

Socialist Organiser

DECEMBER 1

Day conference called by Socialist Organiser on:
'FIGHTING THE TORIES: SOCIALIST ANSWERS'
In London. Sessions include: How to fight for jobs; the
Alternative Economic Strategy; winning the Labour Party
to socialist policies; police accountability; alternatives to
the police; debate on Defence.
Details from: SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 200 October 11 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

SCARGILL IS

RIGHT

ON Wednesday October 10 the High Court fined the National Union of Mineworkers £200,000, and Arthur Scargill £1,000, for "contempt of court" in defying an earlier court ruling that the miners' strike is official.

The miners' leaders have refused to bow down to the court's class law - and the Judge said that if the fines were not paid within two weeks he would impose further penalties, maybe seizure of the union's funds.

As at Cammell Lairds shipyard in Birkenhead, the courts are trying to say that fighting for jobs is a crime.

The labour movement's answer must be to prepare for general strike action if the courts seize the NUM funds or jail the miners' leaders.

Trade unionists should demand that the TUC calls a general strike. At the same time, the rank and file cannot wait for the TUC: organise now for strikes if the courts do not back down.

ARTHUR SCARGILL SAYS:

"We've got unelected judges dispensing not justice, but class justice, against our people who are involved in a struggle to maintain jobs and maintain the communities in which they live.

There's been a gauntlet thrown down. That gauntlet has been picked up.

The miners' union has been told after seven months of official strike action that the strike is no longer legal or official.

If there is any ambiguity, or any doubt, let me now dispel it. The National Executive Committee of the NUM, meeting on Monday October 1, 1984, were told that there were writs issued

against the NUM seeking sequestration of the funds of the union, and also against the National President seeking to commit him to Pentonville prison.

Following a full discussion, the NEC unanimously agreed the following steps:

1. To fully endorse and support the views and comments expressed by the National President during the interview on Channel Four News on Friday September 28, 1984;

2. Irrespective of the High Court decision the Executive unanimously reaffirms its determination to continue to deal with

Continued on page 4



It's class law

Defend the NUM

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE

Blackpool '84

'We can beat them'

Dennis Skinner speaking at the Tribune Rally at Labour Party Conference.

SOMEBODY has to tell the TGWU when they're wrong, and they were wrong today. They were wrong when Moss Evans went to that rostrum and hood-winked the conference into believing that the issue was all about the man who issued the writ, when it was a question of committing the whole movement to the NUM...

I'm fed up with gesture politics from some of the big unions. Posing. Bragging. Why did they play the peaceful role in this '30 week strike — more than half a year?

There were all those pay claims that have gone in, from all these various trade unions, and everyone knows right from the very earliest days that Mrs Thatcher couldn't handle more than one trade union dispute at a time.

They should have put in a pay claim and doubled the number they first thought of. Because they would have got what they wanted... And right throughout this spring and summer the pay claims have gone in, and they haven't got the political or industrial nous to take advantage of the situation... They'll regret it.

They'll regret what they did today. I hope that there is nobody in there waiting for the trade unions to tell them what to do if Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield are put in jail.

I hope you're not going to be like some of them, always crying out for some leadership — saying 'I hope our leaders will tell us what to do'.

If the miners had adopted that attitude in some of the areas, like Nottingham, then there wouldn't be anybody out on strike there. They went out and took the initiative.

You're not going to get Terry Duffy telling you to come out on strike. You're not going to get David Bassett telling you to come out on strike... It will be on everybody's head here. When the talking has stopped you've got to take some action...

I have to say to Neil as well, based on what he said yesterday, about parliamentary democracy... and what about all those health workers down in Barking, taking part in some extra-parliamentary activity?

Of course we can't accept the nostrum that we've got to wait and sleep for four or five years until there's a parliamentary

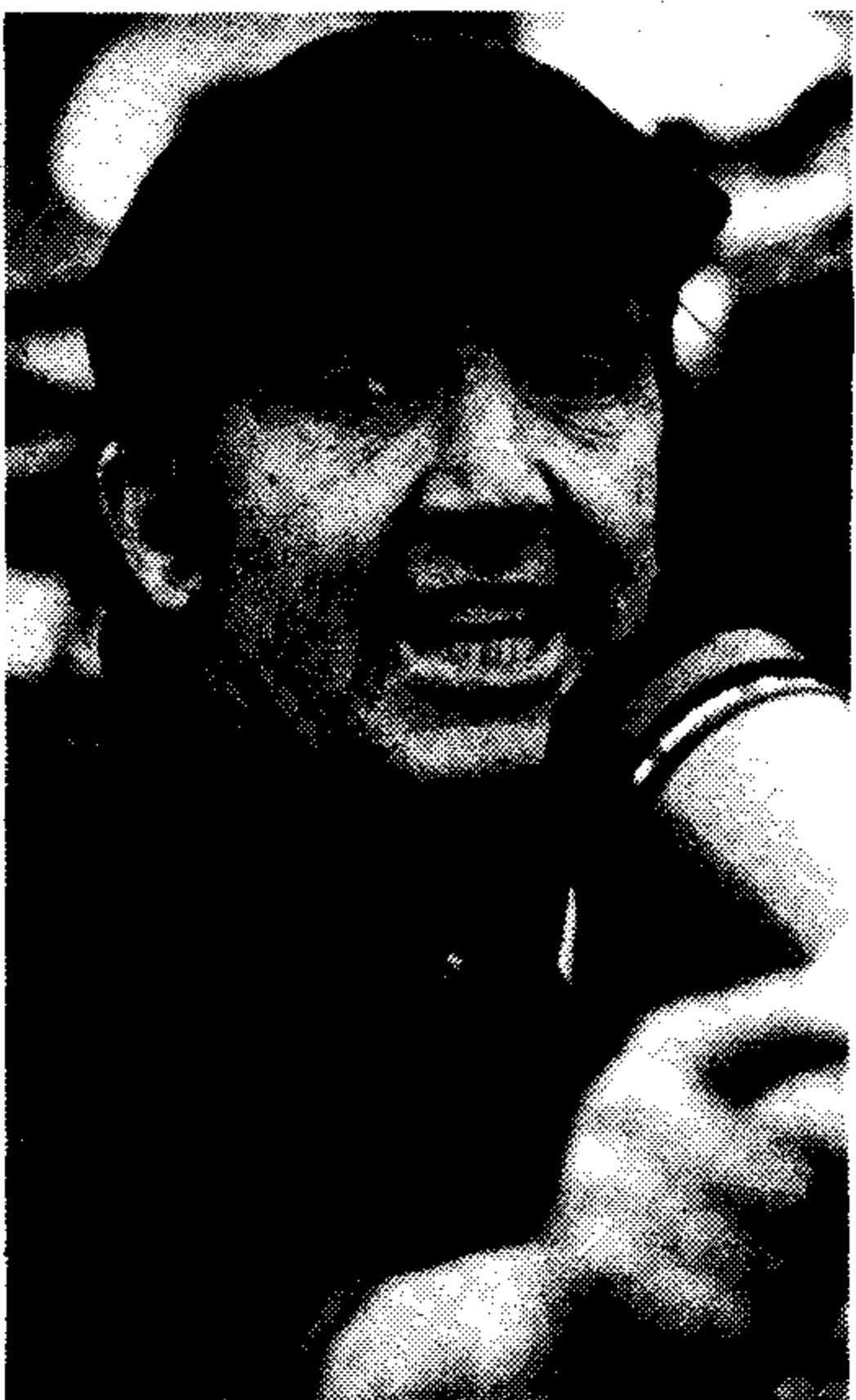
election, and then the sun will shine.

Most of the major leaps forward that have been made by the working class haven't been made high up there in the Houses of Parliament — they've been made on the streets and the picket lines.

IN 1972 when those five dockers were in Pentonville Jail, you had that march down there. You could actually feel the galvanisation of the spirit of the working class.

The TUC had only threatened to have a one-day strike, and within hours they found the Official Solicitor. He was sent down there because our side had won.

And Ted Heath had to come to the dispatch box, despite his majority, despite all the talk about parliamentary majorities and democracy, he had to come to the dispatch box and say: 'The Industrial Relations Act is in cold storage chaps'. We beat them — so they can be beaten.



Dennis Skinner

So, switch on at 6, canvass for food, canvass for money before we finally win this strike. Call on your Labour councils to black all those lorry firms that have gone through the picket lines...

Do as Derbyshire County Council have done and refuse to pay the excessive police bills as a result of the use of Thatcher's private army in the coalfields.

You can't have a strike that lasts this long unless you use it. So join us, we're on the way to victory, we're going for gold...

A victory for the miners is a victory for us all.



Pickets at Ratcliffe power station, Notts

A good Xmas for the miners

Paul Whetton's weekly diary

THERE was a lady at Labour Party conference saying that we should make sure the miners have a good Christmas.

I'll tell you what I'm looking for in Christmas and I think it's going to be great. Twelve days before Christmas I'm going to decorate my Christmas tree, put the fairy lights on, plug it in and sod all's going to happen.

We'll be dancing in the streets. The rest of the community is going to be putting their turkeys and plum puddings in the cooker and sod all's going to happen.

This was the first conference I've attended and it was extremely interesting.

Everybody was waiting with baited breath for Arthur Scargill to get up and talk about the energy resolution. And the Executive accepted the energy resolution because what it talked about was that conference deplores the total dishonesty of the Conservative government and goes on to say it recognises a wholesale and unprecedented operation involving unlawful actions by the police, organised violence against miners, their picket lines and their communities, by means of an unconstitutional national police force.

Now the executive accepted that because it didn't tie them down to anything, it didn't say what we were going to do about it.

Police violence

Then we had the composites. And the Newark composite actually asked for conference, the rank and file activists, to condemn the police violence used against the miners.

It went on to list our demands — disband the SPG, abolish political surveillance, ban the use of riot equipment, mounted police, dogs, etc. in industrial disputes, freedom of access to all

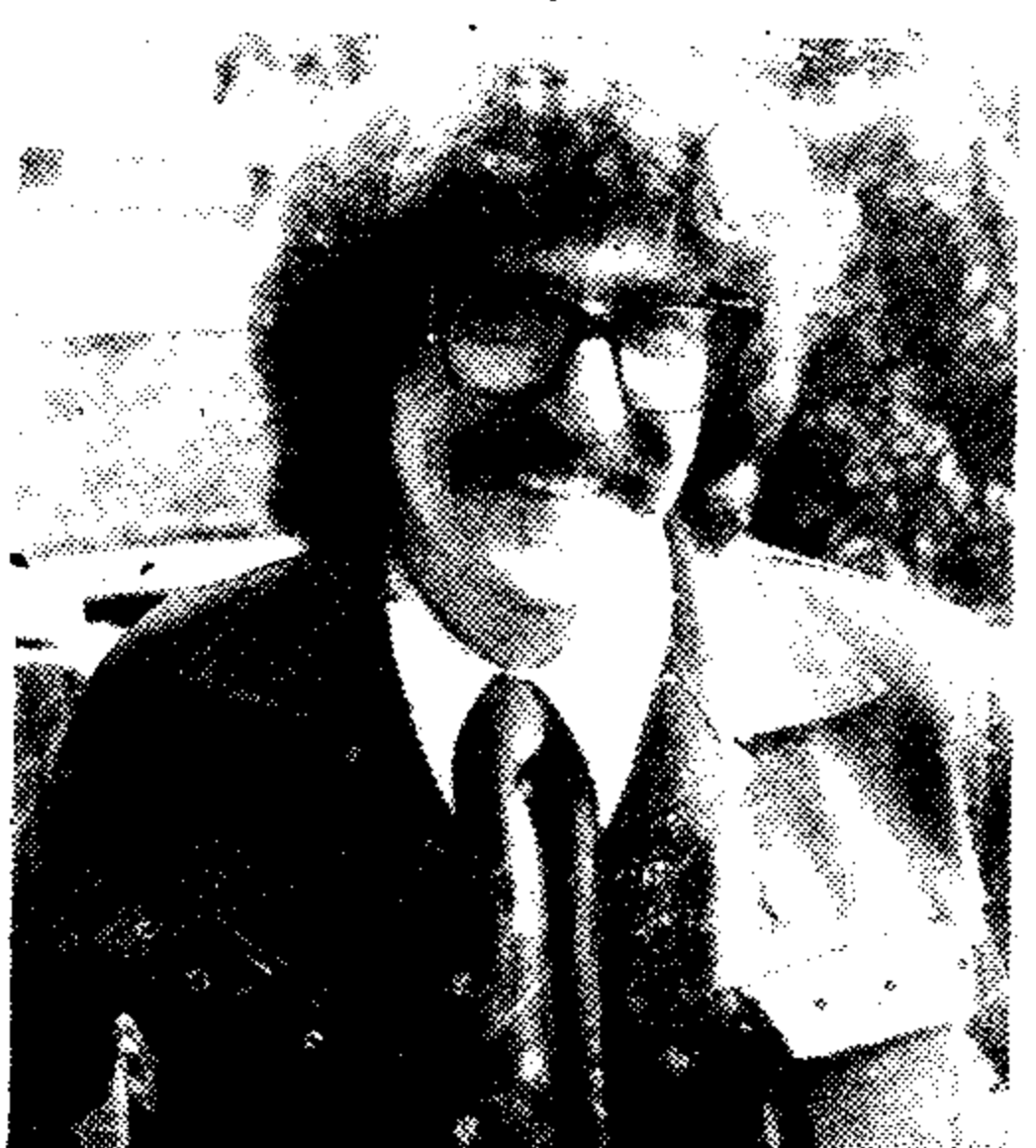
personal files; for an independent body to investigate complaints against the police; and enact legislation to make police play no part in industrial disputes.

