

Sacked for striking



Apartheid bosses sack 20,000 miners



Last weekend nearly 20,000 black miners in South Africa were sacked, cleared out of the company hostels where they live with tear gas and rubber bullets, and told to return to their 'homelands'.

This was the apartheid bosses' reaction to a strike called by the South African National Union of Mineworkers. The strike, in turn, was a response to some hundreds of miners being

sacked earlier in the week for industrial action over racial job restrictions and wages. There have been protests by the labour movements of a large number of countries.

The NUM is fighting for the sacked miners' jobs. Latest reports as we went to press were that some workers had won reinstatement.

Campaign needed for 700 British miners

Around 700 British miners still remained sacked for their part in the fight for jobs. Some are class-war prisoners, jailed for responding to the strong-arm, scab-herding of the police; some have been sacked despite being acquitted by the courts. Kent Area NUM has organised its sacked miners to cam-

aign for reinstatement. But the broad labour movement is doing very little.

Trade union and Labour Party branches should demand that the TUC and Labour Party campaign — and take the initiative if they don't.



**INSIDE
THIS
WEEK**

A split in
Provisional
IRA?

Page 6

Class Fighter
YTS
Special

First part of
interview
with John
McDonnell
about
prospects of
Left unity.
Pages 4-5

Never lose hope!

By Paul Whetton, former secretary of the Notts rank and file strike committee

May Day last year was not remembered up here so much for the miners' demonstration in Mansfield but for the defence of Berry Hill which was marched on by scabs.

We felt at the time that it was disgraceful that on the day of international solidarity of all workers, the working miners held a demonstration and we saw the emergence of a real police state insofar as striking miners trying to get to Berry Hill, were prevented by road blocks from doing so, and working miners were escorted through by police.

We look forward to a May Day this year when workers can truly express their solidarity with one another in struggle.

The former striking miners of Nottinghamshire will be going to other areas, like Chesterfield, to demonstrate.

The message this May Day has got to be that workers should never lose hope. Although we have been through a 12-month long strike which we did not win, that has not deterred us at all. In fact it has made us more determined than ever to take up the struggle. I would hope that people, wherever they are in the world, will realise their own potential in struggle.



People were put to the test in the miners' strike and we suffered casualties — miners who have been sacked and miners who have been jailed. Those casualties must not be forgotten.

One of the main themes this May Day has got to be that those who have been sacked and jailed for standing up for the right to work must be remembered.

There has been a meeting for the sacked miners to come together, talk over their problems and so on. It was a meeting exclusively for sacked miners so I don't know the outcome, but if they want our assistance I'm sure they'll come to us and ask for it.

Even though the 50p levy for sacked miners was defeated many pits have organised their own 50p levy, especially among the strikers.

The court hearing has taken place on the financial standing of the former striking Notts miners. The judgement was that until the full case is heard at the end of the month, we are to be considered, in every respect, full financial members. This has given us all a boost. It's not very often we have had a winner in the courts.

We are not pinning our hopes on justice from a British court, however, but in the meantime we have got the right to attend meetings, to vote, to stand for office and all the other things and that is going to be important in regards to the ballot on May 13 about the national rule change.

Official

It will be important in the ballot for a full time official in the Notts area. We will be urging people in the Notts coalfield to vote for Jeff Peace.

Things will come to a head as far as the future of the Notts area is concerned with the rule change ballot on the 13th. This will be quickly followed by the ballot on the full-time official and the full court hearing. So at the end of that we should have a

much clearer position on what is happening in the Notts coalfield and whether to stand a slate of militants for the June elections.

Rules

The rule change package has obviously been drawn up with a view to ensuring solidarity within the NUM. It's not just a matter of an internal decision. We have to protect ourselves against the courts, against the state, and against the media who will be campaigning to get a 'no' vote on the political levy.

As for the decision in the TGWU to re-ballot, I think the original decision should have stood. The decision shows a bowing to pressure not from the trade union rank and file but from the media. I would have thought that the lesson should be that we will not have union policy dictated by the media.

Ken Livingstone came up to Ollerton during the strike and made quite an impression up here. He spoke about a number of things that people would not otherwise have thought of being linked to the strike.

Since then, the collapse of the GLC's fight against rate-capping has left people rather disappointed in him. I think it was a very sorry day when Livingstone took the course of careerism in place of a principled stand.

Tower Hamlets

By councillor Susan Carlyle



Tower Hamlets council (East London) met on April 23 to consider a revised budget. The previous meeting of this right wing Labour council resulted in no rate being set, but the Labour group suspending nine members who opposed the right wing cuts budget.

On April 23 such was the confusion that the Chief Executive could not confirm whether a rate had been set or not!

The next day the mayor announced on TV that he would recall the meeting. This was as a result of concerted pressure from the unions, community groups and councillors. The Labour Party has called for the resignations of both the mayor and the Chief Executive.

On April 23, the mayor tried to rule out of order the motion not to set a rate, supported by the local Labour Parties. The ruling was overturned.

However, as the member attempting to move it, I had to shout for five minutes and risked being removed from the Council chamber.

As expected, only the nine suspended councillors and one independent voted for 'no rate'. There are 21 right wing Labour councillors.

Local authority trade unions, the Labour Parties,

tenants and community groups had agreed on an alternative to be put forward after the 'no rate' position was defeated.

The alternative was a growth budget of 4%, with £3 million extra money from the GLC never previously claimed in full by the borough and was constructed to increase depleted staffing levels in social services and housing. It involved a rate increase of 8%.

Seven Labour councillors opposed the leadership with this 'no cuts' alternative.

This alternative budget provided a basis for fighting the dominant right wing by protecting services and spending at a higher level.

The Local Government Committee, for the first time, did organise a fightback in conjunction with trade unionists and community groups. Left councillors here have been ill-organised and isolated but now a few have been drawn together and have involved themselves in speaking to local groups all over the borough. They also intend to stand again at the next borough elections in 1986.

A 'no rate' situation can continue for now but only because of the council leadership's blunderings and the Liberal's opportunism — we don't have a council committed to a 'no rate' position.

Our job is to continue organising a Labour campaign against the dominant right wing on the council and with those sections of workers and representatives from the pensioners, disabled, playgroups, tenants, ethnic minority organisations who are outside every council meeting, lobbying and shouting support from the gallery to save their jobs and their services.

Wages of GLC sellout

THE WAGES of treachery is... promotion. With the backing of the Labour leadership, Ken Livingstone has won his fight to be the Labour Party candidate for Brent East in the next general election, beating Diane Abbott by a vote of two to one.

"This thing on my face going from here to here is called a grin", the future Lord Redken told the press afterwards. Well he might. The serious left in Brent East tried to get the selection postponed. They issued this statement:

"We call on delegates to vote against 'proceeding to ballot' for the following reasons:

Ken Livingstone deliberately misled the London Labour Party over his position on the GLC budget and rate-capping strategy. In doing this he undermined the policy of two London Labour Party conferences.

In the GLC debacle Ken Livingstone not only organised against party policy but even encouraged the right to vote for the eventually successful Barrie Stead budget.

If Ken Livingstone sells out on a major issue where he has power, what will he do on the other sharp questions that will arise? We shouldn't give him a second chance.

He has made it clear that he wants a safe seat for a very long time. We have spent years getting rid of an unaccountable MP. Let's not let the same thing happen again.

Since the GLC budget debacle occurred in the middle of selection (March 10), the choice of candidates has been very limited, and there has been little or no opportunity to discuss Livingstone's role in the branches. It has meant that the other candidates today merely provide the

false impression of a real contest. Deferring selection will give the party time to make a considered decision.

Voting against proceeding to ballot does not help Freeson [Reg Freeson, the sitting MP]. The guidelines are clear: 'If the motion (to proceed to ballot) is defeated, the meeting shall close immediately and the NEC representative shall consult with

London gag

THE LONDON Labour Party executive is fighting an attempt at gag law by the national Labour Party bureaucracy.

National agent David Hughes has written to London Labour Party secretary George Page instructing him not to implement a resolution on Ireland passed by a clear majority at the London Labour conference in March.

The resolution called for a debate on British withdrawal from Ireland, which would include talks with Sinn Fein.

The paid officials of the Lon-

don Labour Party are employed by, and thus controlled by, the national party.

Mick Woods, Paul Wilkinson, Dave Statham, Pete Firmin, Howard Platt, Rose Deane, Deb Knight, Steve Barton, Paddy Harkins, Mark Wall, Jill Fried, Kyron Connolly, Jacqui Brown, Ian McClellan.

Louise Christian, joint chair of the London Labour Party policy committee, said: "The London Labour Party has made an important commitment to a policy of withdrawal. The Labour Party nationally should be welcoming the proposed consultation and talks with the Republican movement instead of trying to stifle such an important debate."

"We cannot continue to bury our heads in the sand".

Manchester budget

Manchester City Council's campaign to defend jobs and improve services was seriously dented at the weekend. On Sunday, the City Labour Party met to decide on its budget strategy. This followed the defeat for the Labour Left and for Labour Party policy when the Labour right wing organised with the Tories and Liberals to set a rate on March 31.

