

No. 56 4 May 1984

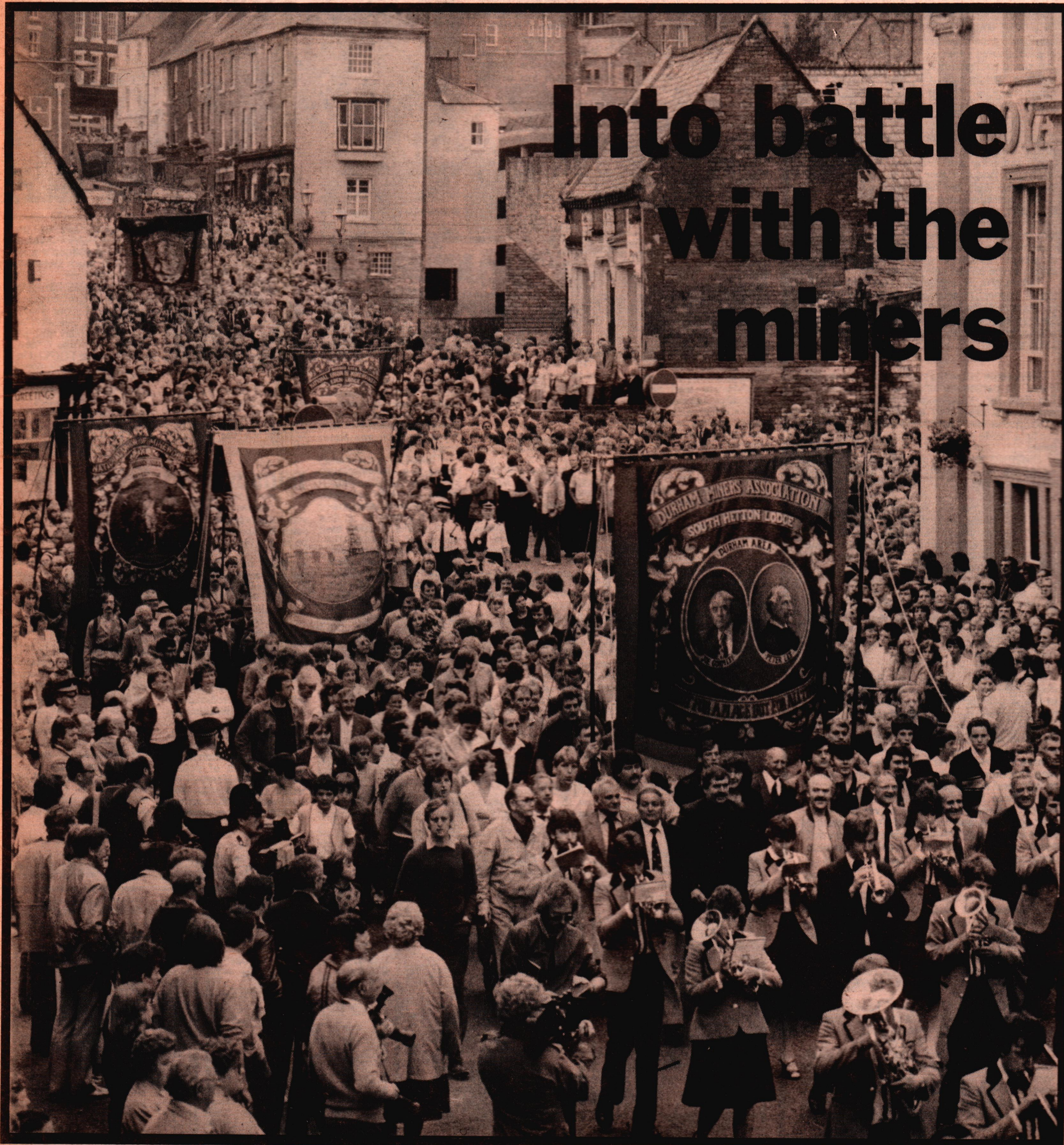
30p

A Socialist ACTION

Inside

'Labour's alliance for socialism'

**An 8 page supplement
with Tony Benn**



Into battle with the miners

Socialist ACTION

A left independent of Kinnock

Five years hard Thatcher

This week is the fifth anniversary of the Thatcher government. There is no need to catalogue the price that the working class has had to pay for those years. Everyone has their own tale to tell of what Thatcher has done to them through unemployment, welfare and health cuts, attacks on democracy, or cheap labour schemes for youth.

