

A Socialist ACTION

No. 81
7 December 1984
30p

TUC

must

back the

miners



Call a 24 hour general strike!

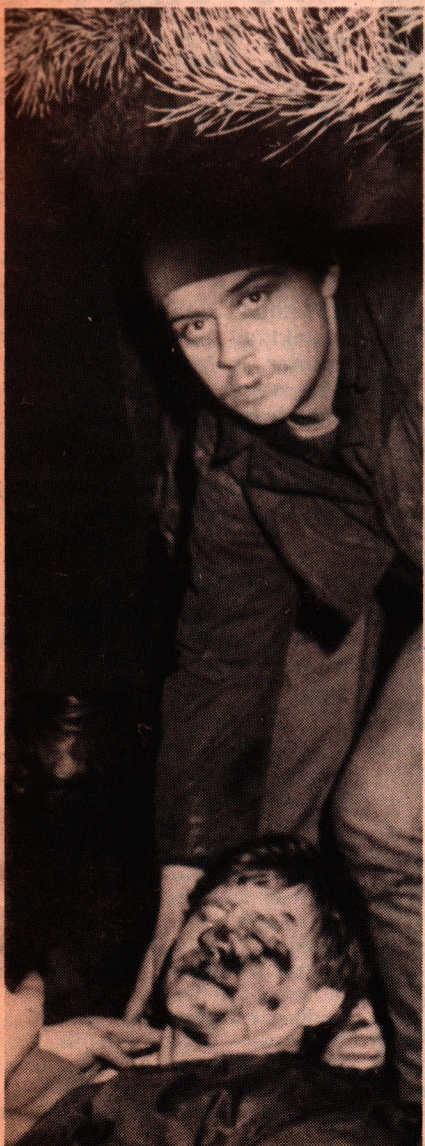
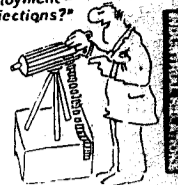


Photo: JOHN HARRIS (IFL)

The courts versus the unions

- 1799 Combination Acts:** made all 'combinations' of workers illegal. Anyone joining together for the purpose of opposing her or his employer is liable to three months' imprisonment or two months' hard labour.
- 1824-1825 Combination Acts:** The 1824 Act repealed the earlier anti-combination legislation but a wave of strikes immediately caused Peel's government to tighten up the law again.
- 1834 Tolpuddle Martyrs:** six labourers from Tolpuddle in Dorset were transported to Australia under a 1797 Act forbidding the 'administering and taking of unlawful oaths' for seditions.
- 1871 Trade Union Act and Criminal Law Amendment Act:** effectively outlawed peaceful picketing by 'watching or besetting'. Picketing had been unlawful since the 1825 Act, but had been finally legalised in 1859.
- 1873 Gas Stokers' Case:** London gas workers who had gone on strike to prevent the victimisation of trade unionists were sentenced to 12 months' hard labour for 'conspiracy' to break their contracts of employment.
- 1896** The courts grant an injunction to prevent members of the Amalgamated Trade Society of Fancy Leather Workers from picketing their place of work, throwing into doubt the right to peaceful picketing believed to have been established by the 1896 Trade Union Act.
- 1900 Taff Vale Judgement:** again, the courts grant an injunction to prevent picketing, this time against the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants — in dispute with the Taff Vale railway. The House of Lords also awards compensation for losses suffered by the company as a result of the strike and the ASRS has to pay £42,000 in damages and legal costs.
- 1909 Osborne Judgement:** the courts declare that it is illegal for the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants to make contributions to the funds of the Labour Party.
- 1915 Munitions of War Act:** made all strikes illegal in industries employed in war work. All trade union rules on production, such as limitations on overtime, are suspended and arbitration in industrial disputes made compulsory.
- 1927 Trades Disputes Act:** banned sympathetic strikes and all strikes 'designed to coerce the government', introduced a 'contracting-in' system for the payment of the political levy to the Labour Party and forbade civil servants from joining unions affiliated to the TUC.
- 1971 Industrial Relations Act:** established special National Industrial Relations Court with jurisdiction in industrial disputes with power to impose strike ballots, 'cooling-off' periods and fines upon unions undertaking 'unfair industrial practices'. The pre-entry closed shop declared illegal.
- 1972 Pentonville Five:** the NIRC under Lord Donaldson imprisoned five dockers, 'The Pentonville Five', for contempt of court in 1972 for refusing to stop boycotting a vehicle depot.
- 1973** Donaldson orders the sequestration of the assets of the AUEW for refusing to stop picketing a Woking firm which would not allow its workers to join a trade union. Three building pickets jailed by the Shrewsbury courts on frame-up conspiracy charges.
- 1980 Employment Act:** ('Prior's Law') outlawed secondary picketing and restricted number of pickets allowed in a lawful industrial action to just six.
- 1982 Employment Act:** ('Tebbit's Law') effectively made all sympathy strikes illegal and made trade union funds liable to claim for damages as a result of 'unlawful' industrial action.
- 1983 Sequestration of the funds of the NGA**
- 1984 Employment Act:** ('King's Law') makes ballots compulsory for strikes and cuts off trade union funds for the Labour Party unless reaffirmed every 10 years by ballot.
- 1984 Receiver appointed for the NUM, TGWU fined £200,000**
- 1985?**

"Here are your new contracts of employment — any objections?"



The TUC's road to hell

JOHN ROSS looks at how the Tories have based their trade union laws on the expectation that the TUC would put up no resistance to a policy of slowly tightening the noose around the labour movement. And how the Tories have chosen the terrain of the miners' strike as the decisive one to force through their plans to change the entire legal framework of trade unionism.

Ever since they were elected in 1979 the Tories have had a clear *political* goal for their anti-trade union laws. That goal is an American model of trade unionism — trade unions which are 'non-political', which base themselves on legally binding contracts with the employers, and unions which take co-responsibility with the employers for policing these contracts. In other words to create an entire union movement on the model of the EETPU or Alistair Graham's role in the CPSA.

The result would naturally be exactly the same as in the United States. A catastrophic fall in union membership as trade union members found they belonged to organisations which offered them no protection.

Worse still trade unions on this model would be confined just to those sections of the workforce with the most secure employment, with skilled qualifications etc. Strikes would, in addition, be banned in 'essential services' such as health, local government, the water, electricity, and gas industries.

The aim would be a trade union movement enormously reduced in size from its present level — with perhaps six million members in trade union affiliated to the TUC compared to ten million at the present. This membership furthermore would be far more concentrated than at present in skilled right wing unions such as the EETPU, the skilled sections of the AUEW etc. The aim would be to destroy public sector unions such as NUPE as an effective force by the combination of anti-union laws and privatisation.

Precisely because their plans for breaking the power of the unions, and transforming their nature, are so sweeping the Tories never calculated they would be able to get their laws through, and enforced, all in one move. Instead their aim was to tighten the noose slowly — to bring forward a successive series of Acts, and legal decisions, that would in a step by step fashion accomplish their goals. The final confrontation to achieve the new framework of law, which would inevitably come, would then be at a time, and on a terrain, of the government's own choosing. Therefore:

Who is the real NUM?

'I AM THE NUM,' said Herbert Brewer, the receiver appointed last Friday to run the NUM. And he wasn't joking. The court order which installed him not only gives him control of the union's funds, but the power to intervene in any decision with financial implications — right down to whether or not a phone call can be made.

By this decision the courts have tried to rule that Arthur Scargill is no longer president of the National Union of Mineworkers and the executive no longer in effective control of the union.

There is only one other situation where the law has dealt in such a way with a trade union: in the 1950s, when the executive of the electricians' union was removed for alleged ballot rigging.

The entire 'legal' case against the miners is a pure political contrivance. Two scabs from Yorkshire, Foulstone and Taylor, began court proceedings on the grounds that branch meetings has not been held regularly and the area elections not held on time.



Royal penguins on parade

- The 1980 Act outlawed solidarity action, limited picketing, and offered unions money for ballots.

- The 1982 Act imposed ballots for closed shops and made unions liable for fines up to £250,000 for non-compliance with the law.

- The 1984 Act imposed compulsory ballots before strikes, and compulsory ballots on the unions maintaining political funds.

- A new 'Green Paper' is promised by the government on banning strikes in 'essential services' as the next round of anti-union Acts.

In addition to the new laws the courts have been steadily piling up a new series of legal decisions which are in line with the government's aims. The most important of these, aside from the miners, have been:

- In May 1981 Chloride Batteries took out an injunction against the TGWU over picketing.

- In September 1983 Eddie Shah's *Stockport Messenger* group took out an injunction against the NGA which led to the sequestration of the unions' funds.

- In November 1984 Austin Rover took out an injunction against the TGWU for not holding a ballot on a strike which led to a £200,000 fine on the union.

The judge used this technicality to declare the entire Yorkshire strike unofficial.

An injunction was granted instructing the national executive to stop urging members not to cross picket lines. The union's refusal to obey led to the £200,000 fine and to Arthur Scargill personally being fined £1000 at the beginning of October.

Scargill's fine was paid by an anonymous donor. The £200,000 remains unpaid. For this Taylor and Foulstone got their sequestration order.

Sequestration means that as long as the union is in contempt — by refusing to say the strike is unofficial — the court can hold onto its money, as security against further contempt. Furthermore it must accept not merely all past but all *future* decisions of the courts — including demands for a ballot or a return to work.

The uncompromising stand of the miners' leaders has pushed the courts into the open. After this blatant attack, who can doubt the role of the courts as trustees of ruling class interests?

The point about *all* these decisions is that the framework of law erected by the Tories is completely *politically* flexible. Legal action can either be initiated, or not initiated, by employers and government simply on the basis of considering the relation of forces. The true character of the courts as political instruments is more and more directly revealed.

The calculation of the Tories in all these attacks has been that the TUC would not act in defence of unions threatened by the law. For its part the TUC policy has been purely a case of 'words not action'. Officially TUC policy is based on the Wembley special conference of 1982. This pointed out that the Heath government's 1971 Industrial Relations Act 'was defeated by a united and effective trade union response ... The fact that trade unions generally adopted an aggressive posture

to the Act made the Act unworkable.'

The conference adopted a position of total non-compliance with the anti-union laws, including refusal to accept government funds for state imposed ballots, rejection of ballots on the closed shop, and support for industrial action in defence of unions attacked under the Acts.

Len Murray, in moving the general council's report to the conference said: 'One thing we — and that means every one of us — has got to do is warn employers what this Act means for them; that if they choose to invoke its provisions it would cost them dearly; if they are foolish enough to start legal trouble they will face the risk of an escalation of action by the trade union movement acting together.'

But the practical course of the general council ever since Wembley has been the exact reverse. The decisive

refusal to defend the NGA, and the failure to act against the legal attacks on the NUM, has been followed by a further series of retreats. The EETPU and AUEW led the way by repudiating the Austin Rover strike. The AUEW executive is appealing to its members to accept government funds for ballots. David Basnett of GMBATU is calling for a 'major review' of the TUC policy of opposition to the law — as is ASTMS.

