

Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1

Strikers and claimants 25p

No 30

25 October, 1992

socialist **OUTLOOK**

**Mines, Rail, Councils, Post Office,
Health, Civil Service – FIGHT NOW!**



Public sector

Strike

together!

KICK THE TORIES OUT!



**Tory
Crisis Special**

Major hits the pits

Butchering the coal industry

By Dave Osler

THE 1988 Conservative Party conference heard energy secretary Cecil Parkinson herald 'the ultimate privatisation': British Coal. Last week's announcement that 31 pits are to shut at the cost of 30,000 mining jobs – and at least 60,000 in the rest of the economy – is part of the pre-sale softening-up process.

Of course, there is the element of revenge against the workers that toppled the Tories in 1974. As Parkinson himself, now out of Parliament, explicitly noted last week: 'Don't forget, in this great surge of sympathy, that the miners brought

down a government and abused economic power many times.'

But at bottom, the decision remains a triumph of the government's never-ending quest for a privatisation fast buck against even the long term interests of British capital.

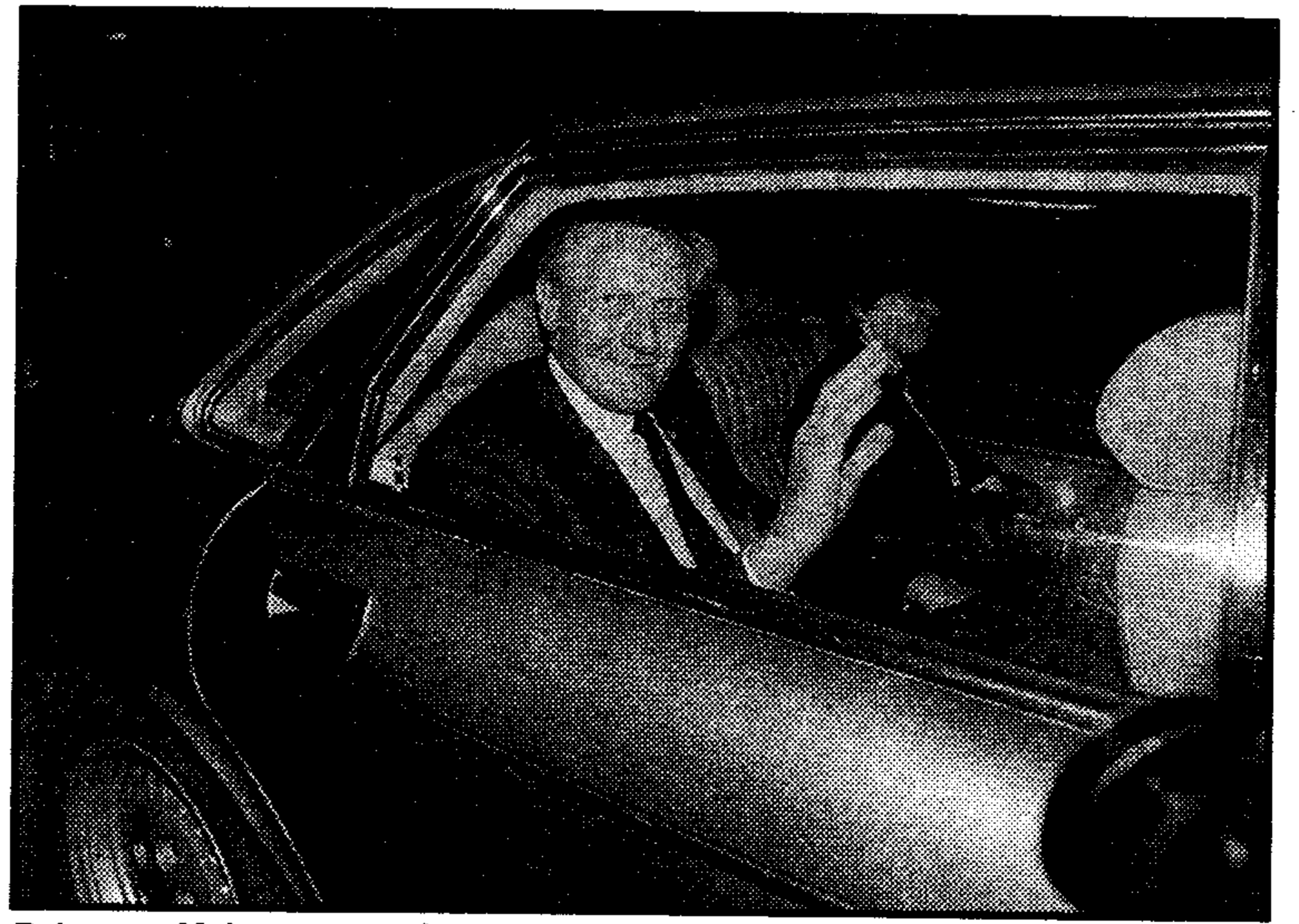
A leaked report from the government's pits privatisation advisors, N. M. Rothschild merchant bankers, made one point brutally last Autumn: 'In all market based scenarios, a substantial further pit closure programme is required.'

As many expert energy economists point out, the coal closures are madness in anything but the short term, even from a rational capitalist

standpoint.

More than £1,000 million will have to be spent on redundancy programmes; perhaps £2,000m will be added to the balance of payments deficit; 90,000 more dole cheques will have to be sent out every week, while direct and indirect taxation revenue is lost. All this before they count the cost in human misery.

On nationalisation in 1947, British Coal owned 1,400 pits. Before the year-long strike of 1984-85, there were still 170, employing 180,000 miners. As of last week there were just 53,000 in 50 mines. On Rothschild's worst case projection, numbers could go down to just 10,000 in 12 pits by 1995.



Driven to Major concessions

Privatisation

Who will buy what's left?

THE REMAINING coal mines could prove gold mines for new private capitalist owners ready to push through measures that would never have been tolerated before - the abolition of national wage bargaining, introduction of 12 hour shifts and a generalised six day week.

Two British-owned multinationals, RTZ, which operates coal mines in Australia, Indonesia and New Guinea, and asset-stripping king Hanson Trust, which owns the world's largest private coal mining company, Peabody of the USA, have indicated interest.

Another possible contender is Anglo American Corporation of South Africa. British Coal chairman Neil Clarke is a former Anglo director, who spent ten years with the company.

Coalite smokeless fuel producers Anglo United have withdrawn from the race be-

cause the severity of pit cuts has left the operation too small to be of interest.

Ryan group, the largest player in Britain's private coal mining sector, which includes 144 underground mines and 72 opencast (surface mining) sites has already said it wants to take over at least one of the Welsh pits. Smaller companies such as Budge Mining and Young group may also be in the market if British Coal is carved up.

At one stage, a management-employee buy-out centred on the strike-breaking Union of Democratic Mineworkers looked a strong possibility.

It would have had strong political appeal to the government as a massive boost to new realism in the labour movement. But the depth of the attack against even UDM pits announced last week now seems to rule this option out.



Mark Salmon

Miners against Maastricht

Competition

A rigged market run by monopolies

THE TORIES JUSTIFY the closures with the argument that British Coal's output is 'not competitive'. In truth, its worth depends on such volatile factors as world prices for coal and oil, and as these are traded in dollars, the strength of the pound. Devaluation of sterling since Black Wednesday has immeasurably strengthened British Coal's position.

The real reason British Coal cannot sell its product is the effective blackmail it suffers at the hands of its two chief customers, PowerGen and National Power, the two electricity generation companies artificially born of the division of the Central Electricity Generating Board on privatisation in 1990.

The two companies currently buy fully 77 per cent of British Coal's output under a three year contract which ex-

pires in on 31 March 1993. They are now threatening to cut their current order of 65 million tonnes a year to between 30-40 million, turning to other fuels or imported coal instead.

This way PowerGen and National Power can, in Rothschild's words, 'purchase coal at below the market price that would have arisen in a competitive market. This would increase generator profits (which would not be passed to electricity consumers) at the expense of coal industry profits and production.'

This is in the government's short-term interests. It still holds 40 per cent of the shares in the generators, which it wishes to sell for as much as possible on the basis of guaranteed easy profits.

But PowerGen and National Power in turn face competition from around 30 new gas-fired power stations planned or under construction by the 12 regional electricity supply companies,

out to lessen their reliance on the generators.

While these plants are quick and cheap to build, their electricity is 20 per cent more than electricity from coal. No problem for the supply companies. As local monopolies, they can simply pass on extra costs to customers.

The crazy situation is the inevitable result of Tory attempts to build a market in a sector that remains nationalised almost everywhere else in the world, allowing governments to plan sensible energy policies.

British Coal is already the most efficient producer in Europe, with operating costs down 33 per cent in six years. Last year it produced 90m tonnes, recording a profit (£78m) for the first time in 13 years in 1991 – and a 1992 profit of £170m. British Coal has exploitation rights for the 45,000 million tonnes of recoverable reserves, enough to last 300 years.

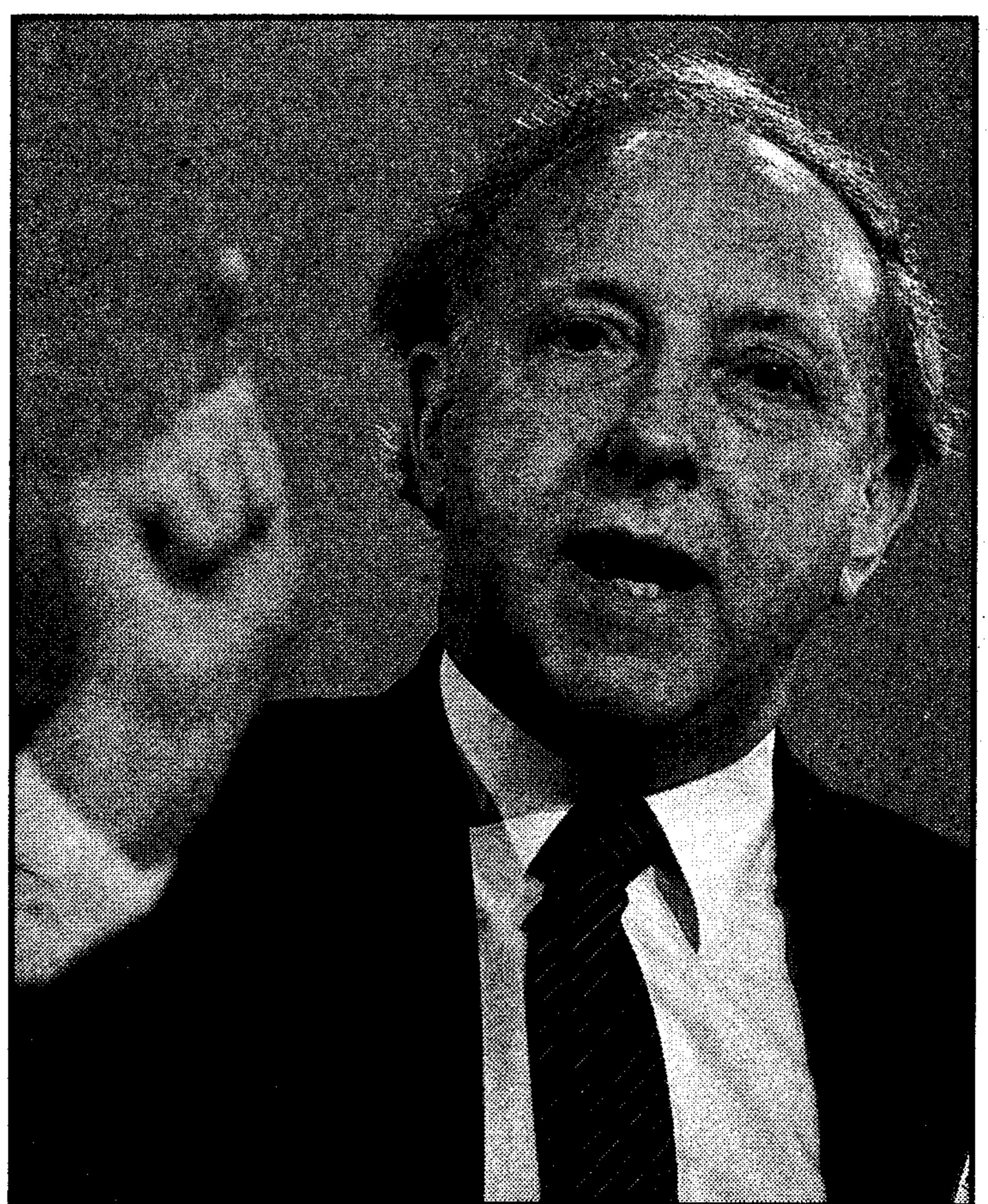


PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Scargill points the finger at the Tories



**Tory
Crisis Special**

Unite the struggles!

