

Socialist Organiser

No. 215. February 6 1985 25p (Claimants and strikers 10p)

STOP THIS LYNCH MOB!

“I call on our members to intensify picketing and on the wider movement to give greater industrial support of all kinds in the face of the government’s blatant determination to destroy not only workers’ jobs but trade unionism itself.”

Arthur Scargill

OVER 100,000 miners and their families are still defiantly telling the government that they aren’t beaten yet.

But the Tories have the scent of blood in their nostrils. NUM blood. Labour movement blood. Working class blood.

The Tories are going for the kill. They think it is only a matter of time before the miners are crushed and beaten back to work. They are confident that the official labour movement will not lift a finger to help the miners.

The Tory press is already setting up a howl of indecent triumph.

Mrs Thatcher publicly purrs with malicious joy such as she hasn’t felt since she sent the Belgrano and 350 of its crew to the bottom of the South Atlantic.

The pin-striped Tory yobs in the House of Commons grunt, yak and snarl their satisfaction over the radio airwaves, baying in tune with the press like the lynch mob they are.

If it goes any further they’ll be doing victory dances in

Whitehall.

And well they might – if the miners go down to defeat. They see the prospect of the break up of the NUM.

Beyond that they see the end of effective trade unionism in Britain for a long time to come.

If they are right that they have won, then they have good reason to crow.

Listen, trade unionists, to this howling ruling class lynch mob which thinks it has the miners at its mercy! If they bring down the miners, it will be your turn next.

NUR, ASLEF, AUEW, TGWU – no trade union, no workplace, no group of workers who dare to say “no” to Tory plans will be safe from the bover boot and knuckle duster treatment.

They conduct their semi-militarised police operations against the miners under the slogan of guaranteeing the right

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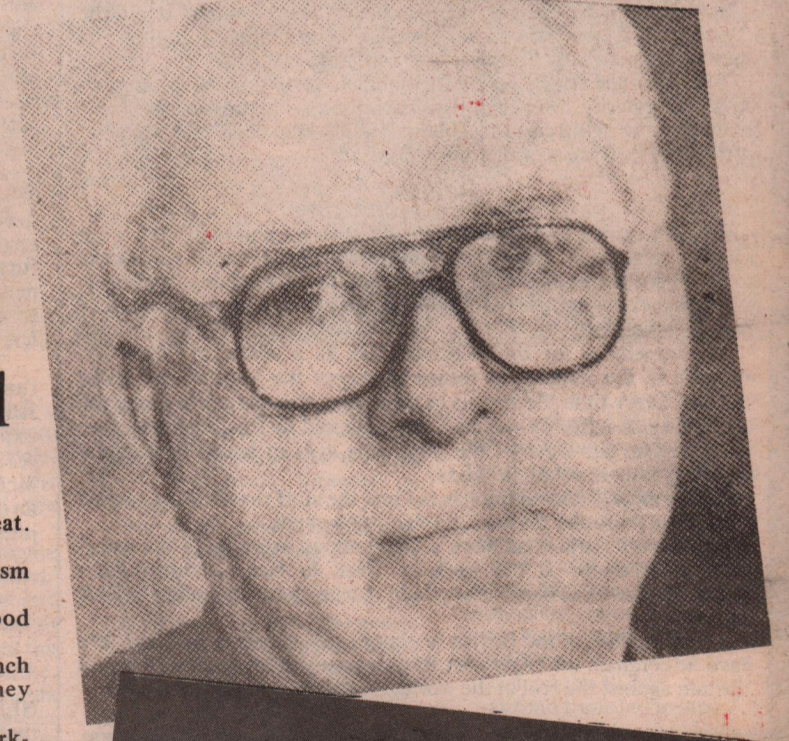
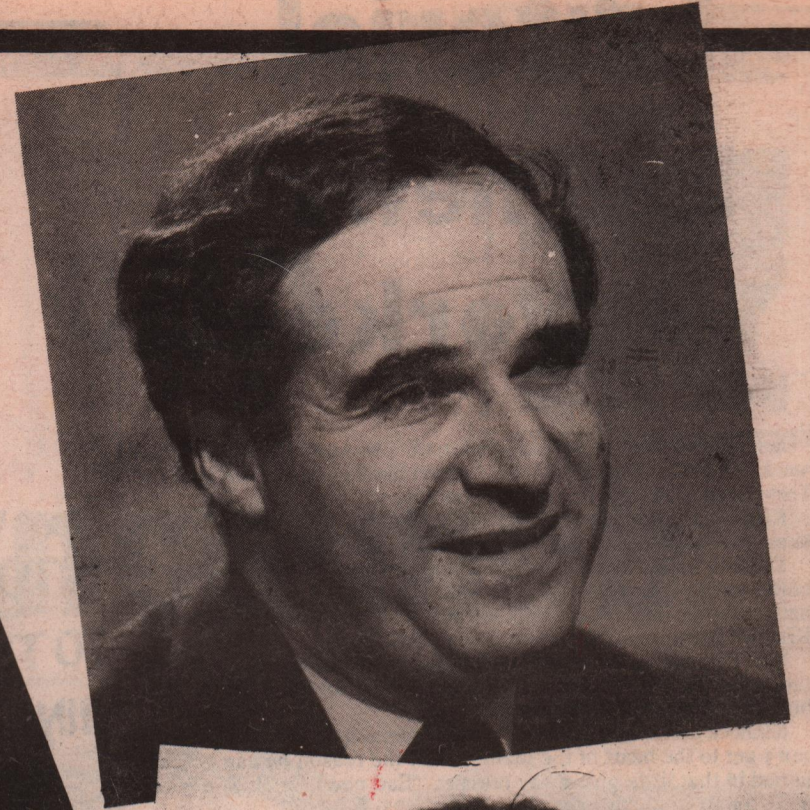


Photo: John Harris

Rally to the NUM

All out on Feb 11

Photos: John Harris

Editorial

Bad news for workers

"Bad news for Britain is bad news for all". So said Neil Kinnock last week, Thursday January 31, in a miserable flop of a censure of the Tories over their handling of the economy.

Kinnock's speech was a flop, but not only because Tory backbenchers drowned him out. He made a mess of it anyway.

Kinnock fluffed it because what was required of him was that he boldly spell out an alternative to Thatcherism — a convincing alternative, rooted in the realities of the situation Britain is in — and Neil Kinnock doesn't have an alternative to Thatcher.

Neil Kinnock came across as someone who can criticise the frills (and even Ted Heath or a near-senile Harold McMillan can do that) but not supply an alternative.

Kinnock and his co-thinkers in the leadership of the Labour Party can't get to the heart of the matter. And the reason he can't is contained in that little give-away phrase: "Bad news for Britain is bad news for all".

Kinnock and the Labour Party leaders look at 'the country' and 'the economy' as a happy family — or one that could be happy with better management. Bosses and workers all do their jobs, and so long as no-one oversteps the mark, everything will be fine.

Right now, things are not altogether fair; and 'monetarism' — the Tory's economic philosophy — is a bad thing.

But juggle about with public expenditure, interest rates and the balance of payments, and all your problems will go away.

The Thatcherite Tories look at things differently. Society, for the Thatcherites, is divided into *classes*. If the bosses are to restore profits, and nudge themselves out of the recession, they must take on and defeat the working class.

Thatcher is right — although she and her party act more by good class instinct than from worked-out theory. In fact their theory also says that 'the economy' is a big family.

But unlike Thatcher, Kinnock accepts the theory and lacks even the faintest flicker of class instincts. Kinnock can't see that 'Britain' is not one big happy family, but a society — like any other capitalist country — torn apart by class conflict.

The capitalist crisis cannot be resolved in the interests of 'the nation'. Either the bosses resolve it in their own interests — by beating down the working class, and, right now, the miners in the first instance; or the working class destroys the whole crisis-ridden system and reorganises society completely.

The difference between two world-views, two different bases for organising economic life is at the centre of the miners' strike.

The call for pit closures on 'economic grounds' expresses the very basic guiding force of the capitalist economy: that people's needs are subordinate to economics — that is, in the final analysis, profit.

From the point of view of 'the national economy', the NCB and the Tories — and now, of course, Kinnock — are right. Keeping pits open is 'bad news for Britain'. 'We' can't afford it.

The aim of the strike — that the needs of people in their communities take priority over such considerations — expresses the basic principle of working class socialism. It is working class "economics" versus the economics of the ruling class.

Poison

Kinnock cannot understand that! He doesn't know what is wrong with capitalism; so he can't offer a remedy. Socialism for Kinnock is something you occasionally talk about, not something realisable which must be fought for as the working class answer to the crisis of British capitalism.

The remedy is for the working class as a whole to follow the example of the miners: to refuse to accept the logic of the profit system. Every time the bosses or their governments try to make the working class suffer for the crisis, they should be fought. Instead we must impose our logic — the logic of a system based on rational planning to meet people's needs.

But Kinnock's non-solution is not just the stuff that flops are made out of. It is poison to the working class movement.

The miners' strike has been a tremendous example of the international solidarity of the working class. In fact, solidarity from foreign workers has been, if anything, better than from other British workers.

The best allies of the British working class are other workers. We have no common interests with British or any other bosses. It is not 'Britain against the rest of the world' — it is class against class.

Councils/Labour Party



Muddling through?

THE annual Labour Party Local Government conference at the weekend was a non-event for most of the delegates attending.

At a time when local authority workers and services face a massive onslaught by the Tories, the conference failed to address the necessary issues of mobilisation and detailed strategy for the fight that is needed.

Neil Kinnock, in his address to the conference at the beginning of the weekend further illustrated the Parliamentary Labour Party's isolation from the rank and file activity and views of the movement.

Emphasising "legality" at a time of necessary defiance of the Tories, he angered many delegates and further demonstrated the need for the rank and file to organise as London Bridge has done in London.

Throughout the weekend, the middle-through view of John Cunningham was expounded. Full time union officials, particularly Alistair McCrae from NUPE and Jack Dromey from the TGWU jumped on the Cunningham

bandwagon, maliciously focusing on the spurious issue of councillors resigning office en masse.

This seems to be a careful ploy to avoid discussion of action and tactics to consoli-

date defiance and was calculated to portray splits in the fragile unity displayed over the tactic of not fixing a rate.

Many local authorities, particularly local authority

leaders from London, were furious with the front-bench spokespeople and some even stormed out of the final session, when Jack Cunningham complemented the Kinnock line.

Stop the lynch-mob

Continued from page 1

of scabs to work. If they crush the NUM then only scabs will have a secure right to work in Thatcher's Britain!

This lynch mob is howling against every militant trade unionist in Britain. The miners are in the front line, but every trade union is in the war zone.

Even NACODS — the mine overseers' union, which last October could have tipped the balance in the miners' favour — are alarmed at what will happen in the coalfields if the NUM is crushed and smashed. They will decide next week if they are going to do anything to stop it.

NACODS have good reason to be alarmed. The British labour movement should be mortally alarmed. Most of the labour movement has stood by and left the miners to fight a long war of attrition in very unfavourable

conditions with a vicious Tory government willing and able to spend thousands of millions of taxpayers' money to break the NUM — and thereby to undermine and break the back of the labour movement.

Solidarity with the miners today is a question of basic self-defence for every trade unionist in Britain.

The Tories' ugly whoops of triumph are premature. They should be a warning to the labour movement.

Don't let the Tories beat the miners! Make next Monday, 11th, into a massive demonstration with the miners, and the first of a series of mass mobilisations by the labour movement in its own self-defence.

The miners can still win! Victory to the miners!

Replace Neil Kinnock!