They were jibbing at that last one because they know that if a Labour government is elected they are going to have exactly the same sort of problems — rank and file militants demanding the rights we've been fighting for for 200 years and they were terrified of that because they want to use exactly the same means to put us down.

The Labour leadership doesn't want to ban riot equipment, because it will need to use it against us and that is why there was such a kick back.

The other resolutions were talking about looking into the criminal law, and one of them talks about trade unions in the police force. That's quite a legitimate aim. We did ought to have free democratic trade unions for police officers.

There were, of course, other issues than the miners at Labour Party conference.



I think it was a very healthy debate on black sections. The motion fell but I don't think that's going to be the end of it.

The ethnic minorities are going to want representation and I think that positive discrimination in order to attract some of the ethnic minorities into the Labour Party is vital.

The same with women's organisations. The women's involvement in the miners' dispute has already been talked about — we couldn't have managed without it.

Hornet's nest

We've stirred a hornet's nest up. God knows how we're going to live with them when this dispute's over.

They're politically active and that's very important. If I'd gone down to our Welfare a year ago and asked for women to go down to Greenham Common, I couldn't have got a car load.

Now if you go and ask, there's a bus load wants to go, because they have recognised what the women of Greenham Common are fighting for.

The tie up between what is happening in our dispute and what has been happening in Northern Ireland is becoming increasingly clear for us to see. People can also understand now the harassment that ethnic minorities have to put up with, and we can now see the reality of policing Northern Ireland for ourselves.

It's woken the lads up to realise that this has been

going on there for years. I believe that this dispute is really going to politicise miners and their families.

The question is where do we go from here? Kinnock and the party leadership have no intention of implementing those party resolutions. In fact he's gone out and said 'I'm in charge'. Well, if that's true, Neil Kinnock doesn't belong to the same Labour Party that I belong to.

Because there is no leader of the party in charge. The leader of the party is the rank and file. They tell Kinnock what to do and if Kinnock doesn't want to follow the orders, then he gets down and makes way for someone that is.

The implementation of conference decisions is one of the basic principles of belonging to the Labour Party.

We saw how Wilson abused it and now Kinnock is saying the same thing. Kinnock is saying we've got four years in which to campaign for the re-election of a Labour government. That means we, the rank and file, have got four years to make sure that the Labour government we get is the one we want, the one we need and the one that we deserve.

I would urge everyone, especially the women, to go out and recruit. Having joined is not enough, we've got to go out and recruit, and put the pressure on the upper echelons because they are the ones who are going to be saying in Wilson's words, I'm the one standing on the bridge of the ship and I can see a lot further than you so I'm the one who is going to decide which direction the ship goes in.

The leadership has got to be told — we are the crew, we're doing the rowing and we'll decide which direction this boat goes.

Get ORGANISED!

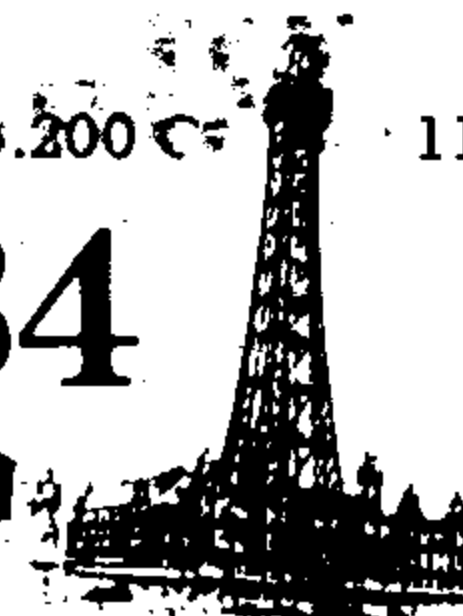
Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance — groups are established in most large towns. We ask £1.50 a month minimum (20p unwaged) contribution from supporters.

I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter / I want more information.

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Address

Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.



Labour conference as miners saw it

Rank and file backs NUM

Albert Bowns

Kiveton Park NUM

We got the support we wanted from the rank and file but we certainly didn't get the support we wanted from the leadership, particularly Kinnock. I thought he was very skilful, the way he skirted round the issue - it was a typical politician's answer.

We think the leadership have got to come out on the side of the people they are supposed to represent.

Kinnock's speech didn't do that, although he had a perfect opportunity.

He is concerned only to put forward policies he thinks people will vote for and so, of course, he was worried about the violence. But the present situation is the perfect opportunity to put forward socialist policies. Instead, the leadership are going down the same road that past leaders of the Labour Party have gone down.

They think that all working people are 'moderates'. But what is happening to us now is not moderation and I think working people now recognise that this Thatcherism is hitting them hard.

Kinnock should have come out totally opposed to

violence by the police. Dennis Skinner gave us a good example of what the leaders of the party should be saying.

He came out totally against police violence. He explained, and the NUM has explained, that the violence is perpetrated by the police.

Time and time again we've had peaceful mass picketing. But that won't come out in the media.

But when we have massed police using the methods they are using now - horses, riot police, etc. - then of course you get retaliatory violence.

I don't think you should condemn people for retaliating which is just a form of defending themselves.

As for the black sections and women's debates, it seems to me that for these people to get their ideas over they've got to be able to form groups to put that point over to the Labour Party hierarchy.

At the moment they are being discriminated against in the Labour Party just as they are in everyday life.

Unless these pressure groups are able to get into sections of power, they'll not be able to put their point over.



Applause at Blackpool

Alan Wassell Weldale NUM

We just missed the miners' debate, but as we arrived the conference was in a state of euphoria.

Since Monday, for me, the tone of the conference has slipped away, and I think the NUM have been lucky to come away with what they got on Monday, and not have it taken back off them with further resolutions later in the week.

The debate on the black sections was abysmal; as was the debate on unemployed into the unions, when the union block vote lined up against it - 5 million trade unionists voted against accep-

ting the unemployed into their ranks. I think that's a disgrace and it wants putting right as soon as possible.

Listening to Neil Kinnock and his condemnation of the picket line violence I'm afraid that most of the criticism of picket line violence came from the people who have never actually been on an NUM picket line. It's time that Kinnock got off the picket fence and got on the picket line and then he could speak with some authority on the subject.

I think the feeling of the conference was that the NUM and the TGWU were reluctant

to press the resolution associating the Labour Party with Scargill's defiance of the courts, in case it destroyed any of the gains they'd made on Monday.

Having been here all week, I'm going away with a similar feeling that I left the TUC conference at Brighton with. We've had some hollow rhetoric, with no concrete support offered. We've yet to see anybody come out in support of the miners and say they're out in support of the miners. Consequently they might actually take Arthur or the funds and get away with it.

Barry Daynes
Keresley NUM

The support we have had from the delegates coming in has been fantastic. We must have raised many thousands of pounds for the NUM.

Nuneaton Labour Party paid our expenses to come up here to collect money.

People in the hotel where we are staying are contributing food.

Do you think it's been a good conference for the NUM?

There's been a good response from delegates to Arthur Scargill.

What do you think of Kinnock's condemnation of all violence, including that of the pickets? What do you think of the view that Kinnock is sitting on the fence?

I have to agree with that theory. I've been on the picket line myself, and the police harassment is intimidating. At our colliery they're pushing you back off the path which is only 3 feet wide, and we're falling over fences. And yet we've been doing nothing. The Wives Support Group has been standing there and the police use abusive language at them, calling them prostitutes, and so on.

The police start it and we get the blame for it.

I think Neil Kinnock should have come out more against the police, irrespective of whether it is vote-catching or not.

I wasn't politically minded because I've always learnt don't mix politics with trade unionism. But I've found out now through experience that both go together.

Hopefully the delegates at the conference will keep supporting the working class as they are supposed to do. They should represent the working class in the fight against the Tory government and that means supporting us every day through this strike.

"They should represent the working class in the fight against the Tory government and that means supporting us every day through this strike."

Barry Daynes, president, Keresley NUM, Coventry

John Ratcliffe Bold NUM

John Ratcliffe, Bold NUM, Lancashire:

The best thing that's come out of the conference for us is a lot of Labour support, a lot of MPs are backing us all the way now. Kinnock got a bit of a bashing on Monday, but he made a come-back on Tuesday and we saw him on Tuesday night and he gave us a good word. He's signed some Coal Not Dole posters for us which proves that Kinnock is behind us, not as a lot of people say, sitting on the fence.

Overall it's been a very good conference for Labour itself and for the miners.

Now that the conference is

over, Neil has got a lot more support than he had before he came and looking forward we can now see a Labour government in the near future.

What about Kinnock's condemnation of picket line violence? Isn't that sitting on the fence?

Well it is in a way, it depends whose violence he is condemning, the pickets or the police. The police are using more violence than we are. When the police come running at you with truncheons, on horses, he should be condemning the police, not all violence, but the police in particular.

Do you think he did that?

That's what's annoying, he's not saying where the violence is coming from, he's just condemning all violence.

What do you think about the court case being put off to Wednesday?

All that was a ploy. I don't think they would have tried to come in here to arrest him.

They did this before with the NGA - they seized their funds, they've tried it in South Wales, and they can try it nationally now but I don't think they'll get anything out of us.

If Arthur goes to jail we all go to jail.

North-West Regional Labour Movement

March & Rally

"Victory to the Miners!"

Saturday November 3. Speakers include

Dennis Skinner MP, Les Huckfield MEP, Sid Vincent (NW Region NUM), Bernard Catterall (West Pennine NGA), Susan Wilson, (Plank Lane Miner's Wife) and Derek Hatton (Deputy Leader, Liverpool City Council).

Assemble: 11.00 am, rear of Forby Hall, Alder Street, Atherton. Move off 11.30 pm. Rally at Atherton Labour Club.

Church Warsop Women's Action Group

desperately require donations of food and money in our effort to feed our families and sustain our struggle.

Donations to: 98 St Laurence Avenue
Bolsover, Chesterfield, S44 6HT.

The miners of Tower Pit in South Wales have invited the organisations in Islington to visit the South Wales NUM in the Cynon Valley. The Islington Miners' Support Committee will be organising a coach.

Saturday 13 October 1984

Coach tickets £4 each from:

3 Davenant Road, N19. Tel: 263-0069 or 263 2508

Back the miners



Scargill

Continued from page 1

its internal affairs in accordance with the Rules and Constitution of the NUM, as befits an independent and free trade union.

3. To reaffirm as official the strike action in the British coalfield, including Yorkshire and Derbyshire, which has been sanctioned in accordance with national rule 41 by a national delegate conference.

The national delegate conference is the governing body of our union, and gives instructions to all members of the National Executive and national officials.

I am not someone who wishes to go to Pentonville Prison. But I want to make it absolutely clear. If the choice facing me, and I would hope facing any other responsible trade union or Labour leader, is to be committed by a High Court to spend a prison term in Pentonville or any other jail, for standing by this trade union or our class; or, alternatively, having to live with the imprisonment of one's mind for betraying one's class — then there's no choice as far as I'm concerned. I stand by my class.

Confrontation

Over the next period we're going to be involved in possibly the most major confrontation that we've ever witnessed.

We've got the head of the police force in London justifying the use of plastic bullets on miners' picket lines. We are now facing the full might of the judiciary.

We've so many writs we could paper two buildings the size of this hall. We've got actions against the South Wales Area, North Wales Area, Durham Area, Yorkshire Area, Lancashire Area, Northumberland Area, and we've got actions specifically against the Scottish miners.