Every single one of these retreats has led to a further tightening of the screw by the government. The Tories' are now calculating that if the TUC fails to back the miners the *major* step in forcing through the new framework or anti-trade union law will have been taken. This is why the battle over the NUM really is the *decisive* one for the entire future of the trade union and labour movement.

'During this s we have lost of five of our

AFTER THE death of David Wilkie, the driver ferrying one of Merthyr Vale's two scabs to work last Friday, two young miners, Raymond Hancock and Russell Shankland, have been charged with murder at Merthyr Tydfil court. The ruling class with the media right behind them, are baying for blood.

The whole process was a pure display of ruling class hypocrisy.

After the death, **DICK WITHECOMBE** and **TERRY LUKE** spoke to **TYRONE O'SULLIVAN**, chair of the Cynon Valley joint lodges, about the death.

What's the response of NUM members in Cynon Valley to the death of David Wilkie this morning?

A death in the family is always a tragic experience. We have lived with death in our communities since coal mining began. In the case of the taxi driver, I have felt for a long time that someone taking scabs to work would eventually become a fatality.

Firstly, the method of getting scabs into work — driving into pitheads at 70 miles per hour with no regard for either the pickets or the police — is dangerous. Only on Monday, at the



Photo: JOHN HARRIS (IFL)

The funeral of Joe Green — the second miner killed in the strike

TUC must back the miners

Arthur Scargill

« THE PEOPLE who built this movement didn't have any money either. If they hadn't made sacrifices there wouldn't have been a movement.

And if we'd had to rely on money rather than principle, courage and determination, then the fight wouldn't have even started. We will have some money from our friends in the national and international trade union movement.

The trade union movement has got a choice: it can either be in contempt of the law or in contempt of its membership. If it ever loses the support of its membership and they hold it in contempt then the trade union movement in Britain is lost.

I only hope there's a recognition that this most serious and drastic step taken by the High Court so far to smash the NUM is but a prelude to the smashing of the entire trade union and labour movement.

I only hope that the trade unionists of this country recognise that they have now to stand up and fight. »

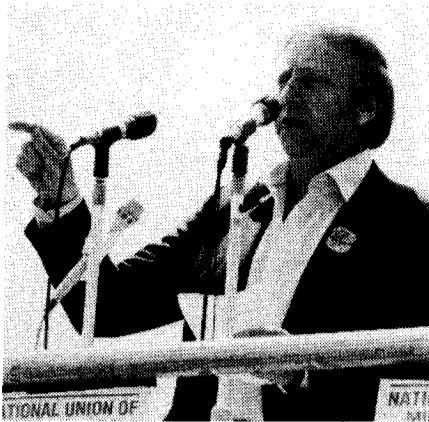


Photo: GM COOKSON

tire policy of the government. It is absurd and ridiculous that what the TUC is discussing today is how to make a further retreat on the anti-union laws instead of coming to the NUM's assistance.

Precisely because the government has been forced out into the open by the miners' resistance this is the time when the entire trade union movement should be mobilised to break down the Tories package of anti-union laws.

As long as it appeared simply a question of solidarity with the miners there were many parts of the trade union movement where it was difficult to get solidarity — despite the overwhelming support from many other areas. But with an attack on every single trade union threatened the TUC, with a decisive lead, could swing that round.

The simple call should be, as the NUM has demanded, industrial action in support of the miners — and also of the TGWU. This should mean the TUC fixing the date for a national day of industrial action, a 24 hour general strike, against this legal attack on the NUM and the trade union movement. If this does not force the government to back down it must be followed up by industrial action sufficient to force the withdrawal of the legal attacks on the unions.

The NUM have given the lead which the trade union movement has been waiting for. They have defeated the 'back to work movement'. Now at the delegate conference they have held firm against the legal attack launched against them. It is up to the trade union movement as a whole to give them the support which is needed. Financial support but above all industrial action.

It is simply absurd to claim, as the TUC right wing has done, that supporting the NUM would place the TUC's funds and position in jeopardy. The government would not dare risk an attack on the TUC itself.

Arthur Scargill put it perfectly in his speech in Yorkshire on Tuesday: 'The time for mealy mouthed resolutions in unions and organisations is at an end. The time when this movement must react is now. We're not asking for moral support or resolutions. We're asking now for practical assistance. And we've asked for the general council to be convened to authorise industrial action in support of this union. In defence of its organisation as well as its fight for jobs.'

The NUM has given the lead which is needed. The TUC must give the support which is needed. If the general council won't give that support then the TUC congress must be recalled to do so.

NUM resolution

THE FOLLOWING was the resolution passed by the special delegate conference of the NUM.

1: The NUM deplores the court decision to appoint a Tory party official as receiver with total control over our funds.

2: The NUM is 'NOT prepared to sanction payment of the £200,000 fine levied against the union' — though it recognises that the payment will be 'seized without our consent.'

3: The NUM is not prepared to purge its contempt — insisting that the union has acted in accordance with its rules.

4: The union is not prepared to allow any union official to help the receiver or the court sequestrators.

5: The NUM calls on the TUC to mobilise industrial action to stop this most vicious threat in our history to the freedom and independence of British trade unionism.

Call a 24 hour general strike!

strike
the lives
members'

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



very same colliery, Myrth Vale, a number of policemen were run down causing major injuries, as a scab was driven in.

Also, the situation arises that when the police stop pickets at road blocks and when they order pickets off their buses 5-6 miles from where they intend to peacefully picket, it gives rise to frustration. When you put 2-3000 people on the road at any time, you take control of the pickets away from the NUM organisers.

I don't see the death of David Wilkie in any way beneficial to miners on strike, or to the ends and means of the strike. But as far as responsibility is concerned, it hangs not with the NUM, but with the government and the methods of policing.

During this strike we have lost the lives of five of our members due to violence inflicted on them while picketing. And we have lost nine lives — young and old — while they attempted to keep their premises warm by digging for coal because the NCB has broken long term agreements to provide coal to miners and their families.

What affect will the media campaign have?

As far as we are concerned there is no way this will affect the strike, because although this tragic death has occurred, the death of a community is also a



tragic occurrence. The principles we came out on strike for have not altered. We want a future for ourselves, our families and our communities.

How have the police responded?

The pickets that we've had out since this morning's incident have reported that the police are encouraging and leading a violent attitude towards us. My members have been taunted by challenges to 'come on and fight one to one'.



The Myrth Valley has been road-blocked all day. On the picket lines this morning the police were trying to take everyone's name and address, allegedly to eliminate us from their enquiries.

Presumably, all striking miners not on these lists are suspects and will be thoroughly investigated.

All this week we have had a build up of increased police intimidation. This week I've seen more punching and kicking than I've seen on any picket line I've been on in the country.

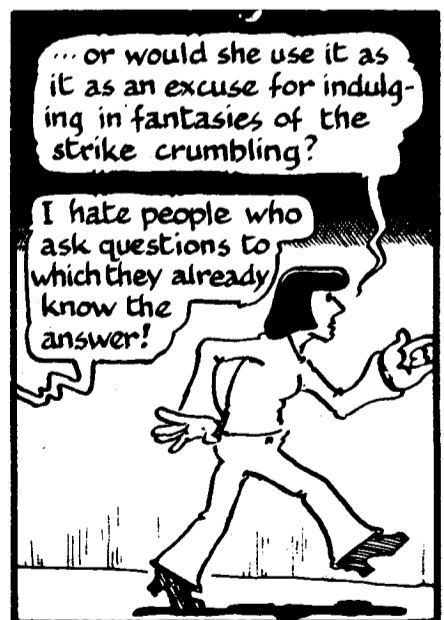


How is morale?

Personally, I think it will have some effect for a couple of days and that's all — though I don't know if it's calous to say that.

Everybody is thinking about this. It's not been in the interest of the strike, but whatever happens the morale in the valleys will not be affected.

We've been fighting this present government for five years — fighting for our futures. Nothing will deter 99.9 per cent of South Wales miners. Victory will be ours.



Apologies

WE APOLOGISE to our readers for the late appearance of this week's issue of the paper and the absence of much of our usual miners' coverage. A veritable influenza virus, evidently in the pay of the NCB, knocked out all but two people on our editorial staff for most of this week's issue. We promise that the paper will be back to its normal self next week.

Mineworkers Defence Conference

Building for victory

BY LAST Thursday evening it was clear that Camden conference centre would not hold all the delegates who wanted to attend the Mineworkers Defence Committee conference in London last Sunday. On the day there were at least 1,200 delegates in the main conference. The overspill meeting in the University of London Union had over 500 in attendance.

The activists from the solidarity movement made the conference a spectacular success for two main reasons. They came to hear the key leaders of Labour's left wing — Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and Ken Livingstone — speaking about the dispute. But they also came because the solidarity movement over the last eight months has grown locally and regionally but has so far had no national forum where it could discuss how to increase the effectiveness of its work in the dispute.

By Valerie Coultas

The conference was built on the success at Labour Party conference. Here the NUM intervened to win total support for its struggles. The left stood firm and the centre and right were defeated on the issue of extra-parliamentary struggles.

Last Sunday's conference marked a step forward in the willingness of Labour's left wing to begin to put pressure on the party leadership to take those conference policies seriously. That's why the potentially most important part of the statement endorsed by the conference was the last sentence which called for a 'massive national demonstration in support of the miners, to be organised at a date to be agreed with the NUM'.

Battle

The atmosphere of the conference was overwhelmingly positive. Tony Benn set the tone for the day with a speech explaining how the British labour movement was being reconstructed in the battles against the Thatcher government. The work shop report backs later in the day reflected the development of the solidarity movement and the way that many groups, previously outside the 'mainstream' of British labour movement politics, were coming politically to the fore of the dispute.

Hazel Jones, from Mountain Ash Women's support group, told the conference how women were more determined not to give up what they had discovered in this strike. Natasha Sivanandan from the black solidarity workshop explained how black people had suffered the kind of treatment the miners were receiving in the pit communities for

decades.

A report from the lesbian and gay workshop outlined how this was the first time in a major industrial dispute lesbians and gays had got together publicly to express their support for another group of workers.

But the core of winning the dispute remains industrial support. Two printworker delegates explained how they were stopping the lie-machine of the Tories — the popular press. 'The best front page of the *Sun* we've had was a blank one' said an NGA member from the *Sun*. Deputy father of the chapel at the same paper explained how 80,000 copies of the Fleet Street workers' 'Miner's Special' which allowed the right of reply to the NUM had raised cash for the miners' cause.

Delegates

The afternoon rally heard speeches from a woman representative of the CGT, and Italian member of the European parliament representing Proletarian Democracy, from delegates on the floor, from a Yorkshire area executive member, and from Joe Mohammed — a striking miner from Notts.

Joe raised the roof with his story about going back to work to collect his overalls and fearing a physical confrontation with the scabs. When he walked in his head was held up he said but all those at work were looking at the floor. That's the difference between a scab and a striking miner he told the audience. They'll always have their heads to the ground but we'll hold our heads high. No one could have put it better.

