

**Socialist
ACTION**

**KEEP
NOTTS
NATIONAL!
DEFEND THE
NUM!**

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NEXT WEEK:
Peter Heathfield
on the Notts breakaw

Scapegoats

THE NARROW Alliance victory at Brecon and Radnor predicably resulted in Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley looking for scapegoats. Both selected Arthur Scargill for this role. They have since been joined by two Welsh MPs, Allan Rogers and Ray Powell, who have said that Scargill's speech on the Monday before voting had affected Labour's result. What actually happened was rather different.

The Tory vote fell by 20 per cent. Undoubtedly, the most important factor in this fall was the effect of the miners' 12 month strike. It has wiped out the 'Falklands factor', and Lawson's planned tax cutting manoeuvres, and has put the Tories back to where they were before 1982 in terms of popularity. The problem with the Brecon election was not that the Tories were able to hang onto their vote. It was that the Alliance was able to pick up more of the disaffected Tory votes than was Labour.

The Alliance vote rose by 11 per cent, Labour's by nine per cent. The Alliance picked up five times more former Tory votes than Labour. The issues that mattered to the voters of Brecon and Radnor were those that matter to millions: unemployment and cuts in the welfare state. Labour under Kinnock has no answers to these questions. Indeed far from providing an answer, the Labour leader concentrated on attacking Scargill who has fought for jobs.

Scargill's speech on the Monday before voting was a clear call for a Labour government to defend those who had fought the Tories to guarantee jobs in the pits and mining communities. Kinnock's response was to dismiss Scargill's speech as 'fantasy'. With an approach like that little wonder that many voters did not see Labour as a positive alternative to the Tories and turned instead to the Alliance. As Scargill said, in response to Kinnock, Labour's electoral chances have been improved because of the miners' strike, not despite it.

Kinnock could learn from Scargill's statement that: 'Provided we adopt policies and stand firmly by them, we have nothing to fear from the electorate.' Instead of this Kinnock is more concerned to steal the Alliance clothes. The recent statements that mass unemployment would remain under Labour, the rejection of a clear commitment to renationalisation, and the talk of wage controls, has underlined Kinnock's turn away from any clear alternative to the Tories.

Media gimmickry and fudged policies — which is what Kinnock has to offer — will not be capable of eliminating the Alliance threat at the general election. The left in the party must reject Kinnock's attempt to isolate those who do begin to put forward the necessary alternative policies not only to Thatcher but also to Owen and Steel.



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Labour must campaign against Lynk

MINERS AND miners' wives loyal to the NUM want an immediate national campaign to defend the union in the Notts coalfield. Already, many of those who supported the strike are pressing for action to isolate Lynk's breakaway. As Pam Oldfield secretary of Nottingham women against Pit Closures explained: 'It's important we get some meetings off the ground as soon as possible. There should be meetings every night, even if only two people turn up.'

The need for a national campaign is clearly understood. Comparisons between the present confusion and disorganisation and the first days of the national strike are common. Those who stood with the NUM then want swift action to defend it now.

'We've got a certain amount of time. We've got to get information out: leaflets, papers. The *Notts Collier* we've got to get that out. *The Miner*, it's got to be in there,' argued her husband Dave, a leading striker at Sherwood pit.

Everyone understands what's at stake. Although Lynk's hand was forced, as Pam explains, the anti-NUM forces are organised. 'They've been in touch with other areas. We've just got to do the same.'

Otherwise there's

nothing to say you won't get a situation where there's two men down the pit doing exactly the same job, and one's in one union and one's

By Mick Archer

in the other and different rates of pay are negotiated. The Coal Board will do anything to split the miners' union.'

Thankfully in some pits things are already underway. In Warsop, Wellbeck strikers organised a meeting addressed by Ray Chadburn. Two hundred miners turned up, although only 82 men stuck with the strike till the end. In Gelding, where 42 of the 1300 men stuck it out, a leaflet supporting the national union has been drawn up.

Meanwhile women are discussing a picket of the

area headquarters at Berry Hill which will reaffirm the central role they can play in defending the NUM. Both Pam and Dave believe initiatives like these have to come from the rank and file leadership thrown up by the strike.

Such a campaign will not be easy. Firstly, it has to aim to win all those committed to the NUM, including miners who worked during the strike. Secondly, it has to be understood that the Board will do everything to promote a split. Already there is talk of financial incentives for that breakaway, and letters have gone out to miners at Blidworth urging them to stick with Lynk.

Brighter

Together the Board and Lynk will do everything they can to convince Notts miners that they face a brighter future outside the NUM. Spencer and the coal-owners peddled the same promises in the 1920s and '30s, before attacking the pay and conditions of miners then.

As Pauline Radford, a member of Blidworth

women's action group, explained: 'They'll offer a nice juicy carrot to the members to join the breakaway. So people are going to grab that and think they're doing alright. Then in 12 months time there'll be more sackings, more pits closing, and then they'll withdraw that money. Then they'll be worse off than in the first place.'

Finally, there's the right wing bureaucrats of the Labour Party and the TUC. Mansfield's Labour MP, Don Concannon, clearly supports Lynk, and will fight for Labour Party recognition for any breakaway that occurs.

Here again however miners and their wives have begun to act. In the Blidworth and Rainworth Labour Party a resolution was passed unanimously calling on the national Labour Party not to recognise any breakaway and for individual branches not to join it.

Sue Petney, wife of a sacked miner and active in Blidworth women's action group, predicts that many of those who joined the par-

ty during the course of the strike will leave in disgust if it gives recognition to the breakaway. But such a campaign has to be national.

Trade unionists and Labour Party members should move resolutions in their branches demanding the TUC and the Labour Party refuse the breakaway any recognition, and publicly state that will be the case. Amendments should be forwarded to Labour party conference calling for this.

Branches should call on Labour movement leaders, including Kinnock and Willis, to visit Notts to campaign on behalf of the NUM. Miners' support committees and women's support groups should organise supporters to visit Notts to give practical help to the campaign.

The case for the national union has to be got across. Lynk is now the main card being played in the Tory and NCB's campaign to break the back of the NUM. The labour movement can't afford to sit back and adopt a 'wait-and-see' attitude. Action to isolate Lynk is needed now.

NEIL KINNOCK devoted most of his speech at Saturday's Durham miners' gala to attacking Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill, and promising miners a rosy future if they stopped fighting for their jobs now and waited for a Labour government. This is scarcely any help when the *Financial Times* has already leaked NCB plans to close 50 pits in the next two years.

But despite these attacks, Kinnock was forced to come out against any breakaway from the NUM. The entire labour movement must now demand that such words are turned into actions.

Kinnock and Norman Willis could in fact destroy the Notts breakaway before it gets properly off the ground. There is not the slightest doubt that a mass Labour Party-TUC campaign in the Notts coalfield would prevent Lynk getting anything like the majority he needs in the ballot for a breakaway — even in a ballot for a fake 'fusion' with another scab union.

What is needed in Notts is precisely what Kinnock and Willis refused to give in the miners' strike. That is a campaign of mass meetings and appeals addressed by Kinnock, Willis and the most authoritative leaders of the labour movement. Kinnock and Willis should make *personal* appeals to every Notts miner to stay within the NUM.

Personal

These appeals should be backed up with clear and unambiguous statements that the TUC will refuse to recognise any separate Notts scab union, and that such a

union will be ineligible for any relations with the Labour Party. The Parliamentary Labour Party whip must be immediately withdrawn from Don Concannon and Frank Haynes who have openly supported the breakaway.

Far wider forces even than those who supported the strike can and must be involved in the campaign. The TUC, for its own reasons, cannot support a breakaway. Ray Chadburn — who obstructed the attempts to bring Notts out on strike before formally supporting the struggle — has come out publicly against the breakaway.

The one thing that can obstruct the most massive campaign to defeat the breakaway is the line of Kinnock towards the miners' strike and the leadership of the NUM. It is well known that his supporters had as

their plan a defeat for Scargill *within* the NUM. The aim was to force Scargill to stand for reelection and defeat him. But this year's NUM conference democratically defeated that move and passed the decisive rule changes.

Support for the strike, and for those such as Arthur Scargill who led it, was reaffirmed at the NUM conference. It is precisely because they are unwilling to accept the democratic verdict of the NUM membership that Lynk and Prendergast have called for a breakaway.

For once Neil Kinnock did get something perfectly right at the Durham gala, when he said that a breakaway from the NUM would leave miners, including the Notts miners, subject to a 'powerful and arbitrary management', and that the only people who

would profit from a breakaway would be 'the very people who are threatening the coal mining industry'.

Now Kinnock will doubtless try to pursue his campaign against the leadership of the strike and the NUM by other means — including by behind the scenes manoeuvring. That problem will be dealt with as it arises. But the immediate demand must be for the entire weight of the labour movement to be thrown into smashing the Notts breakaway. That means campaigning with anyone who wants to campaign from Kinnock and Willis downwards.

If Kinnock and Willis won't act, then the campaign in Notts must be based on everyone in the labour movement who is prepared to fight the breakaway in both words and deeds.

Keep Notts national

'RIGHT THROUGH the national conference, Lynk and Co were saying that they had no intention of splitting. But when the crunch came, they did,' said JOE MOHAMMED, a black miner from Cotgrave colliery in Notts. Joe was on strike till the end. Now he's one of those fighting the split from the National Union of Mineworkers. He told GRAHAM BARNETSON what he thought of the attempt by Notts NUM area officials to set up a company union.

THE Notts lads need all the help they can get. After Mike Clapham's excellent report to the forum, I'm confident that there will be a national campaign underway in Notts. To stop this breakaway needs as rigorous a campaign as possible.

Warning

The dangers of Spencerism must be explained, and the membership in Notts held together. We must build bridges with all those loyal to the NUM, especially the young miners who, I feel, have been misled and misguided — conned in fact — by the right wing bureaucracy.

A leafletting campaign is now being planned in Notts, and the women from the support groups who were at the forum meeting pledged their full support. And an edition of the *Notts Collier* must be got out right away.

Solidarity

Malcolm Pinnegar and me from the Dirty 30 also pledged our support and ex-

plained the situation in our area. It is likely that Jack Jones, general secretary of the Leicester area, will be recommending that our area follows Notts when the area council meets in August.

Choice

We'll be watching that situation closely. And, if that does happen, then we will immediately re-form the Leicester NUM.

But the important thing is to act now to stop the breakaway. That means that everyone loyal to the union has to be contacted and talked to, to get the case across. And it means we need national resources in Notts to carry this out.

Of the 600 miners sacked during the strike many were branch officials and delegates. That's an awful lot of skills and knowledge that could potentially be put at the service of the Notts miners loyal to the NUM. And every figure of any importance in the labour movement must bring their weight to bear to keep Notts national.

View from Notts



THE NOTTS miners' forum met last Saturday to discuss a plan of action against the threatened breakaway by Roy Lynk and his supporters. It was attended by Mike Clapham, on behalf of the national headquarters, and representatives of the Leicestershire 'Dirty 30' were also invited.

MICK RICHMOND was one of the Leicester Dirty 30 who was there. He told CAROL TURNER what was planned.

STRIKERS have been working to win the leadership of the union and win miners to stay with the national union. The issue is to go with a gaffers' union or stay with a real union. Deep down, they know it's in their interests to stay with the national.

The response so far

from the men has been generally encouraging. This is partly because of Lynk's reputation and unpopularity before the strike. He's always been considered an extreme right wing opportunist, who expressed the gaffer's view in disputes. Lynk puts himself up

as a democrat. But when it comes down to it, he did not ballot the men on splitting from the NUM. He has not stood for election as general secretary since the sacking of Henry Richardson.

He's exactly like Spencer. He has used the rule changes, and the jargon they were written in, to build suspicion and mistrust among those men who didn't want to strike.

Once it was shown at the national conference that none of the other area delegates were going to support Lynk, the decision was taken to split.

It was MacGregor and

the NCB who were behind this. They decided it was time for Lynk to breakaway. Anyone considering supporting it should ask themselves: if it's in MacGregor's interests, how can it be in theirs?

We have to get out to those who were not on strike, as well as those who were, if we are going to defeat the breakaway. Many don't want MacGregor's closure programme, and know what Scargill said before the strike was right. We must take this opportunity to explain why all miners should stay in the NUM.

The breakaway should not be recognised. It's a bosses union and should be ostracised. This is as important as the campaign to keep the miners in the NUM. It should be created as a bosses union by all those who consider themselves socialists or trade unionists.

People who can see the situation for what it is, have to talk not just to those miners in danger of joining the bosses union but to those who may recognise it. It mustn't get the trappings of respectability — that way the cancer will die.

What is 'Spencerism'?

FROM the start of the miners' strike, the spectre of the Spencer union raised its ugly head again in Notts. Why has a breakaway occurred in Notts as it did in 1926? What is 'Spencerism'? What is the alternative needed to fight it? HELEN ARTHUR looks at some of the issues involved.

SPENCERISM has indeed returned to the Notts coalfield after 60 years. Since the divisions in the NUM have now hardened into an open split, it is important to look back at the history of the Spencer union, and the lessons it holds for today. The issues run far deeper than a simple comparison of 'breakaways'.

