

# Socialist ACTION

Special issue



**'An alliance means you're with us — all the way.'**

Betty Heathfield, page 5



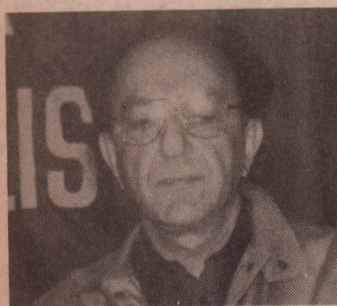
**'We will see victory because we can settle for nothing less.'**

Diane Abbott, page 2



**'Successive Labour governments became the intensive care units for capitalism.'**

Tony Benn, page 6



**'The ANC and the people of South Africa are natural allies in the struggle for socialism throughout the world.'**

Ben Turok (ANC), page 9

**Building an alliance for socialism**



**'The resistance of the nationalist people is so deep that it cannot be crushed.'**

Martin Collins, page 10





## Answering realignment

THE 'ALLIANCE for Socialism' weekend organised by Socialist Action on 16-17 November symbolised the politics of this newspaper more than any other single thing it has done.

Speakers represented the most advanced class struggles taking place in the world today: the Central American revolution represented by the FDR of El Salvador, and a representative of the ANC of South Africa.

There were speakers from the NUM — Jack Collins, secretary of the Kent NUM, and representatives of the South Wales, Durham, South Yorks, Nottingham, South Derbyshire and Lancashire coalfields.

There were speakers from Women Against Pit Closures, including Betty Heathfield; from the Black Sections including Diane Abbott, Marc Wadsworth and Narendra Makenji; the Campaign Group of MPs — Tony Benn, Bob Clay and Jeremy Corbyn; from the Women's Action Committee; from the Labour Committee on Ireland; from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners; and the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights; the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy; as well as a speaker from the Liverpool black community.

There were meetings of supporters of campaigns in the Labour Party, and members of the NUM, AUEW, TGWU, NUR, NUT and other unions.

The theme which brought together all the diverse strands, and gave them their coherence was the title of the conference itself 'An Alliance for Socialism'. The keynote session was 'Building an alliance for socialism'. It is worth spelling out why this was the crucial question.

A socialist transformation of British society bears, and will bear almost no relation to the models of either traditional labourism or most of the Marxist left in Britain.

Every great socialist revolution, every achievement in opening the way to a socialist society — the creation of the USSR, Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, Nicaragua were great popular transformations of society. They drew together every diverse strand of struggle — the fight of the working class against exploitation, the fight of oppressed nations for liberation, the fight of women for their liberation, the fight of peasants for land, the fight against fascism, against foreign occupation, against war, against racism.

It is only by pulling together such forces, in a nationally specific form in an advanced imperialist country, that socialism can be achieved in Britain as well.

Finally to achieve such a society requires an entirely new state, one democratically based on the organisations of the working class and oppressed and, in the words of Arthur Scargill, a government which is as loyal to our class as Margaret Thatcher's is to the capitalist class.

But socialists must be strictly objective. Today Britain is far, far away from that type of society, that type of government, and that type of state — or of a direct struggle for them. The working class is still only putting its first steps on the long road that will lead to a socialist society in Britain. What then are the most basic features of that struggle, its strategic way forward?

First and foremost it is that we are engaged in an international

struggle. It should be stated calmly and coldly that if the struggle for socialism in Britain were a struggle between the British ruling class and the British working class then the ruling class would undoubtedly win.

Certainly the people of Central America, South Africa, and all those fighting imperialism throughout the world need solidarity in Britain. But even more those fighting for socialism in Britain need the victory of the struggle of the people of Central America and South Africa. For without their victory we can never achieve socialism.

Secondly it must be constantly remembered the British state still has an 'internal colony' — the North of Ireland. Without the struggle to free Ireland, without an alliance between the working class in Britain and Ireland, based on the fight for complete independence of Ireland, the British working class can itself never be free.

Thirdly to achieve socialism the British working class must overcome the 'aristocratic' prejudices it acquired from its imperialist past.

Without overcoming racism and organising the black population, without fighting sexism and organising the mass of women, without inspiring and organising young people, without fighting every aspect of national chauvinism which is left from the British empire, the working class in Britain cannot achieve socialism.

That also shows the only way in which such alliances can be built and sustained. As Diane Abbott points out, the alliance between the working class as a whole and women — inside and outside the working class — with blacks, with oppressed nations, those oppressed for their sexual preference, can only be built with a first conditions being the respect of the right of self-organisation of every oppressed group in society.

Women or blacks do not need white male workers who 'understand their problems'. They need strict respect for their right to organise and lead themselves. It is only on this basis that the necessary refounding and reorganising of the Labour Party, and the labour movement, can take place.

Fourthly any alliance for socialism can only be forged in struggle. The miners forged the most powerful, and active, social alliances seen since World War II. They achieved that because of the resolute leadership shown in the strike — and decisions like those to support women's self-organisation and the black section — by Scargill and the NUM leadership. It is only by creating the type of leadership which knows, in Tony Benn's words, which side you are on, that the social alliances necessary for the labour movement can be created. And 'which side you are on' applies not only to the national but to international class struggles.

To bring such a struggle to full success means to consciously have the idea of fighting for an alliance of the exploited and oppressed for socialism. That strategic alliance is the key one in reply both to Thatcher and the current 'realignment' within the Labour Party.

In itself the conference organised last weekend — some of the main contributions from which we print in this issue — was a very modest affair. But we hope it can be part of something much bigger in the labour movement as a whole.

# ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

## "We will see victory -

WHAT SORT of socialism are we fighting for? What sort of alliances do we want? asked DIANE ABBOTT at the main session of the 'Alliance for Socialism' weekend. Her answers were simple: a socialism that empowers the working class and the oppressed in an alliance based on action. Black people and women, she said, are at the centre of that fight. They know they will see victory, because they know they can settle for nothing less.

THE TITLE of this session is 'Alliance for Socialism'. I am going to address myself, relatively briefly, to two questions: what sort of socialism and what sort of alliance?

Let's start with what sort of socialism we are mobilising for. It seems to me the key question, and one which the labour movement in this country have lost sight of since the 1945 administration, is that we must be organising for power, not just office. For years and years the Labour Party in this country has seemed to be simply about taking office: a bunch of white male MPs — barristers, retired trade union officials, that kind of person — taking office, endeavouring to manage British capitalism more humanely than it has been in the past.

What we must be organising for is to take power as a labour movement, to empower the working class. And when you address your mind to the issue of empowering the working class certain things become clear. It becomes crystal clear that you're not going to empower them via a Parliamentary Labour Party which is all white, all male, and middle class. And it becomes clear that certain

**'One thing that black people can bring to your practice of socialism is a clear and uncompromising analysis of the role of the state. That is something you can learn from us.'**

issues have to come higher up the agenda than they have done in the past.

The other thing I want to say is about what kind of socialism we're mobilising and organising for. It seems to me black people and women can teach white men in the Labour Party about socialism. The main thing that black people have to teach white men in the Labour Party is not just about racism in the party — institutionalised racism, how it works, how it disables both black and white. What we have to teach you is about the state.

One thing that black people, both in this country now and of my parents' generation in the colonies for hundreds of years, know about is the nature of the British state. It's already been touched on in this session: people wringing their hands and saying 'how un-British to see policemen clubbing down miners at Orgreave, how un-British to see policemen rushing into people's homes and shooting them down'.

Black people know it's not un-British. We know it's intrinsically British. We know it's the way the British state has always operated. If there's one thing that black people can bring to your practice of socialism it is a clear and uncompromising analysis of the role of the state, the way that the institutions of the state — the police, the courts, the immigration service — are used not in some objective manner but as an arm of the state. That is something you can learn from us.

At the party conference debate this year about reimbursement of money to the miners I was amazed to hear the top table going on about the 'rule of law'

and how it must be upheld. Black people know that the law in this country post-capitalism has always been an arm of the state and indirectly an arm of the ruling class.

What have women got to teach you? You've got to remember first and foremost that the miners' strike would never have lasted as long as it did without the support of women. That's something nobody could have foreseen at the beginning, because the miners are nothing if not the Grenadier Guards of

**'Too much time is wasted in pure posturing: machoism, the sort of stuff you associate with men. One of the things I've gained from being involved in feminist politics is learning to work collectively.'**

the labour movement. Who would have thought that women — unorganised, supposedly unpolitical women — would have been the main edge which kept that strike going to the bitter end. But it was women.

Women have something to teach you about your politics, both in terms of the issues to take seriously and in terms of how you practice your politics.

The classic preoccupation of the British Labour Party is the aristocracy of labour, the white male working class. Issues like low pay have until recently never been taken as seriously as they should have. But for working class women low pay is a crucial issue. We are nearly half of the workforce, but we are 80 per cent of the low paid. Anyone who takes women's issues seriously will take the issue of low pay seriously.

Another thing that women have to teach you is about how you conduct your politics. Too much time and energy is wasted in pure posturing, oppositionism for the sake of oppositionism — machoism, the kind of stuff which you associate with men. One of the things that I've gained from being involved in feminist politics over the years is learning to work collectively, getting away from hierarchy, trying to

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save the time you spend on just striking attitudes and use that time actually working with people.

Black people and women aren't coming in to the labour movement asking people to be nice to us, to do us a favour by putting us on your platform. We have things to teach you.

I want to go on to what sort of alliances. Let's be clear, when you talk

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about an alliance it's not just about some kind of conglomeration of people who can be brought together at a certain juncture in time on some loose

political basis. You have to be terribly precise about the terms on which you ally.

For me the first condition for wanting to ally with people is they have to respect my right as a black person or my right as a woman to organise autonomously. Respect for the right of groups to organise autonomously is crucial for building a serious alliance for socialism.

I think white people really do find it hard to take on board the issue of black people organising autonomously. The reason you find it hard is that the whole heritage of colonialism tells you that really black people can't do anything unless white people are there first. That is why everytime our young people are in insurrection we read that white outsiders were in the area and set them up to it. White people really can't believe that black people can even riot without white people telling them what to do.

As Narendra Makenji pointed out,

having had Kinnock and Hattersley telling us that 'their' black people don't want black sections — just us trouble-makers — is really ironic that the minute that one of 'their' black people wants black sections they expel him. The other prerequisite for an alliance and what sort of socialism. Finally, I'd just like to say a word about the Labour leadership. When Mr Kinnock became leader of the party, but sometimes it's used in opposition to the notion of black people and women organising autonomously — as if class is a higher good. I do think that a class framework is crucial, and I think that as much as anything because I am black.

**'Kinnock has made a point of coming out openly against black sections. He seems to have no idea how that looks to the wider black community.'**

You'll not empower the mass of black people, you'll not help them, unless you empower the working class. To put it another way: anti-working class politics are politics against the interests of black people as a whole. It's one of the things which black people bring to labour movement politics, because we are forced, we have no option but to keep going back to a class context.

We know that there are opposed interests in this society, you can take the notion of broad popular fronts only so far. At the end of the day there are the interests of capital and the interests of labour — and we as black people know what side we're on.

