

# A Socialist ACTION

- The dates of the five rallies announced by the NUM are:
- 6 November, Edinburgh Usher Hall, 7pm
  - 8 November, Sheffield City Hall, 7.30pm
  - 11 November, Newcastle City Hall, 7pm
  - 13 November, Aberystwyth Lido, 7pm
  - 14 November, Birmingham Digbeth Hall, 7.30pm



# SCAB!

**THE LABOUR** Party discovered on Monday evening that it has another open scab in its ranks. The problem is that this particular scab is the leader of the Labour Party.

There should be no illusions as to the enormity of what Neil Kinnock has done by refusing to speak at the five national rallies of the NUM.

The miners today are under the most vicious attack launched against any trade union, and any section of the working class, since 1926.

The union's funds have been seized. The government is literally trying to force the miners, the women in the mining communities, and their children into submission through brutal hardship.

Police thugs are operating in the mining areas. £1,400 bribes are offered to scabs to return to work.

Court writs are now piling up like confetti. If the NUM were to be defeated in this strike it would shape, drastically for the worse, the future of the labour movement for the next years.

In that situation the NUM, rightly, has turned for support to the organisations of the entire working class. The miners had the right, and the duty, to demand that the elected leaders of the working class movement, Norman Willis and Neil Kinnock, pledged themselves totally and utterly to their support. That is what the TUC and Labour Party conference voted.

By refusing to speak on its platforms Neil Kinnock calculatedly stabbed the NUM in the back. But his action was only a qualitative stepping up of the policy he has been pursuing for months.

Since Labour Party conference Kinnock and Hattersley have been

systematically installing the right wing as chairpersons of the key committees of the NEC. Those removed naturally included all the strongest supporters of the miners strike — because it has been the left which has been organising the real mass support for the miners.

In the Parliamentary Labour Party Heffer was purged from the Shadow Cabinet and Benn not elected. Liverpool council, was publicly attacked by the party leadership, even before the miners' strike.

In short there is a pattern. Neil Kinnock is systematically using his position, and supporters, to disrupt and disorganise the struggle of the working class, the working class movement, and those most determinedly fighting for the interests of the working class.

Previously Kinnock appealed for unity of the party. That would have been excellent if it meant unity for the

struggle. But by refusing to speak on the NUM's platforms Neil Kinnock is decisively breaking the unity in struggle of the labour movement.

In any case there is a *higher* law than party unity. That is the fight to defend the interests of the working class and of the working class movement.

Until now, in the interests of party 'unity', many on the Labour left have preferred not to reopen the leadership question. But it would be better today for an *open* determined left to fight than to allow Kinnock to go unchallenged in his scabbing.

The left wing of the NEC should publicly and openly dissociate itself from Kinnock's action on the miners strike. The NEC, or its left wing, should demand Kinnock's resignation. The left should decide on its candidate to challenge Kinnock for the leadership.

Every CLP and labour movement body in the country should openly come out against Kinnock's action and demand he resigns.

It would be genuinely better to have the fight openly now than to be led to disaster in three years time by a scab who used his position to disorganise the struggle of the working class. The left needs to organise not only independently of but consciously *against* Kinnock.

Neil Kinnock by his action on the miners has broken any claim to be leader of the working class movement.

As Kay Sutcliffe, one of the leaders of the Kent miners wives put it, 'Kinnock was elected as a leader of the working class through the Labour Party. If he's not prepared to stand up for the working class he shouldn't be a leader of the working class.'

He must go.

# Socialist ACTION

## Organising the left

NEIL KINNOCK'S scabbing role on the NUM strike this week drives home one of the most fundamental lessons of the class struggle. The labour movement was created to fight against the bourgeoisie — but the role of its leadership today is not one of pursuing that struggle but of breaking up and disorganising it.

Kinnock was elected with the vast good will of the overwhelming majority of the working class activists. Those who opposed him were a tiny minority and certainly had no power to 'disrupt party unity' even if they had wanted to. Any 'disruption' which has now occurred is purely and exclusively the work of one N. Kinnock.

'Party unity' has been broken up simply and solely because Kinnock has refused to support those engaged in a serious fight with the Thatcher government. Furthermore Kinnock is increasingly openly in a political and organisational bloc with the right wing on every issue from Liverpool, through reselection, to the miners strike.

In short regardless of whether anyone on the left wanted it or not, and regardless of whether they expected it or not, the left now is faced with a clear and long fight. To get at the Thatcher government it is simultaneously going to have to fight a long and bitter battle against Kinnock. Therefore where does the left stand in that struggle today?

At one level there is a real step forward. The left of the party has both acknowledged leaders who have proved they can gain popular support and it has at least rudimentary organisation in a number of areas.

Tony Benn has been the left's traditional candidate for party leader — and will probably continue to be so for this Parliament. But after that Ken Livingstone, one of the most popular politicians in Britain, is an obvious alternative candidate of the left for leader if one requires. Just let Kinnock's supporters claim that Ken Livingstone would 'only appeal to a narrow circle of party activists'!

There also exists authoritative organisation in a number of fields — and rudimentary organisation in others. The Women's Action Committee is building an impregnable position as the leadership of the fight for women's self-organisation within the party. The black section adds an entire new dimension to Labour Party left politics. Out of the fight on local government at least some rudimentary organisation can be expected to arise.

The big weakness is still organisation in the constituency labour parties and the trade unions. In the CLPs *Briefing* has by far the best potential. In the trade unions the situation is still weak however — which is no accident because an across the board organisation of the left inside the unions would begin to crack Kinnock's base wide open.

Across the board organisation of the left in the whole party has only really been temporarily achieved once — around the Rank and File Mobilising Committee in Tony Benn's campaign for Deputy Leader. A more informal type of unity has existed powerfully around the miners' strike.

The process of organising this left is not going to be achieved in a short period. But the elements are there. It requires two key steps.

The first step forward is that co-ordination by the existing left must be encouraged. United fronts on particular questions, conferences involving currents such as WAC, the black section, *Briefing* and other currents are what is required. An immediate goal must be a conference of the entire left.

Secondly there is the question of how the NUM itself is going to settle accounts in the labour movement. No issue has more clearly drawn a line on who is for, and who is against, the class struggle and the miners' strike. The NUM needs to break with its tradition of running 'parallel' with the developments in the Labour Party to instead turn into the party to help deal with those who opposed it and supported it. Out of these developments can begin to develop organisation of the entire left inside the party.

Neil Kinnock has chosen war inside the labour movement. The task for the left is to ensure that it is not just one side that is prepared for it.

# Full support for the miners!

I AM DELIGHTED with the NUM's call for support from the wider trade union movement. The time has long passed for any serious trade union activist to recognise that the NUM battle in reality is a battle for everybody.

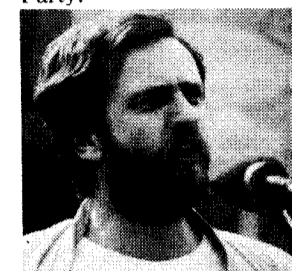
If the miners are not successful, there will be no victories on rate-capping, no victories on abolition, no victories on the peace campaign. And the Tory government will have its greatest boost so far.

No other leading union — and certainly no other leading figure in the Labour Party — has stood up as the NUM have and refused to accept an economic philosophy that expends jobs and communities. They have stood up in a way no other union has to the philosophy that says you can always negotiate your way out of a problem.

When other unions in the basic industries have been confronted with Tory proposals, most of them have accepted — albeit reluctantly — the principle of redundancies in order to keep the industry going. The NUM have refused to do that — and they're speaking for everybody.

I am appalled that the TUC took until the congress to make any significant declaration even of support in principle for the

NUM. I'm equally appalled at the lack of activity by the front bench of the Parliamentary Labour Party.



By Jeremy Corbyn

Last weekend was the classic example of this. The *Sunday Times* ran the story of the alleged visit to Libya by the chief executive of the NUM with allegations of Libyan finances to help the strike. It was immediately condemned by the leader of the Labour Party.

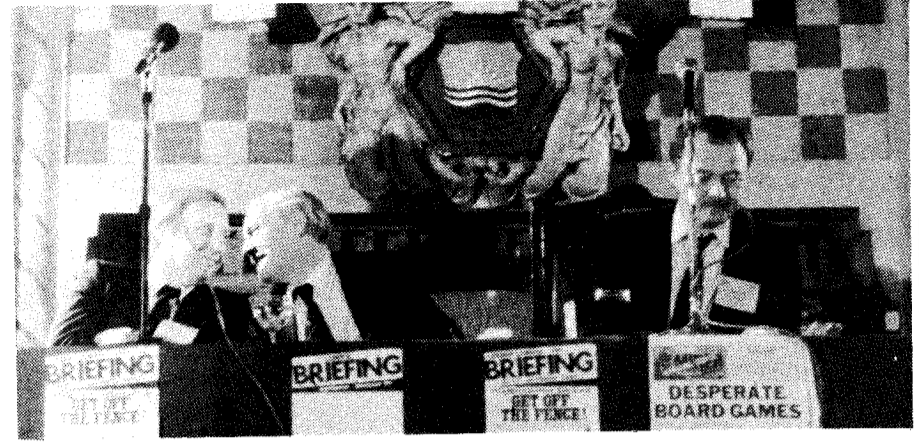


Photo: GRANT KEIR

It is disgraceful to condemn the activities of any union on strike without first of all finding out what they are doing. I recognise the right of any union to seek support from trade unionists around the world. A parliamentary motion to that effect has been tabled, signed by representatives of the Campaign Group.

The party leadership ought to know better than to jump into the mire created by the press over the whole affair. Because they did, it then became an issue for the rest of the

week. But the hypocrisy of the Coal Board and the Tory government was exposed — on the one hand condemning Arthur Scargill and the NUM for seeking money from trade unionists anywhere in the world, at the same time busy investing money themselves and importing South African coal which is keeping the power stations going.

The response of constituency parties throughout the dispute has been magnificent. In many parts of the country, it has

been the making of the Labour Party. The response of the Labour Party nationally, and the leadership, has to be total support for the NUM. Neil Kinnock, Norman Willis and Arthur Scargill should be marching down the road together.

The miners are leading the battle at the present time. Anyone who is serious about any campaigning in issue in this country has to support the miners — and that includes Labour's front bench.

# Libya: more dirty tricks

FOR THE PAST ten days, the Tory press has led a vicious smear campaign against NUM president Arthur Scargill, in an attempt to divide the union and end the strike.

Despite the initial success in wheeling out Neil Kinnock to condemn the NUM's alleged ties with Libya, the press have failed in their first attempt to split the miners and weaken support for them in the rest of the labour movement.

The complete cynicism and double standards of the Coal Board and Tory government were rapidly exposed by Tony Benn's announcement of the Coal Board's own Libyan connection, following the *Sunday Times* first 'revelation'. But while the Coal Board's contract with the Libyan government has been quietly forgotten, the *Sunday Times* continues to sling mud at Scargill.

This week the insight team followed up with a blow-by-blow account of Scargill's whereabouts for the past few weeks in a se-

cond attempt to prove some dirty political deal. They paraded the 'sinister figure' of Mumtaz Abbasi, Libya's 'Mr Fix It', saying that the NUM 'won't have any financial problems any more. They won't forget me for the rest of their lives'.

By Carol Turner

Supposedly, Abbasi thought the miners would adopt him as a sponsored MP, as a suitable token of their appreciation.

These bizarre ambitions revealed, the *Sunday Times* went on to draw out the many connections of the 'not entirely trusted' Mr Abbasi — alleging that various groups suspected he either worked for the KGB or British intelligence.

But the real suspicion in the whole *Sunday Times* story lies in the details themselves: exact times, places and dates of meetings, and in many cases what was said by whom. How did a team of journalists, in so short a space of time, have access to such information — in-

cluding details of intelligence officers?