There are two options available. Either we can accept the imposition of the organised might of the state, or stand by the policies of the Trades Union Congress and the policies of the Party.

This Party is on record arguing against redundancies. The TUC are on record arguing against the anti-trade union legislation in all its forms and so is our Party.

Now is the time to turn those words into deeds.

Arthur Scargill was speaking last Thursday, 4th, at a Labour Party conference fringe meeting organised by Labour Briefing.

Notts strikers need money

Send money or invitations for fund-raising visits to the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committees.

North Notts. Strike Centre, Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Ollerton, Notts.

South Notts. Miners' Strike Centre, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

Power cuts: NACODS still stalling how soon?

By John Bloxam

WHEN will there be power cuts?

The Coal Board, the Electricity Board and the government say that they can last through the winter without power cuts.

But most estimates put the existing power station stocks at between 13 and 14 million tonnes. Many experts reckon that nine million tonnes is 'critical'.

So far, the effects of the strike have been cushioned by a very costly switch to burning oil instead of coal. Up to 50% of electricity has been coming from oil.

A report produced for the NUM believes that oil-burn has not yet reached its theoretical maximum. But it will be difficult to maintain the 50% figure as electricity demand increases with colder weather; and whether the theoretical can be reached depends on many things, not least breakdowns.

Power stations have been run without scheduled maintenance breaks, and this must have an effect.

Another factor is the distribution of stocks.

According to a recent New Scientist report, stocks at power stations are very unevenly placed. 50% are at the Midlands power stations — and under two million tonnes in the South-East and South-West.

Power cuts could happen quite soon in the South if coal stocks aren't diverted there.

Lorry convoys — so it is reported — may soon be trying to ferry coal to Didcot power station.

Despite government boasts that coal from the main scabbing areas would rise to 700 million tonnes a week, recent production figures are little above the June rate (422,000 tonnes).

Recent reports of the Coal Board and Electricity Board stocks from open cast mines by lorries (against TGWU policy

and, in the case of a site in Cannock, against an agreement with the local council) shows they are more worried than they would like to appear.

But all the calculations depend on one major variable — trade union action.

If the deputies' union NACODS came out tomorrow and stopped all the pits, then, (if 'New Scientist' is right) all coal stocks would be finished in December.

Picketing by strikers and supporters is also central — not only to appeal to the workers inside the stations, but also to stop the movement of supplies. Pickets, are being organised at Didcot to try to stop that station restarting (it was shut down 'for overhaul' some months ago).

Pickets will be even more essential when the Coal Board tries to move the estimated 20 million tonnes at present stockpiled at the pit-head of strike-bound pits.

Despite the TUC promises, there is little evidence so far of action being delivered in the power stations.

AUEW delegates are due to meet in Blackpool this week — six weeks after the TUC! Reports from the GMBATU in the Midlands suggest that their 'consultation exercise' is still going on.

The Financial Times last Friday, 5th, reported that the GMBU and TGWU had just issued instructions to power station shop stewards 'telling them what fuel to accept and crucially, what not to accept, to express their solidarity with the miners'.

But there is little evidence of GMBU and TGWU officials campaigning for solidarity.

The Financial Times suggested that action was least likely in the Midlands power stations, and most likely elsewhere — mentioning in particular the big Fiddlers Ferry station on Merseyside, and the Grain stations in the South-East. If true, this means that those stations with the lowest stocks (and therefore most in need of 'new deliveries'), are most likely to take action.

What's most needed is local campaigns organised jointly by the NUM and other unions, and speaking directly to power station workers at rank and file level.

Notts

ALL the power stations in the Trent Valley are still handling scab coal being brought in by non-union labour.

No coal is being brought in by rail, so it all has to come in on scab lorries.

Oil is also being brought into the power stations, though pickets at Donnington and Radcliffe are having a degree of success in stopping oil.

While large collections of money by power workers are taking place for the miners, coal is still being moved about inside the power stations.

Letter

Answering the police

SPEAKING in Middleton on 22 May 1848, the Chartist John West observed: "It was of no use agitating except the people would be organised in a similar manner to the military and the police."

After being for months confronted and attacked by well-organised and equipped police it is not time that the miners took this observation to heart?

The police do not leave their helmets behind when they act on behalf of the Conservative government and the propertied classes. Why then do the miners leave their helmets behind when they go on picket lines on behalf of the working class?

A photo in Socialist Organiser no. 187 showed miners occupying Rossington colliery wearing their helmets. Surely that example could be built on.

An important interview in Socialist Organiser 182 showed

THE MINING deputies' union NACODS is still sitting on its 82.5% ballot vote for a strike, and taking no action.

A strike by the deputies — over pay being stopped for deputies who have not crossed picket lines, and over colliery closures — would bring every pit in the country to a halt, and speed up the miners' victory a great deal.

But the NACODS leaders are using their strike mandate only as a *threat* to give them weight in their negotiations with the Coal Board and discussions with the government arbitration service ACAS.

The NUM are also to meet the Coal Board under ACAS auspices this Thursday, 11th.

NACODS has proposed a new procedure of arbitration over pit closures by a tribunal separate from both coal industry management and unions.

NUM general secretary Peter Heathfield says that the NUM is not opposed in principle, but that the real issue is to force the Coal Board to withdraw its plans for closures. (This would presumably be decisive in the terms of reference for any tribunal).

The Coal Board is reported to oppose the NACODS proposal. 'Independent' arbitra-

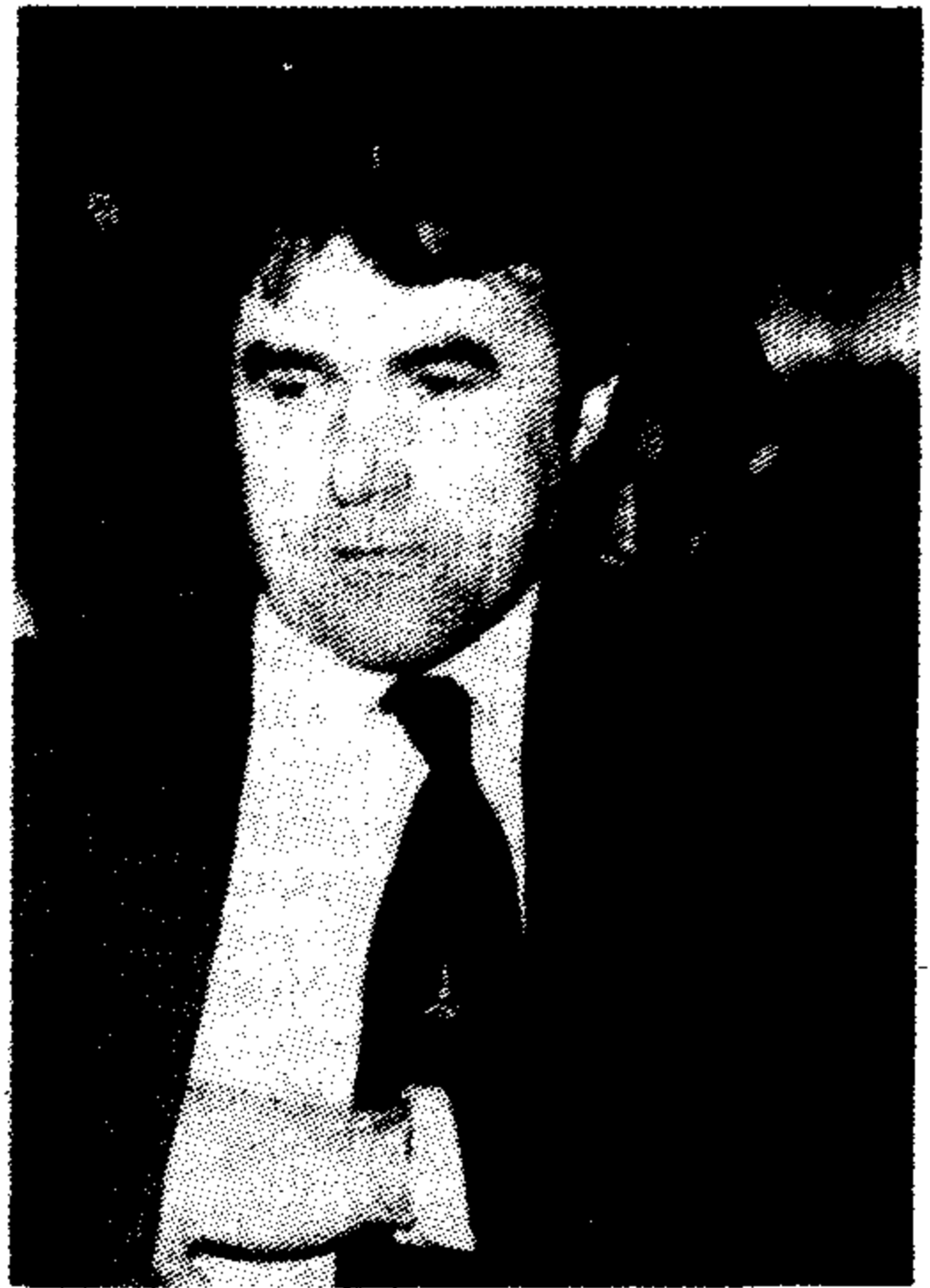
By Clive Bradley

tion is never really independent, and usually favours the bosses, but the NACODS scheme would tie the Coal Board's hands to some extent, and it would not take away the unions' right to use industrial action as the last resort against pit closures.

The press has also speculated that the Coal Board may withdraw all attempts to find a form of words for the closure of unprofitable pits. Instead, there would be a case-by-case examination of each pit threatened by closure.

Peter Heathfield has indicated guardedly that there might be a basis for negotiation here — if the case-by-case approach were on the basis of the 1977 Plan for Coal, 'Coal in the Year 2000'.

These developments underline once again how secret negotiations can harm the miners' struggle. Rank and file members are left totally dependent on the media to know what is happening, and the basic issues — unambiguous withdrawal of the pit closure programme, and a four day week to safeguard jobs in the future — can get lost in a mass of detail.



Peter McNestry, NACODS secretary.

The method used by Solidarnosc when it relayed its negotiations over closed-circuit television to a mass audience of workers would be better.

Midlands action

WEST Midlands TUC have called a week of action in support of the miners, starting on October 8.

But as I write, on October 7, no details or instructions have been given as to what 'action'.

This is the first solidarity that West Midlands TUC has organised other than fund raising.

In North Staffs, the Trades Council organise various activities during the week (meetings, street and pub collections, etc).

The Miners Support Committee in the West Midlands has drawn up a list of firms that have been breaking picket lines, and are asking for solidarity action to black them. They are:

Apple Bee, Wolverhampton; BOC; CA Boulton, Newcastle under Lyme; B&C Haulage, Ashbourne; Coombes, Cheshire; CTS Midlands Ltd, Tamworth; Century Oils; Corbishleys, Staffordshire; Glover Cables, Stalybridge; Grahams Coaches, Stoke; Hoveringham; J. Harvey, Cheadle, Staffs; Kettle & Co., Stoke; Lyme Valley Commercial, Newcastle under Lyme; A. Morris, Chester; Midlands Road Haulage; Midland Tool Hire; P&M Coal & Transport Services, Stoke; Parry's Coaches Walsall; Stevensons Buses, Uttoxeter; Seddon (Plant & Haulage) Ltd; Sproston; Steetley; Stoke Transport; Tarmac; Towel Master Workwear Services; Vendepac; W. Voxwell, Stoke; Walkers, Matlock; West Midlands Transport; Weetman of Weston; Wass, Stoke; Wakemans of Cannock; Deggs, Stoke; Berresfords Buses, Stoke; Stoniers Buses, Stoke; Crystal Coaches, Stoke; Thomsons; Porthill Transport, Newcastle under Lyme; Thomson Babs, Stoke; Jarvis, Telford; Parry's Shropshire; Spencers, Newcastle under Lyme; JL Birch, Endon; Haydon & Sons, Biddulph.

The attack the Sun didn't splash

By John Bloxam

LAST Thursday three Manton miners, including NUM Branch Secretary Dave Potts, were remanded in custody at Mansfield magistrates court, charged with threatening to murder arch-scab Bob Taylor, his wife and two children. The supposed evidence comes from Taylor himself, one of the two Yorkshire miners who have gone to the High Court to try to get Arthur Scargill jailed.

The media splashed the story. As far as they're concerned, the three strikers are guilty and they are going to play it for what it's worth.