There is no way you can disentangle issues of race from issues of class. Take education. My parents and that whole generation came to this country to work. For the most part they did pretty shitty jobs. But they believed, with a passion, that it would be better for their children. They believed that the instrument for making it better would be the

education system.

There's a lot of tragedies about racialism in society, but one of them is the way the British education system

# we can settle for nothing less"



Photo: STEVE MANSFIELD

has abused us, set up a whole generation of black children to fail. When you look at the institutional racism in the education system, when you look at what happened to our children within it, then you're back to the issue that the British education system was never meant for the working class children as a whole to succeed anyway. It's just one of the many elaborate instruments of control that the British state has set up. Take also the Silent Night dispute. There's somebody here on the platform from the Silent Night strikers. It's important to note that 20 per cent of those strikers are black. You cannot disentangle the issue of class from issues of race.

The other criterion for an effective

alliance for socialism is that when people talk about allying with black people and allying with women what matters are deeds not words. Let me tell you, words come cheap.

**'The other criterion for an effective alliance for socialism is that what matters are deeds not words. Let me tell you, words come cheap.'**

I've been to so many meetings in the past 18 months and seen white men on the platform go on about black people and women. They agonise and tell you that they're on your side. But when

push comes to shove white men in the party have shown they're extremely resistant to letting go of power.

It's easy for people to stand on platforms and talk about the plucky miners' wives, talk about the struggles in South Africa. (I have always noticed how white people love black people the most when we're far away.) Words are easy, it's deeds that matter. In the nitty-gritty interplay of the day-by-day labour movement I have to say that the absence of deeds has been noticeable.

Look at the numbers of black people actually active in parties claiming to be left. Look at the number of black school governors those parties are putting on the schools on their area. Look at the number of black councillors.

The Militant tendency... we may have four in the next parliament. That is a scandal. After all the can-

**'When I go canvassing people don't say we're not going to vote for you because you're run by Militant. They say we're not going to vote for you because you are all the same.'**

from white men on the left about the importance of more women in parliament, what has been the result?

It's deeds not words that count. We don't want your gifts, we don't want the Labour leadership. When Mr Kinnock became leader of the party there whatever else they might say people thought 'at least under him we're going to win the next general election'. I must say, as a leadership to win us the next election Kinnock has disappointed even his worst enemies.

Kinnock made a point of coming out openly against black sections: two years ago, before conference had even debated it. He seems to have no idea how that looks to the wider black community.

Not everybody in the black community agrees with black sections as a tactic, but everybody knows that the struggle between Labour Party black sections and the leadership is a struggle between black people trying to make their presence felt and white people. Everybody knows what that struggle is about. The black community follows it very keenly. Kinnock's line on black sections, his opposition to black people, and now the expulsion of Amir Khan in Sparkbrook-Birmingham, — just to put it in its crudest terms, this cannot help the party to win the support of black working people. It's actually standing in the way.

Let's take Neil Kinnock and the Militant. Again he's gone out of his way to attack the Militant tendency. I'm not a supporter of Militant, I'm opposed to them on the issue of women's organisation and black organisation. But when I go canvassing as a Labour councillor in Paddington people don't say: 'We're not going to vote for you because you're run by the Militant.' They say to us: 'We're not voting for you because you are all the same.'

When Kinnock attacks sections of the party who, at the end of the day, are fighting for socialist policies — when he attacks Militant and the Lambeth and Liverpool councils, when he puts himself in opposition to some of the most progressive currents in the party, above all when he makes a virtue of not being accountable to the party — he is pushing our chances of winning the next election further away. The only way we will convince working people that we're not all the same is if we actually implement the policies which we

**'Black people don't have the luxury of asking can we win? We know that not only are we going to win but that we're going to keep on fighting until we do. Those prepared to ally with us on our terms are welcome to join our fight.'**

Let's say what that is. It's to win the next election, and to win it at any price. If socialism is that price, he's prepared to pay it.

All I can say is this: as a black person I don't have the luxury of asking that kind of question. Black people know that for us nothing will do except the transformation of this society. We don't want a racist society managed more humanely. That still locks us into our position as a sub-strata of the working class. We cannot stop short of anything other than a total transformation of this society. A transformation

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economically, a transformation socially, and a transformation of the Labour Party.

We know that not only are we going to win but that we're going to keep on fighting until we win. Those who are prepared to ally with us on our terms — and our terms are respect for us to organise autonomously, our terms are class politics, and our terms most of all are deeds not words — those people are welcome to join in our fight.

It is a fight we cannot run away from. It is a fight we can not equivocate on. It is a fight that will continue because we know that we will see victory — and not just in electoral terms. We will see victory in terms of transforming this labour movement, because we can settle for nothing less.

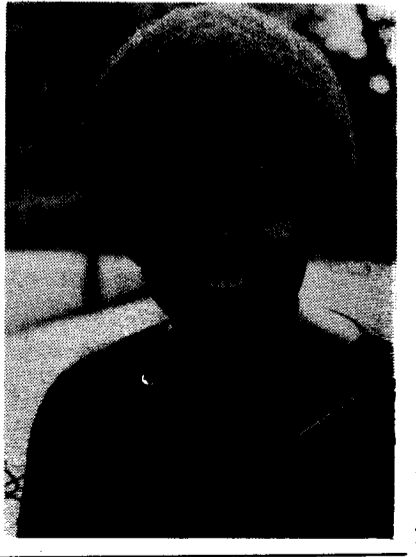


Photo: JENNY MATTHEWS

## The Miners strike has politicised a generation

IF IT WEREN'T for scab organisations there'd be no victimised miners, argued JACK COLLINS, secretary of the Kent NUM. He explained that the Coal Board's aim is breaking the union to pave the way for bigger profits. That's why it's in the interest of the whole working class to keep fighting with the miners.

I THINK in the aftermath of the miners' strike the most important thing to note is that what our leaders said during the strike has all been proved to be true. They said 'if the miners are pushed back, you'll all be pushed back'. Well, you're getting pushed back now.

I want to look at some of the positive things that came out of our strike as well as the negative. Yes, we didn't achieve what we intended to achieve, but there are generations being politicised, like our two little grandchildren who know the difference between a pig and a policeman, and they're only six-years old.

They know the difference between a miner and a scab. Hopefully they'll always remember the days when they were in a soup kitchen, and later on in life they'll ask: 'Why was I in that soup kitchen?'

We know where the miners' wives stood many, many years ago, and it was no surprise when they linked arms with us. They've never done anything else, but they took it into the movement. We look at that as a positive gain.

We also look at the effect and the extent of our struggle internationally. And we do know, as the comrade from El Salvador has said, that our struggle has had a thought, has laid some seeds, in the mind of the international working class.

Our people know of the police actions. What the police have done in the black regions of London, and in other major cities in Britain, wouldn't have been possible if the working class had stood with the miners.

The people who are prepared to attack and defeat the El Salvadorean people, are the same people who were pouring napalm on the kids in Vietnam a few years ago. They are the same bunch of bastards who were prepared to starve miners' kids. And we should never forget that. Anybody who didn't support the miners is on the side of the people of that ilk.

I want to talk about the scab outfit that is being organised. The split is being organised by the bosses, by the media, for a number of reasons. They're not prepared to negotiate properly with Scargill, Heathfield and McGahey. They are offering them nothing. They are offering the scab outfit a few crumbs.

The bosses are doing this not just to destroy this union, to destroy Scargill, Heathfield and McGahey, or

to build up the scab outfit. Since they are only concerned about profit, they are doing it for another reason as well.

They have offered the NUM nothing. The scab union accept a little bit, because they think they better take it while it's on offer — because they will treat them just like the rest of the NUM if they don't.

So the con-trick has been perfected. The bosses have got away with giving a little scruffy award, the lowest wage award since 1972. We can see that Lynk and his gang are already a bosses' outfit.

Pits are being threatened with closure all over the coalfield. We have only got three pits left in Kent. You'll remember it was one of our pits — Snowdown — that was on the original list of five for closure. Well, now they've gone down to a lower seam and found it to be very rich, and Snowdown is about the only safe pit in Kent. That shows you the mad logic of the Coal Board.

At Snowdown £4 million is needed to get at 37 million tons of coal. In Nottingham, at a pit called Gedling, they've got six million tons of coal, but the NCB are prepared to spend £10 million to get at it. So you can see what the Coal Board's game is.

They talk about this mystic thing called 'Scargillism'. They talk about 'Bennism'. They talk about 'socialism' and 'communism'. But when they come to the Hammonds and the Lynks and Brittains, they talk about 'democracy'.

I would say to Scargill, Heathfield and McGahey: dig in, and don't let them shift you. They want to shift you, not for the benefit of the miners, they want to shift you for the benefit of their own class.

I want to talk about ballots. There's an illusion that if you have a ballot and the workers vote to go on strike, then the bosses will cave in. The bosses will never cave in through ballots. They'll only ever cave in through some direct action.

I just want to finish by saying this. The world doesn't begin and end in Britain. The working class doesn't begin and end in Britain. And yes comrades, we might have been pushed back in Britain, but in Latin America, in Africa, in the Philippines and all over the world, the working class is winning and we are part of that victory.

# ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

## "An alliance means you with us... all the way!"

'DEFEAT' IS a word that women from the mining communities never use explained BETTY HEATHFIELD at the session on lessons of the miners' strike. There's no time to rest, she said. Get up off your behinds and join us again. The message was loud and clear: Women Against Pit Closures are still fighting side by side with the national union.

I THINK it's appropriate at a weekend where you're discussing alliances for socialism, and lessons from the miners' strike, that women from the coalfields are here. As a member of Derbyshire Women's Action Group, I'm quite sure that all the women here from the coalfield today could put up just as good a case as I'm going to. Because they've had a year practicing.

I want to take up one issue. There is one word that none of us accept in our vocabulary and none of us use. We do not accept the word defeat. We don't mention it. We don't talk about it.

It's not that we bury our heads in the sand, it's that the word defeat should never come into the vocabulary of any socialist or any fighting person anywhere. Because that's just the type of language that the Tories keep pumping out at us day-out and day-in.

'Oh isn't it awful you've been defeated,' 'Oh isn't it terrible that you've got to go back.' It's just what they want. It always produces pessimism, despondency and despair.

**'There is one word that none of us accept and none of us use. We do not accept the word defeat.'**

We don't say to Nelson Mandela: 'god isn't it awful that you've been in jail all those years, you've got a great defeat on your hands.' He says: 'I'm still in jail and the struggle is my life.' That's what we're saying to you today: 'the struggle is our life.' It was for this last 12 months and it still is.

We're saying to you 'don't let us look back'. We're not having any kind of looking back on our last year of struggle that sets some kind of norm for what we want to do now — for what we're still doing now, and what we've been doing since the miners went back to work.

If we look back, we want to look at the positive things that happened during our year of struggle — we need to look back at those things if we want to continue, if we want to enlarge and strengthen the movement that started during the strike.

Let me tell you if you live in the coalfields you don't need your batteries recharging once a year, once a month or anything. You need them recharging every morning when you get up. You've got to say to yourself: 'We're still here. What can we do today to make it work better? We've got to convince some more people today.'

Every day from now until the next election has got to be treated like an election. There isn't anytime for you to say 'I'm tired, I'm fed up, I'm despondent'. We've got to say that if we don't get up and go that woman and her government will be back in power in another two years' time.