There's cause to be suspicious all right. But not of Arthur Scargill or the NUM. The *Sunday*

*Times* investigation has all the hallmarks of drawing on police and intelligence sources.

In the 1920s the British state had a very active dir-

ty tricks department — the publication of the Zinoviev letter during the election of 1924 being the most famous. It seems the old firm is still at work.



# A PIECE OF THE ACTION

#76 11-84 Gormac



What's this? Oh joy!! It's yet another little report on what to do with the Irish!!



I simply must get a copy and learn which piece of tinkering they think would make this police state more lovable!



And then, of course, the Report will be filed away in this little container! For even the littlest tinkering would offend the loyalists and we can't have that!



But although these reports make very amusing reading they can have a very harmful effect on one's sense of reality....



Photo: RICK MATTHEWS (IFL)

## The courts go to war

**WRITS AGAINST the labour movement are now flying like confetti, as the courts go for the kill against the NUM, attack solidarity action with the miners, and try to break the Austin-Rover strike. But it is the legal moves against the NUM that are by far the most serious.**

**The seizure by the Irish courts of £3 million of NUM assets was a widely publicised blow to the miners. But still more potentially dangerous legal actions were also taken last week.**

Derbyshire 'working miners' were granted a High Court injunction on Monday banning the use of area funds in furtherance of the strike. This move is clearly aimed at strengthening the back to work moves in the North Derbyshire area, and at preventing strikers from effectively picketing the scabs.

The move against the Derbyshire area will be a signal to strike breakers in other areas to seek similar orders.

In Yorkshire the scabs are attempting to take control of the area away from its elected officers, and place the union in the hands of a receiver appointed by the courts. This will be on the basis that the High Court has declared the strike unofficial, and therefore use of the funds is a breach of trust. The receiver would run the union on terms dictated by the High Court.

The Yorkshire action has a similar basis to the one pending against members of the NUM National Executive which will attempt to make individual officers personally liable for the fines on the union.

In South Wales, the TGWU has also been

ordered to stop the boycott which the Cardiff dockers have imposed on the two scabs haulage firms whose court action led to the seizure of South Wales NUM funds.

by Pat Hickey

Separately from the miners strike, but as part of the new legal onslaught, BL has also taken to the courts to attack its workforce. Mass meetings at the company's plants at Longbridge and Cowley voted by large majorities to reject the company's wage offer. After failing to stimulate a 'back to work' move the company is now using the courts to break the strike.

Under the 1984 Trade Union Act, which came into effect in September, unions are liable to up to £250,000 damages unless a secret ballot is first held to endorse strike action. To get back within the law, the unions will have to call off the strike for a secret ballot to be held. Clearly, such a move would break the strike.

If the strike is not called off the unions will be liable to be sued for damages by BL, components suppliers, dealers, scabs etc. The BL unions

would then face fines similar to those imposed on the NUM.

The labour movement must face up to these attacks now. They represent the most serious assault on the unions since the imprisonment of five dockers in 1972 — and could also end up in the imprisonment of trade unionists. Even now these court actions are a serious threat to the NUM's ability to pursue the strike. The government knows that if the NUM can continue through the winter power cuts will come. It is therefore aiming to break the strike now. Simultaneously the government is trying to push through the whole framework of its anti-union laws — because if the Austin-Rover injunction is the first major use of the 1984 anti-union laws it will be very far from the last if it is not defeated now.

The TUC has got to act to stop these legal shackles being imposed on the unions. The TUC Congress decisions commit the TUC to industrial action to stop these laws. Massive industrial action is needed now to back the NUM and to stop the courts.

The General Council of the TUC should be recalled to prepare such action. At present the courts are picking off individual unions — and in the case of the NUM individual areas — with no centralised response from the labour movement. In fact ever since the betrayal of the NGA by the General Council the Tories have been preparing further attacks. Only the miners' strike has held them back.

The fact that the earlier legal attacks on the NUM were not responded to by the TUC has encouraged the government to step up their assault.

The whole labour movement should follow the example of the NUM in its defiance of the courts and the law. The TUC should build on the miners' struggle and prepare the whole labour movement for strike action.

Given the attacks on the different areas of the NUM there should also be a campaign to build regional strike action.

The entire trade union movement is now under legal attack. The entire trade union movement has to be mobilised against it.

### Defend the miners! Defend the political levy!

**TWO important conferences on vital questions for the future of labour movement are taking place in London on the weekend of 1-2 December. These are:**

- 1 December at Central Hall Westminster, Labour Co-ordinating Committee Conference to Defend Union Political Funds
- 2 December at Camden Town Hall, Mineworkers Defence Committee Conference.

Socialist Action urges all its supporters and readers to come to both conferences and have a real socialist weekend.

## Back to work movement still failing

**DESPITE the hullabaloo from the Coal Board the real facts of this week's 'back to work' movement are plain to see. In the striking areas, including North Derbyshire, the strike is still 98 per cent solid — and this is based on the NCB's figures which the NUM hotly contest.**

The Coal Board clearly learned from their failed back to work movement at the end of the summer and this time have employed more judicious tactics.

Firstly they ensured that the drive for a return to work was backed up with a financial reward — Christmas bonuses and holiday pay.

Secondly they have clearly been saving up those who wanted to go back for one push on definite day, rather than encourage them to go back in ones and twos.

And thirdly they have centred their fire on one weaker area rather than base their propaganda on a generalised return to work across all the

coalfields. North Derbyshire is the chosen focus, and this is where picketing should be concentrated on turning back the Coal Board's campaign.

By Jude Woodward

North Derbyshire has been in a weaker position since the summer. It neighbours the scabbing areas of Nottingham and South Derbyshire which has had an impact on the strike in North Derby.

The inclusion of Bolsover in the figures for those working in North Derbyshire also affects the proportions which has a valuable propaganda value for the Coal Board.

Bolsover NUM is part of the Nottingham area, even though geographically it is in the county of Derbyshire. Since the summer the Coal Board has included Bolsover in the North Derbyshire figures, effectively including part of the scab Notts miners in with the Derbyshire strikers.

The attempt to make a significant breakthrough in North Derbyshire is fur-

ther evidenced by the introduction of a writ to prevent the North Derbyshire NUM spending any of its funds on the strike.

However even on the Coal Board's figures, including Bolsover, the number on strike in North

Derby has only declined from 95 per cent in August to 85 per cent now.

Overall the figures for the 'total strike' areas — Scotland, Kent, South Wales, Yorkshire, the North east, and North Derby — show a tiny

decline from 99 per cent on strike on 20 August to 98 per cent on strike this week.

However the Coal Board's campaign must be turned back. Safety cover should be withdrawn in all pits where

miners return to work. And mass pickets should focus on the North Derbyshire pits to keep that area solid in the face of a massive media and legal offensive.

The strike is not even slightly cracking. Even John Lloyd in the *Financial Times* had to concede that judged against the pressure from the Coal Board and the prospect of a long winter, 'the figures ... look no more than what one would expect'. And that is not what the Coal Board would have us believe.



Photo: MARTIN SHAKESHAF (IFL)

# Strong support for Coalville railworkers

DELEGATIONS OF railworkers from depots stretching from Tinsley freight depot in South Yorkshire to Brighton passenger depot on the south coast descended on the small Leicestershire town of Coalville last Sunday.

Over one hundred rail trade unionists piled into the Labour Club to express solidarity with Coalville members who have suffered seven months of intimidation at the hands of British Rail management for refusing to shift coal.

As Roy Butlin, local railworkers' leader explained to enthusiastic applause: 'Our fight is not just about the miners' strike. It's about solidarity, working class loyalty, standing up for what you believe in, and pursuing it to the bitter end.'

'No threat, no intimidation, and no aggravation will deviate us from what we are doing, because it's right. It's right to support the miners, and see it through to ultimate victory — victory which will benefit all the working class.'

The struggle to maintain unity at the depot isn't easy. Coalville is just what it sounds like — a town which wouldn't exist if it weren't for the four local pits. Two have already been closed.

The landscape is dotted with stock-piled mountains of scab coal. And, as coal levels at the Trent Valley power stations reach danger point, both the National Coal Board and the British Rail Board are trying every trick in the book to get coal back on the trains.

Butlin reckons that with 22 million tonnes of coal sitting around, there is every chance that the army will be brought in. But in the next few weeks management will be continuing in its campaign of intimidation to try and bust the action by railworkers.

## Leaflet

So far, the Coalville men have withstood the pressure admirably. Butlin opened the meeting by exposing the lies in a leaflet handed out by management last week. In this latest attempt to split the workforce, management calls for a return to normal working on Monday. The leaflet states that the men's refusal to shift coal has led to the loss of traffic from Desford colliery, which shut on 24 August '83!

In addition to the leaflet last week, management tried to pressure the Coalville men into moving two trains filled with coal that have sat at the depot since 6 July.

Graham Cross, Coalville NUR branch secretary, told the meeting how Transport Police searched his home, as well as homes of six other members. 'These searches show just how desperate management is getting,' said Cross, 'and they have resulted in three sackings to date.'

One the Coalville men had put their case, the meeting heard from a whole platform of speakers. Tommy Taylor,

secretary of Shirebrook ASLEF, reported on the severe intimidation faced by Federation members in his depot. 'Although it's a disgrace that only about 50 per cent of our membership has responded to union appeals, the half of the depot which remains at work is only shifting about 20 per cent of the normal movement of coal.'

Tommy Doyle, secretary of the NUR at Tinsley freight depot brought greetings from 3000 South Yorkshire railway workers. 'We are no longer in the sunny days of the summer,' Doyle said. 'Now there is a real threat of power cuts. The lies and threats will continue.'

By Doreen Wepler, NUR member

'Management has made concessions. But South Yorkshire is not satisfied with what is still happening. Our branch executive committee and the next meeting of our district council will be considering a resolution to call on the national leadership to take national industrial action to stop the intimidation. The answer to management must come on a national level.'

A warm welcome was extended to the NUM speakers. Brian Walker, branch secretary of Newstead colliery in Nottingham, was joined on the platform by Malcolm Pinnegar, one of the 'Dirty Thirty'.