For five years the labour movement has faced the most determined onslaught against its rights and living standards that it has seen for fifty years. And Thatcher has got even more in the pipeline if she can deal with the miners.

This sustained attack has undoubtedly led to confusion, disorientation, and for a time some demoralisation, among large sections of the labour movement. There have been some major defeats — like the NGA or GCHQ. Duffy's moves to accept Thatcher's offer to pay for secret ballots in the unions compounds this.

But despite the set backs a real fight is starting to appear. Thatcherism, by its very brutality, has accelerated the beginnings of a real force for progress inside the British labour movement — a socialist force with mass support inside the working class.

The Labour left in the post-war years concentrated on parliament and the constituencies. The fight for resolutions at the annual conference was presented as its *raison d'être* — although this was a caricature. Even in 1979-83 the fight inside the Labour Party was largely internal.

But what has come out of that struggle is something which now begins to have the elements of the type of mass politics which is needed in Britain.

Tony Benn, even in the 1970s, was the first Labour left leader since Bevan to inspire really overwhelming mass popular support — even if it is most definitely a minority of 'the masses' who support him. David Blunkett and Ken Livingstone represent the same new forces.

Liverpool council has shown that a determined struggle against Thatcher can win the support of an entire city. And the local elections this week will show that it becomes increasingly impossible for Thatcher to win an election in any major city.

The mass movement against US missiles has continued to mobilise hundreds of thousands on to the streets against Thatcher's policies. But most importantly right now, Arthur Scargill — whatever disagreements one has with him on Poland or women — has brought the miners into a tremendous struggle against Thatcher. This is a force with real power to change things, even stop Thatcher in her tracks, and Scargill wants to fight, and he wants it to win.

All these forces remain a minority within society and within the labour movement. Thatcher still holds sway in much of the high ground of the class struggle. And even these leaders and movements can not yet provide adequate answers to the struggles to come.

But we need a sense of history. Fifteen years ago Labour's left could be ridiculed by Wilson and the press as 'isolated from reality'. The press still does portray it that way. But today, slowly and unevenly, and because it is the only force confronting Thatcher, the left wing of the labour movement is sinking its roots in mass struggles and politics which it has not had for a generation or more.

Socialism is only isolated today when it chooses to be isolated. It is creating a political culture which goes far beyond those whom *The Sun* chooses to slander in its columns.

Thatcher in the short term has won tremendous victories for her class. But over the longer view she has stirred up forces that have not been seen in British politics for many years.

In another five years time British capitalism may prefer that these devils had never been summoned up.

WHEN NEIL KINNOCK was elected leader of the Labour Party, and Roy Hattersley deputy leader, a sharp debate broke out in the left about the attitude to take to the 'dream ticket'. JOHN ROSS relooks at the discussion in the light of the miners' strike.

Nothing shows more clearly the need of the Labour left to organise itself independently of Neil Kinnock than the fight being waged by the NUM. This is not a question of sectarianism but of the basic needs of the class struggle.

For the first six weeks of the miners strike Neil Kinnock first said nothing and then intervened to support the call of the right wing of the NUM for a ballot.

Kinnock's, and Roy Hattersley's, support for a 50p levy of Labour Party members for the miners at last week's national executive meeting was the case of the horse being dragged rather late, and kicking, to water.