Our first priority is to make sure that we get rid of that Tory govern-

ment — and that we never have another. In doing so, we hope that the National Union of Mineworkers is going to survive and we are going to do everything in our power to help it survive.

If we want to learn any lessons from the women then I think you'll have to find out like we found out; in action.

**'If you want to learn any lessons from the women then I think you'll have to find out like we found out: in action.'**

We found out several things. We found out that when formerly unorganised women come together in action with a clear purpose and a straight way forward, they can become a very very strong force against any kind of oppression, against any kind of threats. That is the kind of attitude we had in the strike, and that we are still trying to keep and create among women.

We didn't go round through all the red tape saying to people 'write a letter to the trades council and ask them if we can have a meeting'. We said to them: 'We've got a centre, we want some money, we want some food. Come and see us, we're here, bring it to us.' And they did.

We produced that kind of liaison not only in our country, not just in every town, not just in every village, but in every other country as well. That's another lesson to learn. You've got to cast your net wide, and you've got to make those liaisons everywhere you can find them. We make very simple demands but we've got a positive attitude, and we learn by getting into action.

**'We joined up with the Greenham women. We've linked up with all kinds of women in all kinds of struggle. We've found out that the more people you can unite and the more you spread your net, then you learn it's the same struggle — you're all in it together.'**

We learned a lot during that strike. Not just about ourselves, but that we've got a heritage we have to defend. A lot of those women didn't know anything about that heritage before. We found out that we weren't really doing anything new. Everything we were doing had been done before. It's been done for years, in every country, by women in the trade union movement.

Very slow progress we women are making as well. It took the Ford women 17 years to get parity in their industry. And people are criticising us for not doing what we should have done in a year! I'm telling you look back, and look back with a positive attitude.

We also learned a lot about politics, about trade unions, about parliament, about local government, about our own communities. We're



trying to put that to good use now.

We found out that in every aspect of our lives as women there is a tremendous male dominance — everywhere. We've got to try and change that around. And coming from mining communities I don't need to tell you that we've got a long way to go yet. But we're not giving up. We're not saying 'its too hard and we've got to give up'. We're going to keep chipping away at it. We've got to make some headway — somewhere, sometime.

We've got to share the corridors of power. Women have got to have a say in things. Even if we're only doing it in our communities and areas in a very small way, nevertheless we're doing it where we didn't do it before.

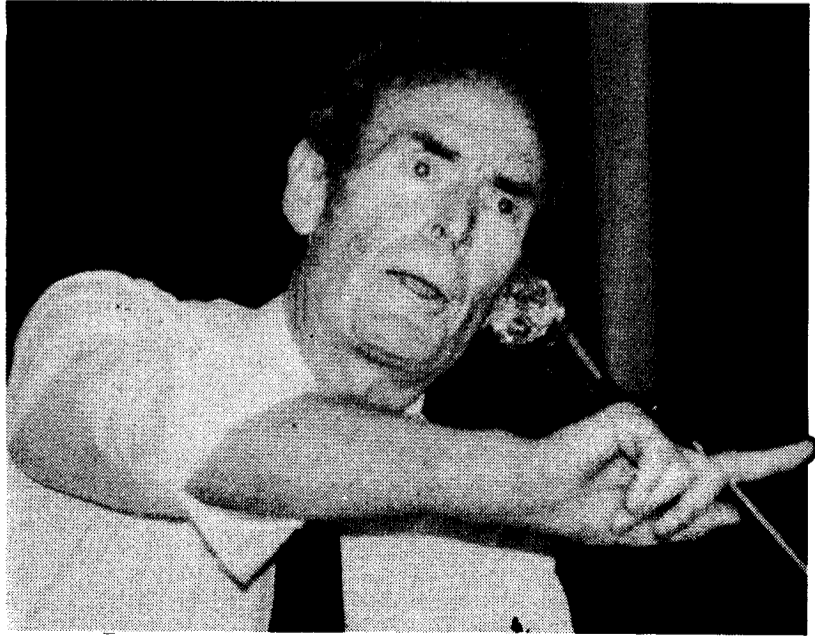
After the miners strike, a lot of our women are getting themselves elected as school governors. They are thinking about local politics, and saying 'I want to be in on this'. I've been to the council meeting and listened to all those people talking. I think: 'I could have said that. I know what they're talking about.' They're thinking about those kinds of things now.

We've found out also that we're joining hands and linking with a lot of

women from a lot of other areas of struggle. In our area we've been on the picket line with the NUPE women because their jobs have been privatised, and they're going to lose them. They come to our meetings and we go on their picket line.

We joined up with the peace women and the Greenham women. We've linked up with all kinds of women in all kinds of struggle. We've found out that the more people you can unite, and the more you spread your net and the more you find out about them, then you learn it's the same struggle, you're all in it together.

We've got to plug the concepts that I think the women, more than anyone, created during the strike. We have to answer all the questions about the trade unions, about things like violence. We've found a new concept



re



saying to you: 'You have that same clear purpose. Join in with us and together we'll be able to win.'

I'm saying then they're saying to us Well you should have when you could have and why didn't you they ask? If you'd thought of when you sort of missed your chances muffed your task. If you'd only but you didn't and why don't you tell us now. If you can't you must let us lead, do it for you show you how. And we said to them we're sure we did we can we still do. Why don't you listen when we say. If you're really our supporters you'll be with us all the way.

And that's what I'm asking you to do now. An alliance means that you're with us — all the way.

**PAM OLDFIELD  
Notts WAPC**

The management at the pits have refused the men access to distribute leaflets. Where the men couldn't get the women could. They couldn't sack us.

The thing that we had to do in Nottinghamshire was to swap pits. We went to each others pits so that they couldn't pick us out. They couldn't say 'that's so and so's wife.'

We put out leaflets the men couldn't put their names to explaining why people should stay in the NUM. Where it wasn't being distributed we went round and put *The Miner* through everybody's letter box...

Although things are more quiet, and there are less people at Women Against Pit Closure meetings the education is still there. When we organised things such as socials — we had one for the Central American campaign and for Silent Night — the women turned up in droves. That proves that the education has gone home. They know what it is like for people who are struggling.

**ANN JONES  
South Wales WAPC**

The fight in South Wales is this. The pressure and blackmail of the NCB is so great the men are closing their own pits. They're not given the information on why they should save their pits. There's no information given out on what taking redundancy means. They're left all to themselves.

It's very difficult for Women Against Pit Closures in South Wales. We're fighting the people we're trying to help. 'Those interfering women' is a reflex — not of the ordinary man and file but of the people in power.

It's difficult for women to get into anything in South Wales. You have to push. And when you push it's 'the left' or 'one of those Trots down the road.' If you stand up and fight you're called all the names going.

But there's a lot stayed with WAPC and they're stronger than before. They've got to win over their husbands to stay in the fight. We want to have to fight against the South Wales executive.



Photo: AMIN LADHA

see you starving, we'll find you something'. The receiver doesn't think that it's necessary for those leaders to receive any pay because he doesn't recognise them as leaders. He doesn't intend, and neither does this government, for them to continue as leaders of the NUM.

And if you don't believe me, I'll read you out a sentence from a letter that was written to me and Ann Scargill by Peter Walker close to the beginning of the strike. That man refused to answer Women Against Pit Closures. He would only correspond with me and Ann Scargill. He was on about all the things that 'our husbands' have been doing.

He said: 'My deepest sorrow is for the families of those men who are denied work by intimidation and violence. You can be sure that when this damaging and unnecessary dispute is ended I'll be doing all in my power to get this industry back on its feet and to see that miners' families are restored as quickly as possible to a state of happiness and confidence.' And this is the crunch sentence: 'I only hope that the National Union of Mineworkers will have a leadership which will be collaborating in this task.'

I give you no guesses as to who the leadership 'collaborating in this task' he imagines is going to be. And this is what we are fighting against now.

The Notts women, and the people in the surrounding areas, are also leading the fight. They're putting up a magnificent fight, and so are we in Women Against Pit Closures, against the breakaway outfit. We are going out leafletting. If the men take the leaflets they get the sack. But they can't do anything to us — except tell us we'll be prosecuted if we go on Coal Board property. We're prepared to argue that one as well!

Now we are finding, and the men are finding, that just as during the strike the women's movement is very valuable and it's in action. It doesn't always have to be in a soup kitchen, at a sink somewhere, or wrapping up a food parcel. We are just as valuable as the men in this struggle — and they're realising it.

In the Notts area the women have got a fantastic working relationship with the 7000-odd miners who've signed up with the NUM. We have to remind every miner that the NUM still represents the overwhelming majority of miners in this country and that's the way we intend it to stay — and you wouldn't realise that from the press.

They've the wealth, they've got the power, the money — but we've got the guts and we're staying. We

cases of miners that are coming up. I think they're having to drop them for two reasons. The first is they can't afford their image being spoilt more than it is by their treatment of black communities. They can't afford to have people think worse about them.

I know this is true. In our areas they're sending the police with the dogs round to all our schools to tell them how 'nice and friendly' our local community police are. We say to all those kids in the schools: 'That's the dog that bit your dad's leg a few months ago. And if your dad comes out on strike it'll bite him again. So don't take any notice of them.'

Secondly they don't want, and can't afford, to have anyone feeling sympathetic towards the miners at this moment in time. That's because their original plans for the miners — and the miners' leaders — are still being carried out. If there's anybody in this room today who believes that this government can't, won't, aren't, and wouldn't get rid of the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers then I can tell you you're living in cloud cuckoo land.

They have now removed the sequestration order. But the receiver is still there. He's still in charge of the NUM's funds. If the leaders of the NUM put one foot wrong, or one foot on the side of the line where this government disagrees, then they'll be back where they started from immediately.

**'We've got to get over to people that the trade union isn't just at work. It's at home and in your community. We've got to fight for those principles of trade unionism that make trade unions strong.'**

I can tell you that the receivership of this union has meant that the receiver doesn't think it is necessary to pay any bills on behalf of the NUM — which he hasn't done since last November. No bills for typewriter ribbons, no bills for paper. So don't tell us we should be getting the leaflets out, and we should be doing this, that and the other. Because we have to find the money for that, and we haven't got any.

The receiver also doesn't believe that the leaders of the NUM need any pay — not that it matters because we've got friends who say 'we'll not

need money, for hardship and to organise our own organisation. We need money for the sacked and jailed miners. And we need effort to keep their problems in front of everybody's minds. We won't ever forget them and we hope you're not going to — because we won't let you.

We need money to help all those branches of the NUM which haven't got any money to operate. There is a branch set up in every pit in Notts. We're trying to fund them as well.

In our area, Derbyshire, our women have been out on the picket

for the trade union movement. When the miners were on strike we discovered that the union wasn't at work. It was there in our homes and in our communities. We've got to foster that concept of trade unionism. Everything a trade union fights for is of great concern to every member of your family — your aunts and uncles, your grandmas, your sons and your daughters. It's their future. It's the future of your communities.

**'They've got the wealth, the power, the money — but we've got the guts and we're staying.'**

We've got to get that over to people, that the trade union isn't just at work. A trade union is at work and at home and in your community. It's everyone's concern together. We've got to fight for those principles of trade unionism that make trade unions strong.

