

A Socialist ACTION

Stop all coal!

THIS WEEK the labour movement has in its hands the power to win the miners' strike. The decisions of last week's TUC congress, if they were put into practice, would secure victory.

No government can withstand a blockade of the power stations. If the AUEW and the GMBATU carried out the pledges made by David Basnett and Gavin Laird at the TUC the government's whole position would crumble.

All the power workers' unions have to deliver is the most elementary principle of trade unionism: no crossing of picket lines; no handling of goods taken across a picket line. They do not even have to engage in the kind of solidarity strike that the dockers are in fact involved in.

It was this simple policy which won the strikes in 1972 and 1974. And it would again in 1984.

What is more the union leaderships and the TUC *do have* the power to deliver that support. The reaction when the TUC called for solidarity over GCHQ was massive. The TGWU leadership has held together, and at the beginning of the week even hardened, the dock strike despite the massive press and government offensive against it.

And if the TUC delivered on its policy now, the NUM would have won the strike. For the NUM will never be forced back to work by hardship once they know that victory is simply a question of time until the blockade of power bites.

The TUC has the power to cut the hardship of the strike. The TUC finance and general purposes commit-

tee can call on quite enough funds to ensure the NUM cannot be starved back to work. The announcement of massive financial aid would harden the strike and boost morale still further.

If anyone doubted it six months ago, today it is clear that the miners strike *can* be won.

The TUC can ensure victory in the strike simply by delivering its congress policy. Even MacGregor's attempts to blow up the credibility of the TUC's decisions by refusing negotiations came apart at the first hurdle.

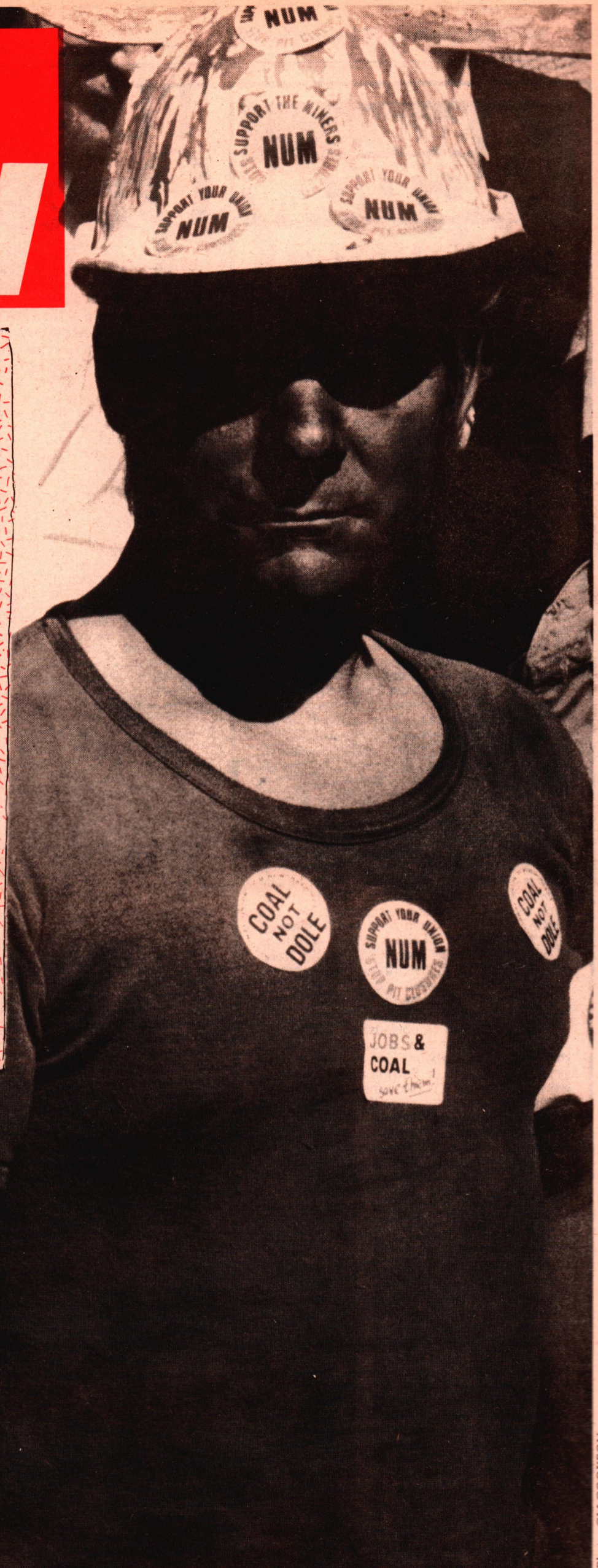
But that is just the problem. The leadership of the TUC *do not want* a crushing victory for Arthur Scargill and the NUM leadership. But they fear both the pressure of their members, and are even aware that if Thatcher can crush the NUM she will come for them next.

The TUC are seeking a 'compromise' that removes the NCB's worst provocations, but lets through the pit closure programme. And that means defeating a strike that can be won.

Fortunately the miners have already shown that they have the power to upset every calculation. Everything is still to be fought for. If in the next weeks militants in every union fight to turn the TUC decisions into reality this strike can win: despite Thatcher, despite the Basnetts and Lairds.

There is no need for compromise. If the TUC back the miners, no pit need close.

The task of the whole movement today is simple. Carry out the TUC congress decisions. Blockade the power stations. STOP ALL COAL!



DON'T CROSS NUM PICKETS

Photo: GM COOKSON

Socialist ACTION

Kinnock gets his way

THE SPEECH which Neil Kinnock made to last week's TUC achieved a remarkable feat. It made Gavin Laird and David Basnett sound like raving militants.

Even with the framework of Neil Kinnock's overall politics it was a consciously right wing speech. The condemnation of 'miners' violence' was long and harsh. The cover of a supposedly 'even-handed' condemnation of the police was non-existent. There was no mention even formally of a victory for the miners — which even Basnett and Laird had been forced to give lip service to.

On every other crucial divide at the TUC — over the NGA, over talks with the government through the National Economic Development Council, over NATO, over the 'no-strike' pledge at GCHQ — Kinnock made it clear he aligned himself with the right.

The sole issue on which Kinnock went out of his way to intervene against the open right were his opening remarks stressing the unity of the Labour Party and the trade union movement — an obvious attack on the EETPU and the other supporters of 'non-political trade unionism', deals with the SDP etc. Kinnock, in short, aligned himself solidly with the right and 'centre' of the TUC.

The leadership of the most powerful unions returned the compliment. The TGWU, while to the left of Kinnock on the immediate question of solidarity with the miners, has taken the political lead to support the new, explicitly pro-NATO, Labour defence document. Ron Todd has made it clear he personally wants the TGWU to support Kinnock's position on reselection. The GMBATU, through David Basnett's domination of Trade Unions for a Labour Victory, continues to be one of Kinnock's key links into the trade unions. The fact that Neil Kinnock's secretary is married to Norman Willis shows the long standing personal links between the Labour Party leader and the new TUC General Secretary.

Kinnock's policy is obvious: to criticise the extreme trade union right for seeking to weaken their links to the Labour Party, but above all to seek to isolate Arthur Scargill and the militant left of the unions. It is the same policy as in the Labour Party itself — where Kinnock first tried to prevent Tony Benn getting into Parliament, now is attempting to break the basis of mandatory reselection, and at the party conference will be attempting to get Robin Cook elected to the NEC to displace one of the left wingers in the constituency section seats. At the level of rhetoric Kinnock is seeking to strengthen the 'centre' in the labour movement.

But what is important to note is the direction in which the centre is headed.

Kinnock's entire policy has been to rebuild Labour's base, and defeat the threat of the Alliance, by taking Labour to the right. There were three key policies which British capital found absolutely unacceptable at the last election — Labour's opposition to membership of the EEC, its unilateralism, and its failure to adopt an explicit incomes policy. Kinnock has worked systematically to eliminate all three.

Opposition to EEC membership has already gone. Unilateralism is degouted by the new defence document. The first murmurings of a new explicit incomes policy were clearly visible at the TUC. Kinnock's proposals on reselection are the first shot in the campaign to limit or reverse the constitutional gains made by the rank and file of the party.

Kinnock's whole policy is to meet the threat of the Alliance by taking Labour rightward to occupy the political space of the Alliance.

Neil Kinnock took Labour a big step in that direction at the TUC congress. The right wing speech was just an accurate glimpse of where he intends to try to take the whole party.

TUC Organise the left

DESPITE THE resolution of support for the miners last week's TUC saw the right wing remain in control. It was not an open triumph of the 'new realist' right that was seen at the 1983 Congress when Chapple, Murray and Alistair Graham openly ruled the roost. But it was a firm and definite right wing control which forms a starting point for strategy in the unions.

Delivering the resolution on support for the miners remains in the hands of two unions, the AUEW and GMBATU, which on every crucial vote lined up with the right wing. On all other key policy votes — the NGA, support for the no-strike deal offered at GCHQ, the decision to return to the National Economic Development Council, support for NATO — the right wing won the day.

The reorganisation of the method of election of the General Council, decided upon at last year's Congress, is also beginning to deliver its gains for the right wing.

Alan Sapper and Ken Cameron were defeated this year. At the next Congress, when APEX will drop into the smaller union category, right wing domination of the small union section will be complete. The 11 General Council seats elected by this section will become virtually a rotten borough of the right.

Finally although the press calculated the right's majority on the General Council as falling to only 26 to 24 after this Congress the fact of a narrower majority depends solely on the NALGO representatives voting solidly with the left. This is still not certain despite the decisions taken at this year's NALGO conference — which criticised NALGO's representatives on the General Council voting with the right over the NGA's struggle at the Stockport Messenger.

The right wing domination of the General Council does not mean that no progress has been made in the last year. The pressure of the miners' strike creates an impact on this issue quite unlike any other. Because of the pressure of their militants, and for their own purposes, a series of other unions, and union leaderships, are not able easily to stand aside and allow the NUM to be crushed by the

government. No matter how much it will be used to try to impose a compromise settlement on the NUM the TUC decisions on solidarity make it easier today to build support action for the miners.

by John Ross

Most fruitfully on certain questions the left is prepared to go beyond words, which are useless in themselves, to actions. The leadership of the TGWU has fought for the national docks strike. ASLEF and the NUR, no matter what their position on the current redundancy dispute in British Rail and London Transport, fought for an effective boycott of the movement of coal by rail. At the base of the TGWU the militants have been able to hold the line on the docks strike. Local support for the miners by the labour movement is overwhelming.

But the problems which are confronted by the left wing in the trade unions today are also obvious. Politically Kinnock has succeeded in disarming the left on an increasing series of issues. Membership of the EEC has been accepted. Support for a build up in conventional arms spending has been accepted. Increasingly the old trap of incomes policy is being discussed — as well as, according to Roy Hattersley, the need to accept unemployment staying at a minimum level of two million.