Success

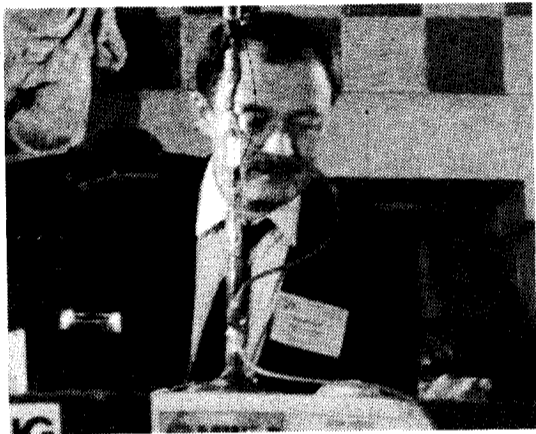
Ken Livingstone had a difficult job in chairing the afternoon session — because at 5pm the organisers informed him that the chief speaker, Arthur Scargill would not be arriving because of the debate on the executive about how to respond to the appointment of a receiver for the NUM funds. But despite that the conference was a major success.

The conference attracted the activists in the solidarity movement. It was *not* representative of all those who have supported the miners to date,

unfortunately, as the refusal of the South East Region of the TUC to give an endorsement was a reflection of the equivocal attitude of the Communist Party to the event.

But the conference marked an important event in the miners' strike precisely *because* it gave the activists in the solidarity movement, rank and

file members of the NUM, the Women Against Pit Closures movement, and the left leaders the chance to organise together to put pressure on the trade union and labour leaders to implement labour movement policy of support for the miners, it was one of the most significant initiatives taken by the Labour left for some years.



Stand with the miners!

Ken Livingstone

If we stand firm and make it clear to the judges and to this government that we are not accepting that we should fight this dispute on their terms — if we make it quite clear that we will reverse the things they do — we will actually weaken them.

I believe it's time that we started to hear from those that lead us in parliament that another government will repay every penny that has been stolen from the miners.

We will repay to every miner's family the money that's been stolen

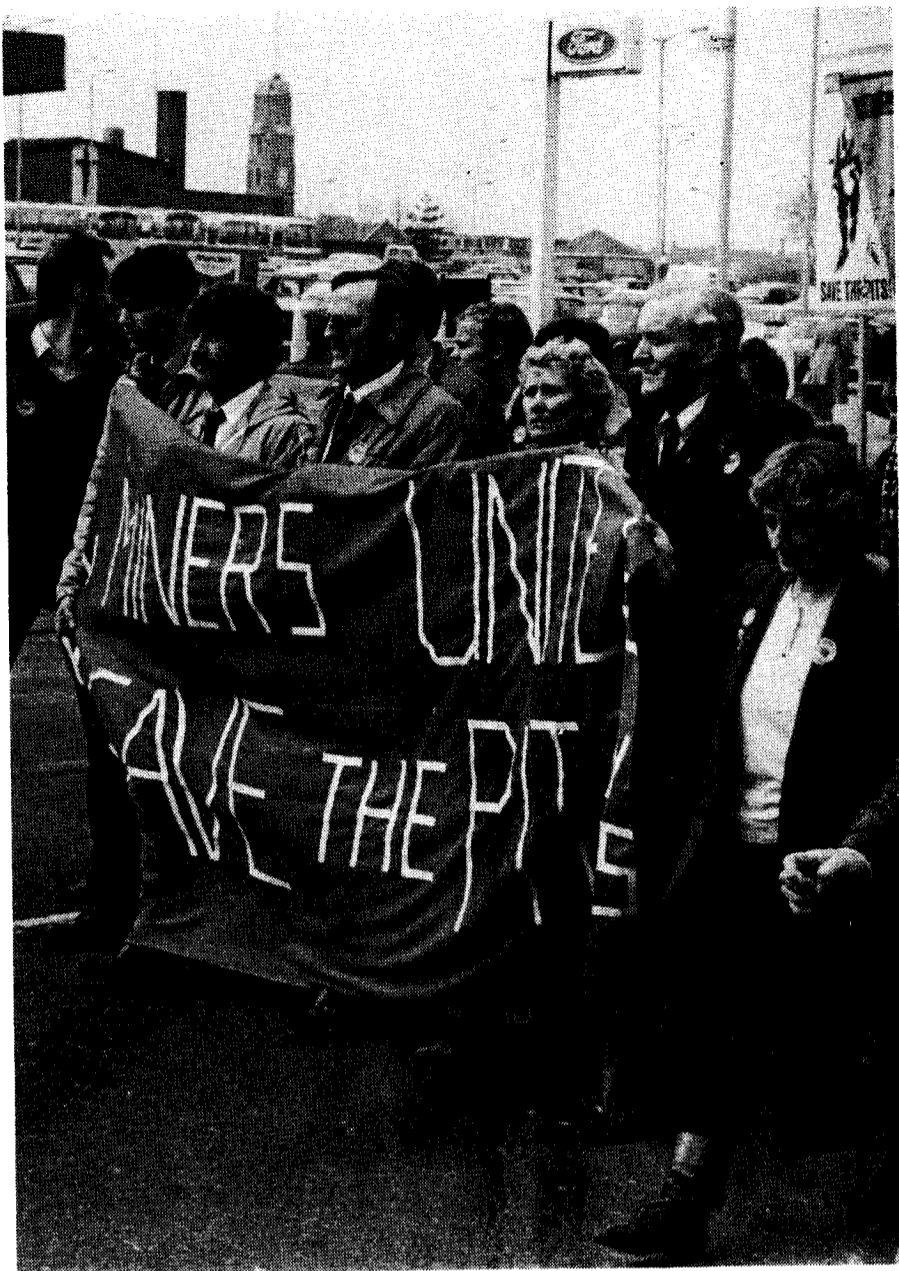
by this government through the DHSS in order to try and starve the miners and their families back to work.

When statements are made by those that lead us, it undermines every judge that's ruling, and twisting the bundle, it undermines every part of the DHSS that's responding to the pressure of this government to hit the miners and the families.

And we need to be saying quite clearly that we soon start the process of selection of parliamentary candidates. We need to demand of everyone who sees themselves getting into parliament: 'Will you actually vote to restore the money that's been stolen by this government? Will you vote to retire those judges who have twisted every rule and every law?'



London railworkers delegation to Coalville



No fuel to the power stations!

THE DAY IS drawing nearer when the NCB will try to shift their 22 million tonnes of power station slack which is currently at the pit heads and at the stocking grounds. Yet we at Coalville still remain solid in our refusal to shift coal by rail.

Morale at the depot has never been higher in the dispute. We passed through the pain barrier some weeks ago. With Christmas approaching we can stick it out indefinitely.

One of the reasons for our high morale is the reinstatement of the young driver management sacked for alleged theft of BR property. The reason why this lad has been reinstated is the fuss we have created in the union and in the media.

Two other lads were charged with a similar offence. They are still waiting to appear in court and to have their appeals

heard by BR management.

Of course subtle pressures are still being applied. For instance last week local NUR members received a hand-delivered leaflet from the Federation of Professional Railway Staff (FPRS), the scab union that broke away in the 1982 flexible rostering strike.

By Roy Butlin,
Coalville NUR
(personal capacity)

This leaflet is nothing more than scare-mongering. But it could worry some of our members who are concerned that we will suffer job losses to the road haulage industry.

It raises some serious questions. How did the FPRS get my members' home addresses?

At Coalville management continues to send us home on a daily basis when we refuse to work the coal train. They won't give us alternative useful work which does exist.

Coal stocks are at crisis level at the power stations. We at Coalville feel that almost every available vehicle and driver are already moving coal by road.

There's no great pool of vehicles left which would be needed for the mountains of stockpiled scab coal. In my village

I've seen coal lorries with cab-side addresses ranging from Cornwall to Aberdeen. Only the army has the resources to move mass quantities of coal.

Until these coal stocks are shifted power stations are being run on oil and even aviation fuel. You might as well light £20 notes because it is that expensive to fire the boilers.

BR management is involved in sharp practice by running oil trains to oil depots instead of direct to power stations. From the oil depots it is transferred to tanker lorries which takes it to the power stations by road. This is what is keeping open many of the biggest power stations.

I only hope that train crews on these fuel trains learn from us at Coalville. All our effort must now be concentrated on stopping all fuel from reaching power stations.

We have to make sure our union leaders do everything possible to back both rail workers at places like Coalville and Shirebrook and Westhouse, who refuse to shift coal, and to back those refusing to shift other sorts of fuel.

This is the lesson we should be giving to our leadership at the lobby of the Confederation on 20 December that is being considered by union activists.

This concrete proposal was made at the transport workshop of the mine-workers' solidarity conference in London. It will be great if it comes off.



Saturday 8 December march and rally

Come to Cardiff

THE WOMEN AGAINST Pit Closures rally and march this Saturday will mark another crucial stage in building a national organisation of women in support of the NUM. The miners' wives have made the miners' union understand that the participation and involvement of women strengthens the entire movement. The demonstration comes too at a critical time is the dispute.

Margaret Thatcher's hypocritical use of David Wilkie's death to 'implore' miners to show their abhorrence by 'flooding' back to work has completely failed. Only two hundred, on NCB figures, returned last Monday — and that is a figure inflated upwards. At the same time, an unprecedented legal attack has seen a blatant Tory stooge installed to run the union over the heads of the membership and its democratically elected executive.

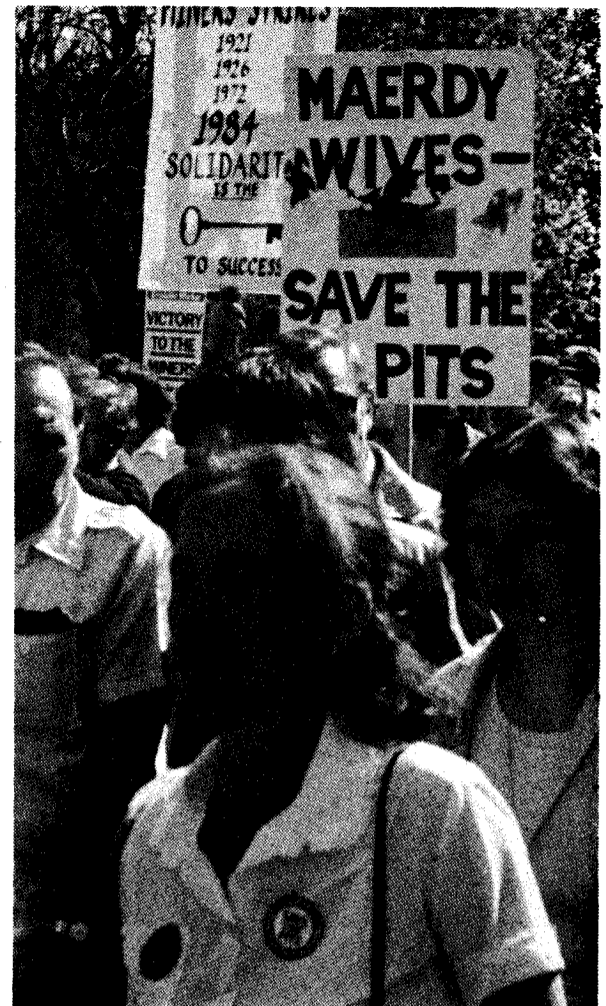
Such a march will highlight the hypocrisy of Thatcher's government who have reduced miners' social security payments just before Christmas, after mining communities have lived on a pittance for nine months in their fight

to save their jobs and their communities.