We wouldn't have any talk then about how trade unions have too much power, because everyone would understand why it's necessary for trade unions to have that kind of power. So let's get out and preach that concept of trade unionism.

Nothing at all has changed since the end of our strike. Indeed every aspect of our struggle has become more acute. The miners are back at work. There's tremendous hardship still in the coalfield areas. People can't pay the bills because everybody's descending on them now. The conditions in the pits are very difficult and the miners now know what it's like to be underground without a strong and effective trade union. But I can tell you there's seething anger and unrest in every pit.

In Derbyshire, since this strike ended, there hasn't been a week without a strike over something or other in one pit — and sometimes three pits at a time.

The women are still here. We haven't got quite so many people in our groups. But they're there and they're still supporting. Now it is the activists who are keeping the women's groups going, and we need to do this.

I don't think it's out of any kind of benevolence that the police, and the law courts, are dropping all these

# "Successive Labour governments became the intensive care units for capitalism"

**LABOUR GOVERNMENTS must cease being intensive care units for capitalism and choose which side they are on. That was the message TONY BENN put to the 'Alliance for Socialism' weekend. To achieve its goals the labour movement has to be refounded to open it up to the social forces that are going into struggle. The NUM must be defended, black sections must be supported, Women Against Pit Closures must be built, the new initiatives of the Women's Action Committee must be championed.**

I WOULD like to congratulate Socialist Action on organising this conference. There has been a wide range of contributions. I think everybody here appreciates how serious the situation is for the people of this country.

There is an attack on living standards, on the unions, on women, on the Irish, on the black community, on democracy, on civil liberties — and a technique of division is being practiced which is to some extent effective. The apparatus of the state is being used quite ruthlessly and of course the media are being used on a daily basis in order to maintain that division.

**'The miners' strike mobilised the very alliance that we're talking about at this conference today.'**

I agree with what has been said, that Britain is the last colony left in the British empire, and that all the techniques of repression that were tried elsewhere are now being used against our own people. Anyone who saw that recent TV programme, *Brass Tacks*, about the police will know that the colonial policing methods have been applied here.

At the same time we have a large American army here. We are really subject to American foreign policy and defence control. We are also in terms of our domestic legislation integrated with the Treaty of Rome. And the bankers have an enormous power over our economy.

It is against that background that we have to look and see what happened within the Labour Party. And I want to turn to that first.

We have had a very big change in the Labour Party over the last 15 years, beginning when Heath was elected, much of it triggered off by the earlier experience of office under the first Wilson government. That was when the radicalisation began. What I think people began to realise — and Diane Abbott touched on it when she talked about power rather than office — was that successive Labour governments, became the intensive care units for capitalism.

When capitalism got in a real mess and the people who ran it could no longer control it, they invited a Labour government to take over which used its capacity to win the loyalty of the working class to make the sacrifices to put the system right. That government then lost the election and handed the system back, fully recovered, to the people who ran it in the first place. That intensive care unit role for Labour governments is an absolute distortion of the original function of the Labour Party.

Thus we had the 1970-74 radicalisation, a further Labour government, and another defeat in 1979, and the campaign (which was absolutely correct) to try to deal with that problem by making the parliamentary party accountable to the Labour conference. Looking back, I think that campaign needs to be restarted, for it was certainly effective. The SDP left and that was an indication of the real position: they

an upgrading of the role of the PLP, and the appearance — which began when the radicalisation started — of the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory, made up of general secretaries who drip feed the national executive with money if they agree with what the NEC wants to do.

Moreover the role of the electorate has been shrunk, and is only perceived to exist now in the statistics produced by the public opinion pollsters. The electorate as such, with all its many problems and needs, disappears in weighted, balanced samples which are then studied like the omens in an ancient tribal ritual. This polling has played a part in the new strategy: distancing us from the struggle — of the miners, of Liverpool, of Bernie Grant, and so on — the repudiation of the left, and of course the renewed witch-hunting which goes very widely indeed.

My fear about that — quite apart from thinking it's not the right way forward — is that every time you read about another repudiation, you find that the party itself is apparently confirming the analysis of Thatcher and Owen: namely that Labour is full of nutters and loonie lefts and dangerous people. And now everything is beginning to rotate around what is thought of as a loyalty test to the leaders. Much of the realignment which is supposed to be going on is apparently designed to realign us around personalities rather than around policies.

The latest charge made against anybody who asks for anything is that of 'impossibilism'. I don't know

if anyone demands more than is currently on offer from the top it means you are charged with impossibilism, and hence trying to lose the election.

The effect of all this is deliberately to lower expectations, and that is what the Mitterrand example is about. 'Don't think we'll do what he did. He came unstuck, so we won't even try it!' Full employment is therefore no longer on the agenda.

Politics is seen increasingly as a parliamentary exercise — in which lobby correspondents are engaged in

unionists. It was all old hat, you didn't need it.' Gaitskell then tried to change Clause IV, an early attempt to realign us to meet the demands of a prosperous welfare capitalism.

Now we're being realigned to fit into a new right wing consensus. Mrs Thatcher, in an interview in the *Financial Times* the other day said in effect, one of the reasons she was staying on was because she didn't want to leave until the Labour Party had come to terms with the fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth

**'The electorate is only perceived to exist in the statistics produced by public opinion pollsters. The electorate as such, with all its many problems and needs, disappears in weighted, balanced samples which are then studied like omens in an ancient tribal ritual.'**

writing up the achievements and the oratory of certain people which has had the effect of taking the socialist analysis off the official agenda. Hugo Young, actually wrote in the *Guardian* an 'obituary' of Arthur Scargill as if Arthur were dead. It was a supreme example of the arrogance of the political correspondents who, like Bishop Berkeley, believe that we only exist because god notices us, and if god didn't notice us we wouldn't exist.

All this is moving us in the direction of a hung parliament. And Neville Hough in Ireland last week said 'Labour might have to depend on Shirley Williams to topple Thatcher'. That was the clearest statement from the chairman of the Labour Party as to

and power in favour of the rich that she was carrying through.

One of the effects of all this on the left is that there has been a crisis of perspectives, by which I mean that there is not a shared analysis on the left at the moment of what is going on. The Euro-communists are in conflict with the *Morning Star*, even with Socialist Action there is some disagreement about the meaning of permanent revolution, and in the WRP there are some arguments about what should happen. Some left trade union general secretaries are in conflict with other right wing unions of which Roy Lyne is now the leader. The broad left within the unions are not always united themselves — these are an indication in my opinion of a certain vitality of argument but a disagreement about the analysis.

The psychological effect of this is to create fear, to create division within our society, and to create suspicion. When you are in difficulties it's very easy to look over your shoulder and say a black has taken your job, or whatever is the National Front line — because a certain sense of hopelessness has been created.

Here I will say something I hope won't give offence. When Thatcher says 'there is no alternative', and it becomes the chorus of the media, we on the left must not respond by saying there will be 'permanent betrayals'. Reflect for a moment on that. If the left says we're always going to be betrayed, and Mrs Thatcher says there are no alternatives — we would be saying the

**'We've got to face the fact that a hung parliament is a possibility and a non-socialist majority in the next parliament is a near certainty.'**

same thing. That is a very dangerous line for us to take. It has a paralysing effect on action for it consolidates the right.

As far as the general public are concerned, the people we try to represent, the effect of all that I've described is to make the political process increasingly remote from their experience. I don't believe that all these little meetings, as when the 'cuddly left' was recently born, has any resonance with the public at all. If you're unemployed, if you haven't got a decent home, if your mother's waiting for a hip operation, if your dad can't live on the pension, if you're worried about nuclear weapons, and you hear there's another dinner at St Ermines where certain people are going to gather together to realign it's just as irrelevant as it could possibly be. It's irrelevant to people's needs.

All that people are being offered



Photo: AMIN LADHA

had tried to run the party from the top, failed and defected.

But, of course, in the period after 1981 there was a major swing to the right organised by some political and trade unions leaders; the Labour front bench supported the Falklands war, which absolutely undermined Labour's peace policy: we had the witch-hunting beginning; and we had the election defeat in 1983. From '83 there has been a major swing to the right in the central organs of the Labour Party — though not at rank and file level.

The Labour conference and the labour movement are now seen in my opinion, as the first stage of the rocket that fires the front bench into office. As at Cape Canaveral, the labour movement provides the initial lift and then falls harmlessly into the Caribbean while the parliamentary capsule goes where it wants.

Since 1983, we have seen the downgrading of the national executive, the downgrading of the role of conference, and a downgrading of the role of policy itself. The NEC has decided that we have no Labour programme 1986 which is what we should have. There has also been an upgrading of the role of the shadow cabinet now funded by the government through state aid,

whether 'impossibilism' began with Leon Trotsky or not. But I suppose by that test the eight-hour day was an impossibilist demand, and that the Chartists and the suffragettes made impossibilist demands, and the Tolpuddle martyrs made an impossibilist demand.

where all this could lead us.

I remember 1959, when Macmillan won his great election, and said socialism was no longer needed because we were so prosperous. There was a film called *I'm all right Jack*. Peter Sellers was in it, they made fun of trade



Photo: GM COOKSON



you from any form of militant... are wholly misunderstanding the nature of the struggle... But how should we approach these new social forces? I find that I agree very strongly with Diane Abbott who talks about people who are angry about women and about the black

...of the struggle... But how should we approach these new social forces? I find that I agree very strongly with Diane Abbott who talks about people who are angry about women and about the black

**'They can live with socialist reform... live with the Archbishop of Canterbury on Easter Sunday talking about the resurrection of Jesus - a thing is being done till we see Jesus again.'**

...community... attempted in the Labour Party... electoral incorporation... manipulation of the new social forces: the idea that if you say the right thing somehow you solve the problem.

...able to make their demands... framework of a party now dominated by white middle class males.

**'The Tory Party have never believed their strength lay in parliament. But they need people there to enrich the people outside parliament who pay for their election campaign.'**

framework of a party now dominated by white middle class males.

There is one important initiative here we should support. The Labour women's committee, who have now decided to have shadow elections for the national executive. They're going to have elections for all women to take

continued over ▶



ow is anti-Thatcherism in many varieties, but no real alternative to the policy that's being carried through. We've got to face the fact that a hung parliament is a possibility and a non-socialist majority in the next parliament is a near certainty. And we've got to look a bit ahead too. We may get a defeat of the present prime minister. She may be removed

Labour Party is the vehicle by which we're going to make change. If you look at the decisions taken at the '85 Labour Party conference you will find they are very good indeed: for example, breaking off relations with South Africa, ending nuclear power, supporting the miners, supporting the local councillors, supporting women's rights and gay rights too. The Labour con-

make the major reforms open to us to make that has led us into some of the difficulties that we're in.

The charge is often made that we really want to lose. It is a wholly fraudulent argument. I've never met anybody who actually believes that if, by our conscious decision, Thatcher could be given another term in some way that would strengthen the left. It would not. We have therefore to try to build up from the bottom.