The strikers' defence has been ignored. At the magistrates court, an attempt by defence solicitors to get reporting restrictions lifted was first granted, then revoked by the bench.

The case stands in stark contrast to an incident in Notting-

ham reported by Paul Whetton to the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee/Socialist Organiser fringe meeting at the Labour Party conference.

"Most of you know about the striker from Rufford who received a knock on his door late at night. There was a working miner standing there, with a four-foot, cross-cut bow saw and a Stanley knife in his hands. He commenced to try to saw the head off the striking miner with the result that the striker finished with 132 stitches in his head, £1,000 worth of damage done to his house and an attack on his 8½ month pregnant wife."

"That didn't get on the front page of the Sun. And after the scab was arrested he was charged with grievous bodily harm and then released on unconditional bail."

It is time Miners' Guards, more than 100,000 strong, showed that they will not tolerate any longer the way the police are behaving.

Comradely greetings,
DAVID HARRIS

Drive in the colleges

Socialist Organiser sellers at the London School of Economics report that they sold about 70 papers last week.

Sizeable numbers of papers have been sold at other colleges starting the new term about now — 15 at North Staffs Poly, for example — and in London alone about half a dozen students have expressed interest in becoming SO supporters.

A number of the regular sales were down a bit last week: the Hulme estate sale in Manchester, 16; Southwark's estate sale, 9; Islington's estate sale, 9; the Holborn tube sale, 18; Highbury Corner, 5.

But Cardiff comrades are planning to start a street sale, and the Stoke group an estate sale.

Send in news of your local sales to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

'When blacks were harassed we said: It's not us. But:

'We're ethnic minorities now'

The truth about picket line violence

I would just like to take you back 7 or 8 months, when we did start picketing on a large scale in Nottinghamshire and other places. On several occasions we had 5-6,000 pickets — no problems — I witnessed several pickets, some a lot bigger than that, with 1500-2000 pickets. 6-7 lads, stopping cars, talking to people, turning most of them back.

Then we went down to Birch Coppice, around March 19. In the pit lane the Chief Constable asked what we were doing. We told him we've come down here to peacefully persuade our fellow members not to go to work. Fair enough, he said, pick out six men and I'll stop everything that comes in so you can talk to them. He did exactly that. I think there were three men went into work that night.

On the morning shift exactly the same thing happened again. Then a riot van rolls up, and another one, and I've never seen a police officer so frightened in his life. He was terrified of what was going to happen; he knew what was going to happen.

Violence

I've never seen provocation like it. That was the start of it, because we were having success.

The tactics started then, and the only criticism I've got of some of our lads is that it's taken them 7-8 months to learn. They keep getting their heads beat in, belted around the earholes, but they don't learn. They've got a blind respect for the uniform.

They had to have violence on the picket lines to justify their presence, because if there was no violence they couldn't justify the number of police there.

In the beginning, if we had a picket or rally, they would say 500 or 1000, and the real figure was probably three times what they said. Now they are doing the opposite. Why? To justify what's coming — tear gas, maybe, or rubber bullets.

Frank Slater (Maltby NUM), speaking at a meeting organised by Socialist Organiser at Rhodesia (Notts) Miners' Welfare on Sunday October 7.

Some of the things that have happened at Kiveton are unbelievable. You get there and you are treated as the scum of the earth, the conspiracy within, the threat — I'm quite convinced that these coppers have been dragged into a back room somewhere and told that there's a communist takeover in this country.

Last week, they've just fetched Ulster police into Maltby.

We still don't know who killed Davy Jones. Some of the leather I've seen given out — they're not coppers. We don't know what they are — paras, SAS, commandos. They're far better disciplined than any of the bobbies. The way they come out of that wood at Maltby, there's no way they're police.

What did we do when blacks were being harassed? We said — it's not us. But we're ethnic minorities now, and we're in for some hammer. We stood idly by and watched other people, in other ethnic minorities, getting some hammer, and we said nought.

1930

I spent a few days in Belgium, a guest of the Belgian Labour party. Once a woman came up to me and said — it was a chilling experience — there's one thing you mustn't forget, it's coming again. What? She said nobody would listen to me in 1930 —



Pickets at Rossington, Yorkshire, jeer a police van

no-one would listen to my husband when he disappeared, he was gun-running to fight the Nazis, never saw him again. She said she could see it coming again.

When I was in Belgium it was like stepping back nine months. The same arguments are coming over to their miners, their working class, about restrictions, job losses, and they're relying on splits — such as Notts, Midlands, Leicestershire coalfields — there it's Turks, Italians and Greeks, imported labour.

NACODS

There's only one answer to this dispute — we're going to win. We haven't got the word 'lose' in our rule book. You can say what you like about NACODS, it's about time they came off the fence, they've been on it seven months. I'm not telling our lads no more to stop having a go at NACODS.

They've sat on the fence too long. If they came out they could shorten the dispute, it could end up being over in a month. There's only one thing the working class get when they compromise — they lose hands down.

We've gone on too long; we've gone too far in this dispute. When Scargill and them say go back to work, we'll go back — and not until. We've got the finest leadership we've ever had.

How many years have they been pushing the unemployed around and we've said nought?

How many times have they lifted them on a street corner and given them a good hiding. At Thurcroft, they lifted a vanload, took them down the road, leathered hell out of them, then let them go, no charges.

We're getting too soft. It's about time we decided an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. I'm not going to condemn any violence any more. I've tried it, but I've seen too much from the other side.

Some of the pensioners have been so brain-washed that they think the pickets are coming in to kick them to death because they lived in a scab village. I've never heard anything so stupid in my life. That morning the pickets deliberately went out of the way of the pensioners' houses. What happens? Riot bobby comes down on a police horse, pulls his truncheon, chases lads and as he goes up pensioners' row, he's banging on the doors. Why? To get the community against us. But I'll tell you . . . go picketing to Kiveton Park, and it's one place you'll feel secure.

Tear gas

This accusation that's been made at Kiveton. If any picket threatened a pensioner the rest of the pickets would give him the biggest hiding he's ever had in his life. And when it comes out that they used tear gas or rubber bullets, at Maltby, Kiveton or anywhere else — people accept it.

But we're not going to accept

it, back down or compromise. And when the bobbies set about us the time will come when we pick our ground and we'll set about them. We've tried not to do it. We went to Allerton Bywater and had them outnumbered by god knows how many to one — but we stood around waiting for the riot bobbies to come — that's how stupid and naive we are. As far as I'm concerned, if someone threatens you with violence, then you threaten them with the same force back. It's going to come, and we ain't going to be able to control it.

Me and Pat could have stood up at Maltby and asked them to stop throwing, and both of us would have got stoned — because it's not me and him that's been at front line every time and got leathered, it's not our brother that's got dragged out and beaten to pulp, it's not our lad that's got dragged out — youngest lad at Maltby, walking past the picket line, they lifted him and dragged him across the road by arms and legs, repeatedly kicking him between the legs. His father saw that and just lost control — they couldn't arrest him because he was laying them out right, left and centre — that's the kind of reaction they have. They have law-abiding people turning into 'criminals'. They're causing it, not us. They're starting it, but we'll finish it.

These six contractors going back to work — they're no threat. We won't go back until

Back the miners



they've gone anyway. But we've contractors at Maltby on picket line as well — and they won't let them talk to scabs.

They've done the best thing they could at Kiveton and Thurcroft — they've turned the whole community against the Coal Board. Do they think there's going to be a happy smiling relationship when we get back to work? I think there'll be more trouble than there is now. I would like to see riot squads on one of our faces.

Win

We're not going back until we win. We might have some arguments about whether it's enough — might get 99% of what we want, but we'll want 110%. One thing I've learnt, when you've got the power, you use it. Because the Coal Board do. Our turn is coming, and it's going to come very soon. Power cuts are starting, the crisis is coming, and that's when we'll rub salt in the wounds.

Les Hearn looks at the attitude of Britain's foremost popular science journal, New Scientist, to the coal dispute and the future of coal.

NEW SCIENTIST has recently explained in detail why power cuts are inevitable by December or January, despite CEBG bravado. This is on the basis of the CEBG's own documents.

Perhaps most interesting for a scientific journal that tries to remain "impartial" was New Scientist's editorial of September 6.

It pointed out that on paper the NUM and NCB both agree on an answer to the dispute — the Plan for Coal. The problem is that the government doesn't!

And when the NCB calls on the NUM to abide by the clause on closing worked-out pits, New Scientist accuses the NCB of exposing its own failure to abide

by the Plan for Coal's crucial call for 135 million tons of coal output by 1985.

New Scientist also rubbishes the NCB's accusation of a failure to increase productivity in line with the Plan for Coal.

Problem

It identifies the problem as the hand of the government pulling the strings. The Tories' call for short-term profitability may make economic "sense" but is "no way to plan for the future".

Not only is it a "strategy of confrontation" over pit closures, but it also shows a "lack of energy policy for the future".

New Scientist rules out oil and nuclear power as a basis for future energy plans, calling for a "clean coal" plan, with anti-pollution measures. Coal should also be used to make synthetic fuels to replace oil and gas, when they run out.

The editorial ends: "Plan for Coal recognised this future. The government and the miners

should stick to it." This even-handed conclusion masks the fact that in the foregoing discussion, New Scientist had voiced no criticism of the miners.

New Scientist has a history of taking coal very seriously as a fuel and chemical feedstock and over the past few months, the tenor of its coverage has been subtly to support the argument of the miners.

For example, a month ago Michael Cross discussed the modernisation of coal mining, noting the high quality of Britain's coal and reporting the view of the Electricity Council that, despite nuclear power, coal would continue to dominate any envisaged plan for generating electricity.

This prospect for coal inevitably raises the spectre of acid rain from the sulphur contaminating all coal.

Rather ignorant nuclear apologists have remarked on the supposed irony that environ-

mentalists have strengthened the case for nuclear power by complaining about acid rain.

Shell

The Shell oil company thinks otherwise. In "Coal in Perspective", they declare that the economic cases for coal and nuclear power are equal, but that a decision to back coal would be dictated on political grounds.

While both have environmental problems, those of coal "can be resolved on the basis of proven technology".

Michael Cross looks at these solutions in a follow-up to his first article. The CEBG has refused to implement these solutions on grounds of cost, saying they would add 6% to electricity bills. This is somewhat less than we will have to pay for Thatcher's attempt to smash the miners.

It seems inevitable that the CEBG will be forced to control acid pollution, so their present

motives are difficult to fathom. Investing in pollution research would undoubtedly *cheapen* control in the long run, and yet the CEBG have actually turned down a free pilot desulphurisation plant in one power station.

The Birmingham firm Lodge Cottrell wanted to test its "dry scrubbing" technique. In this, flue gasses are passed through an alkaline solution, which removes acid gases. The heat of the gases turns the product into a dry, compact, non-toxic powder which is easily dealt with.

Bias

Meanwhile, the CEBG's vaunted five-year study into acid rain has been exposed as the time-wasting, money-saving manoeuvre it is.

One year on, only one-fiftieth of the research fund has been spent, on three small projects. And scientists are complaining about bias in the method of allocation of cash.

Science Journal backs the miners

JOHN HARRIS



won by struggle

militancy, restrictive labour laws become a dead letter.

What is lawful and unlawful in industrial struggle has nothing to do with any principles standing above class interests. It is a reflection of, and a tactical element in, the balance of forces.

In the early years of industrial capitalism in Britain, all trade unionism was illegal, under the Combination Acts.

In 1824 working-class pressure forced the repeal of those Acts. In 1834 the judges hit back by dredging up an old law against 'administering oaths' and using it to convict six farm workers who had organised a union in south-west England. These 'Tolpuddle Martyrs' were deported to Australia.

In 1851 a judge declared that for a union to threaten an employer with a strike was unlawful 'molestation'. In 1859 the unions got the law on molestation changed. In 1872 the judges found another gambit: trade unionists organising for a strike were declared guilty of 'conspiracy'.

Fought

Again the labour movement fought back. In 1875 the law was changed to give unions some protection from conspiracy charges.

The judges retaliated with the *Taft Vale* judgment in 1901, which made unions liable to be sued for the financial damage suffered by an employer through a strike.

As in 1834, in 1851, in 1872, on many occasions more trade union law was being changed by the judges. The judges did not

"THE LEGAL system [is] not in practice even-handed as between employers and unions, current functions put the courts almost entirely in the business of restricting and penalising the latter, and not of remedying their grievances".

