

A Socialist ACTION

BACK THE MINERS!

DEFEND OUR UNIONS!

All out
on 11
February

IT HAS been said countless times since 6 March 1984 that the miners are fighting for the whole labour movement. If they lose we all lose. The Tories know it. The left in the movement knows it. The only people who refuse to acknowledge it are the general council of the TUC.

Thatcher has now made it plain that she wants there to be no negotiations with the NUM until the majority of miners are starved back to work. She wants to ensure the destruction of the strongest union in Britain as a step towards cracking the labour movement. The failure of the TUC general council to back the NUM has now given Thatcher the opening she has been looking for.

The government is now making its intentions quite clear. The decision by Austin Rover to sue eight unions for damages over the December strike, and the threats to sue by British Rail against the rail unions, are a deliberate and calculated raising of the stakes by the govern-

ment. The Tories are now trying to force through in one push the entire framework of anti-union laws they have been working on for five years.

The pattern each time is exactly the same. The desertion of the NGA by the general council led directly to GCHQ. The failure to take effective action on GCHQ left the ground open for an attack on the NUM. Now the failure to defend the miners opens up the way for an attack on every union. The government has already made it clear it has the rail unions lined up for its next attack.

The task of every section of the movement now is to stop that retreat, and fight to defend the NUM. The unions now under im-

mediate threat from the Tories attacks, and those who have stood by the miners, must make a stand against the general council's scabbing role. They must name the day for a 24-hour general strike, and demand the support of the general council and the Labour Party.

Regional days of action have been called for 11 February in the South East and in Yorkshire and Humberside. These should be turned into a national 24-hour general strike, with a national demonstration in London.

The ferocity of Thatcher's attacks on the labour movement does not flow from the strength of the Tories. It rests on the weakness and treachery of the labour leadership. The left must provide the leadership that can mobilise the strength of the class to back the miners. Without that every union is at risk.

Socialist ACTION

A class struggle left

Conspiracy against the NUM

LAST WEEK saw one of the more disreputable episodes even in Neil Kinnock's leadership of the Labour Party. Kinnock read the riot act to the left to prevent any debate being taken in parliament on the miners' strike. Nothing new? You would be wrong to think that.

A parliamentary debate would force Neil Kinnock through at least the motions of support for the NUM — as well as the ritual condemnation of violence. But at the moment Kinnock wants a free hand to do something quite different: that is, to line up the leadership of the Labour Party behind the rapid drive to the right of its trade union masters.

Picket

Kinnock scarcely even bothers to try to conceal now that he is working for the defeat of the Scargill wing of the NUM even if that means the defeat of the strike. His number one goal is for the isolation of Benn and his supporters in the party.

Kinnock knows that means the trade union leadership continuing to turn its back on the policies adopted at the last TUC — and a lot more besides.

Kinnock proposes to show the trade union bosses that they can accommodate to the new 'realities' under the Tories and, unlike Chapple et al, keep their links with (read control over) the Labour Party. Kinnock's efforts amount to a major attempt to shift the Labour Party to the right on the miners' strike to line up the party faithfully behind the drive of Basnett to change the TUC's policies.

Last week various elements of this shift came more openly into the light of day. Basnett went public on his campaign to call a special Congress of the TUC to reverse its attitude to the government's trade union laws. Most immediately, adoption of ballots before action means that union leaders protect themselves from applying the agreements to support the NUM, taken at the TUC.

More generally, militant action by part of a union will not now be able to lead the union as a whole. Basnett has learnt his bureaucrat's lesson well from the miners' strike.

Strikes

Don Concannon even floated the idea that the Notts breakaway scab union should affiliate to the Labour Party. Although official party reaction denied this proposal, at least a section of the party leadership is prepared to consider even this sort of treachery.

Meanwhile it is obvious that the struggle is still on to determine the terms of reference of the NEC's 'statement for democratic socialism'. It has no value for Kinnock except as a weapon to isolate and break those in the party who have stood behind the NUM and to prepare for a more generalised witch hunt in the party.

The pressure of the miners' strike has forced most of the trade union leadership to 'clarify' their position to the right. Kinnock is giving the clear signal that he (and the party) will not be left behind — that 'new realism' and a break with the Labour Party is not the only route to the right. Kinnock has declared open war on those who stand with the NUM inside the Labour Party.

THE MINERS' strike has begun to carve out quite a new type of left in the Labour Party — or more precisely a type of left which has not been seen since the 1920s.

The left in the Labour Party which emerged in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s was one not too caricaturedly summed up in the famous phrase 'revolutionary politics'. This did not mean that it engaged in no activity at all as forces outside the Labour Party sometimes claimed. On the contrary campaigns such as the first wave of CND in the early 1960s had a big impact in the Labour Party. But above all the forums which the Labour left made its own were the affairs of the constituency Labour Parties, the resolutions to party conference and so on. The huge wave of strikes in the 1968-74 by-passed the CLP left.

The Jack Jones-Hugh Scanlon left in the trade unions in the late 1960s and early 1970s equally developed relatively separately from the left in the Labour Party constituencies. The spearhead of that development was the Communist Party apparatus in the trade unions — not the Labour left.

A real turning point of the development of the 'new' Labour left came in the NUM — where else? When Arthur Scargill took the left's nomination for president of the NUM awake from Mick McGahey for the first time the CP was defeated by the Labour left in its traditional stronghold. Furthermore Scargill stood on positions, and a tradition, far to the left of that of McGahey. Scargill was the first real class struggle leader to take the leadership of a national union since AJ Cook and his supporters in the Mine-workers' Federation in the 1920s.

Another key development was the rise of the left in local government in the late 1970s.

The rapid development of the Bennite left in the Labour Party after 1979 was much more mystified in its forms than the development in the NUM. Scargill had established his base out of the strikes of 1972 and 1974. He was the symbol of Saltley Gate. The Bennite current however gathered its initial coherence out of the fight for constitutional reform in the Labour Party — the long fight for mandatory reselection and for breaking the PLP's monopoly

on electing the leader of the party. Its main campaigning issue was the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. The question for that left was where it would go after the first reforms were over.

By John Ross

The answer, inevitably, was that it divided. A large part of the block which had passed the constitutional reforms after 1979 has gone to the right with Kinnock. Another part was faced with the realities of the miners' strike and Thatcher's attack on the Labour movement.

That is why, despite the fact that it occurred merely within parliament, last week's protest by Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and the Campaign group of MPs did signify something. The miners' strike is going through a hard, bitter and decisive phase. It is no easy way to gain popularity. And the possibility of defeat exists.



There are only two choices. One is to try to put distance between oneself and the miners. The second is to be with the NUM right the way through. To fight for a



Scargill on the 11 August Women Against Pit Closures March

successful outcome of the strike. To be with the fight whatever the outcome.

That is what Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer and the others did. The activists of the NUM and the Labour Party are not going to back off from their support of the strike no matter what the outcome or what the consequences. The protest in parliament, in its own way, signalled that this is going to be the choice for at least one section of the Labour left.

Given the mystifications of parliament it is rather hard to define what a class struggle left there would actually mean! But those who are prepared to

back the miners 100 per cent in the present situation is not a bad first definition of it. It is the extension of the miners' strike into another part of the Labour Party.

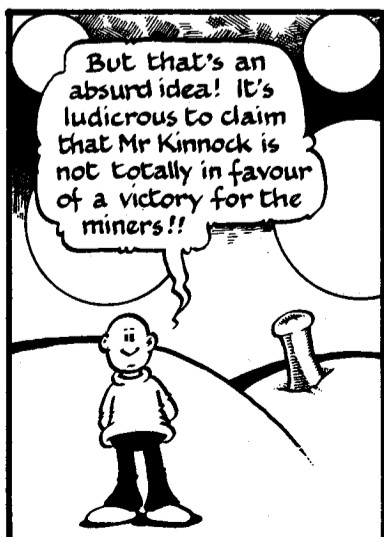
The other area where a real sorting out process is taking place today is in local government. There for the last five years it has been possible for a large part of the Labour Party to talk left but not to have to fight. Today everyone's position is on the line. Those who are prepared to fight are being sifted out from those who are merely prepared to talk. That, doubtless, will produce another 'division' in the left.

The reality is very simple. What is involved in the Labour Party today is not a 'hard' and 'soft' left — except in the sense that Tony Benn said 'a hard situation needs a hard left'. What is involved is a division into those forces who stand on the class struggle and those who don't.

That is the line being drawn by the miners' strike and the fights in local government — as well as those over Ireland, black sections, and women's organisation in the party. It is that class struggle left which is the top priority to begin to organise in the Labour Party in the next years.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

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

TUC props up Tories

ON THE EVE of the September '84 congress of the TUC Ron Todd speaking about new realism in a *Labour Herald* interview stated 'That concept is dead'. As subsequent events, particularly the sabotage of support for the miners, have shown the obituary was premature.

There is no doubt that at the congress the new realists were on the defensive. On the key issues of support for the miners the far right around Hammond and Lyons were isolated and defeated.

By Pat Hickey

Len Murray had retired hurt, and the candidate of the 'left', Norman Willis replaced him. The resolution in support of the miners received an overwhelming majority.

The reluctance of the centre and the right to back the NUM, however, was shown in the behind the scenes arm-twisting to remove the FTAT resolution calling for a day of action from the agenda. Also removed was a resolution calling for a levy of all trade unionists. In the resolution, the right entered the significant caveat: the boycott of coal and oil in the power stations would have to be 'with the agreement of the unions concerned.'

Despite this, the resolution was a victory for the miners. The general council had ignored the strike for six months. Now, the movement was officially committed to support.

The new realists, however, were not prepared to lie down and die.

They began by refusing to wage a serious campaign to implement congress decisions in the power stations — in the clear knowledge that implementation of the guidelines would guarantee victory for the miners. The EETPU and the Engineers and Managers Association openly refused to carry out the policy. GMBATU support was merely formal.

The general council stood aloof. The action that was delivered was mainly a result of rank and file support for the miners, and not the result of leadership from the officials. It was clear that the general council was more interested in getting control of the strike, in order to impose a deal on



Arthur Scargill



Norman Willis

the NUM, than in defeating the Tories.

By October, when the NUM was fined £200,000 for contempt, Basnett and Kinnock were already making picket line violence the main issue, with the clear intention of undermining support for the strike, and avoiding the question of TUC support for the miners against the courts. Only the rail unions and the TGWU were seriously attempting to deliver support.

The right were able to use the situation to raise the question of the anti-union laws. Duffy and Hammond began moves to reverse TUC

policy on the anti-union laws, and Basnett has not joined them on this issue, with his proposal for a meeting of trade union executives to consider the policy.

The new realists have regained the position they lost at the TUC. From the beginning of the strike it has been clear that the centre and right of the trade union movement has had no interest in a victory for the Scargill leadership of the NUM. A decisive victory for the left would endanger the whole policy of reaching agreement with the Tories, and avoiding big confrontations.