It will show the confidence and power of working class women who have discovered their strength during this dispute. That is a power that will not quickly disappear.

If women can sustain the commitment they have during the long months of this strike, then it's about time the rest of the trade union movement followed suit. Come to Cardiff on 8 December and show your support for the NUM and the new women's movement.

● Coaches are booked from London (phone Eileen on 01-732 9776), Birmingham (Pat on 021-708 0823) and Manchester (Cath on 061-223 4470).



Labour women lead struggle

IN THE LAST nine months Labour women have been at the forefront of building support for the miners, through linking up with the miners' wives movement.

Labour women campaigned against strip searches in Armagh jail and successfully changed Labour Party policy on them. In every campaign and struggle, like at Greenham Common. Labour women have been active.

But despite all this activity women in the Labour Party have not yet won their own demands for more power and more representation in the party as a whole.

The Labour Women's Action Committee is holding its AGM in Birmingham this weekend, and at the centre of its discussion will be how women in the party can make further advances in the coming year.

By Judith Woodward

1985 must be the year of building on the tremendous boost that has been given to women's demands by the activity of women from the mining communities.

Arthur Scargill has described the movement as 'too powerful to ignore'. This understanding, which women themselves forced upon the NUM, has to be generalised to the whole labour movement.

But not everyone in the labour movement is enthusiastic about seeking the support of women, and not just because of male prejudices and privilege. It is because they know that if women elected their own representatives it would be the women who support the policies of women's conference.

This would seriously upset the whole apple cart whereby the trade union leaderships, wielding their bloc votes, determine the policy and priorities of the Labour Party.

When WAC raises its demand for power in the party it is not just demanding power for women,

but it is challenging the whole structure of the Labour Party for the 80 years of its existence which has ensured it has remained a party of bad compromises rather than a party of struggle.

To win such a tough battle WAC needs to be clear on the alliances it needs to make. Over the next year it has to organise its women supporters in the unions, in the CLPs, among the youth. It has to be at the forefront of turning the Labour Party outwards towards the mass movements of women and it has to deepen its links with the left-wing of the labour movement.



Tilmanstone women tour Southall

THERE'S BEEN a few changes in Tilmanstone colliery since we visited it some two months ago — especially among the women. Largely as a result of the constant intimidation and harassment by the thousands of police who have invaded the village the women have taken on a far greater role in the running of the strike.

'In 1974 we were content to stand behind the men, today its different — we are up front with them. When they are down we keep them going, when they can't stand on the

picket line we take their place, when they speak at meetings we are there on the platform with them.'

It was therefore no surprise to us that Aurelia and Lyn were more than happy to spend a week with us touring local workplaces and meeting local people in Ealing borough.

By Eve Turner, Southall miners support group

Their confidence grew through the week. 'We believe in many ways, as women, we are more credible than the men, we speak from the heart unlike the men who are hampered by trade union language.'

The week was such a

success they decided to come again and visit even more places. Not that they did badly with visits to Acton sorting office, Mag-nalite factory, stewards meetings at Lucas CAV, and EMI records, a gate meeting at Acton LT works, and receptions organised by NALGO, NUT, and local Asian women in Southall.

Their visit opened doors which had been shut to the miners and collections that followed were the biggest yet.

If you'd like to get involved in Southall miners support group phone Eve Turner on 574 4403 evenings or Vasudha on 843 2333 (days)

Dear Socialist Action,

Please find enclosed my poem. If you print it, will you not put my full name or address. If anyone is interested they could write to me c/o you.

The reason is my job could be in jeopardy, and I need this job. I support two striking miners.

One a single lad who receives no money at all; and one a married lad with a wife and my baby granddaughter aged two, who received £9.50 per week — now reduced by the grace of Thatcher to £8.50 — plus a 16 year old son.

I love my sons and am proud to support them I will continue to man stalls, attend meetings, raise funds, pack food parcels, man soup kitchens, picket, sew, speak, visit pits, cry, laugh and grieve with them all until there is work and peace in the coalfields.

I am a member of Women Against Pit Closures and the local defence campaign. I am an active member of my union's miners' support group. I shall continue to help where I can.

I have been asked if I 'don't do too much'. I am amazed. How can loving and caring people, and wanting jobs and peace in our coalfields be 'too much'?

And whilst we have this oppressiveness, my little contribution will never be enough.

The miners do not condone violence. But whilst everyday they are batoned, beaten, rode over by horses, vans backed into them and legs broken, heads split wide open — and without the slightest provocation — there will be no peace in our coalfields. Help us!

A Yorkshire miner's mother.

From a Yorkshire miner's mother



And she watched the miner picket,
The grey mist swirling round.
And a figure stepped forward,
Truncheon raised — beat the miner to the ground.
The miner was defenceless — no weapon in his hand.
Into the mud
Seeped the miners' blood,
His arms down by his side.
Another blow from a stooping man,
On a horse he was astride.

A scream rang out in the darkness.
And forward a figure ran
To help the injured miner,
A mother to her son.
And blinded by her tears
The grey mist swirling round
The mother came forward in anguish
To help the miner on the ground.

And she cradled the miner to her,
The wound on the head was wide.
Into the mud
Seeped the miner's blood,
The grey mist swirling round.
And the woman knelt beside him
The miner to whom she had run,
For the man who had been beaten
Was the anguished woman's son.

And every wife and mother of a miner
Knows the dread of a truncheon's thud,
In the hands of the 'legalised bully boys',
Will bring her miner to the mud.
And this happens at every coalfield,
In the darkness of the night,
Some miner is beaten senseless
Because he is standing up for his rights.

EVER SINCE he became party leader Neil Kinnock has been trying to find a way out of his dilemma on 'defence' policy.

On the one hand, the party membership is now totally committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. To attempt to openly sell that out would destroy Neil Kinnock's support just as much as his position on the miners' strike has done.

On the other hand, abandonment of nuclear weapons is totally unacceptable for the British ruling class. Kinnock has tried to square the circle with the new Labour Party defence document.

This takes as its framework current American and NATO plans to boost conventional weapons spending in Europe. The defence document therefore commits Labour more firmly than ever to NATO, and therefore to an American veto over military policy, while trying to specialise Britain as a 'non-nuclear' contributor of conventional armed forces inside the Atlantic alliance.

The aim of the policy, for the Labour right and centre, was that the big increase in conventional

arms spending would be implemented and that the commitment to abandon nuclear weapons would be dumped in practice.

But on his recent visit to Moscow, the Soviet leadership quietly blew up Kinnock's line by proposing *serious* abandonment of nuclear weapons. Namely that, if Britain removed all atomic weapons from its soil, the Soviet Union would unconditionally guarantee that no nuclear weapons would be targeted on Britain and that Soviet nuclear arms would be destroyed in the same numbers as British ones.

It is the same eminently practical proposal the Soviet leadership has made to other countries — a proposal *completely* unacceptable to both the United States and the British ruling class.

OLIVER MACDONALD argues that the left has to take up and campaign on the Soviet offer. He shows this is in contradiction to the rest of Labour's present 'defence' policy, in particular the Labour leadership's support for NATO and acceptance of a US veto on British policy.



Kinnock and Chernenko

THE KINNOCK-Chernenko Moscow Agreement last week was a triumph for the peace movement and the labour movement. If carried through by a Labour government, it would be the first time in East-West history that an agreement led to an actual reduction of nukes on both sides. It would make Britain a nuclear-free zone and would thus protect the people of this country from being a nuclear target.

There are now only two coherent policies on nuclear weapons here. One is Thatcher's: the more nukes we have, the more we try to frighten the USSR the safer we are, and any deal with the Reds getting rid of our nukes will mean they will probably do what they have always wanted to do — kill us all at the first opportunity; and Labour's position that by scrapping British nukes and US nuclear bases here we can have security guarantees from the Soviets that will take Britain out of the target area and make Britain

more secure than at any time in the last 35 years.

The muddle-heads in the middle who feel reluctant to go openly into Thatcher's 'bash the Red horde' camp now have no coherent policy at all for dealing with Britain's nukes, no policy, that is, with any clear-cut meaning for the voters.

Peter Jenkins of the *Guardian* gleefully raised the menace of the nuclear winter. The line was: just because Labour's policy stops us being a nuclear target, we will still get the nuclear winter to kill us, so there. If he thinks that will wash with the voters, he's more befuddled by his Foreign Office briefings than we thought.

But the right has one argument that may not have voter appeal but certainly wins over the bulk of the Labour leadership. This is very simple: no European NATO government can take any initiative in defence policy or East-West relations that conflicts with the basic view of the US administration.

This point is, of course, never stated openly like that. To do so would be disastrous electorally in a country whose people like to think of themselves as sovereign, and where most people regard the Reagan administration as dangerous war-mongers.

So the argument is wrapped up in code words. 'Multilateralism' does *not* mean disarmament by both sides (eg the Moscow Agreement). It means disarmament with NATO (ie American) agreement.

'Loyalty to NATO' is another code phrase meaning that no NATO government (apart from the US, of course) can do business directly with Moscow on its own account. You must do it with US approval. Another such code



phrase is 'alliance solidarity'.

None of this, of course, is in the NATO treaty — hence the difficulty many people in the labour movement must have in grasping all this talk about the Moscow Agreement being in conflict with Britain's NATO commitment. What this talk means is that the Moscow Agreement is in conflict with American policy.



Of course it is! Any idiot can see that Reagan would not wish to remove US nuclear bases from Britain. More than that, any idiot can see that the entire US policy towards Europe runs counter to the interests of the European people's security.

US policy is geared to achieving superiority over the USSR and destabilising it. Let us remind ourselves of some facts:

● The Reagan administration had declared it has political ambitions in the East: at the Stockholm con-

ference earlier this year, after Reagan had begun his peace rhetoric, Schultz explicitly called for roll-back in Eastern Europe — the aim of pulling Eastern Europe into the American sphere.

● The Reaganite wing of the Kohl government in West Germany has been raising the claim for a return to Germany's 1937 frontiers — liquidating the Polish state.

'The Reagan administration has rebuffed recent suggestions from some West European governments that it should freeze the deployment of first strike missiles like cruise and Pershing to aid negotiations with the Russians.

'The new Follow-On Forces strategy coupled with AirLand Battle methods of Blitzkrieg war will be adopted by NATO this December for no other reason than that the US insists upon it. This war fighting approach is consistent with the idea of a sudden strike to 'liberate' this or that country in Eastern Europe from the Soviet sphere. The virtually unanimous condemnation of it by West European military experts has simply been brushed aside by the United States. (The Lionheart exercise this autumn, by the way, showed that NATO is going over not just to FOFA as the media says, but the AirLand Battle plan as a whole.)