Proper

The proper title of Spencer's union was the Nottinghamshire Miners' Non-Political Industrial Union (NMIU). It was founded during the 1926 miners' strike, in the aftermath of an organised return to work by the Notts miners following the collapse of the general strike.

Spencer, a senior official of the Notts Miners' Association (NMA), led this wholesale scabbing, and was expelled from the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) by its conference. The coal-owners immediately recognised the non-political union, and granted it exclusive bargaining rights in the Notts area.

Spencer and his followers, along with the coal-owners, loudly sang the praises of the NMIU and its founding principles: 'pure trade-unionism, collaboration with management, and opposition to the fixing of any national wage levels. It

stood for peace in the pits, for cooperation between workers and management to ensure the mutual interests they were both supposed to share.

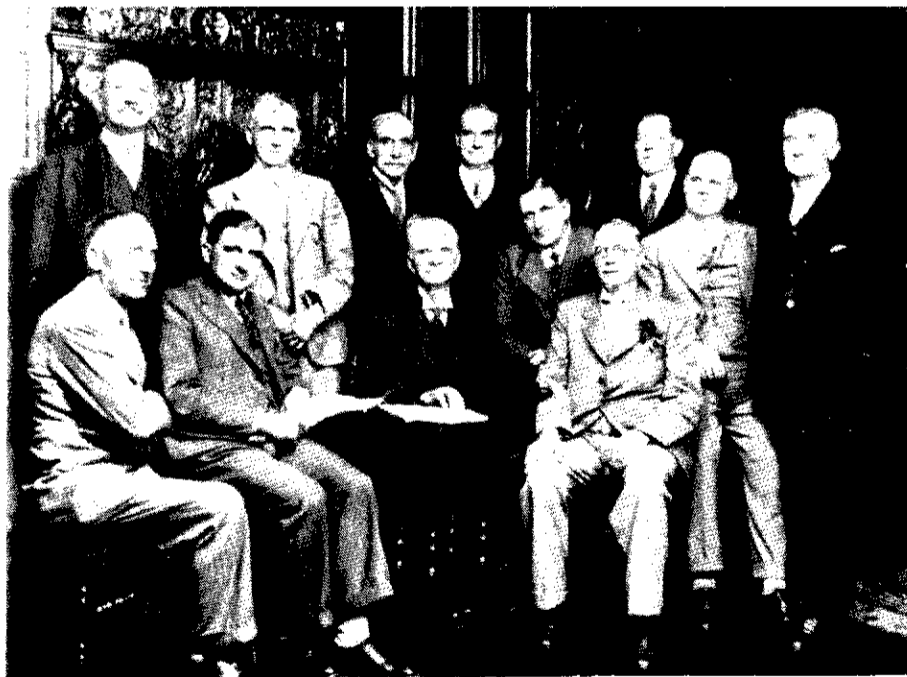
The NMA and the MFGB, helped by the TUC, ran a campaign against the breakaway, culminating in a ballot in 1928. Eighty per cent of the Notts miners voted for representation by the NMA. Yet Spencer's union was still able to hold sway for another nine years.

Spencer certainly ensured peace for the bosses. But at what price for the miners? The reality contradicts his view of the nappy family atmosphere enjoyed by Notts miners during his rule.

Second

From 1926 to 1934, the Notts miners went from being the second highest paid in the country to the second lowest. But by 1936, Notts coal-owners were reaping more than 50 per cent more profits per ton of coal than in South Yorks.

Much was made of the 'welfare capitalism' in Notts, where the owners proceeded to sink 'super pits' and build model housing estates alongside them — the only miners' houses at the time to have indoor bathrooms and constant hot water laid on from the pit. Injunctions were held by the companies to prevent picketing, public meetings,



The NMIU executive committee

leafletting and posters in these villages. They employed squads of detectives who held a reign of terror over the inhabitants, faced with the threat of instant dismissal and eviction for any militant activity.

Why is there a breakaway in Notts again in 1985? It is no mere coincidence that Spencer and Lynk are earning the same reputation in the same area. The Notts miners scabbed to break the 1926 strike and 1985 strikes on the same material basis.

The decontrol of the mines after World War I had ended the government-imposed national wage scales, and allowed those in the more productive areas like Notts to negotiate a

privileged position both in wages and conditions. Similarly, the scabbing of the Notts area during the recent strike can be traced directly back to the efforts of the right wing under Gormley to smash the National Power Loading Agreement (NPLA) of 1966.

Wage

This agreement had once again secured national wage levels for the miners, but in '77 Gormley manoeuvred to introduce area-based incentive schemes, which Notts, Leicester and South Derby eagerly pursued in defiance of NUM policy and rules. The Coal Board's involve-

ment in this process can be seen even from the fact that in recent years, more capital has been invested in Thoresby colliery in Notts than in the entire South Wales area.

The lessons are clear: once the coal-owners had dangled the carrot of better wages and conditions to entice workers into the NMIU, they were able to use their isolation from the rest of the labour movement to coerce workers to join it. Notts miners were then forced to accept falling wages and worsening conditions.

Non-members of the NMIU, especially those still loyal to the NMA, were victimised. The parallels facing strikers today in the scab

areas are clear. Throughout the NMIU's existence the coal-owners were adamant they would not negotiate with two unions. Coercion drove miners into the NMIU, and their rivalry with the MFGB merely allowed the employers to drive down their wages, while at the same time holding a knife to the throat of the MFGB unions in other areas.

Even within its own framework of peaceful coexistence with the owners, Spencer's union could not deliver the goods. From 1934 onwards wage cuts were accepted at alleged 'loss making' pits even though the companies were making massive profits overall.

But why did it take 11 years to end Spencer's domination in Notts? What sort of action was necessary for the MFGB and TUC to make the 1928 ballot count in reality? And can Scargill and the NUM win where the MFGB failed?

The NCB is looking to do a Spencer act again today. They will be going for sole negotiating rights for the scab union, and to victimise those loyal to the NUM. They will seek to break the power of the national union throughout the coalfields. And they will use every means in their power to build a yellow union and overturn the closed shop.

The Coal Board is unlikely to observe any formalities. Backed by the government and the courts, they will go for the throat. And as leaders of the MFGB explained in 1937: 'Since 1926 everyone has known

deep down in his heart that we cannot have the perspective in the British coalfields of a successful national struggle on any question so long as this thing (NMIU) is on the flanks of the national organisation'.

That is the level of threat posed to the NUM by this split today. More than that, it is a knife to the heart of the militant trade unionism in Britain in the next period. Non-political trade unionism, which Spencer claimed to be the genuine tradition of the labour movement, is none other than the 'realism' preached by Earlmond, Murray and other misleaders of our movement.

Today we face more than a struggle against Spencerism, against non-political unionism. We face more than the defence of the NUM as it existed before the strike. Our struggle is for political trade unionism. Scargill's way of fighting

The NMIU treasurer boasted in 1927: 'The Nottinghamshire Industrial Union is the best trade union in the world, definitely to bar by the Communists and the revolutionaries from membership... We want the world to know where we stand and that we are up against the wreckers'.

History has shown that the real wreckers are Scargill pointed where the future lies when he spoke at the Yorks miners' gala. Out of the miners' strike has come a whole new generation of class conscious fighters. It is they who must lead the fight against Spencerism today.



Double Standards

THE FOLLOWING is an excerpt from Peter Heathfield's speech to the Bridgewater Campaign Against Unemployment on 20 June.

Our demand for an amnesty for the re-employment of victimised miners has almost fallen on stony ground. The Standing Committee on employment which gave evidence with a majority of Tories on that committee came out in our favour. They declared the board had not applied the standards and yardsticks which they claimed they had applied. They had acted in a discriminatory way in different coalfields. McGregor has rejected the findings.

He has said, Mrs Thatcher has said, Tom King has said and Peter Walker has said that people guilty of violence have got to be punished. The irony of that statement is that the issue is not about violence.

I'll site you two examples to show that its not about violent miners in Kent and Scotland.

In Nottinghamshire 30 working miners have been convicted of violence against striking miners and their families. They've been fined between £25 and £300. Not one has been disciplined by the NCB not one man has been told that his job would go.

In Derbyshire, in my own coalfield, in the early part of the strike 15 miners were convicted of assault on coalboard property. In May they were sentenced to three months imprisonment. They were not out of prison two days before the colliery manager was knocking on their door saying you can have your job back, providing you strike break.

It's not a question of violence. There's a common feature about those dismissed in Scotland that the board refused to talk to and those dismissed in Kent. The common feature is that they are died-in-the-wool, 100 per cent supporters of the NUM. That is the crime they have committed.

Very few prosecutions have actually taken place in Scotland. People have been sacked who have not been prosecuted by the police.

The Kent miners who travelled underground to inspect the state of their pit were found to be in breach on the Mines and Quarries Act. They were all dismissed.

In Lee Hall in the Midlands, a father and son decided to have a sit-in to demand a ballot. The NCB sent the television cameras underground. They were in breach on the Mines and Quarries Act. They received no punishment. They were honoured.

Different standards apply to people in struggle and people defending the establishment.

Hear Scargill speak

Public Rally

Thursday 18 July

7.30pm Friends Meeting House, Euston Road.

'Hear Arthur Scargill, launch the petition and campaign to defend the sacked and victimised miners.'

Speakers include Arthur Scargill, Jack Collins, Martin Gould (SERTUC), Joan Maynard.

Chair: Andrew Jacks (SERTUC).

Doors open 7pm.

Miners' wives angry at Conference vote

AFTER ALL the fine words expressed by miners during the 12 month long battle against pit closures about the magnificent role of the women's support groups it came as a bitter blow that the NUM conference decided — by one vote — not to give the women's support groups associate membership status.

The successful resolution, giving honorary membership, to be awarded either by the conference or the executive, was not the same as the executive's original proposal. Honorary membership will be given only to the few, not to the many thousands of women in the support group's who experienced political activity for the first time in their lives and became the backbone of the struggle against the coal board.

Betty Heathfield was one of the women who went to the conference to lobby for support for the resolution which would have given official legitimacy to the Women Against Pit Closures Movement. 'We were very disappointed as a group of women', she said. 'All sorts of different excuses were offered to the women.'

'The Yorkshire area said that it wasn't phrased in the right way for them. That it was open to too wide a category of associate members. The Welsh delegation tried to tell us that women in Wales weren't in favour of it.'

'We got the impression that it had not been discussed through in the branches,' said Betty. In fact the dominant impression given to the women lobbyists was that the delegates were rather em-

barrassed by the way they were mandated to vote after all that women had done during the dispute.

'The general outlook seemed to be that it was rather a lot of hoo-ha about something that wasn't so important and

By Valerie Coultas

that delegates were confused about what associate membership status meant. There was also a very chauvinistic element that said we'd done a good job in the strike but patted us on the head and suggested that now we should go back into the cupboard'.

Linda McDermott, another of the wives on the lobby, hit back at these arguments saying that the 'women of the mining communities had proved themselves more loyal to the NUM than the scab members in Nottinghamshire.' Women obviously felt that they had given a lot to this strike and deserved associate membership in return.

'Associate membership includes no voting rights for women, no right to attend meetings,' explains Betty Heathfield. 'It would simply mean that we could go as visitors and observers to national conference, have joint educational schools, and we've already got our office in the NUM headquarters in Sheffield.'



Photo from 'Unfinished Business', by Phil McHugh available at £3 from Acorn Press, 240 Water Street, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 6QP.

The women feel that it was short sighted of the delegates to vote the way they did because associate membership would have meant that if the women were needed again in the battles coming up with the Coal Board they would be there in an organised way.

They are not daunted at all by the decision however. Rather Betty approaches it as a spur to organise.

'The women understand why it's important to have this recognition of our role. We want to see joint schools, joint discus-

sion with the men in the union about the whole spectrum of women's problems in society,' she said.

An enlarged conference is being planned for 17 August in Sheffield City Hall with room for 2,000 people. Draft proposals have been drawn up for the permanent organisations of the Women Against Pit Closures Movement.

'Honorary membership is no good because you can't have thousands of honorary members,' explains Betty. 'We want to encourage all those women

to join us who didn't get involved during the strike.'

The composition of the Women's support groups will also be under discussion at this upcoming conference. At the moment 75 per cent are miners dependents and 25 per cent are not. Some women want to throw the groups open to all women. Others want it to remain mainly miners wives.

But all the women want the movement to remain broad based to keep the links that were made during the strike. Fees and a constitution will be discussed at the conference as well as the crucial question of building support for the sacked and imprisoned miners.

The women know that they were and still are part of the battle against pit closures. It is many of the women's support groups that have taken the initiative in campaigning for an amnesty now that the strike is finished, despite the dreadful hardship that surrounds their communities because the debtors have moved in to claim what was not paid during the strike.

The women are going to organise and win this battle and the left in the NUM must give them backing to ensure that the next NUM conference reverses this decision.

As Marsha Marshall from Dartford Main explained: 'We are not a threat to (the men) or the union, but we played a big part in the strike and it was about our future as well as theirs.'