The Labour Party now faces the task of sorting out the details of the budget. The Executive Committee proposal, which was finally passed, was a legal budget containing £4 million of improvements.

In financial terms, the manifesto demands amounted to about £30 million of improvements.

An amendment to the City Party meeting argued that the first position put by the Labour Party to the Council should be a deficit budget, including this £30 million expansion.

Unfortunately the amendment was defeated.

Where does this leave the fight to defend jobs and improve services? The Labour Party, while settling for a legal budget, is still committed to fighting for the other improvements over the rest of the year.

Letter

Ken's Irish votes

On Paul Wozny's letter (last week), just one additional point which was not taken up in the editorial note replying to him.

He says it is cynical and wrong to think that the quest for Irish votes has anything to do with the mushrooming of support for Irish nationalism (in fact, often, for narrow Catholic nationalism) on the local government Left. Espousal of Sinn Fein, he says, is more likely to lose than win votes.

Of course, being linked with Sinn Fein would lose Labour votes in many areas. But Paul Wozny cannot really believe that Irish nationalism is a vote-loser in Brent (where Ken Livingstone hopes to be MP) or Islington, or with most of the Irish people in London, who are

said to number one in six.

He is using the general idea that association with Sinn Fein is not likely to be popular in large areas of Britain to stop himself or other people from understanding what's happening in those areas where vague general common-denominator Irish nationalism, such as we learned in the schools of the 26 Counties, is anything but a vote-loser. And the running is being made by councillors in places like Islington and Brent, and by Ken Livingstone.

Sincere

Of course, there are also many sincere supporters of Ireland's rights and of the Northern Ireland Catholics on the local government left who — unlike Ken

Livingstone — can expect to gain nothing from it. The original SO article said so.

It is not cynicism to recognise and identify unpleasant things like sordid self-interested careerism at work; the cynics are those like Livingstone who connive and calculate to further their careers and who — claiming to speak as socialists — exploit the understandable nationalism of the Irish-born electorate.

Should Livingstone be a member of a Kinnock-led Labour government, he'd drop Sinn Fein like he's dropped the serious left in London. You don't have to be cynical to see that; you have to be naive not to.

FERGUS ENNIS, London.

STUDENT MOVEMENT CONFERENCE ON YTS

Organised by Manchester Area NUS and Tyne Tees Area NUS

Manchester University Students Union
Saturday May 11, 10.30 a.m. — 5.00 p.m.

Plenaries and workshops on student unions and YTS; the Tories and youth; tasks for monitoring groups; TVEI; sexism and racism on the schemes; the National Inquiry into Youth Training

Speakers invited from NUS Executive, Birmingham Resources Centre, Manchester TGWU/ACTSS, the National Inquiry, women and YTS

More details from Tim Perry, MANUS, Waterloo Place, Oxford Road, Manchester. 061-273 5111 or Simon Pottinger, DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham, 0385 69194.

Regrouping the left?

Editorial

IN 1983, soon after the Tories' general election victory, Ken Livingstone spoke at a meeting called to discuss the election results.

Decrying the defeatist notion that the Thatcherites were an irresistible new force, he argued that the real new force in British politics was the radical Labour Left.

Less than two years later that Left is disintegrating in a spectacular way.

Ken Livingstone has ratted on the fight against rate-capping and made his peace with Kinnock. This week Neil Kinnock welcomed Livingstone's selection as Labour candidate for Brent East.

Today Ken Livingstone aligns himself with the same sort of ideas — presented by 'Marxism Today' — as he attacked in 1983. He, and many others, present the division as between a new politics of 'broad alliances' and outdated 'fundamentalism'.

In truth there is nothing new about the policy of 'broad alliances' and popular fronts.

The serious Left needs to get its own picture of the divisions, and dig down to the roots of failures like the GLC debacle and the labour movement's inadequate solidarity with the miners.

Three weeks ago Labour Herald published an appeal for left regroupment. It was

signed by Lambeth council leader Ted Knight, by John McDonnell, and by Matthew Warburton.

Labour Herald was started by Knight in collaboration with Livingstone, and now expresses Knight's views.

Many things said in the article are true and important: but it calls for the Left to unite around Labour Herald.

Labour Briefing has replied, rightly:

"We strongly agree with this sentiment and the call for left unity. We feel however that it would be wrong for any one group or campaign to pretend that it alone can be the sole vehicle for such unity.

"We are therefore calling on all socialist groups and currents within the left wing of the party to meet to discuss how to work together over the coming period. We would ask all those organisations... to bring proposals for action".

Labour Herald is particularly unsuitable as an axis for the left to unite around, as it has no democratic structure. The lavish 16-page weekly exists without any visible network of organised support, apparently thanks to favourable arrangements with the WRP printworks, where it is produced.

Moreover, Ted Knight is

not the best person to analyse the roots of the GLC's collapse.

Today he talks of 'absolute defiance' in Lambeth. Yet he knows that there is practically no chance that his Labour group will hold its slim majority when it comes to the crunch.

As early as 1979 he proposed cuts in Lambeth, and since then he has implemen-

ted them.

The publicity campaign against rate-capping — displaying portraits of Ted Heath and Francis Pym, in best Marxism Today popular-front style — bore the signature of Lambeth as well as the GLC.

In fact the GLC fiasco had been prepared for over four years by the way that the local government left —

Knight as well as Livingstone — reacted to the Tory offensive.

Labour Herald — and Briefing, too — have for years pushed ideas and strategies which paved the way for the collapse.

The Labour 'new left' took control of a number of Town and County Halls just before or during the high tide of Thatcherism. They had a choice: to be fighters, or administrators.

They tried to evade the choice and 'buy time' with rate rises. This was wrong and utterly short-sighted.

Rate rises cut into working class living standards. As time was 'bought', and a confrontation with the Tories was postponed again and again, the rate rises also demobilised the local community.

The miners' strike showed that the trade unions should have mobilised and fought back against the Tories in 1980, before the slump and unemployment had bitten so deep into the labour movement. The same is true of the local government left.

Right from the beginning they should have conducted themselves as people determined to fight, doing everything to prepare for confrontation. Instead they fantasised about their local 'power', they manoeuvred, and... they ran before the Tories.

The open collapse of the GLC was the culmination of the whole strategy of the local government left over five or six years.

The Left does need to regroup, to pick up the pieces and draw out the lessons of this experience. First of all, and most important, we need a full and open discussion not just on the personal fate of Ken Livingstone, but the whole record of the local government Left.

At the same time we need the greatest unity of action on specific issues wherever it is possible.



Two jailed miners are released: Garry Hopper (right) is greeted by his father, and Dave Richardson (right) by his brother. But between 150 and 200 miners are still in jail. Photo: John Harris, IFL.



School racism

In 1982 workers at the Ukaidi Community Link Project became concerned at the number of black parents seeking advice on the suspension of their children from Nottingham's schools.

The workers approached the Labour-controlled county council, who agreed to begin keeping statistics on school suspensions by racial origin.

Statistics were compiled covering the summer mid-term 1983 to Christmas 1984. The county council, however, broke its agreement and refused to release or discuss the figures. The reason, as UKAIDI workers later found out, was that the county council's own figures showed that black children were being suspended six times as often as their classmates.

Pop front

When is a coalition not a coalition?

According to born-again-Kinnockite Tribune editor Nigel Williamson — when it's a popular front.

The Employment Institute — a pressure group set up under SDP leadership but with the sponsorship of Roy Hattersley and Michael Meacher — came in for criticism at the Labour Party national executive meeting on April 24. But Tribune sprang to its defence.

Despite public meetings involving as many as 300 black parents, the Labour-controlled county council's only response has been to claim that black children are being suspended more often because they belong to single-parent families.

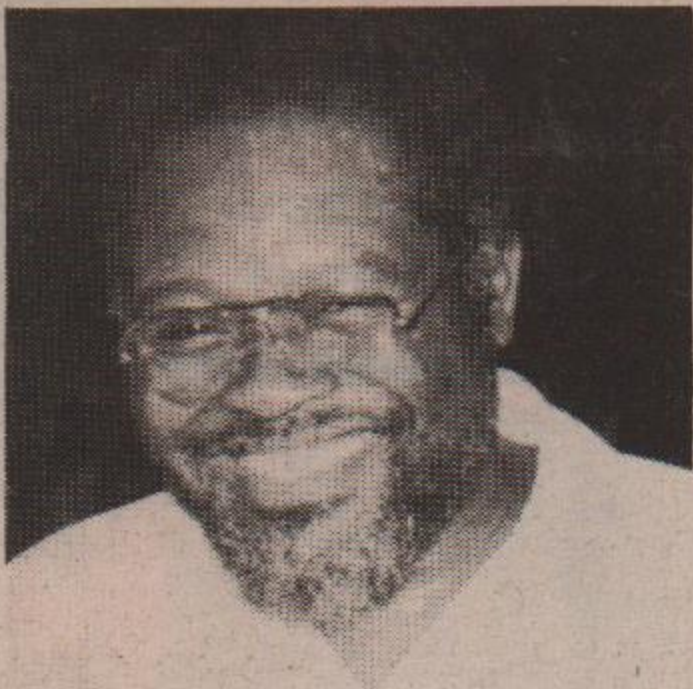
Nottingham African-Caribbean Convention is calling on the council to:

- release the suspension figures,
- hold an independent enquiry into black suspensions,
- revise the suspension procedure,
- make clear instances of racism by teachers and education officials a disciplinary offence,
- develop an anti-racist curriculum in the schools,

The participation of Hattersley and Meacher was "quite legitimate". But if a common front on jobs — which Labour, after all, stresses as the central issue — then why not a full-fledged alliance as advocated by 'Marxism Today'?