Sir John Donaldson, Master of the Rolls, Nov. 1983

write new laws, but they took old clauses from the vast rambling structure of English legislation and used them to restrict unions in ways previously unthought-of.

The 1901 judgment, coming at a time of rising militancy, was soon reversed by the Trades Disputes Act of 1906. The next blow from the ruling class against the unions came through Parliament, in 1927, when the Tory government took advantage of labour demoralisation after the defeat of the 1926 General Strike to pass a new restrictive law.

The 1927 Act was repealed by the Labour government in 1946. But the working-class answer to legal shackles has never been, and should not be, quietly to submit and to wait for the next election and a more sympathetic government.

The 1945 Labour government was pushed by a wave of working-class militancy. It tried to maintain an anti-strike decree from wartime — Order 1305 — and withdrew it, finally, in 1951, only after dockers had been jailed for defying it.

The next Labour government, in 1964-70, tried to initiate its own anti-union laws, with the proposals entitled 'In Place of Strife'. They were designed to curb the shop-floor militancy of

unofficial strikes which had flowered in the '50s and '60s.

Trade union opposition stalled 'In Place of Strife', but an Industrial Relations Act was introduced by the Tories in 1971.

Since TUC unions refused to register under this Act, they now lost all legal protection. Any employer hit by a strike could sue the union.

Few did, in practice. The employers understood that words in the statute book were not holy writ, but only one element in the balance of forces between classes.

Mass strike action

Mass strike action in July 1972, when five dockers were jailed under the Industrial Relations Act, crippled that Act. The five were freed and the Act was used only occasionally until the Labour Government repealed it in 1974.

In 1976 and the following years, trade union militancy nose-dived. True to form, the judges took their chance, and in court cases between 1977 and 1979 almost nullified the relatively liberal legislation passed by the Labour government in 1974 and 1976.

Solidarity strikes and 'secondary' picketing (picketing not at your own place of work) were declared unlawful because they

were not 'in furtherance of a trade dispute' but only 'in consequence' of it.

In the case of Reg Fall, who had an injunction slapped on him to stop picketing during the lorry drivers' strike in 1979, the judge explained his bizarre interpretation in rather candidly political terms.

Secondary picketing

"There must be a presumption", he said, "that Parliament does not intend to legislate to bring about its own destruction". Secondary picketing, so Mr Justice Ackner felt, endangered the fabric of society; therefore, even if the law seemed to permit it, in fact it could not.

Moreover, he added, he had to bear in mind the public interest. And strikes were not in the public interest.

A great part of what the Tories did in their 1980 and 1982 anti-union laws was simply to write onto the statute books what judges had decreed in 1977-79.

Now — with those two laws and the 1984 Trade Union Act — the Tories have a vast array of legal weapons against trade unionism. Cautiously but ruthlessly, they are trying to deploy those weapons on the battlefield.

Justice, right and wrong, moral principles, have little to do with it. The ruling class changes laws, ignores them, implements them selectively, or twists the interpretation of them, as suits tactically.

The working class cannot afford a less realistic view.

Why the law is class law

'Equality before law' under capitalism means inequality

BRAZILIAN bishops last week said it was morally right for starving people in the country's poverty-stricken North-East to steal food.

Citing the medieval theologian St Thomas Aquinas, the bishops decided that the looting of markets and warehouses was justified by extreme hunger.

Neil Kinnock, in recent months, has spoke more like a would-be bishop than a working class leader. But it seems that in Brazil even the bishops would find him too deferential to the established order.

The miners argue that their fight to save their communities from becoming wastelands of unemployment and despair justifies breaking class law imposed by a Tory parliament, capitalist courts, and ruthless police. In essence, their argument for human rights against property rights is the same as that of the people in Brazil's North-East.

But in capitalist law, impartiality means that property must

THE LAW in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to steal bread, to sleep under bridges, and to beg for food.

Anatole France.

be defended whatever the cost in human suffering.

Lord Denning, giving a judgment against squatters in 1971, put it like this:

"If homelessness were once admitted as a defence to trespass, no one's house could be safe. Necessity would open a door which no man could shut..."

"Each man would say his need was greater than the next man's. The plea would be an excuse for all sorts of wrongdoing."

"So the courts must, for the sake of law and order, take a firm stand. They must refuse to admit the plea of necessity to the hungry and homeless; and trust that their distress will be relieved."

ed by the charitable and the good"

Capitalist law defends property equally. But one class owns the property, and another does not.

It was against the law for the workers at Cairnmill Lairds shipyard to occupy the vessels being worked on at that yard. With



great impartiality the law would equally protect any property the workers owned, houses for example.

But the formal equality before the law means actual inequality — because the private property of British Shipbuilders is also the means of livelihood for the workers, while any private property workers have is simply for their personal use.

Capitalist market economics permit millionaires quite legally to rob the working class. So long as an employer pays the going wage, his transaction with a worker is a market transaction like any other; a sale and a purchase of labour-power freely agreed to by both sides.

In the workplace, this free and equal transaction changes into something quite unfree and unequal. The capitalist gains control over the worker's productive life and ownership of the fruits of his or her labour and creativity.

One class owns the means of production and thus wealth, power, and the ability to maintain its privilege by exploiting others. The other class, the working class, depends entirely on trying to sell its labour-power.

The law — which defends property equally and regulates the market impartially — protects this inequality of wealth and power.



ANDREW WARD (REPORT)



'We need to say it again and again until our black comrades in the unions get organised'

Black socialists here to stay

Elaine Foster (Birmingham Ladywood CLP) and Munira Thobani (Hornsey and Wood Green CLP) discussed their reactions to conference with Jean Lane.

Munira and I have just had. Two elders came up and the old woman said - we haven't got an autograph book, but can you sign this for us, I remember struggling for women's rights.

Elaine: Can I share a very emotional experience that

I have had a lot of mixed feelings at conference. Firstly

just meeting with and talking to people who are real socialists and there's a sisterhood, a lot of group feeling and emotion. We joined in with gay people and lesbian women, and the miners and the disabled and women, it was really amazing.

Jean: Do you think that link between the different groups will continue now?

Elaine: Yes. Munira: I think we came here to express our passion for socialism and our anger about racism and I think we managed to do both very effectively. I think we've put racism on the agenda.

I feel very sad that the unions, in the absence of consultation, voted against black sections per se in the separate motion. I think it is disgraceful but I think they haven't thought it through.

I feel we need to say that again and again until our black comrades who are in trade unions get organised.

Elaine: I think the other thing is the deafness or at least ambivalence of the leader and the leadership generally to a lot of issues.

I was very disappointed with Kinnock's speech on Tuesday. He started off with all this powerful stuff about what we're going to do and he ended up saying nothing.

Munira: I think power is what he wants but he doesn't want to share it and therefore we question his socialism and his commitment to it and that came across really clearly to us and to other groups who at the moment are pressure groups who want an equal say in the party, and they must have it.

Jean: Presumably now the

black sections are going to continue regardless.

Elaine: Yes we will, we've got renewed vigour. There's no way we're going to stop because we've got to face up to the issue of racism. I'm not saying that is the ultimate aim, but it's one aspect. We've all seen that racism is there this week and unless the labour movement confronts it and starts to deal with it, then it's never going to start breaking down the mechanisms of capitalism, of which racism is just one.

Jean: It's very similar to the position of women. One of the reasons why they are against having five NEC seats voted on by the women's section isn't just because they're sexist, but because the women's conference is the most radical section of the Labour Party.

Munira: The other point about women and youth is that none of the speakers against us were women, which was very encouraging and also none of them were youth.

One argument put up against us was Militant's bold programme of socialism. But you can't have a bold policy of socialism if you don't listen to everybody. You need to have a collective vision of what you are working together for.

We do have different interests, men and women have different interests, but of course women's aren't listened to and men's dominate.

Trying to change that is how we'll come out with a bold programme for socialism.

We felt that some other speakers had a very colonial

mentality. One said that if we start agitating they'll send us back on the banana boats.

We think it's very unfortunate that young black comrades in Militant are seen lining up with people who have that colonial mentality.

Elaine: I think that already there are signs that they are rethinking the position that they have held. I spoke to a few of the black Militant comrades today and pointed out that what we were up against in the conference wasn't just to do with black sections but with confronting racism and he had seemed to be on the other side. And he actually agreed.

Munira: At the Red Revue they tried to scapegoat onto Militant the issue of black

sections. Kinnock came up and was going on about black ghettos and said what we need is a bold programme of socialism. He actually scapegoated the issue onto Militant. Now that is disgraceful. It should not be tolerated. The emphasis needs to be shifted back to their opposition. The Militant comrades aren't against us as people in the party, but Kinnock is, because we're threatening.

Black people, whether in Militant or in the black sections are committed to socialism. We're not threatening to socialism. But we are a threat to that white platform up there, because we want them to vacate those seats. We don't want extra seats so we can be tagged on.

Keep the leaders on the hook!

Gerry Byrne, delegate from Putney CLP

WE were part of two committees - on women's organisations and black sections. Both were voted down heavily. At least there was a good debate on women. The black sections discussion was a disgrace.

The only really heartening thing was the support of the NUM and the NUM delegate's speech. Usually, when you get support from male comrades, there's a rather patronising note to it. This wasn't.

I don't think it's just tit-for-tat either: you support us and we'll support you. I think it's that when workers go into struggle, they find themselves caught up in situations with the whole mass of the oppressed - police violence, media lie and the hollow "we support you" from our leaders - and see things from the other side.

If we do get the promised all-out action if NUM leaders are jailed or their funds seized, then maybe everyone will see it our way. I don't think the leadership will deliver. The TGWU's climbdown on their emergency resolution was a fair sign of that. It'll be up to the rank and file to force it on them.

There's an enormously powerful feeling of support for the



miners, as Monday's vote showed. But they still manage to wriggle off the hook. Kinnock's law and order speech was a direct contradiction of the policy passed the day before on police violence.

That's why the victory on reselection is so important. Accountability is the one thing that's unbearable for the weavers and dodgers.

So they have to keep coming back with attempts to keep it down. And we'll have to water knocking them back.



Elaine Foster

ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

A way forward



By Vidya Anand

WE never believed it was going to be the push-over that some of our comrades might have believed. It had to be a long uphill struggle, as was the campaign to set up women's sections many years ago. What now? Firstly, our comrades must not allow themselves

to be used by the media and the Establishment of the Party to engage in petty factionalism, even though the opposition to our cause may be provocative to say the least. Let us concentrate on agreed facts and agreed principles.

The fact of racism in our party — covert and overt — the fact that we, the black people in the party and in the country are grossly misrepresented in Parliament, in Local Authorities, in the Trade Unions, with but a few honourable exceptions, cannot be overlooked or swept under the carpet.

The Hackney 28 Campaign, at which I spoke last Thursday, is perhaps the answer.

Hackney is a borough where black people comprise 45% of the local population. But out of sixty current local councillors, only 5, or 8½%, hail from the black communities. All GLC councillors are white and there are no black Members of Parliament.

This reflects the extent of inequality which is endemic in

British society. The Hackney 28 Campaign, launched with a contribution of £100 from the black historian and Pan-Africanist CLR James, will seek to get 27 black councillors and one black Member of Parliament elected in Hackney.

There is no time to lose. Black people must begin similar campaigns all over the country — campaigns of education as well as organisation of our comrades to the aims and objects of the labour movement, and involving our communities in the Constituency Labour Parties, trades unions and the women's sections of our party.

We must make it clear that we are not advocating Black Bantustans or black ghettos but the very opposite — a broad forum where we can gather our resources for the fight to bring the Labour Party towards internationalism away from petty factionalism and racism, on the way to sweeping away and rolling back the tide of the reactionary government of Maggie Thatcher.

Miners shake Labour

THE MINERS' strike has changed the Labour Party.

Last year Neil Kinnock was the hero of Labour Party conference. This year Arthur Scargill was.

Last year the initiative seemed to belong to a whole wave of people, once left-wingers, moving rightwards to swing behind Neil Kinnock. This year the once-fashionable talk of a Labour/Alliance 'anti-Thatcher coalition' is dead.

Last year the Left was muted. Many Labour activists were trying hard to forget what they had learned in previous years, and to believe that all would be well with the new Kinnock-Hattersley consensus. They saw papers like Socialist Organiser as sour-minded killjoys.

This year the tone was set by the miners, and by the many Labour activists who have been working flat-out to support the miners.

The conference firmly separated itself from Neil Kinnock's piously even-handed denunciation of both miners' and police violence, and called for the withdrawal of police from industrial disputes.