Coalville showed the way

THE COVERAGE of the historic miners' strike has necessarily concentrated on the work of the NUM itself, on the women's action groups and the support groups that sprang up all over the country. But the story would not be complete without an account of those trade unionists who gave full support to the miners, and nowhere was this more impressive than at Coalville where the railworkers stopped all movement of coal throughout the dispute.

The new Socialist Action pamphlet, written by those who were involved, tells this story in detail and draws the political lessons from it. All those who heard Roy Butlin, or other Coalville workers, at many of the miners' rallies around the country, will want to read what happened there, and so will every Labour and trade union activist who supported the miners.

The miners who were picketing their own pits had a difficult enough job to do, but how much harder it was to sustain solidarity in another industry, in an area where a majority of the miners were still at work. Yet that is exactly what the Coalville rail unions did and the lessons they learned are of direct relevance to us all.

For it was their broad political perspective which sustained their solidarity against tremendous pressure from the Railway Board and its manage-

ment. Indeed BR went to the lengths of trying to establish that one of the striking signalmen was mentally unbalanced and suspended him on those grounds.

The real importance of this pamphlet lies in the way in which the political lessons are brought out —

By Tony Benn

including the impact of the opposition to the strike that came from inside the labour movement.

If only the Notts miners had stayed loyal... if only NACODS had acted on their huge ballot majority for a strike... if only the TUC general council had followed the decisions of congress... if only the whole parliamentary party had been on the picket lines every week... then the strike might have ended in victory!

But there is no point in looking back to find scapegoats, for what really

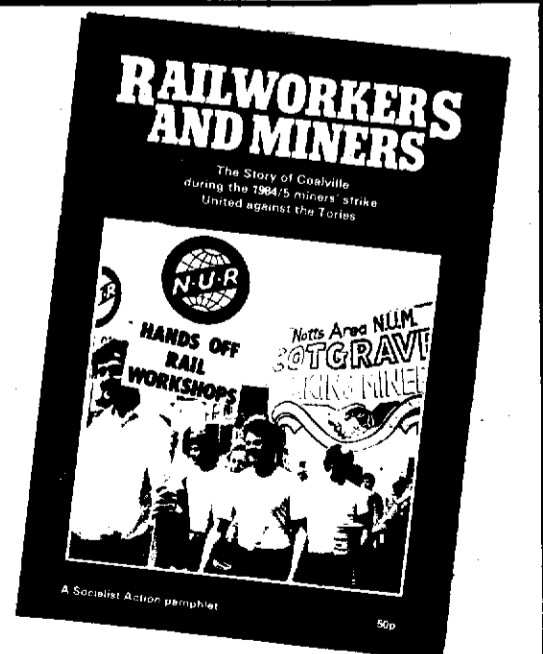
matters is that even without this backing it was possible for workers to take the power of decision into their own hands where they actually worked, and do it themselves. And that is exactly what the Coalville workers did, not waiting for anyone's permission to go ahead and take action, doing so in the full knowledge that they might very well be on their own.

Now, as the government tries to carry through its mopping up operations against other groups of workers in the aftermath of the strike — attacking teachers, health service workers, steel workers and the Fleet Street unions too — everyone will have to stand and fight, where they are, or we shall be picked off one by one. Nor should we deceive ourselves into thinking that if we do so we are necessarily weak as compared to the powers of the establishment.

For that frightened huddle of top people who are now crowding into the soft centre of politics — Tory wets, SDP, Liberals and all those who agree with them across the political spectrum — are only doing so because they

believe that the Labour and socialist movement in Britain is strong. They would never be doing so if they really thought that we were as weak as they pretend they are.

Everyone who takes a stand adds to that strength and helps to build the majority support that we need to get rid of our oppressors and lay the foundation for Socialism In Our Time.



Socialist Action supporters in rail have produced a pamphlet called 'Railworkers and Miners', the story of Coalville during the 1984/5 miners' strike. It costs 50 pence per copy and is available from Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Together we can win

Photo: GM COOKSON



ARTHUR SCARGILL's presidential speech to this year's NUM conference drew an entire balance sheet of the 12 months strike and replied to critics of the miners leadership. Socialist Action prints the speech in full.

CONFERENCE meets this year following the longest, most bitter and possibly most savage national strike ever seen anywhere in the world. We meet not in the aftermath but still in the midst of a historic and heroic struggle waged by this union and mining communities against the most reactionary coal industry management seen since the 1920s and 30s — a struggle in which we have had to face the combined weight of the most reactionary and destructive government Britain has known in over a century.

We have come through a strike which has changed the course of British history: a conflict of tremendous significance which has resounded around the world — a conflict which has transformed the lives of those who stood and fought against the National Coal Board's disastrous pit closure programme — a conflict which has inspired workers in this and other countries to defend the right to work.

The National Union of Mineworkers has challenged the very heart of the capitalist system. We have refused to accept that any industry inside capitalist society — whether public or private sectors — has the right to destroy the livelihood of men and women at the stroke of an accountant's pen. Our challenge has been met with a savagery unprecedented in any time of trade union history.

The pit closure programme announced by the Board on 6 March 1984, was a deliberate action, designed to provoke our union into either taking strike action or backing down in the face of Coal Board policy. Backing down, some delegates in this room may recall, as the union did a number of years ago. Since November 1983, the union had been operating a highly successful overtime ban, building an effective 'Campaign For Coal', winning support both in mining areas and in the wider community. The NUM was taking the arguments for saving pits and jobs to our members and their families in a way which had never been seen before.

Faced with this unity of action, the Coal Board began a new tactic, using closure announcements to cut across and violate all our industry's

established procedures. As they temporarily announced 25 pit closures — five of them immediately — with a loss of over 25,000 jobs we knew in our hearts that our union had no real choice. We could either accept the Board's proposals in the certain knowledge that they were only the start of a massive closure programme — or we could take strike action, and fight with dignity and pride for the position we knew to be right.

To the eternal credit of this union, we took strike action. Let me say, unequivocally, that in defending our policies, our jobs, communities and industries, we had no alternative — and history will vindicate our position.

Experience

Now, four months after our return to work, it is essential to look back over the first crucial phase of our fight for the future, examine what was accomplished, and determined where our union and its members go from here. It is vital that the union analyses the events of 1984-85 in order that we learn from what took place and to utilise the experience in the next stage of our fight.

The Coal Board's pit closures programme for 1984-85 was not carried out. It was not carried out because the miners took strike action! And I feel it right that we should remind ourselves, that had it not been for the action of this union, our conference this week would have been taking place with 25 pits that are still open, already having been closed. It was the determination of this union and mining communities which delivered the worst blow ever dealt to the Thatcher government, and created a crisis in international capital.

The cost of the miners' strike to Thatcherism has been truly astronomical. In their crusade against the NUM and trade unionism, this government robbed Britain's taxpayers of £8 billion (more than eight times the cost of the Falklands War), as they sought desperately to defeat the miners and destroy the National Union of Mineworkers. History will record this was a colossal act of vandalism by a monetarist Tory government which in order to survive requires a high pool of unemployment — a weak, collaborationist, or non-existent trade union movement — and

laws which remove the democratic rights won by our people in over two centuries of struggle.

The attack on our union was the culmination of five years in which the Thatcher government had successively introduced anti-trade union legislation while raising unemployment to four-and-a-half million — and through the use of the media had implanted in the minds of trade unionists the idea that they could not win any struggle against this new authoritarian government.

The decision to appoint Ian MacGregor as chairman of the National Coal Board was evidence of the Tories' growing confidence — and with their success against the NGA, and the elimination of trade unionism at GCHQ, they were showing their increased contempt for the TUC and its affiliated unions. Ian MacGregor was appointed chairman in order that free market criteria could be applied to the mining industry, following exactly the line pursued by the Tory government in other nationalised industries. His brief was to carry through a policy of pit closures as the first step towards a restructured mining industry, ripe for privatisation — a strategy which the Tories also believed would see Britain's most powerful union rendered impotent.

Trade unionism and nationalisation are totally abhorrent to MacGregor. His union-busting record in the United States speaks for itself, and it was because of that record that he was brought over to Britain (to the eternal shame of the last Labour government), first to British Leyland and then to British Steel, before being instructed to butcher British coal.

His attitude not only towards trade unions but parliament itself has been demonstrated within the last fortnight — first by his disdainful dismissal of the Conservative-dominated Employment Select Com-

mittee's report, which recommended that the Coal Board review its position in relation to those miners dismissed during the strike — a recommendation which if it had been implemented would result in over 80 per cent of those sacked being reinstated, and the union could have concentrated on winning reinstatement for the rest of those miners dismissed.

During the strike, over 900 miners were sacked, and since the end of the strike, still more have been dismissed. To date, over 600 have not been reinstated. This is an attack upon this movement and union that smacks of the 1920s and '30s. The management and government are determined to try and dismiss from this industry the most active elements, and the most militant sections of the trade union movement.

Crime

Over 50 of our members have been jailed whilst carrying out union policy, taking action to save pits and jobs. I say without equivocation, they are political prisoners, and this movement must regard them as such, and should support them and sustain them during the period while incarcerated by this government. Their only crime was fighting for the right to work, and an amnesty for them, as well as reinstatement for all who have been sacked must be amongst this union's first priorities.

Ian MacGregor's contempt for this country and those who work within it has also just been demonstrated by the Board's total abandonment of the agreement reached last autumn with NACODS, which incorporated a new modified Colliery Review Procedure. You will recall that this procedure was described by Ian MacGregor, by Peter Walker, by Margaret Thatcher, as being 'sacrosanct'.

It has now been proved the sham we said it was at the time. And I hope that those with the vitriolic pens will remember the words they wrote last November, when they urged that this union accept the so-called NACODS deal. Some went so far as to say that the union was snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. What we said then is now being proved correct. The deal was a sham, and the only thing that miners, in whatever union of this industry should have done, and should continue to do, is to fight the Coal Board's policy and keep pits open.

Ironically, if we judge Ian MacGregor's stewardship of the coal industry even on the basis of his own market forces criteria, he stands accused of total incompetence and of crimes against Britain's economy and the British people. During the two years since his appointment, he has cost Britain's taxpayers of this nation over £90 million per week. He is, by any standards, an unmitigated disaster, and if ever there was a case for redundancy, he represents the perfect candidate — the quicker he goes, the better for all concerned.

The NUM argued from the beginning that Ian MacGregor should never have been appointed. His entire performance during and since the end of the dispute bears witness to this belief. Under his direction, local and area management of the Board have embarked on a vendetta of draconian measures which have deliberately destroyed long-established customs and practice within our industry. We have seen industrial relations dismantled as Board management takes on an increasingly hard line against our members.

There is no denying that the miners' strike could have been brought to a swift and successful conclusion within a very short space of time but for a number of important factors which had a major effect on the attitude of both the Coal Board and the government.

Photo: MARK SALMON



Together we can win

Conference will recall following our special delegate conference on the 19 April 1984, which reaffirmed the democratic decision to endorse strike action in accordance with Rule 41, the union's call on all areas to support the dispute was not followed by Nottinghamshire, South Derbyshire or Leicestershire. We are now analysing what should have taken place in various sections. We're analysing those things to point out that if those steps had been taken, the strike would have been drawn to a swift conclusion, and let this conference examine those facts in a sober and detailed fashion.

In refusing to respond to a call from the vast majority of their colleagues already on strike, and — more important — by refusing to respect picket lines, those who continued to work producing coal provided a life-line to the Tory government as it waged class war against the NUM. There have been many comments from critics, cynics and even some colleagues, suggesting that had we held an individual ballot vote the outcome of our dispute would have been different. That argument has three basic flaws.

First, it fails to recognise that miners in 1984 were taking exactly the same kind of action that they had taken in 1981. Recall the action of 1981 was unofficial strike action, and had been supported by Notts, South Derbyshire and Leicestershire without a ballot vote. If that had been done on this occasion the outcome in the early weeks of the dispute would have transformed the situation.

Secondly, it fails to recognise, by the time of our conference on 19 April nearly 80 per cent of our members were *already* on strike. And never in the history of this union have you held a ballot vote of members who have already decided with their feet to take action against the Coal Board decision to try and destroy their jobs and their communities. And thirdly, the argument also fails to recognise, or conveniently forgets, that on a previous occasion areas, including those three areas — Notts, South Derbyshire and Leicestershire — refused to accept the democratic decision of our membership as determined in an individual ballot vote, and proceeded to negotiate with the National Coal Board an incentive scheme that has led this union into divisions and split.

There have also been suggestions (again, from critics, cynics, even some of our colleagues) that traditional, picket-line militancy is dead. Nothing could be further from the truth, and accurate historical analysis will prove that point beyond doubt. Colleagues, it was not a failure of mass picketing, but a failure to mass picket that represented a weakness in many sections of our union, and other trade unions, and we must learn the lessons of what took place in 1984-85.