"A popular front against Thatcherite economics is one thing. Allowing ourselves to get sucked into some soggy, Centrist, SDP-dominated coalition is quite another".

Why?



Left-wing Haringey councillor Bernie Grant is the first black leader of a London borough council.

Firms rip off council

In private session the Housing Committee of Merton Council were told on February 5 that random checks revealed that 15.4% of the private building contractors' bills were claims for work either not done or over-charged.

The report to the Housing Committee says that checks carried out by the Council — on November 1984 bills — show that in one week alone contractors claimed £4,923.76 and council officers estimate that £758.74 was for work not carried out. Official estimates put the possible loss at as much as £95,000 over a full year.

The Federation of Merton Council Tenants estimate the figure as high as £360,750 — which is based on 15.4% of the actual repair and maintenance bill of £2,342,500 for last year.

These figures from the Housing Revenue Account were presented to the same Council meeting on February 5.

Clydeside anarchists

After a three-day trial, eleven Clydeside Anarchists have been found guilty of breach of the peace and malicious damage to property, for their occupation of the offices of Price Waterhouse in Glasgow — after the firm had taken charge of the sequestration of the South Wales NUM funds during the miners' strike.

Save one, who was already remanded in prison, the anarchists were freed on bail pending social work reports. They re-

appear in court in May for sentencing, and face the threat of prison sentences.

The anarchists' occupation of the Price Waterhouse offices was an act of solidarity with the miners. The case is therefore obviously political. But the Glasgow labour movement has failed to take up the issue, and for two reasons.

One is sectarian prejudice towards the anarchists and their activities. While the anarchists'

sometimes outlandish and inaccurate attacks on the Labour Party and unions might account for this, it certainly does not justify it.

Another is the failure of the NUM in Scotland to campaign about the class 'justice' inflicted on sacked and jailed miners. It has not even publicised the fact that a Solsgirth miner is now serving a four-month prison sentence.

Firms Defend Galtieri?

General Galtieri is now being tried in Argentina for his part in the great massacre of left-wingers and trade unionists during the military regime.

General Leopoldo Galtieri was, of course, the military dictator who invaded the Falklands in 1982.

Galtieri was hailed by large sections of the British and international left in 1982 as a fighter against imperialism. Some erstwhile supporters of Socialist Organiser (who now produce 'Socialist Viewpoint') said that military-ruled Argentina had, under Galtieri's leadership, crossed over into "the class camp" of the international working class.

Others, like Socialist Action, were less ridiculous in their assessments, but all the more

ardent in their support for Galtieri's 'anti-imperialism'. In their enthusiasm they forgot that Argentina has long been a powerful sub-imperialist power in South America — with its own multinationals, and imperial ambitions.

They forgot that the Argentine military had been the major force behind the Bolivian military coup of 1980, and that Argentine troops were in El Salvador, supporting the government.

In their enthusiasm, Socialist Action published excerpts from the speech of Argentine foreign minister Costa Mendez to the Non-Aligned Conference, with approving comment suggesting that its 'anti-imperialist' rhetoric could be taken seriously.

Why then are these people now silent about Galtieri's predicament? Here is a man who fought the good fight against imperialism being tried by liberal sell-out merchants who plainly have no intention of resuming the progressive war that Galtieri lost.

Isn't Galtieri being scapegoated for losing the war? If he had won the war, his present accusers might have faced trial or been spirited away in the middle of the night.

Surely Galtieri is as entitled to

the left's solidarity against the civilian government as he was to their support against Britain.

Isn't there an element of 'bending under the pressure of imperialist and bourgeois public opinion', comrades, in your failure to speak up for the one Argentine leader prepared to 'fight imperialism'?

Castro

Talking about Socialist Action. Last week it reprinted a full-page interview with Fidel Castro. Fidel Castro took power in Cuba on January 1 1959, and has held it since. Cuba is now a Stalinist state without proper elections, without legal opposition, without independent trade unions, without legal working-class parties, and without freedom of speech, press, assembly or of sexuality.

Castro's subject in the interview? In his capacity as an expert on such things, he discusses and analyses, for the enlightenment of Socialist Action readers, the progress of 'democratisation' in Latin America!



Videla: on trial with Galtieri

The future of the left

There have been a number of articles in the Left press recently — one in Labour Herald which you put your name to, calling for a realignment of the Left, and others in Marxism Today and New Socialist. Is there a realignment taking place on the Left? How do you see it?

It has come about because of the miners' struggle and the rate-capping struggle. These struggles have brought the class struggle to a pitch of intensity where the labour movement has divided on traditional, historic lines between those who are genuinely revolutionary and those who are reformist.

What has happened in the Labour Party is a triple process. First of all the attempt by Kinnock and Hattersley to introduce a whole series of policy statements prior to conference, jobs and industry, education, social security, to bounce the Party into basically social democratic policies, take the Party back down the road of Wilson and Callaghan and into social democracy.

The second part of that process has been the launch of the Employment Institute which is an attempt to establish some form of pact or coalition if the Labour Party does not have an overall majority at the next general election. It looks like Kinnock has been reading Hobsbawm and has been completely convinced that straightforward, firm socialism won't obtain an overall majority, and therefore he will have to do deals with the SDP, the Liberals and the Tory 'wets'.

In addition to this there is a third process which is an attempt by the right wing at national level to embrace the soft left and centre elements that came into an alliance on the broad left around the struggle over the programme for the 1983 election and around Benn's deputy leadership campaign.

In the struggle around the miners and rate-capping, that soft left element has peeled off because they couldn't face up to the threats that were coming from the central capitalist state, and they have been embraced warmly now by the centre-right coalition, based around Kinnock and Hattersley.

Every excuse has been dragged out for that reneging on Party policy and betrayal of the struggle — that they were unsure of the ground, or that they thought it would be better to fall back on some accommodation with particular reforms, rather than the prospect of a heavy defeat, and in recent articles by Livingstone in Marxism Today and Morrell in New Statesman, the spurious attempt to take on board some of the best developments in the left over recent years like the mass participatory struggle that has been developing round rate-capping and the miners' strike, and seeking to use and abuse the trend of feminism that has been developed by socialists and try to isolate and marginalise those comrades on the left who have stood firm.

In the aftermath of the miners' strike, a new centre-left is regrouping in the Labour Party. Groups like the Labour Coordinating Committee, and figures like Ken Livingstone, Frances Morrell, Michael Meacher and Tom Sawyer, have cut loose from the class struggle left and moved towards Kinnock.

John McDonnell led the fight on the GLC for the London Labour Party's 'no rate' policy and for his pains has been dumped from his position as deputy leader of the council. He talked to John Bloxam about the prospects for regrouping the Left. The second part of the interview (next week) discusses the call for regroupment made by Lambeth council leader Ted Knight's 'Labour Herald', with which McDonnell has associated himself.



Kinnock: 'convinced socialism won't win a majority'. Photo: John Harris.

That is the triple process that has been going on and what is needed now is for those comrades who are clearly of the Left and who have stood firm throughout those struggles to come together and regroup and develop first of all a clear programme of policies and ideology that can be seen quite clearly to be socialist and that people can associate themselves with.