Hammond and Duffy are quite happy to see the NUM go down to

defeat, while the centre around Willis and Basnett seek a compromise deal that would weaken the Scargill leadership. The Tories seek no such compromise. Recognising the weakness of the general council, they want total victory.

The response of the left to the treachery of the general council has been less than adequate. After the TUC congress, when the initiative was with the left, the success was not adequately built on. Then, the response should have been to organise meetings between the rank and file in the power stations and rank and file miners.

It is necessary to take the fight for implementation of congress deci-

sions directly to the ranks, rather than wait for the Basnetts of this world to honour their pledges. In most of the power stations neither the TGWU nor the GMBATU have arranged meetings where the miners could put their case directly.

There have been even fewer instances of TGWU or GMBATU officials standing on the picket lines at the power stations with the miners to appeal for support for the TUC guidelines. The left has not organised its forces to deal with the sabotage of the right.

The left union leaders have not taken the steps needed to bring together the support that exists at the base of the movement, through for example, a national demonstration, a national solidarity conference, or pressure on the TUC to support a national day of action. The right have been far better organised, and have had the courts, the media, and the state on their side.

They have had no compunction about dividing the TUC to achieve what they want. The left has been far too slow to open up the political battle with the right wing. The reality is that the trade union movement is more sharply divided now than at any time since the 1920s.

These divisions will deepen as the Tory attacks continue. It will be of decisive importance for the future of the labour movement that the left organises itself from top to bottom of the movement to meet these attacks.

The divisions in the NUM, with the threat of scab unions, is not an exception to the general trend. They express, in an extreme form, the divisions in the movement as a whole. The left has to recognise the necessity for an open political battle with the right who are taking the movement down the road to disaster. The centre will always fall into the arms of the right, as Basnett and Willis have done, unless the left is waging a fierce political battle which forces all manoeuvres into the open. That means clear political campaigns, with focuses around which the left can mobilise are essential. The line of divide between those who are prepared to fight the Tories, and those who want to capitulate must be clarified. For that the left must organise.

CEGB on a knife-edge



Activists picket the power stations, but where is the TUC?

LABOUR LEADER Neil Kinnock last week attacked the Campaign Group of MPs for trying to force a debate on the miners' strike in the House of Commons. Such a debate, he told a meeting of the PLP, would 'not be so much a debate as scratching the wounds of the miners.'

Kinnock, with Basnett and Willis, are eagerly awaiting the end of the miners' strike — and hoping that a defeat for Arthur Scargill will weaken the left, even at the price of weakening the whole movement. This is why they are peddling their defeatist line which gives aid and comfort to the Tories and the NCB.

The truth however, is that the claim that the miners cannot win is as false now as it was at the beginning. The *Guardian*, 18 January, revealed just how close power cuts are, and how little needs to be done to bring them about.

Using information from sources inside the CEGB, the *Guardian* reported that the CEGB is struggling to maintain supplies. Although there have been voltage reductions since the autumn, some power stations are nearly out fuel. The

switch to oil and the reduction in maintenance has reduced efficiency.

Reserve generating capacity is very small. For example, on December peak demand was 42,000 MW, while total capacity was 42,800. While the board made much of its ability to supply 44,600 MW on 8 January, its ability to maintain the supply is on a knife-edge.

The Yorkshire stations in particular, are in real trouble, and the strains on the system will be even greater in the next few weeks. The *Guardian* report shows that government claims that supplies can be maintained without power cuts could very easily be refuted.

It would require only a small effort by the TUC to step up action in the power stations to force the CEGB into power cuts. Of course, this would mean a change of policy on the part of the general council — from scabbing on congress decisions to attempting to deliver on them.

Even at this late stage, it is clear that victory for the miners is possible. The prospects of the Tories winning rests entirely on the general council of the TUC, and the craven policy of Kinnock and company. There is only one name for labour 'leaders' who pursue such policies. SCABS.

The NUM and Spencerism

THE THREAT to the NUM from the Notts breakaway union must be defeated. Striking Notts miners will be in the forefront of the fight against Spencerism. Socialist Action spoke to MARTYN BOWER of the South Notts strike committee for his personal views.

THE move to change the constitution of the Notts area is backed by extreme right wing organisations who began to hatch a plot to form a breakaway union in Notts. Spencer lives again!

You have officials who have reached the highest point of their career at area level and want to go further and run the whole show from Notts. Rule 51 is the national rule they oppose most avidly.

It makes provision for a disciplinary committee of national officials and rank and file members to deal with members or areas that break the rules. It was introduced 18 months ago but it is only now that Notts officials call for its removal.

The rule changes created the debate about expelling the scabs. The Notts area is totally against national policy and the national rule book. We want a National Union of Miners not a Notts Working Miners' union.

For the past 10 months we have had immense hardship, and pressure from the police, the courts, etc. We now have the education and the ability to form a much stronger NUM in Notts.

We'll welcome men who have gone back into work into the NUM with open arms. We hope they'll come back out on strike, but all we ask of them is to recognise the NUM and refuse the breakaway union.

If we were to ask every miner crossing picket lines 'do you still want to be in the NUM?', 90 per cent would say yes. But in branches and at area level this simple question is ruled out of order. We are not allowed to put this question in Notts.

The split will be a welcome boost for the strikers in Notts. We won't have to accept right wing policies being imposed on us at this moment by the area.

In the new NUM in Notts we'll produce regular local newsletters to

distribute to all the miners in the area. Most people here don't even get to see *The Miner*, because pit delegates can't be bothered to pick it up from the area offices.

We don't intend to let the grass grow under our feet as we did in the past. The rank and file want to get involved in organisation and we are more aware now of what we want to achieve through the union.

Organising in the Labour Party is a sound investment for striking miners and their families.

We have to get away from the present situation where the Labour Party has a very weak leadership. The same problem exists at local level.

It's not only the unions but the Labour Party itself that we have to educate to play a more active role in industrial disputes. We hope the ties we've made through the strike with other political groups and working class organisations and especially internationally will be kept up, and the links will not be broken when the strike is over.

What we have to do now is educate, agitate, organise!



Photo: GM COOKSON

Coal shall not move

ROY BUTLIN, Coalville NUR, received a standing ovation for his speech at Hackney Town Hall at the end of the 17 January rail protest at the harassment of railworkers refusing to move coal.

'They can slander us, sequestrate us, injunct us, screw us from every angle possible even commit us to a lunatic asylum — but we shan't move coal until the miners win.'

The industrial action called by the rail Federation was solid among the areas officially called out.

Unofficial action was taken by two main line depots in London, St Pancras and Waterloo. Stonebridge freight and passenger depot in West London also came out.

'We've inflicted one day of pain on the passengers, but we've had it for 42 weeks. This strike will put the morale of my members up 1,000 per cent. It's a real shot in the arm.'

'The most significant thing for me', said Ray, 'was Waterloo which joined in despite no official call. Management will have to think very hard about this as will our union executive some of whom were reluctant to call any form of industrial action. It's given me great personal satisfaction because the area manager didn't think it was possible.'

Greg Tucker, secretary of Waterloo NUR, explained why the action had taken place.

'We were prepared to take up Coalville's call and the day was an unqualified success. Sooner or later railworkers are going to have to face up to the reality of what's happening to our own industry just like the miners.'

'Our picket line was great with miners from South Wales, Yorkshire, Kent, together with a delegation from striking CPUSA members from Brixton dole office and a Lambeth Labour group delegation. Only one

Leicester passenger depot which was not called out almost came to a halt because no trains came through from Nottingham, Derby and Sheffield.

Leicestershire striking miners 'the Dirty Thirty' set up a picket line at midnight of 60 people.

Sam Reed, area manager Derby, drove in with his head bowed. The wives of the Dirty 30 picked from 6 pm. The Dirty 30 feel that this action has given the striking miners in the minority areas a tremendous boost.

Roy Butlin explained the next steps: 'Unless all our demands are met at Coalville this isn't the final word. We have partially established during this week the principle of alternative work for our members instead of moving coal but the BRB locally will not concede on attempting to move the coal.'

'Chaos'

They persuaded a few railworkers not to go in and got a commitment from others not to move trains into Nottingham and Derby.

The area manager there went on radio apologising for the 'chaos' and claiming 'that his workers were being intimidated'.

At Coalville itself, Mick Richmond a leader of the Dirty 30 said that 'through the 24 hours, morale on the picket line at Mantle Lane was brilliant'.

On the line were local ASLEF and NUR members joined by rail delegations from Bestcote and Saltley, who are part of the rail link throughout the area but who have not been victimised so far.

Harassment

Members of the Dirty 30 and Warwickshire striking miners were joined at 6 am by the South Notts miners and at 9 am a large delegation arrived from Mardi lodge of South Wales — the last pit in the Rhondda Valley.

Throughout the day the picket was never less than 60 strong in a temperature of minus 13°C, watched over by no less than two police support units and a snowperson with a 'coal not dole' placard.

Dirty 30

'To a certain extent what happens next is up to management — will they continue their campaign of harassment? We can't sit back. The situation is still that the NCB and BRB have to move that coal, especially now that the weather is so bad with people talking about a winter similar to '47 and the CEBG worried about its fuel stocks. To do this they've got to use trains not lorries.'

'National action which is the ultimate response we can make. We hope it doesn't come to this, we hope that the management stops its provocations now in all the freight depots throughout the area but we don't think this is really likely.'

'Of course if the BRB goes through with its threat to sue the unions for loss of revenue during the strike this will up the stakes. I understand that this threat itself was behind the decision of Stonebridge Park to come out last Thursday. The rail unions must respond vigorously to the use of courts on this question.'

Miners warn Neil

ONE THING that will not be the same following this miners' strike is the attitude of NUM activists to their local Labour Parties and the MPs and councillors representing their areas.

REDMOND O'NEILL asked TONY DAVIES, chairman of Blaenserchan colliery NUM, which is adjacent to Kinnock's constituency, how attitudes have changed in that part of the South Wales coalfield.

WE HAVE been very disappointed with Neil Kinnock's attitude to this strike. He seems to have been playing at politics for the benefit of the press instead of supporting his own. He hasn't shown that kind of solidarity we are entitled to expect from a leader of the Labour Party in a mining constituency.

Kinnock should have been 150 per cent behind us in the same way as local wards and rank and file activists as well as many MPs have been.

There have been a couple of meetings with Kinnock and local miners to try and clear the air. For example he had a very bitter meeting with Oakdale lodge in his constituency. But it was not satisfactory. Kinnock is saying one thing to the public and another in private to the miners.

Miners will take a different attitude to the Labour Party after this. We'll have no more sheep-head MPs coming out of South Wales and claiming to represent us.

In the past we've been complacent and thought that just voting Labour was enough.