For the sake of the record, and in order that the academics, and intellectuals, and members of the media, should not be too confused, let me too compare what took place in Salfley in 1972, and Orgreave in 1984. The mass picketing of Orgreave, like Salfley in



Photo: GM COOKSON

1972, proved so effective that contrary to popular belief, it led to British Steel actually halting its operations on 18 June, 1984. But unlike Salfley, where picketing was stepped up and involved the whole of the labour movement of Birmingham, the picketing at Orgreave was scaled down following the success on 18 June.

I have consistently argued that the tactics which brought us victory at Salfley should have been employed at Orgreave, where with increased picketing we would inevitably have involved the trade union and Labour movement not only in Sheffield, but throughout the whole of South Yorkshire, and brought the flow of coke from Orgreave to a complete halt.

We are involved in a class war, and any attempt to deny that flies in the face of reality. Don't believe me, listen to what Margaret Thatcher, and Peter Walker keep saying about this union and our members. Just look at the attack of the establishment on the National Union of Mineworkers, and they, more eloquently than I, demonstrate the nature of the class war to which I refer. Confronted by our enemy's mobilisation, we are entitled,

indeed obliged, to call upon *our* class for massive support. In any future industrial action by any union — including ours — this must be done.

Fourthly it is a fact that must be faced the NUM did not receive the level of support we needed and were entitled to expect from our colleagues in the wider movements. In spite of pleas from this union, the leaders of the power workers refused to give us the basic support they gave in 1974 — a measure of support again, I should add for the record, was *not* present in 1972 (contrary to any statements made by media experts). In 1974, by operating basic principled guidelines determined by the Trades Union Congress in September 1974 power workers stopped the flow of coal into British power stations.

I try never to personalise, but I want to make one thing clear, if the leaders of the power station workers in the EETPU had been less concerned in inviting Tebbit to open one of their centres and more concerned to call upon their members to support the miners, they would have represented real trade unionism. By acquiescing in the conversion of coal-fired power stations to

oil, power station workers made it impossible for us to really mount an effective campaign. If the power station workers had simply operated the guidelines the oil burn would not have increased from 5 to 40 per cent. And they could have prevented, simply by following guidelines that they had in 1974.

Fifthly, the abject refusal by leaders of the ISTC to mobilise and coordinate the same degree of support for the NUM that we gave to steel workers in 1980 not only betrayed every tenet of the Triple Alliance, but actually forced and provoked the battles of Orgreave, Ravenscraig and Llanwern.

The British Steel Corporation has admitted that without the cooperation of the steel unions they could not have kept going, and the Coal Board would thus have been put under intense pressure to negotiate with the NUM. But any address of this kind would be hollow, and would fail to take into account all the factors to which I have previously referred, if we also did not say at this stage, that in spite of all that's taken place, if steelworkers or any other workers face attack, this union will adopt a principled position of supporting workers in struggle.

The government's massive transport operation, mounted along the lines of the Ridley Plan, to convey coal, coke and iron ore to power stations and steel works only proved effective because the power and steel unions failed to respect picket lines and stop deliveries.

I think that we should pay tribute, at the same time as pointing to a weakness, to the magnificent support we obtained from the National Union of Railwaymen, from ASLEF, and from the National Union of Seamen, and sections of the Transport and General Workers Union. Their support was not only an inspiration, it was an example to other unions of what trade union solidarity is all about.

Sham

Last October, NACODS, having committed themselves to a united fight with the NUM on pit closures, suddenly capitulated to the Boards during talks at the conciliation service ACAS, and accepted what everyone now knows was a deal that amounted to deception.

This NACODS-NCB agreement, described as 'sacrosanct' by both the Board and government, was praised to the skies by pundits and politicians who criticised the NUM for refusing to accept it. The agreement — which we said was worthless — was supposed to introduce into the colliery review procedure an independent appeals body, acceptable to unions and to the Board which would review any dispute about the future of a colliery or unit after all other procedures had been exhausted.

Four months after the end of the strike, the Coal Board has openly violated this 'sacrosanct' agreement, and has announced instead that it will appoint on its own, unilaterally *one* independent inspector. They're going to appoint an independent inspector. The NUM warned that the agreement was a sham, and we are proving it as each day passes. We suggested that if they wanted an independent review body, what better appeal body than the National Reference Tribunal.

Do you know who appointed it? Lord Denning, the Master of the Rolls, not an old friend of the NUM. We were prepared to accept the National Reference Tribunal as the independent review body, but Ian MacGregor and the Board wanted none of it. They don't want an agreement. They want to continue to pursue their own policy of trying to destroy this industry, in the way that they destroyed the British steel

industry, and in the way that they decimated the British car industry at BL.

There is also the failure of the TUC to translate into positive action decisions taken at the 1984 congress. And it was this, according to well-informed sources, that led the Coal Board to a change of attitude, and they saw it as a green light to intensify their attacks against the NUM.

Had the guidelines supporting the NUM adopted by congress been even partially implemented, the pressure upon the Coal Board and the government would have been intense, and a negotiated settlement inevitable.

There can be no excuse for the TUC general council's refusal to provide desperately needed financial assistance to this union following sequestration and receivership. The appointment of a receiver for a trade union is unprecedented, and is associated with the new Tory legislation — and yet, eight months after receivership was imposed on the NUM, the £400,000 fund established in a blaze of glory by the TUC at the 1982 Wembley conference remains intact — while we fight to survive. They should recognise that this union has been hijacked and they should give financial support to this union.



During the strike, the Labour Party leadership allowed itself to be preoccupied with allegations of 'violence', scripted daily by the media — when they should have been attacking the Tory government for its violence against our industry, and defending our members in the same way as Thatcher defended her riot squad in blue. That should have been the pre-occupation of the party right the way throughout our industrial dispute.

Hijack

Of course the High Court decision last autumn to fine the NUM, and then place an order of sequestration upon us failed to stop the union functioning. Further legal moves then resulted in the High Court sacking the three NUM trustees and appointing a receiver, whose purpose was to bring the union's operations and administration to a standstill by hijacking our funds.

As a result of his appointment, our funds have now been depleted by £1 million. Those funds would still be intact had the union's trustees not been sacked, and the trusteeship placed in



the hands of the receiver who is supposed to be looking after the assets of the NUM. I think it imperative to make the point that the receivership of this union marks a very dangerous precedent for other trade unions. It means that the unions in Britain today can in fact be seized literally overnight, and the whole movement has to understand that they've got an obligation to fight back against the appointment of a receiver in this, or indeed any other trade union.

my tribute to young miners, whose courage and determination throughout the 12 months battle remain an inspiration to us all. Our union must continue to fully involve them at all levels, to provide education, and to tap their tremendous energy and skills to the full, for the use of this union in the fight to save our pits and jobs.

Women

I also take this opportunity, yet again, to pay my tribute to the magnificent force which has emerged to take its rightful place alongside the NUM I'm referring to the magnificent women's support groups. No words of mine can pay adequate tribute to their historic contribution to our common struggle. I believe I speak on behalf of Michael McGahey and Peter Heathfield as well when I say that nothing gives me greater pride than my association with the Women Against Pit Closures campaign, and those brilliant women who organised and supported that campaign. There is absolutely no doubt that their collective strength is crucial to the fight that still lies ahead of us.

What of the future? For the NUM, the tasks ahead present the greatest

Whilst we're analysing the dispute, we've also got to analyse the role of the media, if for no other reason, than they've been analysing us. Throughout the year, and longer, the capitalist media has played a role which Goebbels would have been proud of. Press and broadcasting have smeared and lied about our union, its leadership and its members. It's no good just blaming proprietors and managing editors. Journalists — many of them here today whom will say privately that they 'support' the miners — have allowed themselves to be used to attack us every day at every turn, as we fight to protect and sustain our industry. But in hurling weapon after weapon at the NUM, our enemies have revealed more than their hatred of us — they have revealed their fear of us. Their viciousness springs



Photo: RAISSA PAGE



Photo: MARK SALMON

from the knowledge that the heart of their own class-ridden system is under attack.

Finally whilst analysing the dispute, let me say I believe the proposal for a return to work without an agreement was a fundamental mistake — and events have shown that this was not the best course of action to adopt. However, let no one in this conference or outside talk to me about defeat or setbacks. Those who since the end of the strike have pontificated in a negative and destructive fashion fail utterly to understand the nature of what actually took place.

This union must not turn inwards in an orgy of self-criticism. We should stand confident and proud of what we have achieved, proclaiming the positive aspects of the dispute, and the most important victory of all — the struggle itself. Let's not forget that without that struggle the pits would have been closed, and I submit that we had no alternative but to stand and fight. And indeed in future we will have no alternative again.

Within our union and our committees, the strike brought forth revolutionary changes. I never tire of paying

challenge any trade union has ever faced. We must build from this conference a united fight — united on policies and on principles. We must intensify the fight to save pits, jobs and communities, knowing that in the present climate only industrial action can save the pit closure programme and the decimation of our mining communities. If we don't involve ourselves with other unions in this industry, if we don't take decisions this week that will unite our union, then we are showing the green light to the Coal Board to come forward with a programme that will slaughter our industry, and no area will be exempt from that programme of attack.

We must demand, indeed we have a right to demand, from the rest of the movement — and in particular from the leadership of the Labour Party and TUC — a firm commitment in our action, in our fight for the coal industry and for our jobs.

The case to protect our communities and mining families is irrefutable — but never forget that it is inextricable from the economic case for coal, and it is on our economic case for coal and our economic case against pit

closures that we urge the Labour Party and TUC to campaign in parliament and throughout the nation.

The brilliant economic case against pit closures produced by Andrew Glyn of Oxford University shows that the cost to Britain's taxpayers of closing a pit is almost double that of keeping it open, employing workers and producing valuable coal. We're involved in a fight for Britain's future, and the extent to which we succeed or fail fundamentally affects other workers and the nation's destiny.

The rail and steel industries, are now under increasing attack and must learn the lessons of the last 12 months, and understand that the surest way to save British steel and the railways is to take combined action — and not leave trade union colleagues isolated when facing a concerted attack by the ruling class.

But ours is not just a defensive fight. Our generation of trade unionists has a responsibility to make the dreams of the Socialist pioneers a reality. In fighting to save our nationalised industries and our public services, we must win for them and for the British people the democracy, accountability, efficiency and profitability they have been during the past 40 years.

Amnesty

Looking ahead, one immediate task faces us — and the movement — building the campaign to release our members, jailed as political prisoners fighting against pit closures. We must win reinstatement at work for our members sacked during and since the end of the strike. This task is as crucial to the union as the fight to save the industry itself. We must make clear that the next Labour government should first of all take decisions to free from jail those miners who have been imprisoned, to reinstate any miners who remain victimised.

I submit that the next Labour government must then address itself to the National Coal Board. It is no longer enough to merely call for the dismissal of Ian McGregor, although the NUM and the movement must continue to do that. The next Labour government must remove all senior Coal Board personnel, and all area and local managers who have not only participated during the last two years in the deliberate destruction of our industry, but who have also viciously attacked our members and sought to humiliate them since the end of the strike. They've no part of this industry.

The point I think must be made, it's certainly not a departure from any

previous commitment that I've had. I firmly believe that the NUM must then be invited to share in the responsibility of running the National Coal Board as it should be run — of the people, by the people and for the people. The Board must be accountable to those who work within our industry, and the chairman should be the nominee of the unions. Only in this way can the great wrongs of the past five years be righted, and our industry expanded and developed in line with the 1974 Plan For Coal.

Peace

It follows therefore that we must make the broad alliances necessary to create the conditions for the swiftest possible return of a Labour government — one which will mobilise a march towards full employment, while campaigning for peace, the removal of all nuclear bases from Britain, and for economic justice throughout the world.

Despite the struggles and turmoil of the past two years, this union will continue to participate in plans for a new miners' organisation, incorporating East and West and bridging the ideological differences which have separated us for far too long, ripping away the barriers that have been artificially erected by those outside the National Union of Mineworkers and indeed the trade union movement in general.

As we look at rising unemployment within Europe, the threat to other coal industries, as we watch the horrors of incessant warfare in the Lebanon, or watch while thousands die of hunger in the Third World, we cannot forget that our own struggle is connected with those of workers everywhere.

As we see the nuclear madness of the ever-increasing arms race, we must re-dedicate ourselves to campaign for peace — without world peace there is no hope for any of us. We must campaign for the billions of pounds currently spent on weapons of death and destruction to be spent instead on improving the quality of human life.

This conference is a vital one. It follows a historic strike which has united communities as never before. It is true to say that in 1984-85, for the first time in 50 years, many of our people discovered the real meaning of the word 'community'.

But there are also indications (carefully nurtured by our enemies in the Coal Board and government) of splits and divisions in our great union — divisions which would inevitably affect our ability to fight effectively

against pit closures, to save jobs or indeed to represent as powerfully as we should the interests of the entire membership.

At a time when the industry is under attack from the most ruthless government seen in our lifetime, it would be a disaster for every member of this union if any breakaway were to take place. But, as history shows all too clearly, it would be most disastrous of all for those who themselves formed such breakaway. I call in this presidential address in 1985 on all sections of our union to take strength from the lessons of 1984-85, and from the fact that we are all part of a national union.