The tactics used by the government in almost every struggle today are also the same. They are to attempt to go over the heads of the militants, and over the heads of the union leadership, to appeal directly to the rank and file. This is the government's policy in trying to create the 'back to work' movement in the pits. It is its aim in holding the ballot at Tilbury. The new

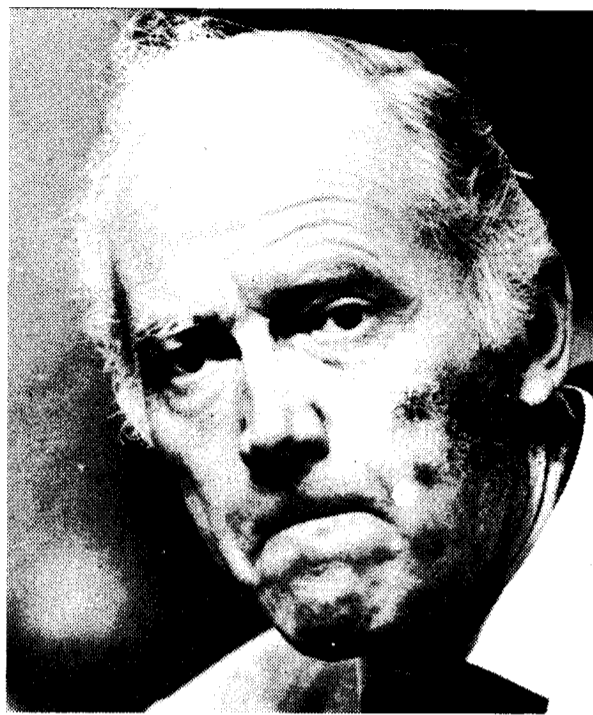


Photo: LABOUR HERALD

'compulsory' strike ballot legislation aims to make permanent and institutionalise the whole process.

It is at this level, among the rank and file members, that the biggest weakness of the trade union left lies today. Even the positive steps taken to coordinate action show the weakness of campaigns that for years have rested mainly on 'the union machine'.

The NUM has held regular meetings with other union leaderships throughout the strike — but no one knows directly what was decided. The TGWU left was able to win the election for Ron Todd but it is not organised for rank and file campaigning in the union or the docks. It is this weakness which the government attempts to constantly utilise.

Scathing

Similarly the left has a base in unions such as the NUM, NUR, and ASLEF, but it is not effectively organised across unions to take the fight into right wing controlled strongholds such as the EETPU or the ISTC.

Neither of the main bodies that exist across

unions are today, for different reasons, up to the job of campaigning that is required. The Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) was always strictly controlled by the Communist Party. Today it is just as much under the thumb of the CP but an insignificant shell of its former self. The organisation was wrecked during the 1970s by its uncritical support to Hugh Scanlon and other 'left' leaders.

The Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) was able to hold a major conference of 2,200 trade unionists earlier this year. But BLOC is just as undemocratically controlled by the Militant tendency as the LCDTU was by the Communist Party, and, because of Militant's sectarianism to other left forces, does not tap the full potential opposition to the right.

While individual initiatives of BLOC, such as the lobby of the TUC on 3 September, are excellent, and should be supported, the organisation as a whole cannot be the organising centre for the left in the unions.

During the next year the left is going to have no choice but to confront this weakness. Firstly it is obvious that solidarity for the miners is going to have

to be built area by area. The tradition of the early 1970s, where regular conferences of the local labour movement were called around key disputes and campaigns, has to be revived.

Secondly, no matter how many boycotts are called for, 'compulsory' ballots on strike action and other attempts by the government to intervene in the normal procedures of trade unions at a rank and file level are going to become a permanent feature of government policy. The fight against them means the left must engage in far more agitation and work at the rank and file level than ever before. It will not be enough just to secure the election of a left union leadership and hope that will do the job.

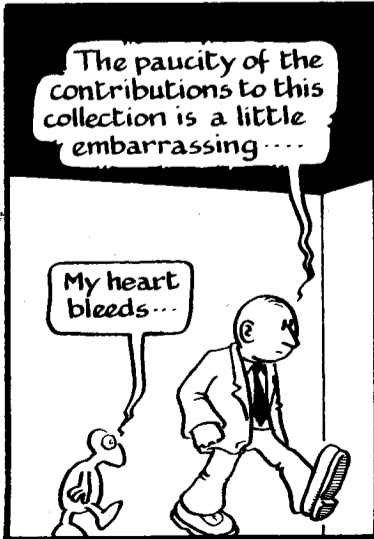
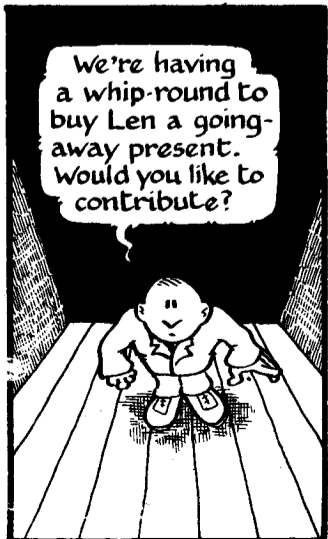
This means a priority on every type of campaigning and organisation at the rank and file level from left wing caucuses, really campaigning broad lefts in the unions, to workplace branches of the Labour Party. The test of any left wing leadership in a union is how far it encourages, or discourages, such rank and file organisation.

The left leadership in the trade unions and the TUC must organise its own base in the unions and Labour Party.

Finally the most important political ballots in the history of the unions will be taking place next year — the vote on maintaining political funds and on affiliation to the Labour Party. Together with the ballots on the closed shop these are going to shape the entire future of British trade unionism. After winning the miners' strike, winning these votes is the single most important task of the trade union left in the next year.

In short the right wing retains its grip on the TUC — but under greater pressure than before from the left. The vital task of the next year is to start to organise that left at every level of the trade union movement. The next stage in the fight is to link that left with the fights which are going to take place at next month's Labour Party conference.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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TUC: action not words ...

Back the miners!

THE 'TOTAL SUPPORT' offered by the TUC to the miners last week has given an immediate boost to the strike. Morale in the mining communities, and among the miners' supporters up and down the country, has been given a shot in the arm.

For six long months the miners have fought with only the support of the left in the labour movement — the rail, sea and road transport unions, the dockers and the Labour left in support committees throughout the country.

The strike has accurately shown the strength of this left. It has been able to wage the biggest industrial struggle since 1926, the most important class struggle since the Second World War.

Despite the stakes involved for the Thatcher government, determined to smash the NUM, the miners have not been defeated. But they have not been able to win with simply the support so far.

The strike remains at a stand-off. The TUC decision opens a new stage in the development of the

dispute which contains the possibility of moving more rapidly to victory, and the threat that the TUC itself will force an unfavourable 'compromise' on the NUM.

By Jude Woodward

From the point of view of the Tory government the strike is at a crucial stage. The threat of power cuts increasingly looms as the autumn goes on and the government can be in no doubt that if the first light goes out the miners will have achieved an

overwhelming victory. Therefore all the efforts of the government are now going into defeating the strike before any threat to the power stations begins.

This urgency lies behind the government's provoking of the national docks dispute around Hunterston, and the refusal to settle with the TGWU — despite the fact that the union's demands in the struggle are quite limited. The TGWU's demand is simply for the withdrawal of scab labour, there need be no agreement from the BSC on an exact quota of coal and ore to be allowed through the docks.

Boycott

Behind all this lies the government's need to move coal from pithead stocks to the power stations if it is to survive a winter strike. While such a move would require a tremendous operation to move coal — 8000 lorries working round the clock on some estimates — it could be done. The key issue for the miners now is whether or not power station employees will work with scab coal.

Picket lines

This is why the TUC statement pledging to make the dispute more effective was so important. It also gives the measure to judge the statements from Basnett of the GMBATU and Laird of the AUEW. Basnett promised 'we won't see the NUM destroyed', while Laird declared 'we are all at one with the NUM'. With these two unions organising the majority of power station workers actually delivering their promise to ensure scab coal is not used would make all the difference to the strike.

But the TUC did not have the best interests of the miners' strike at heart when it passed its resolution of support. Murray,



Photos: NIGEL BEVAN

Basnett et al were thinking about their own backs!

The TUC has exacted a price for its support. It has won the right to intervene into the conclusion of the strike, and will undoubtedly be seeing to impose a compromise settlement on the NUM.

The *Economist*, in its editorial last week, put the problem and the opportunity facing the government clearly: 'It is now unlikely that the vehicle of this defeat (of the NUM) will be either Mrs Thatcher or Mr MacGregor: the antagonism of Mr Scargill and his supporters is too implacable, the back-to-work movement is too hesitant. Nor will defeat come at the hands of the government's inert trade union laws or from some new judge-enforced ballot, which Mr Scargill will disregard. Instead, Mr Scargill's defeat will come from within the union movement itself....'

Immediate

In other words all the fiery words and intransigent laws of the Thatcher government cannot inflict a defeat on the miners' strike. The issue is now in the hands of the TUC — and that was not so simply the case before Brighton.

If there is to be a defeat for the NUM it is now up to the TUC. What would suit Murray, Willis and Basnett down to the ground is for the NCB to offer a little bit more than it has done so far, and then force such a deal on the NUM.

The problem confronting the TUC is firstly the struggle of the NUM and

second that Thatcher still doesn't want to give anything at all. Anything less than all-out victory over the NUM will underline the fact — shown by Liverpool, the GLC 'Paving Bill' and the local and Euro-elections — that Thatcher cannot deliver what the ruling class wants: a substantial and lasting defeat of the labour movement and the whole working class.

Opportunity

To expect the TUC general council, left to itself, to take advantage of the weakness of Thatcher to pull off a victory for the NUM, would be expecting the moon. No trust can be placed in the hands of those who sold out the NGA and GCHQ.

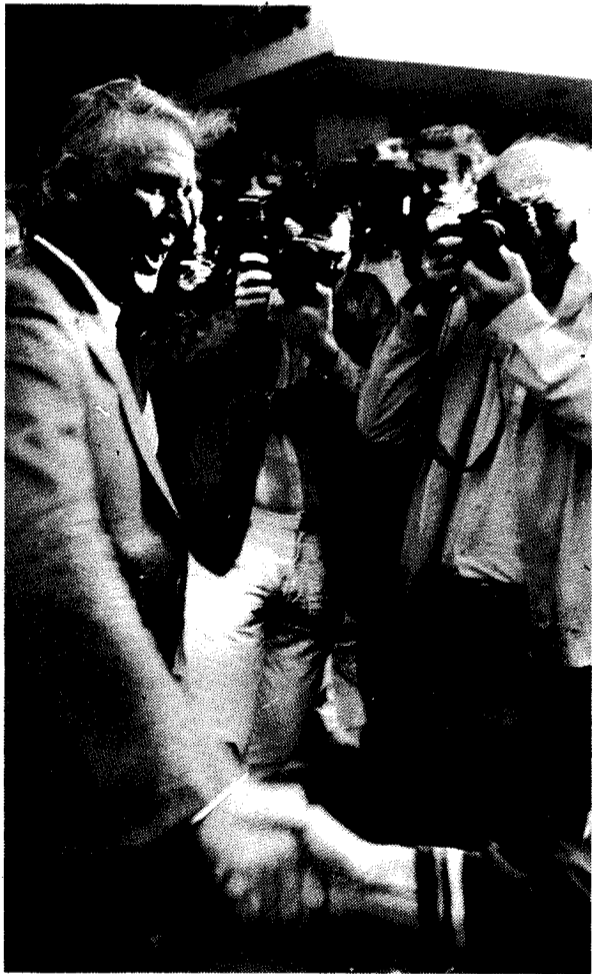
All that has occurred is that the decisions of the TUC, and the statements of Laird and Basnett, give a real opportunity for the support movement around the miners to build links with power station workers to begin building for an effective boycott of scab coal. The task has to be urgently taken on from now to ensure that the TUC's promises do not remain in the realm of empty rhetoric, but are turned into the kind of action that really can force Thatcher's hand.