Against this background it is surely blindingly obvious that no government committed to any sort of peace policy can allow the US administration a veto over its dealings with the East. For the left, this is not a matter of nationalism — 'Britain's right to decide' everything at all costs — but of realism, ABC.



Photo: GM COOKSON

The rebirth of the Labour Party

AT THE Mineworkers Defence Campaign conference in London 2 December Tony Benn made a major speech not only dealing with the miners' strike but on its whole role in rebuilding the Labour movement. Because that section of his speech dealt with key questions of socialist strategy under debate on the left we are printing it for our readers.

I AM absolutely confident that the organisation that the NUM, the women's support groups, and other groups represented at the conference today have been able to achieve is going to transform the British Labour Party.

Because I'll tell you something that has come to light in the course of the last nine months. That is the end of electoral parliamentarism.

Tony Benn

The idea that all you've got to do is to be quiet, then canvass for a Labour candidate, and then when he or she gets into power wait for five years, be loyal to everything that's done, and then turn out again. That is not a way forward for us.

The electoral politics that we tended to regard as being the nature of the Labour Party has got to be replaced and supplemented by the sort of action that the miners and the women's support groups and this conference have carried out.

I believe that what has happened over the last nine months, apart from educating people, has been to establish in every single constituency party miners' groups, women's groups,

women's action groups, that have no intention whatever of disbanding when the strike is over and are instruments ready and able to support any issue that is in the interests of working people. This means defending trade unionists, defending women, defending the blacks, defending the Irish who are under similar attack.

What we are witnessing now is a redrawing of the political map of Britain. We are seeing now the true nature of Tory institutions.

The idea that the BBC is impartial, that the judges are free from political pressure, that the magistrates are just decent citizens doing their job without fear or favour, that the police are above politics, we are seeing all that being exposed.

But we're seeing something else as well. That if we're going to defend rights won by earlier generations of labour people we've got to fight as hard to retain them as they fought to win them. And we've got to harness the energy and commitment released by the miners strike to make fresh demands.

What we are seeing now is the rebirth of the labour and trade union movement in its new form. If the Labour Party had a founding conference now, as in 1918, we know that all the groups that are represented here would be at that conference.

The women's sections would be an autonomous group affiliated, so would the black sections and a whole range of others. They would all be properly affiliated to the Labour Party because a Labour Party that has to do its job has got to be *comprehensive* in character. It's got to be a party fit and appropriate for the magnitude of the struggle that faces us and truly representative of all the interests and problems that confront working people in the age of high technology, nuclear weapons, multinational business and multinational finance. It's got to be an international movement as well.

I believe that 1984 will be remembered as an historic year for us. At the very moment when we were called upon to fight for the rights which we have enjoyed because of the struggles of the earlier generations the miners, the miners' wives, and their communities have risen to the occasion and given us the lead that we need for that victory.

the debate itself, Denzil Davies insisted on the need 'for changes being made within NATO' — a vaguer formulation but the same code.

So the message is clear: the Moscow Agreements embody a policy backed four to one at conference this year, but a policy which the bulk of the PLP leadership will sabotage if the Americans want them to. This means the labour movement must adopt the following steps to prevent Healey and co from sabotaging the establishment of Britain as a nuclear free zone:

- ★ We must demand that the Labour leadership turns the Moscow Agreement into a formalised, draft treaty in consultation with the Soviet leadership before the next election.

- ★ We must extract a pledge from the PLP leadership, backed by a massive conference majority, that the Moscow Agreement will not be conditional on US approval, and will be made a bilateral treaty with Moscow.

- ★ Any attempt by the US government to undermine the reductions in nukes agreed in the Moscow Agreement by shifting nukes from here to the continent will be opposed by a future Labour government.

- ★ Any negotiations and agreements with the US over US bases and weapons here will occur after the treaty with Moscow is initialled and will be conducted through open diplomacy — no secret treaties or secret agreements.

These are the minimum steps necessary to ensure that Neil Kinnock's success in Moscow last week is more than a flash in the pan.



Origins of the Cold War

The problem is that the overwhelming majority of the present shadow cabinet and the entire foreign policy and defence policy leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party is fully committed to clearing a Labour government's policy towards the East through Washington. They are therefore opposed to the implementation of the Moscow Agreement, for the simple reason that they know Washington will not agree with such an agreement, removing all US nuclear bases from Britain.

Is such a view of the shadow cabinet and parliamentary leadership just a matter of 'typical' left wing primitive paranoia? Not in the slightest.

We need simply refer back to reports of this year's Labour Party conference. On the day of the defence debate, *The Times* reported as follows: 'A majority of Mr Kinnock's shadow cabinet would never agree to a unilateral eviction of American nuclear bases, without prior US consultation and agreement.' (This before the recent shadow cabinet elections).

The *Financial Times* the same day reported that Healey and Shore had 'urged their party colleagues to consult its allies in NATO ... before becoming committed to total nuclear disarmament...'

Healey, bending over backwards to seem sympathetic to the Labour Party's view while sticking to the NATO principle was quoted as telling the Fabian Society that unilateral actions are alright 'providing they do not lead to reactions by other governments; inside or outside the alliance, which made the situation more dangerous ... It would be fool-hardy to take unilateral action without first making sure that they did not provoke reactions by other members of NATO...'

In other words, Healey is saying that unilateral actions are fine so long as they are not unilateral at all, but have US approval. And on



Soviet troops entering Stalingrad



Hands off Central America

EVENTS SINCE Reagan's re-election have underlined the challenge which faces the solidarity movement with Central America. First the 'Mig scare', now the US encouragement for Duarte's intransigence in the latest round of talks in El Salvador, make ever more blatant Reagan's reliance on the military 'solution'.

At the same time, the 'moderate' opposition to US intervention is in disarray. The Contadora group is wrestling over whether to rewrite its peace proposal along lines dictated by the State Department, whilst leaders of the Socialist International can't make up their minds whether they're going backwards or forwards.

Spain's Felipe Gonzalez denounces Nicaragua's elections, whilst Willy Brandt half-reluctantly heads up a 30,000 strong solidarity demo in Bonn.

build up greater pressure on Labour Party policy.

Secondly, reconvening NICA (No Intervention in Central America) as a national co-ordinating body can help to bring together the initiatives of the different campaigns into a coherent programme of activities against intervention.

Thirdly, and of most immediate importance, CND has demonstrated a vital new interest in Central American solidarity. Not only did the recent conference pass an important emergency resolution in defence of Nicaragua. CND International Committee is now sending a representative to the reconvened NICA, and the leaderships of both CND and END have decided to endorse the plans for a Central America Anti-War Conference in the middle of next year.

No decisions have yet been made about details, but activists throughout the peace movement should spare no efforts to ensure that this conference does happen. It can become the main focus for building the solidarity movement over the next six months, culminating in the biggest organising conference we have yet seen, with a central emphasis on labour movement and youth participation.

Plans for a mass lobby of parliament and picket of the US embassy at the time of Reagan's inauguration in January can help to build it. In the Labour Party we should also be pushing for Kinnoch and Healey to attend the swearing-in of Daniel Ortega as president of Nicaragua, one week before Reagan (see model resolution).

None of these larger schemes will come to much, however, unless we do the bread and butter work getting out the facts, raising people's understanding and enthusiasm for the gains being made in Central America, and raising their material aid for the revolutionaries who are carrying through those gains.

There are several positive signs. Firstly, the national campaigns themselves recognise the weakness and are discussing ways of extending their labour movement base, through calling regional labour activists meetings, and maybe establishing a Labour committee to

The West and the USSR

Oliver MacDonald's article 'Stalinist Regime and Soviet State' we published earlier this year has provoked considerable debate. We have already printed a reply by Zbigniew Kowalewski — a leader of the Lodz region of Solidarnosc before the declaration of martial law in Poland. Here we are printing a further reply by FRED PORTER, chairperson of the Oxford branch of the British-Soviet Friendship Society.

It becomes increasingly urgent to develop discussion and then to act upon conclusions to your article 'What Attitude to Eastern Europe?' following Oliver MacDonald's article 'Stalinist Regime and Soviet State'.

MacDonald recognises that 'the world balance of power is heavily against the Soviet Union', he declares his sympathy with the USSR's security interests and recognises that the economic and military cold war is not a reciprocal ding-dong between equivalent super-powers but a sustained aggression against the USSR which is now encircled by 300 American military bases.

But MacDonald writes as though the cold war was a post 1945 phenomenon, like NATO, and historically isolated from what preceded it. Why doesn't he discuss NATO and the cold war in the historical context which he must know is relevant?

As early as 4 August 1918 the Foreign Secretary, AJ Balfour, claimed in parliament that: 'the government categorically declare that they have no intention whatever of infringing in the slightest degree the territorial integrity of Russia'. In reality, the same month British troops landed at Archangel.

From 1918 to 1921 14 foreign powers were imposing a total blockade on the new Soviet state; invading its territory from every direction, and giving every kind of support to the anti-Bolshevik forces in the civil war.

From the initial German invasion of Russia in August 1914 to the end of the wars of foreign intervention in 1921, the Soviet state suffered

unimaginable destruction and chaos and lost 30 million people (give or take the odd million or two human beings). Prime Minister Lloyd George proudly declared in parliament on 17 November 1919 that 'there is no country that has spent more in supporting the anti-revolutionary elements in Russia than this country has'.

And 30 years later, on January 26 1949, Mr Churchill still claimed in the House of Commons that history would one day justify the attempt he had made to 'strangle' Bolshevism in its cradle.

Cynical

In 1921 the last British troops left Russia which then had just 20 years to create (from less than nothing) an agricultural, industrial and military base to withstand the next invasion from the West — an invasion which was correctly seen as inevitable. These 20 years were employed by the Capitalist International to undermine genuine collective security against fascist aggression and to give all but open support to the fascist powers in their colonial and anti-socialist aggressions — and especially to Nazi Germany ambitions to conquer 'Lebensraum' (living space) in Eastern Europe and the USSR.

It was not until May 1939 that the British

government accepted the Soviet proposal of a Three Power Pact (with France) of genuine responsibility and mutual assistance against Nazi aggression. A minor Foreign Office official was sent to Moscow and like the military mission which followed him in August (taking an unhurried six days to arrive by rail) neither he nor they had authority to agree to anything of importance and had to report back to London continually for instructions.

This cynical tactic was tried again firstly in 1939-40 when 'phoney war' inaction in the West concealed plans and training for a real 'switch the war' strategy against the USSR, and secondly in the delayed opening of a second front in Europe for as long as there was no immediate danger of the Red Army beating the Wehrmacht in Europe.

Vulnerable

When the Polish government declared in August 1939 that it would not accept Soviet aid in resisting aggression from Germany the British and French governments simply acquiesced in this refusal of any alliance with the Soviet government, leaving the USSR to wait behind its own frontiers while German panzers destroyed Poland — and then invaded Soviet territory without any serious distraction from the West.