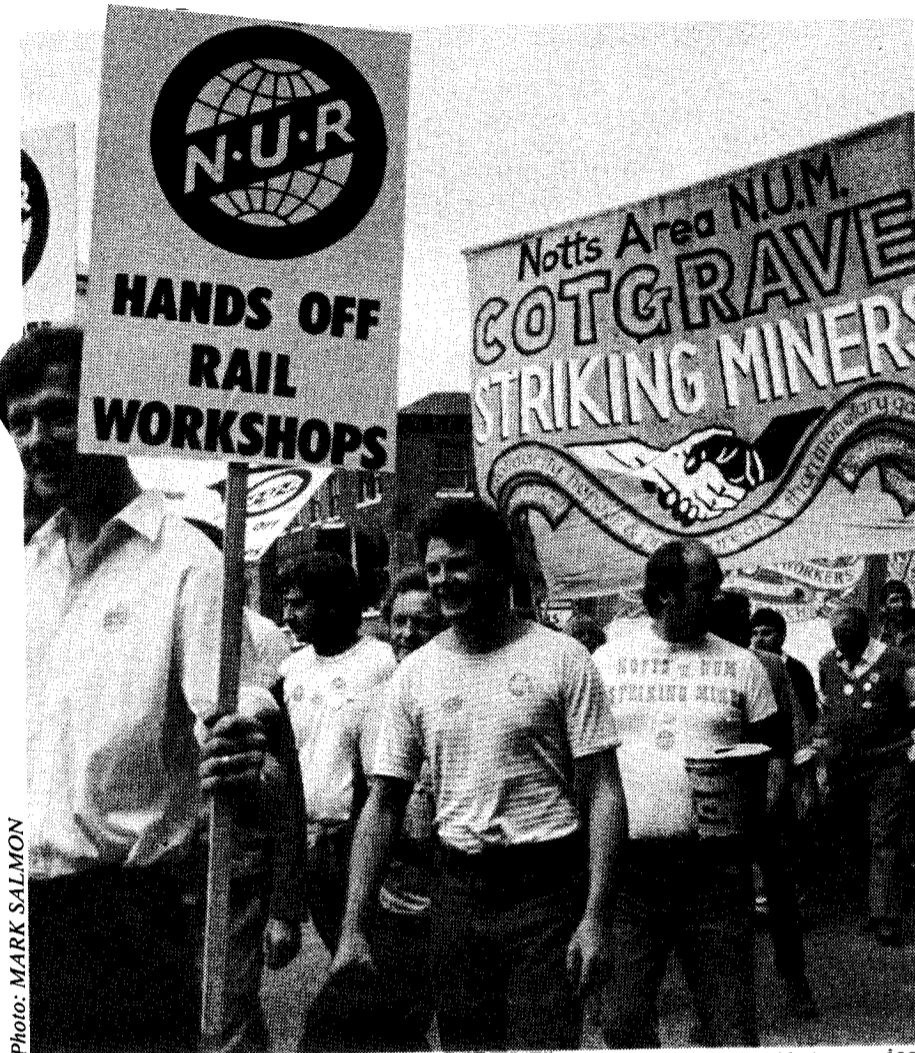
Pinnegar paid tribute to 'the magnificent job of the railmen in Coalville who are stopping the movement of 135,000 tonnes of coal each week.'

## Beauvoir

He mapped out the plans of the NCB to shut down pits up and down the country, promising everyone jobs at the Vale of Beauvoir. 'Then they will privatise Beauvoir. Well it'll be over our dead bodies that any mine will be returned to private owners.'

But for many of the railworkers at the meeting, the one speech that was closely followed was from Tony Donaghue. He brought fraternal greetings from the executive of the NUR, as well as from the Federation as a whole. Donaghue pledged support from the Federation. 'Your union is behind you,' he said.

'We are doing all we can at a national level, at a district committee level, and at a branch level. And today is an indication of our commitment. Mantle



Derby solidarity demonstration, 10 August 1984

Lane depot in Coalville will not be left alone for carrying out the decisions of the Federation.'

## Derby

While Donaghue's message was welcomed, many members from the floor were critical of the lack of a national lead. Jerry Hughes from Derby put it plainly. 'We say we need a regional one day strike. The EC member says support should come from the members. Well we back the Coalville men. We're ready, but where's the call from Unity House?'

As Roy Butlin told Socialist Action, 'This meeting will give a boost to our members. But it's important that those who have come to Coalville take the inspiration they have had today back to their depots and branches and act on it. We hope members will be putting resolutions at every level of the union and the Federation.'

## Policy

'We hope all actions taken by miners in line with union policy will be backed, and that calls will go out for a campaign to reinstate our members who have been sacked.'

'The rail union leadership would strengthen our fight if rallies were organised in the front line areas, to support railworkers and miners. And a recalled Guards and Shunters Grades Conference is indispensable today.'

# Lesbians & gays support the miners

LESBIANS and gay men support the miners! This was the message, loud and clear, from a delegation of 30 lesbians and gay men from London to pits in South Wales on the weekend 26/27 October.

The London lesbians and gays support the miners group, formed only three months ago, has already collected more than £2000 for miners in Dulais valley, as well as organising a successful public meeting which attracted 100 people. The group's success has accelerated the formation of other groups up and down the country.

By Polly Vittorini

The delegation was our most triumphant event yet, and an eye opener for all concerned — two very different life styles came together for a while.

Perhaps the most significant event of the weekend was at a rally in support of the miners in Swansea, where a young woman representative from the group was invited on the platform, alongside Dennis Skinner, Jimmy Knapp and Peter

Heathfield.

The applause which greeted her words was tremendous: 'We all face the same police violence. We're all fighting the same enemy: so let's go forward to smash this Tory government together, and without prejudice. No to the oppression of lesbians and gay men — victory to the NUM!'

This was our first mass platform — it must be the first of many.

Certainly the most emotional point of the

## National solidarity conference

ARTHUR SCARGILL and Tony Benn will be speaking at the National Solidarity conference on 2 December in Camden Town Hall called by the Mineworkers' Defence Committee.

The committee was established on 4 October at the Labour Party conference in Blackpool at a 700 strong 'Defend the NUM' fringe meeting. The meeting had been called to alert the labour movement to the threat posed by the legal attack of the High Court on the NUM's right to strike.

By Valerie Coultas

The writ for 'contempt of court' had been served on Arthur Scargill two days earlier inside the Labour Party conference, after the debate on energy had taken place.

At that meeting a statement was circulated to all participants 'declaring the present industrial action by the National Union of Mineworkers to be an official strike'. Since that time a number of other labour movement bodies have also repeated the 'contempt'.

The national solidarity conference will be open to all labour movement bodies to send delegates, solidarity committees and Women Against Pit Closure groups are invited to do the same.

Coming after an eight-month long battle by the NUM against the NCB to keep pits open it will be the first national forum for the grass roots and the left

leaders of the labour movement to discuss stepping up the action.

TUC and Labour Party conference decisions on this issue must be implemented. Arthur Scargill is campaigning up and down the country on this basis.

On 2 December Labour Party members can push forward the campaign for a national Labour Party demonstration in support of the NUM.

As Xmas draws near the miners and their families will need more than food parcels and presents, although this is vital. They need to know that they do not stand alone.

The day before this conference the LCC is holding a national meeting to defend the Political Levy. Socialist Action supporters should get delegated to both events and arrange transport for NUM members to travel down for the weekend.

London Labour Briefing, along with the Briefing Youth Commission, plans to hold a social on Saturday evening.

● Registration for Mineworkers' Defence Committee conference, £2 for first delegate and £1 for every extra delegate, from 31 Cranwich Rd, N16 (01-981 3289).



weekend was a benefit for the miners that night. Speeches were followed by a sight I have never seen of gay couples and mixed couples freely dancing together.

Not for a moment had the group expected to be so warmly accepted and visible.

Undoubtedly the weekend was an historic occasion. For the first time links have been made between two of the most unlikely sections of the working class against the

common enemy. On the one hand the miners, traditionally macho, and on the other, lesbians and gay men, traditionally despised.

Colossal amounts of prejudice were wiped away. This event must be seen as a precedent for further such links.

● Lesbians and gays support the miners meets every Sunday at 6pm in the Fallen Angel, Graham St, off City Rd, London N1 (Angel tube).

# Making the link — which way for Greenham?

**TWO HUNDRED** or more women from the Greenham Peace Camp and all over Britain gathered in Nottingham last week for a women's peace weekend.

**Notts peace women are very actively supporting the miners and Women Against Pit Closures, and the sessions led by women from Blidworth evoked the most enthusiasm.**

They spoke about their experience of police violence, how it had hardened their resolve to win, and how the experience had affected their own lives. 'I've got feelings about the world now, and they will never change.'

The radicalisation of women and our leading role in the peace movement, has led us as feminists to welcome and support the struggle of miners and the organising of women in the mining communities.

The response of women in sessions on Nicaragua and the struggle against nuclear weapons in the Pacific shows our internationalism. However, the question of support for the Greenham camp and its future was not thoroughly discussed.

Women are urgently needed at the camp. But the workshop on the future of Greenham placed too much emphasis on spontaneity and individual commitment, without addressing questions of how we can organise consistent support nationally, through our groups and through demands on CND.

**By Iona Aronovsky, Newham Greenham Support Group**

There is no reason why this cannot be done. And women in London groups will be meeting to discuss how we organise with the support of London region CND and the London Labour Party women's committee. Another workshop

raised important questions on how we take our struggles into political parties and the official peace movement. But the general questions of the direction of the women's peace movement, the role of mass action, our campaign against cruise, and how they relate to CND and its policies, were not fully aired.

We can't forget about these things despite our excitement about the miners' strike. The next women's conference (probably in Manchester) must look at these questions.

Meanwhile we must continue the fight in CND for real support of women's right to organise in the peace movement — it's just not good enough for CND Council to decide whether or not women can have our own conference.

However, the conference in Nottingham scotches any views that women are more reactionary than men, and the dreary notion that pushing forward our struggle divides the working class.



Photo: DEREK SPEIRS  
Armagh women's prison

## London women support the miners

**SEVERAL** hundred women attended the London region Labour women's conference on Saturday 27 October. It was the first conference to directly elect the women's section of the London region committee, and a full slate of left-wing women were elected.

The conference listened to several specially invited speakers. However it was the testimony of Linda Quigley, an Armagh prisoner for three years, that was the most moving. During her speech you could have heard a pin

drop in the crowded hall. The conference was also addressed by a miner's wife from Notts who received enthusiastic applause. Unfortunately the main motion on the

**By Eve Oldham**

miners' strike was presented as an emergency resolution — in itself an indication that the miners' strike was not sufficiently addressed in the resolutions submitted in the normal way. This point was made by Joan Twelves from Vauxhall women's section moving the emergency resolution.

However even the emergency resolution was weak as while it did call for a message of support and a leaflet for women's sections to use in building support, it made no criticism of the role of the party leadership around the strike.

However the London women's committee is organising a week of action in support of the miners at the end of November. This will provide Labour women with the opportunity to show that they really do support the miners. It should be built by every women's section.

## Scottish Labour women meet

**THE SCOTTISH Labour women's conference was held over the weekend of 27/28 October.**

It was divided into two parts, with the Saturday given over to workshops. Several women's sections had written to complain about this format as it once more crushed all the policy-making decisions into one day. This had been the main argument for extending it to a two-day conference in the first place.

**By Ann Kane, Glasgow Pollock women's section**

We were told the workshops were to bring forward new women and had an educational role. But when we got there we found only delegates could speak at them, giving the lie to this argument.

The Women's Committee argued that only delegates should speak as the conclusions from the workshops would form the basis of a new policy document to be presented to the Scottish regional committee.

Clearly as the Scottish committee is under no obligation to take account of the views of the women's conference anyway, conclusions based on workshops are likely to have even less weight than those based on votes.

The workshops were a bad attempt to mix ways of organising in the women's movement with bureaucratic structures and methods, based on the pseudo feminist ideas of some members of the Scottish women's committee.

On the Sunday the two most important motions debated were on disarmament and on the women's organisation.

On defence a composite was unanimously adopted which confirmed unilateralism, called for all US bases out, and for a cut in conventional defence spending. It also instructed the Scottish women's committee to tour the Labour Party in Scotland to gain support for Greenham and to organise an event on 24 May, International Women's Day for Peace,

next year.

On women's organisation a composite from Maryhill, Dumbarton and the TGWU was also adopted unanimously. This called for a Scottish rules conference, and expressed support for a national rules conference for the women's organisation in the Labour Party. The composite made it explicit that a rules conference was necessary to give women a chance to debate, and maybe change, any rules put forward.

Unfortunately once again the LCC prevented

the Women's Action Committee holding a fringe meeting at the conference. They counterposed their own meeting on local government to the one previously arranged by WAC.

If WAC's demands are to be won it is vital that it is organised regionally as well as nationally, so that pressure can be built up on all fronts. Women in the Scottish LCC who claim to support WAC should show that they do by helping get it organised, or stop blocking the development of WAC in Scotland.