Finish off the Tories!

AS SOCIALIST OUTLOOK went to press on Monday, it seems just possible that so-called 'concessions' over the timing of pit closures will be enough to scrape the government through the crucial Commons vote on the issue on Wednesday. But not even that much is certain.

In any case, the changes don't alter anything fundamental; it is slow motion destruction of the coal industry instead of sudden death. The fight to stop the closures continues.

Even if it manages a Houdini-style parliamentary escape act, Major's government is now wounded – possibly fatally. The political loss of face inflicted by even this limited backdown will be immense.

Split

The government's latest problems come on top of the Conservatives' deep split on Maastricht, with its recent conference revealing a party on the brink of open warfare; it's economic credibility has disintegrated in the wake of Black Wednesday; even the Mellor affair has made it an object of popular ridicule.

Having won April's election, the Tories now face all the horrendous consequences of Thatcherism and its destruction Britain's industrial base.

This, combined with world recession and the crisis over European unity, is devastating the British economy. More than four million unemployed are paying the price.

But it is not just those faced with redundancy, wage freeze or public spending cuts that are in revolt. Huge sections of the Tories' base amongst small business people and other sections of the middle class are also being savaged by Major's recessionary policies.

Fatal blow

While this revolt has crystallised around pit closures, concessions on this issue cannot be allowed to let the Tories off the hook; a real possibility exist now to deal the government a fatal blow.

Numerous groups of workers are in the firing line. Throughout this summer groups of local government workers have been striking against cutbacks and redundancies. Healthworkers face mass redundancies through

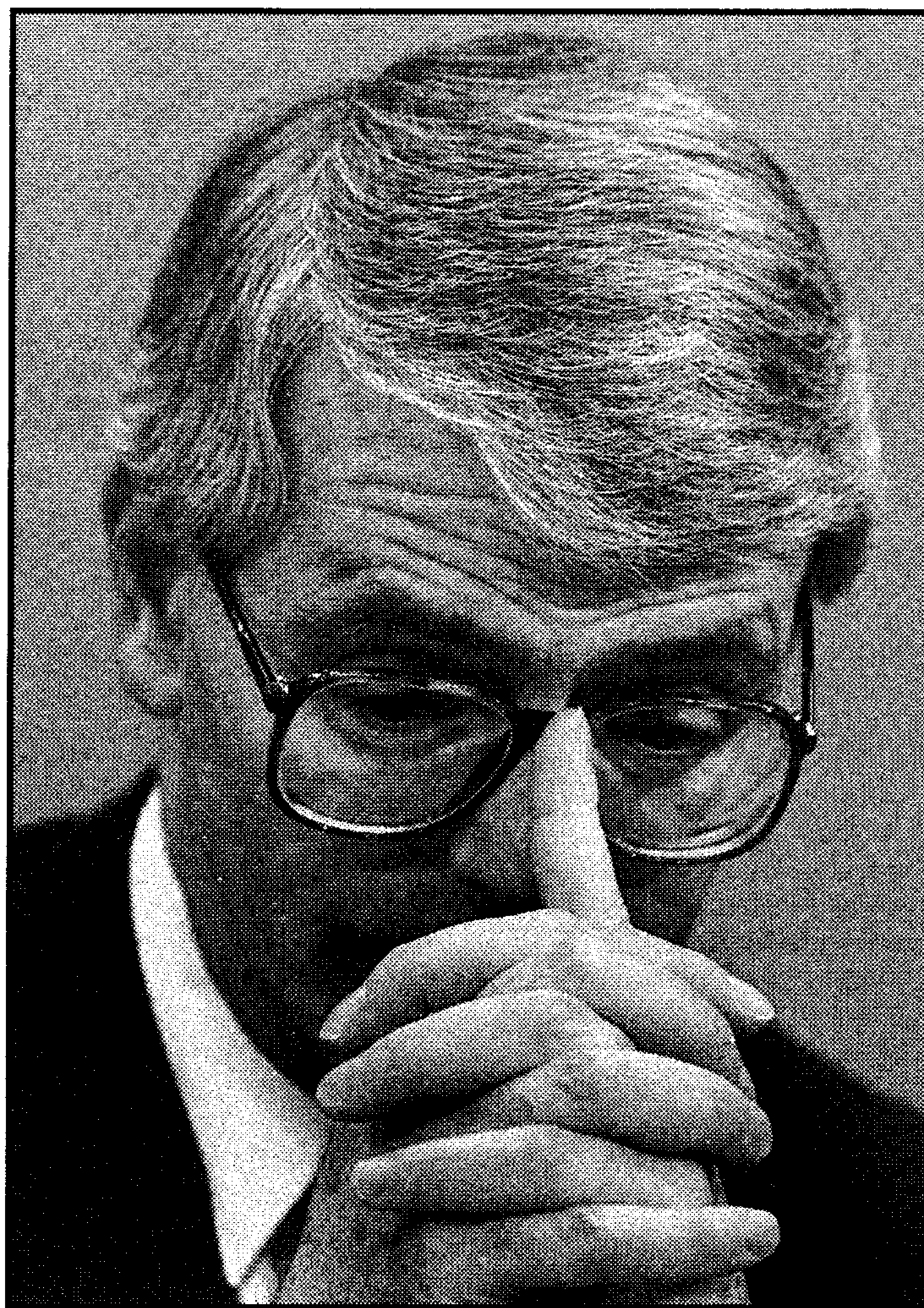


PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Time to put Major's nose out of joint!

hospital closures and other cutbacks. Privatisation of the Royal Mail and British Rail are just round the corner. Teachers face compulsory redundancies for the first time. *Now is the time to forge a powerful public sector alliance against the Tory attacks.*

An effective alliance however can only be based on industrial action, and the best basis for that will be created by a 'yes' vote for strike action by miners.

But beyond the miners, industrial action must be conducted against the cascade of redundancies – whether declared already or in the pipe line through privatisation. In the present climate redundancy payments and 'retraining' packages are useless. Workers sacked faced virtually zero chance of getting another job.

Strike action

Redundancies can only be fought by strike action and occupations. Job sharing with no loss of pay must be the solution popularised throughout the labour movement.

Fighting for industrial action against job losses, fighting to unite the struggles, fighting for no let up in support for the miners – this is just a start. Also vital is that the TUC and Labour leaders continue the fight and do more than the rock-bottom

minimum they have already announced.

Next Sunday's demonstration called by the TUC may well be massive, but the Tories and the employers will not be shifted by even a monster turnout on a Sunday.

The TUC must call a national day of strike action to support the miners. This is the vital next step, a central focus to follow up Sunday's protest. It will of course mean defying the anti-union laws.

But never was there an issue on which the chances of getting mass stoppages was greater; and on which the possibility of effectively using the law against mass stoppages less.

public opinion, the actions of the TUC the absolute minimum they could get away with.

The real danger now is that given the minimal 'concessions' by the government the TUC and Labour leaders will let the government off the hook.

If the government is not defeated in the Commons we now face the prospect of a long drawn-out battle to defend the miners' jobs. The building of miners support groups nationwide is a first priority. The networks which were created during the miners' strike must be reactivated.

A new political situation has been created by the outcry over pit closures. That outcry did not arise simply because of public sympathy with the miners, huge though that has been. It arose because the pit closures, signalling the virtual end of the coal industry, symbolised the regime of mass unemployment and industrial vandalism which threatens the livelihood of millions. It is an expression of deep-seated anger from those on the receiving end of the crisis of British capitalism.

The opportunity exists in this new situation to impose devastating defeats on the Tories and drive them from office – if we strike together.

Useless Labour

The response of the Labour leadership, a national petition campaign, has been predictably useless; and given the weight of

socialist
OUTLOOK

National Rally

**Tories in Crisis –
European Capitalism in
Crisis**

Ernest Mandel

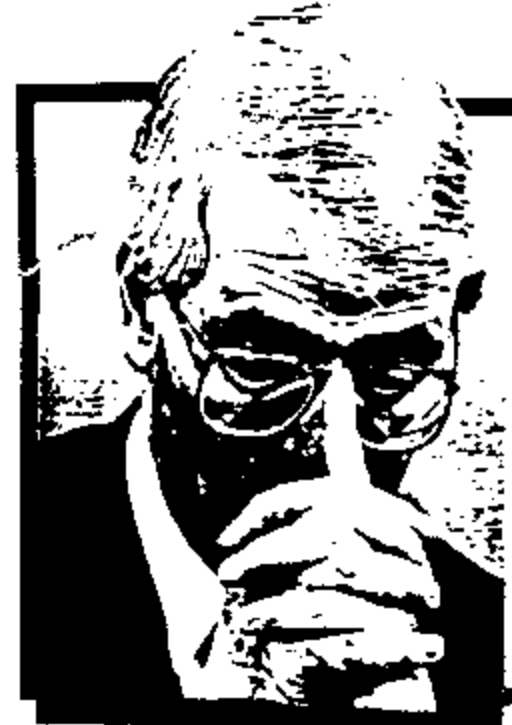
(Fourth International)

Alan Thornett
(editorial board Socialist Outlook)

Ann Conway
(Peoples Democracy – Ireland)

Speakers from the National Union of Mineworkers

Kingsway College,
Sidmouth St., off Grays Inn Rd., London WC1 (Kings Cross Tube)
7.30pm Friday 23 October



**Tory
Crisis Special**

**Public sector:
Strike now
together to
defeat Tories!**

By Celia Murphy

WITH THE TORY government on the run over pit closures now is the time for workers in the public sector to join forces to defeat Tory plans for pay freezes, cuts and privatisation.

The fightbacks going on in local government, the NHS, education and other public services need to be co-ordinated and given mutual support.

This is the best way to turn militant but isolated disputes into a wave of action capable of halting Tory plans to demolish the public sector.

Council workers

Council workers in authorities up and down the country from Sheffield to Islington are striking to save jobs and defend services from savage cuts.

But co-ordinated action is needed in response to the growing national problem of cash-starved local authorities hacking back vital services.

The Department of the Environment is expected to be the biggest loser in the government's next round of public spending cuts - meaning millions more pounds will be slashed from next year's council budgets.

Council tax capping will prevent councils raising more finance from the tax so the inevitable result will be services slashed and thousands more jobs axed.

Health workers

In the NHS, workers are bracing themselves for further cuts as more hospitals opt out and the Tomlinson report into London's health service is published.

A further 128 hospitals and health units are to become self-governing trusts next April.

With 121 more applying to be included in the fourth-wave, this will bring the total opted-out by April 1994 to more than 400 - 95% of hospitals and community services: many first and second wave trusts are already slashing jobs and services.

Self-governing status and the introduction of a market system for health care have wrought havoc on patient care. For healthworkers it has meant job losses and increased

workloads and demoralisation for those who have remained.

While front line NHS staff lose their jobs and see conditions attacked, what was once the cheapest and most efficient health care system in the world is now a mushrooming and expensive bureaucracy with the paybill for the growing layer of NHS managers and administrators rising by 900% in the last five years.

The Tomlinson report, due in the next few weeks, is set to recommend closure of some of London's prestigious teaching hospitals - axing thousands of jobs - whilst waiting lists in the capital continue to grow.

Health unions have already taken strike action over jobs: this must be stepped up.



Time for railworkers to hit the road

Teachers

In education teachers are being told future pay rises will be awarded solely by 'performance' and be at the mercy of governors.



Nursing a grievance: health workers need to revive the spirit of 1988

A new government white paper threatens to remove education permanently from the control of elected local authorities with mass opt-out of schools and a new quango to administer their funds.

Teaching unions have said schools would have to compete for pupils and scarce resources leading to a two-tier system with children in less well off areas being denied full access to the national curriculum.

Even further education is facing the squeeze as it is forced to compete for students and run services with less funding.

Rail workers

Rail workers are also facing a bleak future unless government plans for pit closures and rail privatisation are reversed. Trainload Coal, virtually the only profitable part of BR's operations is under threat.

