

Socialist ACTION

US hands off



Nicaragua

PRESIDENT Reagan's decision to embargo all trade with Nicaragua has jacked up the US intervention against the Sandinista revolution to its most vicious level yet. Just days after all the hoo-ha about Reagan losing the vote in congress for aid to the contras, off his own back, the president simply decrees even more devastating measures. The labour movement in this country, and anybody else with the least inkling of respect for elementary sovereign rights, cannot afford to stand idly by.

In Belgrade, Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega said that the US administration had dreamt up the most extraordinary pretexts for its new attacks. Even though the speech embarrassed his weak-kneed Yugoslavian hosts, this was to put it mildly.

Official US comments on the sanctions reeled off a host of despicable lies: the measures were a response to 'the emergency situation created by the Nicaraguan government's aggressive activities in Central America'. It is the American govern-

ment that has turned Central America into a battlefield, with its military manoeuvres, massive new bases and military support for repressive client regimes and mercenary thugs.

Even the most conservative independent observers recognise that Nicaragua's military build-up, draining nearly 50 per cent of its total budget, is entirely defensive in character, a response to US aggression. Nor has Reagan been able to produce one shred of evidence that Nicaragua is running arms to anybody.

Nicaragua represents, said American officials, an 'unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States'. The only threat that Nicaragua could possibly pose to the mightiest military power in the world is that of an example of a revolutionary democracy which has been shown by last November's elections to command a great deal more active support from its people than Reagan does from his.

Schultz generously told the Nicaraguans that the sanctions would be lifted if the Sandinistas agreed to negotiate with the contras. The backbone of the contra forces remains the members of Somoza's old National Guard, whom 50,000 Nicaraguans died to rid their country of.

ed. But the cost in human suffering, and in the damage wreaked on the real social gains of the revolution, will be tremendous.

What the British labour movement has to recognise is that the gains of the Nicaraguan revolution are our gains: the gains of working people and oppressed people all over the world. We are not prepared to see these whittled away or destroyed.

For 12 months in this country the miners became a focus for all sections of society who had had enough of being kicked around by the Tories and their friends. The support on the ground was extraordinary.

On an international level the labour movement and its friends must now learn to see the Nicaraguan people in the same way, as the focus of a grand alliance bringing together all those who are fed up with being kicked around by Reagan and his friends. Nicaragua needs extraordinary support now.

THE SECRET TO MY FOREIGN POLICY IS MY PAIR OF EAST-WEST GLASSES



Their support inside Nicaragua is miniscule. The Sandinistas have no earthly reason to negotiate anything with such people.

Nicaragua is supposed to have intensified its 'communist totalitarian rule' since the previous week's congress vote, developing 'new ties with the Soviet Union'. This is a reference to Daniel Ortega's visit to a whole series of Eastern block countries.

As Nicaraguan trade minister Alejandro Martinez pointed out, the only reason Nicaragua was forced to seek aid from the East was that the US was blocking all credit through multi lateral agencies like the Inter-American Development Bank. Earlier this year Schultz had made an unprecedented intervention into that bank's supposed impartiality, instructing bank officials in effect to lose the paperwork on Nicaragua's application.

In any case, Soviet aid to Nicaragua since the revolution has totalled only \$400 million, a rather small part of the total.

The fact is the US remains Nicaragua's main trading partner. Unless this blockade is broken it will make the already difficult economic situation much worse.

Reagan cannot seriously believe that the Nicaraguan people will now desert their revolution. The experience of the Cuban blockade imposed in the '60s suggests that, if anything, their resolve will be harden-

THEIR PATENTED 2-D LENSES POLARIZE THE WORLD INTO EAST AND WEST



ANYWHERE I LOOK, I CAN SEE U.S. VITAL INTERESTS AND THE SOVIET MENACE



OF COURSE, YOU LOSE SOME OF THE DETAIL



WASSERMAN

- HANDS OFF NICARAGUA!
- BREAK THE BLOCKADE: IMMEDIATE AID TO NICARAGUA

Socialist ACTION

Thatcherism after Thatcher?

FRESH FROM the SDP-Liberal Alliance successes in the shire county elections David Owen has set out his terms for supporting a minority government if the next general election should result in a hung parliament.

The county elections showed the long-term decline of the Tory vote is continuing, and clearly demonstrated the role of the Alliance in preventing such votes going to Labour. The decline of the Tories has again become a major problem for the ruling class, because Labour, even under Kinnock is still not considered a reliable enough governmental instrument.

The long term decline of the Tories demands a permanent answer for organising ruling class politics — and the Alliance is that answer. It is an indispensable safety net for any decline in Thatcher's support.

Owen's terms for supporting a minority government are clearly aimed primarily at the Labour Party. The terms are that the Alliance would have the right to exercise a veto over the Queen's Speech — the policy statement of an incoming government. The aim is to win a 'pact' with the largest party — almost certainly Labour on current polls — which would 'reflect majority opinion' (i.e. ruling class opinion). It would agree a 'programme for national unity and prosperity' (i.e. would defend the interests of the ruling class.) Owen went on to state that if the Labour Party was not prepared to agree to the Alliance's terms they would form a government with the Tories.

Owen is well aware of the strength of Labour's left wing, and so he is also demanding that the respective parliamentary parties should endorse the 'pact'. In other words, if a Kinnock-led parliamentary party were to make such an agreement it would have to disown, or whip into line, its left wing and any pretence to pursue policies which would be in the interests of the working class would have to be abandoned.

Owen is, in effect, telling the ruling class that if they want Thatcherism after Thatcher they should start treating the Alliance with the respect they deserve. That means that they had better start preparing their safety net now. Otherwise they may end up with a Labour government.

The beginnings of a crisis in the Tory Party, and the certainty that the Tories will be unable in this term of office to ensure a qualitative shift in the balance of class forces will give Owen's statement extra weight.

Finally the coming prospect of a major state funding crisis as North Sea oil revenues decline was explicitly taken up by Owen. In that situation he said, the Alliance would support a government of national unity — a government which, as in 1931, would seek to resolve the crisis through attacks on the welfare state.

The Labour Party must respond to these moves by a forthright and unequivocal rejection of Owen's position. It must make it immediately clear that there is no question that Labour will enter such an agreement with the Alliance, and that if the Alliance were to exclude Labour from office through an agreement with the Tories Labour will organise mass campaigns against the policies pursued by such a government.

The Labour Party should not enter into a coalition with any capitalist party. But the real answer to the Alliance is for Labour to develop a programme that unites all sections of the working class and oppressed, and to campaign on those policies. Such a programme corresponds to the needs of the overwhelming majority of the population.

The failure of Kinnock to support the miners, the moves by Kinnock and Hattersley for a new social contract, and the failure to put forward a radical programme to deal with unemployment all open the door to the Alliance. After all, if there is no fundamental difference between the policies of the Alliance and those of Labour, what reason can there be to reject a pact with them? The left must take up the fight over policy against the 'unity behind Kinnock' line with renewed vigour. The decisive divide in the class struggle today is that fight, or lack of it, against the Thatcher government. But the fight against the rightward drift of the leadership of the Party is vital both to that struggle itself, to the fight against the Alliance, and to the fight for a majority Labour government.

Tories launch further attacks on welfare state

THE LATEST proposals on Social Security benefits by the Tories represent a fundamental attack on the whole future of the welfare state. Thatcherite policy dictates not only the weakening of the trade union movement — both politically and organisationally — but also the dismantling of the welfare state piece by piece. Having taken on the NUM in a twelve month battle, the Tories have now unveiled plans to attack the living standards of those in work and those who depend on benefits to live.

The poor, weak and disorganised have no place in Thatcherite Britain and these proposals represent a cynical attempt to widen the already yawning gap between wage earners and the growing pool of the dispossessed.

The abolition of the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme — SERPS — would force 11 million people into compulsory private pension schemes. This will take place in 1987/8 at the latest according to press reports. Child benefit, which has previously been threatened with abolition, means testing, and taxation, will not be increased in line with inflation — in other words it will be cut.

A much tougher means test will be introduced for housing benefit which means people on 'higher' incomes will stop getting it altogether. Claimants will be forced to pay 20 per cent of rent, rate and mortgage interest payments themselves. The £25 maternity benefit will be abolished altogether.

The row that has broken out between Lawson and Fowler, and which has been publicised in the press, is over the niceties of the level of cuts, not on whether to make them. Thursday's cabinet meeting decided to cut the period of consultation to guarantee that the changes become law by next year. The Cabinet are even considering acting on some of the changes without legislation — the only discussion would be on how best to implement them.

The freezing of child benefit, which is likely to remain fixed at the present

rate of £6.85 despite inflation, could be implemented as early as next month.

The cuts are intended as a direct attack both on those in work and the jobless and in that regard follow up Lawson's budget. The cuts in benefits for homeless people are among the most savage. They will throw thousands of unemployed young people on the streets. The cutting of homeless benefit will hit 180,000 of the poorest people in Britain — 85,000 of whom are under 26.

By Graham Topley

In addition to fixing levels on board and lodging allowances at £70 in London, and £40 elsewhere, the government has said young people under 26 will be limited to eight weeks benefit in major cities and four weeks in other places. Homelessness will increase as a direct result of this policy, with many supplementary benefits claimants being forced out of accommodation.

These policies must be resisted by the whole trade union and labour movement. They represent an attack on the most basic rights of whole sections of the working class. Nor are they just ideological — as some on the left have seen Thatcherism. British capitalism's competitiveness cannot survive with a strong trade union movement — hence mass unemployment and the attack on the NUM. It cannot survive, either, without massive sacrifices being imposed on the



Blacks, Women and Young People are most under attack

poorest sections of the population. In a direct sense, the working class and oppressed are being forced to pay for the crisis. The attacks on the welfare state are all of a piece with unemployment, cuts in benefits, slave labour schemes for youth and destruction of the education system.

Thatcher's Britain increasingly only has room for two classes of citizens. Upwardly mobile wage earners, cushioned against inflation by the side effects of the oil revenues, or docile trade unionists, restricted by legal shackles, looking into the abyss of mass unemployment and the ever increasing pool of the dispossessed who are hit by the at-

tacks on the welfare state. It is an attempt to divide the working class in two and set them against each other.

Alternative

Because the welfare state proposals form a central part of the Tories' attacks, along with restrictions on abortion rights, rate capping and so on, they cannot be defeated by verbal denunciations by Labour's leadership, or clever questions in parliament of the type Kinnock is playing up. The consensus that Kinnock and others crave has shifted. It is being broken up by Thatcher in a conscious way.

The Labour Party must develop a serious, rounded alternative to the Tory attacks, that champions the cause of the working class and oppressed — centrally including blacks, women and young people who are most under attack — and which is built around the defence of the Welfare State. There can't be much talk about developing alternative policy, if the defence of the existing Welfare State, with all its defects, is not at the centre of attention. The Labour leadership deserted the miners in their historic battle. Will it now treat the hundreds of thousands who look to it for a lead, in the same way, in the face of the new Tory attacks?

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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COUNTY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Thatcher gets a bloody nose



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

THE YEAR long battle of the miners is continuing to exact a price on the Tory government. It is not merely that Thatcher is losing support at the polling booths, she is beginning to lose friends at the top. The day after the County Council elections *The London Standard*, formerly one of Thatcher's most sycophantic supporters warned that the results were 'more than just a mid-term malaise'. They showed that the country wanted 'evidence of humanity as well as efficiency, from a government which, six years into Mrs Thatcher's administration, has so far provided neither'.

The Financial Times also criticised Thatcher's failure to tackle unemployment, solve the problem of public expenditure, or deal effectively with the underlying economic problems of the economy. It pointed out, as did the *Standard*, that Peter Walker, the Energy Secretary, represented an 'alternative Tory Party'.

It is beyond doubt that the ruling class is getting worried. There is of course no serious move to ditch Thatcher. But the danger signals for her are clear.

By Pat Hickey

The fundamental reason for this shift is the fact that Thatcher, despite the appalling levels of unemployment, the attacks on the welfare state and the anti-union laws has not succeeded in making a qualitative shift in the balance of forces between the classes. The miners' strike has exacted an enormous cost,

The reality is that to win the strike, the Tories had to rely more on the trade union bureaucracy than on the power of the courts and the police. They were not able to impose a 1926 style settlement, with agreements forced on the union, selective re-employment, and so on. There seems little

prospect that the Tories will achieve such a breakthrough for the ruling class now.

They will of course continue to pile on the pressure through the anti-union laws, the political funds, and attacks on particular sections. Tories' hopes of inflicting a decisive defeat are not going to be realised. Thatcher has pursued a strategy of ignoring the trade union leadership and going for direct confrontation.