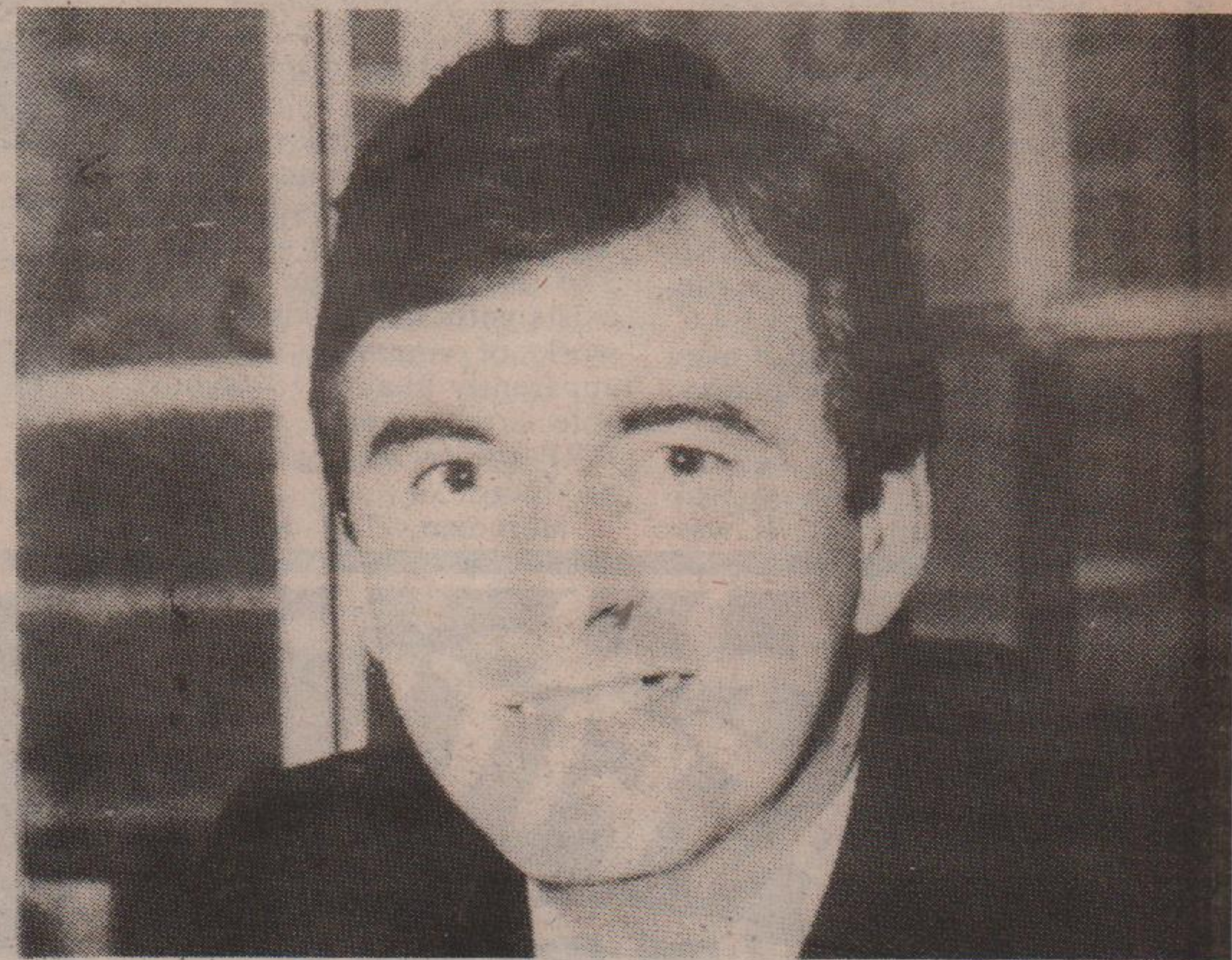
It is also necessary to develop an organisational forum in which those policies can be discussed and in which we can agree on tactical interventions in immediate struggles, particularly the range of industrial disputes that are going to occur.

Livingstone in his Marxism Today article describes the split in the left as being between the vanguardists, the McDonnellites, the Tankies [hard-line Stalinists] on the one side and the Euro-communists, the participatory left, the soft left, presu-

ably the Livingstoneites, on the other. How useful do you think that categorisation is?

It is an attempt to categorise those people who stood firm in the struggles both on the miners and on rate-capping in a way which denigrates them. It has been the organisation around the miners' struggle through the leadership of Scargill and others who have stood firm. It's an attempt to disassociate the left from the developments they have aroused within the movement because the mass participatory struggle has gone on through the miners and rate-capping and have been developed by the leadership of those people who stood firm throughout.

Far from consolidating that mass participation, the people who have capitulated both in the miners' struggle and the rate-capping, have brought about a demoralisation which is undermining that mass participatory struggle.



John McDonnell: 'discard those elements who are reformist'.

The best example of that is the GLC where for the first time in London we have had a rank and file trade union action through the Democracy for London campaign and London Bridge who were organised to take industrial action once we refused to set a rate and any jobs were threatened. That has been demoralised and undermined by those people who have supported setting a rate, although those workers are now coming back to organise against cuts in jobs and services that might be brought about by the cuts budget that has gone through.

The soft left say that the tide is turning their way. They cite for example the re-selection process in which very few people have been de-selected, and argue that in general people are following them. Do you think that those wishing to stand firm are now in a much weaker position?

The division needs to be clearly categorised as between revolutionary and reformist. It is the same division that occurred in the German Social Democracy at the turn of the century. It is the same division that occurred in the Labour Party in the 1920s and again in the 1950s. It is between those people who genuinely want to bring about a revolutionary transformation in our community and those people who are willing to accommodate to certain reforms which may ameliorate the condition of the working class in the short term but in the long term result in the return of an economic crisis and cuts in services and the undermining and destruction of basic rights that working people have struggled for, and also results in a demoralisation and a destruction of credibility of the Labour Party.

What we are seeking to do is to bring together those people who are genuinely revolutionary, discard those elements that are reformist

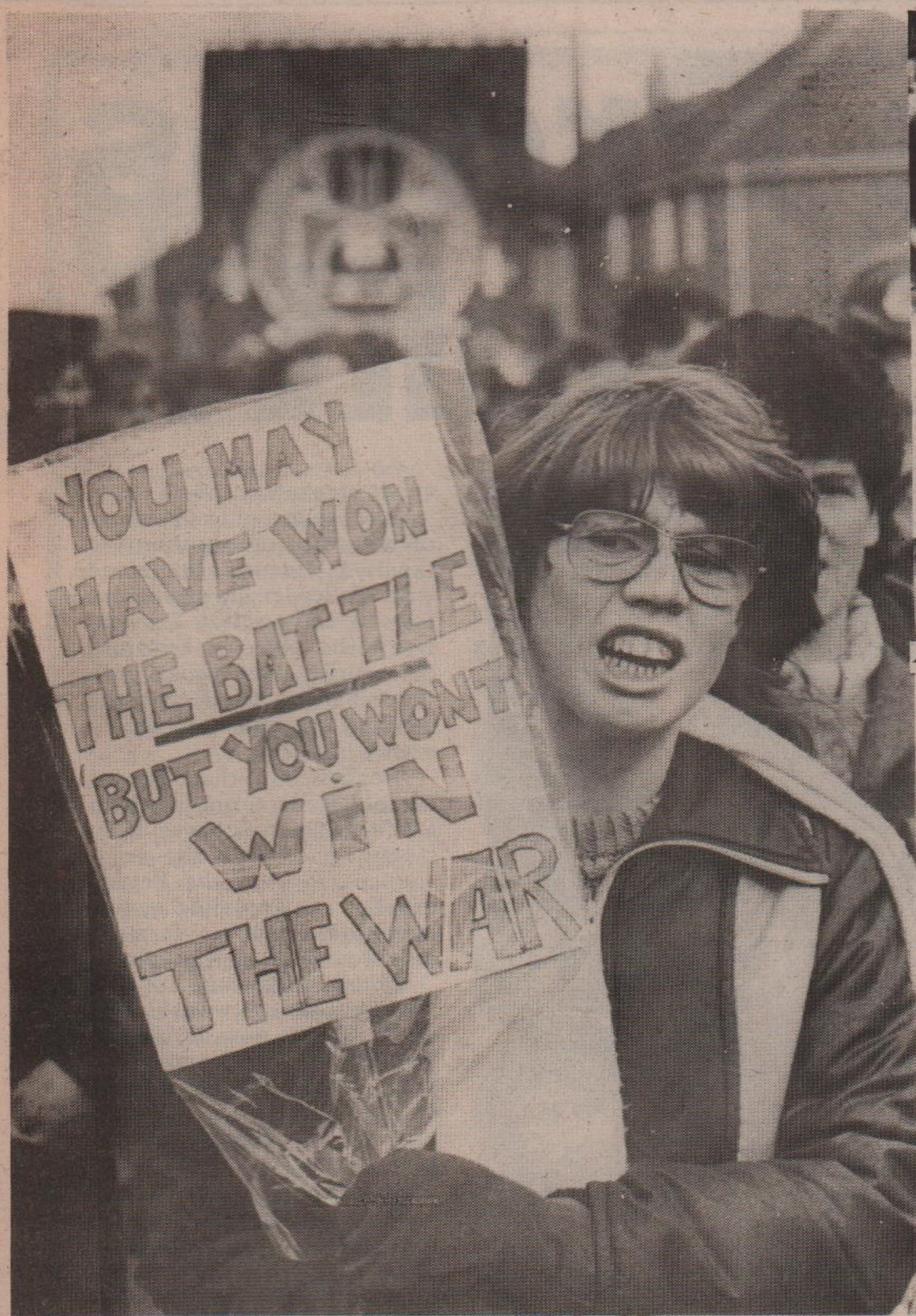
who because of their firm alliance with Kinnock, Hattersley and the right wing are clearly protecting the right.

It is true that in the reselection process we are not getting the changes that will be sending revolutionary socialists to Parliament, but that is only a short-term gain.

The reformists are making the same basic failure in analysis that Kinnock did. Kinnock sees the objective of gaining office as everything rather than gaining power. Reform



Livingstone: 'capitulated in rate-capping'.