I pledge for my part to accept the decisions of conference whether it be on policy or rules — and to work wholeheartedly for them. No matter what my personal view, I will fight for the policies you decide, and I believe that all areas of the union should give the same commitment.

That is my responsibility as president and I carry it proudly.

I would like to express my deep appreciation of the unfailing solidarity and comradeship shared throughout the struggle by my two colleagues — Michael McGahey and Peter Heathfield. Yes Michael, the 'troika' has remained united, and irrespective of what they say in the media, Heathfield, Scargill and McGahey will continue to fight a united battle on behalf of this national union.

Our union's contribution to history and to humanity is in itself a triumph — let our great strike be the beginning of the fight not only to save jobs and pits, but to strengthen our union, and help create the conditions for electing a Labour government pledged to fulfill the aims and principles upon which the NUM was founded.

Colleagues when we go from this hall at the end of this week, leave with confidence and pride. Lift your eyes and go into the coalfields and campaign. Recognise the achievement of the 1984-85 dispute. You have written history. Let there be no doubt about what your achievements are — that the only way to sustain our industry, the only way to save our jobs and our pits, is to fight yet again with the same determination, the same courage and the same pride that brought us together in a way never seen before.

Let each and every one of us, from every single area of the British coalfield, dedicate ourselves to the task of carrying out the policy decisions of this conference. As president, I pledge myself to that task. I ask conference to equally pledge itself to the task as well. Together we cannot fail.



THIS WEEK sees, on 19 July, the sixth anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution. In May 1983 one of the key leaders of the Sandinistas, Tomas Borge, delivered a speech assessing the Nicaraguan revolution and the historic contributions made to it by Sandino, before his assassination in 1934 and the founder of the FSLN, Carlos Fonseca, before his murder by the dictatorship in 1976.

The editing of the speech is by Socialist Action.

WE HAVE agreed to make some comments on the history of the Sandinista front. They will at least serve as a basis for us to reflect more seriously and finally to make some notes toward a modest contribution to the glorious history of our organisation.

Due to the death of Sandino and domination by a brutal instrument of repression, the period from 1934 to 1956 was to be a dark and sad interlude. The practical expression of this was a downturn in the revolutionary movement. The people went on struggling stubbornly, but they were weak and undernourished in terms of ideology and organisation.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front was founded in July 1961. This historic event signified the people's alternative, as opposed to the bourgeois reformist alternative, in the struggle against *somocismo*.

We could say the Sandino's thought can be summed up in two great ideas retrieved by Carlos Fonseca: only the workers and peasants are capable of struggling to the end against imperialism and its local political representatives. With this notion, Sandino's intuition grasped above all the class character of the revolutionary movement, the class struggle as the motor of history.

Besides pointing to the workers and peasants as the fundamental subjects of this struggle, Sandino also grasped the form the popular revolutionary movement in Nicaragua had to take. In the economic, social, and political conditions of Nicaragua, the armed struggle was the only road that could lead to the revolutionary transformation of society.

The Cuban revolution, as Carlos Fonseca observed, had an impact on Nicaragua even before its victorious culmination. Fidel was for us the resurrection of Sandino, the answer to our reservations, the justification of the dreams and heresies of some hours before.

Popular

This popular agitation involved sectors that had never before demonstrated openly against the *somocista* regime. The ferment pointed up the congenital helplessness of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie, or, more precisely, the absence of a national bourgeoisie able to assume leadership of the anti-*somocista* movement.

The armed struggle was initiated with the Coco River and Bocay guerrilla front in 1963. The Coco River and Bocay experience constituted a defeat — not precisely from the military standpoint, since the main problems did not arise from armed engagements but rather from the absence of the minimal conditions on the ground necessary for the guerrillas' survival.

The vanguard turned the military defeat of 1963 into a source of lessons. The correction of its errors had allowed it to survive and put together a clandestine apparatus in the cities.

The military defeat of 1963 coincided with, and contributed to, a temporary downturn in the anti-*somocista* movement. A period of economic upswing was under way (*somocismo's* best period in that sense). The most dynamic sectors of the bourgeoisie took full advantage of this. They were able to combine their agro-export and commercial interests with the new phase of industrialisation spurred by the government's economic policy.



Photo: from Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution

The struggle of the FSLN

Imperialism's new development strategy for Latin America, the so-called Alliance for Progress, which some of you may not even recall, was Kennedy's political response to the Cuban revolution. This famous alliance received a great deal of publicity, and it had an effect in altering the facade of many Latin American countries. In Nicaragua, it gave a certain cover to the *somocista* dictatorship.

In the Pancasán Campaign (1967) the vanguard suffered a military defeat... but... the Nicaraguan people became conscious that only armed struggle could defeat the *somocista* dictatorship. After Pancasán the Sandinista front again took up the guerrilla struggle by establishing a front in the mountains of Matagalpa and Zelaya. While there was a certain reassessment in our ranks, the idea of guerrilla combat was not abandoned. We began to prepare the conditions in the mountains.

Combat

Within this framework, we also managed to set up some tactical combat units in the cities. Moreover, supply lines to those guerrilla columns and their very survival called for close ties to the barrios and the trade unions. The Sandinista front thus began to make efforts to penetrate certain cities of the country, especially León but also Mangua, Masaya, Matagalpa, and Chinandega.

The immediate aim of this work was to organise the barrios to struggle for better living conditions, raising immediate demands such as potable water, electricity, medical services, and so on, but without falling into making these demands ends in themselves. We differed from other groups that made immediate demands their final aims. For us, they were instead a means for seeking out the best individuals among the people and installing in them the notion that they must organise for the taking of power.

This silent accumulation of forces was ended on 27 December 1974, when a squad of Sandinistas seized the house of top Somoza crony José María Castillo. After a three-day standoff, Somoza was forced to back down and grant a series of FSLN demands. From 1975 on, despite the *somocista* repression, the popular struggle not only continued but became more and more intense. At first sight, nonetheless, the results of the repression justified the illusions held by the National Guard and the reactionaries. The exigencies of an organised struggle had given rise to a sort of division of labour in the FSLN, in which militants were distributed among complementary activities in the mountains, in the cities, and in tasks related to mass

work. The blows of the dictatorship turned this division of labour into the isolation of the various elements one from the other. Various perceptions of reality emerged, based on different experiences, conditioned by this division of labour and their isolation. This led, along with other factors, to the formation of three tendencies inside the Sandinista National Liberation Front.

Tendencies

It is necessary to analyse this experience. We think that isolation is one of the factors that contributed to the formation of those tendencies. The existence of tendencies does not harm the image of the revolution. The great thing about this revolution is that we have been able to unite despite the tendencies. We have provided the peoples of Latin America with the example of what maturity means among Nicaraguan revolutionaries. That is the great thing, the important thing, about our experiences. To emphasise that greatness, we have to say that we were divided at a certain point in our history, but that we were mature enough to unite.

Only those who are ignorant of the fact that the movement of history unfolds through contradictions, only those who do not grasp the fact that a political organisation is nothing more than an instrument in the class struggle, could have concluded that as a result of the tendencies the front would dissolve into factions and would disperse the popular struggles in isolated actions without any major impact on the dictatorship. In fact, the three tendencies continued to uphold the name of the Sandinista front. The people always recognised but a single Sandinista front, and all the compañeros know that fighters from the three tendencies all shouted 'Free homeland or death!' They fought in the same trenches and shed their blood together. So why should it be strange that we united? Unity on a higher level was required in order to synthesise the different experiences. The first stone was laid toward this end with the continuation of the popular movement.

The relative downturn that affected the vanguard on the military level after 1974 was brought to an end in October 1977 with a Sandinista offensive that began with the seizure of the San Carlos barracks and continued with the taking of the village of Mozote, the attack on the main barracks in Masaya, and the seizure of the San Fernando barracks.

October 1977 was the result of a shift to an offensive mode of operations in the armed struggle at a moment when the crisis of *somocismo* was becoming acute. This crisis began after the 1972 earthquake and deepened after 1974.

The Somozas' corruption, while it had its worst effects on the masses, also harmed the interests of the small and middle bourgeoisie. This led to broadening the base of opposition to the dictatorship. To this must be added the fact that the big-business sectors themselves began to lose confidence in Somoza's abilities. Somoza came to be an obstacle to capitalist development, and even to the prevention of the bourgeois order in Nicaragua.

The bourgeoisie really did not have a party of their own. The Liberal Party belonged to the Somozas and upheld the interests of an oligarchy that was highly centralised around a single family. The Conservative Party was the party of the landowners, a rather anachronistic party. No modern party of the bourgeoisie had appeared in this country. The MDN was born at the moment when the bourgeois regime was in total agony — it did not even manage to be a premature infant. In the end it could only survive artificially through the umbilical cord that tied it to imperialism.

Faced with the acute crisis of the Somoza dictatorship, imperialism and reaction manoeuvred to provide the regime with a way out. With this end in view, they sought to make certain adjustments in the *somocista* system without touching in any way the system's fundamental bases: its economic might and the National Guard. Somoza was forced to lift the state of siege and martial law and to call municipal elections. With these measures, the regime sought to improve its discredited image before public opinion and play along with the imperialists' manoeuvres.

Error

The FSLN's October 1977 offensive was a historic achievement, because it disrupted the enemy's plans, strengthened the vanguard's hegemony among the masses, and fortified the masses' self-confidence. All this led the *somocistas* to commit one of their gravest errors: they murdered Pedro Joaquín Chamorro (on 10 January, 1978).

Chamorro had become the leader of the incipient national bourgeoisie. Through journalistic activity over many years, he had also managed to gain the sympathy of broad sectors in our country. The crime caused the masses to take to the streets — you saw this better than I did, since I was still a prisoner. They expressed their repudiation with revolutionary violence. In those demonstrations the masses openly identified with the Sandinista National Liberation Front. The people reiterated that the Sandinista front was the only possibility for confronting the Somoza dictatorship.

This spurred the morale and the efforts of the people as a whole. They were encouraged by the mounting activities of FSLN combat units in the cities and countryside. Everything was ready for the insurrection. Another significant event that helped to raise the fighting spirit of the people and that demonstrated the Somoza regime's inability to halt the advance of the popular struggle was the taking of the National Palace on 22 August, 1978, by the Rigoberto López Pérez Sandinista Command.

The seizure of the palace had a great impact, not only among the people but also on international public opinion. The dictator Somoza — with his image tarnished and feeling pressure for a change from an obscure human-rights policy that US president Carter was trying to impose — found it necessary to utilise more and more brute force against the people. This led to events like those of September 1978, which opened the road to victory. There were insurrections in Estelí, Masaya, León, and Chinandega, and popular uprisings in certain barrios of Managua. Through these struggles, the people began to lose their fear of the National Guard. So the people began to move forward and take the offensive.

The rising struggle was headed by a revolutionary organisation and imperialism and the reaction began to view this with fear. They saw that their interests were in danger. They cooked up the 'mediation' scheme, which involved removing the dictator and leaving in place *somocismo* without Somoza. Somoza, being arrogant, would not accept this.

Deals

He proposed holding a plebiscite that never took place. Mediation was to reconcile, through shady deals, the interests of the corrupt party of Somoza, the genocidal National Guard, the bourgeois opposition political parties, and private capital.

These mediation manoeuvres were shattered by the unity of the vanguard. The mediation scheme ran up against the unity of the entire nation that was taking shape around the FSLN, which kept on fighting with arms in hand down to the end. Whatever vacillations arose were neutralised by the FSLN's will to carry the fight to a higher level. Plans for insurrection were drawn up on the basis of the people's experience in struggle; military actions by armed detachments were combined with popular uprisings and the general strike, which played a complementary and very important role.

The final insurrection began in May 1979. The general strike called by the FSLN combined with the uprising of the masses to give to the people the historically inevitable victory that rightly belonged to them. All the factors had been brought together exactly at the opportune moment and in the opportune places.

The 19 July 1979, victory was possible because of the years-long struggle our people had carried out against the *somocista* military dictatorship. It was possible owing to the emergence of a revolutionary vanguard.