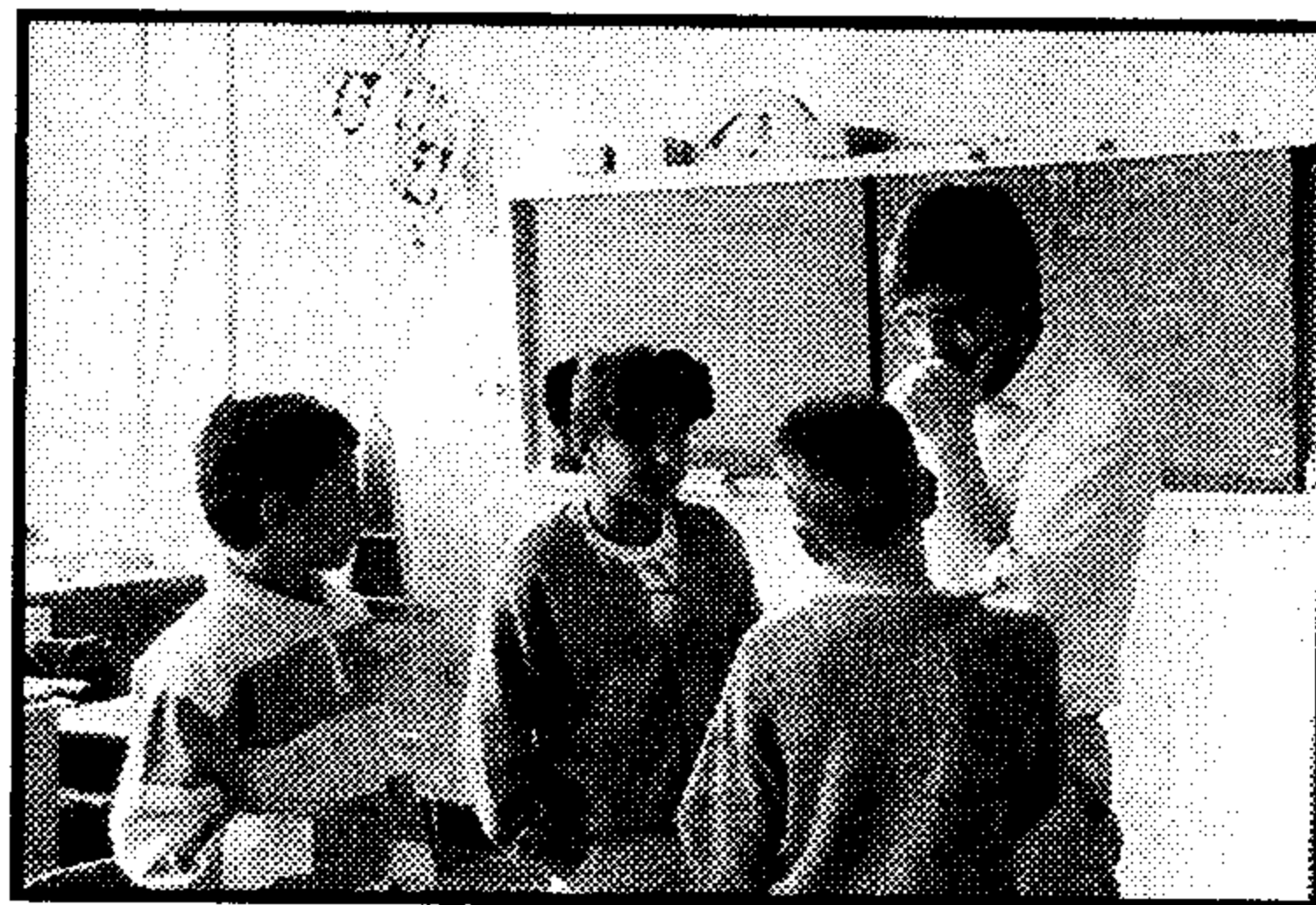
Its business depends on the movement of coal from pits to power stations and the pit closure programme threatens the jobs of its 7,000 employees.

Meanwhile rail privatisation is expected to cost up to 40,000 jobs and, according to a government-funded report by accountants Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte, will mean travellers facing fare rises totalling 6% above inflation over the next 14 years.

At the same time services will be slashed as private operators inevitably opt to run only the most profitable routes.

Civil servants

No area of the public sector is safe from the chaos wrought by Tory cuts and privatisation. The civil service, once unrivalled in its 'job security' is to be dismantled and hived off to the private sector. Only two



Step up class struggle: time for teachers to fight

weeks ago, the government paid Tarmac £50 million to take over the Property Services Agency with the loss of 900 jobs.

The Royal Mail faces privatisation, and postal workers have already staged a demonstration outside the Tory Party conference.

Fighting the pay freeze

With the pay round now in full swing, the government is

threatening to freeze or impose a wage-cutting two percent limit on public sector pay - well below current inflation.

NALGO and NUPE have publicly declared their rejection of such a pay limit: now is their chance to make a real fight of it.

Already claims submitted for nurses and hospital ancillary workers, teachers, university lecturers, firefighters and postal workers are stuck in the pipeline: there will not be a more favourable time to take action.

If they are not challenged the Tories are likely to repeat their refusal to award the rise recently agreed for university lecturers.

Only concerted action by public sector workers can defend wages and conditions, save jobs and halt the madness of privatisation. With the wave of anger at threatened pit closures threatening to force a government U-turn, the last thing Major's cabinet wants is to have to fight a second front against an alliance of public sector workers.

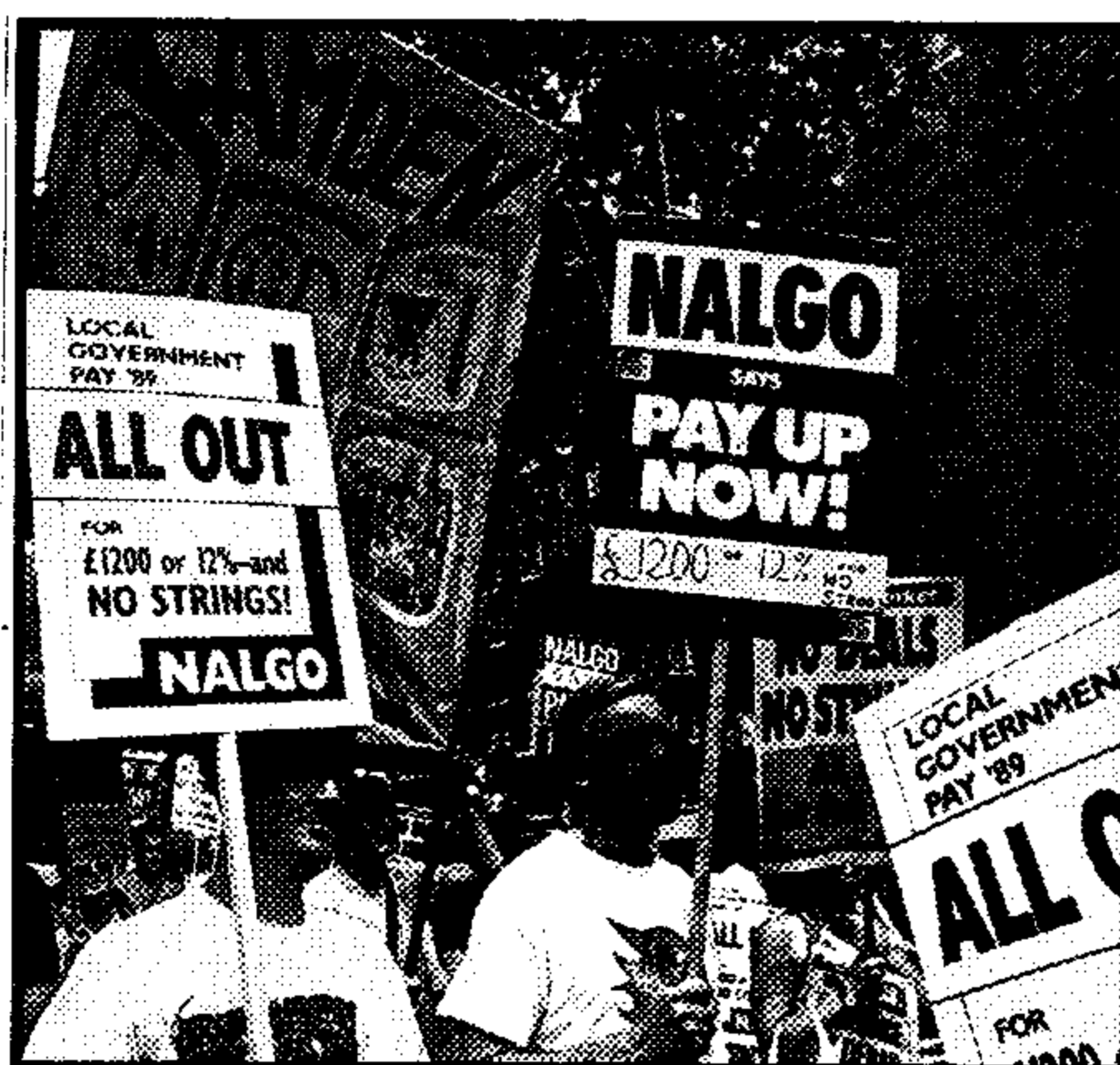
This is precisely the opening workers need to save jobs and services. United action could bring that result.

**Labour and NALGO Executives try to defuse anger
NALGO Nov 4 day of action**

by a NALGO activist
LOCAL GOVERNMENT union NALGO has selected Wednesday November 4 for a 'London Against The Cuts' day of action, with events across the capital culminating in a major demonstration. But building the protest has met with countless bureaucratic obstacles despite official support.

Metropolitan district officials blame problems in agreeing a route for the march with the police and in booking an assembly point with Southwark Council for the fact that no publicity was produced until last week, more than a month after the demo decision was taken.

Despite initial indications of at least token support from other public sector unions - notably NUPE and COHSE, both currently balloting on merger



Some colleges may strike on pay on Nov 4th

with NALGO - no other union has backed the action at national level. NUPE has banned its London region from even sending a banner.

This change of heart is almost certainly attributable to pressure from

Walworth Road, with the Labour Party nationally opposed to the action. It is even alleged that Labour have tried to persuade NALGO to call it off.

However, many trade unionists have responded warmly at local level, particularly the NUT teachers' union and NUPE and COHSE members in hospitals.

NALGO's executive has insisted, for the first time, that branches must ballot if they want to take strike action on the day. Several branches are in fact already doing so, with others set to call for strikes at branch meetings as support for the protest grows at rank and file level.

Most NALGO local government branches will at least send delega-

tions. A coach is even coming from cuts-hit Sheffield. NALGO members in Universities and colleges may even choose November 4 for a one-day strike in support of their pay claim.

With massive cuts in local government, hospital closures and the prospect of a public sector wage freeze, now is the time to fight back.

This day can be used to launch a national campaign to defend public services and jobs. In the limited time still available, all stops must be pulled out to build this demo among all public sector workers and users of public services.

● *London Against The Cuts' demonstration called by NALGO. Assemble Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Southwark (tube: Lambeth North) at 1.00pm on 4 November. March to rally at University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1.*



**Tory
Crisis Special**

Birmingham Conference Major's Maastricht misery

LAST FRIDAY the whole of Europe's bourgeois political leadership arrived in Birmingham to deal with the Maastricht crisis caused by the semi-collapse of the Exchange Rate Mechanism.

In the British media the conference was completely buried by the pits crisis. John Major used the post-conference press conference almost exclusively to explain the government line on pit closures. But the reality was that the conference itself was at best a public relations exercise, at worst a fiasco.

Dilemma

Capitalist Europe has found no way out of the Maastricht crisis; and the Tory government has found no solution to its 'in or out' dilemma.

The conference declaration talked about 'making the EC more open' so that the citizens of the various countries can 'understand' it; and respecting the history culture and rights of

individual nations.

But the Maastricht crisis doesn't stem from a lack of understanding; it arises directly from the irreconcilable contradictions between Britain (supported by Denmark) and the rest of the EC.

The Single Europe Act creates, literally, a single market and freedom for the movement of labour and capital in the EC. But Maastricht goes much further - towards building a single political entity in Western Europe.

Economic union and a single defence and foreign policy are keystones of the Maastricht treaty. *That's why the collapse of the ERM would signal the complete defeat of the Maastricht process, and why Britain's withdrawal from the ERM is such a blow to the Maastricht timetable.*

The Birmingham conference of course did nothing to resolve this tangle. Britain and Denmark demand a wide extension of 'subsidiarity', an arcane notion which means in short the



PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Major - not only waving but drowning

return of decision-making on key issues from the EC to the member states.

Thwarted

But despite all the pretence, 'subsidiarity' can only go so far. The 'core six' nations of the EC (Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries) will not allow the move towards monetary and foreign policy union to be thwarted by the

'subsidiarity' con. Which leaves Denmark and Britain in a complete fix.