NEIL Kinnock clearly believes that the miners' strike is over. Wanting the defeat of militant trade unionism — 'Scargillism' — more than he wants the defeat of the Tories, he's not too unhaspappy about this. As a 'senior Labour analyst' told the Sunday Times: "Throughout the country Scargill's supporters are going to get it in the neck. The hard left line that only industrial action could get rid of the Tories and that parliamentary opposition was impotent has patently exploded."

Kinnock has waited until he thinks the strike is defeated before he appears on a picket line. Cheaply, he now proposes that Labour MPs increase their weekly contributions from £5 to £12 out of a wage of over £300 a week! After publicly rounding on the Campaign Group of MPs for fighting for a parliamentary debate on the strike, he agreed to have one after all. Labour won it — no thanks to Neil Kinnock. And even this is not the whole

picture. Kinnock is expelling Labour Party members because he disagrees with them (Militant supporter Brychan Davies was expelled at last month's Labour Party National Executive Committee meeting).

Neil Kinnock is also undermining the possibility of a fight-back in local government in defence of jobs and services. He demands that Labour councils should bow down to the Tories' laws.

Kinnock — and his openly right wing deputy, Roy Hattersley — must go. The serious left should challenge Kinnock and Hattersley for the leadership of the Party.

Use the following resolution:

Use this resolution

Neil Kinnock's equivocal stand on the miners' strike has been a disgrace.

He has tried to equate miners' efforts to defend themselves with police violence. He has said 'commercial considerations' should govern pit closures. It took him ten months to get onto a picket line.

Miners are disgusted with Neil Kinnock's performance. Yet many of them have joined the Labour Party in

order to work with the rank and file who have backed the miners, and in order to challenge Neil Kinnock's equivocation within the Labour Party.

Labour Party activists must not let those miners down, or let the lessons of the miners' strike go unlearned.

We therefore appeal to the Campaign Group of MPs, and to Tony Benn in particular, to challenge Neil Kinnock

and Roy Hattersley for the Labour Party leadership and deputy leadership this year, centring the challenge around the lessons of the miners' strike.

We reject the notion that this would be divisive or destructive. The responsibility for any division rests with Neil Kinnock. The Labour Party has decided on a mechanism for annual election of Party leader, and that mechanism was designed to be used.

Socialist Organiser FORUM
Number 1 February 1985



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The Labour Left and the break up of the Communist Party

THE BRITISH ROAD TO NOWHERE

The state of the strike

Back the
miners

Mass picketing can stop the Tory lynch-mob

By John Bloxam

A series of large mass pickets took place last week in South Yorkshire — Cortonwood one day, Shireoaks the next, and so on. The miners are fighting back against the propaganda barrage aimed at collapsing their eleven month strike.

The NCB claimed that the number of new scabs on Monday and Tuesday was "a record". The union says the figures are exaggerated, to make propaganda to back up the government's drive to demoralise and defeat strikers. The NCB, said Arthur Scargill, is "mixing figures like people mix cocktails in the West End."

The fact is that 130,000 miners, the overwhelming majority of miners who came out eleven months ago — are still on strike. Even the NCB admits that 106,000 miners are still out.

But whatever the exact number of new scabs, it is true that a steady stream of strikers seem to be giving up and letting themselves be driven back to work. The union doesn't deny it. Inevitably this drift back puts pressure on the strikers and encourages Thatcher's belief that her lust for the NUM's blood can be satisfied.

Unless the flow of beaten miners going back to work on NCB conditions is either stemmed or counteracted by new pressure on the government, we can expect more versions of last week's ugly charade, when the government cynically played with the prospects of negotiations, like a cat with a mouse.

Last week, the Barnsley and South Yorkshire NUM issued a leaflet which spelled out the situation facing the strikers: "Stand together. Victory will come". But — "a further drift back will undermine the union. Management will have you at their mercy. All the local agreements will be broken...If the drift back continues, we will lose everything: the pits, the jobs and all our hopes for the future — four-day week, early retirement, jobs for young people."

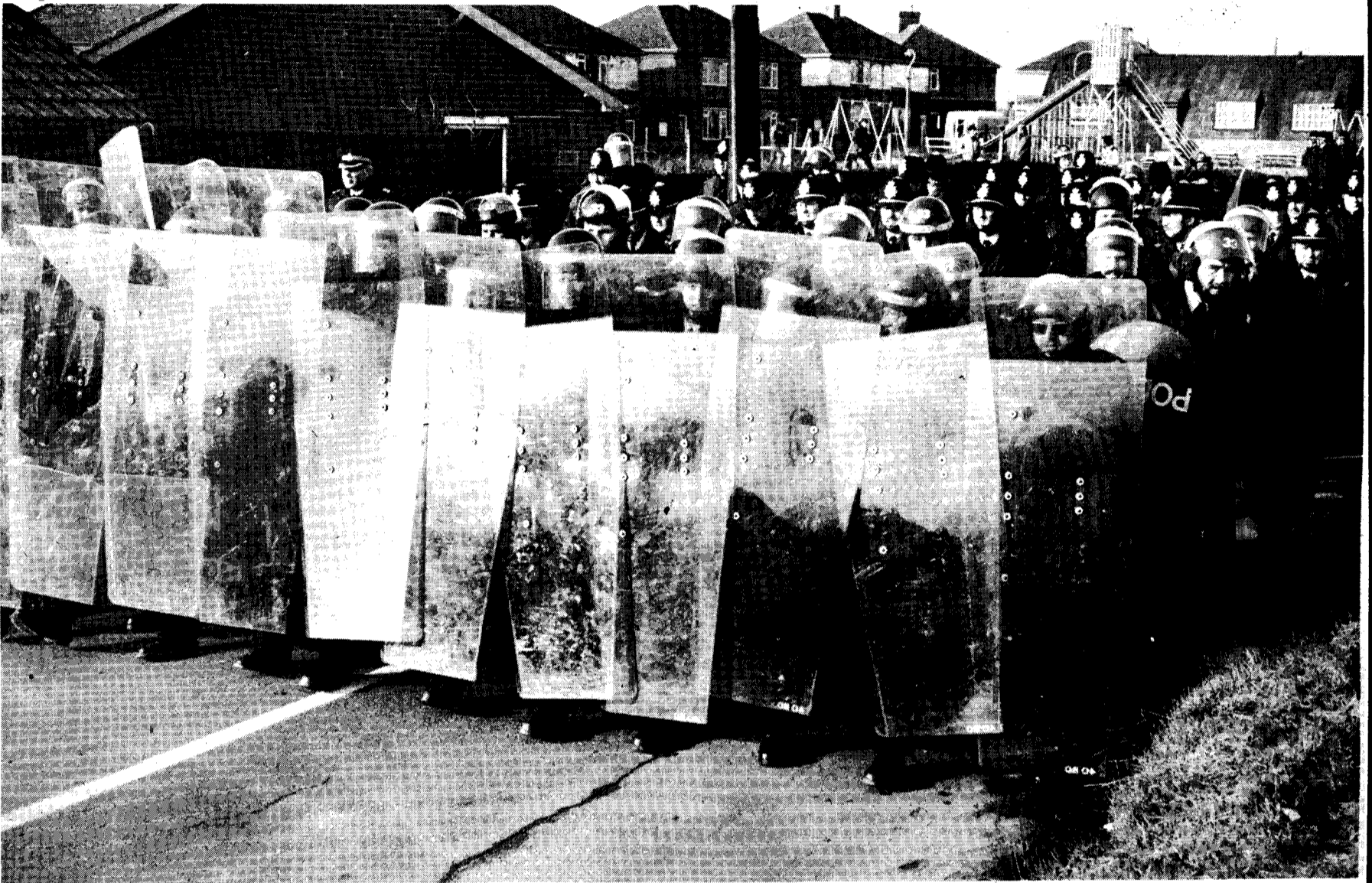
Striking miners have responded with more than leaflets — with mass picketing in South Yorkshire. The threat of large-scale scabbing on Monday produced larger than normal pickets — both in Yorkshire and other areas. The police's reply was to reintroduce roadblocks in key areas.

In key South Yorkshire pits, Notts strikers are now regularly on the picket lines in solidarity. On Monday, 30 Ollerton strikers were at Kiveton park.

Throughout the government's manoeuvring last week, backed by intense pressure from the TUC and Labour Party leaderships to give up the strike, the NUM leadership has stood solid and immovable. The agenda they put up for discussions with the NCB was a clear reiteration of the basic demands of the strike.

They insist on reinstatement for all those strikers sacked during the dispute.

Arthur Scargill underlined the



Police barricade the road at Houghton Main, Yorkshire. Photo: John Harris, IFL

union's position: "This dispute cannot be settled without an amnesty. We've argued very powerfully that the principle adopted in 1972 and 1974 should be applied." "Our members are confirmed in their view that as far as they are concerned they want to see a settlement and not something which represents a betrayal or a sell-out"

When asked about the NCB's attempt to extract a written agreement to close pits, South Wales NUM President Emlyn Williams replied on Wednesday: "What? Sign away my coal-field? No way!"

Standing firm

The NUM is standing firm, and is rightly continuing to demand that other trade unionists come to their assistance, to help put more pressure on the government. It is now more urgent than ever that that happens.

When the NACODS EC meets at week it is not impossible that it will decide to try to stop the government's attempt to crush the NUM. A NACODS EC would change the whole agenda, cancelling at a stroke the recent gains of the NCB and the government.

But after the way NACODS scabbed on the NUM last October, there are few rank and file miners who put any store by this.

One of the most significant

developments last week was the decision of the South Wales Area to demand an immediate recall of last September's Trades Union Congress to get industrial action in support of the strike. Terry Thomas, the Area's vice-president, said: "There is no point in the TUC and the Labour Party conference giving standing ovations and then going away and forgetting about it. We are demanding the recall of the TUC conference."

The Sunday Times commented: "The TUC leaders are likely to look askance at the prospects of a recalled congress ..."

If the NUM EC was to support this call it would make it a very real prospect. It would immediately open up a strong ferment in the movement. Militants could spark discussions on what it will mean for the labour movement if we let them crush the NUM and the need for action to support the miners.

At a special TUC Congress all those TUC leaders guilty of sabotaging action over the last 11 months, and of ignoring or sabotaging the decisions of last September's TUC Congress could be called to account.

Dennis Skinner, in a letter last week to TUC General Secretary Norman Willis, came close to the same idea. He thought a meeting of the General Council should be called immediately to implement the decisions of the September Congress. He said:

"In order to implement such a proposal it may be necessary to have an immediate special delegate conference so that the mobilisation at rank and file level can take place."

Saturday's recall delegate conference of the Mineworkers' Defence Committee should add its voice to the campaign for an immediate recall TUC and to the call for a general strike.

None of this, of course, cuts across the urgent need to deliver action now. There's no need to wait to organise action while campaigning for the official movement to do the same — in fact, it's a necessary part of the campaign.

February 11

The best possible response to the latest offensive in the government's attempt to grind the NUM down would be to get the widest possible action on next Monday's Day of Action, which has been called by the Yorks and Humberside and South East Regional TUCs.

Of reported commitments to take industrial action on that day the most significant so far is that of railworkers at so far is that of railworkers at South and St Pancras in London. But even at this stage the situation facing the miners can be used to rally support and get action.

Every trade unionist in Britain will be under immediate threat if the Tories score a "domestic Falklands victory" over the

miners. Solidarity with the miners is now an immediate question of basic self-defence for every trade unionist in Britain.

The main activity on Monday will be mass picketing of power stations.

In Nottingham there will be a mass picket of Radcliffe power station, and in the North-West of Carrington. In Stoke-on-Trent, a mass picket of Wolstanton pit is planned.

Action on a significant scale on Monday, 11th, can do two things. It can provide a powerful boost to those who have fought so courageously for the last 11 months, and even convince some waverers to stick it out.

And it can provide a spring-board for the campaign for immediate industrial action — both in the power stations and elsewhere.