Following the TUC there are two key tasks confronting the left in the labour movement to win the miners' strike. Firstly, steps have to be made now to extend the solidarity across the labour movement by organising practical action with power

workers. Whatever its intentions the decisions of the TUC, and statements like those of Laird and Basnett, provide a real opening for the organisation of the left around the strike — including in the GMBATU and the AUEW. And the utter hostility towards the EETPU after Eric Ham-

mond's attacks on 'picket line violence' should give the green light to militants in that union to start to organise around the miners.

Above all the solidarity movement has to use the TUC decisions to take a new step forward, its objective to STOP ALL COAL.



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Bill Sirs — history of a scab



THE ARTICLE REPRINTED below is taken from the August/September issue of *South Wales Labour Briefing*. It was written by RAY DAVIES, a steelworker from Llanwern and a regular contributor to Socialist Action. One of Ray's activities is producing the now-famous Llanwern *Steelsheet*. The original article was written for the union activists' newsletter and a copy duly fell into the hands of ISTC superscab, Bill Sirs.

Mr Sirs promptly raised it at his national executive meeting. The executive decided to take action under Rule 43, which deals with members whose activities bring the union into disrepute.

But last weekend saw a new twist in events. Mr Sirs and his executive have been having second thoughts, it seems. Worried that an enquiry might evoke a good deal of sympathy for the so-called offender, they've decided to delay any investigation until after the miners' strike is over.

IN 1979 THE ISTC was one of the weakest, most ineffective unions in the country. This is why the Tories first picked on the steelworkers in their campaign against the trade unions.

But things began to change during the 1980 strike. The rank and file on the picket lines relegated the pathetic full-time officers to answering the telephone and making the tea. The strike developed into one of the most militant national disputes since the war.

Looking back to the pre-1980 period, steelworkers realised that of the major trade unions theirs was the most autocratic, undemocratic

organisation in the whole trade union movement. The ISTC was virulently pro-nuclear weapons. It supported the EEC. And it consistently supported the right in the Labour Party. It was not until 1976 that the ISTC held a national conference and even then, it was only of advisory status.

Region

During the strike the left realised that to democratise the union they would have to change the structure which separated region from region, and one section of the steel plant from the other. They put forward a number of proposals.

They proposed the establishment of joint trade union bodies and the abandonment of the system of worker directors. They demanded that branch meetings be held regularly and that industrial action should not be called off before branches had been consulted. Delegate conferences should become policy making, and full time officers should be elected.

The response of Bill Sirs, the general secretary, was rapid and decisive. He cancelled the 1980 annual conference on the spurious grounds that it was too expensive.

Obstacles

Despite these obstacles the left made steady progress and, by 1981, had won conference support for CND, for opposition to the EEC, and to place the union behind the left of the Labour Party. Most importantly, annual conference became policy making.

The left now turned its attention to the executive council. A motion was passed calling for the abolition of the undemocratic trade based structure.

But while the left celebrated Sirs was plotting his comeback. He persuaded the existing EC to organise a ballot on his proposals for a new structure. Each region would elect its three EC members, as called for by the left, but on the basis of one seat from the private sector, one from the staff sections, and only one from the shop floor of the larger BSC plants. So after all the hard work, we ended up with a worse EC than before!

The small private steel sector is traditionally moderate, whilst the staff sector is dominated by middle management. The majority of steelworkers are grossly under-represented. We had won the conference only to have victory snatched out of our hands. Worst of all, plans to democratise the shop floor have been completely frustrated.

Melting

There are no joint shop stewards' committees, or single branch structures in the steel plants. Instead, organisation is by section — one branch for the melting shop, one for the coke ovens, one for the mills, ten for the various staff and management

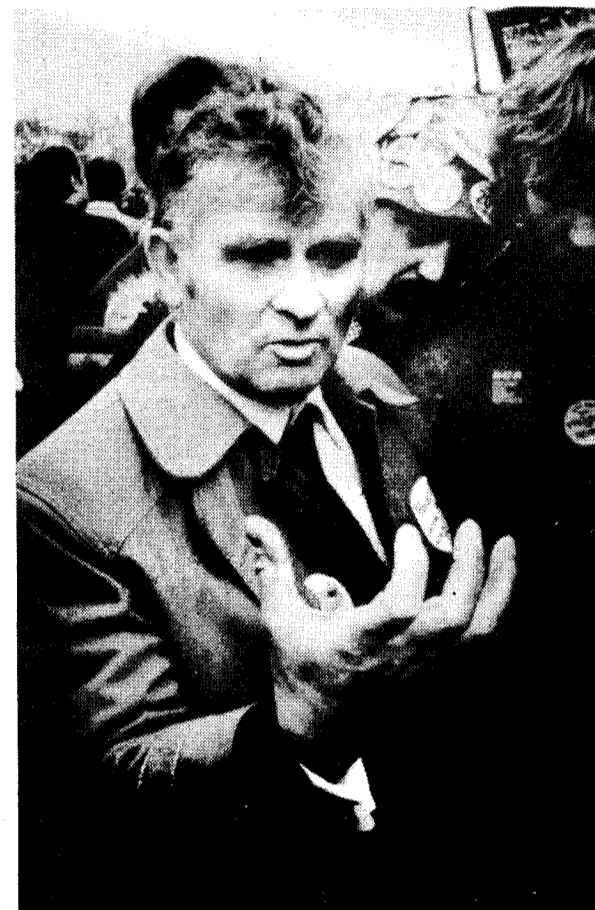
grades, and so on. Each branch holds its own negotiations. The only coordination is from outside the plant by full time officers.

All this, of course, plays into the hands of the bosses. When a branch becomes strong or militant, or just troublesome, the management calls in the full time officers. They then read them the riot act, threatening expulsions and disbandment of branches. These people are not elected and not accountable.

Worst

Is it any wonder that Bill Sirs has had such an easy time scabbing on the triple alliance and undermining the most important national strike since the war. We have not had one mass meeting during the miners' strike. There has not been one call for action to support the NUM. Worst of all, our obligation under clause 9 of the triple alliance relating to joint industrial action has been ripped up and trampled underfoot.

At plant level all over the country a small proportion of management and staff unions are handling the scab coal and ore. The bulk of shop floor



workers look on — sad and confused — while local trade union leaders queue up at the Tory media to extol the virtues of scabbing.

Even though the task looks hopeless, there are

still small groups of steelworkers fighting back — publishing news sheets, building support for the miners, and joining the picket lines. The fight to win justice and democracy goes on.

Didcot power station closed

By Dominic Johnson

DIDCOT power station, 15 miles south of Oxford, is set to become an important focus in the coal dispute. It is the largest coal-fired power station in the south west of England.

NUM members from Merthyr Vale in South Wales have picketed the CEBG station from the earliest days of the strike and rapidly stopped all coal deliveries thanks to solidarity from rail workers.

Coal stocks were rapidly depleted and in the early summer, with only two weeks' stock remaining, the power station was shut down 'for maintenance'. Since then no electricity has been produced, and the NUM pickets have maintained their round-the-clock vigil.

In addition the miners' position has been strengthened by the solidarity of the workers inside the power station. Back in June, after a strong lead from the

AUEW district secretary, Malcolm Young, a mass meeting of the power workers voted 3-1 not to handle scab coal.

This was then followed by a management offensive against the unions in the plant, including withdrawal of overtime and union facilities.

Today however a new situation has been reached. Rumours are rife that

teams of fitters are working on transferring the plant from coal to oil burning. Whether this is true or not, oil is needed to restart the furnaces. Last week BP oil tankers were turned away by pickets after TGWU drivers refused to cross picket lines. This was the first time that oil has tried to go in.

It is now on the cards that CEBG management

will try to bring in oil with scab labour, and in fact last Saturday one oil tanker did cross the picket line.

This situation could easily escalate. The key factor will be the response of workers inside the plant, who up to now have refused to handle scab fuel. Alongside this the attitude of the South Wales NUM is crucial. Up to now

the they have avoided mass pickets on the grounds they are unnecessary and likely to alienate the plant workforce.

Support will also be needed from the local labour movement which has already given widespread support to the NUM with over £35,000 so far raised in the Oxford area.

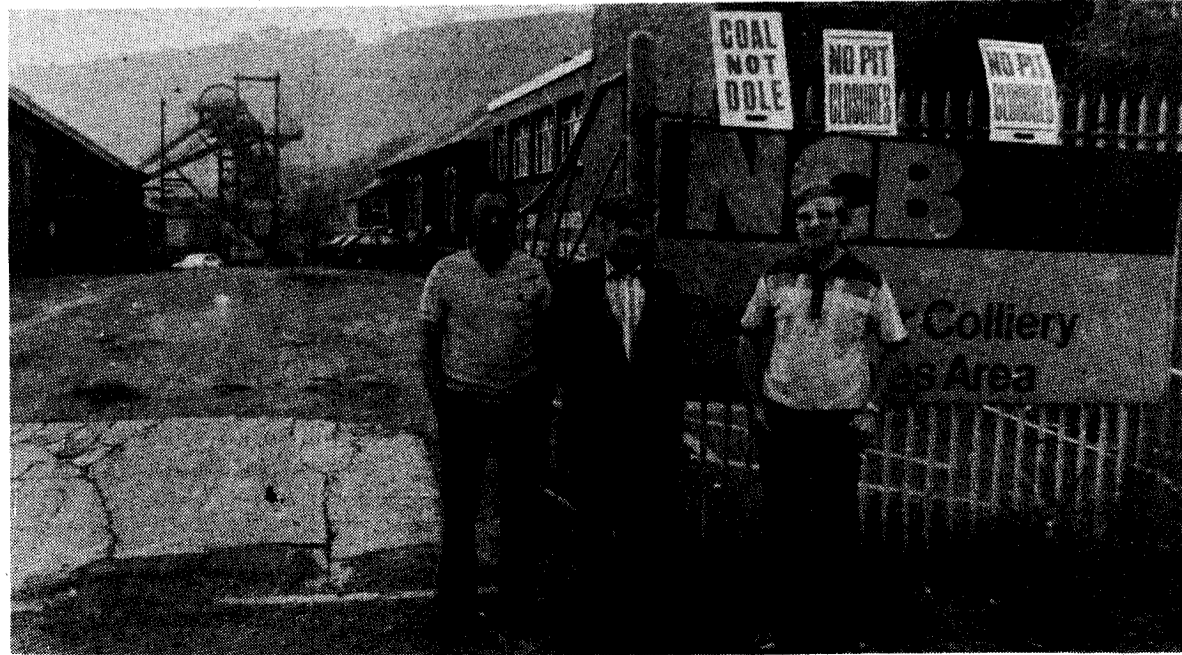


Photo: NIGEL BEVAN

Support for NUM from Brazil

THE FIRST congress of the new Brazilian TUC, the CUT, passed the following resolution of support for the NUM:

At this its first congress, the Brazilian CUT expresses its total solidarity with the struggle of the 150,000 brothers and sisters, British miners, who have already been on strike for 168 days against the destruction of their industry, their jobs and their communities by Mrs Thatcher's Conservative government.

