been in the driving seat of the revolution.

It has been no easy ride. Somoza left most Nicaraguans illiterate, undernourished and poorly housed. The ethnic prejudices he fostered were strong. As a parting gift he poisoned the capital's water supply.

The mountainous jungle currently favours the Contras. Groups of ex-National Guard, CIA mercenaries and Honduran military can hide there for weeks, attacking farms and villages by night. Near the border, no one works without a rifle on their back.



ills

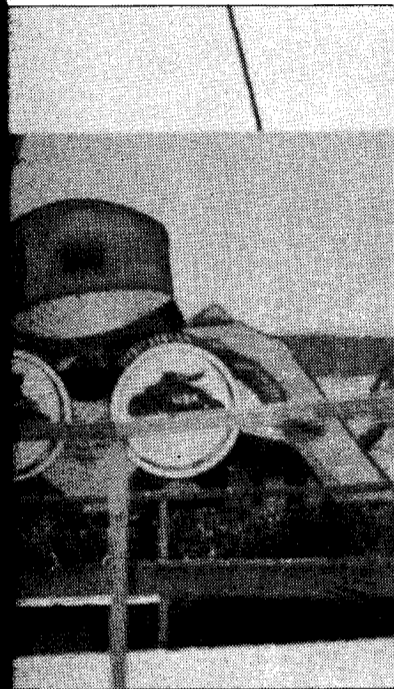


Photo: JOHN HARRISON

Nicaragua is desparately poor. Output per person is maybe £400 a year. It has lost its biggest pre-revolutionary export market, the US, and now faces an economic blockade. It is chronically short of foreign exchange. War and a land reform have starved the country of labour to pick coffee and cotton — the main dollar earners.

But the achievements are dramatic. Soon after the Triumph — the universal term for the Somoza's overthrow — thousands of high school students set off on a 'literacy crusade' to the countryside. Adult literacy rose from 40 per cent to 90 plus, and the



division between town and country narrowed. Schooling, previously the exclusive preserve of the rich, is now universal and free.

So is basic health care. Many basic diseases have been virtually eliminated. Malaria is now confined to the border areas — mosquitos don't carry passports. We shared a hotel with the San Francisco Mime troupe, touring outlying villages with a play about basic hygiene.

Unemployment and under-employment are largely history, as are the slave-history conditions of many pre-revolutionary latifundia and mines. Minimum monthly wages are now 1200 Cordobas in the countryside and 1600 in the cities. Welfare and pensions are, comparatively, as generous and universal as in Western Europe. Nicaragua is the only underdeveloped country in the world with a labour shortage.

All this has been achieved without a whiff of Stalinism. On the day of Somoza's overthrow the FSLN leadership, most of whom had been tortured in Somoza's jails, abolished the death penalty. Tomas Borge, told the

National Guardsman convicted of torturing, raping and murdering his wife: 'We will not touch a hair on your head. You will serve your prison term and then go a free man. My revenge will be that you will know that our justice is so much greater than yours was.' (quoted in *Politics and Profit*, Oct '84)

One of the Junta's first projects was an open prison farm — no guards, no fences — for ex-National Guard thugs, many serving the Nicaraguan maximum of 30 years. There have been only two 'escapes'.

Elections

Re-reading the last few paragraphs, I sense that — like almost everything written by socialists who have visited Nicaragua — it might seem over the top. The revolution has not ushered in the communist millenium. Few urban workers have more money in their pockets today. Some have less. Most of their rural counterparts are probably a bit better off. The old and the sick can now get by. Hardly heaven on earth — but a hell of a step forward.

This, then, is pre-election Nicaragua. Nicaragua Libre as the new car number plates proudly announce. No one can be sure of the outcome in a country with no history of free elections, and no opinion polls. My own guesstimate is that the Frente will pick up 55-70 per cent of the votes in a high turnout.

The elections will certainly be free, and meaningful. Over 90 per cent of adults — 16 upwards — have registered. A plethora of parties, some explicitly bourgeois, are after power. Their programmes differ markedly. Representation will be based on votes received and the process monitored by Western observers.

Not so up North. There the geriatric star of *Bedtime for Bonzo* seems set to romp home on the back of the most expensive media campaign and lowest turnout in US history.

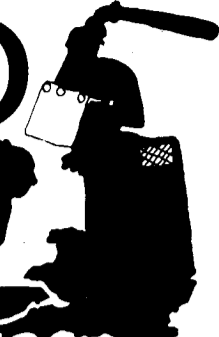
In the words of the FSLN's election slogan, *i seguinos de frente, con el Frente*. Forward with the Front.

How to find out more:

- *The best book on Somoza's overthrow is George Black's Triumph of the People, Zed Press 1981.*
- *The Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign organises occasional study tours. Mine lasted 17 days and cost nearly £800 all in.*
- *The Financial Times has a sympathetic and well-informed correspondent in Managua. It will be worth reading over the election period.*
- *Under Fire is a great movie.*
- *The FSLN produces a weekly in English, Barricada International. A six month subscription is available from Apartado 576, Managua for \$19.20.*



IRELAND UNFREE



Demonstration outside Armagh jail

Armagh: the louder we shout...

THE SUCCESS at Labour Party conference and at Labour women's conference before it, in winning a policy of opposition to the strip searches in Armagh jail cannot be the end of the campaign, it must be the beginning.

Even if the prison governor, Thomas Murtagh, and the Thatcher government seem unlikely to bend under pressure, campaigning against strip searches has immediate practical results.

The aim of strip searches is not to prevent smuggling of arms and ammunition into the women's prison (after all, metal detectors could be used if that were the problem), but to introduce systematic sexual harassment of women with the aim of breaking their morale and collective solidarity. Knowledge that a vigorous campaign is being waged outside the prison walls undermines the effects of the searches.

Women have said that the knowledge that their case is being followed and campaigned around strengthens their resolve, making them feel that the degradation and humiliation cannot be allowed to succeed in breaking their spirit. Women have also said that at times when the public campaign is at its most vociferous, there is a reduction in the frequency of the strip searching carried out inside.

This year's Labour women's conference in Swansea said: 'the use of strip searching whether in English or Northern Ireland prisons is a deplorable practice (which is) aimed at degrading and demoralising women prisoners. In the case of Irish republican prisoners, it is proof of an escalation of repression of an oppressed nationalist population by the forces of the British state. Strip searching is a tool by which British imperialism hopes to crush the spirit of the women in Armagh.'