Can I turn now to the role of new social forces, which is the jargon for what we're discussing today? There is the argument, associated with Professor Hobsbawm, of a declining working class. I think there are a number of points to be said about that analysis. First of all the working class is always changing its composition and always has. Secondly, when Britain had a working class of a classic character, we never had socialism. So the theory that you could look back on a golden age when you could have got socialism because the working class was big enough to give it is not true. We've never had that.

It also seems to me a very strange — and this is why the miners' strike was so unpopular with the Euro-communists

**'The thing we have surely learned from the last year is that we don't need permission before we take action. If Arthur Scargill had written to Len Murray, he would still be waiting for a letter on House of Lords notepaper telling him to go ahead.'**

efore the election because the Tories are not very loyal to their leaders when they fail. I don't rule out the possibility that if support for the Tories continues to decline the Earl of Stockton will find himself sitting next to the Countess of Finchley and they can sort it out in a private word because the Tories will get rid of them. But the day she goes, and particularly if the Tory Party is defeated, despite everything I've said there will be a big surge of expectations. People will say 'this is the end of the crisis'. They'll have been told it's all about Thatcherism, and when Thatcher goes they'll believe that it is the end.

And that presents a danger for us as a socialist movement. For if, following the rising expectations, there was a terrible disenchantment, it could be followed by a swing to the right and socialism would go down in the subsequent debacle. Our job is to see that doesn't happen.

Now may I say something about certain cul-de-sacs which the left must avoid — the false trails. First of all the temptation to respond personally to attacks on the left that are made personally. I don't believe that has a resonance with the public. I don't think it's the right way forward. Secondly, I don't think that the right way forward is to try and personalise the argument by a challenge to the leadership — because to be quite candid, I think that if that happens, the desire to defeat Thatcher would be so great that the left's strength would not in any way be reflected in the outcome of such a challenge.

I don't not believe that the answer lies in sectarianism, if by that is meant the idea that somehow you can go on dividing and subdividing till you're only with people with whom you wholly agree. I don't believe that splitting the party is right. I don't believe that leaving the party is right. There are people who say, in effect, that there is no hope. That's absolutely wrong. Those in the past who have left, like the ILP, have withered on the bough. We have got to accept that the

ference at Bournemouth, if you forget the media hype for a moment, was an excellent indication of the strength of socialism within the party.

There is one other point I want to touch on, because it often features in the left, and that is the role of parliament. I think there is some genuine confusion about this. The argument about the parliamentary versus extra-parliamentary, put in its crude and simplest form, is really a false argument.

**'If people say we want black sections or women's rights to be recognised then class comes out of a dusty cupboard and is used to reject those demands. Class is used to shut off the new social forces and forgotten if you are going to discuss what transformation would be about.'**

If you doubt what I say, look at the Tory Party who have never believed that their strength lay in parliament. Their strength lies outside parliament, but they need people inside parliament to control the statute book, to enrich the people outside parliament who pay for their election campaign. That view of parliament, as the control of the statute book being part of the process of transformation, seems to me to be unanswerable. We too need the statute book to control the state, to prevent it from enslaving us, to deal with certain economic questions, to liberate or to enfranchise working people (I've never liked the phrase 'empower the working class', I've always thought they had power but didn't use it), but we would have to enfranchise the working people and that is what the statute book is about.

I also think there's some confusion in arguments about about reform versus revolution. My complaint is not that we've had reform rather than revolution, but that we haven't had reform. All the periods of Labour governments have manipulated the system, sometimes to our advantage as in '45, but we have never changed the power structure. And it's that failure to

— that such such an argument was launched at the beginning of the greatest working class struggle in the history of Britain, the miners' strike. That was not supposed to be able ever to happen again. And if it happened, it was supposed to be seen as irrelevant.

**'Don't think we'll do what Mitterrand did. He came unstuck, so we won't even try it. Full employment is therefore no longer on the agenda.'**

Actually, the miners' strike mobilised the very alliance that we're talking about at this conference today. The political consciousness, the central role of women in the strike as an independent reinforcing element, the link with the black community, with the Irish struggles, and so on, came out of it.

Also, as I'm sure must be becoming apparent, the militancy of the so-called white collar workers is rising. Look at the teachers, look at the nurses, look at the GCHQ people. If anyone who thinks that because you've moved to a certain level that somehow excludes



# ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

► continued

part in, culminating in the women's conference. Of course it is not in the constitution, but they will produce an elected slate, which I hope the whole labour movement takes up and then elects them all onto the national executive.

We've got to open up new affiliations and we've got to recreate the socialist tradition within the labour movement. That is what I think our task is about.

When you look at that and ask how do you actually do it, the answer is that we must root it in experience. You can't approach people with a textbook and say 'on page 88 this was said in 1883'. That would be bibliolatry, where people used to stick a pin in the bible to read their fortune.

**'Socialism has got to be rooted in people's experience, it's got to be about whose side you're on. It's got to build solidarity, it's got to develop internationalism.'**

You can't approach socialism in that way. It's got to be about people's experience, it's got to be about whose side you're on, whether it's miners or Liverpool or the people in Tottenham. Any other basis is going to fail. It's got to build solidarity, it's got to develop internationalism.

My approach to internationalism is very, very simple. They've got the same problems in South Africa that we've got here. We were a developing country till a couple of hundred years ago. After all, the collective memory of what it was like in feudal England hasn't changed. England is still a feudal country — you just need to see the opening of parliament on television to realise that. There was the chief on her stool; there were the wise men of the tribe with long hair (they call them judges); there were the witch-doctors robed as bishops; and there were the lords dressed up in animal skins, ermine, indicating their ownership of land. It's a *shared* analysis with the third world that is going to make internationalism real.

We have got to campaign for basic demands and build our broad alliance on the demand for jobs, the demand for homes, the demand for schools, the demand for health care, the demand for dignity when you're old, for equality and an end to discrimination, and the demand for peace. We have got to approach socialism through all forms of experience of exploitation.

Believe it or not we had some document at the Labour national executive's home policy committee last Monday saying that we were going to have a policy for those who were not employed, like woman at home, as if those who work to raise a family were somehow non-employed people. The experience of exploitation may well come just because you are a woman or black or gay.

Unless we open ourselves to those experiences in the way that the trade union affiliation opens up the party to working experience in factories and pits, we're not going to develop good policies. We've must look again at the concept of the manifesto. For many years I spent my time trying to get the manifesto under the control of the national executive, though when I look at the executive now I wonder if it was worthwhile.

We cannot have a manifesto composed of promises made to the public by politicians. The manifesto



Photo: GM COOKSON

has got to be redefined as meaning those demands we make here and now. We make them when Thatcher's in power, we make them when Labour's there, we make them if Owen's there. A manifesto of demands is quite different from a manifesto of promises.

I mention this only briefly, but in Chesterfield we're trying to do just that. There, arising out of the by-election and the miners' strike, our membership has gone up from 300 to 1500. We got a 12 per cent increase in the Labour vote at the county council elections. We've got a community defence campaign. We've got an international committee set up now. (I don't know if other constituencies have done it.) That international committee

is also going to work with Anti Apartheid, with the black groups in the area. It's going to be an international committee that is a centre of internationalism built into the structure of the party. We've got workplace branches. We need plans prepared for the future: new local government legislation, and aims and objectives which we're discussing at our own conference in about four weeks' time.

The policies we're demanding in our manifesto must be for full employment. I know the *Million Jobs A Year* pamphlet which the Campaign group endorsed is not perfect, but actually at the root of most of the questions of black people and women is mass unemployment. Unless we can

tackle that problem, and do it seriously, you're not going to be able to do more than a cosmetic job.

The manifesto, in my opinion, must include the withdrawal from Ireland. All this latest media hype about Fitzgerald and Mrs Thatcher is not going to work. The manifesto must include a policy of non-alignment in British foreign policy: to take us out of NATO, because NATO's nature is being seen more clearly. It must include common ownership of the banks, of land and of major companies. But not a common ownership which ends up with a MacGregor or a Robens in charge, but one which allows people who make the wealth to make the decisions that influence the companies and

enterprises in which they work.

If you look back over the history of the nineteenth century and our whole history, you will find that it is the democratic challenge they fear most. They can live with socialist rhetoric just as they can live with the Archbishop of Canterbury on Easter Sunday talking about the brotherhood of man — so long as nothing happens till next Easter Sunday.

But what is really threatening to the establishment is to demand accountability: accountability of the unions to their members, of local government to their own community of industry to those who work in it, accountability in foreign and defence policy and party democracy put back on the agenda. I agree with the right of recall and I've got a very radical suggestion: that we should have socialist on every shortlist. We have got to prepare it all now.

Can I just say this in conclusion. It is a very hard time in a way, but it is also a time for action and a time for hope. I find that reading labour history is really encouraging because almost everything that's happening has happened many times before.

When I saw the police in Chesterfield I remembered that the government sent the Dublin Fusiliers during the miners' strike of 1893, and again in 1910. In the 1820s I remember they were hanging Luddites all over the place, literally hanging them. They had barracks built after the French revolution, which frightened the British establishment quite as much as the Russian revolution. They built military barracks in all the industrial towns.

**'If anyone demands more than is currently on offer from the top it means you are charged with impossibility, and hence trying to lose the election.'**

It's all happened before. The difference between then and now is that when those people worked for a different society they didn't know it was possible. We know they were able to make gains. In that sense we're doing it again, and this time we intend to do it properly.

The system is in crisis and neither Thatcher nor Macmillan, nor Heath nor Pym, nor Steel, had any real answers. What gives me the feeling of confidence now — because I do have it very strongly — is that more and more people are learning what it's all really about. Political consciousness is rather a fancy phrase but that's what's happening.

I even met lawyers in Chesterfield on Friday who came to complain about what's happened to them under the new Crown Prosecution Service, that solicitors were not being treated properly. The nurses came two days earlier talking about what was happening to them. Capitalism is attacking the professions as well as the manual working class. A lot of people are learning.

And we have surely learned something else from the last year. We don't need permission before we take action. The Greenham Common women didn't need permission, Arthur Scargill didn't need permission. If he had written to Len Murray, he would still be waiting for a letter on House of Lords note-paper telling him to go ahead.

The capacity to take action is vested in us. When you look at it that way, there are grounds for hope and confidence: so long as we're clear that we either do it ourselves or it won't be done at all.



# South Africa: the battle for power

**WHY ARE black people in South Africa now ready and willing to sacrifice even life itself in their fight, asked BEN TUROK of the ANC in the 'Alliance for Socialism' session. Because they are no longer just fighting for civil rights, but for power, for the end of the apartheid state and their liberation from white domination.**

COMRADES, I FEEL an enormous sense of responsibility in fitting into this very rich texture of political discussion here today. I am enormously impressed and stimulated by the wealth of ideas.

Even though what I am going to say is about a struggle many miles away, it is clear that there are certain common themes that face people in struggle across the world, and it is my task today to suggest that the ANC and the people of South Africa are indeed very natural allies in the struggle for socialism, in the alliance for socialism throughout the world.

**'Power is the one thing that will guarantee that people will have civil rights.'**

The ANC is engaged in a struggle against monopoly capitalism and imperialism in its own territory, that is, within South Africa — but also on a world scale.

The ANC is fully conscious that it is fighting not only racism and white domination, but also international monopoly capitalism and imperialism in all its forms.