No government, even minimally responsible, could allow itself to be manoeuvred into such a vulnerable position. A non-aggression pact with Germany, recognised as a temporary expedient to gain a little more time to organise defence, became for the Soviet Union in 1939 a matter of urgency.

In the light of this record will your contributor of 5 October still maintain that the Soviet bureaucracy has an 'obses-

sion' (ie an irrational fixed idea) with protecting its borders? Can we imagine that Reagan, Thatcher et al are less dangerous and belligerent at this stage of capitalist crisis than were Balfour and Churchill or that the new right would not encourage, exploit and intervene in disturbances and upheavals in any of the USSR's military allies? Does Socialist Action and Labour Focus on Eastern Europe (via Oliver MacDonald) call upon socialists to urge the Soviet Union not to establish military alliances to defend its territory, besieged and threatened for the third time this century for God's sake?

Subjugation

Have your contributors forgotten (they must surely know) that disruption of post-war settlements in Europe has been a constant principal of US foreign policy from Foster Dulles' 'roll-back', to Kennan's and McNamara's 'containment' theory, on to Carter's 'liberation' of Eastern Europe and now the considered policy statements (not funny jokes) made by Reagan rejecting the 'passive acceptance of the permanent subjugation of the peoples of Eastern Europe' and Secretary of State Schultz's view that: 'the USA will never accept the idea of a divided Europe'.

Bluff

Are the ceaseless Western initiatives in rearmament and the war economies of NATO states nothing more than an expensive bluff and aimed at nothing more than the dislocation of the USSR's social and welfare programmes, at nothing more sinister than a special kind of 'peaceful' co-existence?

Churchill in his dotage was more realistic and,

probably because he was a dotard, involuntarily more candid, when he proposed to parliament on 23 January 1948 that 'we bring matters to a head' and impose a settlement on the USSR by the threat of war before the Soviet Union got the A bomb.

Liberation

Anybody could invent a plausible excuse for American covert or even overt intervention in Eastern Europe once the over-all central authority of Moscow weakened or was defied.

The 'soft-Tory'-Labour Focus-END campaign for 'Liberation in Eastern Europe' diverts attention from firstly, the constant Western policy of anti-Sovietism starting in 1917 and continuing through the 20s and 30s and the post-war period — to the astronomical profit of the world's armament industries and secondly, the hideous danger of an imperialist hot war started by Western agents and fomented by Western mercenary 'contras' among the (undoubtedly many) malcontents in Poland and other military allies of the USSR.

In the 1950s, JB Priestly wrote an article in an American magazine wondering whether the USSR might not be a happier place if it were defeated in war and Moscow crowds were able to flock to the Bolshoi to see 'Guys and Dolls'. This seems no more inane than a fantasy of working-class uprisings along the borders of the Soviet Union which could somehow remain more free of US intervention and contamination than the wretched countries of Central America and the Caribbean. And in a period of galloping imperialist crisis that kind of 'liberation' means curtains for the lot of us.

MODEL RESOLUTION

This CLP/YS/women's section urges the NEC to send the party leader and spokesperson of foreign affairs to attend the swearing-in of the newly elected President of Nicaragua in January, in response to the invitation made by FSLN representative Carlos Nunez at this year's annual conference.

MANY OF US are still reeling from the shock of nightly TV pictures of starving Ethiopian children. The famine has already taken its place alongside Biafra, Cambodia and the Vietnamese boat people as a tragedy which ordinary people respond to generously whilst their governments try to pass the buck. JOHN HARRISON and BOB MORGAN examine the dimensions and causes of this 'silent holocaust'.

THE SCENES covered by the camera crews do not begin to depict the scale of suffering. Four in ten of Ethiopia's 42 million inhabitants are undernourished (too few calories). Relief workers expect one million to starve to death this year. Nearly 2¼ million have already left their homes in search of food. Dying relatives are abandoned on the wayside.

Ethiopia is just one of the countries afflicted. Food supplies are dangerously low this year in 26 of Africa's 50 countries (see table), including the whole of the sub-Saharan regions.

One hundred and fifty million Africans face undernourishment or malnutrition (shortage of essential nutrients). Over 200,000 have already died in Mozambique. In Djibouti one third of the livestock has already died. The EEC commissioner for development aid, Edgar Pisai recently estimated the monthly grain shortfall at 7,500 tonnes in Chad, 17,000 in Mali, 18,000 in Mauritania 29,000 in Niger and 55,000 in Ethiopia.

In Mauritania more than four-fifths of growing land has been reduced to desert. Pisai regards Mauritania as in potentially worse straits than Ethiopia, whose aid is at last beginning to flow.

Famine

The scale of the problem dwarfs that of the last major African drought, in the Sahel in 1974. This killed 'only' some 300,000 people in half a dozen countries. James O'Keefe, from Eire's Foreign Office, recently told a meeting of EEC ministers that: 'I think we face a famine that is the worst in living memory... despite our best efforts in March or April of next year we may see hundreds of thousands more dying and millions also in danger'.

In this context the US boast of an aid programme to 'match or exceed' the Sahel effort is pitifully inadequate. It has so far committed \$135m worth of emergency food aid to Ethiopia enough to cover only about four and a half months of the expected grain shortfall. A further \$45m has been allocated to Kenya, Mozambique and Mali. The EEC has set aside \$102m for the Sahel region this year. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisations (FAO) has come up with \$15.0m of emergency food aid for the whole continent. No accurate figure are available for Eastern Bloc relief although it is known that the USSR has sent 300 trucks, 16 planes and 24 helicopters to Ethiopia to assist food distribution.

When the pro-US Emperor Haile Selassie ruled Ethiopia a decade ago, he received more aid from the US in six months than the new regime has obtained over the last three years. Prior to the famine, the US allocated less than one per cent of its food aid to Ethiopia. The new allocations are too little and too late. It has been estimated that even if all Ethiopia's food needs were met tomorrow, two in ten of those gripped by the famine would still die.

The Reagan administration is not the only government at fault. As Labour shadow minister Robin Cook pointed out in the House of Commons: 'The amount of grain so far released by the EEC is barely one per cent of surplus stocks and less than one tenth of the amount that the EEC is currently converting into animal foodstuffs for Europe.'

Even this meagre response was only prompted by pressure from the public and voluntary relief organisa-

Ethiopia and the politics of starvation



tions in the wake of media coverage of Ethiopia. While the public may have been surprised by the famine the powers that be were not. US satellites regularly monitor crop developments throughout the world and the FAO had predicted major food shortfalls in Africa as early as December 1982. Yet Oxfam had to divert £6m from its long term development assistance programme into emergency food aid in an attempt to shame the Thatcher government into action.

Hypocrisy

The reluctance to help Ethiopia is political. As *Newsweek* recently put it: 'The Reagan administration was reluctant at first to send food to the Marxist regimes in Mozambique and Ethiopia.' The US representative to the UN, Jean Kirkpatrick, has constantly sniped at the motives of the Ethiopian government in seeking aid. Doubts have been expressed as to whether western aid gets to those in most need, with critics suggesting that rebel-occupied areas of Ethiopia have had aid withheld — a charge strongly denied in Addis Ababa.

Kirkpatrick recently told the UN general assembly that nothing would be more 'reprehensible (than) to find relief for some regions hampered and disrupted for political reasons'. Perhaps she ought to have had a quiet word with Senator Jessie Helms, a leading Republican foreign affairs specialist, who has suggested that: 'Food policy will be our main foreign policy level in the future.' Reagan's \$75m aid programme for Africa next year stipulates that the money should only go to governments that reject socialism. Over half this year's allocation for the sub-Saharan region went

to the US's four major allies there: Somalia, Kenya, Liberia and Zaire.

The problem is also far more deep rooted than a natural disaster year, whose victims become pawns in a game of Aid and Imperialism. In a normal year, at least 800 million people — or about one in six of the planetary population — suffer undernourishment. Tens of millions are ground down by malnutrition. Most people in the 30 poorest underdeveloped countries are worse off today than a decade ago. And things will get worse. The world population is set to double in the next

Sixteen years on there will probably be 817 million.

Yet today's world is quite capable of providing for everyone's needs. Output worldwide averages around \$2,500 per person, (about the average living standard in Portugal) resources could, if mobilised, add another \$500 a person. Resources could also be diverted into more socially useful avenues. The eighteen most advanced capitalist countries between them spend at least \$200 billion a year on what is euphemistically described in their accounts as 'defence', (adding in the Warsaw pact might take up to \$400bn).

TABLE

Severe Food Shortage	Inadequate Food Supplies	
Ethiopia	Angola	Mauritania
Kenya	Botswana	Morocco
Mozambique	Central African Republic	Somalia
Niger	Chad	Tanzania
Sudan	Lesotho	Zambia
	Mali	

quarter century. Most of the growth will occur in the South. Two hundred thousand extra people are born every day in the less developed world.

Africa is in particularly dire straits. Income per head averages only \$482 a year, one tenth down on a decade ago. Six out of ten Africans go to bed hungry every night. One million children a year die of malaria.

Africa also has the highest population growth rate in the world. Today 435m people inhabit the continent.

wealthiest 20 per cent are 67 times better off than the poorest 20 per cent. Europe is a landscape of wine lakes and grain mountains while Africa's millions starve.

Even such apparently 'natural' facts as the spurt in the third world population growth are a product of developments within the system as a whole. Birth rates have hardly changed while life expectancy has increased dramatically. Medical science has penetrated the third world unevenly, immunisation and other forms of basic health care have arrived ahead of effective, acceptable and freely available forms of contraception. In this context the Reagan administration's recent decision to withhold contraceptive aid from any country permitting abortion is one of the most sickening fruits of the rise of the 'moral majority'.

The worsening plight of much of the third world over the last decade — of which the current famine in Africa is the highest symptom to date — is far more a product of developments in the metropolitan centres than in deserts and paddy fields of the periphery.

The story begins in the winter of 1973/74, when the price of oil quadrupled within three months. The vast majority of the third world, which produces no oil, was instantly hit by escalating fuel import bills. Its response was to seek loans from western banks, justified on the strength of high export earnings — commodity prices had almost doubled over the previous 18 months.

Banks in the advanced countries found themselves flooded with loans from the newly rich oil producers. They were keen to lend these at a profit. Over the next decade third world indebtedness grew to the unprecedented level of \$800 billion.

Loans present no immediate problem so long as you can meet the interest repayments. But many Less Developed Countries are no longer able to. Governments in the advanced countries responded to the oil price rise by squeezing credit sharply. This generated a slump in the north, hitting commodity imports and hence reducing LDC export earnings. At the same time it raised interest rates, making it still harder for the south to service its debts. Higher interest rates cost the LDCs \$20 - 25 billion over the three years 1979 - 1981. The Organisation of African Unity estimates that the servicing of the continent's \$130 billion foreign debts now absorbs 60 per cent of export earnings (as compared to 30 per cent in Latin America).

Profit

Many third world countries responded by shifting agricultural production from domestic subsistence crops to ones which could be sold for dollars. Guinea-Bissau forbade all domestic sale of ground nuts (a traditional basic staple) in the attempt to increase its export earnings and thereby stave off its international creditors. The nuts are now fed to pigs and cows in Western Europe while their producers go hungry.