Defend the NUM!
Defend trade unionism!

Socialist Organiser

Another increase in Glasgow's paper order this week. And a report from Sheffield. John Allerton, a new SO supporter in that area and an NUM member, sold 35 copies of last week's paper at a South Yorkshire Defence Campaign meeting last Thursday.

Send reports of what your local group is doing to increase sales to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

FUND

A SLOW start to February's fund, considering that we have to raise £400 to balance the month's budget, let alone put anything aside for premises.

Thanks to: two Essex London readers, £5 and £1; Terry Connolly, £10; Steve Harvey £10; Mark Osborn £5; Joe Baxter £1.70; Russell McVean £1; Les Hearn £10; Nik Barstow £5. And we also have £7 that we would prefer not to have — fines collected from late arrivals at our national SO organisers meeting last Sunday.

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

Back the miners



Kiveton: more determined to stay out

Richard Woodhouse, Alan Bragan, Michael Popple, and Robert Lee, miners from Kiveton Park, Yorkshire, spoke to Judith Bonner

Why did you all decide to come out on strike?

AB: We don't want to go through life without a union.
RW: That wasn't our first reason. It is now. We were asked to support Cortonwood miners in defending their jobs.

RL: Which we did.

RW: It was only right we support them.

RW: If your pit was closing down you'd expect everyone else to support you. We thought it the right to choice to make.

MP: Also, none of us wanted to be moved out of our community.

Has your reasoning changed?

AB: We don't want to work in the way it used to be, "no sir, yes sir".

RL: Taking our hats off to the manager. As Arthur Scargill put it, "we'll be giving the manager, deputies and overman "the power they've got" if we drift back to work. We are fighting to strengthen the trade union movement.

MP: We know that if she breaks the NUM it will be hard for anyone else to stand up to her.

What was your reaction to the recent scabs at Kiveton?

RL: Over 200 returned in one week at Kiveton recently. We've now got 300 left out, with 450 scabbing. The 300 who are left are mostly the real hard core - we'll stay out till the end.

But among those returning are lads who've been picketing with us since day one. Some have been arrested with us. It hurts when people like that go back.

My brother went back because of financial difficul-

ties. That hurt me more than anything else. Some people just ignore him now. I know he's a scab but I can't ignore him.

RP: My dad and my brother have gone back. I've not seen my dad because I was in London when he went back. I don't know how I'll react to him when I get back.

AB: My dad's gone back - I've not seen him either. I know he's a scab, but I'll still talk to him. I feel like he's sold me out - he showed no indication he was going to go back. But he doesn't try to get me to go back.

He's gone back for the money, because of the hardship. He wants to stay in the NUM.

RL: When 400 men went back, Kiveton's number one scab got up and made a speech about joining the Notts breakaway union. Everyone except ten hard-line scabs walked out. That shows that they've still got some sympathy with the NUM's cause.

RW: At first we just ignored the scabs. But now we're a minority, if we don't talk to them we get beaten up.

AB: Most of our friends have gone back.

RL: They've admitted they're ashamed, and wish they had the guts to stay out with us.

AB: Scabs try to talk to you as though they've done nothing wrong - to relieve their guilt. They offer to buy us drinks.

RW: It's made me feel more determined to stay out on strike to make the scabs feel guilty. Even though we're a minority at our pit, we're the big majority in Yorkshire, and nationally. We're still solid. We won't give in.

Keresley's class war prisoners

By Jim Denham

FOUR striking miners from Keresley colliery were imprisoned for six weeks and an ex-miner was imprisoned for six months last week. The four, who include the chair and the secretary of the strike committee, were charged with affray. The other one was charged with assaulting a police officer.

The charges relate to an incident in the village last summer which was reported in Socialist Organiser at the time. It was the day of the miners' gala. There was a pickets' ball in the welfare that night and after that some went back to Colin Ward's house for a drink.

At about 2 am a knock was heard at the back door and Colin opened it to find a load of coppers in the garden. They dragged him out and beat him

up. When the others came out, they too were beaten and arrested. One of the men charged, Dennis Evans, had his head banged up and down off a car bonnet in the street and had to wear a neck brace for some time. The strike committee secretary received a broken nose. All of them suffered injuries at the hands of the police that night.

There had been charges laid against the four of assaulting police officers which they all denied. Dennis Evans denied four such charges. The police obviously couldn't make these charges stick because the jury were told not to return verdicts on those charges but only on the ones of affray.

Even then the judge couldn't

have been happy with the evidence. On sentencing them he said that sending decent men to prison was "a task so distasteful that I wish the responsibility could be taken from me". And later he said, "It's frightening that the present circumstances have given rise to your behaving with violence that is ordinarily out of character".

The only one they could make an assault charge stick on was Lesley Ward, a former miner from Keresley. That was because he had a previous record. But the best of it is, on the night of the party, when the police raided the house, he was asleep in bed. He was dragged out of bed by the police and arrested.

The local National Coal Board made a statement on the day of the sentence (the court case

lasted seven days) that this did not automatically mean they would be sacked. But, sure enough, all four received notices of dismissal the following morning.

This is just one more example of the police and courts being used as a political instrument to break the miners' strike.

Colin and Lesley Ward, Nev Bell, Bill Jackson and Dennis Evans can be added to the list of class war prisoners. And all but Lesley Ward can be put on the list of men who must be reinstated before this strike is settled.

It is not clear which prison the five have been sent to so send messages of support and solidarity to D. Jones, 11 DeCompton Close, Keresley, Nr Coventry and they will be passed on.



Police landrovers charge at pickets, Cortonwood

Campaign in Glasgow

By Les Glasgow

SINCE its establishment at the beginning of the year, the Glasgow Mineworkers Defence Committee (MDC) has been able to start coordinating the work of local support groups and raising the broader political issues posed by the strike.

Its fortnightly meetings, attended by delegates from some ten of its fifteen local affiliates, provide the opportunity for hearing an up-to-date picture of the current state of the strike from a striking miner and for discussing intervention in forthcoming events in and around Glasgow to do with the strike.

The Glasgow MSC has also produced a weekly bulletin since its inception, taking up the need to build both the MDC and this Saturday's MDC national conference, as well as stepping up support for picketing and the organisation of more workplace tours by miners.

Other issues taken up in the local bulletin have included: the crossing of picket lines by vehicles of firms based in Glasgow; the need to expel ex-UCS sit-in leader Jimmy Reid from the Labour Party for his public denunciations of the strike; and the reported restoration of TGWU membership cards to Yuiff and Dodds drivers who have been taking scab coal into the Ravenscraig steelworks since the start of the strike. Glasgow MDC has consistent-

ly sought to build support for the miners, rather than fall in behind the appeals of the Scottish trade union bureaucracy to the Tories to end the strike, with the differences in approach coming most clearly in relation to a recent Scottish TU demonstration in Glasgow intended to "pressurise" the Tories into accepting unconditional talks.

Plans for the future include supporting the Broad Left

Organising Committee's lobby of the February meeting of the Scottish TUC, holding a further public meeting to report back on this Saturday's MDC national conference, holding fringe meetings at the Scottish regional meetings of the Labour Party and Labour Party Young Socialists, and continuing with efforts to raise more financial support and more support for the picket lines.

Despite its weaknesses, in particular its limited resources and size, partly the result of the efforts of the Communist Party

to isolate it from the rest of the labour movement, Glasgow MDC has been able to make local solidarity work both more effective and also more political.

And whatever its weaknesses to date, it certainly provides an opportunity for all committed to building active support for the miners to link up their efforts and argue out the tactical differences in the open, instead of seeing solidarity work and debate consistently stifled by the Communist Party and its allies in the Labour Party.

BIRMINGHAM RAILWORKERS SOLID

ASLEF members at Birmingham's Saltley Rail Depot are standing firm by their policy of refusing to move coal or oil. ASLEF and NUR members at Saltley have been taking this action since the early days of the miners' strike, but recently local management have been manoeuvring to find ways to break the railworkers' solidarity.

On Friday January 25, management appeared to have scored a victory when two coal trains were moved. Meanwhile, an ASLEF member, Maurice Newman, announced that he would be putting a resolution to

a special ASLEF branch meeting on Sunday January 27 to reverse the existing policy.

An ASLEF activist at Saltley told us: "Newman himself is not such a bad bloke, really. He even claims to support the miners, but he's worried by management's claims that a lot of rail freight is being lost forever because of our action."

"Behind Newman, though, is a group of hardened right-wingers who've opposed the miners from the start. So Sunday's meeting was crucial in terms of maintaining our solidarity."

"In the event, Sunday's

meeting went magnificently. There was a very good turnout, and we had a really thorough debate. A lot of rank and file members spoke and the case for keeping up our solidarity was hammered out in full detail.

"Eventually Newman withdrew his resolution, but it would have been defeated anyway."

"Combined with the great rank and file response to the one day strike in support of Coalville, it goes to show that support for the miners is still solid amongst railworkers. If we had a stronger lead from the NUR and ASLEF executives we could really step up the action".

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

Name

Address

Send to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



Police barricading the road at Houghton Main, Yorkshire. Photo: John Harris, IFL

Back the miners



Appeal to NACODS

Dear comrade,

I have been instructed by the Notts Miners' Rank and File Strike Committee to write to you and express our strongest concern at your members' attitude towards the present dispute, especially in the Notts coalfield.

As fellow trade unionists we view with alarm your members' continuous crossing of our picket lines and we would respectfully request that even at this late hour you urge your members to stand up and be counted in the fight to save jobs, pits and our mining communities.

In spite of the media distortion, I can assure you that the NUM have no intention of surrendering in this dispute and are determined to win the most momentous victory in the history of the working class.

Of much more serious concern, however, is your members' continuous supervision of non-essential overtime. This matter has aroused quite strong and bitter feelings amongst our ranks and I would strongly urge that this practice cease forthwith. We well understand the difficulties your members are operating under at the present time, but I must insist that there is no justification whatsoever for this outrageous attitude.

Furthermore, we would seek your outright assurances that in the event of the working miners in Notts attempting to break the national overtime ban, you and your members would immediately and publicly refuse to cooperate in any way whatsoever.

Again, I cannot emphasise too much the exceedingly strong feelings on these matters and I urge your immediate action. Our fight is your fight and we are committed to fighting to ultimate victory achieved on behalf of all mineworkers within the British coalfields.

Victory to the miners!

Yours fraternally,
Paul Whetton

Make solidarity snowball!

I just don't believe the return to work figures we've been given this week. I'm convinced that the Coal Board are cooking them up.

I don't think the strike is in any serious danger. I think the propaganda effect of issuing such figures may be to lower the morale of some strikers, but if you've been on strike this long, you're more than likely prepared for it.

I think it is inevitable that some will drift back to work. After eleven months, some of the lads are getting pretty desperate. There is, after all, a great deal of hardship.

But the strike as a whole is not crumbling. The only thing that is crumbling is the British economy. That is crumbling a damn sight faster than the strike is.

The breakdown of talks has clearly demonstrated to the British public that the Coal Board and the government don't want to settle this dispute around the negotiating table. They intend to smash the National Union of Mineworkers and rub their noses in it.

We've gone along, right from day one, saying we're fighting an industrial dispute, although the hand of the Tory government has been evident all the way through, and now we should be saying, that if that is how they want to play it, we should be calling for the downfall of this government.

If they won't negotiate with us, and they won't let us settle it, then we'll have to get rid of the government.

I don't think we can do that overnight, but we've certainly got to step up the heat of the dispute, or put the heat back into it. We must use the events coming up over the next month to do that.