But I'm sure blokes like Fred Evans MP don't even know they have pits

in their area. And Leo Abse, my own MP, has had a very good meal ticket on the backs of the people of Torray and Borough but he won't give us the support when we need it. MPs like him are going to be out.

Up till now we haven't taken up our options in the Labour Party as NUM representatives. We've been active in the union and not in the party.

Now it's all altered. In this strike we've seen that we've got to be active in the Labour Party to ensure that we get people who really represent the workers and not well off solicitors from Cardiff who don't care.

Through the strike we're getting a mass influx into the Labour Party and the union is taking up our seats on the general management committees and all other bodies on which we are entitled to representation.

A lot of miners' wives and youngsters are also going into the Labour Party. So one thing is certain — the Labour Party in South Wales is going to be altered after this strike.

TARGET LABOUR GOVERNMENT

Conference jointly organised by Target Labour Government & Labour Briefing

★What Type of Labour Government?
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SATURDAY 16th FEBRUARY
10am - 5pm
DIGBETH CIVIC HALL,
DIGBETH, BIRMINGHAM

Sponsors so far include: Black Sections Steering Committee, Labour Committee on Ireland, Labour Against the Witch Hunt, Labour Women for Ireland, Mineworkers Defence Committee, Womens Action Committee, Labour CND.

*Creche — bookings in advance * Food available on day * No wheelchair access
Registration: 55 organisation delegate, 52 waged individual, 50p unwaged.
Available from: David Jones, 60d Barnaby Street, London N1 1ER.



Photo: PETE GRANT

Greg Tucker

driver out of 200 signed on and 15 guards out of 100.'

In South Yorkshire the action was almost 100 per cent. Tommy Doyle, representative of his area on the executive of the guards and shunters grades conference, reported that both Sheffield passenger depot and Tinsley freight depot were completely shut down.

By Antonia Gorton

'Action in this area is likely to escalate because four or Tinsley's freight trains operated by 15 to 20 train crew have been shifted to Toton freight depot which like Shirebrook is divided on the movement of coal with loss of work for us.'

'Tinsley NUR is demanding that the Federation issue an instruction that these trains should be boycotted and if moved we will take further action.'

International solidarity with the miners

IN MAY 1983 the Fourth International launched a campaign of solidarity with the National Union of Mineworkers.

The aim of the campaign was threefold. Firstly to get the truth out to the international labour movement about the miners strike through the organisation of speaking tours of miners and women from the mining communities.

Secondly to raise material aid for the strikers through united front initiatives in the trade union and labour movement.

Thirdly to try and stop all coal bound for Britain through a campaign in each country to win trade unionists to support the boycott of coal.

The results of this appeal are testimony to the

resonance that international solidarity has among the working class today.

A total of 16 speaking tours for miners and women from the mining communities have now been organised in the following countries: Belgium; France; West Germany; Portugal; Switzerland; the Netherlands; Denmark; Ireland; the USA; Canada and Australia.

Altogether £30,000 was raised through these tours. But most importantly these tours have helped stimulate the setting up of united front solidarity committees that have raised large sums of money which have helped to sustain the NUM through their long battle

against the Tories and have stimulated international solidarity action.

One of the best examples of this is the work of the Danish section of the Fourth International which helped establish a national collection through their shop stewards organisation which raised over £100,000.

Here also members of the Fourth International were able to successfully campaign for the stopping of the movement of coal from the port of Aarhus.

● Report reprinted from *International Viewpoint*

Below we publish a selection of reports from the journal *International Viewpoint* about the activities of the solidarity movement and the Fourth International.



Postcard produced by the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire

In Ireland a campaign in solidarity with the miners is being organised in the North to collect money, food and toys for miners' families at Christmas.

Regular levies take place among union members. One union, NIPSA (Northern Ireland Public Services Association) has agreed to match pound for pound the donations made by members from their own pockets.

A support group has been set up in Limerick. Several South Wales miners have visited the area.

One group of workers at Shannon have managed to get their company, GAC, to check off contributions to the NUM at source.

Many shop stewards have participated in the group and busworkers have been particularly generous. One office in Cork has been opened staffed by two South Wales miners.

In Austria Joe Holmes from the Kent NUM spoke to 500 people in Vienna on

15 November. Miners children were invited to the country for holidays organised by the Red Falcons, the Catholic workers and trade union left.

The Austrian trade union confederation, the union of Private Public Services Association and the Engineering, Mining and Energy union have donated £12,000 between them.

In France the CGT (Communist Party union federation) has organised an impressive campaign of solidarity with the British miners. In two weeks last year they collected £60,000 and 400 tons of food.

This made up a convoy of 22 lorries, which stretched over 1 mile. It arrived at Calais on Saturday October 14 to be received by Malcolm Pitt, president of the Kent NUM. 'A victory for one section of workers is a victory for the world workers movement!' he said.

At the end of this meeting the French union leader tried to get the 'Marseillaise' sung.

Several workers instead began singing the Internationale and Krasucki, the CGT leader, jumped to the microphone taking up their chant.

On Saturday 24 November one thousand tons of coal destined for Great Britain were poured into the marshalling yard at Calais by CGT miners. The week before 1,600 tons of coal had been tipped into the marshalling yard at Miramas.

Earlier in November Dennis Pennington, Colin Hiscock and Susan Gannon from Bold had spoken with Gardenne miners during the tour organised by the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, (LCR, French section of the Fourth International).

They also visited Lorraine, Lyon and Lille. The tour raised £10,000 with more pledged for Christmas.

In the Spanish state the solidarity campaign has been slower starting because of the low standard of living and the setbacks southern European

workers have suffered over the last few years.

Adrian Pirt, a Nottingham miner toured for the newspaper *Combate* on October 3-6.

Rallies were organised by Nueva Claridad, together with the Left Socialist Co-ordinating Committee and the Ezkerra Marxists were held in Pamplona, Alava and in the Navarran town of Estella.

In Pamplona Adrian Pirt addressed miners at the Potassa de Navarra mine where food and money were collected.

In Italy, facing similar problems to Spain, solidarity is finally getting off the ground. Meetings have been held in factories in Milan Brescia and Mantua.

A Lombardy-wide committee representing engineering workers, building and textile and food workers recently invited Alan Jones from South Wales to the region to get support. Among other meetings he addressed the workers at the Alfa Romeo car factory near Milan.



In West Germany the two million-strong metal workers union IG Metall has opened a fund for the British miners. This followed a donation of 1.3 million DM made by the union to the NUM.

This was in stark contrast to the German miners union whose leaders, Adolph Schmidt, took a hostile attitude. The support received from the Greens was reported in SA issue No 84.

The comrades of the GIM (German section of the Fourth International) organised two highly successful tours for the Bold NUM and went onto organise a tour especially for two women from the

Kent Women Against Pit Closures movement, Kay Sutcliffe and Marie Collins and two women from the Greenham Women's peace movement, Ilona Aronovsky and Leslie Boulton.

In the Netherlands the FNV, the largest trade union confederation, has established an official solidarity campaign and by October 84 it had 400,000 guilders (£95,000) in the account.

A hundred thousand pounds worth of foodstuffs were sent to Britain by the Belgium Socialist Party. Two miners wives visited Amsterdam at the request

of the Dutch Women's Union (the women's organisation of the FNV).

In Belgium the Socialist Workers Party (POS/SAP Belgium section of the Fourth International) organised a tour for the Bold NUM in October which raised £4,900. Dennis Pennington and Susan Gannon visited Liege, Brussels, Louvain, Ghent, Charleloi and Antwerp.

The section also produced a leaflet calling for workers in the Ghent dockyards to stop all transport of coal.

In November the NUM won an agreement with the unions in Antwerp that coal would not be exported.

Saturday 16 February Socialist Action Miners Meeting

Penrhicewber Miners' Institute
Penrhicewber Cynon Valley, South
Wales.

Speakers invited so far include Ernest Mandel, Dai Davies, (South Wales NUM), Kay Sutcliffe, Helen John, Roy Butlin (Coalville NUR), People's Democracy.

Evening social and bar

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Bristol — a model solidarity campaign

BRISTOL MINERS' Support Group is a model solidarity campaign. Since it was established at the beginning of the strike £120,000 has been raised in cash for the South Wales miners.

Roughly the same value of food has been raised on top of this, with vans travelling every week from Bristol to the Gwent area covering 20,000 families.

Six miners are permanently based there to

help organise this work from the group's office in Transport House. An important source of support is the local Labour Parties.

by Brian Drummond

Here in many areas the collection of the 50p a week levy is organised in many wards to cover every member and not just those attending meetings. This is done by dividing up the levy collecting amongst all the ward activists and newsletter distributors.

Food collections, with the co-operation of the

local Co-op are also organised by Labour Party wards.

The support group was set up by the trades council and District Labour Party, and is recognised as the body through which all money collected in Bristol should be channelled by the South Wales NUM executive.

In addition to the fundraising and support in the labour movement the group has now started to send speakers to sixth form and other school debates on the miners' strike.

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Churchill

The reality of World War II

THIS YEAR the 'Allies' will be celebrating their victory over Nazi Germany. Already a storm has been roused by Thatcher's initial refusal to celebrate VE Day. Britain's great war 'leaders' will be brought out. All in all we can be sure of being given one of the greatest festivals of lies of all time.

The British ruling class has no intention of allowing the truth about World War II to be discussed. And both Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock will join in the suppression. For it was the British ruling class, probably more than any other in the world, which created the conditions for World War II and the greatest slaughter in history which it produced.

It was the British ruling class, together with the French, which in 1919 imposed on Germany the infamous Treaty of Versailles which helped prepare Hitler's rise to power. Already during the 1920s British Conservative leaders such as Churchill openly declared their admiration for Mussolini.

It was British loans which helped keep Nazi Germany afloat in the 1930s. The British Conservative government of the 1930s directly participated in allowing Hitler to gain his great foreign policy victories — the occupation of the Rhineland, the invasion of Austria, and the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

This policy of appeasement of fascism, and of Hitler in particular, was not a mistake. The British ruling class, and the Conservative Party above all, hoped that Hitler would be a bulwark against the Soviet Union. It is the same virulent anti-Sovietism which Margaret Thatcher puts forward today that in the 1930s led her predecessors to directly appease Hitler.

This point is extremely important to understand not only for historical but for contemporary reasons. Thatcher, and her supporters, claim that it is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament that is pursuing the same path as the appeasers of the 1930s. The exact reverse is the truth.

CND stands in the tradition of those who fought fascism in the 1930s. Of those who campaigned against Hitler and Mussolini, of those who fought Mosley in Britain, of those who fought Franco in Spain. The element which remains constant in the Conservative Party's policy is its violent opposition to the Soviet Union and its support for right wing dictators — then Hitler, now virtually every unpleasant regime in the world from South Africa onwards.

The same policy which today demands Britain arm itself to the teeth with nuclear weapons has the same class content as that which in the 1930s appeased Hitler. That is the reality which Thatcher wishes to cover up.