If that is not going to succeed the ruling class needs to start looking at alternatives. A safety net is necessary. In particular it is necessary to involve the trade union leadership to a greater degree. They proved their value in the miners' strike, and they will be needed again before the ground can be prepared for the next decisive confrontation.

Moreover, if the Tory base in the country is not to be eroded even more by the Alliance a more human face may soon be necessary. Hence the rehabilitation of the wets. Thatcher is not going to be ditched in the short term. But her failure, even after the most colossal battle for 60 years to break the working class, and her deep unpopularity in the country has provoked the beginnings of a crisis that will not be easily resolved.

The second class Tories

THE COUNTY COUNCIL elections on Thursday 2 May delivered a blow to the Tories in the wake of the miners' strike. Their previous worst was in 1981, before the 'Falklands factor' intervened to boost their standing in the polls. The defeat of the miners has not provided Thatcher with another such boost. Instead the Tory vote declined. They lost control in nine of 18 councils. The result is that the Tories have been swept out of power in their strongest and most traditional power base.

However, the elections do not give a great deal of comfort to Labour. They lost control in five out of 10 councils. The main beneficiary from the elections was the Alliance. The majority of the shire counties, 24 out of 39, now have no overall political control, which means that the Alliance will hold the balance of power. In this regard, the elections have been a very clear demonstration of the Alliance's main role — catching disaffected Tory votes and preventing them going to Labour. It is clear that there is an established three-party system in Britain which is having a major effect. It is clear that there is an anti-Tory majority in the country and the role of the Alliance is either to ensure that the Tories continue to rule because the opposition is broken up, or that Labour

is prevented from winning power.

On the basis of these results pollsters have made predictions on the results of a general election which vary from a Labour majority of 24 (*Sunday Times*), to a minority Labour government

By Pat Hickey

(BBC). Such predictions are highly suspect. The GLC and the Metropolitan Counties were excluded from the elections by the Tories abolition proposals, and it is in these cities that the real test of Labour's strength will take place. The low turn-out (40 per cent) is another important factor.

The main point however is that a general election will take place in a very different political

context. The major questions of national politics will be sharply posed, in particular the issue of unemployment. For the Labour Party the issue will be whether it can put forward a programme that will win the overwhelming support of the working class and oppressed.

If Labour is to win the next election it is necessary for it to qualitatively improve its vote. This means that it must greatly increase its share of trade unionist's votes (38 per cent last time), win a massive majority in the inner cities, particularly amongst blacks, and also win majorities amongst women and in the youth. To do that requires a radical programme that meets the needs of those sectors, the most oppressed and exploited, in our society.

The leadership of the Party is taking a very different course. The drive now under way to push policy to the right is an attempt to steal the clothes of the Alliance. In particular, Kinnock's support for a new social contract with cuts in welfare high unemployment and incomes policy. These are the policies which will hit the very sectors that Labour needs to win.

The last time this happened, the result was a disaster for Labour and the working class — it gave

us Thatcher. Kinnock and Hattersley hope that it will make Labour a 'respectable' alternative to the Tories in the eyes of the ruling class. But the ruling class will not trust a Labour government — the left wing of the Party is too strong for that, and the organised strength of the working class has not been broken.

As an election comes closer the assault of the media on Labour as unreliable and extremist will increase. The only hope for Labour is to appeal over the media to those who are facing the worst effects of the ruling class attacks. Appeals for incomes policy, and still worse, lending political credibility to bodies such as the Employment Institute and its Tory and Alliance supporters can only confuse and divide the Labour vote.

Kinnock and the right, and now even sections of the former left may believe that this is the way to ensure a Labour victory. What it will actually do is open the door to the Alliance. In any case, a Labour government pursuing such policies would strike a demoralising blow at the working class and prepare the way for an even more virulent form of Thatcherism. The fight around policies will be crucial for Labour.

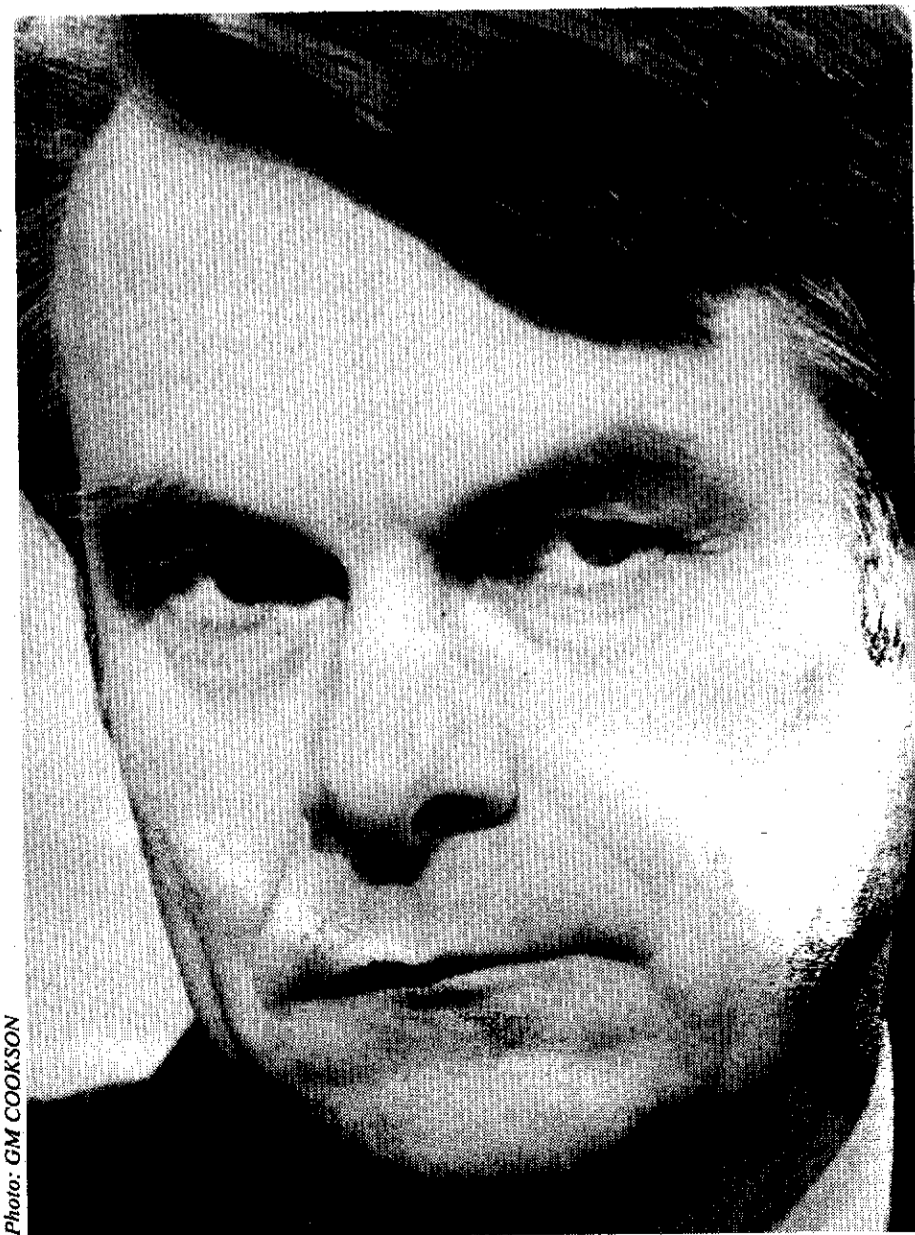


Photo: GM COOKSON

Amnesty!

TONY BENN used his platform at the May Day rally in Chesterfield to argue for a 'complete amnesty' for all miners now in jail and all trade unionists or councillors 'fined or imprisoned under the repressive laws passed by the present government'.

A future Labour government he argued would immediately release and pardon all miners in jail and pay back all fines and sequestration funds.

'Tory laws', he told the crowd, 'have been used against decent people whose only offence has been to defend jobs.' The results of last week's county council elections gave real hope that the Tories would be thrown out at the next election.

'The Prime Minister's brutality towards the miners explains the loss of a great deal of her support.'

The campaign of legal intimidation being waged by the Tory government against the NUM suffered a defeat last Thursday in South Wales.

Eight miners were acquitted on charges of unlawful assembly at Newport Crown Court. The trial, a test case, will determine whether another 31 miners will be brought before the courts on similar charges.

These charges arose from the occupation of Newport transporter bridge last August by miners to prevent the movement of coal and coke to the Orb Steel-works.

Charges of riotous assembly were dropped early in the week after the court saw a BBC film of the occupation.

This filmed record of the event vividly contradicted the statements given by police witnesses at the trial. Prosecution barristers also attempted to employ legal precedents established during trials of republicans in Northern Ireland to justify the charges of riotous assembly brought against the miners.

Judge Michael Gibbon banned all solidarity demonstrations within a quarter mile of the court. He ordered that Mary Crofton, secretary of Newport miners' support group, should be reported to the Attorney General for alleged contempt over the contents of a leaflet distributed outside the court.

Newport Trades Council and Newport West CLP have passed resolutions expressing deep concern about this ruling and its implications regarding the democratic right to demonstrate.

By Phil Price



When Charles and Diana stayed in the port of Livorno on 25 April, they were given a reminder of some realities. The luxury yacht Britannia was confronted by another ship, flying the Irish Tricolour with 'Coal Not Dole' emblazoned across it.

Responsibility was claimed by two of the parliamentary candidates of the revolutionary socialist organisation, LCR. Their action appeared prominently in *Corriere Della Sera*, the main Italian national daily.

OVER 90 people attended an open conference in Leeds on 27 April, in defence of sacked and imprisoned miners. The large number of women from the support committees were particularly determined that no miner should be left isolated in prison or on the dole.

Betty Heathfield opening the conference urged everyone to build on the political gains of the strike. She emphasised the importance of the new levels of international solidarity and the massive commitment of women in the mining communities to take up a wide range of political and social issues.

Her final message was that resolutions are no substitute for action. Other speakers included Sammy Thompson (Yorks NUM) and Dave Feickart (NUM Research Officer).

In the last session, conference decided to establish a Leeds Miners' Defence Group. It aims to publicise the cases of individual miners and offer help and hospitality to wives and children of jailed miners visiting prisons in Yorkshire.

The Group is appealing for up to date information about sacked and jailed miners in Yorkshire and seeking links with other groups in the country.

● Contact Ann Jones, 245 Winrose Drive, Belle Isle, Leeds, LS10 3HA

Manchester Miners' amnesty rally

TWO HUNDRED and fifty people attended a Miners Amnesty rally in Manchester on 3 May to officially launch a North West Miners Defence Campaign. The campaign established by Bold NUM at the end of the strike has for two months raised money for imprisoned and sacked miners in Lancashire.

Two miners from Lancashire have so far been sacked, including Dennis Pennington, editor of the *Lancashire miner* who received a standing ovation at the rally. There are nine miners imprisoned in the North West, four of these are members of Yorkshire NUM and four Staffs NUM.

The central aim of the North West Campaign is to raise sufficient money for these sacked and imprisoned miners and their families each week — distributed through a special fund established by Bold NUM. All excess monies are sent to the national NUM hardship fund for distribution to victimised miners in other areas.

The campaign is also organising tours of sacked miners and of miners wives to labour movement bodies and workplaces. The aim is to campaign for an amnesty for sacked miners and the release of all those in prison.

The main speakers were Mark Jones (father of David Jones killed during the strike), Lorraine Johnson of Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures, Dennis Skinner MP and Dennis Pennington who had been released from prison a week earlier.

Lorraine explained the activities of the WAPC to campaign for the release of all miners. In particular she spoke about the radicalisation of women in the mining community during the strike. 'Women have learnt to organise, they have stood up and voiced their opinions. I used to vote Labour but I didn't know why.'

By Dick Withecombe

'But we're not going back to the kitchen, we are all joining the Labour Party. Not one woman has been lost during the strike, we've even got the men doing babysitting and we have still got WAPC as a national organisation.'

'Women should fight for what we want' she continued, 'we are going to campaign against the Powell bill. Men shouldn't tell women what to do with their bodies. Its up to women not the government. I wouldn't ask the government if I wanted an abortion.' 'Maggie' she concluded, 'we are organised and ready for you, you ain't seen nothing yet.'

Dennis Skinner spoke for one hour and fifteen minutes on the lessons of the miners strike. He asked



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Arthur Scargill after arrest at Orgreave

ed the rally to 'remember the class of people tested in struggle. The 50,000 young miners and women in the mining community, it's not what they said, it's what they did, and they came out with flying colours.'