I say that by way of introduction because the press, very often, will say that the ANC is some kind of civil rights movement engaged in opposing racial prejudice. This is very far from the truth.

We understand that the question of race prejudice and civil liberties is

constitutional universal suffrage for all in a single unitary state.

But we cannot stop there. Because we know that behind constitutional civil rights lie power. I am very pleased that Diane Abbott brought up the question of power so forcefully, because it is really at the centre of what the ANC is about: power. It is the one thing that will guarantee that people will have civil rights, the one thing that will guarantee that people have civil liberties.

Power lies in the South African system both in the political sphere and in the economic sphere.

It lies politically in the system that was set up by British imperialism in 1910, which created a single state within South Africa.

The ANC is also conscious of the economic dimension and this has come foremost recently in the campaigns to force international capital to divest, to pull out of the South African economy.

This is something that we have to press today.

The question of sanctions, of boycott, is a foremost issue in the struggle against the apartheid system. It seems to be extraordinary how the British people do not understand that the multinational corporations which exploit them, which use them, are also a mechanism for making British people participate in the exploitation of black labour in South Africa. We and you have a duty to campaign with every possible energy for the boycott of South African

They are not fighting for local issues of one kind or another. They are fighting for a new conception. And that is that white power has to be overthrown and replaced by a new society, a new non-racial democracy, in which black people will be liberated from white domination and white power of all kinds.

This conception of power appears



Photo: AMIN LADHA

at every funeral, where tens of thousands of people raise the banner of the ANC — an illegal act — where tens of thousands of people call for the release of Nelson Mandela; where tens of thousands of people talk about, and raise the slogan, of support for Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, a very illegal act indeed. Because the new conception has entered the minds of the people — that revolution is here, revolution is possible, and revolution is essential.

Today the ANC's assessment is that there is a mood of uprising in the townships of South Africa. It is interesting to see that this is no longer a protest here or there, but that they are facing a mood of uprising.

Of course we ask, how can people engage in an uprising when they are not armed; when they are faced with a

that the attempt to introduce a single model of struggle into South Africa is a mistake because it is a highly complex society. Rural, urban, working class, national — so many different elements combine that to attempt to impose a single model of struggle is a mistake.

There is an unfolding of different levels of action operating in different ways, combining and converging to put the regime under maximum pressure, which is why it is in such a crisis.

At the first level, there is the kind of action launched by Alan Boesak: the non-violent, passive model, the non-violent protest which led to his recent imprisonment in his march on the prison housing Nelson Mandela.

There is place for that kind of action; open, legal, or perhaps illegal but non-violent, taking the form of open action, confronting the regime in the most embarrassing way.

But there is another level: the mass action of the young people in the townships, who are throwing stones, who are grouping and regrouping in the most fascinating way.

**'The black people of South Africa have come to the view that what they are fighting about is so fundamental that life itself is worth giving in that fight.'**

I was privileged to be in Britain at the time of the Bogside attacks in Belfast. I was fascinated to see the methods that are used by the young people in Bogside, by youngsters embarrassing the armed forces of British imperialism.

I have been privileged to be in London when the riots in Tottenham showed the police forces that even highly armed forces can be embarrassed in different ways.

In South Africa today the young people, unarmed as they are, are finding ways of grouping and regrouping, of fighting a kind of urban guerilla warfare, against the most heavily-armed state, perhaps in the world. And succeeding, too. Disorienting them. Causing them embarrassment. Forcing them to bring in the army because they cannot contain the situation.

So what we see in South Africa is another level of struggle. That is the struggle of young people, even unarmed, but nevertheless able to create enormous embarrassment to the regime.

And then there's the ANC underground. A clandestine movement which has cells throughout the country, which has learnt a great deal about the effects of torture on people who are captured, which has learnt a great deal about the importance of security in the underground. That level acts as a kind of skeleton, a framework, within the whole popular struggle, a framework which lies within the body of the people and which sustains it and gives it guidance and leadership and so on.

And then there is the last one, perhaps the most fundamental, which is Umkhonto We Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC. The Knomati accord and the sealing of the Mozambican border mean, let me say, that hit-and-run ideas and methods are now a thing of the past. A guerilla who goes into South Africa today has to survive, has to stay in the country. He can no longer retreat across the border. He must stay there, he must make sure that the conditions



are ripe for him to stay there and to survive under those conditions.

Of course the casualties are higher. But the result has shown that the actions continue, that the armed struggle of the ANC cannot be defeated by the Nkomati accords, by raids into Botswana, or by anything else.

The ANC's assessment is that the conditions are extremely favourable for the struggle in the country for three reasons.

Firstly, there is a crisis in the ruling class of enormous dimensions. The economic crisis, the financial crisis, is only one element.

There is an ideological crisis as well. The regime does not know where to go. The speeches of Botha make no sense because he has nothing to say. He has no direction to take. All he can do is to defend and stay where he is, however he can. So there is a crisis of the regime.

Secondly, the people themselves. Let me say this: the South African case shows very clearly that those who make the revolution are the masses. The revolutionaries can be around for a long time; the revolutionaries can be as militant as you like. But it's the people who make history. It's the people who, somehow or other, through some chemistry, decide when the time has come to sacrifice all, to be willing to die for their revolution. That's the second factor which exists in South Africa.

And the third factor is the existence of the ANC. Not as an alternative government, in any kind of legalistic, constitutional sense. There are people who have said to the ANC from time to time: you should constitute yourself as a government in exile. The ANC has persistently refused, because it understands that what matters is the existence of a revolutionary movement capable of exercising both organisational, programmatic and ideological capacities and able to serve as an alternative power centre; not an alternative government, ready to take over, but as an alternative power centre capable of shaking the system of white supremacy.

**'The young people, unarmed, are fighting a kind of urban guerilla warfare against the most heavily-armed state in the world.'**

What is the outcome of all this going to be? People ask: when will it happen? We cannot answer these questions. I have been in exile for a long time. People have asked these questions for quite a long while. The answer is impossible to give. It would be silly to try and do so.

But what one can say is that the ANC has fingered the most rotten, reactionary, degenerate state in the world; it has been able to inspire people to fight that system and that state. It has also fingered and identified monopoly capital in South Africa as some of the most reactionary capital in the world; closely identified and linked with international capital here, in the USA and elsewhere; and that this is on the agenda, and clearly understood by the people that if this is what they want, then it is what they will achieve.

The people of South Africa are at a historic moment. We hope that the people of Britain will join them in that historic moment.



of course of very great importance. But in a system where black people have been deprived of constitutional rights, there can be no civil liberties. So for that reason alone, the ANC is not simply and solely a movement for civil liberties; it is a movement for constitutional civil rights for all people in South Africa in a unitary state.

I must emphasise the unitary state, because I was astonished to read the other day that President Botha is saying that he is in favour of universal suffrage in South Africa. This is a fraud.

What he is talking about is people voting in Bantustans, and pretending that thereby they have constitutional civil rights. The ANC is in favour of

commodities and for sanctions of all kinds.

Let me say something about the situation in the country itself. Somehow the black people of South Africa have come to the view that what they are fighting about is so fundamental that life itself is worth giving in that fight.

A change has taken place, in the last few years, but in particular this year, in the conception that people have of what they are fighting for. They are fighting for nothing less than power against white domination, for the establishment of a new system. Something as fundamental as that.

They are not fighting in the last resort for wage increases, although that is often placed in the forefront.

tremendous phalanx of police repression, of the military surrounding townships? Nevertheless, the position in South Africa now is no longer Soweto of 1976, no longer Natal of 1973, when something like 100,000 workers began militant action in a spontaneous way, in a particular circumstance. This is now a nationwide phenomenon in which people are joining, and risking all for the defeat of white power, for the smashing of the apartheid state.

What is the expected course of the struggle? What is likely to happen? It is difficult to answer in simplistic terms, but what I can say is this: do not have simple preconceptions about this kind of struggle or that kind of struggle. Reality has shown

# ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

## The biggest carve up since Partition

**BRITISH WITHDRAWAL** from Ireland should be seen as central for creating an alliance for socialism, said **MARTIN COLLINS**, editor of *Labour and Ireland*. The latest Anglo-Irish accord is a challenge to Irish nationalism. We cannot sit back and ignore it just because the Unionists are blowing their tops.

THE TITLE of the weekend is 'An Alliance for Socialism'. We have to bear three things in mind. First is the struggle of the working class and the alliances it has to make. Second is how you use that alliance to break up and defeat the state. Third is to look at the system of alliances of the ruling class and to seek to break those alliances up.

It's very obvious that in Britain, if we are talking about breaking up the power of the capitalist state, we have to embark on the destruction of the state in the occupied six counties of the north of Ireland as well as simply looking at the problem in terms of 'Britain' itself.

If you want to break up the alliances of the ruling class, you have to break up the alliance between the British ruling class and the establishment in the north of Ireland: the Ulster Unionists.

If you are looking at alliances of the working class you have to see that it's necessary inside Britain to create an alliance with the Irish in Britain.

But you also have to see that the British working class has a fundamental interest in alliance with the Irish working class itself. Even if we get to the stage where the Irish have managed to kick the British out, and remove the partition that was imposed by the British, then it is still the case that democracy in Ireland will not be safe until the British ruling class has been fundamentally defeated in Britain as well.

British imperialism will always be a thorn in the side of the development of Irish democracy and the British working class will always have an interest in an alliance with the Irish working class.

If you look at the picture of the struggle for socialism that is predominantly shared by the Labour left in Britain, such an alliance is not foremost in people's minds. At best the struggle in Ireland is some sort of 'added extra'; an appendage to the struggle for socialism in Britain — one whereby the struggle for socialism in Britain is hampered by inconveniences like plastic bullets, inconveniences like the Prevention of Terrorism Act, inconveniences like the existence of strip searching in British jails.

It has to be got across that if we are to make advances on the left then the alliance with the Irish people has to be foremost in peoples' minds.

If you read the book by Chris Mullin *A Very British Coup* you can see in essence the fundamentally peculiar *English* variety of socialism that important sections of the Labour left are talking about and pursuing. You have in that book a scenario for a supposed victory of the Labour Left where the question of the Irish dimension of the struggle is entirely absent. It's not a problem that's considered.

Today, the newspapers have been filled with this 'historic breakthrough' coming out of the London-Dublin talks. We have to think about where the Anglo-Irish deal fits into our model of socialism, — into our discussion on where socialism in Britain is going. Because when the last 'fundamental breakthrough' in 1974 — when the Sunningdale power shar-

ing agreement was set up — the British labour movement, and even the socialist left, looked on the 1974 agreement with a charitable sort of attitude.

When they looked at that agreement, they saw the SDLP was going to be introduced onto the power sharing executive; they saw the possibility of curbing some excesses of the sectarian state; they thought that maybe this form of rule was going to be a little bit more democratic than direct rule.

But most important of all, they looked upon the Sunningdale power sharing agreement and said 'ah well, the Ulster Unionists are our enemies, and because our enemies are opposing it then we are just going to sit back on the sidelines and see how it develops. We think it might very well fail. If it does fail it will be because the Unionists have brought it down. We should just sit back and watch. We don't have any real interest in helping to bring it down.'