But there is another fundamental feature of the war which Thatcher, and those who celebrate with her, want covered up. This is that the war in Western Europe was itself a side show. The real World War II, the one that counted, was that fought out in the East.

The Soviet Union for most of the war fought against 90 per cent of the Germany army. It never fought against less than three-quarters. It was the Soviet army, and the Soviet people, not the western allies, who liberated Europe from fascism.

British policy in the war, after the Nazi invasion of the USSR, was to leave the Soviet Union to do the bulk of the fighting while Churchill ensured the safeguarding of the empire and prepared for the coming struggle against 'communism' in Europe. British intervention in North Africa, Greece and Italy in 1942, 1943 and 1944 were designed to safeguard British capitalism's interests while the USSR was left to bear the brunt of the fighting. The one thing that could have relieved the pressure on the Soviet Union, an allied invasion of France, was constantly put back.

By the time Britain and the United States did invade Western Europe, in 1944, it was clear the USSR had already won the war. The D Day landings were just as much about preventing the Soviet Union advancing too far as they were about the war with Germany — a war the Nazis by then had already lost.

Finally the British government will also take the greatest care to cover its atrocities in the war. We will hear — and rightly — much about the crimes of the Nazis. But how about the role of the 'allies'?

It was once said of Churchill that he was chosen as war leader because it was necessary to have someone who could fight Hitler on his own terms. Churchill never had his own 'final solution' of the Jewish question because Britain never found itself needing it — Britain had already carried out its 'final solution' of the Irish question in the nineteenth century and continued to rule the 'empire on which the sun never set'.

Churchill couldn't order either, as Roosevelt or Truman could, the nuclear bombing of Japan as a warning to the USSR. But within his limited resources Churchill was a war criminal on a scale to compare with any other in history.

Nothing shows that more clearly than his order for the bombing of Dresden — the greatest killing by a single attack in history. More died beneath Churchill's bombs in Dresden even than in Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

It was a 'fitting' ending to the policy which Britain had pursued throughout the 1920s and '30s. Having helped condemn the German workers to Hitler, the British ruling class under precisely the same Churchill who had so admired Mussolini then slaughtered German workers beneath British bombs.

Next month sees the fortieth anniversary of the bombing of Dresden. We are devoting our centre pages to that as a fitting comment on the nature of the 'celebrations' we are going to be invited to participate in during the coming weeks.

Churchill

ON THE night of 13 February 1945, 40 years ago, the city of Dresden was attacked by a force of 1400 British and 600 US planes. The raid was the most devastating of the terror-raids ordered by Churchill — he authorised one of the most horrendously brutal war crimes ever; the biggest single killing in history.

In the space of a few hours well over 100,000 people were slaughtered. No one knows the exact final total but this is what the official police report says:

'Up to the evening of 20 March 1945, 202,040 bodies, primarily of women and children, were recovered. It is to be assumed that the death toll will climb to 250,000. Of the dead only some 30 per cent could be identified. As the removal of corpses could not be undertaken quickly enough 68,650 of the bodies were incinerated, and their ashes interred on a cemetery'.

By John Lloyd

What is known for certain is that the overwhelming majority of the victims were civilians, and that more perished in the Dresden holocaust than in the atomic explosion in Hiroshima.

Terror bombing of German cities was advocated by Churchill as a way of sapping the enemy's morale. Over 600,000 civilians were killed by these raids. To achieve this objective Churchill seemed prepared to go to any extreme.

He considered the use of anthrax to wipe out an estimated three million Germans. An anthrax bomb was actually made and tested on a Scottish island.

He even wanted to use mustard gas — this was his view on its use: 'I want a cold-blooded calculation made as to how it would pay us to use poison gas, by which I mean principally mustard. It is absurd to consider morality on this topic when everybody used it in the last war without a word of complaint from the moralists or the church — it is simply a question of fashion, changing as she does between long and short skirts for women.'

The pretext for the Dresden bombing was that the city was a vital in-

dustrial and communications centre, with factories and an important railway, making it a legitimate military target. But the real reason was political, not military.

'Big Three'

In early February 1945 a conference to decide the future of post-war Europe was to take place at Yalta. This was a conference of the 'Big Three': Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill. Churchill felt himself at a disadvantage. He would not enjoy the same status as the others, largely because of the USSR's astonishing victories over the German army.

In comparison Britain's contribution to its impending defeat looked puny. The speed of the Red Army's advance through Eastern Europe, while decisively destroying the Nazis, making their defeat certain, embarrassed and alarmed Churchill.

Characteristically this utterly degenerate politician sanctioned a gigantic air-raid that would virtually destroy the ancient city of Dresden and its population, as a way of enhancing his own political position. Churchill also wanted this raid to serve as a spectacular military warning to the USSR; a demonstration that capitalism would not shrink from using all the violence and brutality at its command against those who seriously threaten it.

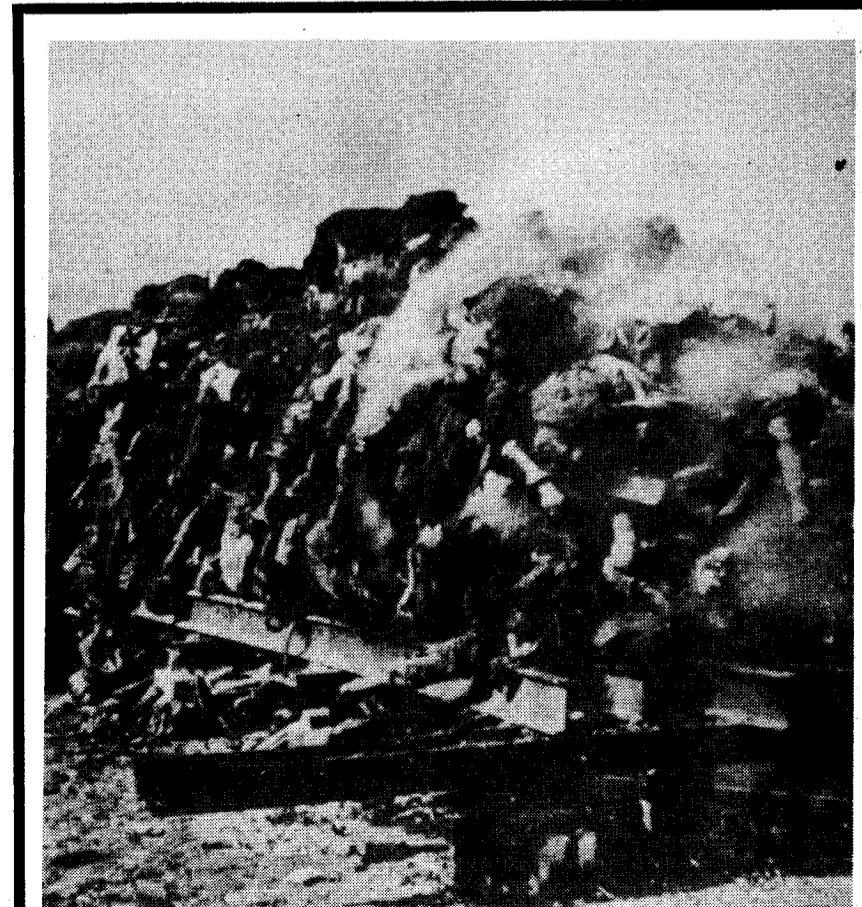
For dramatic effect, the Dresden attack was timed to coincide with the Yalta conference, but bad weather caused a postponement. Planned as the culmination of the terror-bombing campaign, the raid was designed to cause the biggest fire-storm ever.

Fire-storms are created by a specific type of aerial bombardment. The targets are always densely populated residential quarters of cities where vast amounts of combustible material occur. In the first phase of the operation bombers drop high-explosives which rip off roofs, shatter windows and fracture walls, so the interiors of buildings are exposed.

Then the area is saturated with incendiaries which start thousands of fires. Rising currents of heated gases and the rapid consumption of oxygen draws in air with considerable force and speed. Artificial winds sometimes of



Neville Chamberlain



Corpses are disposed of after the Dresden fire-bombing

Kill the war criminal

hurricane strength are generated, rushing to the fires taking with them huge quantities of debris to feed the flames. The fires spread inexorably to make one single fire-storm; a conflagration of raging flames and rushing winds.

The Dresden conflagration burned for days, a pall of smoke three miles high hung over it. Its glow was visible 200 miles away. Victims were incinerated in tens of thousands, even more died from suffocation or the effects of blast.

A direct hit by a small high-explosive on a shelter killed over 200 people in a particularly gruesome way. The shelter contained the full force of the explosion so that rescue workers found no bodies only an even sludge of pulverized flesh and bone. The scene of destruction was unimaginable.

A Swiss resident described what he saw ten days after the raid. His account was published in a Swiss newspaper: 'The sight was so appalling that without a second glance I decided not to pick my way among these corpses. For this reason I turned back and headed for the Grosser Garten.

'But here it was even more appalling: walking through the grounds, I could see torn-off arms and legs, mutilated torsos, and heads which had been wrenched off their bodies and rolled away. In places the corpses were still lying so densely that I had to clear a path through them in order not to tread on arms and legs.'

Horried

A horrified worker, one whose task it was to bury the dead, wrote: 'Never would I have thought that death could come to so many people in so many different ways. Never had I expected to see people interred in that state: burnt, cremated, torn and crushed to death; sometimes the victims looked like ordinary people apparently peacefully sleeping; the faces of others were racked with pain, the bodies stripped almost naked by the tornado; there were wretched refugees from the East clad only in rags, and people from the Opera in all their finery; here the victim was a shapeless slab, there a layer of ashes shovelled into a zinc tub. Across the city, along the streets wafted the un-

mistakeable stench of decaying flesh.'

The RAF considered their night's work to be a success. A similar raid was planned for another city, Chemnitz.

Number Three Group of bomber command was briefed as follows: 'Chemnitz is a town some 30 miles west of Dresden, and a much smaller target. Your reasons for going there tonight are to finish off any refugees who may have escaped from Dresden. You'll be carrying the same bomb loads, and if tonight's attack is a successful as the last, you will not be paying many more visit to the Russian front.'

Mainly because of bad weather, Chemnitz was spared the fate that Dresden suffered. The RAF considered the operation a failure.

The scale of death and destruction at Dresden so appalled that severe criticism was heard, nationally and internationally. So much so that Churchill tried to place responsibility elsewhere, and distance himself.

On 28 March 1945 a few months before the fall of Nazi Germany, he wrote: 'It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing of Germany cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed. Otherwise we shall come into control of an utterly ruined land. We shall not, for instance, be able to get housing materials out of Germany for our own needs because some temporary provision would have to be made for the Germans themselves.