'The job of some of us in the labour movement and PLP is not to go climbing after votes for leadership but to defend and encourage these people. Everyone on this platform has been tested in practice, it will be these people who should stand as MPs, councillors and for trade unions positions not our striped suited or woolly jumper socialists.'

He then launched a vicious attack on *Marxism Today*, Eric Hobsbawm and Neil Kinnock, and

their failure to back Scargill and actively support the strike. He concluded, 'the real issue is that it is appalling that the miners and their families were out for 12 months and yet all the claims went through and every union failed to open up the second front even on wages.'

'What did your leaders do? Willis stabbed the strike in the back. But if I'd been the dockers leader we should have put in a pay claim and that would have been the end of it.'

After this rally the militants in Lancashire NUM and the North West Miners Defence Campaign will continue the campaign for funds and an amnesty, by supporting and participating in the National Organisation of Miners

Prisoners and Supporters, and by building for the Amnesty Rally in Birmingham on 1 June with Peter Heathfield and Jack Collins.

**Picket Powell
'Smash the
Powell Bill'**

Friday 10 May, 5.30

Manchester Business School (opposite Royal Northern College of Music) Brunswick St

Called by: Manchester Campaign Against Powell and Gillick
Next meeting: Wed 8 May, 7.30pm, Health Education Office, Hardman Street

National Women's Solidarity Conference

By Pat Tough



THE NATIONAL Women's Solidarity Conference held in Birmingham on Saturday 4 May served as a useful gathering for women who have been active in the miners' strike over the last 12 months. Two hundred women were in attendance.

Discussions at the conference helped focus attention on the need for a national Amnesty campaign for the sacked and imprisoned miners and prepared women for the upcoming Labour Party women's conference.

Maureen Irons, a miner's wife from Kent, said that Women Against Pit Closures saw their most urgent and important

task as campaigning around amnesty.

'Our immediate aim as miners wives is to fight for the amnesty and reinstatement of all sacked and jailed miners. We will continue to speak at meetings, organise rallies, demonstrations and make people aware of this demand.'

The conference also urged women to support

and build NOMPAS. Doreen Humber, a miner's wife from Nottingham and a member of NOMPAS, underlined the amnesty issue and explained the role of NOMPAS in building a national campaign around this issue.

The Women's Solidarity conference called for a lobby of Neil Kinnock at the National Labour Party women's conference to express disgust at his total lack of support for the miners and to press for amnesty of all sacked and jailed miners.

Members of the Labour Party were urged to put resolutions to their branches and Constituencies calling on the Labour Party to commit itself to full reinstatement of sacked miners and the release of all political prisoners.

The conference also registered the attacks that are being made by the Tory government. Women are particularly vulnerable because they are among the lowest paid workers. Young women, black women and lesbian women face greater discrimination still.

The conference urged women to give backing to

the fight against privatisation and the demonstration called at Addenbrookes hospital; fight the racist nationality bills and support the black community's battles against deportation; demonstrate against Gillick on June 24 in support of the right of young women to be allowed contraceptive advice and to support the Lesbian Strength march on 22 June.

Women Against Pit Closures, Birmingham Women's Action Committee, the National Abortion Campaign, the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, Women on Ireland and lesbian women all held well attended meetings at lunch time.

Maira O'Shea, the Irish woman arrested under the PTA and charged under the conspiracy law addressed the meeting. Miners wives from Kent, Nottingham, North Staffs, Warwickshire and Yorkshire attended the conference.

They came to share their experience with women involved in other women's liberation activities. The attendance

was not as representative as the organisers had hoped, due to the delay of the conference in relation to the end of the strike.

But it gave a boost to the organisation of women in Birmingham and the West Midlands and provided a forum to strengthen the links that have been made among women during this dispute.

**Youth Fightback
Day School**

**Lesbian
& Gay
Liberation**

Sunday 12 May,
11am
Lesbian & Gay
Centre, 291
Corporation Street,
Birmingham

For more information or a speaker at your YS then please contact Mark Holland, Flat 2, 10 Sandford Rd, Birmingham B13 9BU

Fraud of Israeli withdrawal

NEXT MONTH will be the third anniversary of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Three years of war and occupation has led Lebanon into its second civil war in ten years as Israeli forces 'withdraw' south.

Shi'ite, Sunni, Palestinian and Druze forces reassert their control and Christians have fled from the Sidon area to Israeli controlled areas for safety. It is an optimistic time for the oppressed of Lebanon — in three years the Israelis were unable to defeat their heroic resistance.

These recent events, however, should be viewed with a certain amount of caution. First on the question of Israeli 'withdrawal'. It must be repeated that Israel is not withdrawing its troops from Lebanon totally.

They will continue to occupy a 55 mile 'security zone' along the border, patrolled by Israeli and pro-Israeli militias. They will reserve the right to terrorise the local population, strike at resistance and behave in their usual arrogant, oppressive ways, as they have done in the West Bank, Gaza and Golan since 1967.

Israel's 'Iron Fist' policy has not been smashed. On the contrary it is entering a more subtle, less visible phase. Financially, and because of growing casualties, it can no longer sustain heavy military involvement in Lebanon as the economic crisis deepens and Israeli public opinion against the war grows.

Second, Israel's invasion plans have not succeeded. It invaded primarily to destroy the PLO which it did not do. But its dispersal throughout the Arab world has

neutralised the PLO politically and militarily in Lebanon, leaving the Palestinians in a very weak position.

The Israeli's second aim was to establish a government allied and subservient to Israel. Lebanon posed a real threat in terms of revolutionary potential.

By Ros Kaplan

Broadly speaking, two types of government were tried and both failed: Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel's right wing (fascist) pro-Israeli rule and Amin Gemayel's acceptable face of Lebanese capitalism, uniting the Christian and Muslim bourgeoisies for a time, and looking to the Arab world for support, rather than Israel.

This was proven bankrupt. There can be no solution so long as Israel remains in Lebanon and the confessional government system perpetuates divisions in Lebanese society — despite reforms to allow more representation for the Shi'ite and Druze communities.

What certain sections of the Israeli government



advocated and what seems to be at present a possible outcome, is the cantonisation of Lebanon into small statelets. While as socialists we cannot oppose, for example, a community like the Shi'ite Muslims, who are seeking autonomy to defend

themselves against fascist attacks, we can say that there can be no security so long as Israel and its Maronite allies are stronger, militarily, economically and politically in a capitalist framework.

The division of

Lebanon into cantons will only benefit Israel and strengthen its policing role in the region. Syria's attitude on this is pragmatic — whatever the solution, it must be one that will not threaten the Syrian regime. The population of Lebanon is once again be-

ing moved around to suit the needs of Israel.

As the Palestinians and Shi'ites have quite rightly reasserted their control around the coastal region of Sidon, 20,000 Christian refugees are said to have fled to the Israeli controlled Jezzine area. This area, if the Christians retain control, will give Israel a corridor to the coast to strike at Palestinian and Shi'ite settlements.

Among the progressive forces opposed to Israel, unity needs to be reached. It is a tragedy that Palestinian and Shi'ite militias were fighting each other.

Campaign

The Shi'ites, the most oppressed in Lebanese society, are the natural allies of the Palestinians, and indeed they have replaced them as the most militant, potentially revolutionary, force in Lebanon. British media concentration on 'Khomeini suicide bombers' obscures the fact that the Shi'ite Amal organisations — there is not one Amal but several — range from socialist/communist to Islamic fundamentalist. The question to be decided is which force will become the dominant one to lead the Shi'ites in the future.

Ultimately, there can be no peace in Lebanon until the Zionist Israeli state (as opposed to its people) is smashed, the fascists are defeated and a socialist revolution takes place. At the present time,

there is no revolutionary leadership uniting the various communities to lead this.

Today our task in solidarity is to expose the Israeli withdrawal for what it is and demand labour movement support for total, unconditional Israeli withdrawal from the Lebanon.

Picket Risley!

THE Capenhurst Women are in serious danger of being jailed! Their crime? To protest at the use by British Nuclear Fuel Ltd of illegally plundered Namibian uranium.

British-owned Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) is breaking United Nations Decree No. 1 by mining uranium in South African occupied Namibia. The uranium is used by BNFL for domestic and military purposes.

Demonstrate your solidarity with these women who have refused to pay their fines and instead sent the money to SWAPO!

● Picket Risley Remand Centre, Wednesday 15 May at 10.30am. Further details from CANUC, 01-267 1941.

Trade Union Friends of Palestine Conference

Saturday 18 May

'British Labour and the Palestinians, Which Way Forward?'

Holborn Central Library Hall, Theobalds Road, London WC1 (nearest tube Chancery Lane or Holborn).

Trade Union Friends of Palestine can be contacted at PO Box 196 London WC1X 0AT.

US Hands off Nicaragua!

Stop the Trade Embargo!

Picket the US Embassy

Friday May 31

Daytime Picket followed by Demonstration

NATO DAY SCHOOL

Saturday 18 May

9.30-5.15

Polytechnic of Central London, Baker Street

Register now by contacting Joy Hurcombe of CND NATO working group, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4

Defend Nicaragua

AS THE latest move by President Reagan to impose an economic embargo on Nicaragua represents a major escalation in the imperialist war against the revolution, all activists must take action and condemn this despicable act. Our duty is to put Nicaragua firmly on the agenda of all meetings. The full facts must be got out through discussions and resolutions of support. Finally, affiliations to the national campaign are a priority, both to help the campaign and receive regular information.

**By Martine Bonadonna (NSC NEC pers. cap.)
Condemn the Blockade**

The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign organised a picket of the US embassy on May 2, 24 hours after the announcement of the total embargo. The picket also marked the start of active petitioning against the embargo, which is a good way of starting a discussion and a specific action aimed at the publication of advertisements to counteract the right wing propaganda.

Co-ordination is also developing with the other NSCs in Europe, as it is likely that Reagan will put pressure on the EEC members to act similarly. Lobby your MEP as a matter of urgency. Condemns should not be left simply to David Steel. The blockade has a long term impact on the Nicaraguan peoples' life.

Therefore it is vital that material aid is collected for Nicaragua. Containers will be sent from England to cover the pressing need, as

was done very successfully last year. The container project is often a good introduction to a debate on the situation. Start now by asking for financial donations which will buy what the Nicaraguans themselves request.

Blockade

Send the money immediately to NSC, with a simple mention of 'container'.

Both at the quarterly delegate meeting on 27 April and its National Executive Committee on 1 May, the NSC discussed its major event for the year — a trade union conference. It is confirmed for 23 November in Sheffield Town Hall as a specifically solidarity conference, which seeks to further support inside the trade union movement.

Many unions are sympathetic already to NSC and campaigning for support, such as NALGO, ACTT and the National Union of Students. The NSC has just adopted a full time worker and is setting up a solid organising group to co-ordinate this type of action throughout the country. All details will be published soon.

A national network of women active in support of Nicaragua has been set up at a national conference of those already involved with NSC. They want to support the women of Nicaragua and reach other women here, who are not necessarily in the NSC, but are interested. The conference appointed a co-opted NEC member and agreed to push for greater women's representation at the trade union conference. A brigade of women — preferably, but not exclusively, black and Irish — is being organised and a delegation of miners' wives is also planned. All resources on Women in Nicaragua are being listed and pulled together. Speakers are available. All actions must be intensified and lead to the same goals. Support Nicaragua in the face of imperialist attack.

● Contact the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign at, 20/21, Compton Terrace, London, N1 Phone 01 359 8982



SINCE THE end of the miners strike a concerted drive to discredit the so called Bennite left within the Labour Party — the left which supported the NUM — has been launched. Patrick Seyd's 'Bennism without Benn' in *New Socialist*, Frances Morell writing in *New Statesman*, and a major interview of *Marxism Today* have spearheaded that assault.

While some of these attacks have dealt with real questions of policy — for example membership of the EEC — most have been designed to obscure the actual issues dividing left and right within the party. JOHN ROSS looks at the nature of the assault on the left within the Labour Party, at some of the key issues of socialist strategy today and the basis on which different currents of the labour movement can work together.

IT WAS Marx who stated the beginning and end of all wisdom on socialist strategy when he wrote that socialists, 'have no interests separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole.'

In the final analysis, socialism has nothing to do with specific theories, curious (and generally sectarian) tactics, 'exposing people', or the other activities which Patrick Seyd and others see as so central in their arguments against the left wing of the party. Defence of the interests of the working class as a whole, and of every oppressed section of society, is about the future of humanity itself.

Indeed it is *only* through the role of the working class in society that the interests of humanity as a whole can be historically defended. That is why socialists place themselves completely on the ground of the working class and the defence of the labour movement.