Once again, as in its aggression against the Argentinian people, as in its passivity before the death on hunger strike of Irish nationalists, this government has shown itself ready to resort to the most brutal methods in its efforts to defend the capitalist and imperialist interests which it represents. This strike has already seen the big-

gest police operation ever seen in Britain, with more than 1,500 miners pickets arrested, and two killed.

We Brazilian workers are familiar with this sort of repression, and worse; many times it has been exercised against us in defence of those same interests, including those of British multinational firms operating in Brazil.

We know that for our brother miners, and for those other trade unionists supporting them, this confrontation is decisive, capable of deciding for many years to come the future of the workers' movement in Britain, and even that of British imperialism itself.

In this struggle we have a common interest with the British miners. We give them all our support, and wish them every success. Long live international solidarity!

passed by the 1st Congress of the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores, Sao Paulo, 28 August 1984.

Betty Heathfield at the TUC:

“Women face violence of a special kind”

BETTY HEATHFIELD was one of the main speakers at a fringe meeting organised by the Labour Women's Action Committee at the TUC last week.

She explained the impact that women organising have had on the miners' strike, and on the labour movement as a whole. We reproduce parts of her speech.

WE WERE very proud today that no less than six speakers made reference to the mining women in the debate on the strike.

I've been a supporter for many years of the active involvement of women in the social struggles that concern us all. Issues like good housing, health care, full employment and decent wages based on peace and working class prosperity. These issues should be of equal concern to women as men.

I'm proud of the role of women in the strike. It is a tremendous example for women throughout the labour movement.

Women have shown a companionship in action, that has helped to wipe out the image of the press using the working class wife as a lever against the men fighting for their future. That's how they've been able to use us in the past. Always the first person seen on TV in a strike is a wife who can't support her husband because she needs the money.

Coal Board

No union or strike will ever be the same again. Women will join in. Now we need to get the wives of dockers, railway workers and lorry drivers involved.

This women's activity is a means of awakening and uniting the whole labour movement at the grassroots. Our activity has, I think, brought a lot of the men into the strike. And when we win it will be a victory for the whole labour movement. It will wipe out forever the image of the wife who's very willing to escort her husband across the picket line.

There's a great spirit in the strike, especially among the women. This is a crucial time. We know that the government and the Coal Board are making desperate attempts to break our spirit. And as they do that we must be stronger and more determined.

If we get isolated then it's easy to begin feeling tired and frustrated. All the women have a great number of personal problems — debts, no money to buy the children clothes and being short of food.

We've got a national coordinating effort for the women underway, because during the strike women have changed a lot. They are saying that when the strike is over they will not disperse, and we don't want them to either. The strike has been the quickest social and political education they could have gone through.

In Derbyshire we often go on picket lines. That's

another thing, the media always shows us in the soup kitchens or providing food. They imply we are just playing the traditional role of women in pit villages — cooking, cleaning, looking after the men and the children. But women have done many other things.

For example in Derbyshire wives and kids were threatened with arrest if they stood on their own street when working miners were coming home. They could stand in their gardens but not on the street.

Violence

In Welbeck we couldn't even get a soup kitchen. Originally the village hall was given, but the trustees overturned the decision. It turned out that the manager of Welbeck colliery is chair of the trustees!

Women experience violence of a different kind on the pickets. We are intimidated because we are women. We have a women's picket every week in the Nottingham coalfield, we go down as there are fewer women there. Usually there are 50 or 60 of us. You have to see the police violence to believe it.

Two weeks ago about 50 of us went down to Shirebrook and we were just singing and shouting. Our songs are really good. We're not allowed to say the word 'scab' so we incorporate it into all our songs instead. We know we all risk arrest every time we go, because at every picket they always make a few token arrests.

Animals

This time they tried to arrest a Chesterfield woman. We got her away the first time, and we decided she should leave as they had their eye on her. We tried to get her through the police cordon which by now had surrounded us. We tried again and failed while the police sent for reinforcements. They kept us there until 11.30pm, because they said none of us could leave the pen they'd got us in.

When they finally came in for the kill they behaved like animals. We hope that we've got it all on video, because they've never yet had a women's picket on TV.

At Shirebrook the scabs are bussed in in armoured cars from all over the coalfield — they are not all from Shirebrook.

On a Radio Four interview they explained what

they have to do to go into work. They were saying that they make dens to hide in until the bus comes in the morning. The bus takes a roundabout route and it's changed every day. It's all kept secret and they use radio contact to time when they arrive at the pit to the very minute.

The men are warned to keep walking up and down while they are waiting so that no one realises they are waiting for a bus. On the buses some of them wear balaclavas or lie down on the bus floor so that they won't be recognised.

They don't like the women being out there shouting 'scabs', it seems to have even more effect on them than the pickets.

We're going to be sure and consolidate the women's groups that we've got, have more marches and more leaflets. Many of the women in this dispute started off not understanding the issues and have become very



Photos: NIGEL BEVAN

political animals. It would be a shame to let this go. It proves it can be done.

We've brought out the skills of women that are never used. We've translated skills that all ordinary working class women have — ability to run a house etc — into a larger arena. So now they are taking decisions, making speeches, participating.

I want to finish by reading from a letter one young woman sent to us:

'I'm a miners wife and my child is seven months

old, born five weeks into the strike. When it started I had to beg or borrow to get my child's milk ...

'I've not been able to get him new clothes and there are no new toys. I feel we've gone back to the 1920s. And I feel inadequate ...

'They keep saying they understand my husband is fighting for the right to work. Why do we all have to be punished for that?'

If that lass can stick it out then we can all stick it out, and we hope you can stick it out too.



Kent women fired on

THE INVASION of the quiet Kent village of Elvington by thousands of police to protect the 'right to work' of 26 scabs at Tilmanstone colliery has brought a greater sense of outrage and unity among the women.

turned into a police village. But on Tuesday a young girl collecting wild flowers for school along the pit path at 6pm was ordered home by the police.

Aurilia Pugh, chair of the Tilmanstone women's support group, explained what followed:

'About 50 of us women went marching down to the pit path where one of our scabs live. We intended only to put a leaflet (prepared by the NUM for the village) through the door. However as we walked up the path, with the permission of the police, he opened fire on us with a 12 bore shotgun.

'The response of the police, which didn't surprise me, was to accept his word that he didn't do it. I've been telling the women here for years now that the police are no friends of working class people. Now they believe me.'

The feelings of the women were summed up by Lesley, the secretary of the group, when she said:

'Before the strike began the women here were content to leave politics to the men while we sat and talked about the kids, now we won't let them discuss politics without us again.'



Black people back miners

FIFTY thousand stickers and 5000 badges reading 'Black people support the miners — oppose police violence' were distributed by the 'Black Delegation to the Mining Communities' from a float and two stalls which raised over £3000 at the Notting Hill Carnival. Trevor Sheldon of Kensington Labour Party told Socialist Action.



The Notts Striker features the carnival as its lead article.

The delegation — there are about 3,500 black miners in the country — began its work last July.

'In our discussion', explained delegation member Ho Bo from Brent, 'everyone felt that support for the miners from the black community is overwhelming. But like most collective actions by black people, they are rarely given attention by the British working class. Grunwick, rather than also being seen as a black women's struggle, was viewed purely as a trade union rights battle.'

'The Black Delegation's action at the carnival was one step forward towards making black people's efforts visible. We feel the miners are fighting for their jobs against a racist and anti-working class Tory government, that wants to crush dissent by any means. The violence which black communities bear the brunt of is now being deployed against the mining communities.'



Photos: FRANK O'BRIEN

'The Delegation was formed by many different progressive black organisations to come to the miners' aid to make sure a victory for the miners is a victory for all.' Cops were taken aback by the delegation and its

popularity, so they harassed and threatened it. But backing from all those around stopped them.

Black people interested in the Delegation and its work should contact Tay (01-836 8291) or Suresh (843 2333).

Camden Miners Support Group

MINERS BENEFIT NIGHT

Friday SEPT 14th
CAMDEN CENTRE
Bidborough St. WC1 Kings + tube
8.00 p.m.