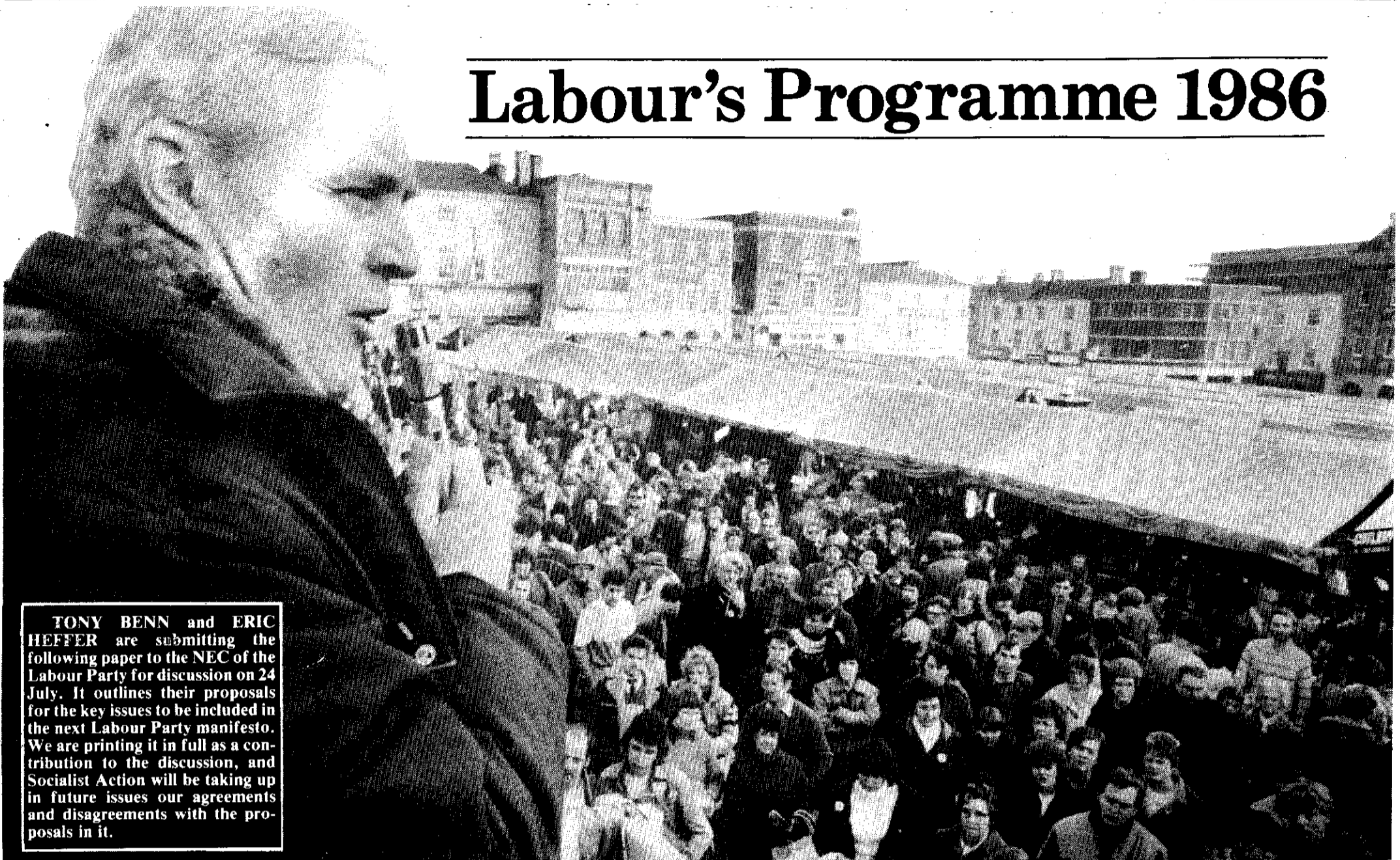
This was possible because at a crucial moment of historical maturity we set aside the search for personal power in the spirit of revolutionary unity, putting the interests of the nation above all. The 19 July was only the beginning. Great dangers still await us along the road. The powerful imperialists are trying to invent a machine to turn back the course of history and, meanwhile, scratching and biting us with the ferocity of a tiger.

We have confidence in the toilers, in this people that was born to make history and is expert at forging new victories.

Free homeland or death!

● The full text of Thomas Borge's speech is reprinted in Nicaragua: The Sandinista People's Revolution, £6.95, Pathfinder Press, 47 The Cut, London SE1 8LL.

Labour's Programme 1986



TONY BENN and ERIC HEFFER are submitting the following paper to the NEC of the Labour Party for discussion on 24 July. It outlines their proposals for the key issues to be included in the next Labour Party manifesto. We are printing it in full as a contribution to the discussion, and Socialist Action will be taking up in future issues our agreements and disagreements with the proposals in it.

Photo: GM COOKSON

A memorandum by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer

Introduction
AT THE May meeting of the National Executive Committee we submitted a paper *Planning for a Labour Victory* in which we set out some recommendations for consideration, and gave notice that we would be putting in another paper dealing with policy.

This memorandum, therefore, sets out some of the policies which we believe the NEC should now be discussing as part of its work programme for the future.

A Policy for Victory

If the Party is to secure an overall majority at the next general election, for which we are all working, we shall have to have developed, well in advance of the campaign, clear and precise policies to meet the situation that will face us when we get into power.

The electorate know very well that a formidable task of reconstruction will need to be undertaken by the next Labour government, and they will want to be sure that we have thought out how we propose to tackle it, and, in particular, how we intend to respond to, and overcome, the opposition that we are likely to have to face.

The need for a new programme

Over the last few years the NEC has presented to conference a series of Labour programmes for discussion and decision, covering the whole range of policy, and there have formed the basis of our manifestoes.

We believe that the general line taken in those programmes has been correct and should be followed in the future.

But we also recognize that the situation has changed greatly in the meanwhile, that therefore there will be a need to up-date and strengthen our commitments to take account of the serious economic and social legacy that we shall inherit when the Tories are defeated.

The last programme was published in 1982 and we believe that another

such Labour Programme 1986 should be prepared for next year's conference as a basis for our campaign in the general election which will follow that.

The proposals made in this memorandum are listed as an indication of the general areas of policy which we believe will need to be reconsidered and do not go into any detail, since that could only be done after further study and research.

A socialist agenda

1. The restoration of full employment

Our first task will necessarily be to tackle the problem of unemployment and this will involve us in a substantial shift of power from market forces towards criteria that allow the needs of our people to be given priority.

However if we are to do this we shall have to reckon with the opposition of those national and international centres of economic and industrial power that now control our economic life.

The introduction of exchange control, import control, the direction of investment in the private sector, much more progressive taxation and the redistribution of resources to secure greater equality in our society could meet with strong resistance.

2. Common ownership

With this in mind we believe that urgent consideration must be given to the common ownership, in various forms, of the banks and financial institutions, of a substantial number of major companies to secure the investment we shall need, and of land for housing and development, as well as the re-acquisition of privatized assets without paying twice for them.

3. Trade union rights

The repeal of the anti-trade union legislation, the granting of an amnesty, and its replacement by new laws that encourage trade union membership and safeguard the rights of unions to protect their members and play a full role in all decisions which affect them.

4. Democratic self-management

The enactment of legislation that would make provision for a genuine system of self-management enter-

prising the ultimate right of employees in public and private industries and services to elect and remove their managers.

5. The Common Market

The immediate restoration — pending our liberation from the Treaty of Rome — of full parliamentary control over legislation ceded by the 1972 European Communities Act to the EEC, because:

(a) even our existing economic and industrial policy would be held to be illegal by the British Courts, responsible as they are, for enforcing Community law in Britain which would create a major constitutional crisis with the courts and the civil service.

(b) the current proposals for a move towards a fully federal Europe would be completely unacceptable to the Labour Party, the British people, and would undermine parliamentary democracy in this country.

Labour, being an internationalist party, must have perspectives for socialist co-operation that stretch across the whole of Europe and far beyond the confines of the Rome Treaty.

6. Education and training

The provision of a genuine comprehensive system of education and training throughout school and college and in all further and adult education.

This must be linked, in every case, to the provision of real jobs, the development of individuals and the meeting of social and economic need.

7. Welfare benefits

The rebuilding and reconstruction of the Welfare state by the provision of a whole range of statutory benefits covering all kinds of social need to be available as of right, to replace the present means-tested system.

8. The re-unification of Ireland

The violence in Northern Ireland, caused by the partition, can only be resolved by negotiating the termination of British jurisdiction in the six counties, and plans will need to be drawn up to secure this objective without any unionist veto.

9. Foreign Policy

The adoption of a much more constructive foreign policy to allow Britain to play a major role in peace

making, especially in Europe, and in supporting political liberation and economic development in the Third World.

10. Defence cuts

Major cuts in defence expenditure, because we shall not be able to afford the present cost, let alone an increase in the conventional arms budget taking up any savings deriving from the ending of our nuclear weapons programme.

11. Relationship with the USA

A critical re-appraisal of our relationship with the Americans if, as is quite possible, they were actually to refuse to remove their nuclear weapons from British soil.

12. Machinery of government

Major changes in the machinery of government, the civil service, the public sector, the law and the police, which have now become instruments of Tory policies staffed, at top levels, with Tory appointees; and all of which will need to be reformed and made fully accountable.

13. Constitutional reform

The abolition of the House of Lords which, after a short honeymoon period, will certainly do all it can to delay, obstruct and prevent, an elected Labour government from carrying out its mandate.

14. An effective local government

The establishment of local government on a new basis which would give general powers to these authorities to act in the interest of their constituencies.

15. An end to all discrimination

Legislation that will completely outlaw all forms of discrimination on the grounds of class, sex, race or faith.

16. A democratic and pluralistic media

The preparation of plans to safeguard the freedom of the media so that a full range of opinions can be made available to the people.

Towards a Labour victory

The Labour party has always done best when it has presented a radical programme to the electorate based on socialist concepts, and has been defeated by the Tories to be a Labour government — in 1945

1964, 1966 and 1974.

Our worst results have always been when our manifesto was vague or lacked support from the leadership as in 1951, 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1983.

This time the sheer gravity of the crisis will lead to an expectation from the voters that if they elect a Labour government there will be a real and serious effort made to advance towards a fairer society.

Socialist policies, of the kind outlined above also have a special relevance now, since the Tory wets, the SDP and the Liberals have already moved into the anti-Thatcherite, non-socialist — and bitterly anti-socialist — middle ground of politics.

If we were to model ourselves on their approach the electorate will see no difference and will feel free to support any, or all of those parties and groupings with the likely consequence that we may end up with a hung Parliament and a paralyzed government.

Labour's best chance of victory lies in its appeal to all those, especially the organized working class, who are deeply opposed to monetarism and militarism, and to millions of others who do not bother to vote because they cannot see any difference between the parties.

Such people would be more likely to respond to a serious socialist alternative that offered jobs, homes, education, good health, dignity in retirement, the prospects of peace, greater human rights and democracy — backed up by a readiness to will the means as well as willing the ends.

Conclusions and recommendations

We therefore recommend to our colleagues that these proposals be discussed by the Home Policy, International, Local Government, Women's and Youth Committees and that these committees be asked to report back to the NEC as part of the preparation of a Labour Programme 1986 to go to Conference next year and to form the core of our Manifesto for the next general election.

**Tony Benn
Eric Heffer**

IRELAND UNFREE



Manchester conference

Manchester Labour Party has this week provided a timely example of how the British Labour movement can aid the Irish fight for democracy, MARTIN COLLINS reports. In two events hailed by the emigré newspaper the *Irish Post* as a breakthrough for 'out of London cities', the City Council decided to identify the Irish in Manchester as an ethnic minority and act accordingly against discrimination; then a City Labour Party delegate educational policy-making conference came out overwhelmingly in favour of British withdrawal, affiliation to the Labour Committee on Ireland and adopting a series of practical measures to boost the withdrawal campaign.

The significance of the 'ethnic minority' decision will be seen in practice. Once racism is identified not principally as resulting from the colour of people's skins, but as a product of colonial rule, then more practical work can be done to combat it.

For it is not simply a matter of trying to persuade people to live together in harmony, but also to bring an awareness to the population as a whole how discrimination has come about and attacking its material roots.

The GLC discovered much about the extent of anti-Irish discrimination in housing, jobs, health and education which had previously been hidden. It showed how repressive legislation like the PTA silenced the Irish community and break up its community organisation. It pointed to the division of Ireland and occupation of the Six Counties and attendant 'troubles' as an aggravating source of anti-Irish racism. The self-identification of the Irish must involve the reclamation of Irish culture and language, and the identification with the fight for democracy and freedom in that country.

Such moves were supported by a delegate educational conference held in the Council chambers on 6 July. Concerned that the Labour group's only response to a Tory resolution condemning the Brighton bombing had been to praise the fire fighters and emergency services and warn that under the Tories they would be cut back still further the Labour Party decided a firm policy was needed.

They circulated along with Labour Policy statements, an essay by Geoff Bell on Labour's record on Ireland, a statement by Irish trade unionists advocating withdrawal, and a Bill drafted by Tony Benn showing legislatively how it might be accomplished.

150 delegates heard Bernadette McAliskey explain how people in Ireland experienced British occupation and point out how the miner's strike had shown the longer Britain remains in Ireland, the more repression first used in Ireland would be practiced against its own working class. Michael O'Reilly a representative of the Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Independence and an anti-coalition executive member of the Irish Labour Party explained how partition had divided the Irish working class and that the fight for socialism was tied up with scrapping it.

After workshops which looked at British 'perceptions of Ireland': it was the turn of Labour's front bench spokesperson on Ireland, Stuart Bell to present the official line. For the LCI, Ken Livingstone argued strongly for withdrawal. He said that a future Labour government would be forced to use repressive methods if it tried to maintain direct rule. Having thought through the problem of Ireland in more detail than anything apart from local government, Livingstone said that he had come to the conclusion that withdrawal would have to take place not 'within the life-time of the next Labour Government', but within the first couple of days of office.

As the more than 30 workshop sub-groups presented their thoughts on what Labour's policies should be, one after the other argued that present policy of 'unity by consent' was inadequate.