A socialist must reject with indignance and outrage not simply economic exploitation but imperialism; sexism and the oppression of women, racism; suppression of democracy; persecution on the basis of sexual orientation; the degrading of human beings through pornography, and a million of the other things that make up our rather revolting current society.

But, as people with heads as well as hearts, socialists have to understand that only the working class has the power to secure the conditions for victory in these fields — and that unless the working class takes up the struggle in every one of these spheres it will not secure victory. A slogan of the women's liberation movement — 'No women's liberation without socialist revolution: no socialist revolution without women's liberation' — applies to every sphere of oppression of society.

The point which needs to be added is that, of course, even socialist revolution by itself will not solve many problems — merely create the conditions to do so. The fight to create a free human society will last for decades, and probably centuries, after any initial ending of capitalism.

Preservation of a free independent trade union movement, of an independent women's movement, of black organisations, of organisations of gays and lesbians, of democratic organisations, of movements for national liberation, are not 'quirks' allowed to exist until the overthrow of capitalism. They are a fundamental part of the fight for the liberation of humanity. Such organisation will become immeasurably strengthened, not weakened, after any transformation of society towards socialism.

From this angle socialism has a profound moral base — and we know this is extremely relevant to the ideas of Tony Benn and many of his supporters. As atheists Marxists cannot agree with any idea of a god-given, god-based, moral order in society. But they can totally agree with the idea of the tremendous moral role of the working class as the defender of every progressive gain and historic interest of humanity. The working class is the bearer of a superior moral order of society as well as a defender of its material interests. On whether the working class wins or loses that struggle depends quite literally the fate of humanity itself.



Photo: DAVE DRONFIELD

Key issues for

The material, conscious, and moral role of the working class within society, and the social alliances it can create around itself, create the possibility for the working class to exercise hegemony — hegemony in society, in the future of humanity, and in the struggle for socialism. And from *that* flows the relation of every other layer of society to the working class and to the organised labour movement.

Whether your goal is the preservation of humanity from nuclear war, fighting imperialism, eliminating racism, securing the liberation of women, eliminating unemployment and poverty, defending and extending democracy, or saving the world's science and culture, your interests coincide with the historical goals of the working class — and can only be realised through or in alliance with, the organised labour movement. That is a fundamental message of socialism.

Lenin

From this it follows that *many* forces will contribute to the building of socialism — and to the fight for it. The idea that only socialists will contribute to building of socialism is, as Lenin once wrote, a belief of arrogant idiots.

For example, in Nicaragua today, the FSLN rightly works with every single force that wants to defend the country and oppose the horrendous attacks being launched on it by the United States. Some people will cooperate only for the defence of that country. Others will participate in the struggle for a socialist society in Nicaragua. But for the FSLN, as for Lenin, the 'leading role' of the party has nothing to do with the 'exclusive role' of the party — a position which Stalin de facto invented.

It is the same in Britain. The 'exclusive brethren' approach of groups such as the *Militant* tendency, or the Workers Revolutionary Party, has nothing to do with Marx. The final test of where any current, or individual, stands in regard to socialism is not its ideas, important as these are, but where it stands in the actual material class struggle.

It is because people come to participate in the class struggle for many different reasons that unity is possible in campaigning and in work.

For example at the time of the Malvinas war christian groups opposed



Photo: GM COOKSON

the British fleet being sent to the South Atlantic because of deep-seated and sincere religious beliefs. Others, pacifists, who oppose any war at any time under any circumstances, also opposed the war. Marxists, who are atheists and do not oppose *all* wars, participated in opposition to the war because it was an *imperialist* war.

The cooperation between these groups was real, sincere and honest. It was in no way about, as Patrick Seyd puts it in his *New Socialist* article: 'demands on reformist socialists which they... cannot meet and are designed simply to discredit reformists.' That campaign and struggle was to try and prevent the British fleet going to the South Atlantic. And it should be said that some of the christian and pacifists in this struggle acquitted themselves more honourably, and were far more correct on this issue than so-called Marxists such as *Militant* who spent their time making up sophistical 'theoretical' reasons why they should fail to oppose the British fleet.

Similarly on the issue of the political levy, the Labour Coordinating Com-

mittee has been trying to get a central campaign off the ground. The LCC is one of the more frequent targets of criticism in the pages of *Socialist Action*. But on this issue, all we regret is that the LCC have not been more successful. *Socialist Action* wants a campaign on the political levy not to 'expose' the LCC but because winning the ballots on the political levy would be a big step forward for the labour movement.

We think that Tony Benn put it very well in a recent interview when he said that unity in the struggle of the labour movement cannot be achieved around a theory — that is far too narrow. Unity can only be achieved in action, through defending the interests of the working class and those under attack.

That is why Tony Benn has been under attack. It has nothing to do with the fantasies dreamed up by a Patrick Seyd — let alone the scurrilous abuse from the gutter press. The point is that Tony Benn has been engaged in campaigns which defend the interests of the working class. And this is deeply embarrassing to Neil Kinnock because he has not.

The truth is — and this has to be faced up to by every socialist — Neil Kinnock is leading the labour movement to a disaster. The economic policies advocated in recent labour statements accept the existence of mass unemployment. Incomes policies of the type which Roy Hattersley is now so assiduously promoting are no different to those which smashed Labour's electoral support in 1966-70 and 1975-79.

Neil Kinnock is leading the Labour Party into a permanent minority position in politics. He is not putting forward a hegemonic strategy for establishing the political dominance of the labour movement, and a way out for society, but is instead more and more reducing Labour's role to a policing agency over the working class. This is particularly clear in the incomes policy proposals. This role, which was originally projected as being Labour's alone, is now verbally conceded perhaps to be a joint Labour-Liberal policing job over the labour movement.

This entire trajectory was symbolised, and brought to a head, over what happened in the miners' strike. It used to be the tradition that (at least some) Labour leaders talked left when in opposition even though they moved right in office. Even in opposition Kinnock failed to support a crucial section of the

working class fighting for the elementary right of its community to exist. He also has failed to speak out to defend the right of those fighting for their communities through opposing rate-capping to break the law. Both have done great damage to the struggle now and are the worst possible omen for the future.

Does it follow from this that the left does not want a Labour government, a Roy Hattersley recently charged. On the contrary. Every section of the labour movement should be united in a fight against Thatcher — and any disunity on this field is a product of Kinnock's refusal to support those in struggle.

Fight

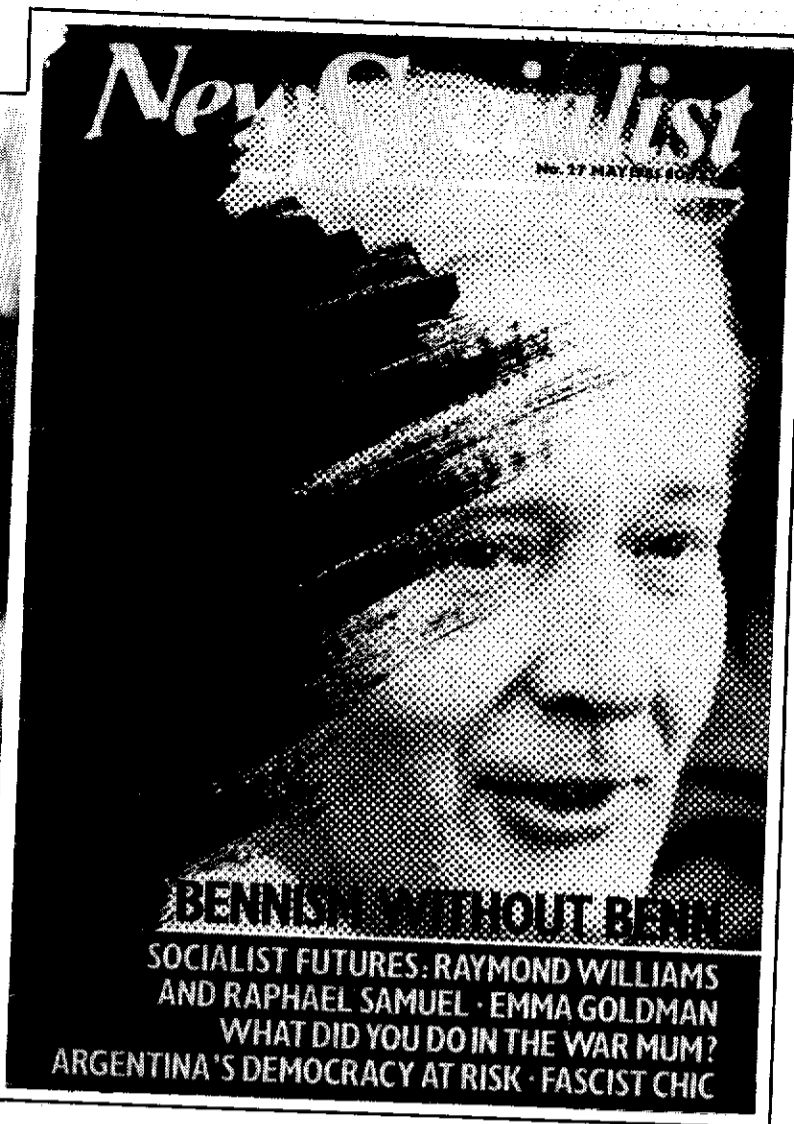
On this, of course, the right and centre left of the party should have no fear whatever if *their* views of the world are correct. Because, if they are right, then it is the left wing who would appear foolish after a Kinnock government.

If Neil Kinnock came to office and eliminated mass unemployment, tackled poverty, staunchly backed Nicaragua, got nuclear weapons out of Britain, and carried out a whole series of other progressive acts then people like *Socialist Action* would look remarkably foolish. They would deserve to because they would have got it wrong! But we already know the outcome on this.

If however Neil Kinnock does what we think — that is if he presides over a government which viciously attacks the working class and demoralises it — then it will be Peter Hain, the Labour Coordinating Committee, and the new 'inside left' that will look stupid. Equally, they will deserve to because they will have made a disastrous misjudgement. Either way however everyone has an interest in fighting for a Labour government.

We think that Tony Benn is dead right to make it clear that he has no intention whatever of running against Neil Kinnock for the leadership of the Labour Party in the present circumstances — and why those who are urging him to do so are sectarian ultra-lefts who should be opposed on this.

Those who fully supported the miners in their struggle are today a minority in the labour movement. They do not have the power to lead the



the Labour left

Labour Party and for them to believe they have the power to do so is sheer adventurism. There is a long hard fight to be gone through before those fully supporting struggles such as the miners win a majority in the labour movement. Tony Benn would of course attract a support far wider than simply strong supporters of the miners. But the relation of forces in favour of Neil Kinnock, even if one does not like it, was clearly expressed in 1983. There is no reason to believe there has been any fundamental shift on this — and we do not agree with those (for example the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy), who say that regular use of channels for electing the leadership is the main thing that should be fought over.

Actually a challenge to Neil Kinnock today would simply result in an under-representation of the strength of the left wing of the labour movement. Whole sections of people who do support the left would simply not vote for a candidate such as Tony Benn — not because they disagreed with him but because they thought that this was not the right issue at the right time.

This means essentially that we agree with the attitude adopted by Tony Benn and the Campaign group of MPs: that a key fight today is not around the leadership of the party. Socialist Action expressed that view two years ago. The key fights are against Thatcher to put the Labour Party clearly behind those in struggle, to fight for new alternative policies which actually would defend the interests of the working class and oppressed, and to carry through the decisive fight for the demands of the Women's Action Committee and black sections. These areas, which are entirely complementary with those of securing a Labour government at the next election, are the areas on which attention should be concentrated.

It is not because of non-existent campaigns for the leadership but precisely because the left wing of the party concentrated on these activities that it has come under attack. Taking some of the concrete areas will make the situation clearer.

Firstly as regards supporting struggles we, of course, now have an example which beats anything seen for sixty years. The support movement for the miners was rightly described by the *Financial Times* as 'the greatest civilian mobilisation since the Second World War'.

Naturally a movement on the scale of that for the miners cannot be built for anything except the greatest struggles. But the basic lessons shown by the miners strike — intransigent leadership basing itself on mass mobilisations and campaigning, mass democratically organised support activity, real social alliances being built around the strike — can be applied, if necessarily on a smaller scale, to every struggle.

In that not merely Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and the NUM leadership but also Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, and the Campaign group of MPs gave an example of what should be done. As Tony Benn put it in an interview with Socialist Action the Campaign group did not attempt to substitute for the miners, or tell the miners what to do. It supported the miners — together, still more importantly, with hundreds of thousands of activists and trade unionists. Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner gave an example of what Neil Kinnock should have been doing. The left wing of the labour movement has to ensure that that activity is carried on quite regardless of whether Neil Kinnock wants it or not. Because once the labour movement stops defending the working class and its allies it is dead.