We've got the Mineworkers' Defence Committee conference on February 9; there is the Yorkshire and SERTUC day of action on Monday, 11th; the national demonstration on February 24; and then the March 6 day of action against rate-capping and abolition of the metropolitan authorities - a day, incidentally, which

Paul Whetton's diary

for a great many of our members is the anniversary of the strike. So we have to try and engender some sort of rolling programme.

Along with that we must support 100% the South Wales miners' demand that the full TUC Congress be recalled.

I personally feel that the Notts striking miners would certainly go along with that.

From Saturday's MDC conference we have to step up the support work, we have to step up the political argument that this is an all-out attack on the working class and the trade union movement.

This isn't just a miners' fight, it's a fight for the very existence of the trade union movement.

I personally feel that the campaign to organise a general strike is very important. I do not go along with the idea of a 24 hour general strike. Once you manage to raise the political consciousness of workers and you pool

that, then it is a tragedy, 24 hours later, to turn round and tell them to go back to work.

Since this dispute began the Coal Board have employed the tactic of lifting the strikers up, only to kick their legs from under them. So it would not surprise me if last week's negotiations were just part of that tactic.

And of course, after 11 months, if you get on a bit of an upper, then it's bound to knock some people when the other side bring you down again.

But as I say, that doesn't mean that the strike is in imminent danger.

As far as the recent statements by the NACODS leadership are concerned, I wouldn't set any great store by them coming to our rescue. If it happens it will be a marvellous bonus, but we've seen it all before.

Kinnock is obviously only looking forward to the day when he is in power and he

is only saying the sort of things you'd expect any prospective Prime Minister to say. We lived through all that in the '60s. Our problem was that we were too loyal. We stood by and let a Labour government massacre our industry, and because it was a Labour government we let them get away with it. We're not going to allow that again, under any government, be it Labour or Tory. The sooner Kinnock grasps that message the better.

Unfortunately, I think the debate in Parliament was a fruitless exercise. The government won the vote and nothing concrete will come out of it.

In Notts there's not been a mass return to work. The Area Conference was postponed and this has taken a lot of the urgency out of the campaign to recruit to the new NUM Area. Despite that the campaign is going quite well and we've got a committee to run the campaign which is called Keep Notts National.

This campaign is being run completely separately from the strike committee.

Paul Whetton is the secretary of the Notts rank and file strike committee, writing in a personal capacity

Determination in Durham

By Gary Scott

DESPITE media reports, the strike is still solid in the Durham Area. In fact, less people are returning to work. According to the Sunderland Echo (January 23), 5,329 men were back at work. The Echo reported that "the Area Coal Board is expecting the number to increase as other shifts report for duty". And what happened? On Monday January 28, the Echo reported that only 5004 miners reported to work out of a total of about 27,000. The earlier report was just part of the propaganda war.

The number of men going back varies from one scab at Horden to over 700 at Wearmouth.

Something that hasn't been

reported has been the number of men rejoining the strike and their reasons for doing so. For example, men working at the Tursdale workshops have rejoined the strike because of intolerable working conditions imposed on them.

They are being supervised by the police who have taken over the workplace. They are given a police escort to go to the toilet.

The Durham Area has previously been renowned for its "moderation". A leaked NCB document has stated that by the year 2000 there will be only one pit left in the Durham and Northumberland coalfield. The only pit left will be Wearmouth. The growing realisation of this may have led to the increased

militancy.

The Save Easington Area Mines Campaign has played an important part in making people living in mining communities aware of the effects pit closures have on the mining communities and the miners' support groups established through SEAM have been vital in keeping miners' families fed and in boosting morale.

Most miners returning to work are from villages where there is no pit and where the relief work has not been as well organised. If the strike does crumble it will be in these peripheral areas. The signs are, though, that the miners are determined to stick it out to the end.

Campaign for reinstatement

THE NUM in North Staffs is to begin a campaign calling for the reinstatement of sacked strikers. The campaign is to start on February 11 when a mass picket and demonstration of solidarity will take place at Wolstanton colliery. An appeal will be made to the scabs to take action on the day in support of reinstatement.

The hope is that the appeal to the scabs will gain support because of the hypocritical attitude of the NCB on sackings for violence and because it is clear that those sacked are

unlikely ever to get another job.

The solidarity demonstration is supported by North Staffs Trades Council Miners Support Committee and Newcastle Trades Council.

It's important that the demonstration be made as big as possible to begin rallying support to the NUM and begin turning the tide against the Tories.

Arthur Bough,
Secretary, NSTC Miners Support Committee
(in a personal capacity)

MINERS' VIDEO

URGENT APPEAL TO ALL MINERS SUPPORT GROUPS
The Mineworkers Defence Committee Video Group was formed after the Mineworkers Defence Committee's December 2 conference. We aim to assist in the solidarity work and campaign for an NUM victory.

We are producing a newsreel video for immediate distribution to striking NUM members. Like all of us, the mining communities are forced to rely for much of the news about the strike on the Tory press. The government is using the media in their present campaign to create a false impression of isolation and despair in the miners. We want to show them the real extent and diversity they have among trade unionists, women's support groups, local support groups, Black delegation groups, lesbian and gay groups, internationally, etc.

We are gathering together and editing a 40-50 minute tape of amateur and professional film, video and photo material from all areas where solidarity and support activities are coming.

WHAT WE NEED URGENTLY:

*Existing video (preferably) or film material about solidarity actions and activities.

*Photos, leaflets, posters, etc., as a record of support in your area.

*Off-air recordings of TV news items about support for miners, power cuts, the effect of the strike on the pound, etc. (We don't expect much here, but sometimes something slips out...)

*Material on international solidarity.

If you have anything (however slight or 'poor quality'), please contact us immediately. All material must reach us, by the latest on Friday February 22.

With thanks, in solidarity
DAVE TURNER,
for the MDC Video Group

Revolt on the Clyde part 3

Between a strike and a revolution

In addition to using the army, the police and scab organisations, the government was also prepared to introduce a whole new battery of legal restrictions on basic trade union activities and rights. Although never actually carried out, because the strike ended before this was possible, they illustrate the lengths to which the government was prepared to go:

*Striking railway workers were to be conscripted into the army and then ordered to keep the trains running.

*General mobilisation and demobilisation of the labour battalions was to cease during the strike.

*Legal sanction would be given to industrial agreements and criminal proceedings begun if the unions did not keep to them.

*All strikes "endangering the public interest (i.e. effective ones) would be "dealt with" under the Defence of the Realm Act (i.e. banned).

*Union funds would be seized if used to finance such strikes, and union officials involved in them arrested.

Apart from preparing new laws the government also used the existing ones to carry out a decision made at the war cabinet meeting of January 31: arrest the strike leaders to weaken the strike movement.

The next day Gallacher and Kirkwood were arrested while trying to stop the fighting in George Square, and in the following days the rioting was used as an excuse to pick up other leaders including Shinwell, Ebury (national secretary of the Marxist British Socialist Party) and Hopkins (Glasgow secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers).

Thus while certain laws were used to pick up the strike leaders, the same laws were ignored when broken by the scabs and the police themselves; and when existing laws looked like being inadequate to deal with the strike, the government rushed to put new ones on the statute book. As the strike showed, there is nothing neutral about the legal system; it is a weapon in the hands of the ruling class.

Press

The press, too, joined in the ruling classes' counter-offensive against the general strike, and presented a totally false picture. Workplaces and union branches voting to join in the strike were ignored, while news about the Patriotic Workers League and individual workplaces that had voted not to come out got the front pages. Especially towards the end of the strike, reports appeared about various factories having gone back when in fact they were still on strike.

Often the reporting was just plain hysterical. The Glasgow Herald put the strike down to "the clap-trap nonsense of Trotsky" and "the studious inculcation of the temper of revolt" and described its leaders as "a gang of political revolutionaries who have contrived to exploit the industrial weariness of Scottish workers...notorious rebels against the social order".

Stan Crooke concludes his series on the Glasgow general strike of 1919 by drawing out the lessons of the strike for us today.

"Terrorism on the Clyde" proclaimed one headline in the Scotsman, and "Glasgow Bolshevism: disgraceful scenes" proclaimed another in the Evening News, over an article which claimed that the troops had been sent in to protect "life and property" from "the rabble".

Even detective stories were used as agitation against the strike movement. The Weekly Record published a detective serial about the "famous detective and crime investigator" Derek Clyde, who bumps off a Jew called Finkelstein (who of course isn't a Jew called Finkelstein at all but a Bolshevik agent called Vladimir Tolstoi) and impersonates his contact man Lucas in order to track down the other five Bolshevik agents who, under the leadership of the fanatically

mad medical doctor from Petrograd is hiding in Newcastle, are behind all the unrest.

Police

The police, troops, new legislation, a press witch-hunt — these and other similar tactics were used by the government and the employers to smash the strike movement. The action taken by the ruling class during the strike, and the measures in the pipeline when the strike was finishing, amounted to total military suppression combined with the outlawing of free trade unionism. Far from meekly giving in when confronted with the strength of the strike movement, they fought back with everything they had.



Police truncheon striker, 'Black Friday' 1919.

The strike ended officially on February 11, sixteen days after it had begun. The Strike Bulletin did the best it could to put a brave face on it. "The strike is suspended until we reinforce our ranks. We have retreated in good order without any intention of submitting to the abject terms our exploiters wish to impose on us...the knowledge we have gained will not be wasted. Be ready!"

But it was making a virtue out of necessity: in the days leading up to the 11th, there had been a gradual return to work, although hardly the avalanche portrayed by the press, and the only alternative to instructing a return-to-work would have been to leave the most militant workers isolated and therefore an easy prey to victimisation.

The press had a straightforward explanation for the failure of the strike: it had never had any support to begin with in Glasgow; there had been a lack of support outside Glasgow as well; the government's firm stand had convinced the strikers they were not going to win; and the whole thing was totally un-British: the strike was "a symptom of incipient revolutionary tendencies wholly foreign to the good sense and the political and social beliefs of the people."

The talk about the "un-British" nature of the strike was superstitious nonsense; the claims about the lack of support in Glasgow were only a continuation of the propaganda pushed by the press throughout the strike; and a resolute strike leadership would have answered the government's counter-offensive by escalating the struggle into a direct confrontation for power.

But did the strike movement possess such a leadership? And, more generally, were the leaders of the British labour movement outside of Glasgow prepared to lead a fight for such high stakes? No: and that was the real reason for the strike's failure to achieve the 40-hour week, never mind the overthrow of capitalism.

Fear

Many of the local leaders went in fear of the massive social upheavals unleashed by the general strike, and did everything in their power to prevent the strike being pushed forward to its logical conclusion. Left-talking demagogues, their practice put them in the camp of the Right.

David Kirkwood was a typical example. Before and during the war he had built up a reputation for himself as a left-winger, and in his speeches to the mass meetings in the strike he would declare himself a revolutionary socialist. But in the same breath he would say that the strike was not a revolutionary situation, so everyone should be sensible and concentrate on no more than trying to get a shorter working week!

The plea made by his lawyer at the trial for his alleged crimes on Bloody Friday sums Kirkwood up. With a tremor in his voice and a sweep of the hand, the lawyer cried out: "Look at him, he's a Christian. His dear old

mother who sits at home waiting for him is a Christian. You cannot send a man like this to prison."

The role of Emmanuel Shinwell, the chairperson of Glasgow Trades Council (and now a Lord), was a lot worse. He had the same myopic view of the strike as Kirkwood: "There was no class war, no plans for revolution — simply a wish to make life in Britain a semblance of the Land Fit For Heroes so glibly promised by Lloyd George."

Shinwell excelled in doing deals behind the strikers' backs. It was Shinwell who was responsible for getting full-time officials onto the Joint Committee set up at the January 18 meeting, and for doing a private deal with the Lord Provost whereby the latter would appear for government intervention, while Shinwell would dampen down the strike movement until the Lord Provost got a reply.