It failed to deal with the loyalist veto which past Labour governments had to bow down to, allowing a minority of Irish people to block the democratic right of the majority to decide how they wanted to live. Practical campaigning measures were put forward to combat the use of the PTA, to promote Irish organisation, to campaign on Labour's policy against strip searching, plastic bullets and no-jury Diplock courts. Delegations, visits and exchanges were advocated as part of a process of clarifying the Irish point of view and building awareness.

With the Labour leadership pledging 1986 as the year we get our Irish policy sorted out, the Manchester decisions are a model for how to ensure that the conclusions of such discussion adopt immediate, unconditional withdrawal as the only way to guarantee the right of the Irish people to decide their own future.

Newham 7: police exposed

WHATEVER THE justified anger expressed as a result of the conviction of four of the Newham 7, the verdicts show that the jury accepted the defence version of the facts. Only on the law — or the politics — did they disagree, and then only by majority. Count one of a complex indictment stated that Chaudri assaulted Scott Young. Chaudri said that he had only defended himself and two independent witnesses supported him. Verdict — Not Guilty.

Count 2 charged three white co-defendants with the pathetically light offence of 'common assault', on the driver of a Mercedes, when the back windscreen was smashed and a passenger stabbed with a broken bottle. Verdict — Guilty. They were fined £100.

Count 3 accused Chaudri of conspiracy to smash up the Duke of Edinburgh pub, in retaliation for the murderous attacks that were sweeping Newham. He had 'admitted as much in an interview'. The defence was that 'we were only going to stop the attackers'. Verdict — Not Guilty.

Count 4, which was possession of a weapon by Chaudri, was abandoned

by the prosecution. Count 5 charged the other six Asians with criminal damage to the Duke of Edinburgh. Pub windows were broken during the fight outside. No one knew who broke them, but if it was a concerted attack by the Asians as police claimed they would all be guilty of a 'joint enterprise', a much more serious matter.

The defendants said that they didn't go to attack the pub, but to show they were not afraid and to deter racist attackers. Verdict — Not Guilty. On Count 7, three defendants were accused of having offensive weapons in a car the next night, 'to defend

themselves'. Seven police District Support Unit officers gave obviously concocted evidence. Two defendants said that they did not know the items were in the car, the third gave an explanation for each item. Verdict — Not Guilty.

This only left Count 6, of 'affray' and 'unlawful fighting'. The case against Jyoti Rajappan collapsed when an incriminating interview was thrown out on the grounds of police pressure. Amjad Aki denied he was there and said that identification of him from photos was malicious and wrong. He was found not guilty.

The affray charge against the two whites was predictably dismissed. The remaining four Asians faced the crunch issue of the entire trial. This was the question: what do you do when you and your community are under attack and the police are unable or unwilling to help? DC Bonczoszek illustrated the point. Hearing of hammer attacks on Asians by



whites in a silver Grenada, he saw fit to keep watch on Asian youth. He and other police officers suppressed all reference to violence by whites from the Duke of Edinburgh.

But an internal document, unearthed by the defence showed that police estimated that 25 whites were involved in the fight. The Asian defence was that they did not go to at-

rack the pub, but when they arrived opposite they were abused and pelted with glasses. Having been under threat all day they did not run away but fought back with anything that came to hand.

They chased the whites into the pub and no one was hurt. They acted in self-defence and in prevention of further racist crimes. The real issue then was whether they had used 'reasonable force'. The judges summing up stressed that people must remain within the law at all times.

The jury convicted the four defendants by a 10-2 majority. Despite this, it is beyond all doubt that the police version of events in the original prosecution case was utterly discredited. Unmesh Desai, of the defence campaign, has stated that there will be an appeal on the cases of the four convicted. He said: 'The Newham 7, like the Newham 8, is about making the streets safe for blacks and Asians to walk free from racist attacks.'

South of Ireland elections

THE 20 June local government elections in the South of Ireland were a disaster for the government parties. Fine Gael and Labour together won only 37.4 per cent of the votes, a drop of 11.4 per cent compared with the last general election in November 1982. Fianna Fail, the main opposition party, made a small gain.

There was substantial support for small left-wing parties and independent candidates: 17 per cent. That's more than double the Labour score of 7.9 per cent. This was the party's worst national electoral performance for 50 years.

Some of the 17 per cent 'others' vote will probably return to the main parties in the next general election — Fianna Fail expect to be the main gainers. But the big parties are worried. In some areas there were dramatic results, giving hope to the socialist republican movement.

The five-seat Dublin North inner city constituency returned independent left-winger Tony Gregory (Teachta Daia — member of the Dublin parliament) and Sinn Fein's Christy Burke. Both these councillors, especially Burke, are closely identified with the Concerned Parents Movement, a militant anti-heroin pushers campaign.

Sinn Fein did well in other Dublin constituencies — getting 8-10 per cent of the poll in contested areas. Their lower preference votes often went heavily to the Workers' Party, which became the third largest Dublin corporation group with six seats.

Although the Workers' Party used to be part of the republican movement it now has a pro-Unionist policy on the national question.

By contrast Fianna Fail always calls itself 'The Republican Party' in election literature and has a big working class base. They took control of the Dublin Corporation and the County Council, for the first time in over 20 years.

Fianna Fail had one big black spot. Their vote in Limerick city went down five per cent. Joe Harrington, a candidate for People's Democracy (the Irish Section of the Fourth International), won a Limerick Corporation seat. Harrington stood in

By John Meehan

the four-seat working class district of Southill. After the first count he was in second place with 589 votes, 12 per cent of the poll.

The People's Democracy candidate took the second seat on the seventh count with 1019 votes. He got a heavy transfer from the eliminated Sinn Fein and Workers' Party candidates.

The campaign against the new water tax imposed by the government has been a big feature of Joe's campaign. Up to 1982 water supplies were free, and local authorities were responsible for maintaining the service. Now the government wants these services to be paid for.

In Limerick Joe Harrington was the first to speak out against this unjust tax. Since then, with the people of Limerick Joe has marched against water tax, publicly burnt the demand notices and civil bills, picketed the courthouse and Dail Eireann and forced the city council to vote against the £50 levy.

Fifteen to 20 activists in the water tax campaign backed Joe's election campaign. His manifesto linked this issue to broader national issues such as the need for a crash housing programme; for local councils which side with working class people in their struggle for justice;



for a programme to solve unemployment based on a 35 hour week with no loss of pay and also argued that there could be no real change in the welfare of

Irish workers without a real change in the position of women in Irish society.

People's Democracy concludes the manifesto by also supporting the

struggles of workers world wide — of Solidarity in Poland, of the miners in Britain and the workers in South Africa and Nicaragua.

NSC: solidarity grows

LAST Saturday's Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign national delegate meeting marked a rapid growth in the campaign's sponsorship, and decided to capitalise on that by organising a trade union solidarity conference in Sheffield on 23 November.

There are already a diverse bag of MPs supporting NSC — from Neil Kinnock of the Labour Party, through Daffyd Elis Thomas of the Welsh nationalists, to Liberal David Steel. And other support includes show-biz celebrities such as Harold Pinter and Julie Christie, together with CND's Bruce Kent, the Communist Party, and the Na-

tional Union of Students.

Nationally affiliated unions include ACTTS, COHSE, NGA, and GMBATU to name but a few. The autumn conference is intended to build on this support. Speakers will include members of the Sandinista trade union (the CST), Jack Jones (formerly of the TGWU), and Campbell Christie of the SCPS.

The conference will take up the issues both of trade union policy towards Nicaragua, as well as the nitty gritty of direct solidarity.

Affiliated unions will be circulating their branches with conference details. All Socialist Action readers are encouraged to raise it, and get delegates elected and branches affiliated.

In a further step for-

ward, the NSC national delegate meeting passed a resolution to organise for mass action, including street demonstrations to oppose the growing US invasion threat. The NSC has recognised the importance of this in the light of Reagan's declared 'national state of emergency'.

There is now a hot debate in the solidarity campaign about the timing of a national demonstration. Meanwhile a rapid mobilisation network is being set up in London to deal with emergencies and take short, sharp action.

● Conference material will be available shortly from NSC, phone 01-359 8982 and ask for Lillian Grewar. Contact the same number if you wish to be included on the mobilisation network.

More Communist Party expulsions

THE EXECUTIVE committee of the Communist Party has taken another decisive step towards a final break between the Eurocommunist and *Morning Star* wings of the Party. The executive committee voted at the weekend to expell 12 members of the management committee of the People's Press Printing Society.

Those expelled include Ken Gill of TASS, Terry Marsland of the Tobacco Workers Union, Ken Brett of the AUEW and former Longbridge convenor, Derek Robinson. The expulsions mean that all of the *Morning Star* supporters on the management committee have now been expelled from the Party.

In addition, the executive committee has taken action against the London branches of Willesden, South Hornsey, Tottenham, Bethnal Green, Limehouse, Poplar, St Georges and London College of Furniture. They are to be dissolved and re-registered. These moves are in preparation for a London District conference to be held next March. The Eurocommunist are dealing with those areas of the Party considered 'politically unreliable'. These also include the North-West district committee and the North Manchester Marxist Forum. The latter has been told that its activities should 'cease'.

The reason given for the expulsions is that the 12 supported *Morning Star* nominees for the People's Press management committee against

the nominees of the Communist Party executive.

Democracy

The Eurocommunist executive also considered a report which set out to prove that the only way in which a district committee opposed to the line of the executive could be elected would be 'as a result of an organised effort that went against the principles of inner party democracy'. Apparently all 'diversity' and 'pluralism' for Martin Jacques and his cothinkers is exclusively *outside* the party.

Politically the report made by Martin Jacques to the party executive signalled the first real open move made by the CPGB, as opposed to simply *Marxism Today*, towards support for a Labour - Alliance coalition or for an openly right wing Labour government. Jacques outlined that recent elections showed 'not a shift to Labour, but a shift to both Labour and Alliance'.

Jacques' conclusion was as follows, 'Thatcherism still calls the main tunes and orders the political agenda. As things stand now, it still has a very good chance of winning the next general election, even though it is



Ken Gill

unlikely to enjoy the same degree of political initiative it did in 1983 and 1979. Alternatively a hung parliament looks a real possibility.

'A Labour victory, while looking more possible than it did after the 1983 election remains unlikely. Moreover, even if it did scrape into office, unless there is a dramatic transformation in the political climate, it will operate in political conditions which will profoundly constrain its radicalism. Thatcherism will still in large measure set the terms of debate.'

The executive also adopted a position to recognise that the *Morning Star* is 'no longer a Communist newspaper' and decided to launch a new Communist Party weekly paper in October. Judging by Jacques' report the latter should be one of the most right wing papers in the labour movement.

Livingstone call for surrender

WHILE LIVERPOOL City council continues to fight the Tories attack on local government, GLC leader Ken Livingstone has delivered another blow to the campaign. He is pressing the GLC Labour councillors to reverse their stand of boycotting talks with the government on abolition of the GLC. His argument is that: 'We have to accept that the battle is lost and the GLC will be abolished.'

Until now Labour policy has been to fight abolition even after the Abolition Bill became law, and to create the maximum possible obstacles to the Tories plans. Livingstone had previously argued that the unions and Labour should hold to a policy of non-cooperation with the new bodies which are to take over the GLC's functions. His change of policy puts him to the fight of Labour's national policy

which is for non-cooperation.

The move will certainly be welcomed by Labour's environment spokesperson John Cunningham who is to urge local councils and trade unions that cooperation with abolition is now the only sensible course. This move, if accepted by the GLC Labour group will massively increase the difficulties facing the unions in the fight to defend jobs and services.

Livingstone's argument is that Labour must not be seen to be the cause of the disruption which will result from abolition, because it would be electorally unpopular. The fact is that abolition will result in huge loss of jobs and services. Failure to fight will mean that Labour will co-operate with the Tories in their attack. In the fight against abolition the ball is now firmly in the court of the local government unions.

They must now make it clear that they will continue the fight, and that if the Labour group discusses staff cuts, or sits on the bodies making these cuts, they will find themselves fighting the unions.

GMBATU votes 'Yes'

THE GMBATU, Britain's second biggest union, has given a resounding blow to the Tories' attack on political funds. It was the sixth and biggest victory so far in the ballots on this question. The result was 89 per cent in favour of retaining funds, in a 61 per cent turn-out.

The result confirms the trend already established in previous ballots in other unions. The lowest proportion of yes votes so far has been in the Furniture Timber and Allied Trades, which showed 72 per cent in favour. The result makes clear that the overwhelming majority of trade unionists see the need for their unions to be involved in political activities and campaigns. In view of the overwhelm-

ing majorities that have been obtained so far, it is clear that a more positive campaign on the question of the links with the Labour Party can be conducted than has so far been the case in most of the ballots.

The ballot results so far.

Union	Yes	No	Per cent yes
GMBATU	448,426	54,657	89
UCW	102,546	33,337	75
SOGAT '82	91,760	25,947	78
ISTC	28,633	4,404	86
FTAT	11,410	4,269	72
NCU	77,183	17,757	81



Benn and Hatton

Liverpool fights on

FOLLOWING LIVERPOOL city council's deficit budget, when a rate of only nine per cent was set, the district auditor is now considering whether or not to proceed against Labour councillors. If notices of surcharge are issued this would leave each councillor facing an estimated £2000 surcharge or disqualification from office.