## Leeds support group

**THE LEEDS miners' support group has been very successful in building solidarity with the strike. MICK FOLEY talked to two members of it, BARRY EWART and JON APPLEYARD, about what it's been doing.**

The group was originally formed from a resolution from Elmet CLP, which contains most of the pits in the Leeds area. This went to the District Labour Party which set the group up.

The original aim was to collect £1000. In the first week £3000 was collected, and has raised over £55,000 to date.

**What role does the council play?**

The council provides

clothing vouchers, freezer meals and premises for the pit shop. It also organised a Billy Connolly concert which raised £8000 for hardship cases.

**What's been the political impact of the strike?**

Since the dispute began over 150 miners have joined the Labour Party, primarily because of the rank and file involvement of party activists — the miners have liked what they see despite the chronic national leadership.

**What about violence?**

We have been on the picket lines which have generally been peaceful. It's when the police turn up in massive numbers with horses, dogs and riot gear that troubles start.

The extra policing for

the two scabs at Allerton Bywater have so far cost £70,000 a week.

County councillors present at picket lines have been horrified by the actions of the police. A resolution was subsequently passed unanimously by the District party.

**WEST LONDON LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE MINERS**

**SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER**  
10.30am to 4.15pm  
Hounslow Civic Centre  
Lampton Road, Hounslow

Organised by Miners' Support Committees in West London. For further information telephone 01-872 2764

**NEXT YEAR every union will have to hold a ballot on the question of whether it wants to maintain a political fund. It is money from political funds that presently pays for affiliation to the Labour Party. But under the Tories' new law, most campaigning activity that unions might undertake would also have to come from a political fund.**

**Thatcher hopes to both undermine the Labour Party's financial support and to severely limit the field of activity of the unions by a single measure.**

**PETER HAIN of the Labour Coordinating Committee, explains the implications of the Tories' law and looks at how we should campaign against it.**

**A RICH party financed by secret funds derived from the sale of honours and from large subsidies subscribed by wealthy men, is trying to disable a poor party which carries on its work by modest contributions from trade unionists.'**

**SIMILAR denunciations to this one from a 1927 May Day manifesto may well be directed at the 1984 Trade Union Act. But, if so, they could underestimate the full significance of this latest Tory law on trade unions, because it contains perhaps the most serious challenge to its historic unity and strength which the labour movement has experienced this century. The Act is a key part of a Thatcherite project to break the links between the unions and the Labour Party and alter the balance of class forces.**

**In 1983, 47 unions affiliated 6.1 million members to the party and contributed £2.9 million out of their political funds — nearly 80 per cent of the party's national income.**

**Now, section 3 of the 1984 Act will require unions to win an individual ballot of their members by March 1986 in order to retain their political funds and their party affiliation.**

**If the ballot goes against maintaining a political fund, then it will be illegal for the union concerned to remain affiliated to the Labour Party. The political fund would effectively cease to exist and both the union and the party itself would be in breach of the law if the present formal Labour links were somehow maintained.**

**Furthermore, the new Act attacks the rights of even those unions not affiliated to the party. Unions without political funds could be prevented from conducting public campaigns in the future, because the definition of 'political objects' contained in the 1913 Trade Union Act has been updated.**

## Campaigning

**The old section 3(3) of the 1913 Act allowed unions to use their general funds for campaigning activity of a broadly political kind provided its 'main purpose' was to pursue unions' 'statutory objects' (ie, members' industrial or economic interests). But under the new Act such activity has to be financed out of political funds if its 'main purpose' can be shown to be to persuade people either to vote or not to vote for a political party or candidate.**

**NALGO's campaign in the spring of 1983 which included very effective national newspaper advertisements against public spending cuts could be stopped under the new Act, admitted a government junior Employment Minister during its committee stage in the Commons, because NALGO has no political fund.**

**In short, if any public initiative by a union could be construed as influencing support for or against a party — even if it happens to form the government of the day — then it could be caught by the legislation.**

**This is not the first time that there has been a legislative attempt to restrict the political role of trade unions and to end their links with Labour. Prior to 1908, trade unions had for over 30 years and without restriction used their general funds to pursue political objectives, including representation in parliament. But, that year, a court judgement in the Osborne case made this practice illegal.**

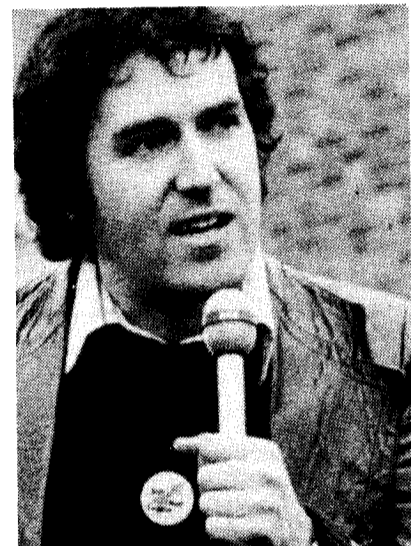


# Defend the min

After the Osborne case there was a concerted campaign by the unions to legalise their political activities. Eventually a compromise was introduced by the Liberal government. The 1913 Trade Union Act made provision for a system of 'political funds' separate from 'general funds', from which members could 'contract out' if they did not wish to support their union's political activities.

This system survived until the Trade Union Act of 1927 when the Conservatives decided to take advantage of post general strike demoralisation and impose new restrictions on unions.

The net effect of the 1927 Act was to reduce union membership of the party by 37 per cent. However, when Labour came to office after the war, this attack was reversed.



Peter Hain

Having a political fund does not mean that unions are automatically affiliated to the Labour Party, though almost all have done so. Establishing a political fund is a process governed by the 1913 Act — deciding to use that political fund to affiliate to the Labour Party is a separate decision. Under union and party rules people contributing to the political fund through their regular contributions become 'affiliated members'. 'Full' members join their local Labour Parties directly, though there is considerable overlap and many 'full' members are 'affiliated' through their unions as well.

Clearly, the consequences of large-scale disaffiliations in financial and organisational terms would be serious, especially coming on top of the party's recent near bankruptcy. But, particularly after the 1983 election debacle, the new Act could threaten the very viability of the Labour Party.

Instead of concentrating on the method of paying the political levy, the 1984 Act seeks openly to break the link between Labour and the unions. This was contrary to the impression given in the Green Paper which preceded it. Entitled *Democracy in Trade Unions*, that Green Paper, issued by Norman Tebbit in January 1983, signalled the Tories' intention specifically to legislate on the political levy.

In fact, the Act makes no mention of the method of paying the political



# Defend the



The threat last time: the demonstration against the Industrial Relations Act, 1972

levy. Instead the government negotiated an agreement with the TUC under which 'contracting out' would remain, albeit in a looser form, with unions promising to make more effort to inform members how to opt out.

This was greeted by the Tory right as a considerable government climb-down, while many in the trade unions saw it as a victory secured by reasonable negotiation. In fact the switch in tactics brought several advantages for the Tories. It stands a better chance of cutting the unions off from Labour and crippling it financially. It deflects the charge of discrimination: of imposing restrictions on unions funding Labour whilst leaving untouched company financing of the Tories.

But, perhaps most important, it puts the labour movement on the defensive: by giving members the right to vote on a political link decided by

their union generations ago, the Tories can present it in terms of extending democratic rights in unions. Even though their appeal to 'union democracy' is hypocritical — for example, it did not operate in GCHQ — the truth is that the Tories do strike a chord when they complain about the gap between the leaders and the led in the trade union movement.

However, to see the new law merely in terms of punitive measure against an electoral competitor or an act of malice against trade unions would be to miss its full significance.

## SDP

The Tory right had begun to question the system of union affiliation to Labour with increasing regularity after Thatcher's 1979 election victory. Then in 1981 a broader consensus for this position emerged when the formation of the SDP produced a barrage of criticisms from its leaders against the union link. In the autumn of 1982, the SDP published a document entitled *Reforming the Trade Unions* which attacked 'contracting out'. Norman Tebbit's Green Paper followed in January 1983.

After the 1983 election, with Labour just having scraped into second place in the popular vote, political commentators began to canvass the prospect of the Alliance becoming the major opposition force. At about the same time, Mrs Thatcher gave an interview to the *Director* magazine in which she cited the USA as an ideal, saying she

favoured two major British political parties operating 'within the same framework of free enterprise'.

The objective was clear: to make Britain 'safe from socialism' by reducing Labour to a rump leftist group, with the implicit assumption that the Alliance would take its place.

## USA

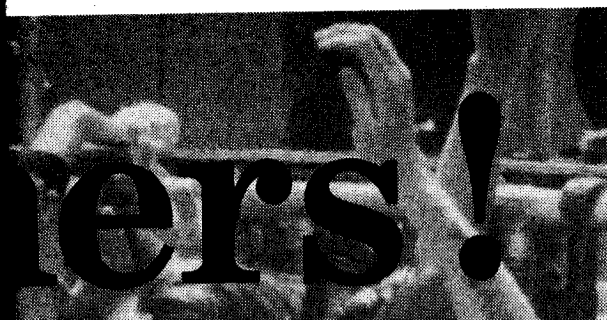
The opportunity for the Thatcherites to carry through their strategic attack on the political unity of the labour movement must be seen against the background of the latter's relative failure to cope with the post-war repositioning of the class system.

There have been important changes in the composition of the working class, which have been reflected in the make-up of the unions (notably in the growth of white collar and public sector TUC members) but nothing like to the same extent in the Labour Party. Consequently, the Labour Party's political base in the trade union movement has been seriously undermined. Notwithstanding Labour Party rhetoric about a unitary Labour/union movement, more than ever before there are now 'Labour' trade unions and 'non-Labour' trade unions — the membership ratio being not far short of 50:50.

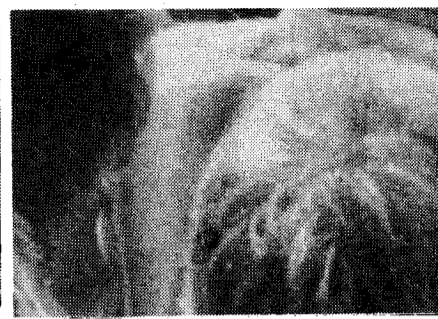
This change has been fairly dramatic. Between 1957 and 1977, for example, the proportion of TUC organised trade unionists affiliated to the Labour Party declined from about 70 to 50 per cent. (Over a longer time-span the picture is even more dramatic

TABLE 1

	% Increase in Trade Union Members since 1964	
	Affiliated to Labour	Affiliated to TUC
1966	0.7%	6.5%
1970	0.3%	12.9%
1974	5.2%	20.1%
1979	18.3%	45.7%



# ers! political levy!



nature of Labour's affiliated trade union membership hardly suggests a fighting force for socialism: in 1983, for instance, four million trade unionists voted Labour — about two million less than the party's affiliated union membership!

The Thatcherites may indeed have had a closer appreciation than many in the labour movement itself of the tenuous basis of the 'political' dimension to British trade unionism. In some ways the formal link to the Labour Party has obscured a reality of a relatively 'non-political' tradition in British unions in which sectionalism and economism have invariably been dominant.

Even the name *Labour* Party was chosen in 1906 (against the left's preference for *Socialist* Party) because the majority of trade unionists involved 'wanted a name for the party which transcended politics'.

Despite the TUC's formal decision in 1899 to establish a party of Labour, British unions have tended to see their political role in highly ambivalent terms. Whilst there has always been a wide margin for political action, with some unions conducting overtly political campaigns from time to time, generally unions have acted politically only to restore or advance their ability to engage in 'free collective bargaining'. Invariably, their political activity has been pragmatic and instrumental: particular political initiatives by particular unions would be in response to particular challenges to their sectional interests.