Labour women successfully took this resolution to Blackpool, demanding that the Labour Party as a whole condemn and demand an immediate end to strip searching of women in British controlled prisons. Jo Richardson, who is Labour's women's

rights spokesperson, has followed the wishes of Labour women's conference and personally campaigned against strip searching and is intending to visit Armagh to see conditions and talk to prisoners herself. Of Northern Ireland, she said: 'women in particular are suffering and have indignities heaped upon them daily. Strip searching of women on remand in Armagh is a disgrace.'

It must be remembered that women on remand have not been found guilty of any offence. Not knowing what to expect from the arbitrariness of the system which passes for justice in the North, they are held on remand for excessive periods — sometimes up to eighteen months. It is then that women are at their most vulnerable. The weekly visit to the courts to renew the remand order becomes a mental and physical ordeal as it is inevitably accompanied by the degradation of the strip search.

Women have said that they felt tempted to confess or inform upon others to break the weekly pattern. They have said that they were prepared to do this even though they knew that the confessions they were being asked to sign were false or the individuals they were asked to incriminate were innocent.

Linda Quigley, an ex-Armagh prisoner, who was a visitor at Party conference described strip searches as 'attempt to use our bodies against us'. Women's own bodies and their nakedness are used to isolate and degrade. Women's menstruation is used to exert extra pressure as sanitary protection can be sometimes forcibly removed. Pregnancy is also used as fears for their safety heightens the tensions of the search.

Labour's speakers must now implement party policy, stepping up pressure upon the government and prison authorities to stop the searches and giving support to the Armagh women's campaign. Local parties or union branches wishing to know more about the campaign or hear speakers should contact: LABOUR WOMEN FOR IRELAND c/o Feminist Library, Fiegerford House, Victoria Embankment, London WC2

The early gay rights movement

'ALTHOUGH THE THEME of sexual behaviour may not be of paramount significance for the economic and political struggles....the search for an objective means of assessing this side of social life is not irrelevant....The party is strong enough to influence the shape of state law, its speakers and its press influence both public opinion and members. Thus the party already has a certain responsibility....'

A member of the shadow cabinet in *Labour Weekly* on the need for the Labour Party to take up the struggle for lesbian and gay liberation? No. These words were written by Eduard Bernstein in the German socialist paper *Die Neue Zeit* in 1895.

Bernstein was writing in defence of Oscar Wilde, who was about to get two years' hard labour for 'gross indecency' in Britain, and his views represent a far more advanced understanding of sexual politics and the oppression of homosexuality than will be found in most of the modern left.

Bernstein was not a lonely voice on the left either. On the contrary, the German workers' movement was to be involved in advancing this struggle over a prolonged period. But the whole history has been so effectively eradicated by both fascism and stalinism that most lesbian and gay activists (let alone socialists) are today unaware of the rich history of struggle — dating from the turn of the century.

The precondition for an organised movement for the rights of homosexuals did not come about until the second half of the

19th century.

The massive social upheavals resulting from industrialisation lay behind a collapse of the working class family; its reconstruction in the mould of the bourgeois family during the second part of the century created the material conditions for another development.

The establishment of a type of person who was a 'normal heterosexual', created its opposite, an 'abnormal' homosexual person, who represented a threat to the social fabric, an insult to Christian morality, and a risk to the security of the state.

By Peter Purton

Prior to this period there had been no term to describe gay people, only terms to describe homosexual behaviour, which was not seen as an attribute of any specific group of persons.

The word homosexual was devised by a Hungarian doctor named Benkert in 1869. The next 30 years witnessed a flood of so-called medical, scientific and psychological 'explanations' which all shared one common assumption: homosexuality was unnatural, and therefore the purpose of studying it was either to 'cure' it, or eradicate it.

Burning as a solitary light of reason in this clapnet was the work of Karl Ulrichs (1825-95). Ulrichs, himself gay, developed the notion of an intermediate or third sex — that is, that homosexual men had women's souls in men's bodies, and vice versa.

The term he coined for them — Uranians (drawn

from Plato) — and his work remained the justification for the struggle well into the 20th century: for if homosexuality was inborn, then whatever one's view as to its desirability, it was clearly unjust to punish it.

It was adopted by the most important figure in the history of the early movement, Magnus Hirschfeld, who founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in 1897 — the first campaigning homosexual rights organisation.

Other sections of the movement (such as Benedict Friedlander's Community of the Special) developed more advanced theories, but the most remarkable was again put forward by Bernstein.

In one of his 1895 articles, Bernstein had already begun to apply serious marxist analysis to social and sexual relations and, in a more advanced form than Engels had managed in his *Origin of the Family*, demonstrated the wholly social and historical basis of the construction of sexuality and human relations, and therefore the nonsense of using terms such as 'natural' and 'unnatural' to describe them.

The tragic loss of this thinking from both the left and the movement as a whole has forced it to start again from scratch in challenging the ignorance and unclarity which now smother the relationship between lesbian and gay liberation and socialism.

The type of sex scandals about leading establishment figures to which we are accustomed today were a prominent feature of the 1890s. The Wilde



Gay Rights demo

Photo: GM COOKSON

trials in England, and several scandals surrounding the Kaiser's associates in Germany, were the best known.

In England, the subsequent reaction was terrifying enough to drive into silence those who might have been expected to campaign against the 1885 Labouchère amendment, which created the anti-homosexual laws only partially repealed in 1967.

In Germany, they enabled Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee (SHC) to keep in the public eye the injustice of the equivalent in German law, Paragraph 175.

The SHC's campaign for the repeal of 175 was to be the central and unifying feature of the homosexual rights movement in Germany for a quarter of a century. The SHC under-

stood that while changing laws won't produce instant liberation, focussing one's campaign on them not only enables one to build up a wide movement, but also demonstrates the way in which prejudice, bigotry and discrimination are buttressed by legislation.

The achievement of the SHC has to be seen against the backdrop not only of total popular ignorance and prejudice, but also of vicious political reaction and a puritanical moral code. Central to its work was a petition for the repeal of 175, aimed at prominent political, cultural and artistic figures in Germany.

The campaign was backed up with vast amounts of literature aimed at the general public, including a pamphlet called *What the people should know about the Third Sex*, which went through 19 editions in 4 years.

Speaking tours and enormous public meetings marked the high points of the campaign. Surviving inevitable eclipse during the First World War, the SHC was relaunched in the midst of the 1918 German revolution. It was firmly on the side of the left, and proceeded to develop international links.

Hirschfeld himself toured many states, with particular success in Holland and Austria. The petition itself, weighted down with thousands of signatures, was finally presented to the Reichstag in March 1922, 25 years after its launch.

The Reichstag voted to turn it over to the government for consideration. The onset of massive crisis in 1923 doomed it to oblivion. Only partially changed, the law remains on West Germany's statute book to this day....