Denmark is in a fix because without a considerable reworking of Maastricht there is nil chance of getting the treaty through a second referendum.

And the Tories are in a fix because with the Maastricht treaty they can neither afford to be in, or out, of the process of

European union. To be on the inside means to bow down to the deflationary diktats of the Bundesbank, further worsening Britain's economic collapse; to be on the outside means to undermine equal access to Britain's main export market.

While the pits crisis hogs the headlines, Major's Europe crisis is just beginning.

Italy strikes against austerity

TEN MILLION Italian workers took part in a general strike last week in protest at government austerity measures which will mean huge public spending cuts and tax increases.

Transport workers were at the forefront of the the four-hour walk-outs which paralysed industries and services on the day when parliament was debating next year's budget. The government of Giuliano Amato is proposing to cut

about \$75 billion from the public sector borrowing requirement, effectively dismantling the country's welfare state.

This follows a \$18 billion package of spending cuts which was pushed through parliament a few days earlier.

But workers criticised the response of union leaders, saying the four-hour general strike, which excluded many public sector workers, was an empty gesture. They were also angry about an agreement to end wage indexation

reached between the unions and the government in July. Anger spilled over into confrontations in some areas. At a rally of 50,000 workers in Milan, Sergio D'Antoni, general secretary of Italy's second largest union CISL, was met with a hail of missiles when he rose to speak.

Amato's government is just three months old and militants believe a radical response from the workers' movement could put paid to its austerity measures.

Chesterfield Conference Rallying behind miners

by Bill Sutcliffe

THE CONFERENCE of the Left held in Chesterfield last Saturday - effectively the fifth Socialist Movement conference - attracted around 600 people from a wide range of organisations.

The mood was militant, with a clear understanding that the most important task for socialists here and now is organising full support for the miners.

The gathering culminated in a march to a 10,000-strong rally against pit closures in Chesterfield's market square, addressed by Labour MPs Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, National Union of Mineworkers president Arthur Scargill and Betty Heathfield of Women Against Pit Closures.

Unfortunately, conference organisers had earlier refused



Chesterfield MP Tony Benn to take a resolution from Labour Party Socialists - a Socialist Movement sector - calling for the relaunch of the

Mineworkers Defence Campaign.

Socialist Outlook sponsored two well-attended fringe meetings. A meeting on Maastricht, addressed by Francois Vercammen, editor of Belgian Fourth International weekly *La Gauche* attracted over 50 people. Others had to be turned away because of the small size of the venue.

Vercammen stressed the need for a working class fightback against the treaty and its associated austerity packages, pointing to the examples of Italy and Greece.

He later joined a plenary on left organisation alongside Campaign Group MP Jeremy Corbyn and speakers from Democratic Left, the Scottish National Party and the Socialist Society.

Outlook students also held a meeting on organising the student left.

Help Build Socialist Outlook Militant for the land of the living

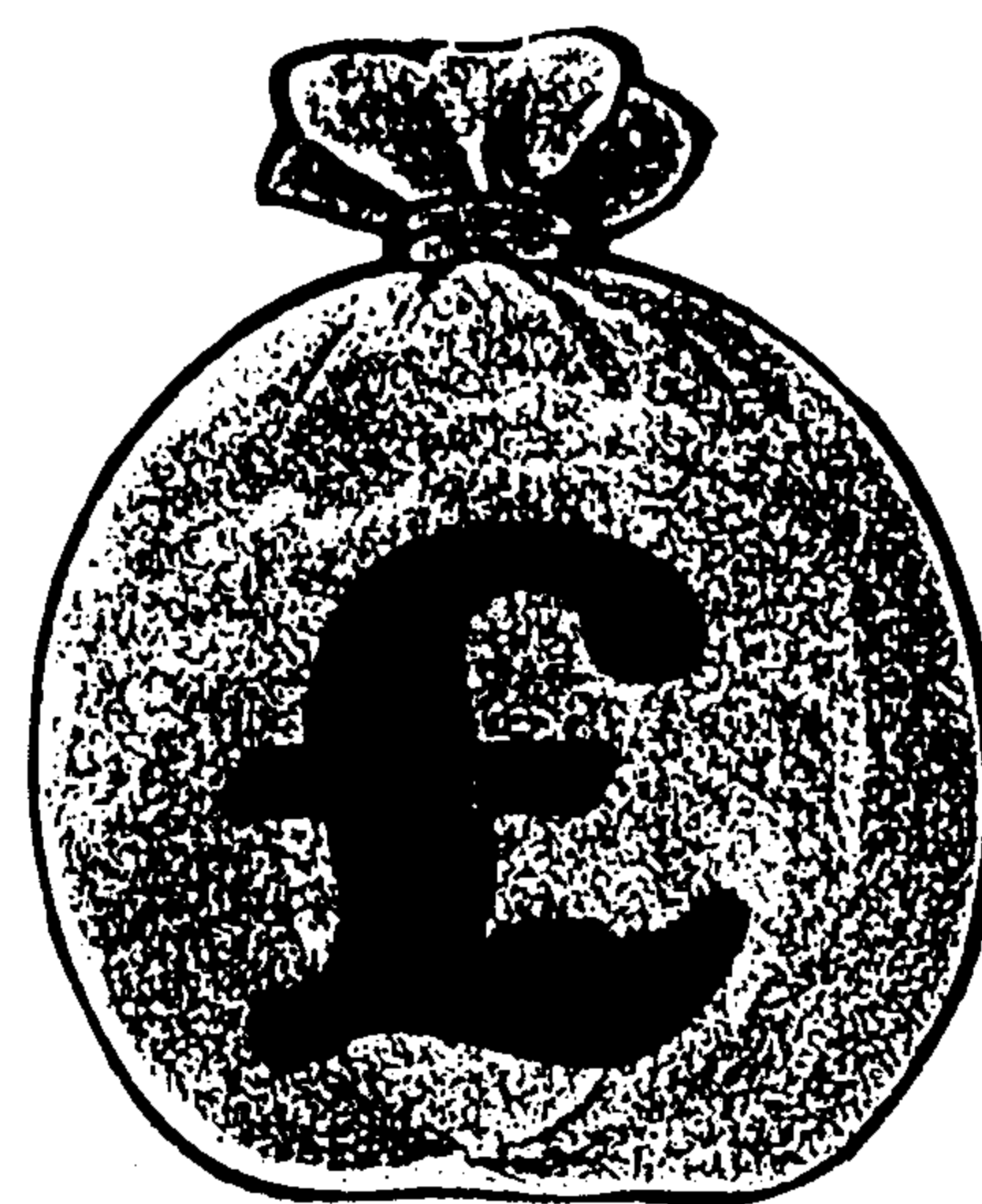
Q: WHO'S THE odd one out between Margaret Beckett, Reggie Kray and *Socialist Outlook*? A: Margaret Beckett. The other two have got convictions.

But in order to put our convictions into practice, we need £8,000 of your money - fast. The next few months could well prove the best chance in years for the working class to even up the score with the bosses and their government.

Unfortunately the labour movement is going into battle under the most clueless rightwing leadership in its entire history. The ideas we need to win aren't going to come from official quarters, who will do everything they can to stop the fight against the Tories 'getting out of hand'.

Demands on genuine socialists and their organisations in the coming period are likely to be immense. But *Socialist Outlook* is being seriously hamstrung by its decrepit publishing and printing equipment.

This not only hampers publication of this newspaper; it



makes it more difficult to produce the leaflets, broadsheets and pamphlets needed to put over the revolutionary marxist message of the Fourth International in Britain.

While *Outlook* remains a fortnightly, the sheer quality of its coverage is superior to anything else produced by the far left. Anyone who has to plough their way through *Militant* every week can vouch for that - thank God they haven't managed to turn it into a daily yet.

We want to make *Outlook* even better. So send your cash to PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU, take a monthly flutter on our 300 club (details on page 13) or get a bundle of *Outlooks* to sell to your friends, workmates and comrades.



The arrogance of Empire

The fall and fall of British capitalism

By Paul Clarke

BRITAIN, in terms of Gross National Product per head, ranks 22nd in the world economic league. Yet 80 years ago Britain appeared to be the world's most powerful capitalist power, and just 30 years ago easily one of the big five. What happened? Why has the British ruling class allowed its industrial base to be progressively wiped out?

As everyone knows Britain was the first industrial power and in the 18th and 19th centuries became, through the combination of industrialisation, sea power and the slave trade, the world's major imperialist power.

Such was Britain's domination of the world economy and the extent of the empire, that by 1860 Britain produced 53 per cent of the world's iron, 50 per cent of its coal and consumed half of the world's cotton output.

Industry

With 2 per cent of world population Britain had about 45 per cent of the world's industry, and nearly 60 per cent of that in Europe. British ships brought raw materials from all over the globe to the giant ports of London, Liverpool and Glasgow – and exported back British manufactures.

Yet already by 1860 Britain's domination was under threat. The fruits of being the first could only last so long; and in the mid-19th century the ruling class made a fateful strategic decision which would hasten its historic decline.

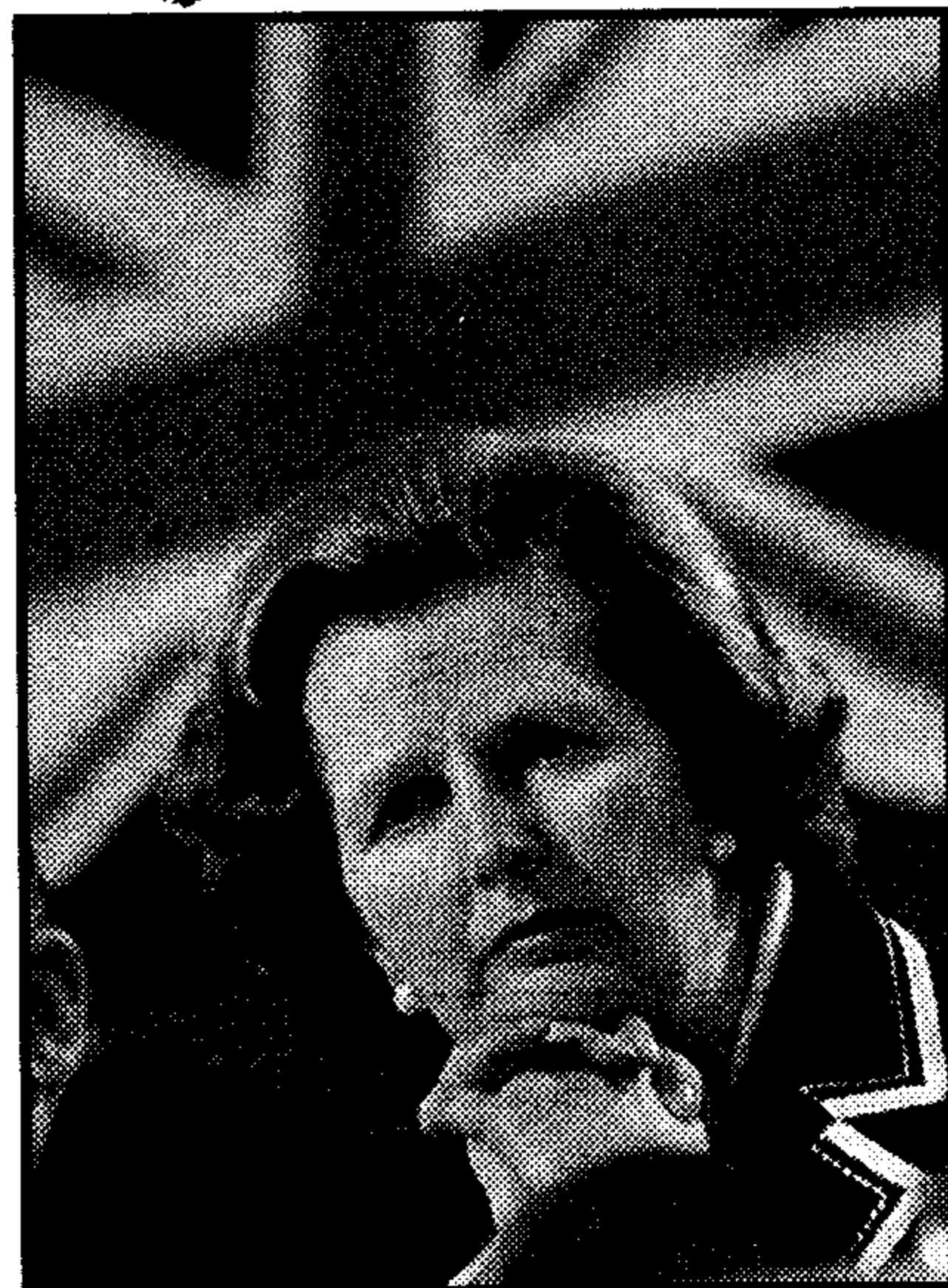
The battle over the Corn Laws was the centrepiece of the fight between the champions of free trade and the partisans of 'protection' and 'imperial preference'. Free traders believed that Britain's industry was so strong that a world regime without substantial import tariffs would benefit British industry everywhere.