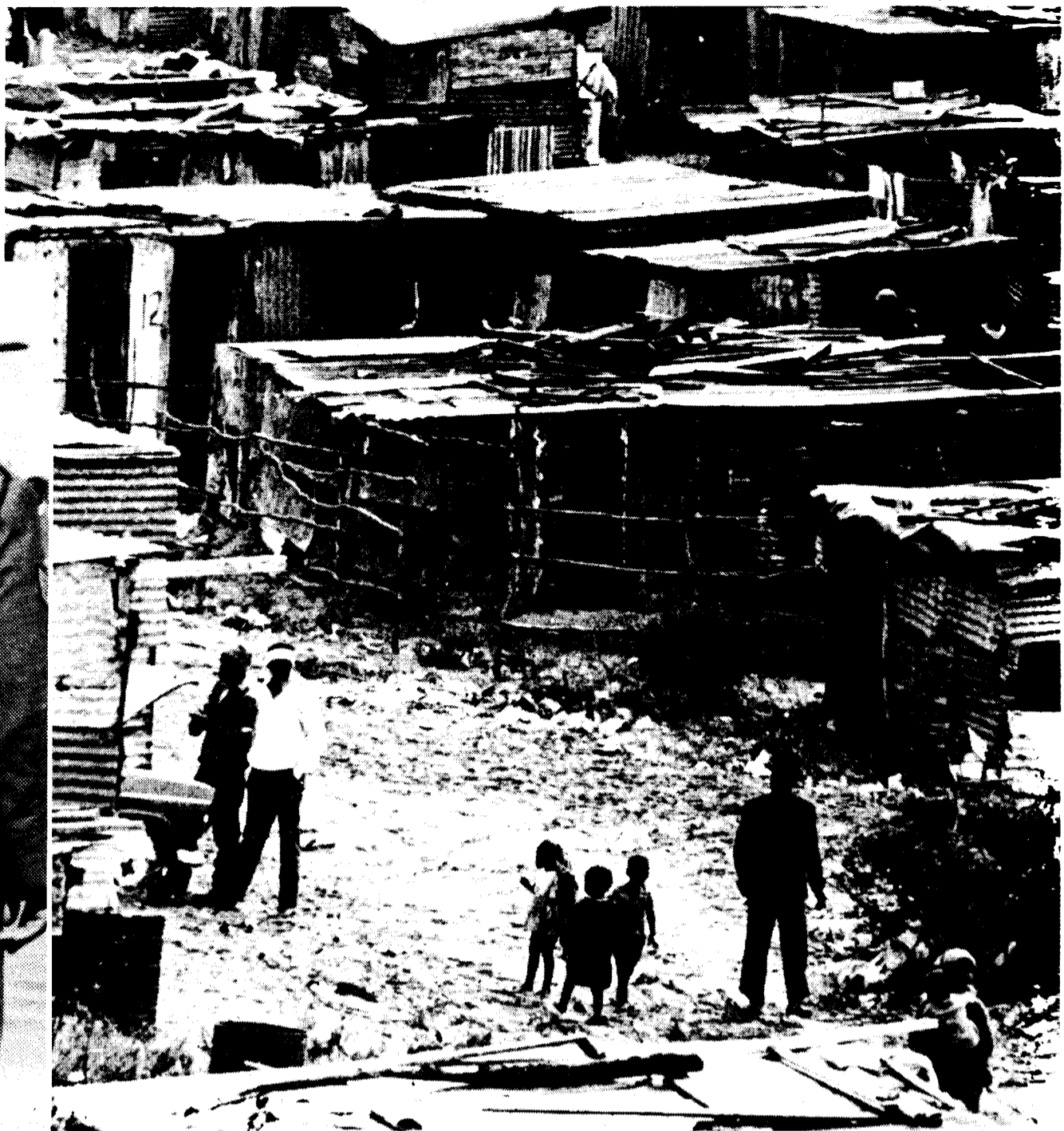
AFRICAN CONNE ION
BARIO LATINO

SEETHING WELLS
MARK MIWRDZ

NUM speaker

£2.50
£1.50 cons.
BAR

ille massacre



YEARS	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981'	1982
Total Number of Strikes	370	384	274	245	90	106	101	207	342	281
No. of Workers involved	98 378	59 244	23 323	28 013	15 304	14 160	22 803	61 785	92 842	189 022

A COMPARISON OF STRIKES IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1973-82

THE THREAT OF a miners' strike in the gold fields of the Rand must be adding to the growing difficulties confronting the apartheid regime, after the rejection of the new constitution by the overwhelming majority of the 'Indian' and 'coloured' voters.

The growth of the South African independent trade unions — the fastest in the world — over the past decade has been truly phenomenal.

Apartheid is a form of racial oppression directed against all black people, but is also designed to be an effective

barrier to the development of independent working class organisations.

Nevertheless, black workers in South Africa have a long tradition of trade union organisation and militancy. The 1920s and the 1930s saw strikes in the mines, docks and industry.

In 1946 there was a massive strike of mineworkers organised by the African Mineworkers Union and backed by the growing industrial unions. In the mid-1950s, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) mobilised black industrial unions culminating in mass demonstrations and 'stay-at-homes' around the time of Sharpville in 1960.

But the apartheid state was able to break the back of these unions in 1960 when SACTU was driven underground.

The level of organisation among black workers collapsed for the following decade.

The revival of the workers movement began in the 1970s with mass strikes in Durban, rapidly spreading to the East Rand and East London. They marked the re-birth of the independent non-racial trade unions. In spite of government hostility, the unions succeeded in winning many concessions.

'The black trade union movement, as the embryo of a broader working class movement, has become in the last 10 years the major organisational form of resistance of black workers. It is the key to the development of a working class movement in South Africa and its future will shape both the character and efficacy of the struggle against apartheid as a whole.' (*A Question of Solidarity*, Bob Fine and Laurence Wells)

Alarmed at the rapid growth and militancy of the new unions, the government tried to bring it under control through the Wiehahn Commission.

It recommended that 'African' trade unions should, through a system of formal registration, be incorporated into the officially sanctioned collective bargaining system.

Registration would ensure a more structured and orderly situation. 'African' members of registered unions would enjoy the same privileges (sic) as their white, Indian and coloured colleagues. Some restrictions which kept black workers out of skilled jobs would be phased out. Registration of racially 'mixed' unions would be permitted.

By Charlie van Gelderen

With this went recommendations for official regulation of union activity through a National Manpower Commission and a ban on trade union political activity.

The government, under pressure from overseas and from major employers, who thought 'recognised' unions would be more pliant than 'unrecognised' independent unions, reluctantly accepted part of the Wiehahn proposals.

Strong opposition from the unions forced the government to drop its initial prohibition on migrant workers joining registered unions. This victory gave the new unions a foretaste of their potential power.

From the start the new unions were determined not to fall into the pattern of the established unions which led to the distancing of leaders from the rank and file.

In the period when they were cut off from the official structures, these unions had to rely on their strength on the shop floor for effectiveness in dealing with employers. This led to an emphasis on shop floor structures through shop steward committees.

The unions fought for the develop-

ment of plant level bargaining in place of, or in addition to, bargaining at industrial council level.

The restrictions imposed by the Wiehahn Commission has not had the effect of curbing the growth and militancy of the unions.

Between 1980 and 1982, the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) almost doubled its membership. Within FOSATU, the Metal and Allied Workers Union trebled its membership during 1981 and almost doubled it again in 1982.

Within FOSATU there are now recognised shop steward committees in 173 factories as compared with 99 in 1981.

Strikes

Side by side with their numerical growth there was a marked increase in strike action.

Of even greater significance, perhaps, is the rapid raising of consciousness among the new trade unionists. Complicating matters for the regime is that the escalating levels of strikes is paralleled by the growth of the political resistance movement which reached its culmination in the boycott of sham elections. The trade unions played a key role in this boycott.

The death in detention of Neil Aggett, organiser of the Food and Canning Workers Union, led to a nationwide half-hour political strike on 11 February 1982. Over 100,000 workers from all major industrial unions downed tools to protest Aggett's death.

It was the first instance of industrial action of a political nature organised on a national scale and centred on the point of production rather than the

traditional form of 'stay away' and showed the increased potential and high degree of maturity of the new trade union movement.

The power of the black workers has grown so much that white workers are now joining black trade unions because 'You don't get fired easily if you belong to black unions' (*Rand Daily Mail*, 13.6.83).

In the last 10 years, the black trade union movement has become the major organisational form of resistance of black workers. The more politically aware trade union leaders see it as the foundation on which a broader working class movement would be built.

In an important address to the FOSATU congress in April, 1982, the general secretary Joe Foster stressed the limitations of the trade union movement and the need for a broader political working class movement.

He pointed out that: 'In the capitalist economies these working class movements (trade unions) have power and organisation yet politically, the working class is still subject to policies and practices that are clearly against their interests as the activities of Thatcher and Reagan show.'

He then went on to state that whilst in the socialist countries political and economic relations have been greatly altered and there have been great achievements and benefits for the workers: 'There is still the need for workers to control their own destiny. So Solidarity was not struggling to restore capitalism in Poland, its struggle was to establish more democratic workers control over their society.'

The independent trade unions will undoubtedly provide the rock on which the South African workers political party will be built. Its future will shape both the character and efficacy of the struggle against apartheid as a whole.

RGILL, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL NEWWORKERS.

ER, GENERAL SECRETARY, ION OF SA TRADE UNIONS.

N OF SA TRADE UNIONS FULLY UM IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST PIT THE FORMATION OF A WIDER SOUTH AFRICA'S INDEPENDENT NEXT YEAR, WE HOPE IN FUTURE TO ER YOU MORE CONCRETE SUPPORT. THE RIGHT TO WORK IS UNDERSTOOD BY SOUTH AFRICAN SUPPORTED BY OUR FEDERATION. AT YOUR VICTORY WILL BE A MAJOR N THE WORLDWIDE WORKER OB SECURITY AND FOR A RATIONAL LA!

20-30 September Ten days for Greenham



Arrests at the Alconbury blockade two weeks ago

ON SUNDAY, as troops rolled into Dover to take part in NATO's biggest ever exercise, campers were evicted from Greenham's Blue, Violet and Indigo gates along the camp's north side.

The Transport Ministry has applied to the High Court for an eviction order. The case comes up on 12 September, ironically the same day as the first national women's conference against nuclear war in the USA. The evictions — the first on a Sunday — must have been in preparation for the case.

By Helen John

The press silence on Greenham is an example of the greatest press freedom of all — the freedom not to print. The media have exercised this to serve the government well. They have let thousands of people believe the camp ended with the April evictions. But they didn't, and on 20-30 September tens of thousands of women will be going there to protest the stationing of cruise missiles, the building of Trident and against the NATO war exercise.

CND's 27 October na-

tional demonstration in Barrow-in-Furness will be directed against Trident, which is produced there. Important though this is, Greenham's ten days will be the only national focus for opposing cruise, and with the NATO exercise in full swing as Kinnock launches his latest stab in the back for the peace movement at Labour's conference, they will be ten vital days.

Planning your visit? Two days to look out for:

● 23 September. London Labour women's committee have called for women to back up Jo Richardson's visit to the camp.

● 29 September. Kent Women Against Pit Closures have organised their coach.



Photos: MARK SALMON

Labour women will win!

National Abortion Campaign conference

'WOMEN WILL WIN' was the slogan under which the Labour Women's Action Committee organised a fringe meeting at the TUC in Brighton last week.

The platform reflected the many struggles that women in the labour movement have been engaged in over the past year, particularly with the presence of Betty Heathfield of Chesterfield Women Against Pit Closures on the platform.

But Diane Abbott, one of WAC's candidates for the Labour Party national executive women's section, spelled out some of the real problems confronting women as seen in the TUC. From her position as part of the ACTT delegation she had been looking round the conference hall and came up with some stunning facts.

Women were only a tiny proportion of the delegates at conference. NUPE, which has twice as many women members as men, had a delegation of 30 of whom only 10 were women.

Labour Women's Committee is elected, and does consist of women, unlike the TUC Women's Advisory Committee, the majority of which is appointed by the General Council and is often mainly men.

This is unavoidable as the only women ever elected to the TUC General Council are to the six seats reserved for women. In the Labour Party Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise are on the NEC in the CLP section in addition to the women who are elected to the five reserved seats.

But their position on the NEC is not at all secure, despite their strong left credentials. They always receive the lowest vote of those elected in the CLP section; mainly because there are around 160 CLPs who vote left, but who never vote for women in this section! This means Audrey and Jo are always vulnerable to any alternative male candidate who can win the allegiance of a section of the 'left' vote in the constituencies.