German

The German revolution provided Hirschfeld with another project: a magnificent palace in which he set up an Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin in 1919. It became a world centre for research, an archive of invaluable information and a home for lectures, seminars and international gatherings of scientists, as well as public meetings, medical advice, and a massively popular marriage advice bureau.

The immediate destruction of the institute by the nazis in 1933 represented both a real and a symbolic termination of the history of this extraordinary and dynamic movement.

Bernstein's was not the only contribution from the left. As early as 1898, the socialist leader, August Bebel, introduced the SHC's demands into the Reichstag. This was repeated in 1905 and 1907, with wide support in his party — the SPD. On the latter occasion this intervention was at the height of an anti-gay witch-hunt.

Bolsheviks

Our own Labour Party's craven silences are to be compared....

This close association continued with the 1918 revolution, and was given a major boost with the decision of the Bolsheviks to abolish the tsarist laws against homosexuality by decree (December 1917).

Grigorii Batkis, director of the Moscow Institute of Sexual Hygiene, was a regular attendee at international congresses of the World League for Sexual Reform initiated by the SHC during the 1920's. The first edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (1930) said under 'homosexuality' that 'Soviet law does not recognise "crime" against morality'.

Back in Germany, the new Communist Party found itself committed to the movement from early on, and in 1930-32, under the influence of Wilhelm Reich, set up a sexpol movement which reached 20,000 members. Central to its demands were the repeal of anti-gay legislation.

Nazi repression in Germany was matched by Stalin's reintroduction of anti-homosexual legislation in the same year. Hitlerite denunciation of 'deviations' as 'sexual bolshevism' was countered by the stalinist description for homosexuality as 'the fascist perversion'. Thus the physical annihilation of the movement was matched by a political elimination of all connections with socialism.

Now, almost 50 years after the death of Magnus Hirschfeld, we are still struggling to re-establish the connection.



Hirschfeld

KLMNOPQRSTU
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Two criticisms

Why I write I do not know. As this letter has no place to go, For a letters' page you have no room, Hurry up! and make some soon.

But seriously, comrades, I am writing with reference to two articles in SA 72.

Firstly in Redmond O'Neill's article, *Solidarnosc says stop all coal*, he states that 'the views of Solidarnosc have been systematically concealed by the British press'. True, but Redmond is also guilty.

In his article he chooses to ignore the disgraceful statements attributed to Lech Walesa in the British press, in which he gave his backing not to the miners but to Thatcher.

Many people view Walesa and Solidarnosc as indivisible. The

absence therefore of any criticism or mention of Walesa's outburst was particularly noticeable and unfortunate.

Secondly, the article by Ilona Aronovsky, *More police violence at Greenham*, was excellent apart from one point.

The response to the call for 10 million women was not 'terrific' — it was lousy.

The idea that 10 million women would turn up at the base over the 10 days was a non-starter. The true figure was probably nearer 100,000 — and, yes, I was one of them.

Had national CND got off their arses to back the call and mobilise support and had the demand been made more realistic — for instance, one million women for 10 days — then, perhaps, we could have claimed a 'terrific' success.

MARY HARTNER, Gillingham, Kent

The vital role of youth

As a young school student watching the Labour Party conference I have been appalled at some of the decisions — not to develop black sections, not to grant the women's demands, and not to include gay and lesbian rights in the debate on civil liberties.

These decisions should have every serious Marxist and socialist up in arms.

Why I am writing to you is because I think that these decisions contain a lot of ominous omens for young people.

The youth in the party have always been treated badly, ie, they have only one representative on the NEC and only £15,000 a year to keep the YS and its 10,000 members on their feet. This appalling treatment is largely due to the right wing and the fact that they have something to fear from an active, campaigning youth section.

The main point of my letter is to say that the youth, and sympathetic elements within the party, that means SA supporters, have to get together and thrash out



an effective and coherent socialist policy.

Anyone who has read Trotsky's *Transitional Programme* realises the importance of youth in the fight for working class power, and the need for older comrades to help in the education and politicisation of the youth.

What I am suggesting is that Marxists in the party must take steps to organise with the YS and try to develop an effective body that can discuss what old and young can do together to ensure the future is a bright, socialist one for all.

DAVID IVENS, Coventry North West Labour Party

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Why Kinnock is no democrat

LAST WEEK Neil Kinnock attempted to modify his previous position on liberty, democracy, and obeying the law.

At the Labour Party conference Kinnock announced he opposed 'all' defiance of the law. Now, under the pressure of mass opposition in the labour movement to the attack of the High Court on the NUM, he has attempted to introduce a distinction between breaking the criminal law and defying the civil law.

According to Kinnock, speaking on Thursday on *World at One*, the criminal law must be obeyed under all circumstances. But civil law is different and 'The use of the law against people does not oblige those people to bend down before the law and accept the civil rule of a court.'

By John Ross

Kinnock was even driven, at last, to acknowledge the obvious fact that: 'It has always been the case in Britain that people will undertake action in civil cases knowing that they invoke the penalty of the law', and that, 'Many of the advances of English liberty have come as a consequence of people being willing to take those consequences.'

But Kinnock still refused to say the truth. That almost all major advances in liberty, both in Britain and internationally, have been won through a willingness to defy the law. That 'all' violence, also, cannot be condemned but that it is *just* to meet the violence of the oppressor with the violence of the oppressed. That there are principles and rights which stand above the so-called 'rule of law' — a rule of law that in many countries, at many times, has been utilised to perpetrate the most foul crimes and injustices.

Was it just to obey the law against Jews in Hitlerite Germany? Or against women in Victorian Britain? Or against blacks in the deep south of the United States?

And if anyone does not choose to compare the trade unions to these rights, let us state a few home truths.

The labour movement, above all independent trade unions, are the foundation of democracy in the world. Margaret Thatcher, echoed now by some theorists of the Labour Coordinating Committee such as Geoff Hodgson, claim that it is capitalism and markets which defend freedom. But the facts show otherwise.

Horrors

There are innumerable dictatorships in the world, from the horrors of South Africa to the dictatorships of Latin America, where capitalism and markets exist but where there is no democracy. But there is *no* country in the world in which there is no free labour movement but political liberty exists.

So fundamental is this principle to any form of democracy, and any form of democratic socialism or socialist democracy, that even where the working class has conquered power it must still absolutely maintain the independence and freedom of the labour movement and trade unions. As Lenin put it after the Russian Revolution there is still need for 'workers' organisations to protect workers from their state.'