'The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing. I am of the opinion that military objectives must henceforward be more strictly studied in our own interests rather than that of the enemy. The Foreign Secretary has spoken to me on this subject, and I feel the need for more precise concentration upon military objectives, such as oil and communications behind the immediate battle-zone, rather than on mere acts of terror and wanton destruction, however impressive.'

Dresden's destruction had little or no effect on Germany's ability to prosecute the war, nor did it hasten the end of the war by one second. It was a barbarous crime. To prevent future Dresdens the lessons of past Dresdens must be learned.



The Soviet flag flies above Berlin after liberation

Extract from official report on Dresden

Dresden
22nd March 1945.

Order of the day No 47 AIR RAID ON DRESDEN:

In order to be able to counter wild rumours, there follows a brief extract from the concluding statement of the Police President of Dresden on the four attacks on 13th, 14th, 15th February 1945 on Dresden.

1st attack, on 13.2.45, from 22.09 to 22.35: about 3,000 H.E. and 100,000 incendiary bombs;

2nd attack, on 14.2.45, from 1.22 to 1.54: about 4,500 H.E. and 170,000 incendiary bombs;

3rd attack, on 14.2.45, from 12.15 to 12.25: about 1,500 H.E. and 50,000 incendiary bombs;

4th attack, on 15.2.45 from 12.10 to 12.50: about 900 H.E. and 50,000 incendiary bombs.

There were 13,441 residential buildings totally destroyed or badly damaged, in other words, 36 per cent of all residential buildings in Dresden. In addition, the following were totally destroyed or so badly damaged as to be of no further use:

- 30 Banks;
- 36 Insurance buildings;
- 31 Department Stores and shops;
- 32 Major Hotels;
- 25 Large Restaurants;
- 75 Municipal buildings; 6 Theatres;
- 18 Cinemas;
- 647 Business premises;
- 2 Museums;
- 19 Churches;
- 6 Chapels;
- 22 Hospitals;
- 72 Schools;
- 5 Consulates, including the Spanish and the Swiss

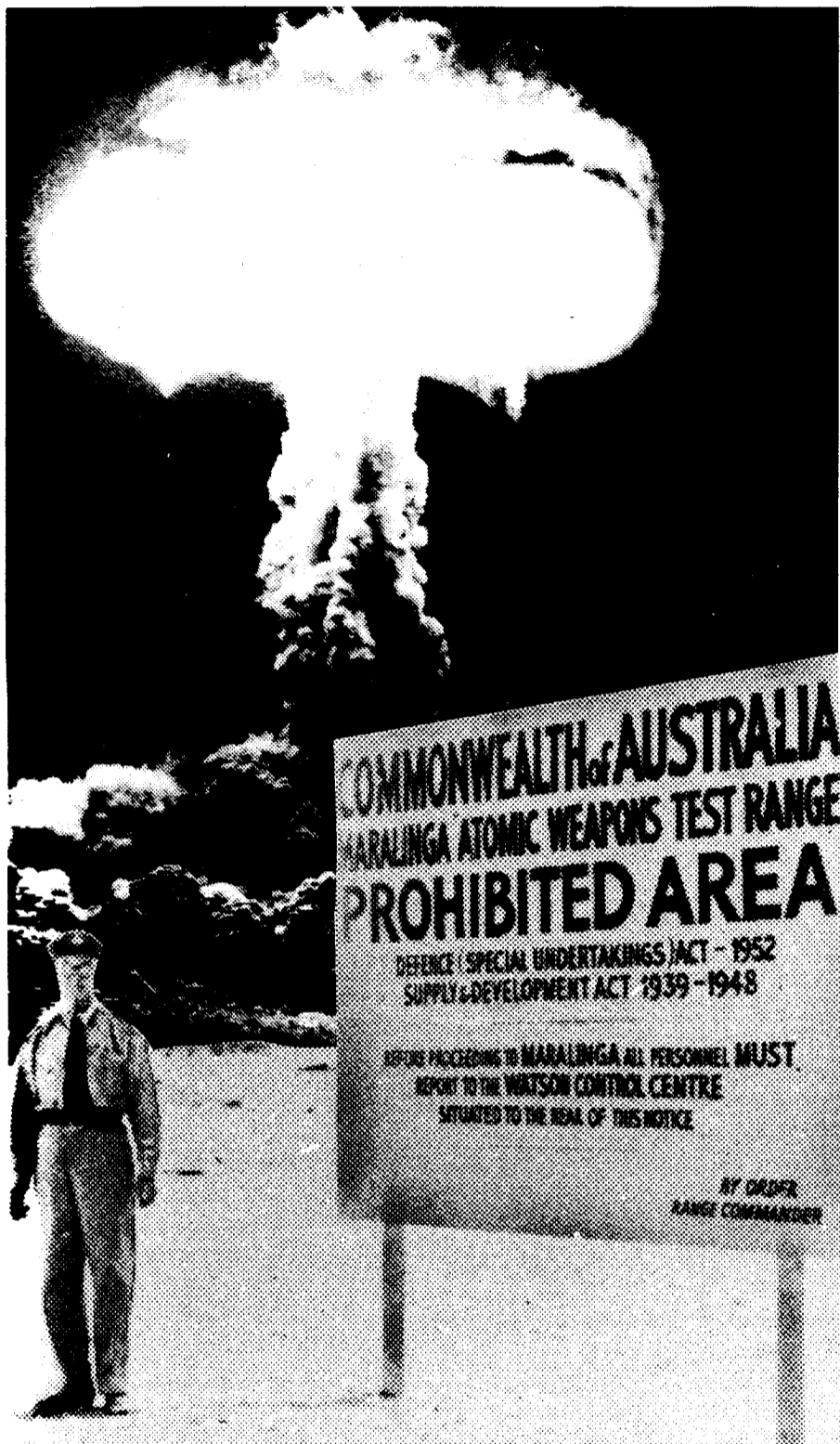
In the cold-store (of the Dresden slaughter-house complex?) only 180 barrels, each of 110 pounds, were destroyed; all other foodstuffs were saved.

Up to the evening of 20th March 1945, 202,040 bodies, primarily of women and children, were recovered. It is to be assumed that the death roll will climb to 250,000. Of the dead only some 30 per cent could be identified. The Dresden Civil Police force has suffered 75 fatalities and 276 more are missing, and must for the greater part be presumed dead. As the removal of the corpses could not be undertaken quickly enough 68,650 of the bodies were incinerated, and their ashes interred on a cemetery. As the rumours far exceed reality, open use can be made of the actual figures. The casualties and the damage are grave enough.

The whole severity of the attack lies in the way that damage on this scale was inflicted within the space of very few hours.

pp The Commander of the Civil Police
Chief of Staff
(Signed) GROSSE
Colonel in the Civil Police

Australia Nuclear disarmament party



PRESS HEADLINES in Britain on the Australian elections in December were dominated by the failure of Bob Hawke's right wing Australian Labour Party government to gain the expected landslide majority. But almost equally significant was the spectacular rise of the Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP). Formed only several months before the election the NDP elected one Senator in Western Australia and secured more than seven per cent of the vote.

Australian socialist JOHN PERCY looks at the significance of the NDP.

THE phenomenal success of the NDP arose out of two major developments in Australian politics over the last few years. Firstly, growing opposition to uranium mining, nuclear weapons, and US bases in Australia had led to massive protests — with up to 300,000 people marching in demonstrations around Australia in April last year.

Secondly, following the election of the Labour government in March 1983, the Hawke leadership had systematically backed down on any progressive election promises it had made. Most importantly, Hawke allowed uranium mining to continue and at the Federal Labour Party conference in July overturned previous Australian Labour Party (ALP) policy and brought it into line with his pro-nuclear practice.

Hawke's actions flew in the face of the overwhelming sentiment not only of ALP voters but of the ranks of the party as well. Disillusioned ALP members were dropping away from the party in their thousands. Some resigned in spectacular fashion — one branch secretary burnt his membership ticket on the floor of the Federal conference.

In this political climate there was obvious potential for a development such as the NDP. The party was formed in June by a Canberra doctor, Michael Denborough, and had a

simple three-point platform:

1. The closing of all foreign military bases in Australia.
2. The prevention of nuclear weapons from entering Australian waters or airspace, or arriving on Australian soil.
3. The stopping of all uranium mining and export.

The party initially attracted little attention. It was general ignored by the left of the labour movement, and mostly greeted with indifference or even hostility by the organised peace movement, sections of which tended to see the new party as a rival organisation.

However, shortly after the betrayals at the ALP Federal conference, a number of prominent figures came out and declared their support for the new party. Among them were novelist Patrick White and poet Judith Wright, both of whom had previously been identified as supporters of the ALP.

Then, not long before the election was called, Australia's best known rock singer, Peter Garrett, joined the party, and was selected to head the NDP's Senate ticket in the state of New South Wales. Another boost to the campaign came when former ALP Senator Jean Melzer left the ALP to stand for the NDP in Victoria.

During the course of the seven-week election campaign support for the NDP mushroomed. From

a handful of people in Canberra in June by the end of the campaign the NDP probably had 10,000 members, with thousands more helping out by leafletting, putting up posters and staffing the polling booths on election day. In the steel city of Newcastle, for example, 1700 people joined the party. Election rallies were held there and in Wollongong, another steel town, drew crowds of 1000 to 1500 people, while other parties could only muster small meetings of the party faithful — if they bothered with meetings at all.

Support

The opinion polls started to register the growing support for the NDP — one poll even had their support as high as 18 per cent in NSW at one stage. Hawke and his campaign managers were forced to respond. Abandoning their tactic of trying to ignore the NDP and the nuclear issue, they switched to the offensive with attacks on the NDP, claiming that they were also anti-nuclear, but 'pragmatic' about it.

The Australian Senate is elected on a system of preferential proportional representation. For this election a party would be guaranteed a Senator for each 12½ per cent of the vote they received in each state, and if they received the preferences of other candidates they could get elected with less. So the NDP concentrated on the Senate, standing teams in all states and the Australian Capital Territory.

NDP candidate Jo Vallantine was elected to the Senate in Western Australia. In NSW Peter Garrett received 9 per cent of the vote, and narrowly missed out, mainly because the ALP directed their preferences to the

Liberal Party, an act that further alienated ALP members and supporters. In Victoria also Jean Melzer came close to getting elected. Nationally the party received more than seven per cent of the Senate vote.

Although formed in response to a specific situation, the NDP is certainly going to continue, contesting some state elections as well as the next Federal election. The task ahead of the party in the coming months is to organise the thousands of new people that were drawn into political activity for the first time by the campaign, and to build up a structure and organisation for the party, something unavoidably neglected in the frenzied rush of the elections.

The growth of the NDP has certainly been the most important political development in Australia for many years.