After the miners' strike: we need to regroup. Photo: John Harris.

ists like Livingstone and Morrell may be gaining parliamentary seats to obtain office, but with having no power whatsoever. If the programme that Kinnock is now supporting is adopted by the Party it will be a straightforward reformist policy, probably even worse than that of the Wilson/Callaghan governments in terms of the lack of resources that will be available and the failure to take on the basic structures of power in this country.

That will come to grief very very quickly and once Kinnock does anything that seeks to put in jeopardy the class power that the capitalists have there will be an immediate run on the pound, the IMF will intervene and Kinnock will seek to come back to Labour Party conference, rather as Healey did, and perhaps even dress it up as a deficit budget in the same way that Livingstone has done it here at the GLC.

This will destroy the credibility of the Labour Party in the short term because as in 1979 people will say 'what's the difference between you and the Tories?' because Thatcher will go and the Tories will replace



struggle.

her with a 'wet'-type leader to undermine what support has been built up for the Labour Party on a clear socialist programme.

But I think we are stronger. It was inevitable that this was going to happen. The only question was when? It's more important that it happens now in the struggles before we go into the next general election so that we can produce a clear alternative socialist programme that we can campaign for and organise around so that there is an alternative once that Labour government starts going down the road of social democracy.

We are not weaker. The struggles have come earlier than we expected in dividing the revolutionaries from the reformists and that gives us the opportunity to organise now and draw together the best elements.

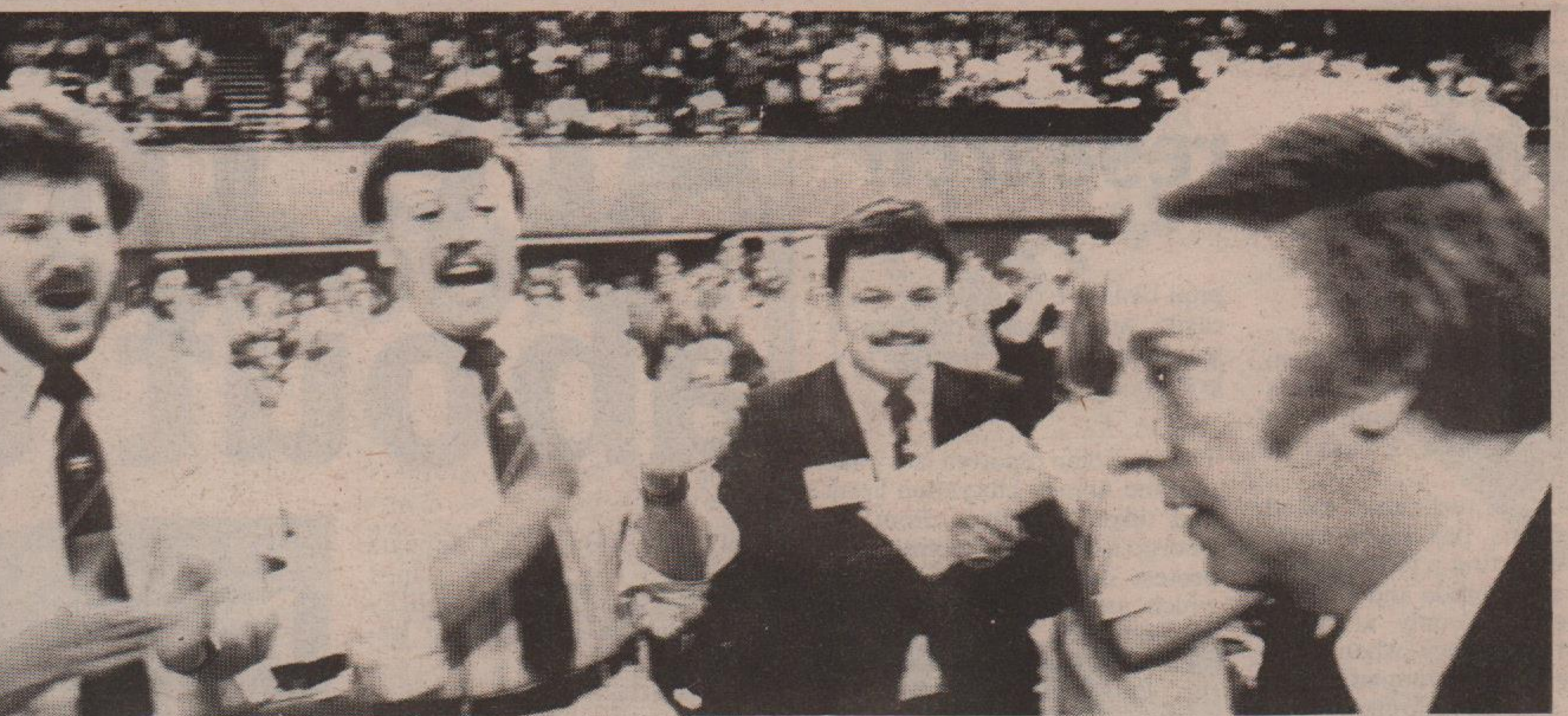
Do you think this division is now fixed? We in Socialist Organiser would argue that the leadership in Lambeth and Islington, have not only in terms of their past record, but also in terms of some of the arguments they have used, not been very distinct from the kind of positions Livingstone adopted at the time it came to the crunch at the GLC. To what extent do you think that the fault lies on the left for not being sharply critical in the past?

I don't think the division is fixed. As far as the leaderships of the struggles are concerned I think the divisions are fixed. In the NUM, for example, there is a quite clear divide between those people who stood for Scargill and Heathfield and those others who capitulated or wanted to capitulate at an early stage. I don't just mean Nottingham, but Trevor Bell and others.

As revolutionaries we always seek to win over the best elements in all the struggles and unite them. So while there may be some fairly stark divisions within the rank and file at the moment, there are large elements that can be won back from the reformists.

I suppose the best example is the GLC campaign where people were unsure about what Livingstone would do at the end of the day and there are still sections within the Constituency Parties who are still supporting Livingstone because they can't come to terms with their left hero bottling out. We need to win those people back.

At the GLC we have learned every time from the struggles. We had three issues in the first year of the GLC. Livingstone voted against the



Arthur Scargill at Labour conference. Photo: Andrew Ward, Report.

left on all of those. We decided that as there were three years left of that GLC the best thing to do was to come back and regroup the left on the GLC and use it as a platform. That is what we have done fairly successfully.

It is the skill of reformists to be able to climb back on particular issues to restore their credibility. That's always the danger that we have to guard against.

Livingstone and others came back after Fare's Fair, having lost their credibility, and jumped on the bandwagon of the development of policies - specifically on Ireland, and the women's issues at the GLC - and then the abolition campaign came up which again gave them a bandwagon to restore their credibility.

To use the platform of the GLC we needed to make certain alliances but what we tried to do was make people aware that there was always this strong possibility that people like that would bottle out in the final analysis.

On the rate-capping issue, I think it's important that we learn the lessons and do not allow those people to restore their credibility on other struggles. Now we are in a period of heightened struggle, broader alliances of that sort cannot be made any longer, because it destroys the credibility of those people who are standing firm.

Should we have exposed them more firmly before the struggle came to the crunch? The important thing it seems to me was to give people an awareness of the possibility of them betraying Party policy, and yet at the same time, not to be seen criticising them beforehand but to give them the opportunity to stand firm. That's what we tried to do. It wasn't totally successful, due in large part to the skilful use of the media by the reformists.

On future developments, because we are in a period of heightened struggle it becomes that much easier to regroup.

Do you see the fight on rate-capping still going on? What do you think councils like Lambeth and Islington should be doing now?

The fight against rate capping is critical, both in the short term and the long term. In the short term it is important that those councils that have stood firm on 'no rate' continue to stand firm and the only way that can be ensured is by mass mobilisations of the trade unions themselves.

The best example of that in the last fortnight was the occupation of Southwark Town Hall on Friday (April 26) when they saw elements on the Labour Group seeking to do a deal with the Tories and capitulate.

That's the most important development we've got to pursue over the next few weeks - bringing trade unionists into struggle around those councils that are standing firm to demonstrate support, or to take action against them if they try to capitulate.

When the Tories move against those councils, in whatever form, no matter how few councils stand firm, we need to ensure there is firm industrial action, not just in those councils, but supportive action as well. London Transport, who are at present going through struggles of their own around garage closures and privatisation, would be a good example.

The third stage of it is that rate-capping for those councils that have capitulated this year starts all over

again in June. That's when the government announces the rate-capped figures for next year, together with the level of cuts those councils will have to make. What we have to do is regroup the workers who were involved in those campaigns in those council areas to ensure that we build a mass campaign for next April when the councillors will have to decide again whether to stand firm and fight the government or if they are going to make cuts.

We need to emphasise the need for accountability and insist that those councillors either stand firm or get out and make way for those who will.

You say it is necessary for those on the revolutionary as opposed to the reformist left to get together to draw up some kind of political programme and open up some kind of forum to discuss tactical issues. How do you see that happening? Do you see it happening just inside the Labour Party?