The overturning of that principle, the destruction of free and independent trade unions in the Soviet Union, was one of the most fundamental crimes of stalinism. The fight to re-establish that right, to create free, independent, self-governing unions in Eastern Europe is one of the pillars of the fight for political liberty in these countries. *Solidarnosc* in Poland



Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst

showed just how fundamental that fight is — and just what sacrifices workers, faced with the tanks of Jaruselski, are prepared to make to build that labour movement.

This question of the freedom and rights of the labour movement exists in South Africa — where black workers, including black miners, have been openly engaged for 10 years in the fight to create their own unions. In the dictatorships of Latin America workers have fought under conditions of enormous repression and torture to keep alive, and rebuild, their trade unions.

The first drive of every fascist dictatorship, such as Hitler or Mussolini, has always been to suppress and eliminate the trade unions — and the political parties based on them. *Anyone* who accepts the legal shackles and attacks on the labour movement is an opponent of democratic rights — and that includes the leader of the Labour Party. This is the truth the leadership of the Labour Party should have been proclaiming from every television screen and platform open to them.

But how is it that Neil Kinnock can, with *any* credibility, refuse to back the NUM in its confrontation with the law, and now try to introduce sophistical distinctions between breaking the civil and criminal law? How can he spend his time, with any audience listening to him, proclaiming complete nonsense such as that always 'the law will have its way', that you cannot successfully break the law, that democracy rejects 'all violence', etc? It is because, despite the rhetoric, Neil Kinnock, and those who argue like him, refuse to base themselves on the real lessons of the struggle for democracy — let alone the struggle for socialism.

How was even the most elemen-

tary step to democracy in Britain, the abolition of the absolute monarchy, achieved? It was achieved by an ultimate form of violence, by civil war. The side of parliament triumphed through raising an army, crushing the tyranny of Charles I, and finally executing their monarch. Was that violence justified or unjustified? Would it have been right to continue living under an absolute monarchy or was it not the right *and duty* of people to take up arms and crush the violence of Charles I?

And what about the establishment of elementary political democracy in other countries? Was the United States right to create itself by taking up arms and throwing out the British? Was the French revolution an 'error'? Or wasn't it right to fight for the birth of the United States, and for liberty in France, both with violence and in a way that was totally 'against the law'?

If anyone believes that such questions are solely issues of the past let them take just some of the events of the present day. How many leaders of independent countries in Africa and Asia were once locked up in jail by the British (including by Labour governments to their shame) for fighting against the 'empire on which the sun never set'? Were the Sandinistas right in Nicaragua to take up guns to fight Somoza? And do we urge solely 'peaceful' struggle against the arms of the South African racists and murderers?

Anyone who condemns *that* violence, and that lawbreaking, is a traitor not simply to socialism but to the most elementary human rights and democracy that exists in the world. Because laws exist to fit people and human rights, and not people and human rights to fit laws. The condemnation by Neil Kinnock of 'all violence' is just rubbish.

And what about when formal political democracy is established — although under capitalism there is no democracy in the economic or social sphere and only the most limited democracy even in politics. It is only necessary to consider the history of the fight for the right to vote to see the lessons, and the truth. The story is almost too well known to need repeating.

The passing of the first extension of the right to vote, the 1832 Reform Act, was secured through the pressure of massive rioting throughout Britain — and was itself inspired by the revolutions of 1830 in Europe and the threat of rebellion in Ireland.

In Bristol workers seized the city. Nottingham castle was burned. Derby jail was sacked. Mobs in London attacked public buildings and the king's carriage.

Was all this violence to be 'abhorred'? Or wasn't it the inevitable means whereby the first tiny extension of the right to vote was secured? Do we place on an equal level those who took to the streets for the right to vote and the troops who 13 years earlier, at Peterloo, had cut down those demanding it?

Not *all* violence and lawlessness is to be 'abhorred' — to use Kinnock's phrase. Those who rioted in 1832 were heroes of democracy. Those who attacked the crowd at Peterloo were murderers. That is how history remembers them and how it should remember them. The rioters of 1832 were the forebears of the movement Neil Kinnock now claims to lead.

And what about Chartism? The movement that pioneered virtually every single political right in Britain. Chartism was not simply a petition. Chartism staged the last armed insurrection in Britain — when in 1839 armed miners, under the leadership of John Frost, seized Newport and fought troops. Furthermore in 1824 Chartists attempted the first general strike in history. Are these actions to be 'condemned' because they were both violent and illegal? In fact they are glorious pages in the struggle for democracy, even though, unfortunately, they were defeated.

Chartists

It was fear of what Chartism had shown as a mass political force in the 1830s and 1840s which, from the 1850s, led to British capitalism making concession after concession to the working class movement. The great gains of democracy and organisation in the labour movement in the last part of the 19th century were not born out of the goodness of the hearts of British capitalists. They were gained because British capitalism feared a relapse into the 'chaos and anarchy' which it had seen as symbolised by Chartism.

And finally consider the greatest single demand on the vote that the Chartists did not fight for — the right to vote for women.

The Suffragettes totally refused to remain within the law — including, for Neil Kinnock's information, within the *criminal* law. But it is the

Suffragettes who are rightly, regarded as heroes by history and those who enforced the law against them who are remembered as bigots and enemies of democracy.

When it comes to the trade unions the record is long. It should be known to every person in the labour movement — and is known to Kinnock.

The first known attempt to form a trade union was *six hundred* years ago — in Florence in 1345. How do we know this? Because the court records show that the wool comber who made the attempt was sentenced to death by the courts! Anti-trade union legislation is scarcely an invention of Norman Tebbit and Margaret Thatcher.

Tolpuddle

In Britain as early as 1633 troops were used against striking manufacturing workers in Newcastle. A hundred and sixty years later the notorious combination Acts of 1799 and 1800 were still sentencing to prison anyone forming a trade union. In 1834 the Tolpuddle martyrs were transported for forming a union. As late as 1873 gas workers in London were imprisoned for a year for going on strike. In 1972, with the Pentonville Five and in 1984 with the 37 workers imprisoned from Cammel Laird's, trade unionists are *still* being sent to jail.

Coming to more recent times, and more general laws, the Taff Vale and Osborne judgements in 1900 and 1909 tried firstly to smash the funds of trade unions for going on strike and secondly to end the right of trade unions to contribute funds to the Labour Party. Eighty years later the trade unions are once again having to fight for those rights. Capitalism never has, and never will, change its spots on these questions. Anyone who believes the fight for democracy is over and we can now relax, is deluding themselves.