The free traders won and the Corn Laws were abolished. The net result was that while Britain championed the free trade approach, countries like the United States and Germany built up their industries behind high tariff walls.

By the late 19th century it was obvious that Britain's industrial supremacy was under siege. And the conflict between the major imperialist powers led directly to the first world war, where Britain made the historic decision to ally with the United



No hope and less glory – the visions of Empire tumble into the mire of Maastricht



Fool Britannia? Thatcher

States against Germany. The cost of two world wars finished off Britain's empire.

But the legacy of the empire and growing industrial decline produced a very particular type of capitalism, and a very particular type of ruling class. Because of the size of the empire and because of Britain's sea power, London became the financial and trading centre of the world.

Thus already in the late 19th century British capital had developed a much wider spread of international investments than any other capitalism. It was uniquely international, with a much greater weight of commercial and financial interests, as opposed to industrial manufacturing interests.

The second world war dealt the final death blow to empire.

Britain paid for the war via Lend Lease, in effect huge subsidies from the United States. But US president Roosevelt drove a hard bargain. The empire was sold off to American domination.

Paradox

The post war economic boom continued to disguise the extent of Britain's decline. The paradox was that while British capitalism, continued to decline relative to the US, Germany, Japan and France, in absolute terms of course the economy expanded as it did in every major capitalist power.

This disguised the real extent of the impending crisis. Its scope started to become apparent when the pound was devalued by Chancellor Roy Jenkins in 1967, and especially after the onset of world recession in 1974-5.

Every world economic crisis involves a new *division of labour* between the major capitalist powers. In the crisis since 1974-5 the United States and Britain have been losing out to Germany and Japan. The major story in historical terms is the decline of the US post-war dominance. But in absolute terms Britain's decline has been worse.

In part this has been because of objective factors which the capitalist class has been helpless to stop. The creaking structures of British manufacturing

have been no match for the rebuilt post-war industry of Japan and Germany. But consistently government policies and the dominant orientation of the ruling class have worsened the crisis.

The fundamental reason for this has been the relative strength of commercial and financial interests in the British bourgeoisie. Finance capital constantly strives to maximise short term gains on investment; the 'long term health of British capitalism' is a category which doesn't make sense to the individual capitalist deciding where to invest.

Thus instead of systematic investment in British industry huge amounts of capital have gone abroad, and as non-British industry has gained in strength, into financial and commercial operations.

The Thatcher era only worsened this process. By deregulating exchange controls and unleashing privatisation mania, financial speculation was let rip. The weight of commercial and financial interests in the government was strengthened.

Why does all this matter for British capitalism? Why does it matter that British industry is declining, so long as profits come back from British investment overseas, and from domestic service industries? What's so special about manufacturing industry?

For the individual capitalist it doesn't matter a hoot where the profit on investment comes from. But for the overall strength of a particular

capitalism it does. In the end profits only come from surplus value, the creation of *new* value in the labour process. Most financial operations and many service 'industries' just re-allocate surplus value already created.

Profits generated abroad may make individual capitalists wealthy, but in general profits are re-invested abroad and not in Britain. Declining manufacturing reduces the size both of the service sector, and the surplus value available for investment in any kind of enterprise.

Compared with most international capitalism Britain is uniquely vulnerable to recession in the world economy. Today world depression and domestic slump fuel one another. Britain may be the first to fully experience de-industrialisation.

The decline of British capitalism is in the end a spectacular example of the *anarchy* and irrationality of capitalist production. The search for profit in the end begins to undermine the foundations of capitalist production itself. This major tendency inherent in capitalism has been reinforced by a ruling class steeped in the arrogance of empire, sure of its world role, unable to grasp that a major reorientation was needed to secure even its own long-term future.

As Marx remarked, a ship of fools can sink simply because its captain and crew refuse to believe it possible, or take any steps to avoid it.

The shadow of 1931 How Ramsay MacDonald ushered in 15 years of Tory rule



**Tory
Crisis Special**



Big Mac to go
Ramsay MacDonald meets the press in 1931

By Paul Clarke

THE CRISIS of the last few weeks has been full of eerie reminders of the crisis of August 1931.

Then, as now, the attempt to defend the value of the pound against a fixed exchange rate caused financial havoc.

Then as now, a major government financial crisis was met by savage attacks on the working class, including cutbacks in social security spending and unemployment pay, and attacks on public sector wages.

And then as now, working class response was hampered by the right wing leaders of the labour movement, although in 1931 they were the government rather than the opposition.

Minority

Ramsay MacDonald's government had been elected in 1929, although not with an overall majority. Labour had 287 seats, the Tories 269 and the Liberals 59.

MacDonald in his first Commons speech wondered aloud to the Tories and Liberals 'how far it possible, without in any way abandoning our party positions... to consider ourselves more as a Council of State and less as arrayed regiments

facing each other in battle.'

The cynical mental chuckles of the Tories and Liberals at this open profession of class collaborationist intent were almost audible.

The background to the 1931 crisis was of course the 1929 stock market crash and the ensuing world slump. When the Labour government came to power there were well over one million insured workers on the dole. The numbers rapidly increased.

Standard

Labour had pledged either 'work or maintenance' - either a job or unemployment benefit at a level to support a 'reasonable' standard of living.

In 1926 the TUC and Labour Party had jointly demanded 20 shillings a week. But when the Unemployment Insurance Bill was brought forward by Labour in November 1929, the dole was left at 17 shillings, plus two shillings for each child.

A small minority of the 110 Independent Labour Party MPs (about 20 of them, led by James Maxton) rebelled against the government. They were to be the core of the eventual split to form the ILP as a short-lived independent party.

By December 1930 the official unemployment figure was

2.5 million; by July 1931 it was 2.8 million. Huge dole payments were putting pressure on the Treasury.

Drastic

Labour Chancellor Philip Snowden told the House in February 1931 that 'the national position is so grave that drastic and disagreeable measures will have to be taken if Budget equilibrium is to be maintained and industrial progress made...'

Snowden promised 'temporary sacrifices' only, and those best able to bear them would have to make the largest sacrifices.

Parliament appointed the all-party May Committee charged with 'effecting all practical and legitimate reductions in national expenditure consistent with efficiency of services'.

Attacking

The May Committee, which had been proposed by the Liberals and only opposed by the ILP rebels, was in fact aimed simply at attacking working class benefits and wages. Snowden and MacDonald eagerly accepted the proposal.

At the end of July 1931 the May Committee reported. It proposed a 20 per cent cut in

unemployment benefit, steeply increased unemployment contributions and the introduction of the notorious Means Test.

In addition it proposed cuts in the pay of teachers, the police and armed forces, as well as huge cutbacks in public works expenditure. The proposals caused a political storm.

Crisis

When the May Report appeared, there was already a developing international financial crisis with a series of bank failures in Germany and eastern Europe. The report itself increased the panic, and a run on gold destabilised the pound sterling.

Depreciation of Britain's exchange reserves meant that the government turned to foreign bankers to secure a major loan. But the head of the US banking syndicate, JP Morgan, demanded major expenditure cutbacks before 'confidence' could be 'restored' and the loan granted.

Confidence

On August 19 Ramsay MacDonald decided to restore Mr Morgan's confidence by cutting unemployment pay by £48.5 million, teachers salaries by £11.8 million, service wages by £9 million, and the police by half a million (the proportions of course were significant; for every one pound lost by the police the unemployed lost £99).

But the Labour cabinet was split on the issue, but made an initial agreement on £56 million worth of cuts, despite the opposition of a minority. However, the issue immediately arose as to whether the opposition Tories and Liberals would support the government; or would they demand deeper, more savage cuts?

Within three days the answer was clear; the Tories would support a proposal for £76 million worth of cuts, but no less. This was too much for the majority of the cabinet and even the leadership of the TUC!

MacDonald could only get the economic cuts package through parliament with the support of the Tories and Liberals. By constructing this alliance he effectively sank the Labour government.

Two days later he had handed his resignation to the King; on the same day after discussion with Stanley

"MacDonald's political coup made him the prisoner of the Tory party"

Baldwin and the Liberals he was re-installed - as leader of the National Government. Only 13 Labour MPs supported the new government.

Gold Standard

On 21 September the National Government took Britain off the Gold Standard, to avoid further drain on foreign currency reserves. In effect, the pound was left to float, rather than have a fixed parity with gold. But the cuts in government expenditure to finance defence of the Gold Standard had already been made.

Prisoner

MacDonald's political coup against the labour movement made him the prisoner of the Tory party. They now demanded a general election.

Formally held between the 'National Government' and the Labour Opposition, it was in fact between the Tories and Labour. The Tories won 471 out of 615 seats, and government supporters had won 556 seats overall, including 13 'National Labour'.

Ramsay MacDonald was now unceremoniously dumped, and Stanley Baldwin enthroned as the new prime minister of the 'National' (Tory) government.

By splitting the labour movement and subjecting it to the diktats of international capital MacDonald had delivered the working class its most decisive defeat since the General Strike.

This ensured that the dreadful 1930s would see the Tories permanently in power, until a new coalition was established during the war.

The ILP, convinced that Labour was finished as the party of the working class, disaffiliated from the party.

Carried away by the delusion that a period of defeat could create the conditions for the building of an alternative mass party of the working class, within a couple of years the ILP had disappeared as a significant political force.

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What is to be done about...

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Nothing without struggle: women workers must fight for their skills to be recognised

Equality for women workers...?

By Gill Lee

TWENTY FIVE years after strikes for equal pay by women machinists at Ford which eventually lead to the equal pay legislation of the 1970's, women are still earning just two-thirds of men's pay.

Why are women still doing worse jobs for worse wages and in worse conditions than men?

The main reason for the lack of equality is women's subordination in the family and their responsibility for housework and childcare. But there are additional, related causes.

Historically, women have been excluded from certain jobs and concentrated in others. For example today women still make up less than 5% of Ford's total workforce.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries many male trade unionists wanted to keep women out of certain trades, fearing that their cheaper labour would bring lower wages.

Organise

It was to take many decades of struggle before many male trade unionists understood that the way to prevent women being used as cheap labour was not to exclude them but to organise them and fight for equal pay.

Women become integrated into the workforce en masse for the first time during the Second World War, working in munitions factories and doing many of the jobs left by men. But after the war women were pushed out of industry as demobilised soldiers returned to claim 'their' jobs.

Women were again drawn into the workforce in large numbers with the huge expansion of the welfare state after the war.

Many women from the former colonies came to Britain for service sector jobs to escape the poverty and lack of opportunity caused by Britain's underdevelopment of their own countries.

Many black families were separated as women and men travelled thousands of miles

for work, only to find discrimination and segregation into the worst jobs at the worst rates of pay, with their educational qualifications frequently not recognised or valued.

Yet much 'women's work' in the service sector mirrors their work in the home - cooking, cleaning, serving 'caring'.

Between 1959-64 women were unionised at twice the rate they joined the workforce. Unions were quick to recruit women but slow to deliver action on equal pay and conditions.

The ideas of the emerging women's movement in the United States began to spread across the Atlantic and the first women's groups were formed.

In 1968 women machinists at Ford's Dagenham plant held a one-day stoppage, followed by a three-week strike, in support of their claim for upgrading.

In 1969, after a series of meetings, lobbies and demonstrations organised by the National Joint Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights, every trade union passed resolutions supporting equal pay and it was the main topic at that year's TUC.

In the autumn, Barbara Castle introduced her Equal Pay Bill, which became law in 1970. For all its loopholes it was marked a milestone - the first major legislation on women's rights since the 1920s.

Sex discrimination

In the following decade the equal pay legislation was updated and expanded and the Sex Discrimination Act was introduced. In 1986 Jo Richardson's proposal for a Ministry for Women's Rights was backed by Labour's NEC.

Richardson proposed new equality legislation, a minimum wage, free childcare for all three and four year olds, an end to discrimination in social security benefits, abolition of the married man's tax allowance, reduction of the male retirement age to 60 and a more flexible working week with

shorter working days and better parental leave.

Full implementation of this policy would have required a radical economic policy involving huge investment in pensions, benefits and nurseries.