Africa's plight is a particularly traumatic example of an aspect of the law of combined and uneven development. Processes whose causes lie in the rhythm of economic development in the metropolitan power-houses of the system often have their most explosive effects in the villages and shanty-towns of the periphery.

The hand wringing of world leaders over Ethiopia is pure cant. Whilst aware of the scale of Africa's problems, they did nothing until investigative journalism awoke the indignation of the electorate. Even then, their response was pitifully inadequate. The US's policy makes a mockery of Henry Kissinger's 1974 claim that, 'within a decade no child will go to bed hungry'.

The real criticism of these people is not that they respond to human disasters in niggardly and self seeking ways. It is rather that they preside over and promote a system that generates hundreds upon thousands of unnecessary deaths in the pursuit of private profit.

By contrast the 36 poorest countries in the world — in which half of the four billion plus inhabitants of our planet live — together spend only \$5 billion a year on health care. These poorest countries themselves spend three times as much money on the military as on health. The problem is not a lack of productive capacity. It is the distribution of output.

The average income in the US is forty times greater than that in the 36 poorest countries. Within Brazil the

Students back on the streets!

IT WAS IRONIC indeed that Polly Toynbee, writing in the *Guardian* last Wednesday, should have asked, 'Where has all the Student Revolt gone?'. For Wednesday 28 November saw the largest student demonstration for ten years or more.

All estimates agree that over 15,000 students took part in a demonstration that was illegal and militant. Over 40 students were arrested and charged with public order offences, including Tories who had been leading chants of 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, Out, Out, Out!'

Many newspapers have tried to explain this sudden re-emergence of students taking to the streets. Most blame Thatcher and Josphe for provoking a layer of students whose parental income is in the £20,000 a year bracket — prime Tory supporters by and large!

The proposals to abolish the minimum award of £205 and introduce £530 tuition fees, have led to the biggest Tory back-bench revolt yet seen against Thatcher.

However, the reality is that firstly, this is an attack on the *principle* of the grant support system, not just a 'privileged' layer of the student movement. For a variety of reasons, many students whose parental income is in excess of £20,000, *already* do not or cannot pay their contributions to the *present* system of grant support.

Fees

If students in this bracket have to pay £520 tuition fees before they can start their courses, thousands, women in particular, will be denied access to further and higher education.

Secondly, hundreds of thousands of students have suffered from the decline in the value of the student grant. For students in the further education colleges it has disappeared entirely, and for hundreds of thousands of others it has been reduced by as much as 30 per

cent over the past five years.

By Grant Keir,
Kingsway Princeton
CFE

So the backdrop to this latest attack is an increasing discontent amongst very broad layers of the student population. This was reflected as far back as 1981, when against all the national trends, Labour students won the leadership of the NUS, swamping all opposition in the process.

Since then, the militancy has been growing but has been given no *national* leadership whatsoever. Half-hearted attempts to protest against the cuts through the 'New Deal' met with little response. The leadership's lobbying and peaceful persuasion approach left most student activists cold.

What has changed the situation in the NUS is the miners' strike. It is the only 'non-student' issue that will be discussed at this December's conference of the NUS. It came top of the priorities ballot for items to be discussed.

Hopes

This reflects the fact that a new 'left' in the student movement has been mobilised and regrouped around the issues raised by the miners' strike. Having seen the Labour Student's leadership of the NUS dash the hopes of the left



through carrying out their 'middle-of-the-road' politics, the left — in its broadest sense — is once again pushing forward within the students' movement.

If the left remains unorganised at the national level, it is likely that the 'Kinnockites' leading the NUS will repeat their performances over Harrington at the Polytechnic of North London (PNL), and the students that were

arrested on Wednesday. The NUS leadership is so obsessed with Kinnock's 'abhorrence of violence' and desire to stay within the law, that they have been denouncing and refusing to support those attacked and arrested by the police last Wednesday.

At the PNL, where two students have been imprisoned for breaking a court injunction against picketing, rather than sup-

port students in struggle, the leadership of NUS has organised a campaign of lies and slurs, about what is happening.

While the left does not organise nationally, the NUS leadership will get away with such disgusting acts of sabotage against their own members. However, as the Tories press ahead with their cuts, attacks on student union financing and autonomy through 'ultra-

vires', will more and more come up against the use of the law.

Students will be forced to look for leadership that is prepared to fight to defend their interests. To that end, they will find themselves standing shoulder to shoulder with the miners, those fighting rate-capping, those in the disarmament campaign fighting cruise and NATO — indeed, all those sectors in *real* struggle against the

Tories.

The task for socialists in the student movement is to organise the 'new left' that has emerged around the miners' strike and which is extending its radicalising influence into all other student struggles. To link student struggles to those occurring in society at large, and to raise the question of leadership is the task that the socialist students must get down to in a serious way.

Gays the Word — directors charged

CUSTOMS AND Excise have now issued criminal charges against the directors and bookshop manager of *Gay's the Word* in London. They are charged with conspiracy to import indecent articles.

These 'indecent' articles include Jean Genet, Sartre and Oscar Wilde. Since the original raid in April over £12,000 worth of stock has been seized, in addition to many of the books, records and the mailing list for the shop's newsletter — all yet to be returned.

What has become clear is that not only do Customs want the shop closed, but that it is conducting a nationwide operation against lesbian and gay literature.

Britain's other main gay bookshop, Lavender Menace in Edinburgh, has had many books and magazines taken — including literature for the Edinburgh Festival. One gay bookclub — Essentially Gay — has been closed down. Other left bookshops have had books seized, and at least one gay organisation has had

books stopped — the Gay Christian movement.

By Paul Canning,
Lesbian and Gay
Young Socialists

Customs law is such that only *Gay's the Word* and GCM can afford to challenge the Customs ruling. It also means that a massive campaign against the Custom's operation needs to be built up if actions like this are to be stopped in the future. At present any customs officer can conduct a campaign with impunity.

Already the bookshop

has received massive support, even from such unlikely sources as John Weller, the Tory MP, and from the book trade. The lesbian and gay communities have so far raised the huge sum of £7,000, but much larger sums than that are necessary if the Customs campaign is to be stopped in its tracks.

NCCL is making the defence of *Gay's the Word* one of its first priorities this year. It is time for the labour and trade union movement to do likewise.

Just as Rugby is the first stage in a general attack on jobs, so *Gay's the Word* is the first stage in an attack on the left's right to read. It needs to be halted, right at the beginning.

• Copies of the *Defend Gay's the Word* information pack and donations to: *Gay's the Word*, 66 Marchmont St, London WC1 (01 278-7654).

Southwark black section: making links

AFTER THE defeat at Labour Party conference, black section activists recognise that the way forward is to build black sections at grass-roots level in the black community and particularly to link up with black workers organising in their unions.

The public meeting organised last week by Southwark black section marked the beginning of this. Under the heading 'Making Links', Southwark black section assembled an impressive platform, including Joe Mohammed, a black Notts miner, Gulam Mayet, BTUSM, and Marc Wadsworth, Black Section Steering Committee.

Joe pointed out that the black community's struggle against the police

and the media is the same struggle the miners are facing in defence of their communities. And the BTUSM speaker took up the theme of racism in the unions and the need for autonomous organisation to challenge this.

By Antia Patel and
Joel O'Loughlin,
Southwark black
section

But Marc Wadsworth summed it up for us in Southwark when he said we need to turn our experiences of defending ourselves on individual issues into concrete political changes through the Labour Party.

Most successful of all: the majority of the 80-plus audience was local black people. They want black sections in the party to campaign around issues affecting them, not militant rhetoric alone.



Photo: GM COOKSON

Refuse cruise on 12 December

STUDENT CND believes 'there is a big feeling for an anti-cruise demo' to mark the fifth anniversary of NATO's announcement that the missiles would be deployed in Britain. They have called an action in Trafalgar Square on the evening of Wednesday 12 December. They say: 'The demonstration will take the form of civil disobedience in central London, a symbolic protest to make our voices heard.' Be there!

Militant discredits party among blacks

BARELY TWO MONTHS after the fury of the black section debate at Labour Party conference, the Sam Bond affair in Liverpool affords us an opportunity of appraising the record of the opposition's line in practice.

After all, they won the day in terms of votes, and they are in a position to 'show us the way'. They, of course, being primarily the *Militant* tendency, who did most to articulate opposition to black sections.

By Mike Wongsam, Black Section Steering Committee

In answer to the demand that black people be properly represented both in the formulation and implementation of policy — that is, on policy-making bodies and council sub-committees, as well as at a national level — *Militant* put forward the position that the Labour Party should take up the 'white man's burden' when it comes to the black community. Nor does their record stand up in Liverpool where the *Militant* play a controlling role both on the District Labour Party and the city council Labour group.

● Prior to the last general election representatives of Liverpool's black community went on national television (Channel 4's *Black on Black* programme) to proclaim that they felt that they should stand a candidate against the Labour Party to voice their dissatisfaction with the party's unwillingness to consult the black community or take the views of black people seriously.

● A black caucus was organised as long ago as 1979 in order to pressurise the council into adopting an equal opportunities policy and positive action programme. The present Labour group has been dragged kicking and screaming into establishing the race relations unit which is the focus of the present dispute involving Sam Bond.

● The same Sam Bond was unceremoniously 'ear marked' for the job despite the protestations of both the black caucus and the NALGO observer on the council's sub-

committee. Comrade Bond just happens to be a supporter of *Militant* policies.

● Despite a signed agreement between Derek Hatton and the black caucus to readvertise the job, the District Labour Party reaffirmed Bond's appointment.

● Derek Hatton and Sam Bond had to be persuaded not to cross an official NALGO picket line — they refused to recognise a black picket.

● Steve French, a prominent member of the black caucus, had an application to join the Labour Party 'deferred'. In this case, deferred is just a nice word for blocked.

This is a catalogue of the District Labour Party and Labour group's record of implementing a 'bold socialist programme' in order to attract blacks to the Labour Party. The unhappy result is that it affords the Liberals, and even the Tories, the chance to cynically put themselves forward as champions of the black community.

It must surely be clear to all observers that *Militant's* only interest in black people is as fertilizer for their own current, as is the case in the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Everyone on the left of the party who voted against black sections, must now reconsider their judgement in the light of present developments.

From whence does careerism come in the party? Who is employing tokenism? Who fraudulently claims to represent the interests of black people? Who discredits the party in the eyes of the black community? The lamentable comrades of *Militant*.

'WE FOLLOWED all the procedures — we waited 16 years. But enough is enough! We've got to stick up for our rights. Our patience has run out, the procedures are exhausted so we have gone on strike.' This statement from the Ford women sewing machinists sums up their total exasperation with their situation.

The 270 women at Ford's Dagenham and Halewood plant have taken up their case for grading commensurate with their skill six times: in 1970, 1974 and every year since 1981. They have gone to an industrial tribunal which refused to act because a supposedly 'non-discriminatory' evaluation scheme was in operation. Enough is enough.