## Commons

Furthermore these political interventions have been mainly parliamentarist. The terms of the TUC's 1899 decision were quite specifically 'to ensure that working class opinion should be represented in the House of Commons by men (sic) sympathetic with the aims and demands of the labour movement'. This reflected an ethos which saw legitimate political action as being confined strictly to the electoral arena.

This legacy of pragmatic parliamentarism has encouraged union leaders to turn up to Labour Party conferences, become politicians for a week, and wield their bloc votes almost in isolation from memberships not really involved in their unions' political role. Only during crisis periods (such as 1970-74) would the trade union leadership see more overtly political forms of mass action as a serious option.

Thatcherism's instinct that the Labour connection with the unions was vulnerable is underlined by evidence that rank and file trade union support for the party is much weaker than is often assumed by those active in the labour movement. For instance, a 1974 study of a major union, the Union of Post Office (now Communication) Workers, showed massive member ignorance and disinterest in the political activity of their union. Only half of those paying the political levy realised they were doing so, and there is no reason to suppose that this was untypical of the movement as a whole.

Additionally, unions have become less influential and less active within local parties. This is partly a demographic problem: unions with the

strongest Labour ties historically tended to be those based mainly around urban areas with close links between industries and communities. Their connections with the party were quite strong for cultural and geographical reasons — the miners are a classic example. But these (mainly manual manufacturing) unions have been declining in numbers and influence, whilst others (mainly white collar and public sector) have grown.

Furthermore, as has been pointed out: 'Whilst it is clear that there are mining constituencies, and may once have been "railway" constituencies, or "engineering" towns, it is doubtful whether there are ASTMS cities, or NUPE counties.' (Ken Coates and Tony Topham, *Trade Unions in Britain*)

Next came a batch including NUPE, APEX and the engineers, followed by the NUR, POEU, UCATT and GMBATU, with the TGWU being only just above TASS in having a 20 per cent majority against affiliation. Less surprising was the even bigger majority against amongst ASTMS members. Clearly, there is considerable ground to be made up in some unions.

However, it should be remembered that the question on the ballot papers will invite a vote for or against *political funds* — not explicitly on Labour affiliation. And this gives further grounds for optimism on the outcome, for the MORI poll indicates a more positive response to the questions on political representation, the best being on sponsorship of MPs where there is a large majority in favour.

TABLE 2

	Trade Unionists Voting Labour	Trade Unionists Affiliated to Labour
1964	6,077,980 (73%)	5,502,001
1974	5,501,100 (55%)	5,787,467
1979	6,185,280 (51%)	6,511,179
1983	4,098,900 (39%)	6,101,438

% of total TUC membership

Furthermore, there has been a declining proportion of party activists from manual unions and a predominance on constituency general committees of members from white collar or public sector unions sometimes not affiliated to the party. This has encouraged the constituencies to become more culturally and politically distant from their union base.

So what are the prospects for winning the political fund ballots? In a MORI poll conducted for Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory earlier this year, four questions were put in a survey of members of affiliated unions only.

Although the overall proportion wanting to maintain affiliation to the Labour Party stood at only 38 per cent, this is less discouraging than it may seem. First, the proportion goes up to 44 per cent amongst those 'very likely' to vote. Moreover, when it comes down to it, there could well be a differentially higher turnout of those favouring the link with Labour, since those who do not feel strongly against, or are apathetic, may not bother.

Second, the MORI poll recorded views before any active campaign to win the argument. For most union members, the merits of the case for affiliation to Labour have still to be argued. Additionally, when it is shown that having a political fund is essential to secure political representation of union members' interests in parliament and when it is understood that public campaigning financed out of general funds could be illegal, the chances of winning a majority should improve.

The detailed breakdown for the affiliated unions surveyed by the MORI poll shows some interesting results. At the time the survey was conducted (spring 1984), the unions most likely to remain affiliated were the miners, communication workers and electricians.

Next year's political funds campaign could present an unprecedented opportunity to argue for socialist ideas and Labour policies in the workplace. But this is unlikely to happen if the campaign is approached defensively. If it is seen simply as a matter of preserving existing institutional links, and if all trade unions are offered is the chance to renew their membership of a passive Labour supporters' club, then they may well turn their backs on the Labour Party, for the rot has set in too deep to be able to rely with any confidence on a campaign that seeks merely to defend the status quo.

There is probably a better chance of succeeding with a positive campaign aimed not simply at defending the existing links, but explicitly recognising the need to breathe new life into them. An appeal will probably need to be made on *policy* grounds as well. Labour's plan for jobs, a shorter working week, a statutory minimum wage and advancing women's rights are amongst the questions that should all be raised in an attempt to persuade union members that their votes in the ballots are as much about defending their interests as fighting for alternative government policies.

So far, discussion over strategy has been confined mainly to leadership levels in the labour movement. On 1 August, Labour's national executive met jointly with leaders of affiliated unions. The consensus there favoured a 'rolling campaign' of ballots, with unions most likely to succeed starting first in order to create a winning momentum for the rest. The meeting agreed to set up a special coordinating group with a full-time campaign unit and a budget of £150,000.

They also accepted a paper from Bill Keys of SOGAT 82 which argued that 'the campaigns should not be run

as if they were about affiliation to the party, but as campaigns to preserve the freedom of political action by trade unions'. The phrase 'freedom to undertake political action' could provide an effective means of appealing for popular support.

The only other initiative of note has come from the Labour Coordinating Committee which has argued that it is essential to involve rank and file trade unionists and party members if the argument is to be won. So far, the LCC has called for the setting up of liaison committees between local Labour Parties and union branches and has encouraged the establishment of more Labour Party workplace branches. It has also organised a major conference in London for 1 December.

Part of the task will be to link the Tory attack on the democratic institutions of the labour movement with their assault on local government democracy and on civil liberties in general. As they cast their votes in next year's ballots, trade unionists will not only be influenced by campaigns within their organisations, but by the climate outside too.

And, when the wider public realise that what is at stake is not just the self-interest of the labour movement, but a principle dear to liberal democracy — free competition between parties — then popular support could swing over as it did during the campaign to save the Greater London Council.

Whether by abolishing the GLC and the metropolitan counties; by rate-capping; by denying union membership at GCHQ; by oppressive official security prosecutions; or by extending police powers, Thatcherism has made an offensive against democratic rights a major priority in its second term of office.

But it may well be that they have provided the left with its first substantial opening since 1979 to challenge Thatcherism's constant (albeit false) claim to monopolise the values of democracy and freedom. If this proves to be the case, then it could help considerably to undermine the ideological basis for the extra working class support which Thatcher managed to win in 1979 and hold on to in 1983.

*This is an edited version of an article appearing in the November issue of Marxism Today.*

## DEFEND UNION POLITICAL FUNDS

The latest Tory trade union law aims to end trade union political funds and affiliation to the Labour Party by March 1986.

There will be a major Labour Movement conference to plan a campaign of resistance at rank and file level on Saturday 1st December in Central Hall, Westminster, London, 10am to 4.30pm.

Delegates are invited from trade unions and local Labour Parties.

**Campaign Conference: Dec 1st**

**Speakers: RON TODD**

**JEAN McGRINDLE**

**TOM SAWYER**

**MICK McGAHEY**

**ROBIN COOK**

**KEN LIVINGSTONE**

Name(s) of delegate(s)

Address

Phone

Organization

Amount enclosed (registration £2 each) £

Cheques payable to Labour Coordinating Committee, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3JG

## Voting

The fall in TUC union membership of the party reflected itself electorally too. In 1964, 73 per cent of trade unionists voted Labour; by October 1974 this had fallen to 55 per cent, by 1979 to 51 per cent, and by 1983 to 39 per cent (a MORI poll in September 1984 found a recovery to 48 per cent, but one not sufficient to reverse this long-term trend). If the actual numbers of trade unionists voting Labour over this period is taken, the picture is quite stark: between 1964 and 1983 the number dropped by two million while the number of TUC members rose by two million (see Table 2).

In addition, closer inspection of the

## Nicaragua: 'A country that truly wants peace'

THE ELECTIONS in Nicaragua took place on 4 November. Prior to this, ROSARIO ANTUNEZ, a Sandinista candidate in the elections spoke at a meeting in Leeds. ZOE GILBERT was there. She explains what Rosario said, and how the elections are seen.

ROSARIO was born in Nueva Segovia, near the Honduran border, and taught in a primary school for 13 years until in 1975 she was arrested, imprisoned and sacked from her job.

She joined the Sandinistas in 1974. In 1979 she was forced to flee with her two youngest children, walking over the mountains to Honduras to escape Somoza's National Guard.

In that same year her eldest daughter Yelba Maria, who was 15, was tortured and murdered by the National Guard when they ambushed a guerilla column of which she was a member.

After the revolution, Rosario returned to Nicaragua, and was a member of the government of reconstruction. In 1980 she became director of education for Nueva Segovia. She is a candidate for the constituency of Las Segovias in the election.

## Women

At the Leeds meeting she was asked what the Sandinistas had done for women. 'The Nicaraguan woman won her equal rights with the revolution,' she said. Women are no longer used as commercial property — sexist adverts are banned and prostitution has been abolished. A rehabilitation scheme for ex-prostitutes to teach them new skills has been introduced.

The Sandinista programme for women provides for pensions for women abandoned by their husbands. The Ministry of Social Welfare has introduced new measures of care in and after pregnancy. Alongside these reforms, women have the right to participate in every organisation, and have the right to organise as women.

Rosario was then asked how the prospect of Reagan winning the US elections would affect Contra activity and the prospects of an invasion. 'Whether Reagan wins or not, Nicaragua still expects an invasion. The invasion will go ahead whether the Nicaraguan elections go ahead or not. Or if the Sandinistas win or not.'

'The US wants to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution as it serves as an example of what revolution can do for the people of the world. They will do even the impossible to destroy our revolution.'

This is why the efforts of the Contadora group of countries will fail. The Contadora group consists of Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela and Panama and was formed in response to US attempts to destabilise the region.

'Nicaragua agrees to all meetings and to go along with the group,' she explained. 'The Sandinistas support what the group is trying to do.'

'It would be wonderful if they could achieve peace in the region. But there is little that the Contadora group can do. The US is determined to make us appear the war mongers, even though we are the only country that wants peace.'

## Vatican

Finally Rosario was asked about the role of the priests who are defying the Vatican to support the revolution, and about the debate on 'liberation theology'.

'There is a big difference between the upper hierarchy of the church and the priests. The upper hierarchy of the church follows the dictates of imperialism. The priests work with the people. The progressive priests work with the revolution.'

'The confrontation that is now taking place between the upper hierarchy of the church and the priests who support the revolution is not about religion but about politics.'

In the election Rosario, like the other Sandinista candidates, is standing on the achievements of five years of the revolution — major advances in health, education, agrarian reform, labour legislation and mass organisation. Before the other parties pulled out it was clear that on this basis the FSLN would win an overwhelming victory. That's why the other parties have pulled out.

None of the opposition parties have produced a single argument to back up their withdrawal from the democratic process. Now that the Sandinistas have no opposition only the size of the poll will show the extent of their support.

And it will show that, because in Nicaragua, unlike El Salvador, no one is going to be marched to the polling booths with a gun at their back.

# India — heading for the maelstrom

THE ASSASSINATION of Indira Gandhi has provoked an almost unanimous response from the USA to China including the Soviet Union. Few state leaders can have ever received such universal acclaim.

The reason for such disparate forces speaking with such a united voice is simple. All are concerned about their share of the cake when the new regime emerges from the crisis the assassination has provoked.

One thing that certainly does not motivate them is concern for the maintenance of 'democracy' in India. For the past four years the chief attack on democracy has come from Indira Gandhi herself — a policy that will no doubt be continued by her son Rajiv.