This year the candidature of Robin Cook, Kinnock's blue-eyed boy, threatens to split the left vote, and knock Audrey Wise or Jo Richardson off the constituency slate.

At party conference WAC will be campaigning for its own slate for the women's section, but will

also be campaigning in support of Jo and Audrey in the CLP section against the male chauvinism that continues to exist in the local parties.

The LCC are supporting Jo and Audrey, but also supporting Robin Cook. It is not completely clear who they will drop from their slate, but it looks likely it will be Dennis Skinner. However in reality the CLP left will vote for Skinner anyway — and quite rightly — and so despite their paper support, in organising to campaign for Cook the LCC will actually be challenging the position of Audrey Wise.

Similarly *Tribune* has left it very late in the day to make their attitude clear on the NEC elections. Last week they carried a statement from the five women on the WAC slate for the women's section, together with Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise. But *Tribune's* record on women is nothing to write home about, so they cannot be relied on to campaign for Jo and Audrey.

Moreover *Tribune* have failed to grasp the importance of the campaign around Diane Abbott in the women's section. The political significance of Diane standing, the first black person and certainly the first black woman to stand for the NEC, was immediately seized on by the *Guardian*. But to its shame, *Tribune*, which under Chris Mullen's editorship proclaimed itself as the revitalised paper of Labour's left, has totally failed to mention it.

The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, another bastion of the left,

has not done much better. Initially Diane was the reserve in their slate, but then one of their own candidates dropped out, so Diane is now included.

But Frances Morrell, another of WAC's candidates, is not. Instead their candidate is Pat Olly, supported against Frances on the grounds that CLPD could not support anyone who had opposed them registering, and because she was not sufficiently well-known!

So the odds are stacked against women from the start. And with the trade union block vote decisive in the elections for the women's section, it's unlikely women will get the NEC they want. That can't be changed until WAC's constitutional resolutions are passed by conference.

But in the meantime the elections this year, with a slate of women who have a record of fighting for women — as well as consistent support for the left — will mark a big step forward. The political campaign around the slate has already exposed the real shilly-shallying on women of much of the left.

That has to be driven home at Labour Party conference. They are all going to learn, even if it is the hard way, that women will win!

The slates to support

CLP section

Tony Benn MP
David Blunkett, leader
Sheffield City Council
Michael Meacher MP
Jo Richardson MP
Dennis Skinner MP
Audrey Wise

Women's Section

Diane Abbott,
Westminster Cllr
Margaret Beckett MP
Joan Maynard MP
Frances Morrell, leader
ILEA
Clare Short MP

Apology:

In the last issue of *Socialist Action* (no68) an article on page nine, concerning Youth Training Schemes was wrongly attributed to Peter Wells-Thorpe. The author was Grant Kier, and information on the Young Trade Unionists Charter which appeared alongside it was taken from a leaflet circulated by Peter. We apologise for any inconvenience caused by our mistake.

By Leonora Lloyd

THE AMERICAN presidential elections have once again put abortion in the centre of the political stage, not just in the States, but internationally, with threats to withhold aid to family planning agencies who finance or support abortion.

This is despite the fact that abortion remains legal in America and choice is supported by a majority of Americans.

Here, in Britain, we face two immediate threats this year — under-16 contraception and abortion time-limits. We know where Thatcher stands — and she is supported by MPs on both sides of the House.

It is against this background that NAC is holding its 1984 conference, its first since the split that led to the creation of the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign. We hope that this year the conflicts that arise will be more constructive, centering not so much on what our priorities are, but on how best to achieve them.

We will be discussing how to fight around time limits, how to take our campaign on facilities into the labour and women's movements and how to fight racism. Since the split, we have lost some members, but we have also gained many new ones and we will be looking at how we can build on the achievements of the past year.

One of those achievements is a new understanding between the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign and NAC, which has led to a proposal for joint membership, open to all Labour Party members and sections. This will be launched from conference and we will be working together at Labour Party conference to gain new members and support for both organisations.

Following the American elections, if Reagan wins, the right generally will gain enormous confidence everywhere, not least the anti-abortion movements, including here in Britain. Don't wait until that happens. Now is the time for all sections of the labour movement to join NAC and work with us to ensure that our rights are defended and extended.

● NAC conference details: Saturday/Sunday 29/30 September, at Tindal School, Tindal Street, Basall Heath, Birmingham. Creche, good disabled access, food. Open to all NAC supporters. Delegates: £5.00, individuals (waged) £3.00, (unwaged) £1.00. Agenda includes time limits, facilities, fighting anti-abortionists and tackling racism in NAC. Credentials from: NAC, 75 Kingsway, London WC2; phone 01-993 2071/405 4801.

Labour Party Conference Fringe Meeting (LARC/NAC): This will be on Wednesday 3 October at the New Clifton Hotel at 5pm. All welcome.

USSR:

Against the Stalinist gang

EARLIER THIS year we carried an article by Oliver MacDonald, editor of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, on the left and the USSR. In this issue we carry a reply to the article by ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI. Kowalewski was a leader of Solidarnosc in the Lodz region of Poland up to the union's banning by the Polish regime in December 1981.

OLIVER MACDONALD is editor of a review that has a good reputation for dealing with the problems of Eastern Europe and the USSR from the standpoint of the workers movement — *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*.

He has a good knowledge of the nature of the power structure, the state of the working class and the dynamic of the social movements which have periodically shaken up the Soviet bloc over the last 30 years.

For this reason I was rather astonished when I read his article 'The left and the Soviet Union' which appeared in the 6 April issue of *Socialist Action*.

In this article Macdonald aims at outlining a programme of action for the British and the western left in general on the question of the USSR. There is a real and very urgent need to convince socialists and militants of the workers and peace movements in the West to take up the defence of what remains as post-capitalist in the USSR and other similar regimes.

Unfortunately what remains as post-capitalist is limited to state ownership of the main means of production and more or less full employment. The only viable way of carrying out such a defence in the present period is to determine what is blocking the development and destroying the potential inscribed in the post-capitalist nature of these societies and thereby monstrously distorting them to the point that their post-capitalist character is difficult to recognise.

Is it the external forces which use economic and military pressure for the restoration of capitalism or the internal forces that exercise totalitarian power? It is an important task of the western left to oppose the pressure of the former forces — this implies criticising the 'exterminism' theory, the last stage of civilisation, that Macdonald correctly denounces and which leads to the rejection of the theory of the last stage of capitalism.

Priority

But the priority task is to support the disarming and overthrow of the latter forces by the working class, to support all resistance by this class to the ferocious oppression and exploitation of the totalitarian regime.

My basic disagreement with Macdonald is that he inverts the priorities — what should be presented as a priority task is relegated by him to the level of the last task — which furthermore is formulated in the vaguest possible way: 'the left (he states) must maintain its ideological debate and struggle against authoritarian-bureaucratic models of socialism'. Thus in calling for resistance to the 'Atlanticists' in the western workers and peace movement Macdonald makes concessions to Stalinist tendencies, he counterposes one 'campism' to another.



Solidarnosc distributing leaflets in Gdansk

Any reasonable socialist knows we are today a long way from anything similar to the build-up for an imminent invasion of the USSR by Nazi Germany. Nevertheless Macdonald asks for nothing more or less than that the western left raise the banner of defence of the USSR against the capitalist powers — not the defence of the working class and the other oppressed social groups in the USSR against the totalitarian regimes.

His argument goes as follows: if the Western left does not manage to effectively defend the USSR the 'authoritarian-bureaucratic' model of socialism will be reinforced in that country, NATO will be able to prevent any positive development within the USSR and this would lead to 'the opening up of the Soviet economy to western capital', that is, to the restoration of capitalism!

Let's leave on one side these 'models of socialism'. The USSR is not one of these — and at least from someone like Macdonald we could expect that he will not contribute to spreading such a lie.

What is more worrying is the fact that Macdonald gives no explanation of where this repugnant 'model' (the totalitarian system in the USSR) historically came from. The context of the article suggests that the responsibility resides in the pressure of the capitalist powers. This is not true.

The Stalinist gang created — and its followers reproduced — the theory of a besieged fortress to justify its counter-revolutionary action. In fact the contributing external factors were very varied: defeats of the workers movement in other countries, defeats that later, both in western capitalist centres and in the dependent countries were organised by the Kremlin camarilla as an indispensable factor in the consolidation of its totalitarian power.

The problem is how to take that power.

Such a way of presenting Soviet reality can only contribute to preserving the illusion — rather general among the western left — that the

political regime in the USSR (and similar countries) can be reformed. The word 'revolution' is strikingly absent from Macdonald's article.

Reject

One knows that broad sectors of the western left reject the idea of revolution but is it by chance that the best thing Macdonald can do is to leave the consciousness of these sectors in peace? We know the results: 'a standard formula...has been that Solidarnosc was an excellent thing but it was going too far, or travelling too fast', as Macdonald notes in his article 'Solidarity and Socialism' (*New Left Review* no 139). He polemicalises in a very particular way to try to demonstrate that 'large sections of the working class...were not politically won over to a perspective of anarcho-syndicalist (sic!) revolution' and that in general in Poland there was no revolution.

He remains silent about all of the most advanced and radical aspects of Solidarnosc's struggle and reduces it to a constructive effort by Poland's industrial working class to overcome the crisis generated by the Gierk regime when in fact the dynamic of the Polish social movement tended to be something much more advanced and thoroughgoing — the overthrow of the totalitarian regime.

The programme on the USSR that Macdonald proposes for the western left is no use at all unless its objective is to invite people to join yet another USSR friendship society. Today the left must above all take up the tasks of political solidarity with the struggles of the working class in the USSR, the Soviet bloc countries, China...and particularly with the mass social resistance being led by Solidarnosc, with the emerging independent peace movements in countries like East Germany, with the democratic opposition.

A solidarity anchored in the forces of the workers and peace movement

of the west. There has been a very weak solidarity movement up to now, especially in Great Britain.

To call for this solidarity does not mean being idealistic. For example it means explaining to the British miners that if Solidarnosc had succeeded in setting up a self-managed republic, the Polish government would not be able to sabotage the strike being led today by Scargill's NUM through its coal exports.

A final comment. Macdonald alludes to the fact that somebody in the USSR — he does not identify who — had an 'ideological commitment that corresponds to a nationalised economy'. Who is he talking about if at the same time in *New Left Review* Macdonald maintains that a movement like Solidarnosc 'did not embrace a socialist ideological commitment?' Perhaps it is the so-called 'marxists' who are in power in the USSR, Poland, etc...?

It is quite the contrary in fact — the only standard bearer of socialism in these countries is what Macdonald describes in his article about Solidarnosc as 'the ideological trend growing within the industrial working class towards an anarcho-syndicalist (sic) vision of a self-managed and at the same time self-governing republic'.