Campaign

The second great issue is that of representivity of the Labour Party — its role as a real mass party of labour. It is absolutely vital that the present mass affiliation which are the core of the Labour Party — the trade union affiliation — is defended against the attacks being launched on them. This means winning the vote on the political levy is a priority for the entire party.

But this existing mass affiliation is still inadequate. Five key questions must be decided as the basis of the social alliances on which a popular majority for socialism can be achieved — alliances which came into existence during the miners' strike in struggle but which must be organisationally consolidated.

The first is a negative. Labour must recognise that Britain has no positive role whatever to play in Ireland. A complete unequivocal commitment that a Labour government will take Britain out of Ireland must be adopted. Any movement for the Labour Party to organise in the north of Ireland must be

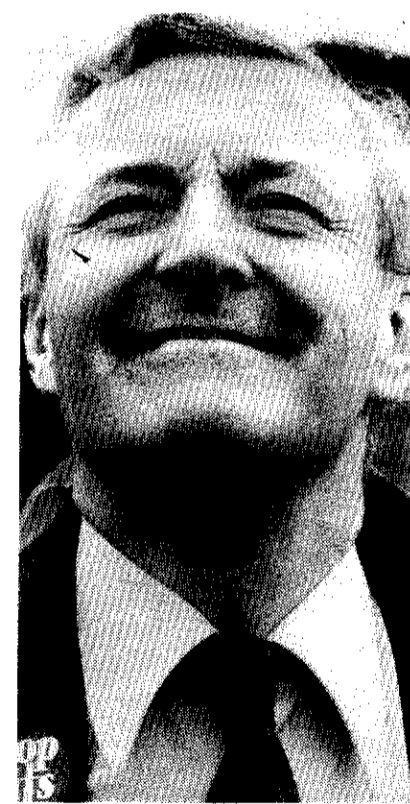


Photo: JOHN HARRIS (Report)

totally rejected. Complete withdrawal is the sole basis for Labour to make one of the most vital alliances of the entire British struggle for socialism — the alliance between the British working class and the people of Ireland.

The second key alliance is the international working class struggle. Labour must develop its solidarity with those fighting the United States in Central America, those fighting apartheid in South Africa, and all those fighting imperialist wars and nuclear weapons throughout the world.

The third key alliance for Labour to function as a real 'party of labour' is women. The grotesque situation where men, the trade union leaderships, elect the women's places on the NEC must be ended. It appears even more in its shameful light after the incredible role of Women Against Pit Closures in the miners strike. Election of the women's places on the NEC by the women's conference, and the meeting of all the other demands of the Women's Action Committee must be achieved. Women Against Pit Closures should be ac-

cepted for affiliation to the Labour Party.

On black sections the situation is equally clear. The grotesque paphenalia of loyalty oaths now being demanded against black sections shows just how far the Kinnock machine is prepared to go.

The only way the leadership is going to be taught sense on this matter is by having a mass revolt on its hands. Whites have no right anyway to determine whether blacks want to organise themselves or not. Support of their right to do so in an organised relation to the labour movement is the most elementary requirement of socialists.

Alliance

These granting of the most elementary demands of self organisation of women and blacks would do far more to bring the Labour Party into line with the changing composition of the working class than any amount of the theoretical pontificating and demoralisation which is currently adorning the pages of *Marxism Today*, *New Socialist* and other journals.

Fifthly the party must build a mass youth organisation. Here the complete inability of *Militant* to build on the huge potential which exists among young people was shown more clearly than ever before at this year's LPYS conference. After 12 months of the greatest working class struggle outside war for sixty years the LPYS emerged smaller than it was before!

The reason for this complete failure is the politics of *Militant* itself. *Militant* loathed the politics which emerged in the miners strike. They hated the women's self-organisation, the black self-organisation, the non-sectarian united front nature of the support work.

The entire strike went in the opposite direction to that which *Militant* sees the class struggle going in. As the strike intensified it saw not an increased concentration on economic questions but the struggle turning into a 'carnival of the oppressed'. It saw the emergence of a left wing of the labour movement going far to the left of *Militant*. It is out of this left wing that a mass LPYS can be built.

The third key area for the left is that of policy. We agree with some, and disagree with others, of the key policies which are being put forward by the

Campaign group of MPs. Ones we agree with are withdrawal from NATO and nationalisation of land. We do not agree that the police can be democratised — to take another proposal. But the priority given to the debate on policy at present — together with support for struggles and increasing the representivity of the party — is we believe entirely correct. All socialist should participate in this vigorously — and that is in the interests of the movement as a whole.

Finally all this poses the question of organisation of the left within the party. Some socialists are at present attempting to set up across the board unified organisation in the party. We believe this is premature — it is not where the movement is at. Those attempts which are being made in that direction — notably by *Labour Herald* and *Labour Briefing* are unfortunately going nowhere.

Labour Herald's analysis is one of ultra-left sectarianism — one based on the idea of an imminent economic collapse coupled with the idea we are living under some form of authoritarian dictatorship. This of course does not rule out certain right wing adaptations by the campaign and, coupled with dubious organisational aspects, indicates clearly this campaign is not a serious one for organising the left.

Ultra-left

Labour Briefing likewise has been basing its perspective on a quite ultra-left and exaggerated view of where we are at. The editorial statement in its May issue also seems to fall into a sectarian project of calling for a candidate such as Tony Benn running against Kinnock. This is made clearly explicit in a letter circulated by *Labour Briefing* to various newspapers and organisations on the left.

The *Labour Herald* or the *Briefing* initiatives are sectarian and ultra-left on all these issues. They reflect the fact that we are not at the level of cross sectoral and cross issue organisation of the left in the labour movement on an ongoing basis.

The real priority at the present time is supporting the struggles which continue to break out and developing the various serious single issue campaigns and organisations which have grown in the labour movement. This of course overlaps with defending the political levy, and building the women's, black and youth organisations of the party.

There are of course many fields for such single issue campaigning. Top priorities today however include defence of victimised and imprisoned miners, launching a mass campaign against US intervention in Central America, continuing to build CND, building the National Abortion Campaign, building the Labour Committee on Ireland and similar key areas of activity.

It is in these three fields — supporting all those in struggle against Thatcher, opening up the discussion in the party on policy, campaigning to defend and build up the mass affiliations to and self-organisation within the Labour Party and labour movement — that the priorities for the labour movement lie and where the gains are to be made by the left. They do not lie in illusory views that it is today possible to organise the entire left across the party in sectarian campaigns demanding that someone run against Neil Kinnock for leader of the party.

Taken together these policies amount to the fight for the labour movement to put forward a real hegemonic strategy for society. It is a policy which can only be based on defending the interests of those under attack in society. It is a policy which transforms the social alliances created in embryo around the miners' strike, for example, into a permanent and institutional feature of Labour movement politics — and transmits them to the level of the whole of society and not just that of an individual strike.

It is precisely because during the miners' strike the Labour movement and working class did show elements of an alternative to the path being followed by Kinnock, and because Kinnock himself is going further and further to the right, that diversions of the 'Bennism without Benn' type have been launched.

The nature of World War II

WORLD WAR II, whose end in Europe the media are now celebrating, set the entire framework of current world politics. It was incomparably the greatest armed conflict in human history. But it was also something more. It was the greatest class struggle in the twentieth century. **DICK CARTER** looks at the history the newspapers don't tell.

The first problem in approaching World War II is its sheer size. With fifty million dead — thirty million of them in Eastern Europe, with war on three continents, with the greatest number of people under arms in human history it bears the same sort of relation to a strike that the Himalayas do an anthill.

For this reason, when the great class struggles of the twentieth century are noted, you often are given a list something like Russia in 1917, Germany in 1919-23, Spain in 1936-38, China in 1946-49 etc. Yet World War II, while absent from the standard agendas, towers over all these in terms of its impact on world politics.

The immediate origins of the great conflagration of 1939-45 lay in the unfinished business of 1914-18. In World War I the combined power of Britain, France and above all the United States, defeated Germany in a straightforward inter-imperialist war.

World War II was a direct continuation of this inter-imperialist struggle. In this second conflict however the two chief imperialist antagonists, Germany and the United States, were much more directly counterposed. Hitler rapidly crushed France and would easily have defeated Britain without the support the latter received from the US from 1939 onwards. From the point of view of inter-imperialist struggle the entire period has rightly been entitled 'the struggle for world supremacy between Germany and the United States — 1914-45'. All other forces, including Britain, were essentially intermediaries in that clash.

In Asia the United States fought it out directly with Japan. Through a war in which it smashed its imperialist opponents, and allies, the United States emerged in 1945 as the greatest capitalist state in the world.

But at the very moment of its triumph the United States found its



The Soviet Army outside the Reichstag

assaulted it from the west. If the Soviet Union had been forced in 1941 to fight a war on two fronts it would almost certainly have been defeated by Germany.

Even purely militarily, let alone the more profound economic and social effects, the Soviet divisions which in 1941 threw back the German armies at the gates of Moscow, were those transferred from the eastern borders of the USSR where they had previously been facing the Japanese army in China.

It was the war in China, spearheaded by the Chinese Communist Party, that saved the USSR from a war on two fronts and thereby conclusively decided the outcome of World War II. Japanese imperialism could not strike westward and northwards into the USSR because its armies were bogged down in a war in China which absorbed two thirds of its armed forces. Even the war with the United States in the Pacific was, in terms of the forces committed, an enforced secondary effort for Japan while its main armies were concentrated in the campaigns in China.

The war in the Pacific was waged between Japan and the United States for the control of China and east Asia. But in the end the Chinese people defeated both of them. Whereas the crushing defeats Stalin had imposed on the European working class in the 1920s and 1930s led directly to opening the door to the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union, the struggle waged by the Chinese Communist Party saved the USSR from defeat — despite the massive setback the Chinese revolution had suffered at Stalin's hands in 1926-27. Out of the combined victory of China and the USSR flowed the entire course not simply of the war itself but of the whole post-war world.

The victory of the USSR in Europe decisively made possible the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism in Yugoslavia and the subsequent destruction of capitalist rule in Eastern Europe. Stalin blocked revolution in Greece, France and Italy — and installed a bureaucratic tyranny in the new workers' states of Eastern Europe — but the victory of

the USSR in the war decisively strengthened the working class movement throughout the world.

In Asia the Chinese Communist Party emerged from the struggle with Japan ruling one third of the country and with an army which succeeded in destroying that of Chiang Kai-shek in the four years of civil war that followed in 1945. The Chinese workers' state then fought to a halt the US armies in Korea.

To the south of China the initial victories of Japan struck a devastating blow against the Asian empires of Britain, France and Holland. Out of the first victories of an Asian power over the white imperialisms of Europe rose an immense wave of crisis and revolt. By the end of the war it was clear the British could no longer remain in India — inaugurating the vast wave of 'decolonisation' of the post war period. By 1945 the Vietnamese Communist Party could launch the thirty years of war that led it to defeat first French and then US imperialism.

The victory of the USSR, the victory of the Chinese revolution, the successive victories of the revolution in Indochina provided the world framework, and material aid, which allowed the revolutions first in Cuba and then in Central America to unfold. World War II provided the basis of all that followed it.

It was an extraordinary realisation of a perspective seen long before by Lenin. In his words, 'In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle (for socialism) will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China etc account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be.'

World War II, and the struggles which it propelled, and which succeeded it, was the greatest confirmation in history of this perspective. The west European working class proved incapable of defeating fascism. But the Soviet working class, and the

working class and peasants of China and Asia, proved capable of smashing to pieces German fascism, Japanese militarism, and then the triumphant march of the United States.

But there was another socialist whose perspective was confirmed with shattering clarity by World War II in addition to Lenin. This was Leon Trotsky.

In 1933, at the moment of the rise to power of Hitler, Trotsky drew two fundamental conclusions. Firstly that the victory of fascism under Hitler meant inevitable war between Germany and the USSR — for only a state which had utterly crushed its own working class could risk war with the Soviet Union. Furthermore that this war would bring revolution in its wake.

The second conclusion of Trotsky, the most shattering at the time, was his conclusion that the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy in permitting Hitler to come to power represented the definitive end of its role as an instrument of world revolution — that world socialist revolution from then on would take place outside the politically defined orbit of the Soviet bureaucracy.

This conclusion, which led Trotsky to launch the Fourth International, appeared bizarre at a moment when Stalin stood at the height of his prestige — and when self-styled democrats in Britain, such as Shaw, the Webbs, and the *New Statesman* were singing the praises of the Soviet leadership.