The regroupment that needs to take place is to basically recognise that a realignment has gone on on the centre and right, taking in the soft left elements, and the objective of that is to realign themselves around social democracy and to isolate and marginalise those people who stood firm on all these struggles and who present a threat not just to the capitalist state but also present a threat to the social democrats themselves.

Concretely we need to bring

together all those people who either very openly consider themselves to be revolutionary, both in terms of the Labour Party and the trade union movement, and in the community at large - the non-traditional areas of struggle, women, gays, blacks, and other ethnic groups like the Irish who have been hit by the Prevention of Terrorism Act for some years now.

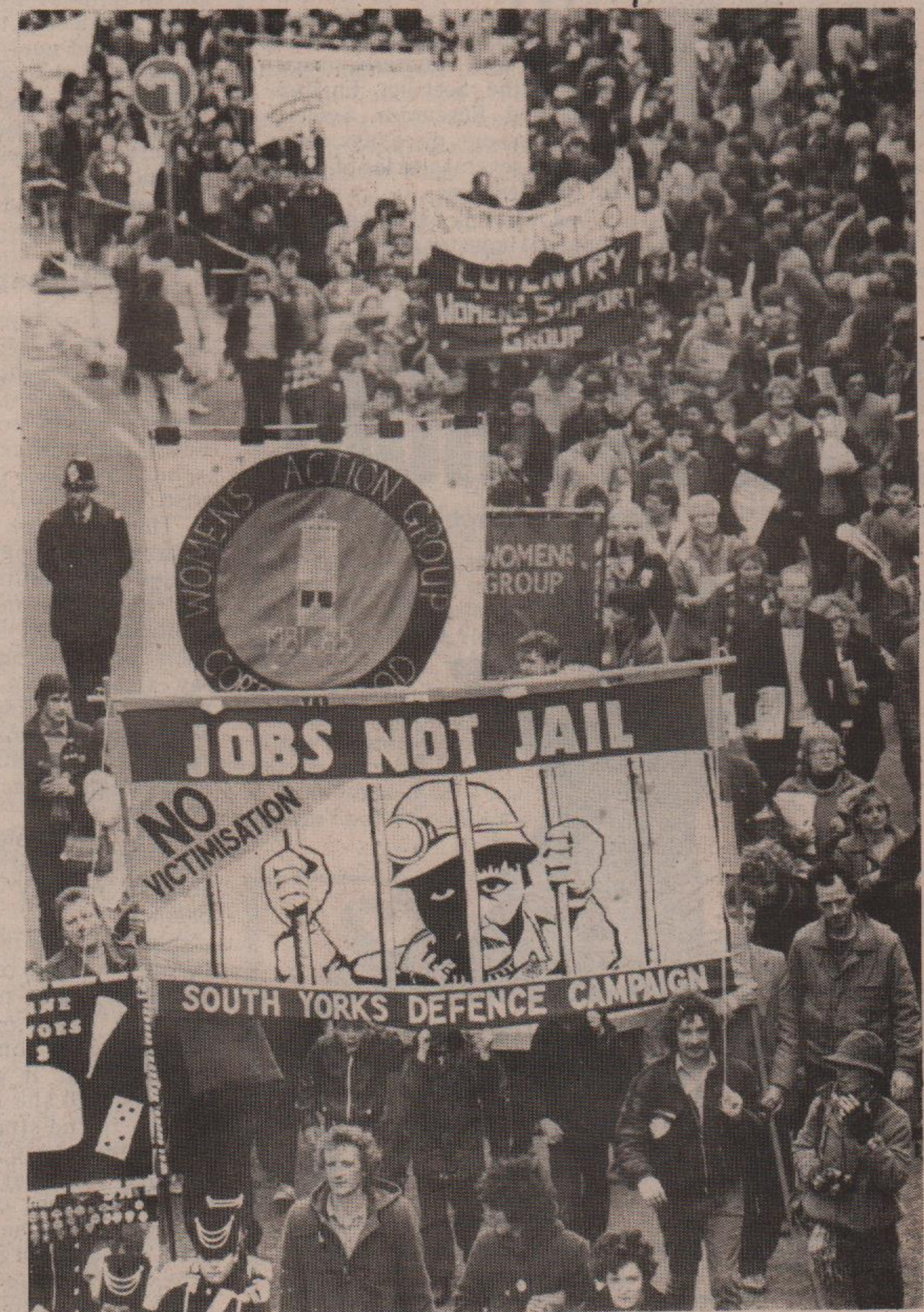
So it's a case of bringing together those who consciously say they are revolutionaries with those who don't necessarily think they are but who nevertheless are challenging the capitalist state and are trying to bring about a revolutionary change in our community.

At the moment that regroupment is going on in the Labour Party and the trade union movement. Outside the Labour Party there are a number of sectarian parties who in my opinion are not providing any lead to people at the moment. They are going into decline. The same is happening to the Communist Party with the split, it is facing.

What we have to do is try to win them to the organisational base of the Labour Party and bring them into the Labour Party.

Trade unionists active as class fighters within the unions should also be organising in the Labour Party.

With the government trying to break the link between the unions and the Labour Party, what we have to do is ensure that link is guaranteed and developed.



Sheffield demonstration for jailed and sacked miners. Photo: John Harris

Embryo research

By Les Hearn

A recent announcement from medical researchers tells of a welcome breakthrough in detecting inherited diseases in human embryos.

Hitherto, a technique called *amniocentesis* has been available for detecting a few diseases such as spina bifida and Down's Syndrome, but only at 18-20 weeks of pregnancy, when abortion may be more traumatic.

Now, a new technique known as *chorionic villus sampling* (CVS) is being introduced. This can be used at only 8-10 weeks of pregnancy, when the embryo is only some 2 cm long.

It involves inserting a thin plastic tube through the neck of the womb and taking a sample of cells from the chorionic villi, while guided by ultra-sound scanners. The samples are then screened with "genetic probes" — biochemicals which "recognise" faulty genes and stick to them, alerting researchers to their presence.

The CV are finger-like extensions of the placenta that stick into the side of the womb. They allow food, oxygen and wastes to pass between mother and embryo. The CV actually originate from the fertilised eggs and have identical genes to the embryo.

CVS is already being used to detect the inherited blood diseases *thalassaemia* and sickle cell anaemia. It has recently been used to detect *haemophilia* and should soon be able to detect such fatal ailments as *cystic fibrosis* (the most common genetic disease in Britain) and *Huntington's chorea*, a degenerative brain disease that strikes in middle-age, usually after the victim has had children who may harbour the faulty gene themselves.

CVS unfortunately carries a 3% risk of causing a spontaneous miscarriage so would not be used for routine screening. However, when a serious genetic disease is likely, the risk will often be thought worthwhile, since otherwise carriers of such diseases will often deny themselves children to avoid passing on such genes.

Some 6000 babies with severe genetic handicaps are born each year and 40% of all childhood deaths occur in this group. A great number of children's hos-

pital beds are occupied by such cases. Anything that can help to lessen this human tragedy is a great boon.

The Guardian reported last week that the Animal Liberation Front had taken 200 mice from St. George's Hospital, Tooting, as a protest over the conditions in which animals for experiments are kept. The Guardian's statement that the mice were from the *Pubic Health Laboratory* (rather than Public) made the story somewhat more ludicrous than it might otherwise have been — a case of *pubic mice*, perhaps?

In fact, the mice are used in tests for toxoplasmosis parasite. This frequently infects cats and humans (especially children) can pick it up through contamination with cat shit.

Inside the body, the parasite multiplies until attacked by the immune system when it forms cysts. These contain hundreds of cells, shielded from attack.

When cysts break open, a hypersensitivity reaction occurs, and the surrounding tissues get inflamed. If the cysts are lodged in the retina, this can cause blindness.

Since the liberated mice are infected with toxoplasmosis, any kindhearted ALF supporter harbouring them risks infection.

These mice are obviously being used only to alleviate human suffering and in fact the Public Health Lab says they are on the verge of replacing the test mice with cell cultures.

These several facts seem to make the ALF action a bit of an "own goal", but perhaps the movement for animal rights is still performing a valuable function in forcing experimenters to justify their actions, and in encouraging development of methods that do no involve animals (and may actually be more reliable).

THE SPRING issue of 'New Ground', the quarterly magazine of the Socialist Environment and Resources Association, is just out, price 60p, and it contains several articles of interest to SO readers.

The major theme is that of the chemical industry and the pollution, poisoning and disasters it causes.

Are the Provos about to split?

THE Provisional IRA appears to be on the verge of a split that could change the political landscape of Northern Ireland.

Reports in the Sunday Times and the Irish Times add up to a picture of an organisation whose internal contradictions are close to explosion point.

Four leading activists in Belfast, two of them former Belfast commanders, have been expelled by a narrow vote of the IRA's eight man Executive. The central figure in the grouping is Ivor Bell who was expelled because he expressed "no confidence" in the leadership around West Belfast MP Gerry Adams and because he was agitating for an IRA Army Convention to meet and reassess Adams' "electoral strategy".