At the Labour Party conference as at the TUC Congress, rank-and-file support for the miners forced through strong decisions despite what many of the leaders would have preferred.

But resolution-passing at conference is not the same as action on the ground. Since the TUC Congress most union leaders have done practically nothing to implement the decision to blockade all coal.

Rank and file activists must make sure that the Labour conference decisions are not similarly dumped — and use those decisions as a springboard for a fight to get the TUC policy implemented.

Constituencies in the coalfields should redouble efforts to recruit strikers to the Labour Party.

Local miners' support committees should offer assistance to the NUM in approaching power station and other workers. They should step up their activity in workplaces, to prepare for increased mobilisation on the picket lines and direct solidarity strike action if the courts seize the miners'

funds or jail Arthur Scargill.

The Left scored another victory at Labour Party conference with a resolution that supported Labour councils defying Tory law in the fight against cuts. And we beat back the proposals to gut mandatory re-selection of MPs.

But in a longer view the Labour Party conference was not so good. The National Executive is still in the hands of the Kinnock/Hattersley coalition. Also: the Labour Party is not just an organisation for producing solidarity with immediate struggles but a political party. What decides, in the end, is the politics. And on that front the week saw steps backward.

Labour's disarmament policy was watered down. And an economic policy document was adopted which confines Labour entirely within the terms of capitalist techniques of managing the private-profit economy — and pretty timid use of those techniques, at that.

While the conference votes against allowing black sections and against giving women a proper voice in the party went through only despite loud protest — and quite right too — the milk-and-water economic policy slid through quietly.

The demands of Labour women and the argument for black sections have gone deep into the constituencies, and now need to be won in the unions. The miners' support for the women's resolutions was a cheering example of what can be done there.

But on economic policy the arguments have not been won even in the constituencies. They have hardly been started.

A strong left wing still needs to be built in the Labour Party which ties together the immediate struggles with a full socialist programme for transforming society.

A well-attended fringe meeting on the Thursday evening of Labour Party conference decided to set up a 'Labour Party Defend the NUM Co-ordinating Committee'. It is circulating a statement for Labour activists to associate themselves with Arthur Scargill's 'contempt of court', and is considering plans for a conference. Contact, c/o Jane Stockton, 31 Cranwich Road, London N16.

Ireland and violence



Joan Maynard MP

The debate on Ireland was good and it was important to win the motion opposing plastic bullets, but we need to be more active on that issue. We've already got 15 police forces in this country with the damn things and we need to link together — as I always do — what's going on on the picket lines here with what's been going on in Northern Ireland over the years.

The British labour movement must realise that they can't keep ignoring the Irish situation. It's our responsibility and we can't deny freedom to the Irish people and retain it for ourselves.

On the issue of violence, the British ruling class know all about violence. They've used a hell of a lot of it over the years. After all we didn't have a big empire and a lot of colonies without using a lot of violence to get them. And the ruling class in this country, after the victory they had last year, are sufficiently confident to use that violence against our workers.

They are the people who have triggered off the violence on the picket lines.

What we did

John Bloxam reports on what Socialist Organiser did at Labour Party conference.

Every day at Labour Party conference from Sunday afternoon to Friday morning, we produced a Conference Briefing for delegates and visitors. It included a daily conference diary by Newark CLP delegate and Notts striking miner Paul Whetton.

£80 was collected at conference on Thursday and Friday mornings to help cover the cost.

65 copies of last week's Socialist Organiser — 'To Hell with the Courts' — were sold on Thursday and Friday and we got a number of donations. We also distributed a number of papers free to striking miners at the conference.

Our fringe meeting was on Tuesday evening, jointly organised with the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee.

Seventy people came to hear the discussion on 'Strikers Speak Out — the rank and file view'. Lol Duffy, secretary of the Lairds occupation committee, was due to speak, but he couldn't because he was locked up in Walton Jail. Mick Cashman spoke instead and brought a message from Lol.

Albert Bowns, Kiveton Park NUM, Paul Whetton and a speaker from Hyndburn Women's Action Group were the other speakers.

The miners at the meeting agreed that the whole collection should be given to the Cammell Lairds occupiers.

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CONFERENCE DECISIONS

Monday October 1: Labour Party conference overwhelmingly backs the miners and condemns police violence on the picket lines. It 'fully supports trade unions drawn into confrontation with the police through the actions of this government...' and calls on the next Labour government to 'immediately ban the use of riot equipment, mounted police, dogs or any other inappropriate means for the policing of industrial disputes'.

Conference demands that the next Labour government 'enact legislation to make sure the police play no part in industrial disputes'. The prospect of employers being deprived of help from the state's uniformed scab-herders so alarms Neil Kinnock that he makes a point of telling the press that he would ignore this conference decision.

Arthur Scargill is served with a High Court writ as he sits in the conference and immediately says he will defy it.

The proposals for an optional replacement of General Committee votes by postal or other ballots of Constituency Labour Party members for reselection of MPs are defeated. A move to accept the principle and defer proposals to next year is also beaten, despite TGWU support.

So the existing rules stand. The proposals would have undermined MPs' accountability to GCs in favour of the referendum-type 'votes of confidence' and would have denied trade union delegates any say.

Tuesday

Tuesday October 2: Neil Kinnock speaks — supports the miners, but piously denounced 'all violence, without fear or favour', in the first place 'the violence of the stone throwers and the battering ram carriers'.

Many delegates point out that Kinnock could speak with more credibility on this issue if he had been on the picket lines himself

Colin Foster sums up

— preferably dressed so as to be one of the crowd, so that he can see for himself what ordinary miners face from the police.

Standing ovation for fraternal delegate from Nicaragua, who appeals for support against US aggression.

Elections for the National Executive — little change. Sam McCluskie (Kinnockite) narrowly defeats Albert Booth (Left) for Treasurer. John Golding defeated in trade union section; Eric Clarke (NUM) replaces Roy Evans (ISTC); Eddie Haigh (TGWU) takes McCluskie's place in that section. In the women's section, right-winger Anne Davis ousts centre-left member Ann Clwyd. No change in the constituencies section, but the seven sitting left-wingers increase their lead over the right wing runners-up.

Overall, roughly a 16-13 majority for Kinnock and Hattersley against the left.

NEC election results also show how far there is to go in the fight for women's and black rights in the Labour Party. he two women in the left slate for the constituencies section — Jo Richardson and Audrey Wise — come 100,000 votes behind the men, and Diane Abbott, the black member, trails last in the left slate for the women's section.

Wednesday

Wednesday October 3: Approval for black sections rejected by a huge trade union block vote. About half the Constituency Labour Party delegates vote for it.

National Executive statement on defence accepted. Alongside of reaffirmation of existing policy on Cruise, Trident, and nuclear disarmament, it slips in a closer commitment to NATO and proposals to increase spending on conventional armed forces. Proposal to remove all US bases defeated.

Friday

Friday October 5: Conference overturns the platform recommendation to call for the abolition of no-jury courts in Northern Ireland. It also repeats its call for the banning of plastic bullets. But a resolution demanding British withdrawal from Ireland is defeated.

Conference calls for an inquiry into the sinking of the Belgrano, and condemns the Khomeini regime in Iran.

Conference, against platform advice, pledges backing to Labour councils which defy Tory law to fight rate capping abolition.

Conference agrees to send a message of support to the jailed Cammell Laird workers: but the TGWU (with Moss Evans in the forefront) backs down on an emergency resolution supporting the miners against the threat of legal action.

Thursday

Thursday October 4: Not a good day. All the following are defeated:

*A resolution calling for industrial action in defiance of the law to support unions penalised under Tory laws.

*Renationalisation without compensation. (The conference decides 'no speculative gains instead').

*Women's resolutions calling for reforms long demanded by the Labour Women's Conference. (Though one of the strongest speeches in favour comes from NUM delegate John Burrows).

*A call for the next Labour government immediately to introduce a 35 hour week and pension age of 60.

The National Executive economic document, 'A Future that Works', is approved. It further waters down Labour economic policy, reducing it to little more than the idea that Keynesian reflation might do some good, but we should not expect too much.

Why Scargill is wrong - by Lech

by ROBERT ERINGER

LECH WALESA has condemned violent tactics in Britain's pit strike.

Poland's Solidarity founder said: "The workers should fight, but with common sense — not with destruction."

"Because whatever is destroyed has to be rebuilt."

"I disagree with any violence. The workers should demand the maximum, but not at the risk of bankrupting the employer."

Walesa had a message for NUM President Arthur Scargill: "Go into the matter carefully and assess how much one can squeeze. But without destroying."

"It is forbidden that ambition take precedence over logic."

"Trade union activists should lock away their ambitions."

"They should calculate their ambitions."



Poland's government has been sending scab coal to Britain, while Solidarnosc has declared support for the NUM. But some people on the Left are using a *Sunday Mirror* report that Lech Walesa attacked Arthur Scargill to justify their hostility to Solidarnosc. John O'Mahony discusses the issues.

THE *Sunday Mirror* some weeks ago printed an account of an interview by Robert Eringer with Solidarnosc leader Lech Walesa in which Walesa appeared to side with Margaret Thatcher against the miners. The *Sunday Mirror* headlined Eringer's piece "Why Scargill is wrong — by Lech". Quite a lot of Solidarnosc's friends in Britain were shocked and its opponents, semi-opponents and outright enemies — of whom there are a very large number in the British labour movement — seized on the article. It is cited again and again by labour movement activists to condemn Solidarnosc.

What did Walesa say? That is less clear than the *Sunday Mirror*'s headline suggests but I will quote the *Sunday Mirror*.

After an opening sentence by the interviewer (or the sub-editor in the *Sunday Mirror* office), "Lech Walesa has condemned violent tactics in Britain's pit strike", Walesa is quoted as saying:

"The miners should fight, but with common sense — not with destruction."

"Because whatever is destroyed has to be rebuilt."

"I disagree with any violence. The workers should demand the maximum, but not at the risk of bankrupting the employer."

The interviewer (or sub-editor) introduces another quote like this: "Walesa had a message for Arthur Scargill". This is the "message": "Go

into the matter carefully and assess how much one can squeeze. But without destroying."

It is forbidden that ambition takes precedence over hope."

Trade union activists should lock away their ambitions."

They should calculate on their computers how much they can get but, I repeat, not at the sake (sic) of destroying the structure."

Eringer then says that Walesa expressed "much respect" for Margaret Thatcher and quotes him: "With such a wise and brave woman, Britain will find a solution to the strike."

Philosophising

I have cited all the direct quotes attributed to Walesa about the miners' strike and about Thatcher.

Now it is by no means impossible that Walesa would condemn trade union "violence" or produce this rather vapid philosophising on realistic trade unionism. And he may well think Margaret Thatcher is wise and brave — because of her strident rhetoric against the USSR, Poland's overlord.

These views would identify him as right wing or soft left if he operated in the British labour movement.

But for many on the left it isn't a matter of disagreeing with Walesa. They question Solidarnosc's right to exist. They seize on things like the

Workers' unity East and West

Why we should back Solidarnosc — despite Fleet Street's effort to use Lech Walesa against the miners

Sunday Mirror article to support the grotesque idea that the entire Polish labour movement is reactionary or "counter-revolutionary". They adopt a soft, tolerant or even friendly attitude to the Jaruzelski regime which has been trying to destroy the Polish independent trade union.

The refusal of the Morning Star to print a paid ad or a letter condemning Jaruzelski for sending scab coal to Britain is one measure of the state of the British labour movement on this question: the Morning Star was clearly confident that it would not suffer for this implicit solidarising with Jaruzelski against the miners.

In an interview in last week's Socialist Organiser, Tony Benn responded to a question about Polish scab coal by asking: "But what about Walesa supporting Thatcher?" And Benn didn't sign the letter to the Morning Star.

Lech Walesa may — or he may not, as we shall see — have given the *Sunday Mirror* the comments which were used against the miners. We know for certain that Jaruzelski has sent scab coal to help Thatcher, increasing by three times Poland's exports of coal to Britain since the miners' strike began.

So Walesa may have made a few Neil Kinnock-like comments to the *Sunday Mirror* criticising miners' violence and Arthur Scargill's ambition. The conclusion does not follow that Jaruzelski — who gives Thatcher scab coal — was therefore justified in banning the Polish trade unions and attempting to destroy them!

Eric Heffer was right when he said in Socialist Organiser two weeks ago: "The entire movement in this country should have given Solidarnosc total support. Free trade unions [in Poland] would not have allowed coal to come in now".