Yet Trotsky was proved entirely correct in his overall perspective — although the time scale involved was far longer, and the forms more complex than he had foreseen.

The USSR was victorious in World War II not because of but despite Stalin. It was Stalin's policies which permitted Hitler to come to power, which allowed the defeat of the revolution in Spain and of the working class in France, and which finally led to the Soviet Union being militarily and politically unprepared for the assault of Hitler's armies. If the Chinese Communist Party had followed the policies urged on it by Stalin, rather than those of Mao Tse-

tung, the USSR would have been destroyed.

It was only through breaking with the orientation demanded by the Soviet bureaucracy that each of the victorious revolutions emerging from World War II — Yugoslavia, China, and Vietnam — were achieved. Where the line of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy was followed — as in France, Italy, and Greece — the result was either catastrophic missed opportunity or crushing defeat of the working class.

The later revolutions in Cuba and Nicaragua did not even organisationally take place through the Communist Parties. In Cuba the Communist Party backed the revolution only at the last moment. In Nicaragua the FSLN triumphed independently of the Communist Party.

While the forms of development were far more complex than Trotsky had foreseen — in particular he had not imagined that certain of the Communist Parties could break with the line of Moscow — nevertheless his overall historical perspective was triumphantly confirmed. The Fourth International which he founded is today the only international revolutionary organisation in the world and one with by far the largest number of revolutionaries within it in the imperialist countries — as well as a definite, and growing, influence in Latin America. Trotsky's perspective was confirmed in this field as well — although again on a very different time scale to the one he had imagined.

But, to return to our starting point, the celebrations of the press this week are besides the point. They are largely concentrating on what was a sideshow — the small campaign in western Europe waged by Britain and the United States which never absorbed even a third of the German army. The real World War II — the one waged in the USSR and Asia — has only a few marginal gestures made to it in the celebrations. The sheer scale of what took place still makes it hard for sections of the left to grasp the magnitude of those years.

For in 1939-45 took place the greatest single class struggle in human history. The Second World War.



Mao Tse-tung

power threatened by the two fundamental forces which, in their combination, had allowed the relatively rapid defeat of Nazi Germany and Japan. They were the struggle waged by the USSR on the one hand and that of the people of Asia — above all the struggle led by the Chinese Communist Party — on the other.

Indeed, in a military sense it may be said that the outcome of World War II was in a sense already decided in the period 1931-39. The greatest strategic decision of the war was that of Japan not to attack the USSR from the east while Hitler simultaneously

THE FOLLOWING is an open letter by DON ROJAS on the occasion of the sixth anniversary of the 13 March 1979, Grenada Revolution. At the time of the overthrow of the revolutionary government in October 1983, Rojas was press secretary to prime minister Maurice Bishop. He was a member of the New Jewel Movement and had served as editor of Grenada's weekly *Free West Indian*. It is a major contribution to the debate on the Grenadan revolution.

DEAR friends, sisters and brothers, and comrades,

March 13, 1985, marks the sixth anniversary of that glorious Tuesday in 1979 when the Grenada revolution made its dramatic entry onto the stage of world history. October 19, 1983 — 'Bloody Wednesday,' as it is now known — marked the betrayal and overthrow of the same revolution, serving up Grenada on silver platter to the invading occupation forces of US imperialism.

Both events will always be remembered as immensely significant dates in the world revolutionary calendar. This month's sixth anniversary should be a time to celebrate the Grenada revolution's accomplishments, to reaffirm our commitment to struggle against the US occupation, and to reflect on and analyse the lessons to be learned by fighters for national liberation and socialism in the Caribbean and around the world.

Six years ago, the Grenadian people, in an expression of unified resistance unprecedented in the history of English-speaking Caribbean mass movements, heeded the call of the New Jewel Movement led by Maurice Bishop to effect the region's most fundamental break with imperialism since the Cuban revolution in 1959.

On 19 October 1983, these same Grenadian workers, farmers, women, and youth, in another massive movement of resistance involving a third of the island's population, rose up to free their revolution's leader Maurice Bishop from house arrest, and were brutally gunned down by troops under the command of the New Jewel Movement's central committee, which had been hijacked by Bernard Coard and his gang of ultra-leftists and opportunists. This infamous act of counterrevolution opened the door for the equally infamous Yankee invasion of 25 October, which then drove the last nail into the coffin of the revolution's corpse.

Clear

On the occasion of this sixth anniversary we must sing out loud the manifold achievements of the Grenada revolution, lest they be lost in a maze of imperialist misinformation, or forgotten amidst the pressures of our daily struggles. We must remind ourselves, and remind all peace and freedom-loving humanity, that it was the revolution that brought democratic rights, national sovereignty, economic justice, and social progress to the working people of Grenada.

It was the revolution that enabled the national economy to grow by 12.5 per cent over three years. It was the revolution that reduced unemployment from 50 per cent to 14 per cent, that introduced free secondary education and free medical care, and that provided scores of university scholarships for talented young Grenadians to study abroad. It was the revolution that stimulated the widespread unionisation of Grenadian workers, that called on women to step forward to take their rightful place as social and economic equals, that adopted laws to protect and advance the interests of working farmers, that raised the incomes of agricultural workers, that drastically reduced crime.

It was the revolution that allowed sports and culture to blossom. It was the revolution that built the Maurice Bishop International Airport, and



Photo: GM COOKSON

Don Rojas on The Grenadian revolution

that invested millions of dollars in other major economic development projects.

It was the revolution that created popular mass organisations of women, youth, farmers, and children. It was the revolution that established councils in all the country's parishes — grass-roots mechanisms to increase the regular and direct participation of the people in running the country's affairs. It was the revolution that involved the masses, for the first time in the history of the Caribbean, in the formulation of a national budget. It was the revolution, in short, that initiated a process of revolutionary democracy far superior to the parliamentary farce that today, propped up by Washington, has falsely laid claim to democracy in Grenada.

These are just a few of the material achievements that we can joyously recall on this occasion. But we must also celebrate the intangibles, the spiritual achievements of the Grenadian people: their pride in self and country; their self-confidence and hope; their high national and internationalist consciousness; their collective sense of belonging, of participating, of involving themselves in their nation's affairs; their sense of feeling genuinely sovereign, of being owners of their country and its resources, of being masters of their destiny — all of which were so eloquently articulated, so boldly personified and inspired by the revolutionary commitment of Maurice Bishop and his close comrades.

Divide

Today, however, the workers and farmers no longer hold power in Grenada, although the spirit of their revolution is very much alive. Today, in the absence of the revolutionary government, hardship, misery, despair, and hopelessness have returned to what a Cuban friend of mine once described as 'the small nation of giants'.

Unemployment now stands at more than 40 per cent in militarily occupied Grenada and little or no

economic growth is expected this year. Prostitution is rampant once again. Drug abuse is on the rise. Social services are deplorable. The socio-economic programs of the revolution, which once delivered benefits to the working people, are things of the past.

The means of production that were once owned by the people's state have been sold to local and foreign capitalists. The government investment code and the structure of import duties and tariffs have been revised to make it easier for foreign capital to penetrate the economy and for substandard North American imports to be dumped on the local market. The much ballyhooed financial aid from the USA has resulted in millions for training and equipping the military and paramilitary police and counterinsurgency forces, with only pennies for infrastructural projects and social welfare programmes. Austerity is the order of the day and greater political and economic subordination to imperialism is the guiding principle.

Legacy

Herbert Blaize and the other neocolonial puppet politicians put into office through the rigged elections last 3 December today govern at the dictates of Washington. 'Restoration of democracy', Reagan-style, has meant increased human rights violations, the banning of democratic mass organisations, the elimination of councils of people's power, the waging of psychological warfare and anti-communist campaigns, harassment of the progressive and patriotic forces, and CIA penetration of the trade unions.

We could go on at length chronicling the systematic and deliberate reversal of the gains of the Grenada revolution, as the process of neocolonisation imposed by imperialism is consolidated in the once free and proud country of Grenada.

On this sixth anniversary of the March 1979 victory, however, we also must review some of the lessons to be learned from the demise of the revolution, important lessons for pro-

gressive, democratic, and revolutionary forces in the Caribbean and around the world. Over the past year and a half, new questions have arisen and fresh insights have emerged to enlighten our analysis. Such a discussion is not a useless exercise in 'arm-chairism', to coin a phrase, or a substitute for an ongoing struggle against the imperialist occupation of Grenada and the escalating attacks on the rights and living standards of its people. Instead, this discussion should be seen as necessary for the clarification of political theory and strategy on which the present and future revolutionary practice of fighting workers and farmers must be grounded.

As a point of departure, I want to take issue with those political currents in Britain, North America, and the Caribbean who have embarked on a campaign to rewrite the history of the revolution's collapse. I am referring to the advocates of the 'both-sides-are-to-be-blamed' explanation, which purports to lay equal responsibility for the crisis of October 1983 on Maurice Bishop and his allies on the one hand, and Bernard Coard and his supporters on the other. Such an explanation is patently false and misleading. Those who are peddling it today deliberately distort the facts, with the real motive of rehabilitating the discredited Coardites, who are the true architects of the revolution's collapse.

Since mid-1984 these elements have stepped up their campaign of misinformation in Britain and North America through articles in various left wing publications, through their own leaflets and brochures, and through speaking tours. They have launched so-called Committees for Human Rights in Grenada and Committees to Free the Political Prisoners in Grenada with the purpose of confusing and deceiving the ill-informed, and manipulating the genuine sentiments of supporters of the Grenada revolution and opponents of the US occupation.

Behind the smokescreen of this 'human rights' campaign, Coard's supporters argue that revolutionaries

and democrats the world over must defend Bernard and Phyllis Coard Hudson Austin, Selwyn Strachan, Liam James, Ewart Layne, Leon Cornwall, John Ventour, and the other traitors currently facing trial in Grenada, because they cannot receive a 'free and fair trial' in the present circumstances of the US occupation. Supporters of this campaign incorrectly describe these individuals as the 'patriotic political prisoners', and stress that defending them is tantamount to opposing the imperialist occupation and puppet government.

Since all the contradictions related to this trial are not clearly perceptible on the surface, such an argument can appear to be persuasive, and the campaign for 'human rights' therefore supportable. Such an argument, however, is premised on the fundamental misconception that to defend the Coardites is to defend revolutionaries facing an imperialist frame-up. This puts reality on its head.

By their counterrevolutionary actions of October 1983, the Coardites have absolutely no claim to be considered revolutionaries; socialist and communists must judge these individuals not by their words but by their deeds, which are indefensible. What are the facts?

Selfish

First of all, Coard and his gang arrested Maurice Bishop and a number of his key allies without the consent or authority of the rank and file members of the New Jewel Movement, and against the will Grenada's working people. On 19 October 1983, the Coard faction, which had taken over the NJM central committee, ordered the cold-blooded assassination of Maurice Bishop, Unison Whiteman, Jacqueline Creft, Fitzroy Bain, and other Grenadian revolutionaries who had been taken to Fort Rupert by the jubilant masses after they had liberated Bishop from his house arrest.

On the same day the Coardites massacred dozens of other Grenadian patriots who were gathered at Fort Rupert. The soldiers who carried out the dastardly crimes were subsequently applauded publicly by Coard's so-called central committee and 'Revolutionary Military Council' (RMC), whose members were hiding out at Fort Frederick.

Over Radio Free Grenada on the night of 19 October Hudson Austin lied that Bishop and the other martyr were killed in a 'crossfire instigated by Bishop supporters at Fort Rupert. He denied that Bishop had ever been under house arrest, and spread the slander that Bishop was in league with 'counterrevolutionaries'.

The RMC imposed a 24-hour shoot-on-sight curfew on the entire Grenadian population from the night of 19 October right up to the day before the Yankee invasion.

Moreover, while the RMC called on the Grenadian people to lay down their lives to resist the US invasion, Coard, Strachan, James, and the others, who were all well-armed, were captured by the Yankee invaders without a fight. The 16 members of the RMC cowardly abandoned their troops after the first two days of fighting, leaving young Grenadian soldiers leaderless to heroically defend their homeland with their lives and their blood. Not a single member of the RMC was killed in battle. Today, Grenadian folk humour has reformulated the acronym 'RMC' to stand for 'Run when the Marines Come'.

These are some of the facts. These are some of the unforgivable crimes.

● Reprinted above is the first part of Don Rojas' open letter. Next week Socialist Action will reprint the final part of his open letter which takes up the 'joint leadership' arguments of the Coardites and their apologists, their bureaucratic methods and examines the lessons of the Russian Revolution.