On key issues it has challenged the 'consensus' that Hawke has been trying to promote, and represents a progressive break from the stranglehold that the ALP bureaucracy has exercised over the labour movement. Although largely initiated by people outside the ALP and the trade unions, it drew many of its activists from ALP members disgusted with the right wing policies of the ALP leadership, and won its strongest support in the traditional working class electorates. In some of these areas, the NDP vote was as high as 25 per cent.

All commentators from the capitalist media had to agree that the formation of the Nuclear Disarmament Party was the most important event in the 1984 Federal elections. It was certainly the most newsworthy. In fact the NDP succeeded in making nuclear disarmament the issue in the elections.

Rough justice

AS THE outrage at the arrests of activists like Maire O'Shea and Peter Lynch under the Prevention of Terrorism Act is being turned into an increasingly effective political campaign in defence of the Irish in Britain and against the racist use of the PTA, doubt is once more beginning to be raised over the case of the Birmingham Six which the Prisoners Committee of the IBRG were known to be investigating at the time of the arrests.

More doubt and mystery surrounds this case than any other involving Irish political prisoners. It is partly the horror over the Birmingham Pub bombings in which fifteen people were killed, and partly the witch hunt that swept through the Labour movement in its immediate aftermath.

The hysteria was whipped up by the press, eager for the police to get convictions at any price. The Birmingham bombs, it is known now, were used as an excuse to rush Roy Jenkins' 'draconian' PTA through the legislative process in double quick time. It had actually been drafted by the Tories some

time before, but the erosion of civil liberties involved meant it could not be introduced immediately.

By Martin Collins

The right atmosphere had to be created. If it can now be understood that the PTA was introduced to enable the special branch to keep a close watch on the Irish community in Britain, and act as a deterrent to those engaging in legitimate political activity on the Irish question, you would think that the case of the six men sentenced to spend the rest of their lives in jail during the same

hysterical period could also be reexamined.

The evidence for reopening the case is more than strong. Father Faul — a Belfast priest now known for his republican sympathies but widely respected as someone who will relentlessly pursue the defence of civil liberties in Northern Ireland has examined all the available evidence in a book called the 'Birmingham Framework'.

He agrees with the claim of the six jailed men that they were framed up as a measure of political expediency by the government of the day. Fr Faul's case rests on the claims of the men that their 'confessions' were extracted under duress by the police.

He says that it was subsequent beatings by prison warders that obscured clear evidence of earlier bruising and weakened their defence. Reluctance to risk further intimidation in prison



Picket at the West Midlands police HQ against the PTA arrests

made them wary of making too much of what was happening in the cells. This enabled the prosecution to cast doubt on their reliability.

Since then, doubts have been cast over commonly used forensic tests for explosives. A prominent scientist has demonstrated that the results obtained to convict the Birmingham Six (scarcely adequate even by

police standards) could have been produced by cigarette smoke on the mens' fingers. The third disturbing factor which has never been explained concerns the main prosecution witness. It was known at the time that one of the infamous Littlejohn brothers who claimed to have planted bombs in Dublin on the instructions of the British Secret Service and acted as an agent

provocateur on other occasions was staying with him on the night of the bombings. He was also known in the area as a National Front activist.

Whatever the relevance of all these different factors, we do know that the 1974 Birmingham Bombing was used to launch a massive offensive against the Irish community from which it is only recently recovering. It would not

be surprising to find that the police at the time would be going all out to show that with adequate legislation it would 'win the war against terrorism'.

The campaign for a reinvestigation of this case being led by 'Rough Justice' and backed by the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the Labour Committee on Ireland must be supported.

Photo: NIGEL DICKINSON

WANTED: stable and intelligent young mother, preferably of caucasian origin, for interesting and unusual job on nine-month fixed-term contract. Applicants must be prepared to be on call for 24-hours a day, 7-days a week for the duration of their contract. They must be prepared to submit to thorough-going medical and psychological testing, in their own time. Some risks to health may be involved.

The hourly rate for this job is approximately £1, payable only on completion of contract, from which the applicant must make her own provisions for tax and insurance payments. Any circumstances which result in the applicant's failure to successfully complete her contract will lead automatically to loss of all payment.

Not a very attractive-sounding job description is it? But if Britain's first surrogate parenting agency advertised for its potential mothers in the local 'jobs vacant' column, that's just how it would sound.

The birth of what is claimed to be 'Britain's first surrogate baby' has led to a storm of righteous protest from the would-be guardians of moral values. Kenneth Clarke, Tory health minister, summed it up thus: 'The involvement of a commercial agency is generally seen as extremely tasteless, and I personally object to a woman leasing out a womb.' The Tory government is widely reported to be considering emergency legislation on surrogate motherhood.

In the few weeks since Baby Cotton's birth, there have been no end of experts pontificating on the subject. Few have dealt honestly — or even directly — with the real issues involved.

By Carol Turner

Dame Mary Warnock, anticipating the controversy, has this to say in her report on the *Enquiry into Human Fertilization and Embryology*: '...the weight of public opinion is against the practice. The objections turn essentially on the view that to introduce a third party into the process of procreation which should be confined to the loving partnership between two people is an attack on the value of the marital relationship.'

'Further the intrusion is worse than in the case of AID (artificial insemination by a donor) since the contribution of the carrying mother is greater, more intimate and personal, than the contribution of a semen donor. It is also argued that it is inconsistent with human dignity that a woman should use her uterus for financial profit and treat it as an incubator for someone else's child. The objection is not diminished, indeed it is strengthened, where the woman entered an agreement to conceive a child with the sole purpose of handing the child over to the commissioning couple after birth.'

'Public opinion' — in a nutshell — is concerned with the threat to the sanctity of the family.

Actually surrogacy is not new. It is extremely unlikely that Baby Cotton is Britain's first surrogate baby. What is new of course is the open and legitimate role of a profit-making agency, made possible and more acceptable by modern techniques of artificial insemination.

What is raised is not the morality of women's actions but the question of exploitation. Alan Rassaby, Research Fellow of the Centre for Human Bioethics in Monash University, Australia, puts the problem succinctly from the point of view of capitalist morality: 'More commonly ethicists object to surrogacy on the grounds that the surrogate herself could be coerced into that role through poverty or unemployment. From one perspective the surrogate can conceivably (sic!) be regarded as the victim of an unfair social order. Without denying this it is rather counterproductive to deny her this



No. 602
Friday
11 Jan. '85

PRIVATE EYE

RENT-A-WOMB NEW SHOCK



Surrogate motherhood: Private Eye get right the Tories' real moral values

The process used by such agencies is that the receiving father donates his sperm by artificial insemination of the surrogate mother, who is the egg donor. This is tried twice a month for six months after which period, if the surrogate mother has failed to conceive, she is dropped from the agency's books — without payment. There are many restrictions on her activity: a period of time during which she can't have sex (to ensure the sperm donor is the father of the child), no alcohol, no smoking, and so on.

Susan Ince's experience shows clearly that the arrangement made by surrogate agencies is no different to hiring a temporary typist or any other sort of casual labour. But the demands on the surrogate mother are a hundred times greater.

It is a strictly financial arrangement. Need is fulfilled according to ability to pay. Receiving parents are inevitably wealthy, described by the agencies as 'in the upper middle class' bracket. Baby Cotton's receiving parents for example were described as having a house in the town and in the country.

From the point of view of exploitation, it is more than clear that surrogacy through a commercial agency is undesirable. But other questions are raised for socialists and feminists.

The idea of surrogacy as an agreement between equal and consenting people, an agreement by one woman to provide a child for another who is unable to bear her own, is one thing. Surrogacy in a capitalist society is another.

Throughout her experience Susan Ince dealt with men: psychiatrists, lawyers, the other 'contracting partner', the father. It was regarded as 'natural' that men should organise this transaction as any other. The role of the receiving mother was minimal.

Susan's anonymity was not assured (even had she wanted that). The father was given details of Susan, including the town where she lived. And the birth certificate gave him her name and address. In fact Susan was encouraged to contact the father: to let him know the pregnancy test was positive, to send tapes of the baby's heartbeat. Never was the mother even mentioned.

Pundits

In the current debate, the arguments of exponents and protagonists alike emphasise the importance of the nuclear family, and with it the control of men over women's bodies. This is a second issue raised by surrogate parenting agencies.

Of course we must favour the use of medical technology to improve the lives of women and make child-birth easier and safer. But this is not what is at issue in today's debate.

According to the National Association of the Childless, more than 10 per cent of couples in Britain want and can't have children. And infertility is increasing, associated with the spread of sexually-transmitted diseases. At any given moment 100,000 couples are looking to adopt but only 1200 babies are available.

Since legal abortion was made easier under the 1968 Act, adoptions have fallen from 24,000 to less than 9,000 each year. And that is exactly how it should be. If surrogacy is a means of fulfilling a real desire to have children, it is only to be welcomed. But it cannot be considered in isolation from the whole issue of women's control of their bodies.

When pundits show the same concern for the rights of women to legal safe abortion, for more adequate child-birth and child-care facilities — in short, for women's basic right to control their own fertility — then their outrage and moral indignation generated over surrogate motherhood won't seem half so hollow. Perhaps then it will be possible to begin to thrash out a rational means of facilitating the process whereby a woman undertakes to grow a child for another — without either being subject to the vagaries of the capitalist market place.

Babies for sale

option. Given a choice between poverty and exploitation many people prefer the latter.'

Tests

There is no doubt about the exploitative nature of the arrangement entered into by a commercial agency. The National Centre for Surrogate Parenting is a Surrey-based subsidiary of NCSP Inc of Bethesda, Maryland, in the United States. When its 'pioneer' Harriet Blankfield — known in Britain by her maiden name, Manning — was interviewed a few years ago by the *Washington Post* she said: 'I want to see this company become the Coca Cola of the surrogate parenting industry.'

She has plans for agencies throughout Europe and the Middle East. In addition to the agency's fee from the sperm-donating father, NCSP sold the story of Baby Cotton to the *Daily Star* for £7,500.

Susan Ince's article 'Inside the Surrogate Industry' in *Test Tube Women* describes the first-hand ex-

perience of an American feminist, and raises the broader issues involved.

The main qualification required by the agency was to be married with kids — 'a track record' as the agency staff put it. It was explained that a battery of medical, psychological and intelligence tests would be required to check her suitability, and that the extensive contract protected her rights and her needs.

Check

In fact this was far from the case. Susan, a single woman with no children, was readily accepted. Her first appointment with a shrink involved questions like: name, address, phone, colour of hair and eyes, any boyfriends, expecting to marry and settle down? It wasn't till she asked some awkward questions of the company lawyer that they sent her back for a 'more thorough' check on her motivation.

Susan's description of the contract she signed bears a close resemblance to the NCSP one described recently by the *Sunday*

Times. Apart from the 'rate of pay' — in Kim Cotton's case a miserable £6,500 — some of the legal clauses are more than a bit disturbing.

Wealth

Susan was subject to an amniocentesis test and required to agree in advance to an abortion if any 'abnormalities' showed up. If that had happened, or if she had miscarried no money would be due to her. In fact no money was forthcoming until after the birth.