Unjust

In this entire struggle the unions, the labour movement, and political democracy itself have only been defended by ordinary people time and time again being prepared to break the law. Furthermore it is not the case that 'the law will have its way' — to quote Neil Kinnock. Historically a whole series of these unjust laws have been smashed — which is why we enjoy most of our rights today. As recently as 1972, over the Pentonville Five and in the miners strikes, the Tories' Industrial Relations Act was pulverised by illegal action.

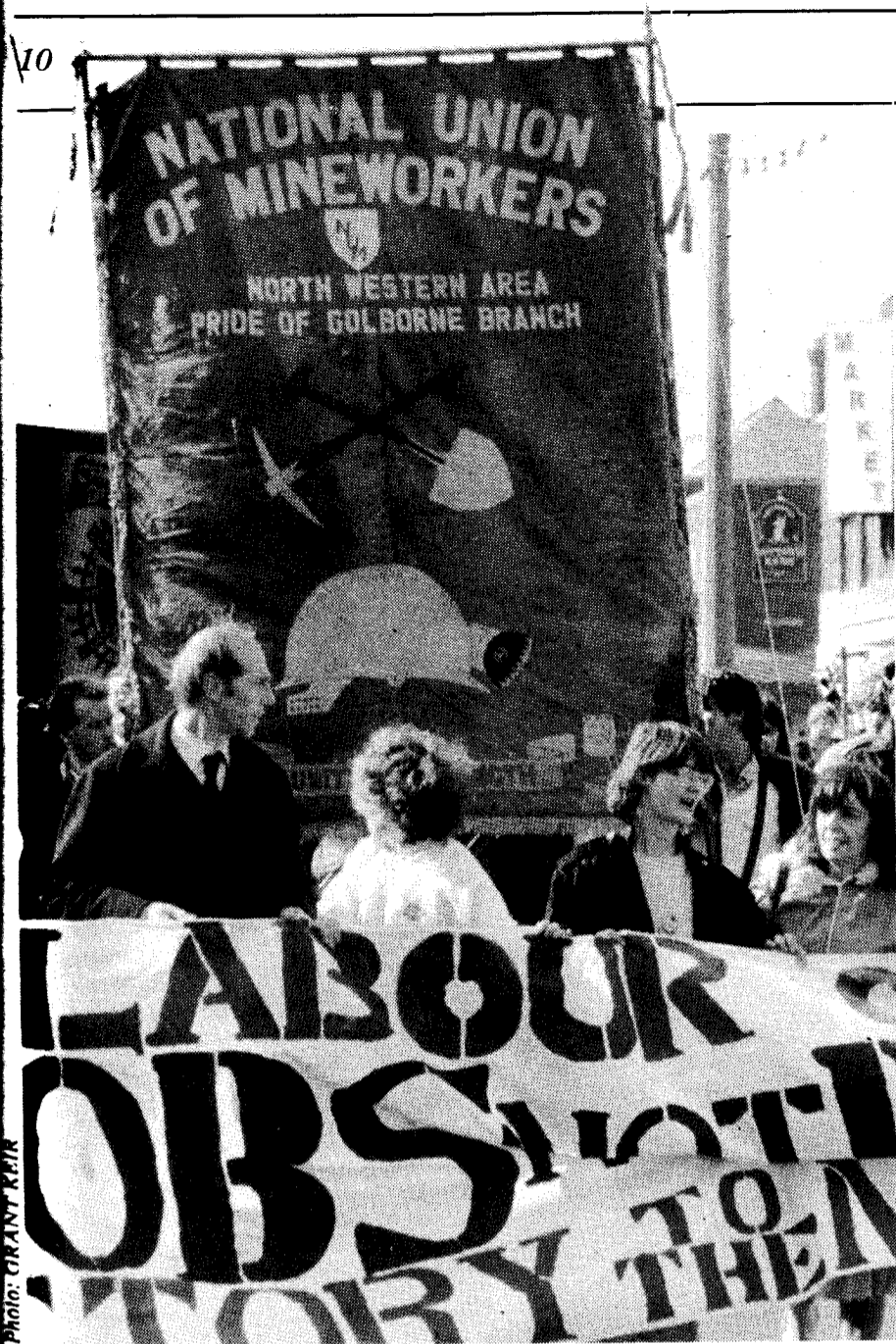
Democracy, liberty, and the law have *never* been the same thing. Democracy has often had to be defended against the law, and is established against the law. It is Arthur Scargill, not Neil Kinnock, who stands in the long line of struggle for democracy both in Britain and internationally. Those who accept the law under all circumstances are not democrats but historically have been enemies of democracy.

The parliamentary armies in the civil war, Cromwell, the Levellers, Washington, Robespierre, were the people who actually *created* democracy. Not a single one of them was a pacifist condemning all violence. Not a single one remained within the law. But they all lived at a time when the fight for liberty and democracy actually meant something in the mouths of those who uttered the words. It was not then the miserable hypocrisy 'democracy' and 'law' has become in the mouth of a Thatcher — or a Kinnock.

Neil Kinnock likes to claim he is a 'democratic socialist'. He is certainly not a socialist as anyone reading the new Labour Party document on the economy will find out. His attitude to the law shows Kinnock is not even a democrat either.



Five of the Tolpuddle martyrs



Labour CND March in Blackpool



Photo: GM COOKSON

CND lurches right

CND'S NATIONAL Council lurched violently to the right last weekend when delegates voted to lobby the Warsaw Pact embassies on 8 December — but not to mark the anniversary of the announcement of cruise deployment in Britain on Wednesday 12 December.

A two hour sitdown in Parliament Square was proposed to mark the fifth anniversary of cruise but Council decided to give it a miss on the advice of the campaign officers who felt it was too much of a strain to organise two events within days of each other.

The decision was taken knowing that London region did not support the embassies event.

These decisions put the lid on a weekend marked by National Council's retreats from campaigning on the issue most central to the peace movement in Britain: getting rid of the new generation of missiles.

Council began by welcoming 'with reservations' Labour's new defence policy which commits the party to remaining in NATO and to a 'non-nuclear' defence strategy based on increased con-

ventional arms spending. It was little wonder then that the Forward Planning and Project Committee's reports made no mention of campaigning for NATO withdrawal in the coming year.

By Dick Withecombe (CND National Council, personal capacity)

Instead the forward planning report which will be presented to annual conference at the end of November outlined the aims for 1985: 'our overriding goal is to convince the majority of the public by the next general election of the case for complete nuclear disarmament by Britain and the adoption of a credible defence policy which does not rely on nuclear weapons.' Activists have already begun

to discuss calling a halt to this drift.

CND National Council is proposing a debate on 'non-nuclear' defence at annual conference. Deptford and Newham CND however have presented a resolution rejecting any shift within the campaign towards supporting conventional defence policy.