Those are the external factors of the terrible degeneration of the workers' revolution in Russia. Also today we must not be very confident about the analysis concerning 'those features of the Soviet state that make it inclined to support revolutions in the Third World'; the first thing we can expect from the Kremlin leadership is that they organise yet another defeat!

Macdonald does not say a word about this in his article. Neither does he say anything about the revolutions in the Soviet bloc were crushed by the tanks of that state, nor of the criminal war of aggression, that has already lasted five years, against a Third World people, the Afghans.

Who is 'prevent(ing)' any positive political development within the USSR or any big advances in the

social position of the Soviet working class' and 'hit(s) the bottlenecks in the Soviet economy especially hard'? According to Macdonald it is the NATO powers and western capital. This is false. It is the social group which has exercised totalitarian power in this country for the last 60 years.

The existence of a nationalised economy should facilitate a tremendous growth of social resources and a balanced use of them, if there is a democratic political system, if working people exercise power, if the enormous economic potential today under the exclusive control of the bureaucratic apparatus passes into the hands of working people through a system of workers self-management; and if development is democratically planned by the direct producers.

Given such a system big reductions could be made in military spending which today weighs down very heavily on the Soviet economy. People's self-defence could be developed in the place of today's participation in the arms race. The USSR competes in that arms race because of the reactionary character of the present regime and of the powerful military-bureaucratic lobby which acts outside of any social control.

Interminable

Macdonald thinks we have to stop the 'interminable debates on how good or bad life is in the USSR', that is...about what is a daily priority concern for Soviet workers! After presenting 'the social and economic rights that working people in the USSR possess' he considers that 'the point is not how fully all these points are at present implemented or how high living standards are'.

That's a fine way of convincing the left of the uselessness of a socialist criticism of the USSR! A big number of the 'rights that working people in the USSR possess' according to Macdonald, in fact exist only as print on the paper of the Kremlin's propaganda.

How can Macdonald talk about for example cheap food, when to buy the same weekly 'shopping basket' for an average working class family the Moscow worker has to work 37 hours, the equivalent worker in Washington 11 hours and in London 19 hours (1979 figures)? How can he speak of rising wages when real working class wages only reached the equivalent 1913 levels at the beginning of the 1960s and peasant income only recovered to the 1913 levels in the second half of the 1970s?

It is no less ridiculous to attribute plentiful cultural facilities, an ambitious housing programme, egalitarianism in income distribution to the Soviet people as Macdonald does. Even full employment is not sufficient to guarantee real economic security.

'The point is (he says) that we want to seek political changes that enable the working people of the USSR to strengthen their control over the affairs of state.' As though it is possible to strengthen something that does not exist?

Macdonald asserts that an ABC of politics for socialists is that in the USSR the 'working class can best exert its power in politics when it is in the strongest possible economic and social position'. But the real ABC is the inverse: any economic and social strengthening of the working class of this country will depend on its ability to take political power, that it does not possess to the slightest degree today.

Reject NATO to defend unilateralism

LABOUR CND IS PREPARING for this year's Labour Party conference against the backdrop of the new *Defence and Security for Britain* statement. And what a backdrop that is. Already the policy statement looks set to sail smoothly over the calm waters of the conference debate, not a ripple in sight.

It is gathering some impressive supporters. Messrs Hattersley and Shore, Labour's NATO hawks, have welcomed it as the most positive statement yet from the party on Britain's continued membership of the nuclear alliance.

Ron Todd's championing of unilateralism at past conferences has not prevented the Transport and General Workers Union from submitting an amendment to LCND's model resolution (409 on the agenda), deploring the Tories' rundown of conventional defence and destruction of defence workers jobs.

Hence, the main card unilateralists had to play against the document this year — the fact that it relegates the commitment of many past conferences to reduce military spending in line with our European allies, to the far-distant future — looks like being trumped by our strongest trade union ally. The document says a reduction in spending '... could not be achieved in the lifetime of a single parliament without major cuts in our conventional forces which we do not

recommend. Our priority must be a non-nuclear defence for Britain and NATO. The rate at which this will occur will depend on circumstances which cannot be predicted in advance.'

By Carol Turner, Labour CND (personal capacity)

There, in a nutshell, is outlined the whole thrust of the document: that Labour must 'persuade' NATO into a non-nuclear policy without threatening our continued membership. Non-nuclear strategy will be designed to minimise disruption to the alliance.

Frank Chapple sung his swan-song to the same tune at this year's Trades Union Congress. On the last morning, congress overwhelmingly passed a

resolution from the electricians confirming the trade union movement's full support for NATO membership.

The general council called for a vote against SOGAT's amendment (to make such support conditional on other policies), justifying this because reference was made to Labour Party policy. With many TUC-affiliated unions remaining outside the party, this was clearly no business of congress!

What a delightful parting shot from anti-Labour, sweetheart-dealing Mr Chapple on his last day in power.

Labour CND's response to the document is a breath of fresh air. It has decided neither to support it nor endorse it, because it runs contrary to the policy of CND.

The critical comments of Walter Wolfgang in the current issue of LCND newsletter represent in broad outline the committee's views on the document. And we are circulating a suggested disarmament composite which includes the amendments from Richmond and Barnes, and Worthing constituencies, as well as Guildford's 'star wars' amendment, Lothian East's opposition to civil defence programmes, and

the part of the TGWU amendment that calls for action on conversion and alternative use programmes for the defence industry.

As well as activities on the fringe of conference, LCND is organising an eve-of-conference march and rally on the theme of 'Jobs not Bombs'. It is important that CND groups and constituencies mobilise for this, and join with the striking miners and support group contingents expected on the march.

Labour's leadership must be left in no doubt that the publication of the new defence document signals no downturn in the activities or commitment of the broad mass of unilateralists in the party and outside. Conference must demand:

- no dilution of our commitment to reduce military spending
- a commitment to NATO must not water down our unilateralist policies
- unilateral nuclear disarmament stands above our commitment to remain in the bosses nuclear club.

● Copies of LCND newsletter (cheap rates for bulk orders) are available from: Kate on 01-388 1628 or Carol on 01-359 8180.



What to expect at Party conference

IF THE recently published Labour Party conference agenda is a guide, after one year as leader Neil Kinnock has done a good job — for the right wing. But he won't have things all his own way.

The debate on reselection will dominate the conference. Kinnock is trying to overturn one of the key Bennite reforms of the last few years. The National Executive seeks a constitutional change to let local management committees hold an individual postal ballot to choose prospective MPs, disenfranchising the unions and opening up the party to the kind of press campaign that was used against the miners. Twenty nine out of thirty amendments oppose the change.

But on defence Kinnock has made much better running. The new defence document is unilateralist — but for the first time commits Labour to an increase in conventional weapons, and stresses Labour's NATO commitments. Kinnock has already reversed Labour's stand on the EEC. Defence could be the next big political defeat for the left.

On this issue there is much more confusion, although Labour CND will be organising a demonstration at the beginning of conference, and their latest bulletin links the defence of unilateralism and Labour's commitment to radical policies to the need to back the miners.

The miners' strike will be a backdrop to the whole conference. The NUM's resolution reaffirms Labour's commitment to the Plan for Coal. But the debate this will be concentrated around the 28 CLP resolutions dealing with police violence.

By Valerie Coultas

Women will not only be campaigning for more power to the women's section but standing their own NEC slate. Unfortunately CLPD has not endorsed the view that women should decide the women's slate, but with the heroic role of women in the miners' strike at the forefront of delegates' minds this will be an explosive issue — as will the leadership's opposition to the 18 resolutions and six amendments backing black sections.

Police violence has opened many eyes to the bankruptcy of Labour's stand on Ireland. On this issue, as on women and blacks, the right wing will, however, have an ally —

the *Militant* tendency, whose resolutions call for a conference to establish a Northern Ireland Labour Party.

Socialist Action calls on delegates to ensure the conference registers the biggest possible backing for the miners and for extra-parliamentary action by urging the Labour Party, through emergency resolutions, to call a national demonstration in support of the miners, and by sponsoring miners and miners' wives to attend conference.

Next week we will publish a list of all the fringe meetings that have been kept out of the official diary because they won't register. If you want yours advertised ring us on 01-359 8180 before next Sunday.

Proposed emergency resolution: Conference notes the decisions of the 1984 Trades Union Congress to support the National Union of Miners' struggle against pit closures and its call for the widest possible labour movement solidarity with the NUM.

In this spirit conference instructs the Labour Party National Executive Committee to call, in collaboration with the NUM, a national demonstration in solidarity with the miners' strike.



Scottish CND still growing

SCOTTISH CND conference in Glasgow last weekend registered a further leap forward in the growth of the campaign. There were 320 delegates against last year's 200. National membership has doubled in the past year to 1000 — that's increased four-fold the membership of 140 local groups.

Specialist sections — Labour, Liberal, Scottish Nationalist and Christian — all confirmed their strength with well attended fringe meetings.

Labour CND's meeting discussed how to fight the government's civil defence regula-

tions, with strong support for campaigning for total rejection of them by Labour local authorities. But there was also a strongly expressed opinion that opposition would best be built through testing them to their limit and exposing their farcical nature.

By Tony Southall, secretary, Scottish Labour CND

There was general agreement that we should campaign, especially in the regional authorities, to imitate Dumbarton district council's initiative in appointing a full-time peace worker and launching a

press campaign against the local Trident development.

A central theme of the weekend was preparation for British CND's demonstration in Barrow (27 October). A speaker from Barrow CND laid the basis for the unanimous adoption of a resolution for a massive Scottish turnout on that day.

The increasing importance of the NATO question was recognised in overwhelming support for the Aberdeen resolution calling for CND to increase its public commitment to a non-aligned foreign policy including rejecting membership of any nuclear alliance.

Unfortunately this wasn't taken to its logical conclusion. A much more

explicit resolution that detailed the need for stepping up the campaign against NATO was rejected.

A resolution setting up a trade union section of SCND for the first time was passed. Again regrettably pleads that local groups should be represented at its inaugural conference were rejected.

Their involvement will be important if we are to build a broad based specialist section, if we're to operate from the base as well as through the overwhelmingly sympathetic Scottish trade union bureaucracy.

All Scottish CND supporters should play an active part in setting up the new Scottish TUCND.



KEN LIVINGSTONE SAYS:
I've fought eight elections, and this is the best I've been in. Everyday it is a pleasure to go out on the streets of London. Each day there is a constant stream of people who say they're voting Labour at this election because they support the retention of the GLC.

All out for the GLC

ANYONE WHO had any illusions about the real role of the SDP-Liberal Alliance in British politics should certainly have lost them with the Alliance's positions on the 20 September by-elections for the GLC.

Within an hour of Ken Livingstone and the three other Labour councillors resigning to fight the by-elections, the SDP-Liberal Alliance had formed an official coalition with the Tories to try to take control of the council. This attempt at a 'coup' in the GLC was blocked by the Labour group temporarily electing a new council leader. But while the Alliance's manoeuvres inside the council were blocked their coalition with the Tories outside the council is going on.