Union officials, both locally and nationally, fell over themselves to prevent workers from striking and to get those on strike back to work. This

"We were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution."

Willie Gallagher

applied in particular to the miners' officials: in Cambuslang they made an appeal for police protection — for scabs. In Lanarkshire they opposed the strike until an occupation of their offices by their members forced them to back down.

In East Fife they tried the routine of holding a ballot before deciding whether or not to support the strike. And the members of the Scottish Miners' Executive publicly denounced the strike. — But the national leadership of the unions played the crucial role in the strike's failure. Instead of campaigning for support for the strike and spreading it, they ordered their members to stay at work and refused strike pay to those on strike, save in the rare cases when they gave in to the membership and paid a strike benefit.

The most scandalous role of all was played by the executive of the AS which even went so far as to suspend Harry Hopkins, the Glasgow district secretary, and the whole of the district committee, for supporting the strike. It was a green light to the police: two days after the suspension of the strike the arrested Hopkins and threw him in prison.

The final edition of the Strike Bulletin

Glasgow strike bulletin

FOLLOWING your recent articles on the shorter hours strikes of 1919 in Belfast and Scotland, particularly Glasgow, your readers may be interested in the following gleaned from the 'Strike Bulletin', organ of the 40 hours movement.

In the issue of January 31, 1919 it reports that Belfast "is practically in the hands of the strikers...(and) The Belfast members of the unskilled unions have compelled their executives to recognise their strike, and the union funds are to be used to pay benefit."

The Bulletin calls for similar action in Scotland and for "Executives to act as the servants of the workers instead of allowing them to boss the show..."

Strike patrols

On February 2, 1919 the headline of the Bulletin is Machine Guns No Remedy, and it also reports that the Scottish TUC had called a general strike. In Belfast it reported that there was "organised a body of pickets to maintain order in the streets...The Belfast Strike Patrol is 2,000 strong...what about Strike Patrols for Scotland?"

The next day, the Bulletin reports that a trade union secretary from England was sent over to upbraid local union officials for their encouragement of the strike. He was met at the boat and "escorted to the offices of the local branch engineers, where they promptly locked him in a room. There he was kept prisoner till the time of departure of the next return steamer."

The issue of February 9,

1919 replies to the threat of further state intimidation: "The awful tanks cannot destroy the human wall which we have built to support our demand."

It reports, too, that in Belfast "The strike committee receives applications for electric current and refuses some, but allows hospitals to take current for X-ray purposes during the daytime as well as for light at night..."

Not only do the Bulletins provide up to the minute strike news, but also sharp, pungent stories from the ruling class press, which are given a class struggle content, as are reports from South Africa, Japan and India. The issue of February 11, 1919 under a headline about women's pickets reports "With over 500,000 women in the country unemployed, the women realise that the only way to provide useful work for all is to reduce the hours of labour all round."

By February 12, 1919 the strike had ended in Scotland. The last issue reports that the Bulletin's circulation reached 20,000 daily, and its last editorial expounds the dignity of better having fought and lost, than never having fought at all.

"The strike is suspended until we reinforce our ranks. We have retreated in good order and without any intention of submitting to the abject terms our exploiters wish to impose on us...The strike has taught us our power; has developed our capacity; has shown where our organisation is weak; has given us valuable experience. The knowledge we have gained will not be wasted. Be Ready."

Yours fraternally,
JOHN DOUGLAS



Tanks on the streets of Glasgow

ke
on

summed up the anger felt by the strikers at the betrayals of their union executives: "Don't forget the executives who failed us in the fight! Those elected servants of ours who have become our bosses are not too favourable to the 40 hours' movement...If we don't put our executives in order we will get nowhere, as every time we make an effort to gain an improvement in our conditions they generally assist big business to keep us from winning."

And the Labour MPs? Did they use Parliament as a tribune to denounce and disrupt the government's efforts to break the strike or to campaign for support for the strike movement?

This was how the Glasgow Herald reported from Westminster on the day following the end of the strike:

"The debate was conducted in admirable temper and left the impression that it must be productive of much good in favourably influencing the atmosphere on both sides in the industrial world". The Labour MPs condemned the use of "unconstitutional methods" by workers to achieve their demands, and stressed that the use of strike action must always be subordinate to the "welfare of the state". Bonar Law, an arch-Tory, commended their attitude.

Kirkwood and Shinwell, the union executives, and the Parliamentary Labour Party all lived in fear of the power of or class which was thrown up by the general strike. They used their positions in the local leadership of the strike and in the national leadership of the labour movement to weaken and betray the general strike, instead of organising to defeat the ruling classes' counter-offensive.

It would, however, be a crude oversimplification to say that the strike failed simply because it was stabbed in the back by the mis-leaders of the British labour movement. Their treachery was certainly a crucial factor in the strike's eventual outcome, but it was only half the picture.

Many of the strike leaders were sincerely hostile to capitalism and committed to the struggle for a socialist society, but their politics were so influenced by the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism that they were unable to build on the dual power situation created by the general strike and unable to raise the conflict to the level of a conscious revolutionary confrontation with the bourgeois state.

Anarcho-syndicalism is based on the idea that the working class, if well enough instructed and educated through propaganda, will spontaneously overthrow capitalism. All that is necessary in the meantime is for socialists to explain to workers the nature of capitalism and to build industrial unions which embrace all workers in a particular industry. Once the class is organised in "one big union" the cataclysmic upheaval which overthrows capitalism takes place of its own accord.

Due in particular to the strength of the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) in Glasgow, anarcho-syndicalism had a strong influence on the Glasgow labour movement

throughout the early part of the century. The SLP had been formed in 1903 as a break-away in the direction of anarcho-syndicalism from the Social Democratic Federation, the only Marxist national organisation in existence at that time.

Anarcho-syndicalism was partly a reaction to the class collaboration practised by the labour movement leaders. As such and in its emphasis on the need to organise at rank and file level, there was a positive side to the work of the SLP and others on the Clyde influenced by anarcho-syndicalism. It was central in generating the wartime unrest and struggles.

But the anarcho-syndicalists also suffered from political weaknesses so serious as to prove fatal in Glasgow 1919. The SLP did not exist to give leadership on day-to-day issues in the overall framework of working for the overthrow of capitalism; it existed only to carry out a propaganda role of lecturing workers about the evils of capitalism and the need to overthrow it.

Strike or revolution?

In Glasgow 1919 the leaders of the movement influenced by anarcho-syndicalism floundered helplessly. Gallacher — wordily-wise, as ever, after the event — writes, "we were carrying on a strike when we ought to have been making a revolution...such was the condition of our leadership [that there was] no plan, no unity of purpose, we were watching one another and waiting for and wondering what was going to happen...A rising should have taken place. The workers were ready and able to effect it, the leadership had never thought of it."

Only a hopeless romantic could believe that the situation in Glasgow was as clear-cut as the quote from Gallacher implies, with the workers just waiting to be told to carry out a revolution but the leaders unfortunately having for-

gotten such a possibility.

But the situation did demand a clear, revolutionary leadership which the anarcho-syndicalists were unable to provide. The ruling class displayed a ruthlessness and determination which demanded a similar reply from the strike leaders if defeat was to be avoided. Passive propaganda about the need to overthrow capitalism was meaningless when a counter-offensive by the ruling class was under way to beat back the threat posed by the general strike.

But there was no attempt to shut down the press and thereby deprive the enemy of its main instrument of propaganda. There was no attempt to win over the troops in the Maryhill Barracks who were so close to mutiny that the government dared not use them against the strikers. There was no attempt to establish armed workers' militias despite the availability of weapons and ex-soldiers trained in their use. And despite the anarcho-syndicalists' emphasis on organisation at rank-and-file level, there was a particular failure to tap the discontent of the unions involved in the Triple Alliance.

In a situation of dual power where the balance could be tipped in either direction — a revolutionary restructuring of society or a return to capitalist stability, at least temporarily — the inability of the anarcho-syndicalists to sharpen the conflict and draw in wider forces proved a crucial weakness. "24 hours can decide the fate of a revolution" wrote Lenin, and Glasgow 1919 proved it, negatively.

In both its strengths and weaknesses the strike contains a wealth of lessons for the labour movement of today. "The knowledge we have gained will not be wasted. Be ready!", the Strike Bulletin had told its readers. But it is up to the revolutionary socialists of today to draw the correct lessons from Glasgow 1919 and thereby ensure it is not a wasted chapter in the history of the struggle for workers' power.

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Bloody Sunday 1972

THIRTEEN years ago, on January 30, 1972, the British army shot dead 13 unarmed civilians. The place was Derry, northern Ireland; the occasion was a demonstration against internment without charge or trial. It has gone down in history as Bloody Sunday.

Internment had been introduced — exclusively for Catholics — six months earlier, in August 1971. A peaceful demonstration was called in Derry. The Northern Ireland Unionist government in Stormont banned the demonstration, but the organisers decided to go ahead with it.

Ian Paisley threatened to organise resistance to the march. So the authorities promised to stop it.

As the demonstrators moved off, the paratroopers opened fire. They shot people randomly. One man was killed with a second shot as he tried to crawl away. Another was killed going to the help of a friend.

13 people died and 30 were wounded. One of the wounded died not long afterwards.

Murder

The reaction to this cold-blooded murder was immediate. Some building sites struck work. In Britain, many thousands converged on Whitehall on February 5 to protest.

In the Irish Republic, a similar march stormed and burned the British embassy.



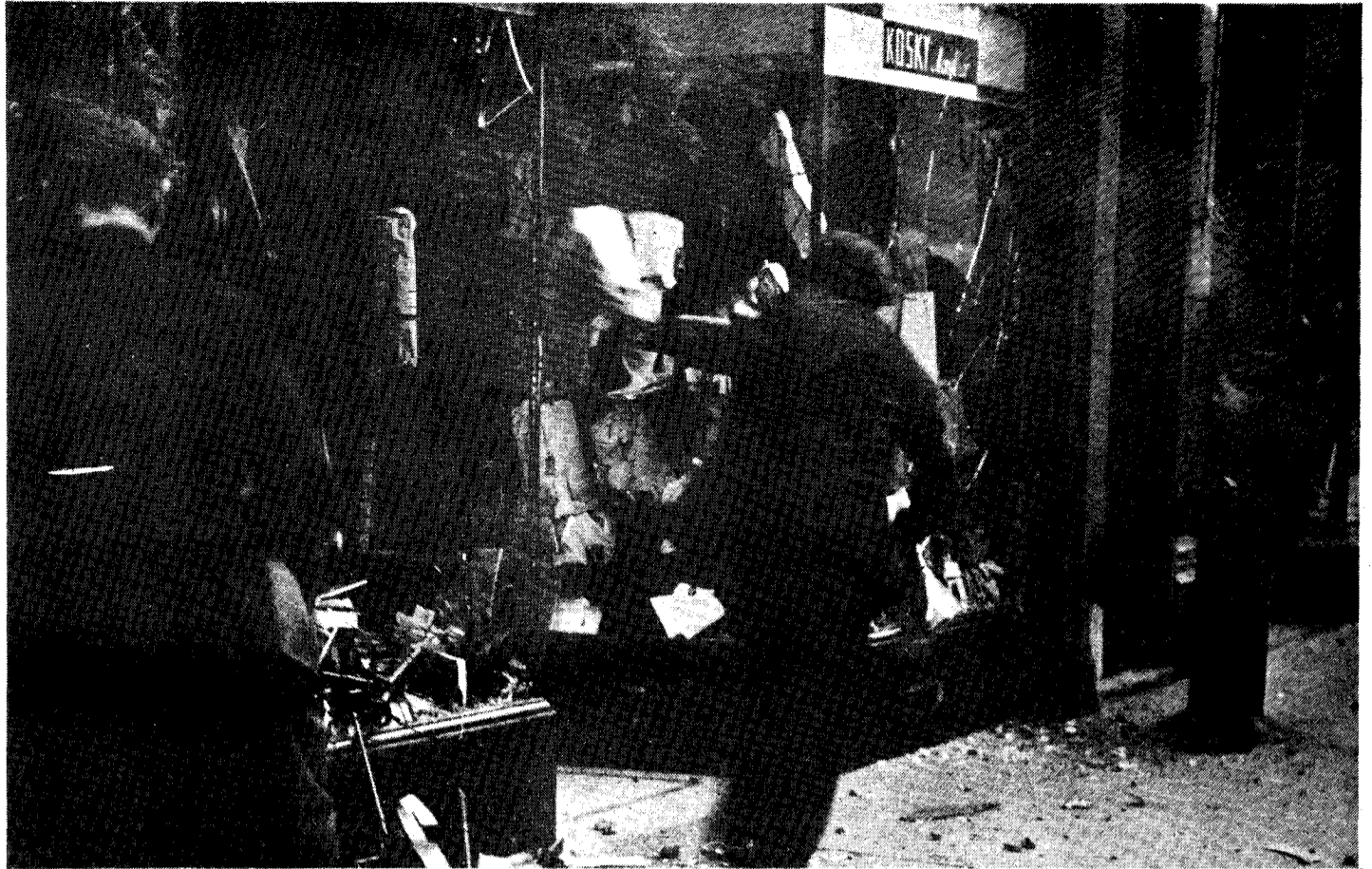
North and South

By Clive Bradley

The international protest scuttled Tory government policy. In 1972, they suspended the Stormont Parliament and imposed direct rule. New 'power-sharing' structures were shattered by the Orange general strike in May 1974.