The other resolutions National council prioritised for discussion at conference however are a motley lot — including one calling for a national demonstration against the weapons of the USSR (no. 24 on the interim agenda), and one from an individual member calling for a biennial conference which would give more powers to National Council (no. 13). A constitutional amendment from West Region wants to get rid of conference altogether!

Removing a democratic annual conference would certainly be a useful first step in any attempts to ditch CND's main demands.

A composite resolution from 19 groups calling for campaigning against NATO and instructing National Council not to campaign for a nuclear freeze, has been dismissed by the Conference Arrangements Committee. With only ten resolutions on the final agenda, no discussion of NATO is planned for conference. The proposal for a women's conference has also been dropped.

The National Council's decisions to ignore the fifth anniversary of cruise comes as a timely warning to peace activists of what's in store at conference. Plans for an event to mark the announcement of cruise's arrival will go ahead regardless of the national Council decision. CND groups should give special attention to building and supporting this event.

A boycott of the embassies event is the best way to make clear to CND's leadership that changing the campaign's aims just isn't on.

Direction 85' - CND left organises

CND ACTIVISTS from many local groups met at County Hall last Saturday to discuss how to defend the unilateralist direction of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in 1985. The meeting, organised by Peckham CND, resulted from a decision by the Conference Arrangements Committee of CND National Council to veto a composite resolution from over 20 groups which called for defending unilateralism, dropping any thoughts of a freeze, and increasing our anti-NATO profile.

Peckham CND is extremely concerned that this year's CND conference will again fail to take up the question of campaigning for Britain's withdrawal from NATO.

For twenty years, 'Britain out of NATO - NATO out of Britain' has been CND policy but in the last few years CND has refused to argue clearly for withdrawal.

Today all major political parties support the NATO alliance. Non-nuclear defence is leading CND away from a unilateral disarmament policy. Worse, continued membership of NATO, ultimately means renouncing unilateralism.

Peckham wrote to all those groups who had supported the Labour CND composite for this year's conference in an attempt to organise to defend the unilateralist basis, and preserve the democracy, of CND. This will be done by ensuring that the CND groups themselves, and

not a select few on National Council, determine the campaign's policies.

Our efforts met with a great response, and about thirty people from the twenty odd groups contacted attended the meeting — reflecting the real concerns within the movement that unilateralism must remain the basic goal and mass campaigning the basic method of achieving it.

By Kevin Jones (Peckham CND)

It was clear from the weekend's meeting that part of the problem to be tackled is that of democracy inside CND. The omission of withdrawal from NATO from our campaigning agenda means that national conference decisions, which represent the democratic expression of CND activists, have been ignored. The Labour CND composite was excluded

even from the interim agenda while a resolution from an individual member has found its way to the final proposal.

Decisions taken by National Council last year have not reflected grass roots feeling in CND — witness the failure at first to back the Reagan demonstration in June. We feel sure that many other CND groups are discussing these same issues.

The meeting at the weekend decided to launch *Direction '85* to take up these debates. We are producing a newsletter to defend 'Britain out of NATO' as CND policy and to keep it on the conference agenda.

CND should not act as an advisor to the NATO generals on the best method of 'non-nuclear defence'. Unilateralism remains our central commitment.

We are organising a 'Europeans Against NATO' fringe meeting, with speakers invited from Europe as well as our own peace movement at CND annual conference.

● For further details of *Direction '85* contact Kevin Jones, Peckham CND, 4 The Vervain House, Hereford Retreat, Bird in Bush Road, London SE15 (01-635 0942).

LABOUR AND UNIONS CHARTER

THE LABOUR Co-ordinating Committee campaign to defend the political levy — the 'Labour and Unions Charter' — is holding a major conference in London at Central Hall Westminster on 1 December.

The 1984 Trade Union Act, which makes it unlawful for a union to have a political fund, and therefore to give money to the Labour Party, without a ballot of its members became law in September.

A meeting of national executives of unions was held with the Labour Party on 1 August to decide on a campaign for the ballots — which, according to the law, must be held by 1 March. But this campaign is likely to concentrate on presenting the

case for a political fund in general without linking it specifically to the question of the Labour Party.

In any case any central campaign needs to be backed up by local and workplace campaigning.

The LCC campaign is sponsored by a wide range of figures in the labour movement including Arthur Scargill, Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn, Alan Sapper, David Blunkett, Eric Heffer and Ron Todd — in addition to supporters of the LCC itself and by Socialist Action.

The conference will be addressed by Ron Todd, Ken Livingstone, Tom Sawyer, and Robin Cook. The registration fee will be £3.

The conference is open to individual trade union and Labour Party members but supporters

are urged to get delegated from labour movement organisations.

Details and credentials from Labour Co-ordinating Committee, 9 Poland Street, London W1V 3DG (01-439 3749)

Planning the Local Economy

Second of 5 meetings about socialism in London

Wednesday 24 October, 7.30pm, County Hall

Speakers: Mike Best, Madhu Verma and John Tilley

Organised by the Socialist Society
Phone 01-734 8501 for details

Target

Labour

Government

TARGET LABOUR Government held a meeting on Sunday 14 October to review priorities after Labour Party conference.

It was decided to hold a conference at the end of January jointly with *Labour Briefing* and to invite the Black Section, Women's Action Committee, Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, Labour Committee on Ireland and other organisations to participate.

Discussions were also held on policy positions for Target Labour Government on international policy, economic policy, and 'law and order/justice'.

Support the Cammel Lairds prisoners

Stop the scabs

SUPPORT THE Cammell Laird prisoners — stop the scabs: This is the demand of the newly-formed Cammell Lairds strike committee, organised by Wirral Trades Council to help the 300 Lairds' workers who are supporting this official strike.

The strike committee is working closely with the women's support group set up by the families of the 37 workers jailed for the occupation at the Birkenhead shipyard.

A continuous picket is to be maintained at the yard, with a mass picket each Monday at 7am. The aim is to prevent several hundred scabs crossing official picket lines to finish work on a destroyer and an oil rig, previously occupied by the 37.

Once this work is finished, the destroyer will be taken by the navy, and the oil rig towed to France to be fitted out. Then there will be no more work, and the jailed workers believe that the yard will then be cleared and sold to private industry.

A privatised yard would employ a handful of workers, on the casual labour conditions which were once the plague of poverty-stricken Merseyside.

The official GMBATU leadership has known this for months, but has allowed the occupation to become isolated and so encouraged scabs to return to work.

By John Nolan,
Cammell Lairds
Support Group

The Merseyside GMBATU official, Barry Williams, tried to stop trades council supporters of the strike using loud-speakers to persuade scabs to turn back.