According to the *Financial Times*, Ford is hoping that the strike does not mean history is about to repeat itself. When the women went on strike in 1968 over the same claim their action ushered in a wave of general industrial militancy at the two plants. It also ushered in a wave of other strikes and struggles of women workers across Britain for equal pay, led to a national equal rights campaign (NJACCWER) and contributed to the birth of the women's liberation movement. Not a small achievement.

By Antonia Gorton

Certainly Ron Todd, chief negotiator and general secretary elect for the TGWU, looked very uneasy at the 22 November lobby of the national Ford shop stewards meeting and reacted angrily to implications that he might go ahead and sign this year's agreement with the company over the women's heads. The pressure on the union leadership is intense.

At the moment however the company's 7 per cent pay offer remains to be voted on and some 8,000 assembly workers are laid off for the third week running as the women continue their round the clock picketing.

A meeting on Tuesday 27 November between the company, Todd and the women's shop stewards ended in deadlock in the face of the company's refusal to budge on this

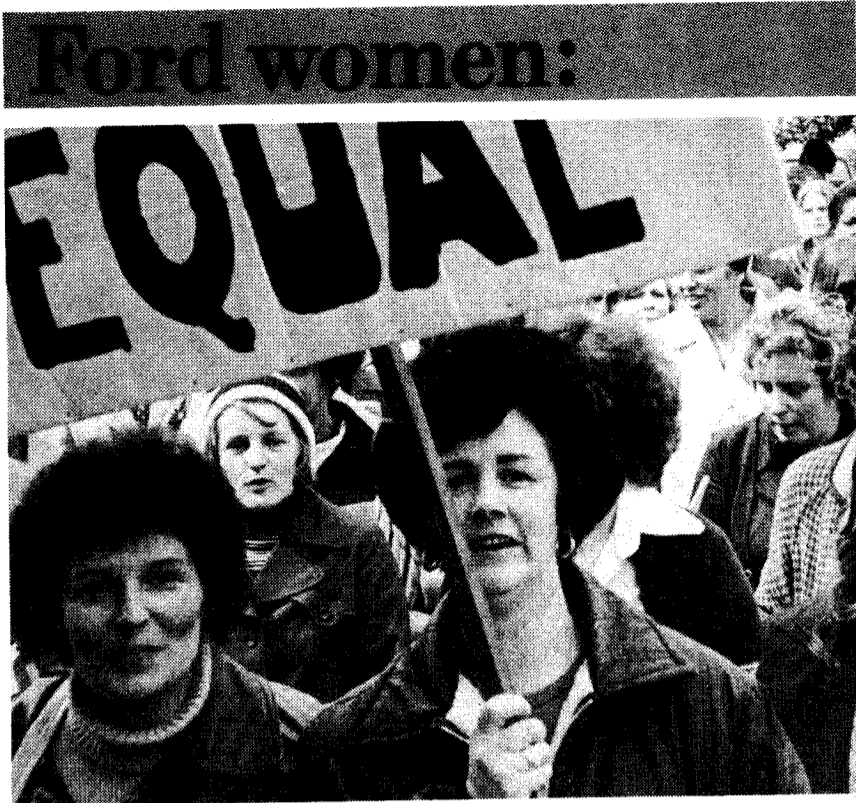


Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

'Enough is enough'

issue even when the idea of going to independent arbitration was put.

The pressure on the women to shelve their action is bound to mount as the 5 December deadline for signing the agreement nears with the threat of the withdrawal of the wages offer. There is no Labour government to intervene as in 1968 to make promises of justice in the near future.

Allies

The women have only their own ability to stick it out, to win allies and to make it impossible for the union leadership to back down. Thatcher is out to smash strikes, not to head them off via cups of tea with the Employment and Productivity Minister Barbara Castle, as in the strike sixteen years ago.

The Ford women don't see their fight as an equal pay struggle. They consider they got equal pay in 1968. They considered this as a fight for recognition of their skill while agreeing

that they have this low skill grading because they are women.

The trouble is that earlier Labour governments did an extremely clever job when they introduced their equal pay legislation, giving the employers five years to figure out how to get around it and persuading everybody that it had sorted things out.

It is precisely by grading and job segregation questions that women are left behind in the wages front, still earning approximately two thirds of men's wages and with the wage differential widening!

When it comes to job evaluation involving women workers, the bosses suddenly give a lot more weight to physical strength criteria rather than skill. At Fords, management agrees that it requires six months training to produce a fully competent sewing machinist compared to minutes on the assembly line but it 'scores low marks on

physical demands and working conditions'. On these criteria a neurosurgeon would rate lower on skill than a grave digger. Of course, what really determines wage rates has little to do with skill and scientifically reputable job evaluation studies but the social weight of the workers and their ability to struggle.

The Ford women are in a powerful, if fraught, position. Their labour is vital to the production of cars and profit for the company. It is estimated that already their strike has cost Ford over £100m in lost production. While in some ways, talking of equal pay or its equivalent seems curiously dated — superseded by mass unemployment and the miners' strike — this strike is important. It is another indicator of the growth of a new women's movement born from the struggle of working class women such as the miners' wives and of a fighting mood in sections of the class.

Women's rights

THE NATIONAL Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights (NJACCWER) was the campaign that grew out of the 1968 strike of Ford sewing machinists.

It was launched on 22 October 1968 that year to achieve equal rights for women. Officers included Baroness Summer-skill, various MPs and trade union leaders and its secretary-treasurer was Fred Blake, organiser of the Ford sewing machinists' union at the time, the National Union of Vehicle Builders.

Over 300 people attended its inaugural meeting at the House of Commons from a wide range of trade unions, women's organisations, political and civil rights groups. It held one national demonstration of some 3,000 women drawn mainly from industrial/manual unions — the first national women's demonstration in almost 30 years!

It collapsed eventually due to the dead hand of Labour and Communist Party figures who argued that Labour's Equal Pay Bill fulfilled the goals of the campaign.

Its charter included:

1. To demand the removal of sex discrimination against women in employment, education, social and public life.
2. To demand the inclusion of equal pay for work of equal value in all agreements between employers and trade unions.
3. To demand that MPs enforce equal legal rights for women through parliament in 1969.
4. To demand that the TUC leads and coordinates a national action campaign for equal pay and opportunities in industry in accordance with their decision at their 1968 conference.
5. To demand the immediate government ratification of the ILO Convention 100.

Levy campaign underway

THREE HUNDRED people attended Saturday's conference in defence of the political levy organised by the Labour Coordinating Committee.

Robin Cook MP, Ron Todd of the TGWU and Ann Pettifor of the Women's Action Committee were the morning speakers. Peter Hain, Tom Sawyer of NUPE and Ken Livingstone spoke in the afternoon sessions. Hain urged people to start work now to ensure that the ballot on whether or not unions hold political funds is won and welcomed the

participation of left newspapers and organisations in supporting the conference and the campaign.

The 47 Labour Party affiliated unions have set up a steering committee to organise a campaign before the 1986 ballots. This campaign, however, intends to centre its work around the need for political funds in general and not specifically around Labour Party affiliation. Hain criticised this approach and called for a direct campaign by Labour Party activists.

Ken Livingstone stressed that, at the end of the

day, it will be the overall performance of the party in the eyes of the working class which will significantly influence the outcome of any campaigns. The political levy is completely linked to the overall positions of the party — and that should start with a campaign of supporting the miners' strike and the local authorities faced with rate capping.

The LCC is calling for regional conferences on the defence of the political levy in the new year and the setting up of *ad hoc* Labour Party-trade union committees in each area to

campaign for a YES vote in the ballots.

oops!

Last week's article by Stuart Holland MP, on the Nicaraguan elections (SA 80) contained three errors of fact for which we apologise. Stuart was in Nicaragua for two, and not three, weeks during the elections; Claude Cheysson is France's foreign minister; and O'Higgins is chair of the Irish Labour Party.

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A Socialist ACTION

LONDON WOMEN FOR PEACE

Women on the Greater London Region CND Council have called a meeting of all women CND members and Greenham supporters to discuss coordinating practical support for the camp in the coming year.

SATURDAY 15 DECEMBER
2-5pm, COUNTY HALL
ALL WOMEN WELCOME!

Down to Greenham on 9 December



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

THIS WEEKEND will see a traditional December women-only action at Greenham Common to mark the fifth anniversary of NATO's announcement that cruise missiles would be deployed in this country. This year, the women of the camp are suggesting that everyone who visits Greenham should bring with them food to distribute to the striking miners and the unemployed.

At the beginning of the camp, just over three years ago, the women were treated much more sympathetically by the media than today. Now they face constant harassment, intimidation and violence from the police and groups of local thugs. The camp 'image' the media try to present has changed accordingly: from women determinedly standing up for their beliefs, to hooligans and misfits hell-bent on undermining the fabric of 'civilised' society.

1984 is the year of the historic miners' strike. They too have experienced the violent and repressive arm of the state in standing up for their rights and the rights of their com-

munities. Greenham women and mining communities have experienced the same fate: criminalisation at the hands of Thatcher's war-mongering, anti-union government.

By Carol Turner

So it's not surprising that up and down the country report after report is that the first women to join the miners' wives support groups were the women who support the camp at Greenham Common. And it's not surprising that the women at the camp have suggested the theme they have for this year's activity.

The links forged between the mining com-

munities and the 'communities' of Greenham women throughout Britain will not easily be broken. Women have learned that they're fighting the same fight against the same enemy.

Action

CND's annual conference recently passed an emergency resolution in support of the December action at Greenham. Despite the resistance of the leadership to discussing any aspect of how to campaign against the missiles in 1985, peace movement activists reasserted the priority of opposing cruise and supporting the women in the forefront of that fight.

In the coming year it's up to all of us to ensure that the camp is supported and the fight against the missiles continues with the same determination. Women, begin by getting down to Greenham this Sunday.

Kay Sutcliffe

THE GOVERNMENT is waging a campaign against the mining community. They are trying to set worker against worker. But we're telling Thatcher and her government we're not going to be used as pawns on their economic board. Us women are going to

stick together and fight right through to the end. We've seen a mass movement of women since this strike began. They've come together from all over the country in a way we never did envisage.

We can look forward after the strike, to maintaining the links we've made and using our experience for the benefit of every dispute and every group that's

helped us. But we're not just miners' wives. There are a lot more women than that in our support groups.

In the past nine months we've gained a lot of inspiration from a lot of groups. Particularly women's groups — and particularly the strength of the resolve of the Greenham Common women. We wholeheartedly support their efforts to rid this



country of cruise missiles. We'll always back them all the way.

Helen John

I HAVE JUST received a blanket from the Women's Peace Caucus in Tallassee, Florida. They want to blanket the base during the 9 December action at Greenham.

The side hanging inwards towardsthe base is covered with eyes and messages which say 'the world is watching you' and 'the eyes have it'. Outside are peace symbols and a large

dove, an attempt to reconstruct the common.

The miners and the peace movement have a common enemy: nuclear weapons and

the Tory government. If we don't defeat them, they will defeat us. Neither the miners nor the Greenham women have any intention of being beaten. We must win!