The document was greeted with scepticism in many Labour Party women's sections. Women criticised the lack of commitment to labour and trade union policies on fertility control and abortion rights - without which there could be no equality in the labour market.

Positive action

Also missing was a commitment to a positive action programme on employment and education which would have addressed women's historical exclusion from certain jobs and from higher education.

Others drew attention to the demand of the women's liberation movement for 24 hour day

nurseries so the responsibility for the reproduction of the labour force would be shifted onto society as a whole.

Of course the real problem with the proposal was not omissions in the document itself but the absence of a class struggle perspective.

Women have continued to be a major part of the workforce. A few have done quite well under Thatcherism. But the majority are still confined to low paid service jobs, often temporary and increasingly, flexible.

But flexibility has been introduced on the employers' terms not women's meaning a lack of employment protection and rights such as sick pay or maternity pay.

Women's work continues to be conditioned by women's supposed relation to the family. Tory cuts mean even less state provision of care for children, the elderly and the sick.

Instead women have to find jobs which fit round 'their'

responsibilities in the home. Male manual workers are working more overtime than they did in the 1970s, reinforcing women's responsibility for childcare and housework.

And now the Tories are proposing to worsen women's position by raising their retirement age, like men's, to 65.

New generation

Their continuing mass participation in the workforce, and the equality legislation of the 1970s have resulted in a generation of women who firmly believe in women's equal rights at work, but this requires a radical transformation of society.

As a starting point for any socialist programme, women's responsibilities for childcare and housework would have to be socialised, abortion and contraception made freely available and quotas for education and employment introduced.

Tories delighted by Labour's wet Blunkett

By Harry Sloan

IF YOU thought Labour's campaign on the NHS was crap during the general election, just look at what they are up to now!

At a time when the Tory government's credibility had plummeted to new depths with their pit closure announcement, it took the special talents of Labour's David Blunkett to give their wretched NHS policies an unexpected boost.

His announcement that Labour would accept the closure of London teaching hospitals - in exchange for vague promises of more GP services - will have cheered the government and dis-

mayed health workers and patients in the capital.

Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley had been gritting her teeth in preparation for a storm of protest when she unveils the postponed report of the Tomlinson inquiry, now due for October 28.

Closures

According to leaks in the *Daily Telegraph* the report will propose closing Charing Cross, the Mid-diesex and Bart's Hospitals, the merger of Guy's and St Thomas's, and forcing London's Special Health Authorities - such as Great Ormond Street and Moorfields Eye Hospital - into the NHS 'internal market' by withdrawing central government funding.

Blunkett however decided to ignore the angry response of many London MPs and health unions - notably COHSE - who had lobbied strongly during Labour Party conference for him to take a strong line against these closures, which represent a massive cut in health care in the capital.

Instead he insisted upon holding a press conference on October 15 in which he revealed himself to be one of a tiny handful of people in Britain who believe that the Tomlinson inquiry was an independent exercise rather than a government fig-leaf for closures.

His statement naively insisted that:

"the Tomlinson inquiry must not be used as a way of dealing with the disastrous effects of the inter-

Council tax: here comes another Heseltine cock-up

Take cover from Tory 'time bomb'

By Joe Pass

THE POLL TAX has less than six months to live. Its replacement – council tax – promises yet more big problems for the Tories.

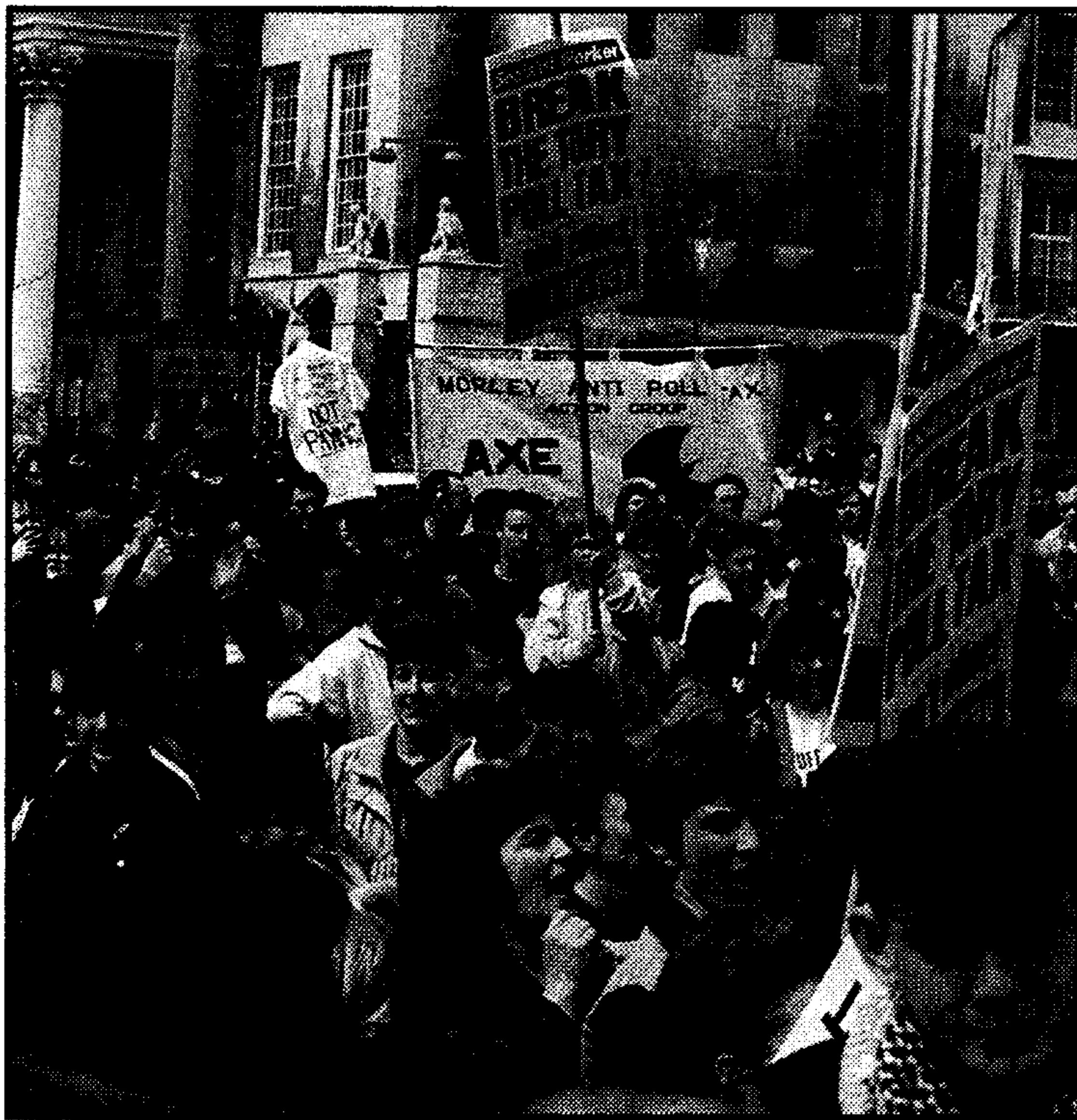
Former local government minister Sir Rhodes Boyson, Tory MP for Brent North, told *The Independent* last month: 'It will blow up like a time bomb. The council tax will be as big a disaster as the poll tax. But this time it will hit voters in the Tory heartlands. It will spell electoral disaster.'

Council tax is, like the old domestic rates system, essentially a property tax. Every home in Britain has been valued at April 1991 prices and placed in one of eight broad bands, labelled A to H.

Band D – properties valued between £68,000 to £88,000 – is taken as the average, with taxation on other bands set pro rata. Those in houses banded A, B and C are charged less; those in the four higher bands pay more.

In an attempt to remove some of the more obviously objectionable features of the poll tax, 100 per cent rebates – effectively, exemption – will be available to some categories of people, such as income support claimants and students; a sliding scale of further rebates will be available to those on lower incomes; those living alone get a 25 per cent discount; and there will be 'transitional relief' to cushion the impact of its introduction.

The above is a gross simplification. Legislation



If you liked the Poll Tax, you'll really rate the sequel

governing the tax are extremely complex and some of the rules and regulations have yet to be announced. But some major drawbacks are already apparent.

Projected revenue from the new tax – initially £9,000 million – is almost certainly an overestimate. Millions of homes turned out to be in lower bands than anticipated, with discrepancies of up to 22 per cent in inner city areas, according to the Association of London Authorities.



Lost in the corridors of power: the man who invented Council Tax

The Tories claimed the band D average would be £400. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance calculates that to meet the target, the government will have to find an extra £2,300 million at a time when public expenditure is being dramatically cut back.

If the government does not pay up, council tax will average £540, according to CIPFA. Other specialists, like the Labour-leaning Local Government Information Unit, put the figure at £600.

The Tories claimed the band D average would be £400. To meet the target, the government will have to find an extra £2,300 million at a time when public expenditure is being dramatically cut back.

Valuation work was put out to tenders and mainly undertaken by estate agents, charging as little as 20p a home, resulting in what an Association of Metropolitan Authorities specialist called 'Mickey Mouse valuations by cowboy operators'.

Millions will certainly appeal. Any that succeed will reduce revenue derived from the tax still further.

With the collapse in property values and the fact that families in identical accommodation in Widnes and Wembley will pay widely differing amounts, the new tax's unfairness will be widely perceived.

It is still too early to assess whether a mass political non-payment campaign can be built on the basis of the now-demobilised anti-poll tax movement. The question will have to be assessed concretely as the extent and class nature of opposition to council tax becomes apparent.

In the meantime, we should be arguing for numerous valuation appeals to clog up the system in a similar tactic to non-registration in the early days of the poll tax fight, maximum support for those who simply cannot pay and continuing resistance – mounted in conjunction with local government unions – to cuts in council jobs and services.

nal market. ... Tomlinson must not be used to bring about cuts in funding and the switch of resources to meet the government's pledges for the coming year in other parts of the country.

Yet this is precisely what Tomlinson was set up to do.

His statement goes on to argue for a 'recognition' that 'the status quo is not an option'.

Blunkett goes on to accept that hospital closures should occur, urging for:

"Any revenue and capital resources released from hospital closures that do occur, to be reinvested in London's health services ..."

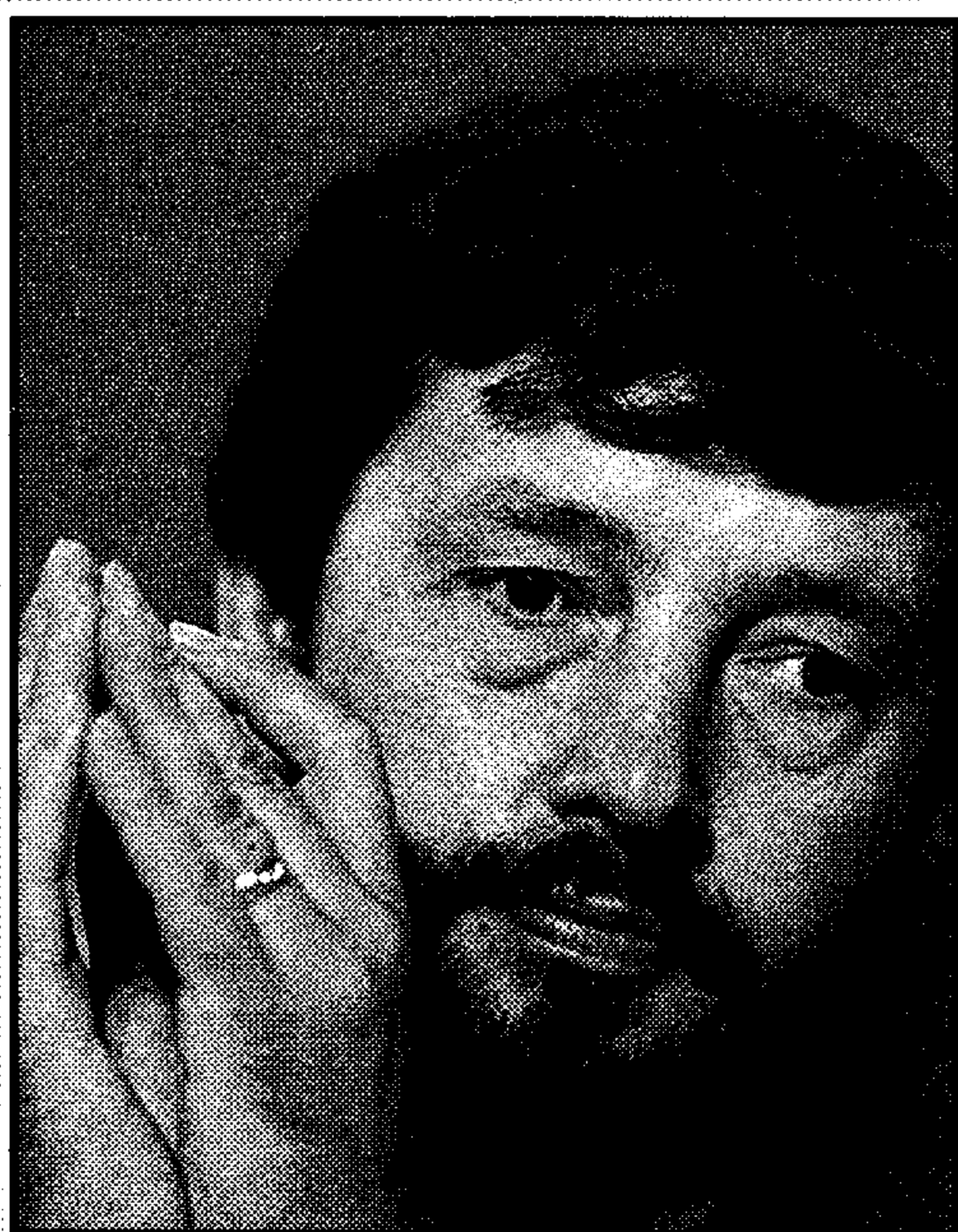
Having brushed aside the interests of health workers and the wishes of Londoners as patients, Blunkett goes on to embrace the tendentious theories of the King's Fund and other trendies who wish to see hospital services replaced by GP and community services.