Though not as dramatic, the British war of attrition against the Catholics has not been less savage in the years since.

It is time the labour movement was committed to getting the troops out and allowing the Irish people the right to decide their own future.



Top: Fascists attack Jewish shops in the East End in the 1930s. Below: The Jewish community and the Labour Movement fight back, Cable Street, 1936

Is Zionism racism?

BANNING the Jewish Society at Sunderland Poly was wrong in principle.

A general meeting passed a motion saying that Zionism is racism. The Jewish Society constitution gives support to Israel. So the society was declared racist and banned.

But that motion should not have been passed.

Saying that Israel is racist and saying that everyone who is a Zionist is therefore a racist are two totally separate things.

Israel is certainly a racist state; it discriminates against Palestinians and the present Israeli state denies a homeland to the Palestinians it drove out.

Victims

But most Jews — many of them are the victims or relatives of the victims of the most terrible act of state racism in recorded history — believe that they have a right to a Jewish state. Apart from far left socialists and religious sects all Jews are "Zionists". Consequently they accept the

Two weeks ago, Sunderland Polytechnic decided to ban the Union of Jewish Students (UJS) because they are Zionist. Andy Burke, currently president of Sunderland Poly, and a SSIN supporter explained to Socialist Organiser why he opposes the ban. The Executive meeting on February 4 defeated Andy's proposal to recognise the UJS. The matter now goes to a general meeting this Friday.

legitimacy of Israel. Most Jews do not know the real history of the driving out of the Palestinians.

But of course it is not true that all Jews or all supporters of the right of Israel to exist agree with Israel's policy. It is not even true that all Israelis agree with the Israeli government's policies. Between 300,000 and half a million Israelis demonstrated in protest at the 1982 massacres of Palestinian refugees by Falangist Lebanese in areas occupied by the Israeli army. That is a proportionate equivalent number for Britain of between three and five million demonstrators.

Many thousands of Israelis recently turned out on a counter-demonstration against a fascist demonstration in a Palestinian

village.

These are Zionists, i.e. people who believe that Israel has a right to exist. They are not racists, despite the racist character and basis of the state. The whole question is a very complex one.

Since World War 2 and the Nazi holocaust it has become a part of the Jewish identity to look to the state of Israel. We may not agree with this, but it is not difficult to understand why it should be so.

It is not possible now to demand that all Jews separate out Jewish identity and culture from the question of Israel and to ban those who won't.

That's the mistake Sunderland made, insisting that the UJS became anti-Zionist, which

in effect meant insisting that the Jewish students rejected a very great part of their religious and cultural identity.

I think the Jewish people, like everybody else, should be committed to fighting what Israel does to the Palestinians. And I think the only way to that consistently is to be opposed to Zionism. But I don't think Jews can or should be forced into being anti-Zionist or that passing resolutions telling them not to be Zionists is a sensible way of going about it. Convincing Jews to be opposed to Zionism can only be done through argument.

Reverse

Sunderland Poly should reverse its decision to ban the UJS and we should change our policy on Zionism. We should still say that Israel is a racist state and that we support a democratic secular state. But we should get rid of the clause which says that everyone who is a Zionist is a racist.



Socialist Worker and the strike

Throwing in the towel

After a long period of pessimism, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) was taken by surprise by the miners' strike. Then — eventually — they threw themselves into it. Now, they are once again preaching doom, gloom and despondency. Jack Cleary reports.

"THIS IS the time that tries men's souls", wrote the famous pamphleteer Tom Paine when George Washington and the fighters for American independence were struggling to survive and it looked like they were faced with defeat.

Today the setbacks suffered by the miners' strike are putting the Marxist groups in Britain to the test, and forcing them to declare what they are made of.

On the one side there are those — the Newline is the most prominent example — who refuse to recognise the real difficulties of the strike or to register what the slump and mass unemployment have done to the working class in the last five years. They make a religion of the call for a general strike.

Socialists need realism, honesty and candour in assessing the world around us. Newline and others like it do not have that.

But at least they do not spread defeatism: miners and other workers will not feel additionally deflated and depressed as a result of listening to what they have to say.

The Socialist Workers' Party, and its weekly paper Socialist Worker, on the other hand, spread a depressing defeatism. The defeatism is disguised with militant headlines, to be sure. But anyone reading what Socialist Worker says could not avoid the conclusion that there is no hope, that the strike is lost.

Socialist Worker's February 2 issue, for example, has good headline advice for striking miners: 'No Surrender'. The basic idea of the article is also sensible, though a little deflated: "The miners must stick together. This is the only way to stop the Tories breaking the power of the union to defend jobs and conditions."

"This is no time for unconditional surrender by the miners' leadership".

But there are no grounds for thinking that the miners' leadership is about to go for 'unconditional surrender' (and when exactly would it be a good time to consider unconditional surrender?)

Autopsy

The underlying train of thought, behind this, is made clear in articles inside that issue, under the heading, "The knives are out for the NUM". They state: "The media and the right wing in the labour movement have already started their autopsy on the miners' strike". Socialist Worker then proceeds to do exactly the same thing, conducting its own 'left wing' autopsy.

Their own inner collapse and acceptance of defeat while over 100,000 miners and their families are still fighting is unmistakable.

For example, talking about the ballot and the right wing, they say: "They are trying to create the impression that it



Pickets in Scotland. Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL

was the failure to hold the ballot which led the strike to defeat".

Under the headline "Who is to blame?", they talk about the "very powerful criticisms to be made of how the NUM leadership have handled the strike". Arthur Scargill is seen as being in some ways an exception, but "he failed to deliver the leadership which could have taken the strike in a different direction".

They are entitled to their opinion, and these are things that will have to be discussed after the strike. But the Socialist Workers Party are not entitled — while continuing to present themselves as militants — to give up before the hard core of the miners give up.

Over the last few years the SWP has been in a deep political depression, talking as if no

major working class action could even be considered. They correctly registered the downturn in the working class movement, but magnified and exaggerated it into a deep depressive pessimism which led them to outright defeatism towards everything alive in either the industrial or the political wing of the labour movement.

Preaching defeatism, they became a force, so far as they had influence, for demobilisation and passivity in the labour movement.

Contact

They criticised the Benn current in the labour movement for losing contact with the working class. It was too left, and

therefore out of step with a depressed and defeated working class.

The SWP ran parallel — albeit in its own sectarian groove — to the Communist Party Hobsbawmites with their talk of 'The Forward March of Labour Halted'.

While the Hobsbawmites concluded that a coalition with the SDP was necessary, it was not clear what the SWP concluded other than a withdrawal into self-centred 'party' concerns. They had an attitude of snobbishly frigid disdain towards the left wing struggle in the Labour Party. They wound up various rank and file trade union groups.

The miners' strike — the fact that it could happen at all — flatly contradicted the SWP's assessments of the state of the movement.

For a while they seemed to abandon their prostration, and responded energetically to the strike. But they never corrected themselves or criticised their previous assessments, taking refuge in statements that the miners' strike was a 'defensive' strike. (Which is only partly true. The NUM's position on pit closures does not correspond to any 'normal' trade union defensive movement).

Now things are coming full circle. The strike is in serious difficulties, so the SWP relapses into defeatism. It tries to fulfill the ABC duty of a socialist newspaper with cries of 'hold firm' — but its underlying defeatism shows through. It starts a public autopsy on a defeat that has not happened yet — a defeat we must continue to fight to avoid.

An extreme expression of the terrible confusion that the SWP is now helplessly wallowing in was an article by Socialist Worker editor Chris Harman in the January issue of the SWP magazine 'Socialist Worker Review'.

After a two page long ramble on the history of the general strike, Harman comes to the point in the last five paragraphs.

He says that today the slogan of the general strike comes from

Livingstone and Benn, who continue to think that "what matters is parliamentary action reinforced by extra-parliamentary activity. On the other [hand] it comes from sects who refuse to look the reality of the class struggle in Britain today in the face".

And what do the 'good guys' of the SWP say?

"Revolutionary socialists should argue that the slogan does not fit at the moment because of the way the Labour Party leadership and the TUC general council have sabotaged the movement in solidarity with the miners. But we also have to go on to say something else: if the slogan did fit (and it will do one day) then it would be necessary to raise alongside it slogans about rank and file control and about confrontation with the state".

Cretinous

Harman is perfectly right that in a general strike revolutionary socialists would raise slogans to take it forward — argue that the workers take control, organise their own defence forces, etc. But it is nothing short of cretinous to use this as one "reason why" the call for a general strike cannot now be raised for the limited immediate objective of defending the NUM.

If a general strike got started and began to unfold and develop in mass action, then other slogans and issues would arise in the course of the strike, and socialists would respond to their expanding possibilities.

No less ridiculous is the notion that socialists do not call for a general strike because the Labour Party and trade union leaders have sabotaged solidarity with the miners. When was it otherwise? Mass strike and solidarity action is possible without the leaders and can pressure the leaders into calling for effective action. That is what happened in Britain in 1972 when one quarter of a million workers struck on hearing that five dockers were in jail under the Tory anti-union laws.

Certainly it is a different sit-

uation now, centrally because of the slump and the accumulated setbacks and defeats of the last six years. That's the strongest argument against the general strike call — the objective difficulties. But it does not follow that we do not call for a general strike.

A general strike is objectively necessary for the self-defence of the working class now, and without it serious further blows will be struck at the labour movement.

What Marxists conclude from the combination of the need for a general strike with the basic state that the working class is in is not that we do not dare say what is in the objective interest of the class, and call on militant workers to work for it, but that we make propaganda for it.

We explain why it is necessary. We link it to events as they unfold. We break it down into warm-up demands like the call for a one-day general strike — on February 11, for example.

The SWP's rejection of the call for a general strike is just part of its crippling defeatism — its fatalistic inner acceptance of defeat.

Looking in the face the reality of the situation the working class faces now is an irreplaceable activity for Marxists. Being hypnotised and paralysed by the difficulties, like a rabbit mesmerised by a snake — that is not Marxist realism. That is throwing in the towel.