The same message came in a broadcast from Solidarnosc miners in Silesia:

"The underground Provision-

al Coordinating Committee of Silesian miners sends you fraternal greetings and our support and solidarity for your struggle for the right to work...

"We will do everything possible to support your struggle, including in action. The protest we have sent to the Polish government and Parliament is an initial measure taken in support of your struggle".

In Socialist Organiser we have also published this message from the Inter-Factory Network of Solidarnosc in the Warsaw area:

"The slave labour of the Polish miners serves to break the resistance of the British miners."

"British miners! In the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in a position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain that we are in solidarity with you".

International

David Jastrzebski, president of the Solidarnosc committee in Upper Silesia, has sent this letter "to the striking miners of Great Britain":

"Our organisation sends you full support for your struggle. We are full of admiration for your stance and your unflinching willingness to struggle. We believe you will achieve your goals."

"Neither the British government's mounted police charges nor its truncheon blows, any more than the Polish junta's tanks or rifle fire, can break our common will to struggle for a better future for the working class."

"We appeal to all members of Solidarnosc to support your struggle. Only the international struggle of the mass of workers can decide our fate".

To Arthur Scargill personally Jastrzebski wrote:

"Allow me to send you the expression of my support and my enthusiasm. For many weeks you have represented the interests of your trade union with dignity."

"At the same time I ask you to consider our own difficult

situation — activity which is clandestine and under totalitarian threats — which means that there are many things we cannot resolve rapidly, often for security reasons.

"In the coming weeks we will send you greetings from other organisations [of Solidarnosc] which support your struggle...."

"I wish you the best, and above all victory. I ask you to send our greetings to all British miners and our best wishes."

"Personally I am convinced that thanks to the attitude of your trade union victory is within your grasp".

In any case, whatever Walesa might say against 'violence' or against Arthur Scargill is irrelevant to the right of the Polish workers' movement to exist. Our duty to defend its right to exist cannot depend on the opinions of one of its leaders — or of Solidarnosc itself.

There are many in our own unions and in the Labour Party who condemn the miners and would like to cut Arthur Scargill's throat. We denounce them of course — and we organise against them. Only a suicidal maniac would conclude that trade unions, because they are led by Eric Hammond or John Lyons or David Basnett, forfeit their right to exist. Yet that is the underlying idea of those who pounce on Walesa's interview and say "We told you so" about Solidarnosc.

Walesa is quoted saying things against a section of the British labour movement — therefore it is right for the Stalinist dictatorship to destroy the Polish labour movement? It is preposterous.

Solidarnosc is a great working class mass movement, which had ten million members when it was outlawed in December 1981, 18 months after coming into being.

It is a unique movement. Never before have independent trade unions emerged in any Stalinist state.

Such a movement will span an immense range of opinions, as ours does. The 11 million strong British labour movement has Labour Party right wingers, Liberals, SDPers, Tories, racists, some fascists and... Stalinist supporters of foreign anti-working class dictatorships like Jaruzelski's.

Our movement — unlike Solidarnosc — is led by a quite distinct caste of materially privileged bureaucrats. We propose to change it politically, reconstitute it, democratise it — not help the 'reforming' Tories put it down.

Nor can it make any difference that industry is nationalised in Poland and Jaruzelski can perhaps claim to be defending nationalised property (though Solidarnosc did not threaten to attack it).

For socialists, nationalisation is a means to an end, not the end: the end is socialism. The



Scargill should unite with Walesa against Jaruzelski

liberation of the working class from capitalist exploitation and from state tyranny.

Nationalisation is necessary for socialism, but it is not socialism, nor the only condition for socialism.

In the Stalinist states nationalised property is controlled by privileged bureaucrats by means of state tyranny over the people unparalleled in history.

The Polish labour movement was born in conflict with a state tyranny much of whose power over society comes from the state's control of the means of production.

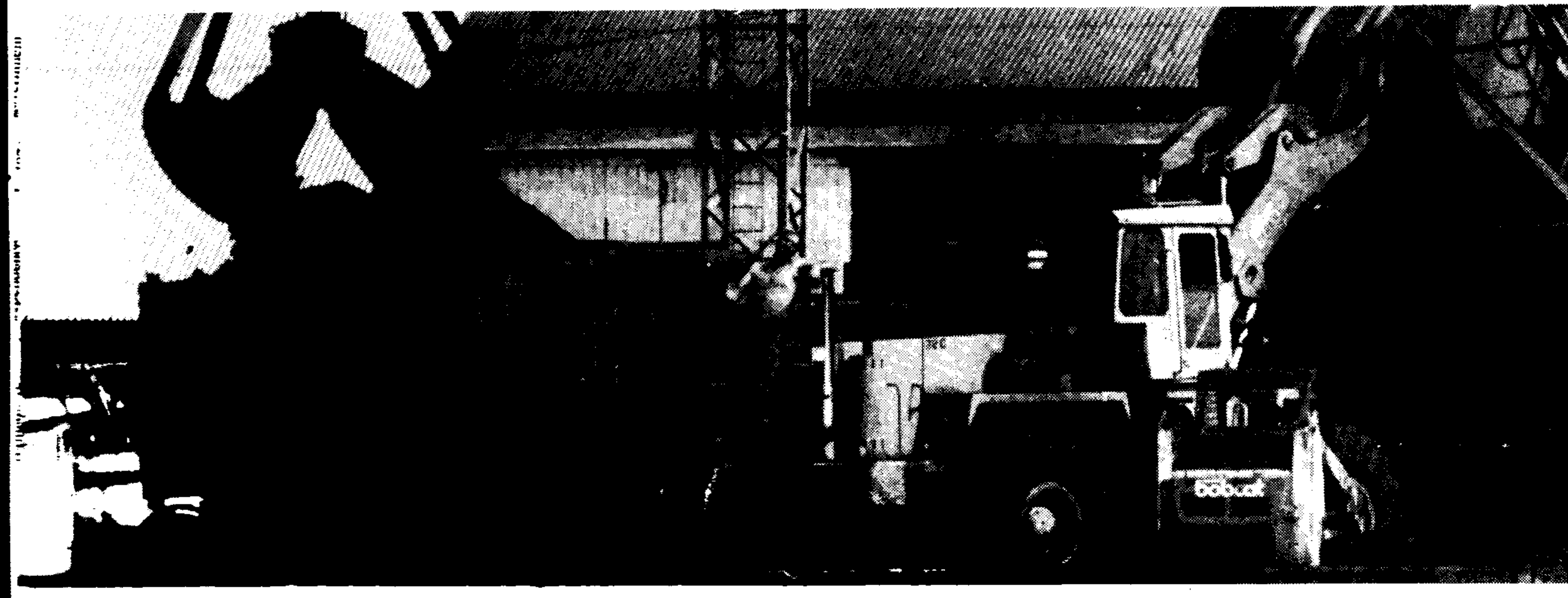
Suppose that movement were, in reaction against Stalinism, to advocate restoring capitalism — though Solidarnosc did nothing of the sort — even that could not lead working class socialists to side with a Jaruzelski standing for nationalisation and "socialism" against "counter-revolution".

Real socialism which liberates the working class, and therefore society, from both exploitation and state tyranny, can only be created by the working class itself, acting in freedom.

Parasitic

The Polish labour movement — even were it making terrible errors — is a great deal more important for socialism than is nationalised property under the control of a tyrannical bureaucracy, parasitic on the labour of the workers and holding them in a police state vice.

The right of the labour movement to live, its ability to grow and to discuss its experiences and its programme for society — nothing in Poland, or in any of the Stalinist states, has a greater value than that, for socialists



Conveyor belt at Flixborough JOHN HARRIS



No violence? Solidarnosc pickets at Gdansk (above) were ready to meet the violence of the bureaucratic Polish State

who base themselves on the first letter of the socialist alphabet, formulated by Karl Marx as follows:

"The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the workers themselves".

In fact Solidarnosc did not propose to restore capitalism.

In fact Walesa is in no way the equivalent of our own tame right wing trade union leaders — he is in working class history the equivalent of figures like Tom Mann, Jim Larkin, AJ Cook or... Arthur Scargill.

And in fact it is by no means certain that Walesa said what the Sunday Mirror puts in his mouth. In so far as I can find out an interview was in fact given by Walesa to Robert Eringer, who is an American or Canadian freelance journalist.

However, the comments quoted from Walesa do not justify or license the Sunday Mirror's headline. The quotes are all just snippets, too short for any context to be discernable.

It is not indicated to what questions Walesa was responding to. You have to take it on trust that Walesa is not being quoted out of context by the interviewer, or by the office sub-editor who gave the article its final shape.

What would Walesa — who was an underground free trade union activist and a victimised and persecuted militant for years before the strikes of 1980 — say in response to questions from a militant miner who told him the facts?

Worse than that. The impression created by the interview is achieved by the headline and by the reporter's or sub-editor's comments, inserted before the quotes from Walesa. You depend on these inserts for much of the sense of what Walesa is made to seem to be saying.

Right at the beginning it is the Sunday Mirror which says Lech Walesa condemns "violent tactics in Britain's pit strike". Walesa doesn't say that as quoted. The Sunday Mirror says he is condemning the miners, but unless you know what question he is responding to, or the broader context of what is quoted, you have only the Sunday Mirror's word for it. For all you can know for sure from what is quoted, Walesa might even have just been talking generally and talking too in the certain knowledge that the Polish secret police were recording every word for possible use against him.

Take the question about assessing "how much one can squeeze" and about "ambition". It is the reporter

who says it is "a message for Arthur Scargill". Apart from the "framing" first sentence all you have there is Walesa philosophising in general terms about sensible trade unionism.

The reporter or the sub-editor has clearly pruned, cut, selected and processed the "raw material" provided by Walesa. Yet the quotes are presented as continuous and breaks aren't indicated. For example that is plainly what happened in the following passage. The first sentence obviously doesn't go with what follows, though they are put into a single paragraph: "I disagree with any violence. The workers should demand the maximum, but not at the risk of bankrupting the employer."

Trustworthy

So the Sunday Mirror article is not reliable, trustworthy reporting. A careful reading of the article shows that it has little hard, indisputably authentic information about what Walesa thinks of the miners' strike.

The article has many of the marks of something "processed" in the newspaper office and slanted to make a pretty routine interview topical and interesting by linking it to current news in Britain and in a piquant and unexpected way.

Walesa may have expressed such views and it may be that he admires Mrs Thatcher for her hostility to the USSR. But we have no reason to take the Sunday Mirror's word for it.

Many oppositionists in East Europe and the USSR — and probably Walesa — do have a friendly attitude to people like Thatcher and Reagan because they are strident enemies of the Kremlin. Their attitude is: my enemy's enemy is my friend.

For a Walesa that is shortsighted and based on a fundamental misunderstanding.

Thatcher and Reagan may say

kind things about Solidarnosc because it is opposed to the Kremlin, but they are hostile to their own 'Solidarnosc' and use the law and the police against them.

Like the Kremlin bureaucrats, in fact, who try to use the labour movements in the west while stamping on the workers in their own domain.

Oppositionists in the East who favour the West are merely a mirror image of those workers in capitalist society who adopt a friendly attitude to the Stalinist dictatorships. Our Stalinists and quasi-Stalinists see only everything negative in the west and think nationalised property is working class socialism in the East. So they favour the east.

The oppositionists in the East see that there is personal freedom in the west, the right of the workers to organise trade unions and political parties and to publish more or less what they like, the rule of law in contrast to the arbitrary state tyranny in the Stalinist states, so they idealise the west.

Both views are one-sided and false: indeed, the easterners' view is probably less one-sided and less false than that of the Stalinist workers in the west.

It is no small difference, after all, that in the advanced capitalist countries we have won the right — through centuries of struggle — to organise freely, while everywhere in the east the workers are subjected to a savage repression which nips in the bud every stirring of independent working class activity and jails or kills its organisers.

It is easy to understand why the eastern oppositionists and especially the fighters for free trade unions in a Stalinist state might idealise the advanced capitalist countries. They shouldn't, of course.

We who live in a country like Britain know how hollowed-out much of the freedom and democracy is, where the multi-

millionaires rule, backed by an anti-working class state. We know that the workers are savagely exploited under capitalism and have to fight every inch of the way, as the miners are having to fight now.

If Walesa were really to attack the miners and Scargill he would only be paralleling the attitude Scargill has adopted to Solidarnosc. In fact it is highly improbable that Walesa would not protest if the Tory government banned the TUC and jailed thousands of militants.

According to the Sunday Mirror Walesa attacked miners' "violence". But large sections of the British labour movement, including Scargill have attacked Solidarnosc's very right to exist.