The joint shop stewards committee of the council are pledged to take strike action should the district auditor decide to go ahead. But if the notices are issued, then councillors have the right, which they are likely to exercise, of appeal to the High Court.

By Carol Turner

City councillors, together with the town hall unions and the support group set up by relatives will be lobbying the district auditor's office this coming Friday with their reply to the letters already received from the auditor's office. The reply is made jointly on behalf of all Labour councillors.

Even if the auditor takes no action, then the money is expected to run out 'sooner rather than later', in the words of one city councillor. The fact that finance chair Cllr Byrne is now controlling all expenditure personally can make no more than a week or two's difference to Liverpool's plight.

Regardless of the decision by the auditor, which he can take his own sweet time over, Liverpool city still remains in a state of virtual seizure. The Tory government can send in commissioners to run the council who would have —

in the words of an unnamed Whitehall source — 'the sweeping powers of a Roman governor'. Parliament could even be recalled from its summer recess to take this action.

Whichever way you look at it, Liverpool city council is under direct threat from the Tory anti-local government laws. And Liverpool is now the only council standing out against those attacks.

With this in mind, the national local authorities coordinating committee, set up after the conference earlier this year called jointly by London Bridge and the Liverpool joint shop stewards, which met last weekend passed a resolution in support of Liverpool council workers. But whether this committee can deliver action when the time comes remains in doubt.

Acts of solidarity with Liverpool are vital. But what remains to be hammered out is a strategy to combat the Tories plans. At this stage such a strategy relies heavily on the local government unions.

● Lobby of the District Auditor's Office, Friday 19 July. Assemble at the town hall at 9am, march to DA's office, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool 1 for lobby at 9.30am. Bring your banners.

Rambo the human ape

'AFTER SEEING Rambo last night I know what to do next time this happens.' Thus quipped Reagan after the release of the hostages in Beirut.

The movie *Rambo* currently, along with Bruce Springsteen, is the biggest phenomenon in the States. Reagan has not been slow in jumping on both bandwagons — Springsteen's for his portrayal of humble American folk and championing the veterans' cause, and *Rambo's* for its blatant 'Commie bashing'.

By Terry Luke

Since World War II films in particular have served as useful propaganda vehicles — the most notorious during the Vietnam war was a charmless piece of celluloid starring John Wayne called *The Green Berets*. This was very popular with US audiences — it told of heroic boys and men sorting out the Commie Gooks in 'Nam.

For a period after the Vietnam war, and up to Reagan's presidency, such blatantly reactionary material was unfashionable with directors. More subtle films were in vogue such as *The Deer Hunter*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Coming Home*. The majority of these films, along with the spate of 'Viet Vet tries to readjust' movies were considered far more sensitive and serious. But although stylistically they were leagues above John Wayne their messages were not unpatriotic. In fact through these films America was cinematically undergoing a mass guilt purge.

The therapy appears to have done the trick and America, after putting itself on the psychiatrist's couch, has recovered and is now more confident and convinced of its rightness than it has been for a long time. Reagan is firmly guiding the process.

Now we have on the one hand 'musical Deer Hunters' like Springsteen and Paul Hardcastle's 'Nineteen' and on the other hand we have new John Wayne's like Sylvester Stallone. Hardcastle might be miffed at the categorisation but '19' is as one-sided a view of the war as any film or song produced by an American. Of particular relevance is the repeated phrase at the end of the song 'None of them received a hero's welcome.'

But now on to the real looney tunes — films like *Red Dawn* and particularly *Rambo*. The former concerns a Red invasion of America which is resisted by about a half dozen WASPS. This stirring patriotic bunk received lavish praise from no less a dignitary than Alexander Haig — who claimed it presented the most convincing case for the US nuclear deterrent.

But to get back to where we came in, *Rambo* mania has apparently reached epidemic proportions in the States. Sylvester Stallone portrays the eponymous hero who frees American prisoners still being held by the Commies in the jungles of South East Asia. Stallone even out guns Wayne in the macho stakes, as he achieves this with very few clothes and without the aid of the Green Berets.

Audiences in the US are gripped by this and even psychologists are getting in on the act by providing rational explanations for 'Rambo mania'. The film grossed £60 million in three weeks and the commercial possibilities appear boundless with off shoots and the president's approval — which of course leads us to its political implications.

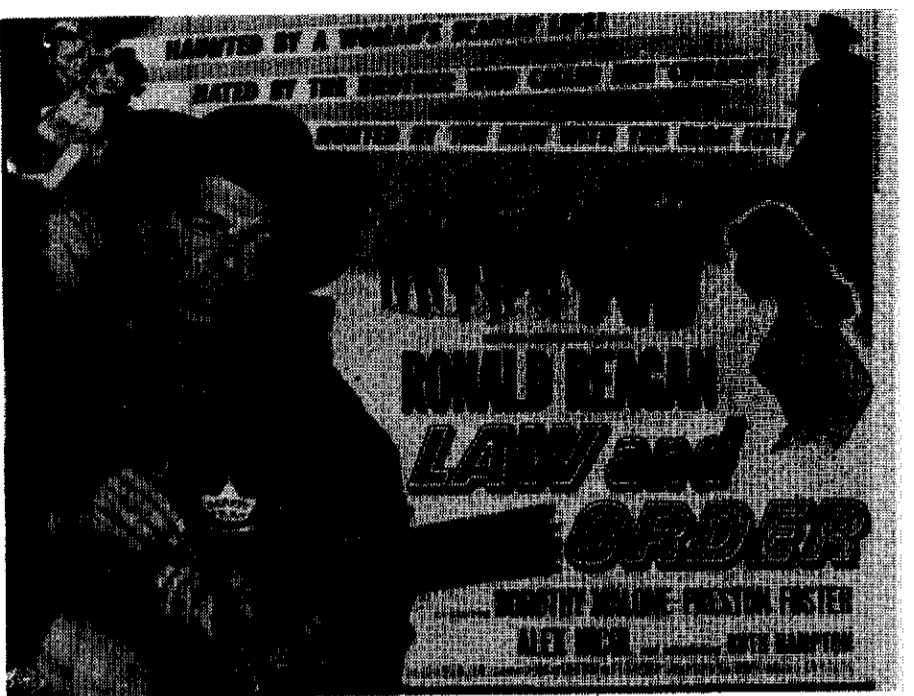
In the words of Stallone 'people have been waiting a long time to express their patriotism.' The logical outcome would be to express their patriotism in support of participation in an offensive against the Communists. For arguments sake lets say more specifically against Nicaragua and instead of one Rambo throw in a whole army of Rambo's to do the job.

As a practical extension of the solidarity work taking place in the Central America campaigns in Britain we could be building support for the idea of actually protesting outside the cinemas which screen Rambo as it is released in this country.

Photo: CHRIS DAY (Report)

Photo: TIM RIGBY

A Socialist ACTION



Apartheid MURDER



White House Cowboy loses his cool

A SHARP exchange took place between Ronald Reagan and Fidel Castro at the beginning of last week over Reagan's ludicrous charge that five 'terrorist' states — Iran, Libya, North Korea, Cuba and Nicaragua — were banding together in an international conspiracy to 'commit acts of war' against the United States.

These states, according to Reagan, were led by the 'strangest collection of misfits, loony tunes and squalid criminals since the advent of the third reich'.

Fidel Castro, speaking at a press conference in Havana, immediately countered Reagan's accusations labelling him 'the biggest liar of all the American presidents' and the 'worst terrorist in the history of mankind'.

Calling Reagan 'a madman, an imbecile and a bum' he focused attention on the USA's war drive against the semi-colonial world. 'It is Reagan who supports the genocidal army of El Salvador, the rapists of American nuns. Reagan ordered the mining of the harbours in Nicaragua. It was Reagan who sent troops to invade little Grenada'. He went on to reiterate the Cuban government's call for a peaceful solution to the

conflict in Central America.

By Valerie Coultas

Reagan's speech had two related aims. It was designed to cover up his administration failure to live up to its rhetoric over the Beirut hostage crisis and his willingness to get assistance from Syria (listed as a 'terrorist state') and simultaneously to swing US and world opinion behind direct military attacks on the semi-colonial revolution, in particular the revolution in Central America.

On 27 June the US House of Representatives voted by 312 votes to 111 to give Reagan five possible reasons to send troops to Nicaragua. This included responding to attacks on the US embassy or US citizens through to intervening if Nicaragua was giving support to 'terrorism'.

Daniel Ortega, Sandinista President, denied Reagan's charge that 'terrorist training bases' existed in Nicaragua and urged him to terminate his own terrorist attacks launched by the contras against Nicaragua.

Reagan's definition of terrorism is extremely partisan. It is any state 'opposing US policies that aim to dominate and control other people.'

Terrorism cannot simply be defined as hijacked planes, planting bombs, assassinations and kidnaps. The most dangerous form of terrorism in the world today is the 'state organised terrorism' of the US and their imperialist allies against the semi-colonial countries fighting for freedom and economic self-determination.

The fact that we are living in a nuclear age where these state terrorists have the means to blow the world up in order to 'protect' their interests makes it all the more vital that the labour movement mobilises on all fronts to oppose the imperialist war drive.

AS THIS article is being written, the death toll of black people in the townships east of Johannesburg for the preceding five days has reached ten — an average of two murders a day. By the time this appears in print there will, undoubtedly, be more victims of the police murder squads.

Since August of last year, when a massive campaign against Botha's constitutional reforms led to the farcical elections for the new tri-cameral parliament — elections which excluded the overwhelming African majority and when less than 20 per cent of this 'privileged' black minority groups turned out to vote — the unrest in the urban black townships has been unceasing.

Mr Louis le Grange, Minister of Law and Order, has admitted in parliament that there has been a total of 400 deaths since September. The liberation organisations put the figure much higher.

The police terror has not stopped the growing campaign to make the townships ungovernable. The apartheid regime has tried to stem the tide of revolt by arresting some of the leaders of the United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad umbrella multi-racial organisation of about 650 groups ranging from churches to charities, sports clubs and trade unions — although the major black trade union federations, FOSATU and CUSA have thus far remained outside.

Between August of last year and February, sixteen African and Indian leading members of the

UDF were arrested. Their trial, on charge of treason opened in Durban last week. In South Africa, treason convictions can carry the death penalty.

If the government thought that the arrest of some of the leaders would

By Charlie Van Gelderen

result in dampening the resistance in the townships, they must now be realising that they have seriously miscalculated. Since the arrests began last year the tempo of revolt has intensified.

The scenes in Kwathema township, about twenty-five miles east of Johannesburg, along the gold reef where the bulk of world capitalism's gold is produced, is only the latest manifestation of this continuing violence.

On Tuesday, 10 July a vigil was being held in a township cinema for four youths who had died in a previous incident. The police claim that they died when hand grenades with which they were going to attack homes of black policemen exploded prematurely. This version is disputed by people close to the victims.

According to Nicholas Shata, a member of the Confederation of South

Africa Students (Cosas) he and his colleagues were approached on 21 June by two men who took their addresses and arranged to meet them on the evening of 25 June.

When they arrived at the rendezvous they realised that the men waiting there were members of the armed security police so they dispersed as quickly as they could. The next morning he saw that three of his companions, executive members of Cosas, were lying dead, their bodies surrounded by police or security branch members in camouflage uniforms.

'I could see that they had all been shot dead,' said Mr Shata, 'one of them had the top of his head blown off by what the police later described to newspaper reporters as a hand grenade.'

It was during the vigil for these victims of apartheid that the police lobbied teargas canisters into the cinema. As the crowd fled, they opened fire and another seven deaths were added to the evergrowing total.

The next day, during the funeral procession, two more were shot. Apparently they had been stoning the nearby home of the stooge mayor of the township when two black policemen arrive and fired three shots at point-blank range.

The labour movement's response to the reign of terror in South Africa must be to step up solidarity action with the

victims of apartheid. This must involve direct action by the organised working class. Appeals to Thatcher will only fall on stony ground.

This is again illustrated when the British government, alone among commonwealth governments, refused to support the call for economic sanctions against South Africa if it continues to ignore United Nations resolution 435 on Namibian independence.

On the initiative of Australia and Canada, the 48 governments represented at a meeting in Marlborough House, London last week agreed that 'appropriate measures under the UN charter' will be needed if South Africa persists in ignoring the directions of the Security Council in New York.

Mrs Thatcher had given prior instructions to the British delegate Mr John Johnson of the Foreign Office, that he should not put his name to anything that amounted to confrontation with Mr Reagan. Mrs Thatcher's policy, like Reagan's is: sanctions against revolutionary Nicaragua — yes! Against racist South Africa, No!

The workers at Dunnes supermarket in Dublin who refused to handle South Africa goods and lost their jobs as a consequence, has shown the correct working class response to apartheid. Such acts are a tremendous boost to the embattled fighters in South Africa.

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