The dissidents have been threatened with death if they continue agitating, if they form a new movement or if they join the rival Irish National Liberation Army. But they are far from isolated, having a strong following in the ranks of the IRA.

They continue to agitate and to organise. Significantly they are allied with former IRA chief of staff David O'Connell and other veterans like Joe Cahill, Seamus Twomey and Jimmy Drumm, who founded the Provisional IRA in 1969/70 but have been ousted or pushed aside in the last three or four years.

The political dispute appears to be about the same issue that split the Republican movement in 1969/70: legal political activity versus the gun and guerrilla warfare. There may also be underlying Left versus Right tensions and the old leadership was bitterly opposed to the dropping of the proposal for a federal united Ireland from Sinn Fein's Constitution.

Dissidents

The dissidents are not against 'politics', but they want politics subordinated to the military activities, and designed only to serve and boost the military campaign — not to replace it or marginalise it.

They charge that the Adams leadership has downgraded the military side of the movement and that legal political activity has become their central concern. They say this devours too much money and other resources and that the military campaign is subordinated and increasingly sacrificed to politics.

The leadership say they want both politics and the gun, in roughly the present balance.

On one level it is a straight forward struggle over the allocation of scarce resources, of the sort most organisations experience in one form or another. But it goes deeper than that, to the root contradiction in the strategy of the Adams leadership.

Their idea that the Republican movement could develop "with an Armalite in one hand and a ballot paper in the other" is fundamentally mistaken. The entire history of the Republican movement



By John O'Mahony

testifies that it cannot work like that for long.

You cannot for any length of time keep conventional, legal, electoral activity in balance with a serious military campaign. One activity must dominate and reduce the other to its auxiliary.

There are hard choices to be made about which activity scarce money goes to. There are also inevitable conflicts over the allocation of people and over how to integrate and interrelate the very different types of organisation needed for electoral activity on the one hand and for guerilla warfare by an underground army on the other.

The traditional Republican rule is that the military wing dominates completely. But what happens when the political side of the movement expands and the military struggle has for a dozen years been in stalemate, occasionally lit up (but not basically shifted) by spectacular coups?

The different activities may flatly contradict each other. Will this or that military action help or hinder the political wing of the movement at this time. If it hinders it, which is more important?

While the organisation only dabbles in politics as an auxiliary activity to drum up support for the army, then a sort of balance is kept and everything seems clear. The military struggle remains central.

Traditional republicanism has been distinguished by making physical force, in all conditions where the movement is strong enough to wage it, a matter of principle, and a dogma that can't be questioned without splits, expulsions and, sometimes, mutual slaughter.

It is a hierarchical movement with control of everything that matters in the hands of the military leadership and the political movement no more than their front.

A radically increased emphasis on legal politics inevitably disrupts this system. When the political

turn is encouraged by success, as Sinn Fein's political turn has been since the hunger strikes of 1981, the balance inevitably shifts against the military faction.

Compromise becomes difficult because the political opportunities imperatively demand commitment from the whole movement for their realisation; money must be found or redirected.

If you take the political movement seriously, you must devote the necessary resources to it, restrain the militarists and make sure they don't do politically embarrassing things at delicate moments.

The militarists are subject to the heavy repression of the state, unlike the politicians, and this further tips the balance in favour of 'politics'.

The military people may have gone along with the 'political' turn, as some of the dissidents did, placated by the promise that the hand that would be free from the ballot box would continue to hold a rifle. But now they realise that the balance has shifted, threatening to turn the 'armed struggle' into a mere auxiliary of politics. The movement is being stood on its head.

They begin to resist, to pull for resources, to refuse to subordinate to politics (one of the expelled dissidents is said to have had an alleged petty crook, Jimmy Campbell, murdered in a West Belfast club last year so as to embarrass Sinn Fein's local election campaign).

Sinn Fein's turn to politics would have been impossible without the full agreement of the military leadership. It can only be maintained when tensions develop if the politicians keep control of the IRA Army Council. Controlling the Council, they can submit dissidents to the IRA's harsh military discipline, whose sanctions include death.

There is little ground between submission (or going into inactivity) and all-out opposition. Serious opposition is only possible as open gun warfare of the sort that erupted when the Provos were born in the split off from the Official IRA at the beginning of the 1970s and at various times since in the Official IRA and its subse-

quent breakaway, INLA.

The reported narrowness of the vote for expulsion on the IRA Executive combined with the leadership's apparent fear to call an IRA Convention (though considerations of security must weigh with them here) suggest that the conflicting groups are pretty evenly balanced.

Reports say that two of the old leaders, one of them David O'Connell, have been taken back on to the army council. Two of the Belfast expelled are appealing against expulsion. There is a ferment of discussion in the ranks.

Highly significant for the likely course of events is that the dissidents now accuse the leadership of informing on them to the RUC and the British Army. This doesn't look like a dispute that will be resolved by votes and formal majorities.

A split will render both the militarists and the politicians much less effective. The militarists could probably step up the military campaign but they cannot possibly break the military stalemate. In the short term, Adams' politicians would probably lose most in a split, especially since it is unlikely to be a peaceful split.

A very important question is how would the political faction develop politically after the split?

Officials

In the last 60 years a number of Irish nationalist political formations including De Valera's Fianna Fail, the main party of the Irish bourgeoisie for the last half century, have gone into politics having broken with the physical force dogma — and quickly ceased to be any sort of revolutionaries. It is improbable that the Adams faction will simply follow in the footprints of the last group of Republicans to do this, the Officials.

But it is surely not ruled out that once the Adams group were freed from the iron matrix of physical-force-on-principle they would, if they continued to dispose of a sizeable chunk of the Catholic vote, get drawn into SDLP-type manoeuvres within the 6 County State.

The level of Provo socialism has been grossly exaggerated and misrepresented on the British left by the mindless enthusiasm of journals like Socialist Action and Briefing. But many Provos are socialists in a general way and they can develop towards working class socialism as they try to come to terms with the Provo experience.

The worst consequence of a Provo split would most likely be to take the pressure off Britain and the 26 County government to go on seeking dialogue and discussion about a solution to the Northern Ireland conflict. Provo militarism has often been counter-productive. But the existence of this powerful and growing movement has exerted a tremendous pressure on the British and Irish governments to seek a political solution.

Reduce that pressure and they will find the status quo livable again.

Socialist FORUM

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Why Militant and IRSP are twins

Editorial: Dialogue yes, ventriloquism no!

Militant's record on Ireland...

... and ours

James Connolly

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Unity in the schools?

By Liam Conway

THE teachers' dispute has been a little more encouraging than normal this year. But no good socialist would argue that it is anything like a genuine trade union struggle.

Two-day strikes with full pay, withdrawal of voluntary duties and a campaign based around comparisons with professionals in private industry hardly amounts to a working class struggle.

Nevertheless a growing number of teachers recognise the importance of a campaign linked with other public sector workers which will include longer, more widespread but less well-paid strikes. These teachers are now aware that little support can be gained from the broader working class movement if we insist that we are an educated, professional elite, a cut above the parents of the children we teach. This is naive in the extreme. We make no profit. The government can cut away our flimsy 'bourgeois' status at the drop of a hat, so it's about time we recognised whose side we are on.

Unfortunately, this process of change has been all too slow. And its pace will not quicken greatly until left wing teachers and other socialists take the class struggle into the schools so that the authoritarian bourgeois values there can be seriously undermined.

As socialists we need to think about the wider implications of the wimpish nature of the current teachers' dispute.

Searching questions must be asked. If teachers are prepared to accept the dictates of head-



YTURC rally and march in Cardiff last Thursday. Photo: Mark Salmon.

masters, then what hope is there of a serious challenge being mounted to the government?

Worse still, if teachers do not question their own social circumstances, then how can we expect them to raise any relevant issues in the classroom?

Education has been with us a long time, yet schools are still hierarchical, segregated according to ability, using racist IQ

tests and worst of all, teaching pupils to be passive cannon-fodder for the capitalists.

Fortunately, some pupils have refused to accept this fate. In several cities last week, thousands of pupils showed that they were not prepared to accept the slave labour of Thatcher's YTS scheme.

Not surprisingly, Kinnock attacked the organisers of the

strike as "dafties", thereby implying that a fight against low wages and a future on the dole was some kind of childish prank.

Undeterred, these pupils chanted "Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, Out, Out, Out!" and talked of solidarity with their teachers in a common struggle against Tory education cuts.

The teaching unions should learn from their more determined pupils. It is ironic that the pupils were able to establish more credibility in a day than teachers have in months of so-called struggle.

Yet many teachers see the pupils' strike as disruptive and unhelpful, claiming, as one head did, that teachers are working in the best interests of their pupils under difficult circumstances.

These claims are fraudulent and need to be exposed as such.

Generally, schools are a bastion of conservatism, in which teachers foster passive acceptance of the status quo. Head-teachers are afraid of pupils questioning YTS because they might begin to question the hierarchical structure of schools and the society beyond. Tories, for their part, encourage the teaching of traditional values in schools, values such as sexism, racism, and knowing your place in the system.