When I was preparing for the session today I was looking at some of the papers. It's very confusing at first glance to see what's going on because *The Observer* headline reads 'Thatcher's battle plan to beat rebel Unionists'. On the other hand, the *Sunday Times* tells us about an 'Anglo-Irish drive to defeat the IRA'. Two of the supposedly serious newspapers have completely opposite understandings of what is going on!

**'The nationalists don't need permission to stick up Irish street signs or display the Irish Tricolour. They are doing it already.'**

Ian Paisley was quoted in the newspapers as saying 'Thatcher will find that the Ulster people are not miners or Argentinians. They have grit and courage and strength.'

So, there you are. Quite clearly our enemies are opposing this deal. Does that mean that we have something to gain by sitting on the sidelines or pretending it's some kind of advance?

We shouldn't make the mistake of underestimating what has actually happened. In 1981 Margaret Thatcher was commenting on the hunger strikers. She said she couldn't understand what was going on. 'Northern Ireland' she said, 'is as fundamentally British as Finchley'.

Four years later, she's meeting with Garret Fitzgerald in Hillsborough Castle. The last time he visited the north it was described as a 'border incursion'.

To understand what's going on in this new supposed Anglo Irish dialogue appears difficult. You have to come to grips with a new language they've invented.

The first word of the new language is 'ethos' describing the traditions of Protestantism. The ethos that has to be respected and paid great heed to, was not what we thought the traditions of Ulster Unionism were — a religious, racist, ideology about going out on 12 July getting pissed, yelling abuse at Catholics, and maybe even throwing stones through their windows, and petrol bombs through their front



doors.

Now there is something different we are told. It is a tradition which has its roots in a very religious dedication which has to be respected. So the whole notion of what Loyalism-Unionism is about has been turned around by this new word, a 'Protestant ethos' which is somehow different from Unionism and Loyalism.

There's another word and that's 'alienation'. Properly speaking, alienation would mean the systematic exclusion of the nationalist population of the six counties from every sphere of life — be it economic life through job discrimination, be it cultural life through the banning of the Irish flag, of the Irish language and exclusion from the political process by means of a gerry mandered electoral system.

The 'alienation' which Thatcher

and FitzGerald talk about is the Sinn Fein vote and the resistance of the nationalist population of the North. The word has been twisted round and used to present a different picture.

Then we have another notion 'the agenda'. The great achievement of Garret FitzGerald is to put items 'on to the agenda' of an Anglo Irish dialogue. Not that they are going to do anything about the sectarianism of the UDR. Not that they are going to do anything about strip searching but somehow it's a big victory that you are able to 'put matters on the agenda' and maybe put some suggestions forward that might or might not be listened to.

You have to look at why it was necessary to invent this new language and why it's necessary to go through this process of talking between Dublin and London. Thatcher has

woken up to the fact that there is fundamentally no solution to the problem of 'northern Ireland'. None whatsoever.

There is no solution militarily. Neither side can win. Half a million nationalists, cannot defeat one million Loyalists, when added to 20,000 armed unionist paramilitaries, the weight of the army and so on.

Equally it's impossible for the British to win, even given their vast fire power. They can't impose a solution in the six counties of the north, because the nationalist population have thrown up a militant Republican leadership which will not go back to the old ways of being governed, will not submit to sectarian majority rule. The roots of resistance of the nationalist people are so deep that it cannot be crushed with any military might.



It is the same on the political front. It's impossible to find a solution to the 'Northern Ireland problem'. It's impossible to return to the old forms of majority rule — because the nationalists won't put up with it. It's impossible to come up with a British solution and make it stick. It's impossible to achieve a nationalist solution because of the existence of the gerrymandering in the first place. So there is no possibility of further movement, and it's necessary for Britain to recruit the Dublin ruling establishment to help them to find a solution.

**Dublin now spends more money per head of the population in defending the border than the British do. 9**

Again, there are changes compared to the previous situation. In 1969 Jack Lynch sent troops of the Irish Republic to the border to guard against a massacre in the north. Some years later Charlie Haughey, now leader of Fianna Fail, was involved in an arms trial under the supposition that he was going to supply arms for the defence of the nationalist people. The situation is completely different today. Dublin now spends more money per head of the population in defending the border than the British do. The whole panoply of repressive legislation is echoed throughout the south of Ireland. You have no jury courts, you have Section 31 which keeps Sinn Fein from the media.

Internationally, the Irish embassies are completely subservient to the British embassies. An increasing incursion upon Irish neutrality and a subordination of Irish foreign policy to the interests of and wishes of NATO. The government is the best ally the British ruling class has to stabilise the six counties.

It's interesting to note that when we talk about the Anglo-Irish deal, more correctly we should be talking about an Anglo-Irish-American deal. The first thing that will be done when this accord is pushed through in the South, and the British parliament, is to send it to the United Nations for the full approval of Ronald Reagan, for ratification at an international level, and for the promise of money being held out in the future.

The accord defies the Irish constitution. It will only serve to prepare for a co-ordinated offensive against the Republican movement and the nationalist resistance that lies behind it.

**Democracy in Ireland will not be safe until the British ruling class has been defeated in Britain as well as in Ireland. 9**

Why should the Dublin government do that? Among other reasons, because of financial pressure. The 26 counties is the most indebted economy in western Europe — one thoroughly in hock to British bankers, and open to pressure from the IMF who prevent loans being called in.

The southern government also suffer because the threat of political instability, represented by the Republican movement, strikes at the very heart of stability in the 26 Counties — where the national question is still the most important political issue going.

In the latest Anglo Irish talks another new word has been invented. In the conference they are going to set

up where Dublin can have a say in the running of the 6 counties will sit the 'constitutional representatives'.

Those two words are very important. What 'constitution' are they are talking about? They are certainly not talking about the Irish constitution because it claims sovereignty over the whole of the 32 counties. They must be talking about the British constitution.

That's not written yet! Why 'constitutional representatives'? The reason why they are talking about constitutional representatives is because they refuse to have elected representatives. They aim to entirely exclude Sinn Fein from any discussions about the future of Ireland.

That is what the Anglo-Irish talks are all about. They are all about the recognition by the Dublin government of the partition of Ireland for the first time ever. They are all about a co-ordinated security offensive to be waged against the Republican movement and the nationalist people. That is what the Dublin government is giving support to in return for putting onto the 'agenda' such items as 'cultural heritage', discrimination, a Bill of Rights, maybe the release of some prisoners to take some of the tension out of the prisons, and maybe some economic co-operation. What is off the agenda is the notion of justice, the disbandment of the UDR, the question of plastic bullets, strip searching of women prisoners, and the censorship which is used to repress the views of republicanism and nationalism.

I'll finish with a quote from Gerry Adams — who's looking forward to the possibility of concessions being made to the nationalist people from the Anglo Irish summit. He says 'such concessions are not attributable to the efforts of establishment politicians. They can be claimed by a struggling nationalist people as a minor appetiser on the road to tasting the full fruit of victory'.

That is the way the nationalist people in the north will look at the Anglo Irish deal. They will not come out on the streets to propose the smashing up of this deal. They will wait and see what this deal means to the people who have borne the brunt of British oppression.

The nationalists don't need permission to stick up Irish street signs, or display the Irish Tricolour. They are doing it already.

This is retrospective legislation, making legal something which the security forces have no power to prevent anyway. People are going to be looking at, and measuring up the performance of the SDLP against the aspirations of the nationalist people and see where it gets them. These points have been put onto the 'agenda' by the struggle of the nationalist people of the north and they are not going to be removed from the agenda by any kind of sell out.

So these talks are not some kind of diversion. Just because Ian Paisley and the Unionists oppose them doesn't mean we just sit back. We have an interest as socialists in fighting for an alliance with the Irish people, of opposing these things ourselves and making sure that people who support the cause of Ireland are won and convinced that they have to oppose this deal. We have to organise and educate around what it represents, because it's something new, something we have to pay attention to.

It's something we have to fight.

**Black section organiser faces expulsion**

ROY HATTERSLEY'S Sparkbrook constituency is trying to expel two leading supporters of its newly-formed black section. In the most serious threat to black people in the Labour Party since the national black section was formed two years ago, the constituency executive decided, by eight votes to six, to recommend that the general committee expel councillor Amir Khan and Kevin Scally when it next meets on 26 November.

Amir and Kevin are formally charged with bringing the party into disrepute. They took part in a television programme in Tariq Ali's *Bandung File* series, which claimed that Hattersley supporters controlled the party by mobilising blocs of Asian voters in deals struck with Birmingham's 'ghetto god-fathers'.

The charge itself is just an excuse — although if the practice of expelling for 'bringing the party into disrepute' becomes general no one is safe. The real source of the EC's ire is the formation, a month ago, of a thriving black section with broad support among Asian party members.

Amir Khan was the leading figure in the move. Kevin was one of its most prominent white supporters.

The black section national officers, supported by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, have circulated an open letter. It is due to appear this week in *Labour Weekly* and *Tribune*. It is already supported, among others, by Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Jo Richardson.

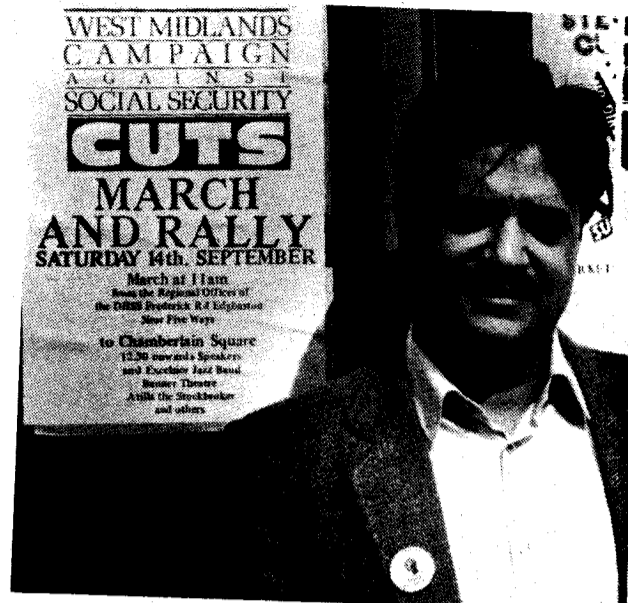
We reproduce it below,

and urge all our readers to send individual letters of protest to the NEC, to Roy Hattersley and *Labour Weekly*, and to pass motions of protest.

**WE ARE** deeply alarmed that Sparkbrook Labour Party executive has decided to recommend that Sparkbrook GC expel councillor Amir Khan and Kevin Scally, both long-standing and respected Labour Party members.

Their alleged offence — taking part in a television programme on Sparkbrook Labour Party — is covered by no party guidelines or rules, and does not merit such measures. Expulsion would be interpreted as a response to their political views.

Amir Khan is leading the establishment of a black section in Sparkbrook, whose MP Roy Hattersley is deputy leader. Black people in Britain will rightly judge the Labour Party by whether it conducts the debate on black sections fairly, rationally and democratically. They will inevitably condemn a move which seems designed to settle debate by



expelling those on one side of it.