In order to understand the consequences and causes of Indira Gandhi's assassination it is necessary to outline some of the main features of Indian politics, and some of the chief contradictions facing bourgeois politics in that state.

The policy pursued by Indira Gandhi since coming to power in 1966, was essentially a logical development of the policy of the Indian ruling class since independence.

India contains one fifth of the world's population and covers an enormous geographical area with tremendous regional variation. The regional economic variation is reinforced by a whole series of ethnic, linguistic and religious variations which constantly threaten to destabilise and break up the Indian state.

There is only one really powerful political force at an all-India level, and that is Indira Gandhi's Congress (I) party, based on the most powerful sections of the Indian bourgeoisie. The working class itself is the only other potential all-India force, but it is weakly organised and has not managed to create an all-India workers' party.

Those mass workers' parties that have existed, in particular the pro-Moscow CP (CPI), have oriented either to the Congress party or local capitalist groups. Indira Gandhi's party was dubbed the 'progressive' bourgeoisie by the CPI because of its relations with Moscow.

India's bourgeoisie is undoubtedly one of the most economically power-

ful of any semi-colonial country. However it has been, and is, nothing like strong enough to unify the country. The policy pursued by Indira Gandhi at an economic level has been based on this understanding. Indian unity has been founded on the existence of a massive state sector of industry and an enormous bureaucracy.

By Jude Woodward

The Indian state maintained stringent trade controls to protect and develop the internal market, coupled with state subsidies to agriculture to increase its productivity — the real driving force of the so-called 'green revolution'.

This distribution of money from the state, and 'protection' offered against Hindu communalism, allowed the Congress party to build an alliance between the big bourgeoisie and the Indian minorities — ethnic groups, the so-called 'tribals', Muslims and the outcastes. Since the economic crisis of the mid-'70s this alliance has been breaking up rapidly. Massively increased communal tensions and regional conflicts, together with electoral instability, are the symptoms of this.

The policy of the 'green revolution', and keeping the Indian market outside of US control, had some initial success from the point of view of Indian capitalism. New richer agricultural layers have been developed, and on that basis regionally based

industries and internal trade have developed — which increased the regional tensions in the country.

## Recession

But with the onset of the world recession the central government in India has been unable to maintain the level of subsidy and benefits to cement this alliance through a new stage of development. The Indian government is therefore thrown back more narrowly onto the resources of the big bourgeoisie itself.

It is this that underpins the growing attacks on democracy in the Indian state. From this point of view the State of Emergency imposed in 1975, was not an aberration, but in fact indicates where India is going. Certainly Indira Gandhi had not consolidated a powerful enough force to maintain the state of emergency and paid a political price for it. But the fact that she and the Congress (I) recovered so rapidly to the sweeping electoral victory in 1979 is a sure sign that the state of emergency was not so out of step with the needs of the Indian big bourgeoisie.

Since the state of emergency the approach has been more subtle, but the level of repression has been growing steadily. According to one Indian marxist, currently preparing a book on the suppression of democratic rights in India, the scale of arrests is in the hundreds of thousands, the victims mainly being workers engaged in struggle, slum-dwellers and the poor.

Recently one of Indira Gandhi's key advisors, Vasant Sathe, the Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers, fielded a debate around a possible constitutional change to introduce an executive presidency. Indira herself took a back seat role in this discussion but the idea undoubtedly originated in her inner circles. Testing the water on this kind of constitutional change is again indicative of the general trend in Indian politics.

## Elections

Prior to the assassination of Indira Gandhi speculation was rife that the promised elections would be postponed — constitutional loopholes that already exist could have been exploited to extend the life of this parliament for up to six months. It was questioned whether the elections would have ever taken place.

Ironically the assassination of Indira Gandhi may well mean that the elections can take place, and that a constitutional change attacking the electoral process will therefore be postponed. Most commentators are advising Rajiv



Indira Gandhi

Gandhi to go for rapid elections and hope to win on a wave of popular sympathy for his dead mother.

But whether the elections take place or not, the narrow social base of the Congress (I) and the absence of any national alternative means that Indian politics have an inescapable logic towards the regime assuming a more and more Bonapartist character, using a tremendous wave of repression to maintain its rule, and eventually being forced to attack constitutional democracy to maintain its position.

## Oppositions

The regionally based oppositions will continue to develop, and while their democratic rights must be defended, these are generally based on reactionary sections of the regional bourgeoisie. The regional character of their demands, often leading them into conflict with neighbouring areas, or to engage in a battle for state subsidies directly counterposed to other areas, mean that they are exceedingly unlikely to be able to develop a national alternative to the Congress (I).

The Punjab is a case in point. One of the key economic demands of the Akali Dal — the legal Sikh party — is for the redirection of water to the Punjab. This leads to a direct conflict with neighbouring Hindu states, which then becomes interlinked with and deepens communal tensions.

Even when these motley regional and ethnic opposition groups can be welded into a national

coalition it tends to have a temporary character. The actual exercise of power would be inclined to blow them up virtually immediately, as happened with Charan Singh and the 1977-79 Janata government.

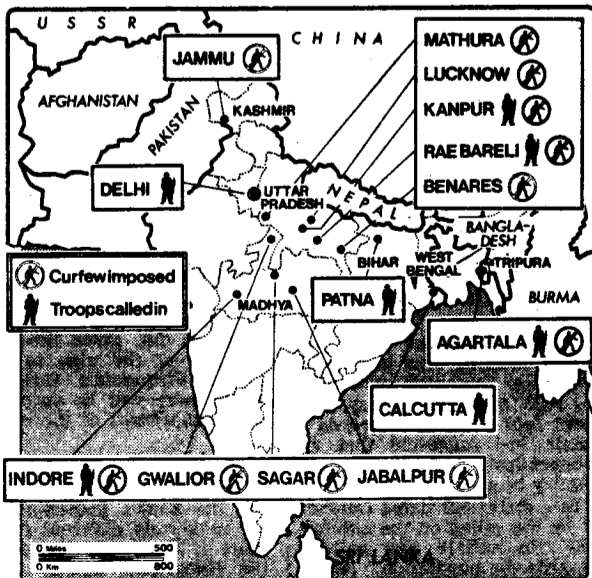
## Hindu

Meanwhile the Congress (I) having abandoned the alliance with the regional and ethnic minorities is forced increasingly to base its popular support within the Hindu heartland themselves. The increasing identification of the regime with the 'high' Hinduism of the richer layers in the Hindu states creates a further chasm between the Congress (I) and the regional groups. A chasm which can probably only be bridged through repression.

For the Indian working class and poor peasantry the future looks grim indeed. Repression will chiefly affect these layers as the economic squeeze leads to waves of struggle around whatever focus is at hand, whether it is religious, regional or genuinely reflecting the economic and political aspirations of these oppressed sections.

## Democracy

Rajiv Gandhi is certainly not inheriting an easy job, but one thing can be sure of. He is not going to be the leader of the 'biggest democracy in the world', his future can be more accurately summed up as a constitutional dictator in a repressive system.





## Europe's future

## 'Peace, jobs and freedom'

LAST WEEK Socialist Action carried the first part of an interview with TONY BENN, under the heading 'Politics of the Peace Movement'. He argued that the campaign against nuclear weapons was too narrowly conceived and that, in fact, the peace movement was part of a broader social movement across Europe.

You have outlined that you think the peace movement is too narrowly framed in terms of nuclear weapons, that it is in fact part of a broader movement, a force capable of developing 'a new Europe free from the threat of the superpowers'.

If it shouldn't be organised just around defence policy, what should be the chief plank of such a Euro-left?

It must link disarmament, development and human rights. 'Peace, jobs and freedom' is not a bad formulation; it was in one of Labour's recent manifestos. It would be capable of attracting an awful lot of support. If we were to try and develop foreign policy along those lines, quite naturally we'd find ourselves slipping out of dependence on the United States and reassessing the potential for cooperation with Eastern Europe.

And the fact that some East European countries would like to establish direct contact means that such contact could even be built up with the existing regime in Eastern Europe, if it doesn't appear to threaten the military security of the Soviet Union. If it did, the Soviet Union would come down on it like a ton of bricks. Superpowers have a genuine interest in their security and the power to enforce it by a *cordon sanitaire*.

The space we have to manoeuvre in is partly ideological space and partly geographical, but it is a space that can't be only Euro-centred. There's the whole of the African continent, Latin America, South East Asia, China — we should be moving over, diplomatically and politically, a much wider area of the world. In that way, I think we would really have some influence. The superpowers would think twice about what they were doing, and the amount of money they were spending on defence.

I agree that the Soviet Union is under military threat from the United States. This raises a relevant question.

A nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal guarantees the military security of the Soviet Union — nobody's going to attack the USSR by conventional weapons. To achieve this would require no American weapons in Europe, no British nuclear weapons, and no *force de frappe*.

First there are no safeguards against proliferation, that's one thing I did learn as Secretary of State for Energy. The spread of nuclear weapons is going apace now, through the development of civil nuclear technology. The whole time I was Secretary of State for Energy and Minister of Technology, plutonium from civil power stations was going to America to be made into bombs, and all the time the civil servants were talking about swords and ploughshares and atoms



Mass die-in at CND's Barrow demonstration against Trident, 27 October 1984

for peace — and I didn't know it was happening.

You can't stop the spread of nuclear weapons unless you take a really hard line, which the West is not prepared to take. And, in that context, I must say the Soviet Union has been 100 — 1000 — per cent against the spread of nuclear weapons. Maybe because they didn't want the Chinese or their allies in the Warsaw Pact to have the bomb. But, for whatever reasons, the Russians have been resolute.

Second, there's no effective form of inspection. Supposing tomorrow Mr Chernenko met Mr Reagan and they said they'd both decided to completely discontinue nuclear weapons programmes — there'd be no way of knowing whether they had or not. What about the US troops and bases in Britain? How would we know they'd moved the stuff?

The real danger is not so much the weapons systems, but the poison in people's minds that makes them contemplate using them. It's this poison we've got to deal with. If you succeed in stopping the poison, then the argument about nuclear weapons would become a sort of economic argument. We would say we need to build homes, to assist the Third World, not build Trident. That would be driving the argument in a different direction.

But it isn't any good focusing on the details, you've got to turn your mind to what it's really about: are we going to allow nuclear technology to extinguish democracy? That's happening now. We need a change in people's perceptions, rather than pursuing indefinitely the ins and outs of this absurd armchair strategy which has unfortunately begun to absorb too much interest on the left.

A credible non-nuclear defence strategy is all about playing military games. The real issues are quite different.

What is your attitude to the political role the United States has played in the world?

This may surprise you. I'd start by saying that the United States is the biggest capitalist country in the world, the only capitalist country in the 1930s that swung to the left. When the others — Germany, Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, and Britain too — swung to the right, America became Keynesian. The New Deal was a beacon of light in the 1930s.

Then, if you take the number of people in the United States who are socialists 'in the closet', that's a huge number: local trade union leaders, the black community — Jessie Jackson's rainbow coalition — environmentalists, the civil rights movement, the anti-war and the anti-intervention movement. Quite a lot of opinion in the United States is progressive.

The time has come for the United States to discover its own socialist tradition. After Mondale is beaten, then it will be shown that the last of the New Deal politicians have totally failed to unseat Reagan with militarism and monetarism.

Also it's very important to recognise that if we had progressive governments in Britain or Western Europe, we'd have allies on the other side of the Atlantic. My position is not an anti-American position.

But if you look at American government policy, it is very dangerous. In the guise of defending the free world, it is actually protecting its own investments and world-wide

interests. It will arm any filthy dictator who will promise to hold the working class down.

By its own policy of supplying arms and forcing imports to make a profit for American companies, it's precipitated the debt crisis which could bring the whole Western economic and financial system down.