The SWP 'towel' has a few Marxist-sounding considerations and ideas printed on it, but it is nevertheless a signal to give in and give up. Despite the militant headlines, Socialist Worker picks up, magnifies, and reflects back onto the miners the social pressures that are leading the strike to crumble in certain areas.

For what other message can striking miners get when, enticed by the militant-sounding exhortations to 'stand firm' and 'no surrender', they open the paper to find SW attempting to conduct a premature autopsy on the still-living — and still fighting — body of the miners' strike?



When the South Wales NUM funds were seized. Photo: M. Shakeshaft, IFL

Science

An avoidable "act of God"

DISASTERS often seem to arrive like bolts from the blue — a product of sheer bad luck. Closer examination, however, shows how various factors conspire to produce an "accident". So it is with the Bhopal tragedy, as reports in the Guardian, New York Times and New Scientist make clear.

New Scientist, in a report by Christopher Joyce in Washington, pinpoints the responsibility of Union Carbide for this "accident".

Firstly, warnings of just such a disaster were issued in 1984 but were not passed to the Indians.

Secondly, the Union Carbide plant in Institute, West Virginia, was far from safe, having had 28 leaks in five years.

Thirdly, the safety mechanisms in the Institute plant would not have been capable of dealing with a Bhopal-type disaster.

The warning and its failure to be passed on are perhaps the most poignant parts of Joyce's report. In July last, engineers at Institute warned of the danger of "runaway" reactions in the tanks containing methyl isocyanate (MIC). They told Union Carbide that the MIC tanks had been contaminated several times, with water and other reactants. They advised that "all operating personnel" be warned as there could be "catastrophic" consequences.

Warning

The warning was never transmitted to the similar plant at Bhopal, and on December 3 last year at least 2,000 people were injured fatally, and 200,000 more injured as a result of just such a runaway reaction.

But what of the safety mechanisms designed to deal with emergencies such as these? The trouble is that in the parent plant (and presumably in Bhopal) they were not so designed. In a runaway reaction where a gas is produced mixed with a liquid, just like a pot boiling over, the mixture should first go to a "knockout" tank. This separates the gas from the liquid. The gas, MIC in this case, should then go through a "scrubber" of caustic soda, to neutralise it. Any surplus gas would be burnt or "flared" as it left the scrubber.

At Institute, the knockout tank was after the scrubber. The system was designed only to deal with gas leaks, and would soon be overwhelmed by a mixture of gas and liquid.

As the company's own safety team report, the parent plant was by no means a safe place. The cooling system, designed to keep the MIC liquid, reducing the pressure, was one problem area, giving rise to the leaks referred to previously. The storage tanks and pipes were also reported to shake and vibrate. This might be due to "structural weakness and/or surges in the process" and might result in

By Les Hearn

transmitting vibrations to more dangerous parts of the plant. It was also easy to overfill the tanks.

Workers received no emergency training and were in any case overexposed to MIC and chloroform, a known cause of cancer. The report listed four major and 39 "less serious" concerns over safety and health.

A report by the US Environmental Protection Agency is more soothing but apparently did not see the company's safety team report. However, it did note 28 leaks of MIC in five years.

It would have taken only a small further relaxation in safety standards for a disaster at Institute, but this is what occurred in Bhopal.

According to New York Times reporters, the Bhopal plant had been making a loss for two years, had lost key staff, and was under pressure to cut costs.

Whether or not for this reason the Bhopal management was demoralised, there was little proper training of new staff, and, possibly crucially, the refrigeration unit keeping the MIC liquid had been turned off.

Then when an untrained worker washed out a pipe, a small amount of water — as little as one pint — was all that was necessary to cause the poison gas cloud.

Without training or proper warnings, the workforce mostly fled.

The accident had found somewhere to happen.

THE medical effects of MIC poisoning are gradually becoming clearer, though there is still a good deal of uncertainty.

The Indian Council of Medical Research has studied the bodies of gas victims and found "devastating" damage to brain, liver and kidneys. In all 20 of the post mortems carried out, severe pulmonary oedema (filling of the lungs with fluid) was found. This is a symptom of poisoning by phosgene, a poison gas used in the First World War, which was a chemical used in the manufacture of pesticide in Bhopal.

Many survivors are unfit for work, suffering from breathing difficulties that leave them weak. In view of the inadequate or non-existent support they receive from the government, some survivors are now going hungry.

Good news is that eye problems seem to be temporary, despite the extreme pain and ulceration initially suffered.

Genetic effects of the MIC poisoning cannot be assessed yet. Most deformities arise in the first three months of pregnancy, and births from these are not due for another six months or so.

Review



Better times

Susan Carlyle reviews Barry Keeffe's play, *Better Times*, at the Theatre Royal.

THE three women in the photo are Labour councillors for the Borough of Poplar. It is 1921 and they are in Holloway Jail. Together with the rest of the Poplar Labour Council, led by George Lansbury, they have opted to go to jail rather than comply with Tory government cuts.

In the photo, Councillor Nellie Cressall, who is heavily pregnant and disoriented by her treatment in prison, is being persuaded by councillors Susan Lawrence and Julia Scurr, that she will not be deserting the cause by signing a piece of paper that will secure her release and allow her to go home.

Barry Keeffe's play, "Better Times" tells the story of Poplar's fight. Unfortunately it does not adequately convey the clear determination of councillors like Nellie Cressall. At times it presents the characters as if they were participating in some kind of routine enjoyment of domestic harmony, with everyone agreeing rather too easily. I bet it wasn't quite like that!

All of them, with the exception of eccentric Susan Lawrence and sharp Julia Scurr are presented as rather pompous and self-important, that is as the classic councillor stereotype.

The focus is very much on Labour leader George Lansbury's character. So other councillors pale in comparison. Where in life disagreement and discussion would have decided actions, the play personalises it



"We are very glad you all understand why we are here, we have not done anything we are ashamed of, our action was against bad, wicked laws and all good men and women should protest and refuse to obey laws which are unjust and bad . . ."

"We are in prison because our people in Poplar are poor and cannot pay the rates and taxes and we shall not do what the judges told us we must do until Poplar gets money from the rich to help the poor . . ."

"We want you to grow up strong, active, loving men and women. We want you never to be contented while there is one single man or woman starving . . ."

"When you leave school join a trade union . . ."

"When you have joined your trade union, go to the branch meetings, learn all you can about the labour movement . . ."

Excerpts from the letter jailed Poplar councillors wrote to their children.

in Lansbury, swinging along on his reputation.

The play addresses itself to political questions that are very much alive today, and present-day parallels are not hard to find. While Lansbury personifies the left and the working class fighters, future Labour Cabinet Minister Herbert Morrison represents the "realists" and the compromisers.

Conciliator

To the figure of Morrison, in the play as in history, falls the role of class conciliator and class traitor. Morrison doesn't want to fight or confront the government. An ex-Marxist, he thinks Labour councils should do the best they can within the framework laid down by a hostile government, running between the Poplar councillors and Lloyd George, looking for "compromise". Morrison gets no thanks for it.

Morrison demands that Poplar should stay within the law as resisted, but the play gives him the last word in the final scene where he talks about Lansbury's demise and



the rise of fascism in the East End.

It was like that in life too. Morrisonism prevailed in the Labour Party. Labour leaders, trained in local government "realism" to operate the capitalist system and not seek too much change — Labour's 1945 Prime Minister Clement Attlee was one of them — came to dominate the Party. Morrison's policy in local government came to dominate the national labour movement.

Most of the scenes that linger from the play are those that detail their everyday life: how they dodged arrest; how tired at meetings one councillor usually was from grinding shift work as a postman; the insults Julia Scurr would hurl at Morrison; the letters written from prison to their children (see box above).

They must have been marvellous times to live in. Despite overwhelming odds of unemployment and poverty, thousands took to the streets. Laws were changed by such commitment and by the will to take on the government.

The Poplar councillors achieved their goal of equalisation

of rates by refusing to charge their own people on the same terms as the rich London boroughs. At the same time they provided houses with gardens, opened public bath houses and sustained working class self-reliance and hope for the future.

That tradition, "Poplarism", should be revived in the present struggle for local government.

With the Tory government bearing down on 12 London boroughs and four metropolitan councils, a good play about "Poplarism" — militant defence of local working class interests by a Labour council — would be apt and timely. Barry Keeffe's play doesn't quite rise to its theme.

But "Better Times" should be seen. The production is good, and there are some fine believable performances. When a labour movement play actually sees the light of day then it is to be welcomed.

"Better times" proved a rare example of positive drama amid the current excess of fantasy and fatalism in theatre.

Perspective

It is also worth some councillors taking a visit to the Theatre Royal — especially waverers such as Blunkett and Livingstone. Seen in the perspective of working class history the startling thing about Livingstone, Knight, Blunkett and others today is that — despite left talk — when it comes to action they are not in Lansbury's Poplar tradition, but firmly in the tradition of Herbert Morrison. And that's a lousy tradition.



Blunkett, Knight and Livingstone are not in the tradition of Lansbury (right) but in that of Morrison and Attlee.

Dole queues are the longest ever



UNEMPLOYMENT in Britain is currently the highest it has ever been. The official figure for January was 3,340,958, after a rise of 122,000.

These figures, of course, are doctored. In September 1982, the government changed the basis of the count in order to exclude all those people not claiming benefit.

The Unemployment Unit has said that on the old basis the figure would be 3,728,500 — i.e. 15.2% of the labour force.

The real figure — if you take into account those women, in particular, who do not sign on — would be a lot higher still.

Scots CP & LCC

The dead hand

KARL MARX once wrote that history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.

But there is nothing humorous about the way in which the current miners' strike is, in Scotland, a repeat of the campaign of 1980/81 for increased democracy and accountability in the Labour Party.

The latter campaign, organised at national level by the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Party Democracy (RFMC), succeeded in winning significant advances, such as the electoral college for election of Party leader and deputy leader, and automatic re-election of MPs.

Those advances, and the campaigning work which achieved them, saw a shift in the nature of the Labour party towards a more campaigning, class struggle-related type of party, however limited the extent of the shift.

But in Scotland the RFMC never got off the ground. Whereas in the rest of the country the RFMC united the Labour Left, in Scotland the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) successfully argued that establishment of the RFMC was superfluous on the grounds that the LCC itself was perfectly capable of fulfilling the role played elsewhere by the RFMC.

Non-existence

The non-existence of the RFMC in Scotland meant that the democracy campaign there of 1980/81 was only a pale shadow of its counterpart down South. Consequently, the impact of that campaign — shaking up the Labour Party and making it more responsive to the needs of the class struggle — was infinitely weaker in Scotland than elsewhere.

In short: the transformation of the Scottish labour movement lagged far behind that of the movement nationally.

Today, in many areas of the country the miners' strike is playing the same role as the RFMC in taking forward the transformation of the Labour Party, breaking Labour Party branches away from electoral routinism and replacing it with class conflict as the mechanism of branch life.

The establishment of local miners' support groups by Labour Party members, the organisation of collections, twinning, speaking tours, mobilisation for picket lines, and the conflicts within the Party generated by Kinnock's scab-herding role have contributed to a further class struggle re-orientation of many Labour Party branches.

But again, the extent of that re-orientation in Scotland is far more limited than elsewhere. Just as the RFMC was stifled by the LCC, today the Communist party (CP) uses its dominant position in the Scottish trade union movement, especially in the West of Scotland, to isolate and contain the potential of the miners' strike for pushing forward the transformation of the Labour Party.

Under the influences of the CP, the Scottish Executive of the NUM has opposed non-NUM members being on picket lines, opposed pickets of miners' trials, opposed the twinning of

pit villages with local support groups and failed to even attempt to organise consistent mass picketing of pits and power stations, whilst the Scottish TUC has focussed its efforts on achieving an "amicable resolution" to end the dispute rather than on raising the level of solidarity action to win the strike.