Thatcher's policy for fighting the new stage in the GLC's campaign for its survival is quite clear. The Tories literally do not dare to present themselves to the electors of London with their position on the GLC.

As Ken Livingstone put it in an interview with *Labour Briefing*, 'In one sense, we've won already ... the Tories, by announcing that they're not standing, are basically admitting that they don't have the support for the abolition of the GLC and they recognise they'd badly lose this sort of election. So already we've won on the key issue, which is demonstrating that the government doesn't have a mandate to abolish the GLC.'

But the Alliance are acting in their usual role as the 'human face of Thatcherism'. The Tories calculate that by not standing in the by-elections, and by throwing all their weight behind the Alliance, they can defeat Labour. The Alliance presents itself as 'defenders of the GLC' while at the same time they in practice are making a coalition with the Tories who want to abolish the council!

The content of the Alliance's partners' policies is also clear. In Hillingdon, where John McDonnell GLC deputy leader is running, the Tory council's policies have been revealed by recent cuts of two schools, an old age pensioners holiday

home and two children's homes. In Hillingdon leading Tory councillors have called for a 'formal coalition' with the Alliance.

It is vital that Labour has the maximum number of workers for the campaign to get over the truth about the Tory-Alliance line up. And to show that the Alliance simply want to gut the GLC in their own way.

The real issue at stake in the by-elections is the existence of the GLC — and Labour needs the whole party to help turn the by-elections into a referendum on the existence of the GLC.

Helpers for the campaign should contact:

● **Edmonton:** Agent, David Wilkinson. Telephone 01-807 1627. Campaign HQ, Broad House, 205 Fore Street, Edmonton.

● **Hayes and Harlington:** Agent Chris Rogers, Telephone 01-573 2778. Campaign HQ, Labour Hall, Pump Lane, Middlesex.

● **Lewisham West:** Agent, Mike Holder. Telephone 01-699 2001. Campaign HQ, 43 Sunderland Road, SE23.

● **Paddington:** Agent, Jen McClelland, Telephone 01-286 9692. Campaign HQ, 39 Chippenham Road, W9.

Teachers' battle not over

By Bernard Regan, NUT executive (personal capacity)

THE ARBITRATION offer of 5.1 per cent to teachers is likely to be endorsed promptly by education secretary Sir Keith Joseph. Despite the militancy of its membership, the right wing leadership of the largest teachers' union, the National Union of Teachers, never intended to lead a serious campaign to win the teachers' claim.

Since 1974 teachers' pay has declined by over 30 per cent in real terms. There is no doubt that teachers are extremely angry about this offer and, in the words of the deputy general secretary of the NUT, 'action will probably continue'.

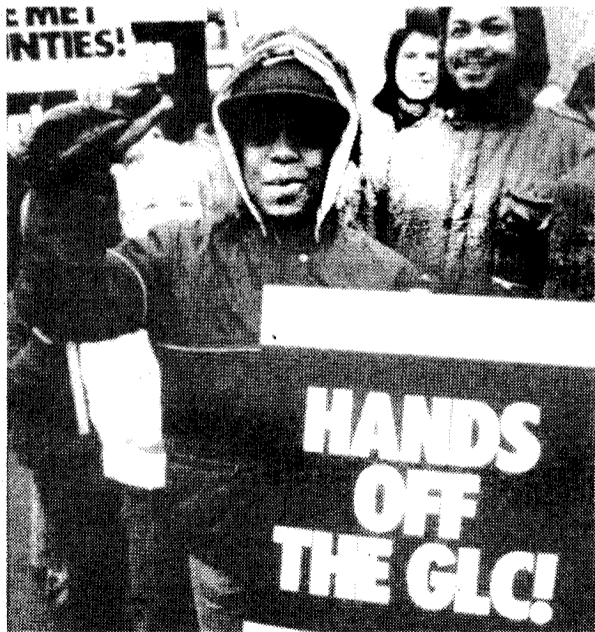
The decision of the NUT executive to go for arbitration was sold to the members despite the opposition of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance and others on the left. It was clear to militants that any arbitration would not be 'independent'.

At the outset the employers stepped in even to oppose the ACAS-nominated chair because they were considered too pro-employee. The union-nominated member of the three-person body refused to sign the final report.

These events should leave no one in any doubt about the need for the union to retain the maximum control over its own pay claim.

The battle on teachers' pay is not over however. On 30 September the NUT is holding a special salaries conference in Scarborough, at which the STA will be fighting for:

- a flat-rate increase for all teachers of £1200;
- unity with other public sector unions against cash limits;
- opposition to arbitration;
- a campaign of militant strike action to win the claim.



Paddington's Public Meetings:

Monday 17 September
Arthur Scargill is invited

Wednesday 19 September
speakers include Merle Amery, Diane Abbott and others from the black community

For details of times and venues phone the election headquarters: 01-286 9692



Transport jobs — breathing space

RANK AND FILE pressure has forced London Regional Transport and British Rail management to back off from job cuts for now. They wanted to chop 50,000 jobs by 1990.

The proposed national 'work to agreement' and one-day London Transport strike has been called off. Activists see the withdrawal of the first stage of job cuts as proof of what the rail union's London District Council can do if it flexes its muscles.

But the Tories and management should be well pleased with their efforts. They faced a crippling work to agreement which would have seen miners, dockers and rail workers fighting together.

Details of the deal are not yet clear, but all the signs are that the bureaucrats have sold the union case short. Even the most dimwitted official must know the Tories are desperate to keep the miners isolated.

Just the threat of action has wrung concessions. A resolute leadership prepared for struggle could have pressed for a complete withdrawal of the job cutting plans and the restoration and subsequent full protection of government subsidies.

Unscathed

As it is, the action has been called off with the five year plan on rail and the three year plan for London relatively unscathed. British Rail launched their five year plan in mid-August last year. 18,000 jobs were to be axed. Just a fortnight earlier they told the unions 2000 miles of track had to go.

LT's three year plan runs to 1986/7 and was already scheduled to chop 8000 jobs. Since then the Tories have taken over London Transport, and transport minister Nicholas Ridley has cut the LT subsidy from £192 million to £95 million over the duration of the plan. Between 16,000 and 20,000

jobs are now at risk. It is clear that management have conceded more consultation and an agreement that there will be no 'compulsory' redundancies. But natural wastage and voluntary redundancies will then be allowed to do their corrosive work.

An indication of what was in the air came in an information circular re-

By Patrick Sikorski, NUR East Ham (personal capacity)

eased from the union on the eve of the TUC.

'The railways board said they recognised the trade unions' concern about job security and the trade union contribution to the longer term plans for the industry', it said.

This was 'something of a turnaround from their attitude over the last few months. They said they were prepared to establish certain "policies and practices" in the context of the 1984 rail plan.' There is nothing better designed to woo the pride and self importance of a full time official than a promise to consult about whose job will go, and when.

Closure

The circular continues: 'on line closures they said there would be no further proposals in mind for passenger closure ... but it was necessary to recognise that the policy in relation to line closures could be affected by the position of Passenger Transport Ex-

ecutives or exceptional circumstances ...

But subsidies to Passenger Transport Executives have already been cut, and indeed some of the most militant unofficial action to date against loss of rail jobs was taken last year against such cuts in the Strathclyde Transport Executive area.

The document goes from bad to worse: 'Whilst the future of particular jobs cannot be guaranteed there should certainly be continued employment opportunities in the industry for all existing staff.'

So if your job in Penrith is declared redundant you can get another

in Cornwall — until, of course, that is also declared redundant. While neither the Rail Board or London Transport managements will declare compulsory redundancies, both are bent on compulsory changes in work methods, for example one person operation of trains, and open stations.

They justify this, in what is the most important phrase in the document, in terms of the need to 'run a more competitive and cost efficient railway'. Until union negotiators and the NECs are forced, like the NUM, to stand up to this Tory demand for the closure of uneconomic operations, the jobs massacre in the transport industry will carry on.

The lesson of the last fortnight is that the left in the transport unions is not yet sufficiently organised to force a fight over central issues of no job loss and for the restoration of government subsidies. Such a fight will of course involve all-out indefinite strike action.

A Socialist ACTION

Docks strike: Step up the pickets



INITIALLY it looked as though the Port of London Authority had had a good weekend. Over 50 per cent of Tilbury dockers voted for a return to work in the management organised ballot.

But the real test was Monday morning, when only one hundred scabs crossed the picket lines in the ballot which really counted — clocking on for work. The normal size of this shift is 750.

At Barry dockers have joined the strike, while at Bristol not enough dockers crossed the picket lines to enable work to continue.

With just over half the country's dockers on strike, it is clear that the militants must now take the struggle for an all-out stoppage to the working ports.

At Swansea, striking dockers are picketing the tug-boat crews who take the ore ships to Port Talbot — a move which would affect Llanwern as well. This type of action needs to be spread.

to work is agreement to scab on the NUM. The dockers at Hunterston cannot fight that on their own. The Tories will not concede that Ravenscraig should cut back production, without the dock strike biting a great deal more.

The dock strike, even at present levels, will start to hit industry in the next fortnight. If supplies to the steel plants can also be stopped the effects will be dramatic.

The obstacle to winning the miners' strike has never been the lack of ability of the working class to win. It has been the scabbing role of the right. Medlock Bibby, Silver Birch, and their ilk are the offspring of Bill Sirs, Eric Hammond and the right wing of the TUC. Those who would sell out the miners will lend their hand to selling out the dockers.

The answer is to spread the picketing, and to link up directly with the NUM.

The 7000 striking dockers provide more than enough activists to picket all the major ports, and make the effects of the strike felt within a week. With miners and dockers striking together the Tories would be in big trouble.

And that is the best answer to those in the labour movement who seek to isolate the miners, and to the scabs they spawn at the base of the movement.

By Pat Hickey

The argument that this strike is directly in the interests of dockers has to be taken to the working ports. The breach of the Dock Labour Scheme at Hunterston takes the employers in the direction they want to go. The Tories have made no secret of the fact that they want to scrap the Dock Labour Scheme.

They will carry out the same attack on jobs and conditions in the docks as they are currently carrying out on the mines.

The opportunity to link up with the miners provides the best way to defend jobs on the docks. Every striking docker now recognises that the bosses' key condition for a return

Andoni Arrizabalga

IT IS with profound regret that we announce the death in a climbing accident of Andoni Arrizabalaga. Andoni, as a member of the ETA, was one of those sentenced to death by the Franco dictatorship in Spain in the infamous 1969 Burgos trials. He was saved from execution by a massive campaign of international and national solidarity.

In prison he survived torture and hunger strikes and became a militant of the Basque Trotskyist organisation, the LKI. He was finally amnestied in 1977.

Andoni's fierce commitment to the struggle and his love of life continued to the end. His death is a blow to the entire international labour movement.

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