It is not in our interests to be a semi-colony of such an imperial system. That's why I supported the resolution to Labour Party conference to get rid of all US bases, not just nuclear bases, from Britain. We should free ourselves from that dependence and subservience in order to play a part in this new, broader world-wide political movement.

The argument isn't about Pershing or Cruise — it's about the politics of American policy. We've got to get out of this technical language, back into the politics of world affairs. That's where the Labour Party should be going.

Would you like to see the withdrawal of American troops from Europe as a whole?

I would like to see a non-nuclear Europe which has liberated itself by its own efforts.

Hitler got nearly to Stalingrad and to the English Channel, through cancerous growth and fascist expansion. When that collapsed, the heritage it left was the Iron Curtain.

It's been over 40 years now, I don't want to go on living under that. I would like to have a perspective that contemplated change, that said Europe is entitled to be Europe.

We should reoccupy Europe — not in a nationalist sense, not in a third superpower sense — but in the sense that we no longer accept the

propaganda that leads us to believe the divisions in the world are permanent and inevitable. I don't accept that.

The future for Europe poses the question of America, which you've dealt with. But what about the Soviet Union? There are opposition movements — Solidarnosc in Poland, dissident groups and peace movements — inside Eastern Europe. How do you see these fitting in?

We've got to begin by being realistic. We've got to make clear to the Soviet Union that we are not trying to destabilise or threaten its security, but anxious to develop detente, a relationship with Eastern Europe.

If you want to break down the limitations on civil liberties and establish a legitimate concern, the best way to do it is by cooperation and detente. We should do everything we can to build up trade and contact.

The Russians have a problem: their *cordon sanitaire* is now too prosperous and independent to remain forever under the control of the Moscow leadership. But the liberalisation of Eastern Europe has potentially great dangers. If the Russians saw such moves as a threat (as in the case of Poland) there could be another intervention like Czechoslovakia. That would be intensely dangerous for world peace and very damaging for the Soviet Union.

The war propaganda in the West is primarily to hold working people down and make them subservient, and in the East those who would like liberalisation are denounced as Western agents.

There is a huge task to be undertaken, and a genuine desire to undertake it. And we must work at whatever level we can — trade union contact, personal contact, trading contact, cultural contact — to isolate the establishment in the West and the military establishment in the East. Both are able to use the cold war to retain a rigid and authoritarian hold over their own people.

Now, that's not a very clear concept, but it is different from the idea that we're all lined up in either Russian or American uniforms, and have to face each other across the Berlin wall forever. I don't believe that for a moment, and I think an awful lot of people reject it too.

'No' is still a very powerful word in the political vocabulary. If you say you don't accept it — if you withdraw your consent from what is central to the defence strategy of the country or the alliance of which you're a member — if you begin doing that, it would really create a change.

That, I think, is our task over the next few years.



Photo: GM COOKSON

Photo: JOHN SMITH (IFL)

**THE 7 NOVEMBER** day of action is the most widespread industrial action so far in London against the Tory attacks on local government. The action was called by the newly formed 'triple alliance' of local government unions in the capital.

The bodies in the triple alliance are Democracy For London (DFL) which is made up of the GLC trade unions; the Save ILEA Campaign and unions in ILEA; and the London Bridge Committee, which is based on the unions in the hit-list authorities.

**JIM FITZPATRICK**, Acting Secretary of DFL, spoke to **PAT HICKEY** about the new stage in the local government fightback in London.

It has taken a long time for the various bodies involved to unite on a common project. Why has it taken so long, and is it going to last?

I'll take the second part first. This is determined by how long we're going to have to fight.

I think that the campaign against rate-capping is going to be a short-term one. It will last six months, twelve at the most.

If we lose the first round against rate capping then whichever borough is rate-capped or potentially rate-capped this year or the year after will have lost the argument.

The fight has to take place this year. This has got to be understood now, because if after April this year boroughs are rate-capped then there will be no fight.

The reason the campaigns have taken so long to get together is because basically there hasn't been a common enemy. But what is the point of stopping abolition if we're going to be rate-capped out of existence?

We stopped the abolition of ILEA, but now they are trying to rate-cap it out of existence. We started out fighting abolition, and we're now working with borough campaigns to fight rate-capping.

They both mean more and more central government control over local democracy and local services.

**Will a pressure campaign**

make the government back off, or will it take more substantial action?

There have been a number of one-day strikes this year. The difference between 7 November and the other one-day strikes is that this time we are announcing the arrival of the triple alliance of local government workers.

This is just the start of a campaign of industrial action to show the government, and to show the groups within the local authorities, that we are not prepared to surrender jobs and services.

We know that one-day action is a strictly limited affair. It can lead to disillusionment and a whole host of problems. We need to persuade our members that all-out strike action is an appropriate step to take.

The 7 November can be built on to legitimise the triple alliance, and to give us the authority to go to Labour politicians and say 'We need you in a united front tactic against the Tory proposals, to break the law if necessary. If you don't want to break the law, it is time you resigned and let people in to do the job which is necessary'.

**What in your view has been the role of Labour Groups?**

The position between the Labour groups and the unions on abolition and rate-capping is that we recognise the problems which they face, in terms of surcharge, debarment from public office and so

## Local government fight: Triple alliance launch

on. The Labour politicians are going to have to make their minds up. They are either on the side of the workers or on the side of the Tories. It's as simple as that.

### GLC

We know from our own internal situation in the GLC that there are real problems. We are engaged in a dialogue with the Labour group at County Hall to determine whether we can go forward with the Labour group.

The campaign so far in terms of influencing Lords, MPs, and opinion-formers in London, has done nothing to influence GLC workers on the need to take industrial action to defend their jobs. That has been undertaken by DFL.

**Are there lessons from the Liverpool experience?**

I think that the Liverpool experience is important for local authority workers in that we need to build a united campaign between the labour groups, the trade unions, and the users groups.

If we get 100,000 workers on strike we will

have shown that the workers are not prepared to have their jobs sacrificed. Then the onus is on the Labour politicians because the community at large has demonstrated that they support the retention of the GLC, and the retention of services.

Labour Party conference decisions were: no cuts in jobs and services, break the law if we have to, to fight the Tories. We hope the Labour groups adopt conference policy.

The London Bridge Committee will send an open letter to Labour councillors asking: will you abide by conference decisions or not? If you do, great! If not, the time to leave is now. Let us propose people in by-elections who are prepared to challenge Tory laws.

If we get that kind of alliance between unions, Labour groups and the community, it is an irresistible force. The Tories will not be able to defeat us.

It will mean massive industrial action. It will mean a massive campaign. But it does need the political will, and to be honest the political will has been lacking.



County Hall

# The end of the Democrats?

**AS WE** go to press the voting in the United States presidential election is not finished. But everyone knows the outcome.

The American ruling class wanted Ronald Reagan in the White House for another four years. They have duly gained it. We need not waste space in an article in Socialist Action explaining that Ronald Reagan is not exactly the answer which is needed to the problems that confront the world!

But there is an issue which is of fundamental importance for the left which comes out of the elections. For almost forty years — from Roosevelt's election in 1932 until Nixon's victory in 1968 — the Democratic Party was the overwhelmingly dominant political force in United States politics. Out of nine presidential elections held in that time the Republicans won only two. Eisenhower, the sole Republican president in that forty year period, himself only carried on the Cold War policies established by his Democratic predecessor Truman.

More significant for practical left wing politics however almost the whole of the American left, from the Communist Party to the supporters of the European social

democratic parties, oriented to and supported the Democratic Party. In Britain the Labour Party consistently supported the Democrats against the Republicans.

**By John Ross**

But by 1984 it had become obvious that the Democratic Party social alliances had become shambolic. The once coherent coalition put together by Roosevelt — the unions, blacks, liberals, ethnic minorities and others — has fallen apart into a series of warring groups.

During the Democratic primary elections the leadership of the American trade union movement, the AFL/CIO put all their resources into backing Mondale. Jesse Jackson took the major



Losers and victors

part of the black vote. Gary Hart opposed the line of the union bosses. Geraldine Ferraro was put on the slate to try to win the women's vote.

The result of all this internal warfare was the 'cardboard candidate' Mondale — a presidential



candidate whose every speech was enough to send anyone to sleep and who had no individual position or individuality at all. The outcome was a massive victory for Reagan.

From any point of view of keeping the Democratic Party together as the

'alternative' to the Republicans, this is of course a disaster. In Saturday's *Morning Star* Angela Davis, the US Communist Party's candidate for Vice President, declared, 'For the sake of the children of the world, for the sake of future

generations, we must do all we can to guarantee the defeat of Reagan ... Reagan can be defeated for peace.' Angela Davis left no doubt that for her this meant voting for the Democrats.

### Mondale

But the reality of the Democratic Party is the exact opposite of the image given to it by the Communist Party (and similar sections of the left). The modern Democratic Party was an alliance created by Roosevelt to prevent the independent expression of labour, of blacks and other oppressed groups in the United States. It was an alliance of these groups organised under the hegemony of the capitalist class.

The crisis of the Democratic Party is not a disaster: it is an opportunity. It is laughable to believe, as Angela Davis suggests, that electing a Democrat is an answer to the threat of war.

It was a Democratic president, Truman, who launched both the Cold

War and the 'hot' Korean war. It was Democrat presidents, Kennedy and Johnson who planned and launched the Vietnam war.

The real opportunity in US politics is not to try to rebuild the Democratic Party coalition but the exact reverse — to use the strains within the Democratic Party to break it up into its component parts — and thereby open up the way to independent political expression for the American working class, blacks, Latinos, women and the Democratic Party's other supporters. This is the *only* way to begin to open up a real alternative to Reagan. The real disaster would be for the American, and international, left to try to spend the next four years putting the Democratic Party coalition back together again.

The great American IWW martyr Joe Hill declared, as he was being led to his execution, 'don't mourn, organise.' He was talking about the trade union movement.

But it would make an excellent epitaph for the Democratic party as well.

# In the Unions



## Austin Rover strike is on

Workers at the Austin Rover Cowley assembly plant have been subjected to an enormous management offensive against the pay strike called at mass meetings last week. Despite these attacks, both Cowley plants are at a standstill as effective picketing closed them down on 5 November.

Management's offensive against the militant mood of many assembly plant workers began the day before the mass meeting called to endorse the strike action.

The *Oxford Mail* on 31 October had a full page company advertisement opposing the strike. On Thursday morning workers attending the mass meeting had their pay docked.

Despite all this, the day shift voted to back the strike call. Management

stepped up their attacks by encouraging small groups of workers who opposed the strike to disrupt production. In some areas management stopped the tracks.

Immediately after the mass meeting management acted extremely aggressively towards the TGWU convenor. Accord-

ing to one shop steward I spoke to they held him 'under siege' in the union office.

By Mike Picken

At 11am they tried to arrange an anti-strike mass meeting, but informed only certain sections. This meeting had to be abandoned after five minutes, as angry workers jeered and bombarded management with missiles.

The company also took the unprecedented step of inviting the media on to the shop floor to interview small groups of

anti-strike workers. That evening the *Oxford Mail* had a headline claiming 'Rigging'. Fury of Car Men', although *Radio Oxford* listeners heard one worker explain that the very presence of reporters in the factory and the management orchestrated stopping of production showed what was going on.

Nevertheless, local and national media focussed overwhelmingly on the 'anti-strike revolt'.

All this had an effect on the night shift. Anti-strike day shift workers were organised with placards to put pressure on the meeting, which voted

### AUSTIN ROVER

to reject the strike call.

However there is a clear majority in the assembly plant for a strike and an angry mood towards management.

In the body plant where workers were not subjected to these tactics workers voted for the strike.