McDonnell: "No rate - only option"

CRITICISMS OF the left leaders of Labour Councils abound in the left press because of the failure of key figures like Ken Livingstone at the GLC to put words into action and actually lead the fight against Jenkins ratecapping legislation by refusing to set a rate.

But as council after council crumbles and agrees to set a rate it's clear that not only have individual council leaders ducked the fight but the strategy decided upon by leaders of this battle was itself flawed. The key mistake made was to try and unite councils and councillors who were not prepared to fight with those who wanted to.

As Kinnock and Cunningham campaigned for Labour to stay in office and make cuts the left bent to this line and replaced refusing to make a rate with deferring the decision to set a rate.

The no rate option became an excuse to delay and fudge and allow the right in the councils and councillors to counter attack. In many authorities it now remains in the hands of the unions whether sackings and cuts will occur.

Valerie Coultas discussed these issues with John McDonnell one of the councillors at the GLC who voted to defer setting a rate on 7 March.

Did you expect the Labour Group at County Hall on 7 March to vote to go illegal and not set a rate?

We always knew it would be difficult at the GLC because we only had a majority of four. But having obtained a legal opinion that allowed the Tories to abstain we knew it would be a straight fight between the Labour left and the labour right in the group. What we expected was majority of four to abide by Labour Party conference decisions. If Livingstone had held firm we would

have delivered that vote.

Why in your view have one after the other threatened authorities crumbled and set a rate. Do you see any problems with the agreements that were made over how to fight this battle in the first place?

The agreement that the GLC, ILEA and all other ratecapped authorities made in February was a sequential division on how to struggle. Edinburgh on 5 March would implement a budget that would bring them into confrontation



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

which they did.

On 7 March the GLC and ILEA would refuse to set a rate and then the ratecapped boroughs would pass a motion, the same as Liverpool's last year, that would bring them into legal jeopardy about five or six weeks later.

Because the GLC and ILEA have a legal deadline to set a rate we knew we would be at the front line of the others. But never-

theless we made the agreement in February that this was the line to be pursued whatever the odds.

But wasn't the agreement that was made in February at the Association of Labour Authorities (ALA) one that would unite soft councils with those that would take a hard line on a position that could be interpreted as simply putting off the fight. Wasn't there a position put there by Ted

Knight not to refuse to set a rate but instead to defer setting a rate.

Ted Knight didn't intervene on this. We knew that no matter what form of the motion was agreed that it would be construed as illegal.

But isn't there a difference between deferring the decision and refusing to set a rate?

No it's completely up to

the District Auditor.

But no council has yet refused to set a rate have they?

They've said that in reality they are not setting a rate because they are unable to. This means the same thing. The legal advice that the Boroughs had was that as soon as they voted to defer they were open to legal challenge anyway.

Leicester, Basildon, Lewisham and Haringey have set a legal rate but Camden, Greenwich, Southwark, Liverpool, Sheffield, Hackney and Islington have not.

Hackney's legal advisors have told them they have gone over the top. These councillors are surchargeable on the basis of the interest lost because of their refusal to levy a rate.

Returning to the GLC, whether or not the other boroughs were going to fight the GLC should have taken a stand.

Yes I agree with you there but how was it that the agreement established broke apart so easily? Who was responsible for this fudge over going illegal?

The Liverpool councillors outlined the motion they had used last year. They had said it was impossible to make ends meet and advised us to adopt the same approach. Different councils then adopted their own

motions.

Is it your view that when the crunch comes a council like Lambeth will continue to fight on 15 May? They only have a majority of four.

On 15 May and after when the District Auditor decides to move against local authorities a number will have majorities in council chamber and stand firm.

Others will have very small majorities and a large part of the burden will fall on the trade unions and the labour movement generally to ensure they stand firm.

In Southwark the left have fought off the right. They occupied the first council meeting and talked out the right's proposal at the second council meeting last week.

Comparing the stand of the Labour councils against Thatcher the miners against Thatcher the balance sheet isn't so good. Don't you have any doubts about the strategy the left adopted?

I don't have any doubts about the strategy. There was no other alternative but to stand and fight. Deficit budgeting, creative accounting or acceptance of cuts would have simply meant defeat. Not setting a rate was the only opportunity we had to seek to fight.

Setback for Newham Nalgo

THE FIGHT to reinstate three residential social workers sacked by Newham Labour Council for attending a union meeting, received a setback on the 1 May when a mass meeting voted by 700 to 200 that the NALGO branch should ballot on the question of all-out strike action if the three are not reinstated. The motion was moved by the right wing to undermine the strike by 200 workers who were calling for all-out action from the meeting.

Whilst actively preventing some low-paid members from attending, the council had given the majority of NALGO

for immediate action.

It was decided to return to work rather than remain isolated, but to organise as a 'campaign Group' to meet regularly around the sackings and other attacks on the union.

By Carolyn Sikorski

members paid time off to attend. This move contrasts with their refusal to give residential workers the right to meet, a refusal which led to the sackings. Straight after the meeting the strikers discussed their position, and censured the branch secretary for putting the ballot motion before that of the branch committee which called

This attack on Newham NALGO is reverberating around the local labour movement. The issue of NALGO's right to organise, and particularly to demand support from the Labour Party is bringing political positions sharply into focus, just as around Labour group elections and reselection of candidates for next years local



elections. The majority of 'left' councillors joined in the attack on NALGO, in the lead-up to the group elections, in which the left hoped, for the first time, to win the key positions of Leader and Chair of Personnel, plus consolidating their hold on the chairs of several other committees.

The price was the three sackings, plus the disciplining and possible sacking of six social services shop stewards, and a total clampdown on the ability of NALGO members to organise. As

the largest and most progressive of the local authority unions NALGO would then be unable to organise against ratecapping. The prize would be that as a reward for succeeding where the right had failed in breaking up NALGO the key positions in the group would be given to the left by the right.

Of course it did not work out that way. In fact the right has consolidated its position in the crucial year leading to ratecapping 1986. Within the Party itself the *Militant* tendency

has placed itself squarely in the middle of the attack on NALGO with an eye to winning, for the first time support for *Militant* candidates as councillors.

Militant has entered into an unholy alliance with the right of the Party and NALGO, against the leadership of the social services shop stewards committee and the NALGO broad left of which they are the leadership. The differentiation in the labour movement in the wake of the miners' strike has hit Newham with a vengeance.

Southwark occupation stops rate being set

TRADE UNIONISTS left Southwark Town Hall united and triumphant on May Day. For the second time in a week, the Labour controlled council's attempt to set a legal cuts rate failed.

This was no thanks to the slim majority of Labour councillors — 24 of whom have now capitulated after two months standing firm against rate capping legislation.

Southwark Council's joint Shop Stewards Committee has been reconvened for the first time in many years and organised a successful occupation of

in Southwark means cuts and is a stab in the back to workers and councils still determined to fight on.

At the end of the day, no rate was set in Southwark — 23 Labour councillors joined by 11 opposition members, voted down the cuts budget and rate.

The long awaited crunch has now come in Southwark. For council unions the focus cannot just remain in the Council Chamber.

While giving maximum support to councillors determined to defy rate capping, we must be building the joint Shop Stewards Committee and preparing for strike action. We must continue to work closely with other rate capped council unions and build the necessary solidarity from private sector unions.

For the local Labour Party the tasks of dealing with scab Labour councillors who have defied Labour policy, continuing to explain what's at stake and mobilising local people, standing firm with council unions and demanding national Labour Party support, remain paramount.

By Eileen Stanford

the Town Hall on April 26, which prevented the Council meeting.

The Council adjourned at May Day when Town Hall unions organised a mass rally with speakers from neighbouring Lambeth unions, London Bridge, Liverpool council and the NUM and then proceeded to pack the Council Chamber.

Delegations from unions, Labour Party and its Women's and Black Sections, and local community organisations, left the 24 'scab' Labour councillors with no doubt about their treachery and demanded 'no compliance with rate cap-legislation, scab councillors resign!'

The arrival of Lambeth Council leader, Ted Knight, brought a standing ovation from the packed chamber while unions and left councillors reiterated how a legal rate

Labour Briefing Public Meeting 'Rebuilding the Left'

Wednesday 15 May, 7.30

Speakers: Tony Benn, Kay Sutcliffe, Sharon Atkin, Sarah Roelofs

Room 143 County Hall, London SE1

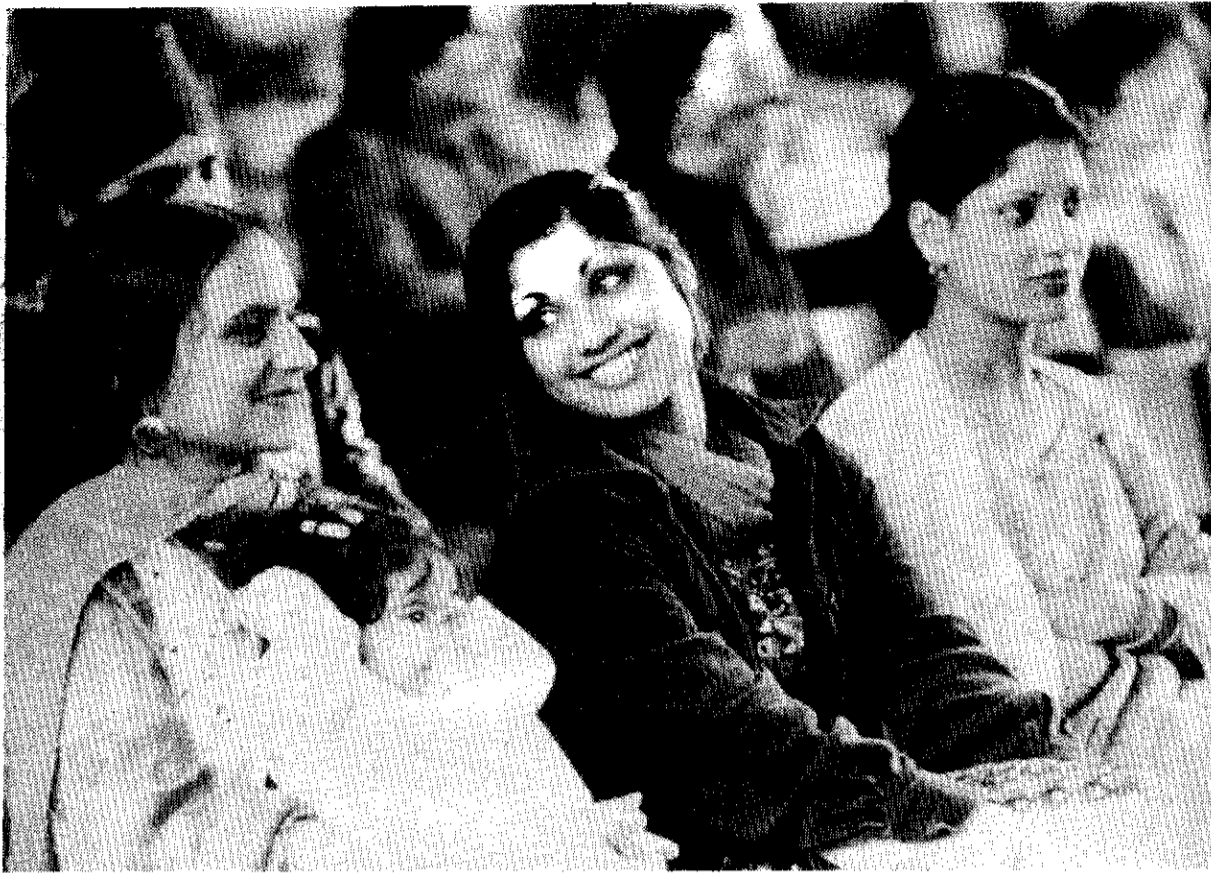


Photo: LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

Attack on Black Sections continues

THE LABOUR Party National Executive Committee has continued to step up its attacks on black sections. A loyalty oath has now been sent to members of Lewisham East Labour Party's general management committee, who have involved black section delegates in their parliamentary candidate selection process.

the selection conference on May 10th.

This move is as good an advert for the Labour Party among black people as President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg cemetery! The NEC has deliberately provoked this situation using bureaucratic means instead of discussing political differences.

**By Chris Khamis,
Black Sections Steering
Cttee (Pers Cap)**

The oath reads 'I accept and will conform to the constitution, principles, programme and policy of the Labour Party and the rules of the Lewisham East Constituency Labour Party'. Only delegates to the general management committee who sign this oath will be allowed to vote in

Such a discussion can be held when the NEC working party on blacks' involvement in the Labour Party reports back in June. Instead we have this ridiculous loyalty oath

which many Labour Party leaders could not honestly sign.