They failed even to protest when it was banned, and they told British workers that Jaruzelski represented socialism in Poland and the Polish labour movement was counter-revolutionary.

Scargill's hostile comments on Solidarnosc will have been used by the Polish media against Solidarnosc just as the Mirror used the Walesa interview against the miners.

Scargill said at a meeting in Sheffield a couple of months ago "I think I owe Lech Walesa an apology".

In any case he owes Lech Walesa and Solidarnosc basic working class solidarity.

I read somewhere that back in the middle ages when landlords and priests oppressed peasants and enslaved serfs, lots of peasants worshipped the devil. They reasoned that since the Christian god was the god of their oppressors, and the devil was his enemy, they had better side with the devil.

Rebels and oppositionists in both east and west today too often approach the east-west division of the world into capitalist and Stalinist camps in that spirit.

Consistent

Instead of such ideas we need independent working class politics east and west. Workers, east and west, should support each other against the oppression of both the capitalist and Stalinist systems. We need consistent international working class solidarity.

For the British labour movement that must mean:

*Active support for Solidarnosc.

*Support for free trade unions in all the Stalinist states and for those trying to organise them.

*Break off "fraternal" contact between the TUC unions and the police state fake unions which exist in the Stalinist states.

Hospitals strike against hive-off

DOMESTIC staff in Haringey hospitals have struck against privatisation measures. The main hospital in the area, the North

By Mick O'Sullivan

Middlesex, is completely s... and Tuesday saw a picket at St Ann's Hospital. The strike is s... to last a week.

Haringey District Health Authority is trying to hive off catering and laundry services in line with Tory government instructions.

Two hospitals have recently been closed in Haringey. There is now only one understaffed accident and emergency unit and the government has already cut Haringey's budget since 1982/3 by £1.2 million.

Another Duke of York

By Rob Dawber

ONCE again the NUR and ASLEF have done their Grand Old Duke of York trick. For the fourth time now during the NUM dispute both unions have geared up for major demands and prepared industrial action, only to call off industrial action at the eleventh hour when a part of the demands have been granted.

And of course what has been granted has been to keep the NUM isolated, rather than risk opening up a "second front" for the government.

Peanuts

The rail unions have settled for peanuts compared with what they could have got from the British Railways Board.

The latest example is the rail strike for October 9 in South Yorkshire, North Notts and North Derbyshire, called to end management's harassment and victimisation of members, refusing to handle coal, coke or oil in line with union instructions.

Apart from threats and pressure put on individuals breaking of agreements on manning of signal boxes, etc., train crews at Shirebrook were having all payments stopped, including tax rebates, by a combination of lock-outs and management declarations that they were on strike.

Decision

The decision to strike came as a result of pressure from South Yorkshire because of frustration at BR having gone back on a promise on July 31 to end the victimisation.

It took the national leaderships two months, to the end of September, to do something. And on October 5 they called it off.

The settlement was that BR would make the payments to train crews at Shirebrook and stop holding up tax rebates. They promised, again, to look into allegations of harassment. The settlement is better, compared to what was demanded, than on the last two occasions when action was called off.

But it could have been better still. And the rail unions could have used the government's fear of a "second front" to gain a great deal more, at the same time helping the NUM.

The action was too long in coming and too soon called off.

London stewards

WEDNESDAY October 17 see the London local authority steward's organisation 'London Bridge' stepping out with a mobilising rally for the strike against rate capping and abolition of the Greater London Council, called for November 7.

For the first time, stewards in the London boroughs will be able to get together, to see the workers in the different boroughs face similar problems and are developing the same defiant stand against government cuts.

No one should underestimate the difficulties facing the movement in organising itself around a policy which will force the government to back down.

But the emergence of 'London Bridge', the rally, and the strike call, testify to the fact that we have moved a long way.

The greatest strength of the 'London Bridge' committee is that it unites craft, manual and white collar workers in a common cause.

The role of the stewards is central now. They have to get the message across to the shop floor and to get them involved. It is the stewards who are going to make or break the whole fight back.

Sheffield NALGO

By Helen Rigby

The strike by NALGO members in Sheffield's Housing Department is now in its sixth week with 650 out of indefinite strike.

Negotiations continue against a background of suspensions and strike-breaking.

Last week nine Treasury Department employees received letters of suspension for refusing to carry out the work of 19 cashiers out of strike.

Friday saw the threatened suspension of ten members of the Education Department.

Both sides have pledged no further escalation of the dispute, at least until the end of the week.

Support for the strike is growing in the other departments. The Education Department are poised to come out and the result of a ballot of committee clerks will be known later this week.

A Town Hall-wide dispute becomes a realistic proposition.



Looking for their friends in the West...

Socialist ORGANISER

Letters

SEND messages of support to the jailed workers at 1 Wing, Walton Prison, Hornby Road, Liverpool.

Their names are: Chris Whitley, Barry Golden, Billy Albertina, John Dooley, Jim McCarthy, Eddie Marnel, Andrew Fraser, Aidan Morley, Sam Morley, Mick Mooney, Chris Bilisborough, Chris Thompson, Paul Hennessey, Eddie Kenny, Colin Airie, Tommy Wilson, Paul Little, Franny Albertina, Anthony McGarry, Michael Byrne, Tommy Webb, George Whittaker, Francis Roach, Eddie Albertina, Joseph Flynn, Tommy Culshaw, Jimmy Barton, Tommy Cassidy, Alan Prior, John Brady, Phil McKeown, Lol Duffy, Nicky Fenlon, John Albertina, John Wright, Stevie Smith, Jimmy Albertina.

Send as many letters as you can. The workers are normally held in their cells 23 hours a day, but they are allowed to leave their cells to collect letters.



Wives of Cammell Laird workers protest at their husbands' arrest - Liverpool, 8 October

Support class war prisoners!

37 workers from Cammell Lairds shipyard have been jailed for a month for fighting for their jobs.

11 were arrested on Monday, 1st, and another 26 on Wednesday 3rd.

They had been occupying a frigate and a gas rig in the yard for three months, and a High Court judge had decided that this crime against the rights of property deserved one month's jail.

The occupation was the last step in a long battle to save jobs at the yard.

Factories have been closing one after another for many years on Merseyside. Cammell Lairds is about the only heavy engineering place left in Birkenhead.

At one time it employed 20,000 workers. At the beginning of this year it was 3300. A total of 1600 redundancies have been declared so far this year, and it seems to be only a matter of time before the yard is closed down altogether.

A message from Walton Jail

"We've told the court that there's no way we're apologising.

We're fighting for jobs, not just for ourselves but for the whole working class community here. If Lairds closes, there's nowhere else to go but the dole.

We're proud of what we've done. What we need now, and what we're asking for, is solidarity action from other trade unionists."

Lol Duffy, secretary of the Lairds occupation committee, currently held in Walton Jail.

There is nowhere else for the Lairds workers to go — except for the dole queue and a life of poverty and despair.

Early this year shipyard workers nationwide voted overwhelmingly in a ballot for a strike for a wage increase and for a 35 hour week to save jobs

— in opposition to British Shipbuilders' 'survival plan' which would massacre the industry.

The strike was due to start on January 6. Union leaders called it off on January 5 — without consultation and with no concessions from the bosses.

Soon Scott Lithgow shipyard

was sold off, with massive job cuts. It was the latest of a string of closures and sell-offs. The nearest to action the union leaders had ever got was a series of one-day strikes over Robb Caledon in Dundee.

Lairds was left on its own. The frigate and the gas rig were the last work left in the yard, with about six months' work left on the rig and a few months' on the frigate.

Management planned to move the gas rig out to France and take the frigate out 'on trials'. Without the vessels, the Lairds workers would have no work and no bargaining power.

Determined

A number of the workers in the yard were demoralised by previous defeats and felt they could do nothing but keep their heads down, hope for the best, and take redundancy money if they got the chance.

But the militants were determined to fight. On June 27 they occupied the rig, and on July 3 the frigate. The rest of the hourly-paid workers were laid off. Messages of support came in from striking miners and from other union and Labour Party bodies.

Management encouraged a 'back to work' movement round a Lairds version of 'Silver Birch' named Harry Euers. On August 13 there was a 'back to work' meeting, with a claimed attendance of 500. Management offered a full eight hours' pay to anyone coming in to the meeting.

But the sit-in stayed solid. On

August 22 the workers sitting-in voted to defy a management instruction to leave. On August 28 a 200-strong mass picket gathered outside the yard to support them.

Then the management went to the courts, and got a writ to force the workers to leave. The workers ignored it, and got support on September 8 from a national shipbuilding combine committee.

On September 13 Cammell Lairds bosses went back to the courts to get an enforcement order, and on September 26 they got a decision from the court that the workers must end the occupation or be jailed for a month.

What was needed, as soon as police enforced these orders, was strike action from other yards and other workplaces. Workers from the occupation called for this action. Unfortunately, the local leadership of their union, the GMBU, has done nothing so far to get strike action.

Picket

On Monday 8th a mass picket tried to stop Lairds restarting work at the yard. The local Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions had called on workers to respect the picket, but about half the hourly-paid workers went in.

Solidarity action is still needed, and still possible. It requires strong pressure on union leaders locally and nationally, and the picket at Lairds being kept up to reduce the numbers going in.

Demo called for Friday

The GMBU, the union of the 37 jailed Lairds shipyard workers, has called a national demonstration in their support for this Friday, October 12.

It will assemble at noon at Shaw St, Liverpool, to march to the Pierhead.

Militants on Merseyside are campaigning for strike action to coincide with the demonstration.

A 24 hour picket is also being maintained at the Lairds yard. Support is especially needed around 7am, the hourly-paid workers' starting time, and there may be a mass picket next Monday, 15th.

Fighting to save jobs

ONE of the jailed workers is Lol Duffy, secretary of the occupation committee and also secretary of the local Socialist Organiser group.

Lol is a GMBU shop steward, secretary of the shipyard Labour Party workplace branch, and chair of Wirral District Labour Party.

He has been an active trade unionist and socialist all his working life, and for many years actively committed to the struggle to build a Marxist organisation in the working class movement.

He joined the Workers' Fight group, one of the forerunners of the Socialist Organiser Alliance, in 1974, at the age of 18. He was then an apprentice at Smiths Dock, Teesside.

He helped build, and became the secretary of, a local Labour Party Young Socialists branch in Eston.

In 1977, after a brief period in Sheffield, he moved to Merseyside, and soon found a job at Lairds.

Last year he featured in

Ken Loach's TV film, 'The Red and the Blue', about Labour Party conference. Lol had been the delegate to 1982 conference from Wallasey Constituency Labour Party.

Now the High Court says that Lol Duffy is a criminal. To be a socialist, and to put your ideas into practice by fighting for the right to work in defiance of the rights of property, is a crime.

Vauxhall strike

AN indefinite national strike at Vauxhall car plants has begun over pay and jobs. 10,000 workers in Merseyside and Luton have downed tools, bringing production in Vauxhall plants to a halt.

Engineers and electricians at Ellesmere Port in Merseyside are out, along with 7,500 manual workers in Luton. In Dunstable, track, trim and paintshop workers have gone home and agreed not to cross picket lines.

Meanwhile at the Jaguar plant in Coventry, workers have rejected a 21% pay increase over two years; and on Friday BL's Austin Rover workers are expected to demand a £22 a week increase at the end of a two year pay deal.

The Vauxhall strike is the first in what looks like a bad pay round for car industry bosses. The workers have rejected a 6% pay increase combined with a further 1.5% that consolidates a £2 productivity bonus.

Vauxhall is part of the huge General Motors multinational, whose accounts cover world-wide production. Consequently workers are suspicious of the figures that they have been shown.

Workers are also angry over the increasing use of new technology for which they are not being paid, and proposals to change work practices.



Join the Labour Party. Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.

Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

AS WE reported last week, we need to collect £800 in 'ordinary' fund money very quickly, to get our regular budget straight, before we can put more aside for the premises fund.

We've had an encouraging £275 over the last two weeks: thanks to P.Hetherington, £5; Mark Copsey, £10; Simon Pottinger, £10; Tony Serjeant, £10; Andy Bennett

£15; Gary Scott, £10; Ian McCalman, £15; Steve Harvey £5 and another £15; Glasgow group, £10; Bas Hardy, £20; Chris Whytehead, a further donation of £25, Jill Mountford, £20; Cardiff group, £100; Bev Wood, two donations of £1 each; Stan Crooke, £3.

Send contributions to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.