There was no guarantee of course that the receiving parents would accept the child if, for example, it was born mentally or physically disabled — although there was a clause of dubious legality saying that in such circumstances the father would be responsible for maintenance.

Perhaps most disturbing of all was the fact that if either party broke their contract, the other — and not the agency — had to sue. Not even the most minimal legal or financial safeguards are provided by surrogate agencies.

Photo: PRIVATE EYE, 11 January 1985 (no 602)

London Labour Party Ratecapping Conference

“Open up the second front”

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN



Ted Knight and Hilda Keene at the special conference on rate-capping

AS WE COME closer to the crunch for rate-capped Labour councils the London Labour Party met last weekend to discuss its strategy. Speaker after speaker stressed the need to link the fight against rate-capping with the miners' struggle.

As John McDonnell, deputy leader of the GLC put it: 'We have to open up the second front.' He went on to pledge that, when faced with the possibility of having to make cuts, 'for the GLC, first, we will not pay our debt charges.' Reflecting the mood of the conference he added, 'we need to enforce socialist discipline on our councillors.'

The morning of conference saw a discussion on how to campaign for, and Jeremy Corbyn pointed out: 'There is no point in agreeing a strategy if we do nothing about it to

mobilise practical support.'

Unfortunately the regional executive proposal — a series of leaflets to distribute door to door — did not seem much of

an answer. Especially when the only mention of the Labour Party on the leaflets was in the small print.

By Greg Tucker, NUR Southern District Council delegate

Conference reacted by passing an amendment to the conference statement calling for 'publicity material of a high quality'. This was the only amendment to be passed.

Reflecting the real divisions at conference was a debate on deficit budgeting versus not setting a rate. The latter was over-

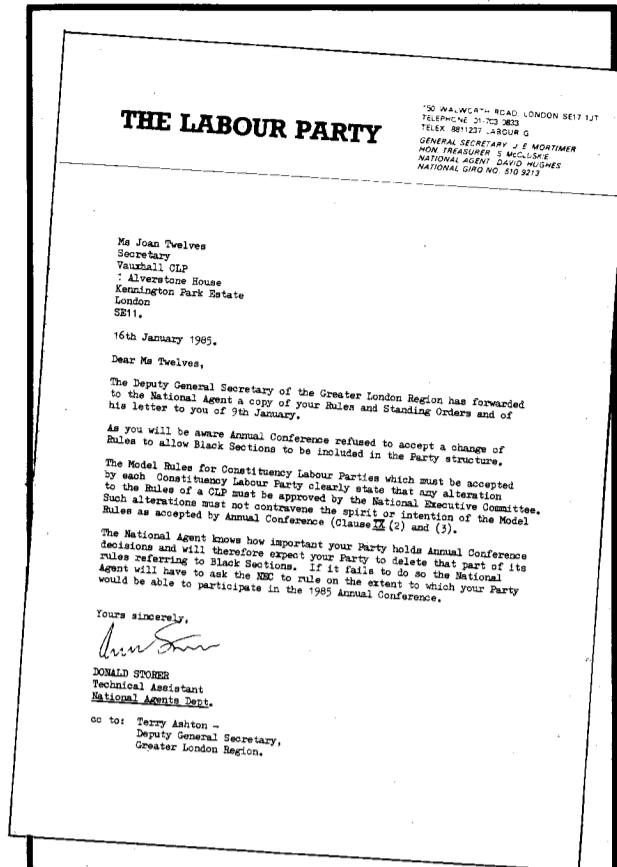
whelmingly endorsed.

But this was not the main divide. Most heat was caused by the debate on the amendment from Islington North calling for coordination with the London Bridge joint shop stewards' organisation. Though supported by the EC this was narrowly defeated when the massed ranks of the NUPE and TGWU fulltime officials showed their reluctance to allow anything to develop outside their control.

For all this conference was a success in registering the united agreement to adopt a strategy of non-

compliance. As Ken Livingstone put it: 'We need a degree of unity and organisation which we have not seen in London for a very long time.'

The task is to physically take control of the town halls, continuing to provide the services and wages, within the state in defiance of the state. Like the mining communities the whole community must come together to defy the government — turning the whole of London against them — challenging the government openly and defiantly.'



Attack on black sections!

IN THE first clear organisational move against black sections a threatening letter has been sent out from Walworth Road to Vauxhall Labour Party.

Vauxhall has incorporated its black section officially into its constituency rules. This is in defiance of the decision of last year's conference and has now provoked a reply from the national agent's office which threatens that, if Vauxhall does not change its rules, 'the national agent will have to ask the NEC to rule on the extent to which your party would be able to participate in the 1985 annual conference.'

Vauxhall's general committee will be discussing this threat at its next meeting this week.

CLPD urges joint campaign

NO DOUBT the supporters of your newspaper are as concerned as CLPD that the Labour Party leadership appears to have made considerable concessions to current reactionary trends during 1984. The leadership has, for example, distanced itself from the miners' struggle, and retreated (in *The Future That Works*) from any definite commitment to a significant extension of public ownership.

In addition, we understand that this month's meeting of the NEC will be considering proposals for a new witch-hunt against Militant Tendency. It appears that they see such concessions as a vital element in their strategy for a Labour victory.

Successful pursuit of this strategy, however, depends on the PLP regaining its monopoly over the determination of Labour's policies. The present reselection procedure is by far the most effective way for the rank and file to ensure that the policies pursued by the PLP accord with those decided by party conference.

It is not surprising therefore that the leadership has initiated new moves to undermine reselection. It is clear that these moves have not ended with the defeat of the Evans' amendment at conference.

The day after conference debated reselection, Neil Kinnock was reported in the press as

stating that he would continue to press for changes in the reselection procedure. The Labour Solidarity Campaign has already declared its intention to continue its campaign on one member, one vote.

Furthermore, at its recent AGM, the LCC decided not only to resurrect the controversy over Clause IV of the constitution, but even more significantly to start immediate consultations with major unions with a view to arriving at an 'acceptable' formula for revising the present reselection procedure. They intend to draw up a constitutional amendment by July 1985, presumably in time for the NEC to by-pass the three year rule and submit this to party conference.

The developments make it urgent for the Labour left to try and find a basis for concerted action to defend reselection and other positions which are under threat. We envisage a joint campaign, confined to internal party

and trade union channels and labour movement publications, which should make a united appeal to rank and file party and trade union members, and promote agreed motions at party and trade union conferences.

We are therefore writing to ask for your views. Should you agree in principle with our proposal, we hope there can be a joint meeting at the beginning of January. Naturally we would welcome informal discussions about this proposal in the meantime.

Looking forward to hearing from you,
Yours in Socialism,
Vladimir Derer
Hon Secretary

● This year's CLPD annual meeting takes place over four 'rolling' venues in March and April. They are: Sat 23 March — Bristol; Sat 30 March — London; Sat 13 April — Sheffield; Sat 20 April — Edinburgh.

All are from 11am till 5pm. The closing date for amendments is 2 March and for nominations, 9 March.

More details from: CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London NW1 7SH; or phone Vladimir Derer on 01-458 1501.



CLPD are proposing a joint campaign to defend Labour Party democracy



CLPD delegates cast their votes

Photo: JOHN HARRIS



Photo: TIM RIGBY

Confrontation on lobby of City Council

War of lies hots up

IN A RECENT unsigned leaflet distributed in Liverpool the black caucus — fighting alongside NALGO for the readvertisement of the race relations post filled by Sampson Bond — is identified as being in league with the Tories and Liberals in weakening the Labour Party's capacity to campaign against governmental cuts.

The leaflet entitled 'Why Do the Tories and Liberals Support the Black Caucus?', through its style and contents, is widely thought to originate from *Militant*. It is a scandalous document.

It lists a series of 'facts' many of which rebound on the Liverpool city council and *Militant* itself in their dispute with the black caucus and NALGO.

For example, it is stated that 'as many as 6,000 council jobs are threatened in Liverpool if Labour are defeated by the Tories'. Such is almost certainly true. What's not mentioned, though, is that of the 30,000 council workforce there are only 200 'ethnic minority' employees. Ethnic minorities are eight per cent of Liverpool's total workforce.

The number of black council employees has dropped since Labour took control of the council!

The leaflet goes on to say that the Tories and Liberals in Liverpool 'are using the black caucus and its campaign to try and split the council workforce, weaken the trade unions, confuse thousands of Labour supporters, and open the way for Thatcher's vicious attack on the people of Liverpool, black and white!'

Of course these 'enemies of the working class', as the leaflet calls them, will utilise breaks in the ranks within the labour movement, but the question *Militant* must ask itself, and seems incapable of answering, is who caus-

ed the split? Who holds the key to the solution?

The inverted logic of *Militant*, who insist no blame lies with themselves, was clearly expressed by Militant councillor Terry Harrison at this year's annual meeting of Arundel Ward in Riverside constituency. He contended that those in the labour move-

By Tim Rigby

ment opposed to *Militant*'s position on Sam Bond were making it impossible to carry out the council's campaign against the government, adding that if the campaign against the appointment of Sam Bond was not dropped the fight against the government could not be waged.

When the meeting suggested that the council should back down, Harrison replied; 'I'm not here to do a trade-off.'

Militant's bullying tactics are convincing few. While they use any constitutional trick they can to overturn decisions made by labour movement bodies in opposition to their Sam Bond policy, NALGO, TGWU, GMBATU, NUPE, ASTMS, the trades council, the joint shop stewards' committee, 11 Labour wards and 2 constituencies stand in firm opposition. That opposition is growing.

A recent letter to *NALGO Herald* — the newsletter of Liverpool council workers — from Pete Cresswell (secretary of the 5,000-strong NALGO and of the joint shop stewards' committee) and Graham Burgess, (chair of Liverpool NALGO and a member of NALGO's NEC) revealed that *Militant* are using 'bosses' tactics to attempt to divide the NALGO membership.

The Labour group has sent out a letter to all NALGO members, the contents of which were described by Cresswell and Burgess as being 'a mixture of misinformation, lies and pomposity'. One of those lies was a claim that nationally NALGO did not support the local boycott of Sam Bond's post.

NALGO's NEC fully support the boycott. As Cresswell and Burgess state, the fact that the Labour group letter went out by-passing the trade union, is astonishing in itself.

Boycott

Additionally, the group letter 'informs' NALGO members that no breach in trade union practice has occurred, and advises in what circumstances a boycott should take place. 'What patronising drivel!' say Cresswell and Burgess, 'it is for trade unions to decide when boycotts should take place — not our employers.'

They continue: 'The Labour group say that the city council is not "just another employer"'. Many of us would love to believe that but recent actions of

the council are leading us to draw the conclusion that they are "just another employer", prepared to attempt to by-pass and villify their employees' trade unions.'