Meanwhile opposition to the NEC's moves is broadening beyond Lewisham East. Vauxhall Labour Party has involved black section delegates in the selection of a black candidate, Lorna Boreland, to stand in a GLC by-election. Norwood CLP has voted to delay its selection so that black section delegates can be involved in the process.

The Black Section national committee has called on other CLPs to follow the Norwood example. These selection processes can be delayed until after the October Labour Party conference to give the party a chance to change its rules. But one

thing must be made clear — there can be no compromise on the right of black people in the Labour Party to organise themselves and speak for themselves.

The Black Sections national committee has also called on CLPs and affiliated organisations to send resolutions against the loyalty oath to the NEC and called on it to stop its mad black bashing course.

The debate around black sections should now be taken into the unions. Resolutions should be sent to trade union conferences in support of black sections and CLPs must also prepare for Labour Party conference by wholeheartedly backing black activists within the party.

Scots teachers draw the lessons of the miners' strike

TWO RECURRENT comments during the teachers' campaign in Scotland — both inside and outside education circles — have been 'when the government have crushed the miners, then they'll take on the teachers' and 'if the miners can't defeat this government what chance have teachers got?'. The miners' strike, was essentially about jobs, the teachers' about an independent pay review. Do these disputes have anything in common?

Like the miners, teachers in England and Wales — as well as Scotland — are in direct confrontation with the government. Whilst our employers are the local authorities, the purse strings are controlled by central government.

The NUM had massive support from their membership, as have two of the Scottish teaching unions. There are four unions — EIS (the biggest), SSTA (secondary only), SSA (linked with NAS in England) and PAT, whose only policy is never to strike. The EIS and SSTA campaign has been backed by an overwhelming number of

teachers who 'would never have dreamt of going on strike before'.

Like the miners, we have failed to get more than token support from the trade union movement.

By Sheila Maher

The teachers dispute in Scotland is also a protracted affair. It is now a year since the action began, and it certainly looks like continuing for some time. Action plans are already being drawn up for implementation in August 1985.

So there are similarities between the miners' and

the teachers disputes. But there are also a great many differences.

First, many teachers, whether we like it or not, do see themselves as 'professionals'. Their case for more pay depends on this, since they can then compare themselves with other 'professional' groups such as the police or lawyers.

The miners' strike had a major unifying theme — Coal not Dole. This is not so in the teachers dispute.

Three main reasons for the dispute are emerging. Many teachers feel that as 'professionals' they should command a salary in line with other professionals and are therefore fighting for more money.

A second group, including many older teachers, have quite simply had enough. The pressure of working in a system with corporal punishment and the rigid classroom disciplines of days gone by, has combined with an enormous increase in

workload. The smallest group are those who see the teachers campaign not just as a means to increasing their pay, but about broader issues.

As is happening in all public services, the government is continually cutting spending. The education system is being dismantled piece by piece. Class sizes are growing; buildings are not being kept in good repair or are being closed; money is not being spent on books and so on. As well there are teacher shortages in particular subjects such as physics and maths.

The current dispute has united these groups under one common campaign, with a militancy never before seen. What still has to be done is to raise everyone's awareness of the implications of this government's economic strategy.

Cuts in spending affect all public services. Only a massive action uniting all public employees will stop this continual erosion.

Low profile in NCU

'QUESTION: WHAT in precise terms are our political objectives?

Answer: Our main political objective is to have a Voice in Parliament — representation in the House of Commons.'

The National Communications Union Engineering Group (formerly the Post Office Engineering Union) will be holding its ballot on whether to retain its political fund during the last two weeks of May. Above is a sample of the kind of campaign the union is running to get a yes vote.

The national executive decided on a 'low profile' campaign based on a strategy of 'if we don't let the press know we're having our ballot so soon, they won't have got round to campaigning for people to vote No'. So low is the profile that branches were not told until the week before Easter that they had less than two months to campaign in.

And of course it was pie in the sky to think the press wouldn't notice. The vote no campaign is well under way in the pages of the *Sun* and the *Mail*.

Many people must have wondered why the allegations of ballot rigging in the TGWU, which have been known about for nearly a year, have only just surfaced now, at the beginning of many unions' campaigns on the Political Fund.

The NCU campaign to 'Keep our Voice in Parliament' is a masterpiece of avoiding the issue. The literature put out to the membership contains not a single reference to the Labour Party — to deny that the ballot is to do with Labour Party affiliation'. Instead, we are told, 'The ballot is simply on whether we have political objectives. Who we affiliate to is a separate decision for annual conference.

Formally speaking this is true. But as well as being seen as extremely dishonest by the membership, it misses a great opportunity to explain the link between the unions and the Labour Party, and to generally raise the question of politics in a fairly apolitical union.

The booklet issued to activists (how to answer difficult questions which people may ask you about the ballot) is slightly more honest. Activists can bear to be told that: 'The tie with the Labour Party is important'. Why? Because 'it is through the Labour Party that we secure parliamentary representation and that we are able to take part in making policy about the future of telecommunications, the Post Office and National Girobank.'

But, you can hear the activists crying, couldn't we do that through one of the other parties? And the answer is no, because 'the SDP and Liberals won't have us — don't want us! (neither do the Conservatives!)'. So that's why we don't affiliate to the

Tories — because they don't want us.

Since the question is being raised, many people are thinking about the link between the unions and the Labour Party — a good campaign would have built on this. The ballot is a missed opportunity to get the membership more actively involved in the union and the Labour Party.

Apparently we have seen 'clearly that having voices in parliament itself is much more effective' than campaigning in 'various forms' outside it. Our sponsored MPs are doing a grand job, 'often behind the scenes', where, of course, the membership can't go and so needn't get involved.

Instead of educating the membership that industrial action is going to be essential to defend ourselves against job loss, the NEC tries to persuade us that with a voice in parliament we will be able to avoid action. Rather than campaign on the real importance of the link between the Labour party and the unions, they try and blackmail us that 'without a yes vote we will be left primarily with the choice of industrial action'.

Bridget Elton London City NCU (personal capacity)

AND YOU THINK I SHOULD VOTE 'YES' FOR A VOICE IN PARLIAMENT

YES

In the past few years the Union has sought to oppose Government policies with a three pronged campaign — Parliamentary pressure, campaigning and industrial action. Without a YES vote we will be primarily left with the third choice. If you wish to help in the campaign to ensure a YES vote, you can contact your POEU coordinator through your Branch officers.

CLPD backs miners

THE CAMPAIGN for Labour Party Democracy's May newsletter is hot off the presses with suggested resolutions for this year's annual party conference ... and they've hit the nail right on the head! One suggestion is a resolution confirming party support for 'the miners' heroic struggle against pit closures' and demanding Labour improve its credibility by adhering to conference policies.

CLPD says: 'The Thatcher government is at last becoming discredited. A long series of anti-social and anti-working class measures is beginning to reap its bitter harvest.

'Towards the end of the miners' strike the public opinion polls, which have long shown a seemingly unassailable Tory lead, indicated a steady erosion of Tory support. Many voters were clearly put off by Thatcher's vindictive attitude, and her victory over the miners may well turn out to be hollow.

'At the same time Labour's support has been picking up. However the fact that there has been little change in how people see the Labour Party — as

opposed to how they would vote — suggests that it is the government rather than the Parliamentary Labour Party which deserves the credit for Labour's improved showing.

'The shadow cabinet's strenuous efforts to distance itself from the strike hardly proved the electoral goldmine which the front bench expected, while the leadership's attack on Labour MPs who stuck up for the miners merely tarnished Labour's image.'

Unless the advice to the party leadership to take a clearer, campaigning stand for party policies is heeded, CLPD's optimism that the next election could well return a Labour

government may prove unfounded.

Other suggested resolutions include:

● a demand that the NEC lays off its attempts to meddle with reselection procedures;

● that votes at the weekly meetings of the PLP be minuted and made available to party members;

● in favour of black sections and the right of women's conference to elect their own NEC members, as well as a substantial extension of party affiliations from black and women's groups.

Now's the time for party to begin considering the resolutions to this year's conference. They could worse than start with getting hold of a copy of CLPD's latest newsletter.

● Copies of the newsletter and further information on resolutions available from: Vladimir Derer, secretary, CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London, NW11; or phone 01-458 1501.

Socialist ACTION

Anti Apartheid calls national demonstration

The Anti Apartheid Movement's national committee has decided on a programme of action, ending in a national demonstration on Sunday 16 June. The theme will be an end to the police killings and a demand for the British government to act against the apartheid regime.

THE RACIST apartheid regime is currently suffering a severe political and economic crisis. Under this pressure, contradictory policies are emerging, particularly on Namibia, South Africa's own internal stability and its international relations.

The cosmetic reforms on mixed marriages and the granting of bail on Friday to five of the opposition leaders known as the 'Durban 6' and eleven other United Democratic Front leaders charged with treason, are all signs of this pressure.

The mobilisations of blacks in South Africa, however, continue to threaten the stability of the regime.

The mass turnout of blacks occurs in the context of high levels of inflation, a foreign exchange crisis and a dramatic fall in the value of the Rand.

The result is savage attacks on the living standards of the black population who are being made to pay for the crisis, in the face of the continued maintenance of the military and security apparatus.

By Graham Topley

The determination of the people of South Africa to fight back has been shown to the world. This must be matched by world-wide mobilisations to express the international opposition to apartheid and increase its isolation.

Britain is particularly compliant with the racist South African regime. There has been no let up in Britain's involvement financially or politically in apartheid, as clearly shown by the visit of Botha here last year.

Since then in response anti-apartheid activities have been stepped up. Regular pickets are being held outside the South African embassy on Fridays.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement has now called a series of events based around its 10 point programme of action, as a direct response to the crisis. The actions will culminate in a national demonstration on Sunday 16 June in London around the themes of an end to the police killings and the demand for the British

government to act against the apartheid regime.

Dennis Worrall, South African ambassador to Britain claims the murders of blacks are 'inevitable in a period of reform'. Leaving aside the fact they have yet to seriously appear, how can there be talk of reforms when South Africa still illegally oc-

Demonstrate against apartheid



Photo: COLIN HEADWORTH

cupies Namibia and when Mandela is still in jail? Reagan, typically, goes further and talks of 'elements who want the violent overthrow of apartheid' while effectively condoning the violent maintenance of apartheid.

Now in Britain it is even more vital that all out

support and solidarity is shown with those fighting apartheid. All labour movement activists and those concerned with acting against the racist apartheid state should step up the solidarity activities and begin mobilising now for the demonstration in June.

Frame-up trial starts

AS WE go to press the frame up trial of Reginald Hancock, Russell Shankland, and Anthony Williams for the murder of South Wales taxi driver David Wilkie has started. It is likely to be one of the greatest carnivals of reaction of the entire miners' strike.

The facts are simple. The police have made no investigation of who was responsible for killing strikers David Jones and Joe Green. There will be no trial of MacGregor and Thatcher — whose policies bear the direct responsibility for the deaths of the miners killed searching for coal on tips during the strike.

There will be no trial either for those who are now trying to make 700

miners suffer a lifetime of unemployment. No trial for those who create four million unemployed — with all the deaths, misery, and human suffering that go with it. No trial of Thatcher who waged war on children with her cuts in DHSS and attempts to force miners back to work through starvation.

Welsh

The only trial that will take place is to bring the full weight of the law against three Welsh miners. There the law, and the hyena's of the media, want their full pound of flesh — and more.

The prosecutor has already told the jury to 'forget the miners' strike' — that is to forget the fight of people for their jobs

and communities, forget the brutality of the police, forget the butchery of people and livelihoods by MacGregor. In short to forget the entire real world.

The prosecution has already rejected a plea of manslaughter by Reginald Hancock and demands the charge of murder. It intends to crush and terrify three miners, their families, and the trade union movement. Meanwhile real mass murderers — the Thatchers and the MacGregors — will walk the streets as honoured citizens.

This trial in South Wales is a monstrous frame up of class justice. Reginald Hancock, Russell Shankland and Anthony Williams are prisoners of the class war. They should be defended by the entire labour movement as such.

Defend Newham 7!

SATURDAY 11 May has been chosen as the day for a national protest against racist policing and attacks on black people in Newham.

This follows the violent disruption of the 27 April march when police brought 3000 demonstrators to a halt outside Forest Gate police station, stopping the march reaching its destination at Upton Park where the racist attacks originally occurred. Police arrested 35 people on that march.

The headline of the *Asian Times* 'Britain's pigs in blue' accurately summed up the anger of the black community.

● Assemble 1pm Plashet Park, Plashet Grove E6 (East Ham underground) 11 May.
● Picket the Old Bailey, 9.30am 13 May.

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