Predictably, Blunkett's sponsors in NUPE were the first to break ranks with other health unions and

support his statement. But Bottomley would be unwise to draw from this ludicrous premature surrender the conclusion that she can press through the closures without a fight.

COHSE remains firmly against the closures, while many NUPE branches and almost every local Labour party on the ground in London will be obliged to fight back against Tomlinson in defence of the NHS.

A London-wide stewards conference to discuss the fightback is on Saturday October 31 (10am-6pm) at Camden Town Hall. A London Health Emergency meeting for all campaigners will be held on Tues-



Tuned in to Tomlinson: David Blunkett

day November 10 at 7pm, also at Camden Town Hall, Judd St WC1 (nearest tube Kings-X).

PHOTO: Andrew Ward

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Communist Party Congress Tanks push China down capitalist road

By Steve Kaczynski

THE FIRST Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since the collapse of the Stalinist systems in the USSR and Eastern Europe began on October 12. There were many fewer foreign delegations and solidarity messages from abroad than in the past.

The gathering was notable for a degree of ideological flux, if not disintegration. The CCP has a membership of about 50 million (greater than the population of England) but if the statements of delegates and Chinese commentators are anything to go by, the CCP is numerically the largest pro-market organisation in the world.

On the opening day of the Congress, Reuters reported that CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin gave a blessing to economic

reforms which all but bury the role of state planning. "The CCP and the Chinese state apparatus are so keyed in to the market that a rally by the Chinese stock exchange on the 12 was officially attributed to the CCP Congress, which had provided a shot in the arm for nervous investors."

It would, however, not be true to say that the Congress and China's ruling bureaucrats all have mixed feelings about the market. Market forces are particularly strong in southern China, near Hong Kong and Canton where there is particular access to the outside world and a particular fondness for economic 'reform'.

But northern China has far more state-owned enterprises, which employ vast numbers of people but do not show a profit. Since Tiananmen, the Chinese authorities have gone in mortal fear that social and economic discontent might lead to

uncontrollable explosions.

Though less ethnically fragmented than the Soviet Union was, China is a far from homogeneous country and there is concern that it might break apart into different bits as it has done at earlier periods in its long history if social and economic stresses should prove too strong.

The Congress has seen the enshrinement of a vaguely defined concept called the 'socialist market economy'. This concept, associated with the 88 year-old Deng Xiaoping, is supposed to be a compromise between a 'market economy' pure and simple and a 'planned socialist market economy' advocated by those cadres and bureaucrats most concerned about the role of state enterprises.

The future is highly uncertain. China is not immune against the collapse of Stalinism in other parts

of the world and many leading CCP cadres and state bureaucrats are not all that much younger than Deng.

This has resulted in several cases where the children of leading bureaucrats have been appointed to positions in the CCP, undoubtedly as a means of training up replacements. However, this has not been as common a practice as some rumours in Hong Kong newspapers had alleged - probably because charges of nepotism can be used as political weapons.

A symptom of the uncertain state of the CCP bureaucracy has been the increased repression of dissent. The September 1st edition of the Hong Kong paper *Cheng Ming* reported crackdowns on a number of dissident organisations including the *China Free workers' trade union* and the *China Social Democratic Party*.

The Free Workers union was

reported to have distributed leaflets earlier this year drawing attention to the fact that the living standards of ordinary workers in China were lower than the country's economic development would suggest, and was apparently suppressed by the authorities as it was preparing to mark the third anniversary of Tiananmen. The Social Democratic Party was apparently founded in 1991 by people involved in the 1989 movement and supported 'democratic socialism' and the Socialist International. This network too was rolled up by the police.

Both examples show that workers and students repelled by Stalinism can, in the absence of a clear revolutionary alternative, be attracted to the soiled banner and bankrupt politics of social democracy.

Why US workers need their own mass party

by Dave Osler

GEORGE BUSH is almost certainly on the way out of the White House, with Democrat challenger Bill Clinton set to become the 42nd president of the United States of America. Should November 3 be Thanksgiving Day for the left?

Of course, it's always gratifying to see rightwing politicians lose elections; in the case of former CIA chief Bush, it will be a real pleasure. If you want to see the real Butcher of Baghdad, look no further than the Oval Office.

Three Republican governments since Ronald Reagan took office in 1980 have openly operated in the interests of capital, from Pennsylvania to Panama, by armed force if necessary.

Cutting edge

Reaganism constituted the cutting edge of the international new right ideologically and militarily, just as Thatcherism did economically. In his 'kinder, gentler America', Bush kept up the bad work. For him to be defeated - even by the far from radical Clinton challenge - will strengthen morale and could raise combativity among many working class people fighting back in the USA and elsewhere.

Republicans have lost their way. Their last Party convention fell under the thrall of hardline anti-gay, anti-abortion Christian fundamentalists, with Bush sitting in on the prayer breakfasts.

Vice president Dan Quayle, meanwhile, has become a worldwide running joke, proof positive that the bourgeoisie doesn't make it to the top on intellect alone.

In contrast to the so-called Grand Old Party, the Democrats have traditionally been seen by radical Americans as the lesser evil. While not a European-style mass working class party, the Democrats are portrayed as close to organised labour and black people and at least ready to listen to the concerns of women, and lesbians and gay men.

Yet as the American slump continues, neither party offers answers to

the concerns of working people. A pseudo-debate centred around intangible symbolism utterly dominates official politics.

The Democrats take their liberal, black and union constituencies for granted and pitch their appeal solidly to the (mostly white) middle class, many of whom currently face economic hardship, albeit not on the scale of South Central Los Angeles.

Clinton has built his entire campaign around not being George Bush. He presents himself as youth against age, new blood against a tried and proven failure - JFK, the second time as farce.

The Republicans campaign in kind, accusing him of draft dodging, extramarital relationships, student dope smoking (but not, apparently, inhaling) and KGB-funded freebies to Moscow. Clinton can only counter by pointing to the qualities of the man he chose as running mate.

Vietnam vet Al Gore - one of the strongest Democrat supporters of the Gulf carnage - cancels out draft-dodging claims, while wife Tipper - a noted 'clean up rock' campaigner - provides the family values ballast against Hillary Clinton's ostensibly hot-headed liberal feminism.

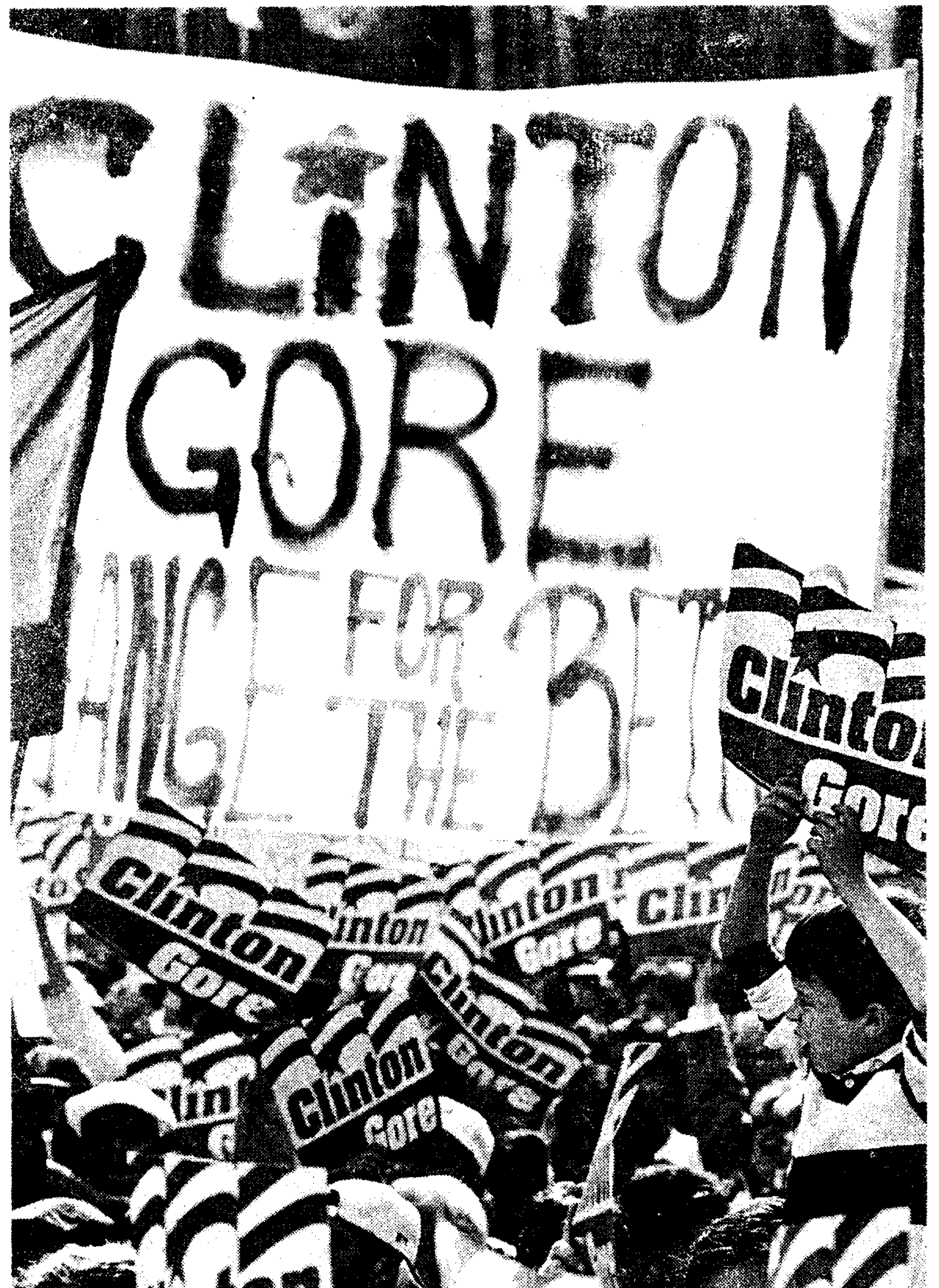
Poverty

Many Americans frankly don't give a damn. According to US Census Bureau statistics, 35.7 million people - 14.2 per cent of the population - now live in poverty, up considerably over the Reagan/Bush years.

Four out of five Americans are worse off than in 1980, as wage rises don't keep up with inflation. Inner city unemployment can reach 70 per cent.

In a deliberate echo of Roosevelt's New Deal rhetoric, Clinton has promised a 'New Covenant'. But what's on offer is anything but radical. In British terms, Clinton is well on the right of the present all-party social market consensus.

Alongside UK Labour Party-style calls for infrastructural investment and better training, Clinton advocates measures the Tories still only dream of implementing, most notably workfare -



Will Bill Tweedledee beat George Tweedledum?

working for welfare benefits.

Clinton personally backs capital punishment; his stance on abortion rights is ambiguous at best; and he derides Bush as 'soft' on Cuba.