Instead Williams argued: 'Only one microphone should be used on an official picket line' — and that one was his. This was at the gate where the scabs were under heavy police escort.



David Basnett talking to Len Murray at the TUC

Reluctantly, after the 37 have spent two weeks in Walton, David Basnett, general secretary of GMBATU is to ask the TUC for help. This will be on Wednesday, two days before the prisoners are due to be released.

On Friday, the day of their release, Lol Duffy,

chair of Wirral District Labour Party, is due to speak on a platform with Keva Coombes, leader of Merseyside County Council, at a Merseyside Labour Briefing meeting (Transport House, Berners Street, Birkenhead, at 7.30pm).

The subject will be ac-

countability. Lol Duffy will talk about the accountability of the GMBATU leadership, Keva Coombes will look at the accountability of MPs. Frank 'Rainbow Circle' Field who is so reluctant to support the Lairds' workers will be very much in everybody's minds.

NALGO: right wing on the march

DELEGATES representing nearly 800,000 members at the NALGO special conference on 10 October, gave a motion calling for a ballot before further national funds could be donated to the miners 30,000 votes less than the two-thirds needed to make the motion policy.

The majority mood on conference floor was to support the miners, but many delegates had been mandated to support the ballot motion against their

own wishes. The NEC also opposed the motion, but it is now unlikely that it will give further active support to the NUM.

Ballots

This is the first time since the 1982 ballot on affiliation to the Labour Party that the left/right divide has been so clear.

Tactics used by the right in calling the special conference on ballots rather than the issue of support for the miners, and the work put into support for the ballot, were

far superior to their performance at conference itself. Speaker after speaker crudely revealed the real nature of their support for the ballot, which was hostility to the miners.

It was only due to their own incompetence around the manoeuvres which always play an important role at conference that they failed to get the required two-thirds.

However, having tasted their power they will not stop after this setback. They will continue to organise against supporting the miners at both

local and national level. There is a danger that instead of recognising that the one-third is a strong base to build on, the left will retreat into routine and branch work.

At a fringe meeting at the end of conference, attended by 80 delegates, there was a strong feeling that branch work needed strengthening by building miners' support committees independent of the branch leaderships.

It was also felt that the production of a leaflet by one or two left branches would help this work.

Of course, this is all very important. But in the face of the growing right wing attack it would be a mistake to concentrate all attention on this area.

National organisation of the left must become a reality. The attack on local government will make this a vital question.

A start can be made by giving maximum support to the national Broad Left conference on 3 November, at Carrs Lane Church Centre, Birmingham (11am-4pm).

Jaguar sets the pace

LAST WEEK, 7000 hourly paid workers at Jaguar turned down management's first offer in the '84 pay review.

The workers' decision shocked both management and the press, and put Jaguar in the position of pacemaker in the '84 pay round in the car industry.

The Jaguar claim has been carefully prepared over four months of discussion. It began with shop floor meetings where the members put forward their views.

By September, a joint claim covering all grades and all unions in the three plants had been hammered out. The shop stewards issued an eight page booklet explaining the claim in detail for every worker.

The issue behind the claim is the low basic rate. At £116.60 and £118.75, skilled production workers at Jaguar are £40-£50 behind leading rates in the area.

The booklet explains that £25 for all grades would not close the gap in one go, but 'it would make a significant step in the right direction and no more'.

By Paul Mitchell

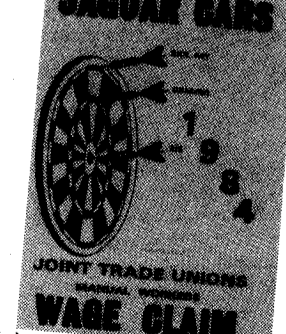
It goes on to say: 'We seek an across-the-board increase so as to avoid widening differentials beyond their present levels. If we are to be successful an equal determination must be shown by the entire workforce and an equal reward in this most important area should therefore be sought.'

On sick pay the claim is for payment from day one for those off sick for more than one week. At present, the first three days are unpaid. The shop stewards point out that 'the cost of granting this part of the claim would be very small but would provide a greater degree of security for our members'.

The claim also seeks to reopen the question of the grading structure. The present structure was forced on the Jaguar workforce following a dispute in BL and with threats to close the company down.

The claim concludes: 'We will not accept a miserly reply. We will expect a reply that... pays a level of wages sufficient to provide a decent standard of living for them and their families.'

Management's offer, despite the media's



coverage, is in fact miserly. Management are strongly committed to a two year deal, over which the offer is spread. The proposal to consolidate £3.75 out of bonus is a proposal to pay us out of our own money. In actual money terms, the offer is £5 weekly after deductions.

The offer on sick pay is most revealing of management's miserly approach. They offer the reduction

of waiting days from three to two. Then come the strings: the unions must help management to police absenteeism; persistent absenteeism will be disciplined; workers must sign sick notes for unpaid days; and 'the company reserves the right to revert to three waiting days if any of the above conditions are not met'.

The negotiating team rejected the offer on all counts, and mass meetings at the plants supported this position unanimously. Negotiators were mandated to press for a 'substantially improved offer based on the original claim'.

This could well be the beginning of a prolonged struggle across the car industry to take back the initiative after several years of unrelenting management pressure on pay and conditions.

Socialist ACTION

Students and Ireland

By LCI Student Officer

THE BOMBING of the Tory Party conference last week has once again focused attention on Ireland's British problem. For, after the press hysteria has died down, the facts will still remain that the British presence in the North of Ireland is the root cause of all the violence that occurs, whether it be in the North or South of Ireland, or here in Britain.

Last year the National Organisation of Labour Students became the first national organisation of the Labour Party to affiliate to the Labour Committee on Ireland. It also recognised that the British military and political presence is the root cause of the continuing war. Now it's up to the Labour Clubs in the colleges to get that message over to other students in their unions and the NUS.

The murder of Sean Downes by the RUC at the 9 August rally in Belfast, marking the anniversary of internment, re-emphasises how vital the campaign against plastic bullets is. Despite the disgraceful delay by Labour's spokespeople in remembering that party policy is to ban plastic bullets, many others have a different outlook.

Miners visiting Ireland have noted how repressive methods developed there are now being used against the labour movement in Britain. How long until lethal plastic bullets, already stockpiled, are used against the miners and others here?

Many student women's groups have already been active in protesting at the use of violent and degrading strip searches against the nationalist women imprisoned in Armagh. This will be raised again at NUS women's conference (open to all student women), in Birmingham on 10 November.

The LCI's excellent magazine, *New Labour and Ireland* (only 40p), is highly informative and easy to sell. It carries a page on student and youth activity — why not sell it in your college?