Socialists must challenge this system and its values by stressing the need for groups of mixed race, sex and ability and above all, by directly confronting the perverted Tory values.

Perhaps the teachers and pupils will build a combined strike for a socialist education within a socialist society. These are the goals that all in education should be aiming for.

GERRY BYRNE'S
TV
WATCH



'Rhino'

I thought the title of "Rhino" might be a bit of oblique racism, but it stands for Really Here In Name Only — i.e. habitual truancy. (It might still be racist on some subconscious level). I started watching with a smile of recognition — the exasperated Education Welfare Officer, the well-intentioned but hopeless social worker, the magistrate whose suspended judgement is meant to convey sympathy but only results in total bafflement, were all too familiar — I ended it in tears.

The story is of Angie, a teenage black girl, who doesn't go to school but instead looks after Charlie, her brother's three-year old child whose own mother has abandoned him. Caring for Charlie is both a valid reason and excuse for bunking school. Angie doesn't like school and she does like Charlie. But the law is indifferent to these considerations: she must go to school. Hence all the concerned professionals, court appearances, culminating in the horribly humiliating ending.

There's considerable sub-cutaneous satire in the treatment of the concerned professionals. They're not just bumbling liberal stereotypes — they care, they try to communicate but they still end up hopelessly wrong. An example, at a case conference, the social worker challenges the teacher's racist generalisations about "West Indian" pupils: "They're not West Indians, they're English. We're all English." English! How many black people would thank you for that label? Black British, perhaps, but "English" with its connotations of crack-pot nationalism and nutty aristocrats?

On her own ground Angie comes over as attractive, resourceful with a biting native wit. "What's the point of going to school, they don't listen to you?" she asks the EWO, and when he proceeds to demonstrate exactly that non-listening: "There you are, you're doing it." She's not daft. You want to cheer when she dispenses advice to a fellow absconder on how to deal with bullying: "Knee him in the bollocks. He won't trouble you again" or "When he picked on me, I took a scissors and said 'You get this right through you the next time you touch me'".

But it's precisely this sound instinct for self-preservation which leads to her downfall. She is caught shoplifting — almost an occupational hazard of truancy — and when the arresting policewoman racially abuses her, she quite reasonably fights back. Suddenly she is catapulted into a new category of deviancy. She's sent to an assessment centre which she runs away from to be with Charlie who has also been put into care. When she abducts or rescues him, depending on your point of view, she is put in a secure unit.

The last seen is of her stripped, examined and made to take a bath under the cold eyes of two white women "care attendants". Stripped of self-respect, torn from the one person she loves unreservedly, she turns to them bleakly: "It's not right. It's just not right."

You'd have been in tears too. What was so horrible was the inexorability of disaster with so many well-meaning people trying to avert it but succeeding only in making matters worse. None of those responsible was seen as wicked (excepting perhaps the police who had only a tangential role). Even the teacher who espoused the racist sentiments was not a rabid Nazi, just someone whose observations confused cause and effect (that black youth are made delinquent by a system that has no place for them).

All these good white people conspiring to destroy an innocent black girl. They couldn't listen, not because they didn't want to, but because there was no way her words could fit their terms of reference. They could cope — though ineffectually — with her "problems" of bullying or finding a full-time nursery place for the child, but her central complaint went unheard.

The play was a repeat and I would like hope lagged slightly behind reality. There were no black teachers, social workers or warders to be seen. It was set in an ILEA school and that authority has more imaginative policy than most on under-achievement by girls and ethnic minorities. Which was the central posed by the play: how can you expect children and young people, robbed of any respect, without a future, to even turn up to school, never mind achieve anything?

Any progress that might have been made in schools is now threatened by cuts and Keith Joseph. Tough luck, kids.

Next week: no more sombre stuff, number 73. Come back Ethel, we can't survive without you.



Songs of
liberty and
rebellion



The Red Flag

'The Red Flag', written by Jim Connell, was inspired by the 1889 London dockers' strike.

The people's flag is deepest red,
It shrouded oft our martyred
dead,
And 'ere their limbs grew stiff
and cold,
Their hearts' blood dyed its
every fold.
Chorus: Then raise the scarlet
standard high,
Beneath its folds we'll live and
die,
Though cowards flinch and
traitors sneer,
We'll keep the red flag flying
here.

It waved above our infant might
When all ahead seemed dark
as night,
It witnessed many a deed and
vow,
We must not change its colour
now.

It well recalls the triumphs past,
It gives the hope of peace at last.
The banner bright, the symbol
plain,
Of human right and human gain.

It suits today the meek and base
Whose minds are fixed on pelf
and place
To cringe beneath the rich
man's frown
And haul that sacred emblem
down.

With heads uncovered swear we
all
To bear it onward till we fall.
Come dungeons dark or gallows
grim
This song shall be our parting
hymn.

Leicester bus drivers strike against attack

By a Leicester bus-
worker

OVER 300 drivers and conductors at Leicester City Bus struck on Wednesday April 17 to protest at a recent assault on a driver and conductor.

The assault had taken place a fortnight previously when three white men with a bulldog attacked a bus conductor, giving him a black eye and broken nose before going on to attack the driver as he came to the conductor's assistance.

Discredit

To its discredit, the management, employed by the Labour-controlled City Council, encouraged the TGWU members to ignore the ballot decision and on the day, nearly 70 scabs went in to work, despite a 150-strong

picket by their fellow workers, which was maintained from 3.30 am to 6.30 p.m.

Bus workers have every right to be angry at the anti-social behaviour of a minority of the working class who use violence against them, and with a large black workforce there is definitely a racist motive behind some attacks.

The Bus Bill will mean rat-race competition for passengers with cowboys creaming off the most profitable routes and the busiest times of the day and week.

Routes

The proposal to put individual routes out to tender means, in effect, putting union members' wages and conditions under the privateer's hammer.

The long-term effects are clear — job losses, wage-cutting, worse services and higher fares. Not only is this a familiar pattern, it is also a recipe for greater violence directed towards the workers on the shopfloor, or in this case, the bus platform.

The campaign against the Bus Bill must go ahead linked to a campaign against assaults and for working class solidarity against racism and fascism, for unity with workers of the same class, thrown on the scrapheap of the dole, and for cheaper fares.

The problem is how to turn the anger of the workers against the Tory government which is turning the screw for the capitalist class and how to unite them with the growing ranks of impoverished workers and the unemployed, who turn to drink and violence.

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Socialist Organiser

Vote Labour on May 2nd!

THE local elections on May 2 are a key test for the Tories. They are doing worse in the opinion polls than at any time for three years. Their abolition of the GLC and the other metropolitan councils has brought the Tory leaders into conflict even with sections of their own party.

Thatcher's bloodminded vindictiveness against the defeated miners on whom she is exacting spiteful and destructive revenge has given millions of people the chance to catch a glimpse of the vicious real face of Toryism just as the government is getting ready for a new drive to slash the fabric and dismantle the structures of the welfare state.

If the Tories do badly in the May 2 local elections it will be another kick in the groin for Thatcher, Tebbit and the rest of them. Predictions are that the Tories will do badly.

The problem is that

Labour may not necessarily benefit. Council seats now being contested were last fought in 1981, before the SDP was formed and could compete with Labour for anti-Tory votes. Now the SDP-Liberal Alliance makes things more difficult for Labour.

In 1981 Labour won all the Metropolitan Counties and the GLC. But in 1985 13 million electors in this heartland of Labour support have had their vote confiscated by the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties. That won't stop the press from telling workers who will soon be voting on whether or not their union should have a political fund that the election results, unless Labour does extraordinarily well, are further evidence that the Labour Party is in irreversible decline.

We must do everything we can to maximise the Labour vote on May 2.



Above: a policeman raises his truncheon to strike a demonstrator. Right and below: four policemen push a black youth into a wall.

Racist police attack

A NATIONAL demonstration against racist attacks erupted in violence outside Forest Gate police station in East London last Saturday, 27th.

The demonstration was also in support of seven Asian youths arrested last year in Newham for defending themselves against racists.

The violence on Saturday was a direct result of police provocation. When the march arrived at the corner of Romford Rd and Green St, by the police station, it was prevented from following the agreed route.

34 Arrests at Newham 7 demo

This caused a hold-up and the police arrested two people.

The marchers refused to move until those arrested had been released. Police snatch squads moved in and 34 arrests were made.

Another march has been called for May 11 to protest at the police action.

Assemble at 1pm, Plashet Park, Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6.

Fund

STILL no definite news on the new premises we're trying to get: we're waiting for a reply from the landlord to our proposals.

But in the meantime we need a steady flow of fund-raising to cover the regular expenses of the paper.

Thanks this week to: Mary Ireson and Geoff Williams, £12; Stan Crooke, £1.50; a York reader, £12; Nik Barstow, £16; Sue Rossiter, £1; Bas Hardy, £15; and Ross Catlin, from Canada, £50.

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