Kevin Scally is a leading activist in the Labour Committee on Ireland. His expulsion would also leave the Labour Party wide open to the charge that it settles debate by expulsion.

The move is not only undemocratic but will harm Labour's election prospects. The majority of Sparkbrook voters are of Asian or Irish descent. How can Labour endorse such moves and then stand before them as a champion of democracy or of the oppressed?

The attempt to discipline individuals on the grounds of internal political disagreement proved a

disastrous obstacle to victory in the run up to the last election. A new and extremely dangerous precedent for disunity would be set by the expulsion of two leading individuals who are not associated with any political tendency but merely hold views unpopular with their local party leadership. We appeal to those concerned that the expulsion proceedings are ended.

● Copies of any motions passed should be sent to the Black Section National Committee, and to the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, 10 Park Drive, London NW1.

**Warning signs for CND**

LAST WEEKEND'S annual CND conference saw the national leadership more firmly in control than in previous years. But the activists are still strong in CND. MATTHEW CREIGHTON, Labour CND executive committee member writing in a personal capacity, reports.

'A WEEKEND away from politics' was how one delegate described his first CND conference. The central political issues facing the anti-missiles movement were kept well off the agenda by a leadership whose grip on the campaign was clearly stronger than in previous years.

For instance, the British Defence Charter, which a number of leading members of CND executive are cobbl-

ing together to present politicians with a soft option to unilateralism, was never discussed. When Labour CND asked why mention of their opposition to this charter had been removed from their report, the answer was that the charter organiser, James Hinton, did not wish to win CND support at this conference so we need not think about it!

But despite the stage-

managed and uneventful debates, it is clear that this is a movement which still has considerable vitality particularly around mass actions against cruise missiles.

Motions agreeing to give more support to these activities, and to actions against Polaris in Scotland, were passed. But conference also voted to give 'top priority' to the proposal for 'Basic Case' campaigning.

Clearly a conference which votes for more resources for everything does little to map out any future strategy. This leaves the real decisions about direction to CND council and does not hamper the compromising shifts of its leaders.

Basic Case is seen by some as a means of reinstating unilateralism at the centre of the campaign which successfully won public opposition to cruise and Trident but made little progress with its central aim.

It became clear however that to others it can be used as a way of dropping the question of NATO and US bases by concentrating only on British deterrence. This interpretation appeared to be endorsed by conference when it rejected an amend-

ment to include the bases and NATO.

Significantly, this was the only mention of NATO on the agenda. But the numerous motions referring to NATO originally submitted by CND groups showed that a section of the campaign realises that it is hampered in progressing unless it tackles the central pillar of British defence and foreign policy — which will require reversing the shifts registered at this conference.

Perhaps the spectacle of Bruce Kent supporting a motion to dilute the constitutional objects of the campaign will at last show the members that the leaders whom they have followed uncritically and bottling out. They would rather shift ground to accommodate the needs of Labour and Alliance leaders than confront the Labour Party's allegiance to NATO.

It is no coincidence that their 'non-nuclear defence strategy' looks remarkably like the Labour Party's 1984 defence document.

After a conference like this, the left will need to get its act together if it is not to waste the opportunities presented by the mass missiles movement.

**WIDENING THE WEB GREENHAM COMMON**  
SATURDAY DEC. 14th 1985

ENCLOSE THE BASE ♀ EMBRACE THE WORLD

MAKE A 9 MILE ♀♀♀ INFORMATION BOARD AT GREENHAM

AT 20th LINK HANDS ALL ROUND THE BASE. TURN OUR BACKS ON THE MILITARY MADNESS AND LOOK OUTWARDS TO THE WORLD.

SUNDAY 15th IF YOU CAN STAY

WIDEN THE WEB AND CARRY GREENHAM HOME EMPOWERED AND STRONG

DECEMBER 12th

CONTACT: DEC 14th ACTION WOMEN'S PEACE CAMP GREENHAM COMMON NEWBURY BERKS

HELP

REACHING OUT IS WIDENING THE WEB

**NEXT WEEK**

Speeches from the 'Alliance for Socialism' weekend continue with:

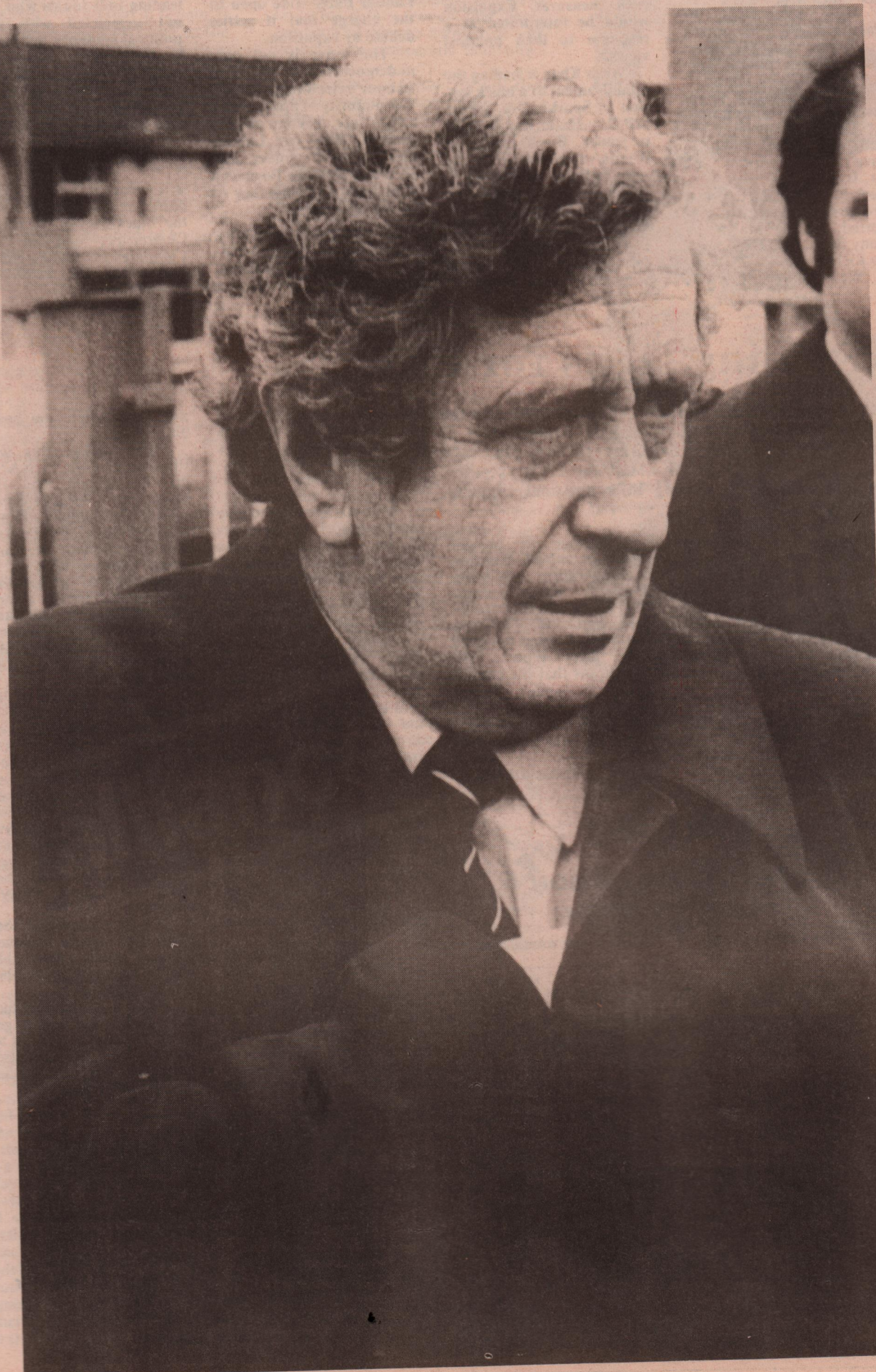
- Marc Wadsworth
- Ann Pettifor
- Narendra Makanji
- The FDR of El Salvador
- Women Against Pit Closures
- The Anti-Apartheid Movement
- ...and others

# A Socialist ACTION

## No return to bipartisanship!

# Reject the London-Dublin deal!

Photo: G M COOKSON



Garret FitzGerald

LABOUR'S COMMITMENT to the reunification of Ireland is being broken up by the front bench's headlong return to bipartisanship behind the conservative Anglo-Irish Accord. The shadow cabinet has fallen for the notion that if the Dublin government gets an office in the Six Counties, it's the first step towards eventual reunification. Their conviction is confirmed by the blood-curdling rallying calls of the 'clockwork' Orangemen in the House of Commons.

Tony Benn disagrees. 'It's another one of these cases,' he said, 'where we are told we all have to pull

**By Martin Collins  
Ed Labour and Ireland**

together. It's the same as when they sent the troops in in the first place. I'll be voting against the Accord when it comes up in parliament.'

Despite the 'rhetoric' of the Irish constitution and the conclusions of the Forum Report which argued for a unitary state, the Dublin government is the best ally Thatcher has in defending partition. The British will allow Garret FitzGerald a right to comment on the running of the occupied Six Counties only in return for an Accord which registers his government's acceptance of partition and the Unionist veto at the United Nations.

The Labour Committee on Ireland is calling for MPs to vote against the Accord in parliament, and organising a campaign of opposition and education against it. They point out that even if the Accord, like previous initiatives aimed at devolution, is opposed by Unionists, it will inevitably lead to renewed repression of the nationalist population.

Exclusion of Sinn Fein is not just an attack on that party. It is a disenfranchisement of those nationalists who have suffered most from discrimination by the sectarian state and repression

at the hands of the army, RUC and UDR.

Labour's spokesperson Peter Archer dashed to Belfast this week to 'consult' with all parties and like his Tory counterparts snubbed Sinn Fein.

How different is Labour leadership's con-

fusion to even the *Daily Mirror* which says: 'This is an agreement for politicians, not the people... Mrs Thatcher has nearly all of Westminster's politicians on her side largely because all parties have failed over Ireland in the past. But they failed because they refuse to recognise the heart of the problem, which is the British presence in Ireland. We will not take the first step to peace until that is removed.'

● See 'The biggest carve up since partition', p10.

## Defend Liverpool

AS WE GO to press, it seems Liverpool council is on the verge of accepting a package of proposals which would avoid imminent bankruptcy.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities have offered the council over £3 million of borrowing rights unused by other councils and has thus been able to compromise substantially, softening the blow involved in its earlier proposals, which were the subject of the Stone-Frost Report canvassed by council leaders such as David Blunkett.

The report would have involved major cuts in Liverpool's housing budget and an 18 per cent rate rise. The new offer would mean a five per cent rate rise, sale of financial assets such as

Liverpool's housing association mortgages, and transfer of expenditure to other years' budgets.

The concessions will not meet Liverpool's needs. But the ferocious onslaught against the council from Kinnock supporters, and the council's national isolation, seem increasingly likely to force acceptance of the compromise.

The TGWU and NALGO have already called for acceptance of the original Stone-Frost proposals — but a new grouping within NALGO, calling itself NALGO Rank and File, has been campaigning against acceptance on the basis that it is a 'live now pay later' solution that would lead to the fight to defend jobs and services being abandoned.