Information on student and youth campaign work for inclusion is welcomed by the LCI. Contact LCI Youth Officer, c/o PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.



Photo: MARK RUSHER (IFL)

ACTIVISTS DIARY

● National CND Conference, Sheffield, 23/24/25 November. Deadline for delegates is 5 November. Don't delay, make sure your college sends its full delegation!

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

● NUS Women's Conference, Birmingham University, 10 November. All women supporters urged to attend.

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

STUDENTS

A Socialist ACTION

El Salvador

Peace talks - a sham!

THE BASIS of the present 'peace talks' in El Salvador is the offer by Duarte of 'free elections' in which all can participate without fear of their lives.

But this is exactly the problem. Duarte can, and intends to, make no such promise. There is only one real power on the government side within El Salvador and that is not president Duarte. That power lies with the army and its high command.

The freedom fighters of the FMLN understand this very well, which is why their main demand in agreeing to participate in the talks was that the army high command should also be there.

The army is highly cynical of the possibilities of success from Duarte's 'softly, softly' approach to the liberation movement. The only reason it has not openly broken with the Duarte regime is due to pressure from the US.

Indeed that is the only reason that Duarte got elected in the first place. It is the army which decides who will be president of El Salvador, not the popular masses. So the US used a very simple mechanism - blackmail.

Military aid to El Salvador was officially cut off before the presidential election in the spring, in a situation where the FMLN was already exerting pressure on the army.

Last year the FMLN made clear progress in attacking garrison towns and opening up new areas of the country to free guerilla movement. In January of this year it attacked and defeated a garrison only 36 miles north of San Salvador, and blew up the Cascallan bridge, breaking the Pan-American highway.

The message from the US was clear. Get Duarte elected and the military aid will come back.

Duarte being duly elected earlier this year the military aid is flowing back into El Salvador with a vengeance, on a scale quite unprecedented previously.

What is involved in the negotiations is a game of bluff and double-bluff. At every point along the way since Duarte was elected the army has threatened to kick away the traces and break with the regime. That essentially would

crunch the US would not see the EL Salvadorian army destroyed - that would aid only the FMLN.

The army is prepared for these talks to go ahead, because they will exercise a veto on any result. And the army will not allow genuinely 'free elections' in El Salvador. There is only one way such elections could take place, and that is if the army's political power was broken. This the generals will not allow.

More to the point, Duarte cannot allow this either. Because after all, whether the army really wanted him or not, he knows he is only president because the army arranged it.

This is why the army will let the talks go ahead, because they intend that it won't make a bit of difference. As a military source in El Salvador put it: 'this is a publicity stunt that will go nowhere'.

The talks can solve nothing. There is only one way to deal with the military dictatorship in El Salvador and that is the route that the FMLN is already embarked upon: the struggle to build mass popular organisations, to arm the people and defeat and destroy the military force of the El Salvadorian army. To build solidarity with that struggle is the main aim of the international campaign for El Salvador.

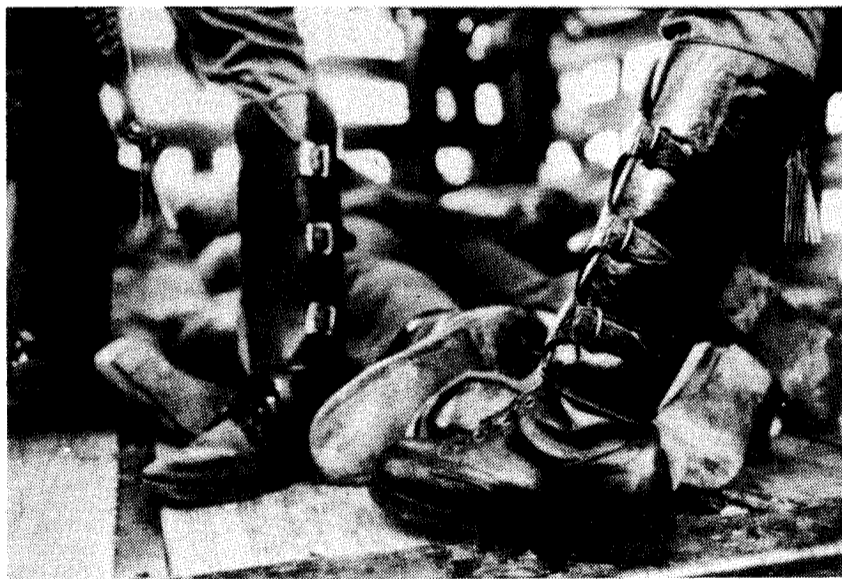
mean openly unleashing the death squads against the civilian population and letting the army loose in the countryside - with considerable embarrassment for the US administration.

Since the election the army has tried to present a more 'acceptable' face to the international public by scaling down its use of terror, torture and the death squads.

By Jude Woodward

But nothing has fundamentally changed. Last month it was announced that on 30 August the army opened fire on 300 unarmed peasants in Chaletenango province. The death toll was over 35, and entire families have disappeared. Most ironic, the battalion involved has been previously held up as a shining example of a unit that had broken with its old brutal practices since Duarte's election.

While the generals accept that the US can make things difficult, they also know that if it came to the



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Car industry heads for hot autumn

THE STRIKE by Vauxhall's 14,000 workers against management's seven per cent offer in the 84 pay round opens up a hot autumn in the car industry.

BL unions have submitted a claim for £22, while Jaguar has rejected management's offer of a two-year deal, and reaffirmed a claim of £25. Fords have submitted a claim for 14 per cent.

Over the last year there has been a revival of militancy in the car industry, which will have a big impact on the autumn pay round. At BL's Cowley Assembly Plant, there has been 130 disputes in the last ten months.

The miners' strike is one element in this revival.

The relative upturn in the motor industry has also been important.

By Pat Hickey

Earnings in manufacturing have been rising at well above the targeted 5

per cent. They are closer to 10 per cent.

This is a particularly serious development for car industry employers. They are geared up for sales of 1.95 million in 1984, while all forecasts were for about 50,000 to 100,000 fewer sales in '84, than the 1.78 million sold in '83.

The result is rapidly sharpening competition with the major producers pushing costs on to suppliers and dealers. The market price of cars in Europe is well below the cost of production.

Europe has about half of the world's excess car manufacturing capacity of 5 million vehicles. The pressure on employers to hold down wages is very great.

Any concessions made now will be even more costly if there is the expected down-turn in sales next year.

Workers in the industry had five years of speed-up and wage restraint. The growing confidence of the unions looks likely to run head-on into the resistance of the employers.