Under Clinton's governorship, the state of Arkansas had the following rankings out of 50 states and the District of Columbia; average weekly wage, 49th; median family income, bottom; health insurance coverage, 46th; school spending, 49th; unemployment, 48th; youth unemployment, 50th; blacks in traditional white male jobs, 50th; workplace safety enforcement, bottom. It's hardly propitious.

Mass disillusion with the political process is reflected in independent candidate Ross Perot, a deeply reactionary Texan multi-billionaire with no party

and no fixed programme.

Earlier this year Perot topped national opinion polls; by withdrawing from the race and then changing his mind again, he largely destroyed his credibility, but may still get a double figure vote.

Clinton, Gore, Bush, Quayle and Perot are all totally committed to the interests of the capitalist class. What American workers really need is their own party - based on the unions - to represent their class interests against the bosses. The Democrats - for all their exploitation of links with top union leaders - can never fill this role. A new party is needed: perhaps in the aftermath of a Bush defeat this overdue task can be tackled.

Stop the National Front march They shall not pass!

Jeff Lowe

ON NOVEMBER 8th the fascist National Front are holding their annual 'Remembrance Sunday' parade to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph in Whitehall.

November 8th is also the anniversary of 'Krystalnacht' when the Nazis murdered Jews and smashed up their homes, shops and synagogues. Today their followers attack refugee hostels in Germany. Attacks on foreigners are now so common place they are no longer deemed news-worthy.

Throughout Europe anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations are holding demonstrations and rallies to mark the anniversary of 'Krystalnacht' and to oppose the rise of fascism in Europe.

In Britain the fascists are using the despair of unemployed white youth to try to spread their influence. In Nottinghamshire the Nazi 'cultural' outfit 'Blood and Honour' is active in the towns threatened by pit closures.

At the 'Justice for Mineworkers' fringe meeting at Labour Party conference Arthur Scargill warned of the dangers of the spread of fascism throughout Europe. A successful struggle by the miners

would massively reduce the ability of the fascists to spread their poison. A defeat would allow them to grow.

Part of the fight against the fascists has to be to ensure the miners win. But we also have to confront the Nazis on the streets.

Compared to some of the European fascist parties the National Front (and the British National Party) are very small. We have to ensure they don't get the chance to grow.

The NF suffered severe setbacks in the 1970s because we were able to pin the Nazi label on them - and because thousands turned out to stop them every time they tried to parade on the streets. We need to do the same today.

The 'They Shall Not Pass Committee' - supported by the main anti-fascist and anti-racist organisations - has called a demonstration to stop the National Front from marching.

On the anniversary of 'Krystalnacht' we must ensure that the anti-fascists slogan of the '30s - 'They Shall Not Pass' - becomes a reality.

For further information contact the 'They Shall Not Pass Committee' at Box 11, Centreprise, Kingsland High Road, London E8. Or telephone on 071 277 0817.



National backing for Burnsall's strikers

STRIKERS AT Burnsall electroplating works in Smethwick - predominantly Punjabi women - have called a mass rally for Friday October 23 as part of their determined effort to defeat their ruthless employers.

Their union, GMB, is sending coaches from London and other areas in support, while the Indian Workers' Association and local trades councils are mobilising for the event. The rally is due to start at 4pm, with speakers including GMB general secretary John Edmonds.

Burnsall's owners, the O'Neill family, have been condemned by their own Irish community and are finding it increasingly difficult to hang on to their present scab workforce.

While about 40

strikebreakers have been recruited since the start of the dispute 20 weeks ago, only 18 are going into the plant at present.

Those that do cross the picket line are getting £115 a week - substantially more than the old starting wage of £80. Sadly, the lower figure is not uncommon for the area.

Despite the Health and Safety Executive ordering installation of extractors and other safety improvements, conditions are still extremely unpleasant. The compulsory seven day, 65 hour, week continues.

Many scabs - obviously desperate people - cannot stand the place for more than a couple of weeks. Production is a shambles because of the lack of continuity of operators and assemblers.

Some workers, sent from the

dole office, have actually joined the picket line after being told what awaited them inside. Similarly, workers from nearby plants have told the strikers they suffer from similar conditions and are even joining the protest themselves at the end of their shifts.

GMB and TGWU now intend to mount a recruitment drive. Equal pay and victimisation tribunals will be heard shortly.

Unfortunately, local police are still harassing strikers, forcing them to move their strike caravan (donated, by victorious Alcan-Booth strikers) and stopping use of their coke brazier.

Donations, messages of support, inquiries about transport to the rally from Burnsall Strike Fund, GMB, Will Thorne House, 2 Birmingham Road, Halesowen B63 3HP. Tel: 021 550 4888.

Demonstrate!

**Assemble
Westminster City Hall,
Victoria Street, London WC1
Sunday 8th November, 1pm sharp**

Over 1000 in Brixton hear ex-Black Panther Bobby Seale

By Colin Meech

BOBBY SEALE, co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defence, spoke to a packed meeting of over 1,000 in Brixton on 4th October. 600 were unable to gain entry.

Highlighting media attempts to discredit him as those of a 'dangerous and violent revolutionary', he revealed

aspects of his life which eloquently dispelled the reactionary myth and propaganda.

Seale works from Temple University Philadelphia and lectures on African history throughout the USA. He was trained as a builder by his father from the age of 5, became an architect at 18, and later was an aerospace designer working on satellite rockets, a jazz drummer and a "damn fine Bar-B-Que chef".

He impressed upon the meeting the need for the self determination of Africans all over the world, and for the unity of all peoples subjected to racism and colonial exploitation.

He stressed the requirement to study the sciences, mathematics and political thought as a basis for the hard work of organising the people so that they may change the terrible conditions that they are forced to endure. "Empty slogans" he said "were not enough".

His experiences and his message were relished by the eager minds of the predominantly young and black audience: a new generation obviously in-

spired by Malcolm X, as was Bobby Seale.

Seale ended his speech by declaring himself a revolutionary humanist, committed to the mental, social and economic emancipation of African people and all of humanity.

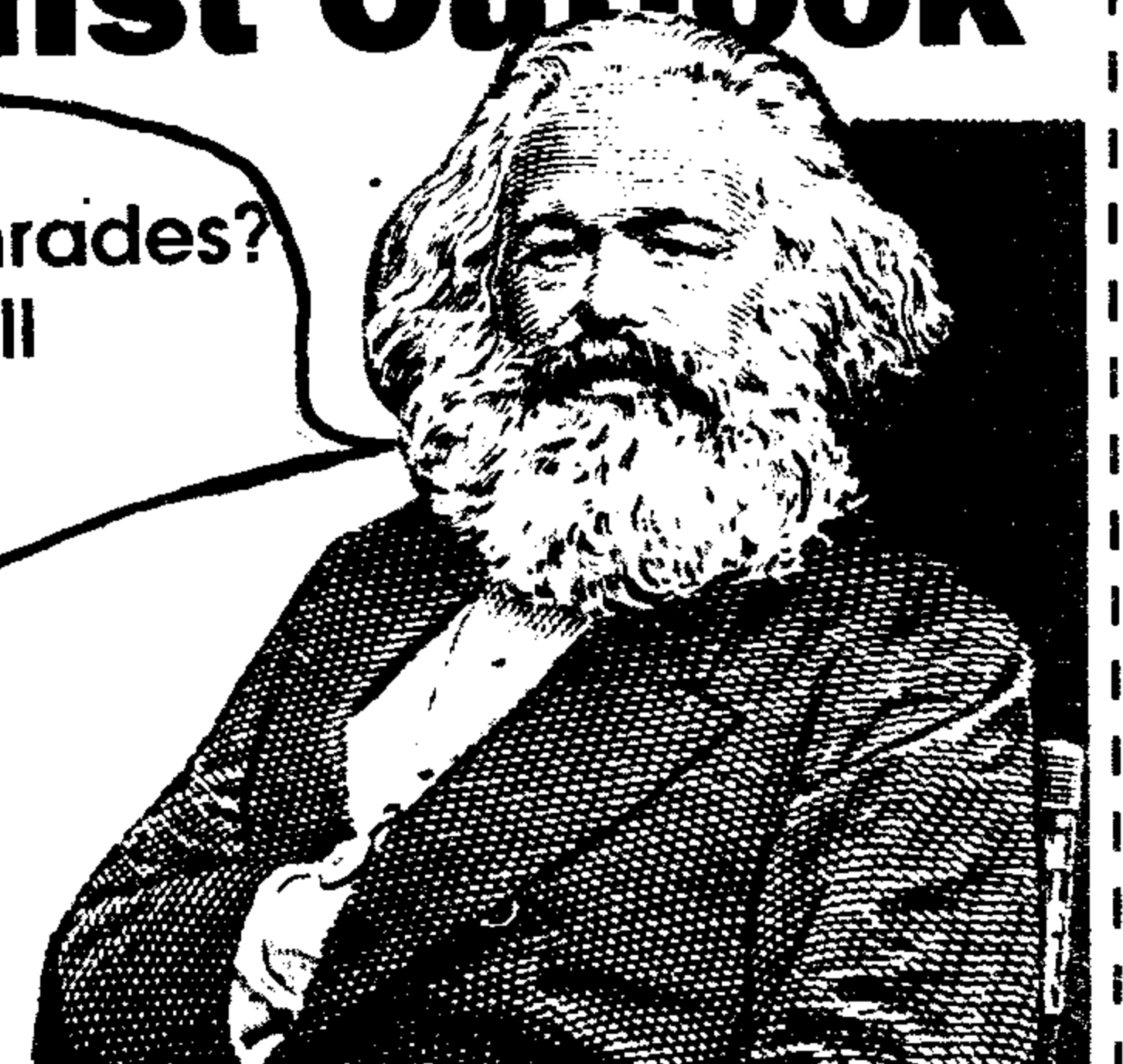
The limited space here cannot do justice to Seale's speech or indeed his life. Read his brilliant and moving account of the Black Panther Party in the 1970 book 'Seize the Time'.

The introduction indicates the objectives to which he has dedicated his life. "...Unity is the catalyst to help humanise this racist world. We need socially conscious activists who will work towards the ultimate goal of community control, as well as political and economic empowerment of our people. We need activists who cross all ethnic and religious backgrounds and colour lines who will establish civil and human rights for all..."

Bobby Seale certainly 'seized' the time. Grab the opportunity to buy and read this book *Seize the Time* recently re-issued by Black Classics Press!

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British troops wreck Turkish-run pub

A Turkish-run pub in the Westphalian town of Iserlohn was attacked and completely wrecked by up to 30 British soldiers last week. The proprietor was slightly injured and his car was destroyed. It is suspected that the attack was in revenge for an earlier fight in the pub, also involving British soldiers, in which several were injured.

Published fortnightly

50p

Solidarity price £1

Strikers and
claimants 25p

No 30

25 October, 1992

socialist OUTLOOK

Humiliated Heseltine sticks to closures

Slow motion death for pits



PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Heseltine - in a political minefield

MICHAEL HESELTINE'S Monday statement made clear what his new plan for the miners is - slow motion death for the coal industry rather than instant death. Ten pits will close after a pefunctory 'review' and the others will be subject to a further enquiry. The chances of any of the pits escaping closure are minimal.

At one level the government's new statement amounts to a political climbdown and embarrassment. But government discomfort will not save the pits. The reason for the changes in the cloadown plans are obvious; Heseltine is attempting to do the minimum amount necessary to scrape a

majority in the Commons.

Heseltine says that the redundancy payments for sacked miners - up to £37,000 - are generous when tens of thousands of other workers are losing their jobs without nearly so much compensation. But in today's conditions redundancy payments, for many just a few thousand pounds, will be useless when another job is impossible to find.

And Heseltine didn't see the irony in admitting that tens of thousands are being thrown on the scrapheap by Tory policies.

Heseltine and Major say that

'there is no economic alternative' to the closure of the pits. But no one who knows the real cost of the investment needed to change to gas-fired power stations believes the so-called 'economic' argument.

It is absolutely obvious that coal mined in Britain is amongst the cheapest deep-mine coal in the world, and that the Tories have been determined to destroy the coal industry in order to smash the organised strength of the miners.

Immediate reaction to Heseltine's statement in the coalfields was unanimous; there was no euphoria at the

pits that had been 'saved' among miners or their families. Everyone knows that any reprieve is temporary and the Tories are determined to crush the industry.

If Heseltine's statement partially defuses backbench Tory revolt, it must not be allowed to defuse the mass campaign against pit closures.

That campaign will continue; it can be the springboard for uniting the struggles of tens of thousands of workers threatened with the sack - if the labour movement seizes this opportunity to turn the Tories' tactical retreat into a rout.