If *Militant* and the city council are serious about waging a fight against the government, they must resolve the Sam Bond problem in line with NALGO and black caucus demands, to win black and trade union support.

They must also go further and undertake serious positive action to overcome the problems the black community has historically faced. If not they do not, they don't deserve the support the black community has traditionally given to the Labour Party.



Cruise Watch conference

THE DREAM born at national CND conference of holding a Cruise Watch conference, has in a couple of months become a reality.

The first conference Against Cruise called by Rusholme-Longsight CND group and the Greenham Umbrella Group will be held in Manchester on 16-17 March.

By Mary Kelly

At a meeting held on 6 January, 50 or more activists from various CND groups, Greenham, Cruise Watch and Moles Watch heard the report back from the various working parties who had been sorting out the details of the conference.

All the people in the working parties are to be congratulated on their efforts.

There are 600 places available at £5.00 per delegate, and registrations must be in by 1 March at the latest.

Speakers will be attending from Italy, Holland, and Belgium and grass roots groups will be invited to speak to conference.

It is envisaged that the conference initially will provide a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas so that strategy and tactics can be developed in the fight against cruise.

Also it is hoped after in-depth discussion an efficient network for spreading information can be involved and will help dispel the 'myth' that cruise is a lost cause.

This promises to be a very exciting two-day conference and we would urge everyone to get their registration into: 'Conference Against Cruise', CND Office, 61 Bloom St, Manchester 3 MLY



Picket

Harrington: the sting in the tail

IT IS NOW certain that the campaign against National Front Organiser, Patrick Harrington, will go on at the Polytechnic of North London (PNL). Having won the struggle to get him taught off campus, thanks to an 'unofficial' agreement with the new director at PNL, the courts have intervened to breath new life into the NF's campaign to infiltrate Higher and Further education colleges.

On Monday 14 January, 16 students were forced to agree to not prevent Harrington using the library and canteen facilities. Refusal to agree this would have meant six to nine months in prison.

The consequences of this court ruling is that if anyone so much as shouts at Harrington as he attempts to use these facilities, they are liable to the same degree of punishment from the courts.

At last the National Union of Students is taking this situation at PNL with the degree of seriousness it warrants. NUS and PNLSU are organising an anti-racism demonstration for Friday 25 January. Details of the demonstration, and posters and leaflets advertising the demo and campaign at PNL, are available from NUS nationally.

All students should be mobilising for this demonstration. By the time it takes place, it is quite possible that students will have been arrested once again for demonstrating opposition to Harrington's presence at PNL.

Calling this demonstration and the position adopted by the Inner London Education Authority mark a big step forward for the campaign against Harrington. Last year, NUS allowed the students at PNL to face the law alone. They even went to the lengths of denouncing the struggle at PNL as being led by a 'fringe group'.

December's NUS conference saw a clear rejection of this disgraceful stance by student activists. The demonstration is precisely what is necessary in the face of the attacks from the courts, but it should not be forgotten that it has taken over 10 months for the NUS executive to get around to calling this action!

The demo on 25 January will be a good opportunity for students to show their opposition to the fascist infiltration of colleges, as well as contempt for the courts that defend people like Harrington. It will not be lost on those students active in supporting the miners that the threat of the use of court orders to stop payments to the miners still hangs over many student unions. So from all points of view, 25 January will be an important event to mobilise for.

All out January 25!
No Nazis in our colleges!
Harrington out!

Muhammad must stay!

THE THREE-year long fight of Muhammad Idrish against deportation is reaching its climax.

The Home Office has refused leave to appeal to the House of Lords against deportation.

Muhammad's case is one of thousands. Last year 2,282 people were deported under Britain's racist laws. A similar number left under threat of deportation.

Muhammad's union, NALGO, has called a day of action and a demonstration on 30 January in Birmingham. All NALGO branches are being asked

to strike on that day, and support is needed from the rest of the labour movement.

The fight against Muhammad's deportation is a fight against the racist and divisive immigration laws. Bring your trade union and Labour Party banners.

Bristol Socialist Action Christmas Raffle Results:

1. K Roberts — no 1197
2. D Amus — no 72
3. A Skinner — no 592
4. B Carroll — no 732
5. A Scargill — no 1019

A Socialist ACTION



Days of Action

TWO REGIONAL TUC's have now given their backing to the call for labour movement action in support of the miners on 11 February, the Yorkshire and Humberside TUC and the South East Region TUC.

The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is also going ahead with its call for a national demonstration in support of the NUM on Sunday 24 February.

In London 500 demonstrators at Tilbury power station (Essex) on Monday were told by Bill Freeman of the London machine branch of the printworkers' union SOGAT, that Fleet Street was likely to stop work on 11 February.

Ivan Beavis, from the Metropolitan district of local government officers, said that his members would be asked to strike in town halls that day.

The South East Region TUC's leaflet advertising the day of action says 'The NUM has urgently requested that unions take sympathetic action in support of their dispute in order to force the NCB back to the negotiating table.'

In Yorkshire and Humberside 67,000 members of NALGO have been asked to join picket lines on 11 February and to donate a half days pay to miners' hardship funds.

In Scotland on Friday 29 January around the message of 'negotiate now' the Scottish TUC is calling a demonstration in

support of the NUM assembling in Blythswood Square, Glasgow at 11.30 am to lobby George Younger, Secretary of State for Scotland. Members of the NUR are expected to come on the demonstration.

By Valerie Coultas

The North West TUC plans to have a day of action jointly with Manchester City Council linking support for the miners with the TUC's democracy week of action around defence of the cities.

Greater Manchester has now established a coordinating committee of officials and shop stewards to plan action in support of the miners.

They aim to win more support from power workers as well as building the LCDTU-called demonstration on 24 February.

Given the offensive the NCB and the Tories are waging against the NUM every single action in support of the miners at the present time is vital and

should be built by solidarity activists.

But the fragmented character of these initiatives is testimony to the political disarray of the key force behind these initiatives — the British Communist Party.

This organisation is responsible for a decision of the LCDTU on Saturday 12 January to simply call a Sunday march in support of the miners on 24 February.

Eric Clarke, NUM Scotland, was reported in the *Morning Star* just before this conference calling for a day of industrial action on 20 February.

At the conference when it was clear that the demonstration proposed was on Sunday rather than a weekday many of the speakers urged the conference to adopt a proposal for industrial action.

One of them, Dave Temple of the Durham Mechanics, urged an amendment on these lines. The platform just ignored the proposal.

It is vital that the labour movement rallies round the miners now. February 11 has already gained industrial support. The CP wishes to confine it to regional action.

It is up to those in the Labour Party, the trade unions and the solidarity movement to turn this day of action into a national focus.

New Caledonia

End French rule

PRESIDENT MITTERRAND of France flew to New Caledonia on Saturday 20 January to intervene directly in the developing Algeria-style crisis over the Kanaks demand for independence.

The Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front, a coalition of 10 organisations, established a provisional government of Kanaky on 1 December following a boycott of the November elections.

New Caledonia is situated in the Pacific Islands on the eastern coast of Australia. It has been a French colony since 1853.

Mitterrand's visit followed the killing of Kanak leader Elio Machoro a week earlier and was aimed at 'resuming the dialogue which looked as if it had been broken'.

The 'dialogue' took place with Dick Ukeiwe, staunchly pro-French leader of the colony as well as Jean-Marie Tjibaou, leader of the provisional government of Kanaky.

Edgar Pisani, French ex-cabinet minister and EEC commissioner for development, is recommending a 'solution' that allows for some self-government but keeps a close association with France. Kanaks, the indigenous Melanesian population, want complete independence and remain unconvinced that Mitterrand's solution would satisfy their demands.

The *Times* reported that while the 'dialogue' was taking place a huge nickel mine in the east coast town of Thio, Machoro's headquarters, was blown up in a raid in protest at the killing of the Kanak leader.

The Pisani proposals are objected to by the Kanaks. Even if the date of the referendum is brought forward to July the Kanaks point out that

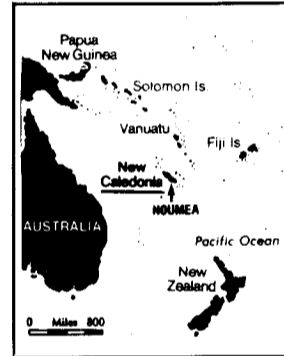
electoral reform would be required for such a vote to be democratic.

By Valerie Coultas

Under French law any French citizen can vote in such a referendum. French civil servants, military personnel, and their families can vote the minute they set foot in the colony.

The French government has already increased its security forces on the island to 3,250. All these soldiers are eligible to vote on the island's destiny.

The other objection the Kanaks have to the referendum proposal is that they wish voting to be confined to those with at least one parent born in New Caledonia.



The demographic imbalances in the island have been created by the French. In 1971 a French minister openly stated that it was important to bring as many white people as

possible to New Caledonia to drown Kanak aspirations for independence, according to Kanak leader Hnalaine Uregei.

It took three years from 1971 for the Kanaks to be transformed from a majority into a minority in their own country.

Today out of a population of 150,000, there are 65,000 Kanaks (about 45 per cent of the population). Another 40 per cent is made up of descendants of French settlers and French public servants. The remaining 15-20 per cent is made up of guest workers who came from other Pacific islands, mostly during the nickel mining boom in the 1970's.

The battle against the French imperialist rule goes back a long way. As soon as the white European settlers arrived in the mid-nineteenth century they stole the good land and forced the Kanaks onto the reserves on the poorest land.

Armed

In 1878 there was an armed uprising which was savagely repressed not only by French troops but by French convicts — some of whom were communards — with the notable exception of Louise Michel.

In World War I when Kanaks, along with other colonials from the French empire, were sent to the North Eastern Front in Europe to be butchered by German guns, another revolt took place.

One of the leaders of this, Chief Noel, was beheaded and the uprising was once again drowned in blood.

Between 1917 and 1946 the French authorities devised a special system for the Kanaks to remain within the reservations. They were only allowed to work for white people.

The Kanaks were denied the right to vote until 1946. In 1953 every night at 6pm there was a gun salute which signalled that Kanaks had to leave the towns.

Even today the Kanaks are not allowed to speak their own language.

The arrival of the French Socialist Party into government raised the Kanak aspirations for independence anew, only to be bitterly disappointed by the compromise solution put forward.

Socialist

The Rhodesia-style assembly elected on 18 November is full of anti-independence, anti-socialist whites.

Their opposition to any reform is backed up by the right-wing in France who aim to 'safeguard the interests of France and French settlers' by waging the same kind of campaign leading up to the French general election in 1986 as they did against Algerian independence in the early sixties.

There are three governments in New Caledonia today. The colonial government, the French authorities, and the provisional government of Kanaky. The racist, imperialist rule of the French will not be ended with a neo-colonial solution.

It will only be ended by giving full support to the Kanaky demand for total independence.



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