These workers recognise the need for militant action in the face of management bully boy tactics. This will be a useful lesson when the company use the courts to try to stop the strike.

## All out at Jaguar

AN INDEFINITE strike of 7000 workers began at Jaguar Cars on 1 November in support of the 1984 wage claim. The strike in all three plants is totally solid and an effective 24-hour picket has been established.

There are also pickets at delivery depots holding finished cars.

In an eleventh hour bid to split the workforce management called for talks two days before the strike was due to start. They stuck to the final offer that had been so clearly rejected the week before, and offered a one-off lump sum payment of £208. This payment was not to be made to workers who started after April '84.

Trade union negotiators recognised this as a shoddy attempt to buy off the strike. It showed no movement towards meeting our claim, and failed to meet demands for new money on the basic rate.

The negotiating committee (JNC) rejected the buy-off, but felt compelled to report back to mass

meetings, recommending rejection and endorsement of the strike vote.

By a Jaguar shop steward

This decision was bitterly contested by some militants who saw it as an attempted sell-out. The JNC argued that they did not want workers on the picket lines the next morning to be told that their leaders were hiding an offer of £208.

At Castle Bromwich and Radford (the body and power train plants) the buy-off attempt failed completely. Although some workers decided to accept the offer, a solid 75 per cent voted to endorse the strike vote.

It was a different story

at the Browns Lane assembly plant. TGWU convenor, Ron Newcombe ignored the JNC decision. He simply repeated the company offer, and the shop stewards rejection.

No attempt was made to win endorsement of the strike vote, and other members of the JNC were not allowed to address the meeting.



Many workers who had voted to fight at previous meetings changed their minds as a result. When the vote was taken there was still a slim majority for the strike.

Unfortunately, a mistake was made in totalling the figures. A

bloc of 430 votes was added twice into the total against the strike.

The result was declared before the error was spotted. The meeting was then recalled to take a recount. This was the last straw for most workers, and at the end of the day only 49 per cent at Browns Lane voted

for the strike.

Nevertheless, the overall majority in the three plants remains 63 per cent, and the workforce is united behind the decision.

## Mass meetings vs. secret ballots

AUSTIN-Rover management are using the courts to enforce a secret ballot and supporting their position by confusion at a mass meeting at Jaguar Browns Lane on 31 October.

By Paul Mitchell

An error in counting in the first vote led to a recall meeting to correct the error. Management and the press have seized the opportunity to claim that secret ballots are a better way to take decisions.

In fact the Jaguar mass meetings are a tribute to the methods of open working class democracy — even if they sharply reveal the weakness of working class leadership, on occasion.

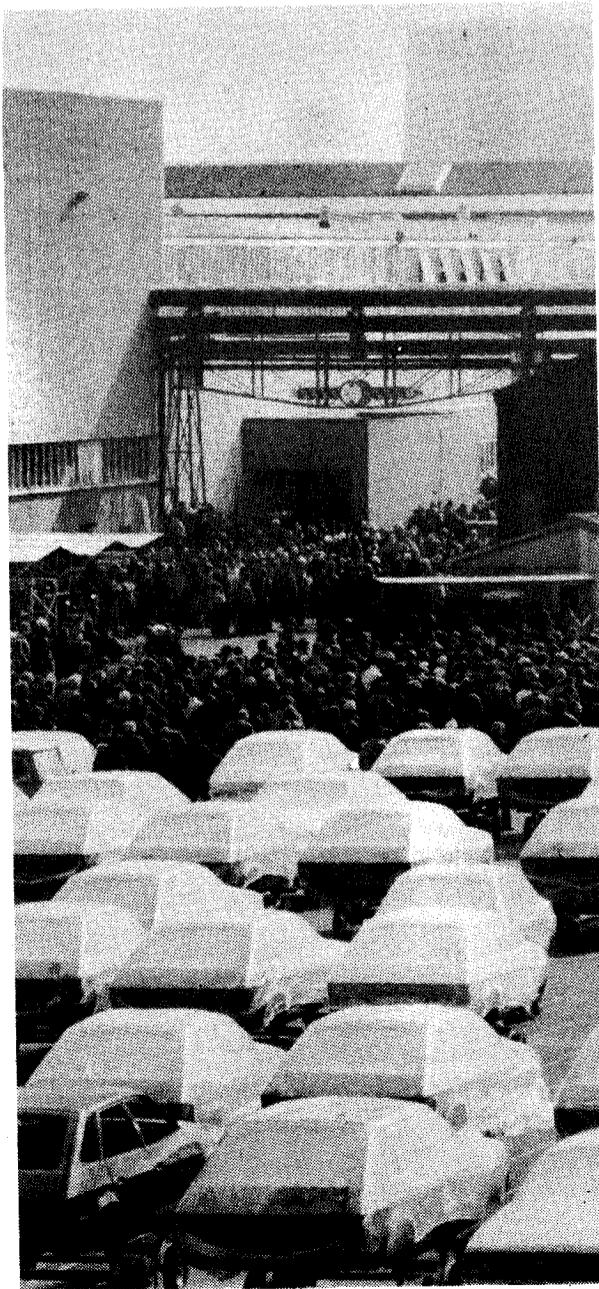
● Virtually every single worker at Browns Lane took part — something no secret ballot ever achieved.

● The voting figures show the meticulous accuracy of the shop stewards head count. It is possible to see exactly how the vote moved on the recounts, and every vote is accounted for.

● The discipline of the workforce, and their confidence in the voting procedure is shown by the fact that they all turned up twice in two hours to vote (except for 14 who were pissed off the second time!).

In a secret ballot, with less than 85 per cent participation the same error would not have shown up. If the error had been discovered secret efforts to correct it would rightly be regarded with suspicion.

	For	Against	Total
First vote			
Declared	1559	1866	3425
Actual	1559	1436	2995
Second vote			
Actual	1492	1489	2981
Change	-67	+53	-14



Cowley washing-up strike, March '83



## Liverpool students fight back!

THE STUDENTS' union at the University of Liverpool is following the lead of the city council and fighting for a 'no cuts' budget for student union finances.

By Tim Rigby, Liverpool Labour Club

The union (known as the Guild) has been dominated for years by Liberals and Tories, but in the last year an active Labour Club has changed the balance. Labour won all the sabbatical and topped the poll in all the non-sabbatical positions.

Our candidates campaigned and won on the platform of 'no cuts' and a pledge to link up with the campus trade unions. The Labour Club members of the new executive have been as good as their word.

Last year the student union treasurer drew up a budget of union finances involving £27,000 worth of cuts.

'We came in,' explains this year's deputy president, Tony McMahon, 'with no intention of making these cuts. We didn't want to be in a position of moral opposition to the cuts but then implement them.'

'We put forward a base line of £510,623 compared to the previous year's treasurer's base line of £485,683. The university's base line was £463,000. Ours represents a figure at which we can run the students' union facilities properly.'

'When we presented our new budget, the university's working party on Guild finance was already waiting to turn down the position of the previous treasurer. We, though, weren't going to just discuss with them but to mobilise the university trade unions and students in support of our arguments.'

'The working party produced a report slamming the new base line. But when the finance committee met to discuss the budget, we had organised a lobby of 200 within three days' notice, which chanted outside the window of the meeting: 'What do we want? £50,000! When do we want it? Now!' £50,000 is the difference between our demands and the university's offer.'

'The committee was originally unsympathetic, but with the lobby outside the window, they shifted.'

The committee has now given the students' union the entire contents of a £30,000 reserve fund, and has agreed to renegotiate in six months' time if the union needs more.

The university has accumulated wealth of £30,000 million, given by merchant benefactors who have long since left Liverpool. This wealth should be used to ensure no cuts are made. No departments, no matter how small, need close.

All departments at Liverpool, and indeed colleges throughout the country, should take a lead from us and fight the Tory cuts.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

- National CND Conference, Sheffield, 23/24/25 November. Deadline for delegates is 5 Nov. Don't delay, make sure your college sends its full delegation.
- NUS Women's Conference, Birmingham University, 10 November. All women supporters to attend.
- London Socialist Action Forums: City London Poly: 'Women in the miners' strike', 14 November
- LSE: 'Ireland and the struggle for socialism', 21 November.
- No Nazis in our colleges! Picket NF member Harrington at North London Polytechnic, Holloway Road Extension Site. Every Friday, 8.30am. Book transport and pass resolutions of support for PNL's stand against the NF!
- Miners' benefit, Bedford College SU, 16 November.

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

# Socialist ACTION

**THE TORY attack on jobs and services continues. The government will not change its mind about abolition and rate-capping because by-elections and opinion polls show a large majority against them.**

The latest opinion poll in London shows that:

- 83 per cent of Londoners believe that the main reason for abolition is political, not improvement of London's administration;

- 71 per cent believe that abolition of the GLC will lead to worse services for Londoners;

- 68 per cent believe that abolition will mean less democratic government.

The Tories will take no notice of these points. But the labour movement should take notice.

The fact is that there is a mass opposition to the government's proposals on abolition and rate-capping.

That is why the Tories refused to contest the recent by-elections, and why they have scrapped the elections in May 1985.

The labour movement must provide the lead which can mobilise this opposition.

There is good reason for doing so:

- ★ Abolition of the GLC alone will mean 6000 jobs lost immediately, and 14,000 to follow;

- ★ A five per cent cut in local government expenditure would mean 160,000 jobs lost in England alone, including 60,000 teaching jobs;

- ★ If the GLC is abolished, borough rates in London will rise;

- ★ This is not to stop 'profligate' local councils. In fact, local government spending as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product has been falling



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

since 1975 (from 34 per cent of GDP then, to 25 per cent now).

The aim of the Tory government's attacks are clear. It is to make a huge cut in services, and therefore in jobs, and to destroy the Labour Party's strength in local government.

The labour movement can defeat this attack. If the rate-capped councils, the GLC, and the metropolitan counties stand together, the Tories will be incapable of imposing the legislation.

Liverpool showed how it can be done. The local

government unions, the Labour Parties, and the Labour groups must stand together in a united front committed to defying the law.

The local community can be mobilised behind this fight, by refusing to set massive rate rises and setting a budget in line with local needs, to defend jobs and services.

Labour Party conference gave the party, and the leadership, a clear mandate to fight the Tory proposals — and to defy the law if need be. Now is the time to organise to wage this fight.

## Stop the Tories! Unite to defend jobs!

## Big victory in Nicaragua

**LAST SUNDAY's Nicaraguan elections registered a huge political success for the FSLN government. Despite a boycott of the elections by all the main capitalist parties, and constant economic and military pressure by the United States to boycott the vote, reports show a turn out for the polls of over 80 per cent.**

This massive turn out to vote constitutes a major rebuff to Reagan's claim that the first free elections in Nicaraguan history were 'fraudulent' and that the FSLN government does not have the support of the Nicaraguan people.

Even more grotesque therefore was Reagan's declaration on Sunday that the election was 'phony'. An election in Nicaragua where 80 per cent of the population vote is apparently no good for Reagan. Yet in the US Presidential elections, only around 55 per cent of the population vote!

Even more convoluted were the accusations of the US State Department. According to the US *International Herald Tribune* on



Monday, 'The principal problem with the election according to US officials, is that Nicaraguans cannot vote for the four parties most opposed to the government because these parties are boycotting the race.'

That is a real Alice in Wonderland reasoning! If

the FSLN's opponents boycott the elections, because they think they will lose, then the lack of choice is due to the FSLN!

The reality is clear. The Nicaraguan elections last Sunday registered massive popular support for the FSLN government in a free poll. The labour

movement must redouble its campaign to stop Reagan's secret war against a government which enjoys huge popularity and which now even has a far greater democratic mandate than anything possessed by Ronald Reagan in the United States!

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