The role of the Communist party has been to attempt to wall off the strike from Labour Party activists and the rest of the labour movement. Thought not fully successful in this endeavour, the CP has succeeded in generally reducing the miners' strike to an object of admiration, instead of being an agency for driving forward the transformation of the Labour Party.

The LCC has played a secondary, back-up role, sniping at Scargill in the pages of "Scottish Labour Activist", demanding that all funds raised for the miners be sent to NUM headquarters rather than local pits, and backing a resolution at Glasgow District Labour party opposing the existence of local miners' support groups.

Enacted

It is not coincidental that the role played by the LCC in relation to the RFMC is now enacted by the CP in relation to the miners' strike.

Some of the more prominent Scottish LCC supporters have a background in the CP. Others share the CP's politics on a number of issues. More importantly, the same political method is employed by both the Scottish LCC and CP: maintenance of a tight bureaucratic grip on developments in the labour movement — even at the expense of stifling combativity and thereby helping pave the way for victory by the labour movement's right wing or the Tories.

As the internecine warfare in the CP escalates, with an open split increasingly likely at its special conference in the summer followed by the collapse of a substantial section of the present CP membership into the Labour Party, a not unlikely development, in Scotland at least, would be a fusion/alliance between the LCC and the ex-CP members inside of the Labour Party.

There is already a good basis for such a development: a shared political method, a comparable track record, the LCC's domination of the Labour Party Scottish Council, and the CP's ability to provide the foot soldiers in the union and (in the event of collapse into it) the labour Party to regiment the rank and file in line with the LCC inspired decisions of Scottish Council.

The result would be strengthening of those forces which have already played such a destructive role in holding back the politically necessary transformation of the Labour Party in Scotland.

Such a perspective further underlines the need for the hard left in the Labour Party and unions in Scotland to so organise itself as to be capable of thrusting aside the bureaucratic impediment constituted now by an organisationally separate LCC and CP but in the future by a possibly coalesced LCC ex-CP bloc.

Scots teachers debate

By Ian McCalman

ONCE again I beg the indulgence of Socialist Organiser readers by taking up valuable space on the issue of the Scottish teachers' pay campaign.

In SO no. 214, Callum McRae makes no effort to try to refute the detailed arguments I presented in a previous issue of SO explaining why I and others within Campaign for a Fighting Union regarded the pay review tactic as a valid means of mobilising the membership of the Educational Institute of Scotland early on in the school session.

Instead he chooses to ignore the arguments and states his intention to "stick" to his original contention, revealing simultaneously a remarkable obduracy and irrationality.

Fortunately Callum has decided to concentrate upon a different theme, the nature of an interim pay claim. On the need for such a claim we are in agreement. The division of opinion is over the question as to whether this should be a flat rate payment.

I am glad to see that neither Callum nor others in Lothian Rank and File now speak of a £1,200 flat rate claim being "in line with NUT policy". Hopefully they have followed our advice to read the text of the NUT claim which categorically states that theirs is not a flat rate claim.

The NUT claim is for an increase of at least £1,200 per teacher in order to assimilate all teachers to a special scale which will in fact widen and lengthen the scale of differentials. That is a course which I am sure Callum, like ourselves, would not wish to embark upon.

The basic problem which Callum does not address himself

to is that the EIS Salaries Strategy does not embrace the flat rate principle. Callum obviously wishes that it did but he must be aware that it does not and that can only be changed at AGMs or special salaries conference. There can therefore be no question of EIS Council agreeing to a flat rate increase without such a fundamental change in our salaries strategy.

Callum must know that for many years the first priority of that strategy was "the maintenance of the living standards of all members." That could only mean percentage increases in each pay round.

The Left have fought over a number of years to change the order of priorities and that argument has not been easily won, which is unsurprising considering that 40% of all teachers in Scotland are promoted (55% in secondaries).

Result

As a result of these arguments, the priorities have been changed so that weighting has now to be given to the upper end of the promoted scales and a single salary scale with a common maximum.

That is not my choice as to how a salary award should be distributed, as Callum implies. That just happens to be the policy of our union as decided at annual conference. For Callum not initially to understand the nature of the NUT claim is understandable; for him to remain in ignorance of the Salaries Strategy of his own union is impermissible.

Nor should Callum automatically assume that all socialists within the EIS agree on the flat rate claim. There is a strong body of opinion that if the global sum awarded to teachers is



Glasgow teachers' day of action against cuts in education. Photo: Rick Matthews (IFL)

divided on a flat rate basis, then there will be no money left to achieve the single salary scale with a common maximum.

Now Callum may think that redistribution along these lines should not be accorded a high priority, but he should not assume that those who have argued long and hard for that

policy within the Institute need readily agree with him. Differentials between secondary and primary sectors have progressively narrowed through negotiations but they still remain with us and their elimination will cease to be a concern of our union if we adopt the flat rate approach.

Cowley defeat

By Ian Swindale

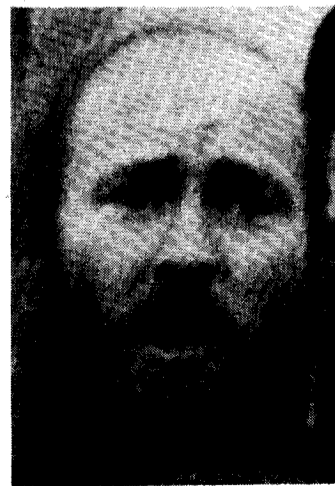
A MASS meeting of trim shop workers on Monday January 28 voted 70 50 against taking industrial action to defend victimised senior steward Bob Cullen.

The senior stewards could hardly have made a worse job of trying to win the vote if they had tried.

The shift that Bob Cullen worked on before his victimisation was working the night shift on the day the vote was taken. Instead of taking the vote on the night shift first thus giving Bob Cullen's closest colleagues the chance to vote for action in his defence and then take a strike vote to the day shift, the vote was taken the other way round.

Then having lost the vote on the day shift, the stewards didn't even bother to take a vote of the night shift!

Bob Cullen was due to meet TGWU legal advisers as



we go to press in order to discuss his next move but it seems certain that the union will take BL to court. That may mean going to an individual tribunal but given the strength of Bob Cullen's case a civil court action cannot be ruled out.

Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN) CONFERENCE

City of London Poly, Aldgate East tube
Saturday February 16, 11 am - 5 p.m.

A working conference discussing students and the miners' strike; ultra vires; rate-capping; and YTS.

Conference papers from and registration fee (£2 on a grant, 50p no grant) to:

Dave Brennan, 20A Upper Addison Gardens
London W14 or phone 603-9202.

Sponsored by MANUS, NESCOL, Sussex University

Socialist Organiser

Recall the TUC!

FROM the South Wales NUM — the most solid area in the strike — has come the demand that the TUC should be recalled to discuss what to do about the miners' strike.

Last September the TUC took the decision to help the miners, but the TUC leaders have never implemented or fought for that decision. They were never serious about it.

If the Tories beat the miners, it will be a historic defeat for the entire labour movement. A recalled TUC could discuss what to do to help the miners and defend the labour movement. In preparation for the congress the rank and file throughout the labour movement would discuss the Tory drive to destroy the NUM and beat the miners into the ground. Congress itself could call the TUC leaders to account for failing to fight for working class solidarity with the miners.

Support the demand for a recall TUC.

Free our class war prisoners!

TERRY French is in jail for five years. He is one of an increasing number of striking miners sent to prison — some estimates put it at over 100. Whatever the charges may have been, these men are in jail for one reason only — because they defended themselves, their jobs, and their communities.

Locking strikers up is one of the many forms of intimidation and harassment used to break the strike.

In Fitzwilliam, in north Yorkshire, seven workers were given heavy sentences for defending themselves from a police riot.

In early July, about 50 police charged into the Fitzwilliam pub in revenge for a demonstration outside the police station earlier that day.

Evidence proved police violence: photographs show 15 trancheon weals on the back of one of the defendants. But they were found guilty in a trial without a jury. One of them was jailed for six months.

THERE are now over 100 prisoners serving time in British jails for alleged offences committed during the miners' strike. These are class war prisoners, men taken and locked up by the bosses' state for standing up to the Tory government.

Leon Brittan has said in public that, even when the miners' strike ends, the police will continue to hound and pursue miners who broke the law during the strike.

So the number of class war prisoners may well rise substantially in the months ahead.

The labour movement must demand an end to state persecution of the striking miners who resist the licensed, official violence of the semi-militarised police thugs sent by the Tories into the coalfields.

The labour movement must treat the men in jail as the class war prisoners they are and campaign for their release. Neil Kinnock and the Parliamentary Labour Party should condemn this vindictive Tory violence against militant miners and demand that all miners in jail should be released and all charges arising out of the strike dropped.

On January 7, nine miners from Shirebrook colliery and a farmworker were jailed at Derby Crown Court.

Last week, four striking miners at Keresley were imprisoned for six weeks, and an ex-miner for six months.

The NCB has used legal harassment of strikers to excuse its own harassment: sacking. Strikers who have

been arrested or suffered legal action during the course of the strike have often been dismissed by the Coal Board.

170 men have been sacked in Yorkshire; 140 in Scotland; over 100 in the north-east, 85 in north Derbyshire, 40 in Kent, 21 in Notts; 17 in South Wales; nine in the Western area; and two in Warwickshire.

The Board has used hypocrisy and double standards throughout.

In a row on a picket line, a member of the clerical union APEX had his nose broken by striking miner Paul Hartley. Paul was sacked.

But when scab Robert Meecham broke a striking miner's nose, he not only was not sacked, but the Board helped arrange a collection to pay his fine.

In Bevercotes before Christmas, two scabs were caught fighting — one of them ending up with five stitches. They got off with a fine and two days' suspension.

But Bevercotes striker George Brookes was sacked while awaiting trial for allegedly assaulting a scab.

The cause of these strikers must be taken up by all those fighting for a miners' victory. Jailed strikers and their supporters must be freed: strikers victimised by the NCB must be reinstated.



Terry French. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL

Jailed for picketing

TWO Kent miners, Terry French and Chris Tazey are in prison, serving sentences of five years and three years respectively.

They were arrested while picketing Wivenhoe Oil Terminal in Essex. Police with dogs set about the pickets, who defended themselves. During the incident a policeman's nose was broken. As a result, Terry and Chris were charged with grievous bodily harm. Both pleaded not guilty.

Terry, in particular, has played a prominent role in the strike right for the start. He was the leader of the march from Snowdown pit to the Nottingham coalfield in the early days of the strike. Since then he has been subjected to continual police harassment. Friends and colleagues are convinced that the police were "out to get him".

Both Terry and Chris would greatly appreciate letters of solidarity, although prison regulations mean that they cannot reply.

Terry French, B73383, HMP Wandsworth, PO Box 757, Heathfield Road, Wandsworth, London SW18 3HS.

Chris Tazey, A29398, HMYO

Prison, Springfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex.

Dear Friends,

I am writing on behalf of Terry who sends his best wishes and thanks you for your solidarity.

He cannot write himself as prison rules allow him one letter a week. I know he will carry on the fight for justice inside prison just as he did out. He looked well when I went to see him last week and said to give the Welsh lads his best wishes and tell them to keep fighting.

There is a fund being set up for miners' families whose men are in prison. As you can understand we will suffer much hardship, not that miners have not already.

Well I thank you once again for your support. Keep fighting.

Liz French

Kent miner's wife

We are also doing a petition for Terry and Chris. Justice in our courts for miners. I will send you a copy.

(Reproduced from a letter by Liz French).



At Houghton Main, Yorkshire, riot police barricaded the road and occupied the village. Photo: John Harris, IFL