Neil Kinnock's turn to financial support for the miners came only after he had been outflanked by the actions of the Labour and trade union left itself. Kinnock's position had been attacked by Peter Heathfield as 'pretty miserable' — and more publically criticised by Jack Collins and other miners leaders at public meetings up and down the country.

Neil Kinnock could not afford to find himself in a situation where Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Eric Heffer and other Labour left leaders were speaking at rallies up and down the country in support of the miners while the Labour leadership appeared to be backing those opposing the strike.

On other vital issues Neil Kinnock has not backed struggles even verbally. On Liverpool, the other big struggle that is going to dominate the summer, Kinnock has been openly critical of the council. On defence of the cities he clashed with Ken Livingstone at the Labour Party local government conference on the question of obeying the law.

All this is quite aside from the support given for the continuation of witch hunts inside the party — a position shown both over the expulsion of Tariq Ali and now over the expul-

sion of six Blackburn supporters of *Militant*.

Given this record it is not acceptable, as is proposed *de facto* by the Labour Coordinating Committee, that the organisation of the Labour left should include Neil Kinnock. To do this would be to paralyse and divide the left on the issues it needs to take up — like the miners strike, Liverpool, and defence of the cities.

Ken Livingstone put it very well at some of his public meetings. He said he had never been harmed by an attack made on him by a left wing current in the Party — or one outside. He's only been harmed when he failed to support somebody's struggle that needed to be supported.

Authority

It's the same with Neil Kinnock. Kinnock had a tremendous position of authority last autumn over virtually the entire Labour Party. If that has decreased, and it has decreased, it isn't because of any attack launched on him by left wing sections of the Party. It is because Kinnock failed to back those who were engaged in a real fight with Thatcher.

All this does not mean that united action cannot be carried on between political supporters of Neil Kinnock, such as the LCC, and other sections of the left. First of all every current in the Labour Party is engaged in activity like the levy for the miners. The LCC takes particular initiatives which are excellent and should be supported — as for example with the LCC campaign to defend the political levy. The entire Labour Party is continually engaged in



Which side of the picket line will Neil Kinnock be on?

clashes with Thatcher.

But what Neil Kinnock's positions mean is that the Labour left must essentially organise *independently* of the current Labour leadership. If Neil Kinnock does take correct positions then excellent — it brings the entire Labour Party into action. But if Neil Kinnock is *not* prepared to support a struggle or campaign then the left must be prepared to act anyway. This means in turn the Labour left being organised *independently* from Kinnock.

This of course already occurs at a parliamentary level where the Campaign Group of MPs has a distinct profile, organisation and activity.

A similar division exists in the constituencies and Labour Party campaigns were the LCC made strong, and unsuccessful, bids to take the leadership of the London Labour Party and Labour CND. In this attempt it found itself in a direct clash with the left.

Currents

Of the currents operating in the constituencies to the left of, and independently of, Kinnock the one with the greatest potential is *Labour Briefing*.

Tribune, *Labour Herald*, and other papers have the insuperable problem that they are subject to no democratic control.

Militant both has thoroughly disgraceful positions on issues such as Ireland, women's liberation, black sections and other questions, and a sectarian project all of its own.

Briefing both has a real base in the London Labour Party and in the last eighteen months has been spreading out nationally. It has a democratic structure and on all key questions has a programme which corresponds to the needs of building up the Labour left today.

Initiative

Of course *Briefing* is very weak organisationally compared to what needs to be done in the Labour Party. It does not have anything like the same weight that an initiative by Tony Benn or a similar figure to unite the Labour left would have.

But *Briefing* does have an extremely good record of working with wide forces of the Labour left — in addition to its normal supporters.

Naturally the Labour left cannot be reduced to any one organisation. In addition to the more or less structured political currents there are many campaigns on individual questions both of policy and internal reform — of which the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy is still the best known. Forging these currents into

a coherent left of the Labour Party involves both much political discussion and much organisational skill.

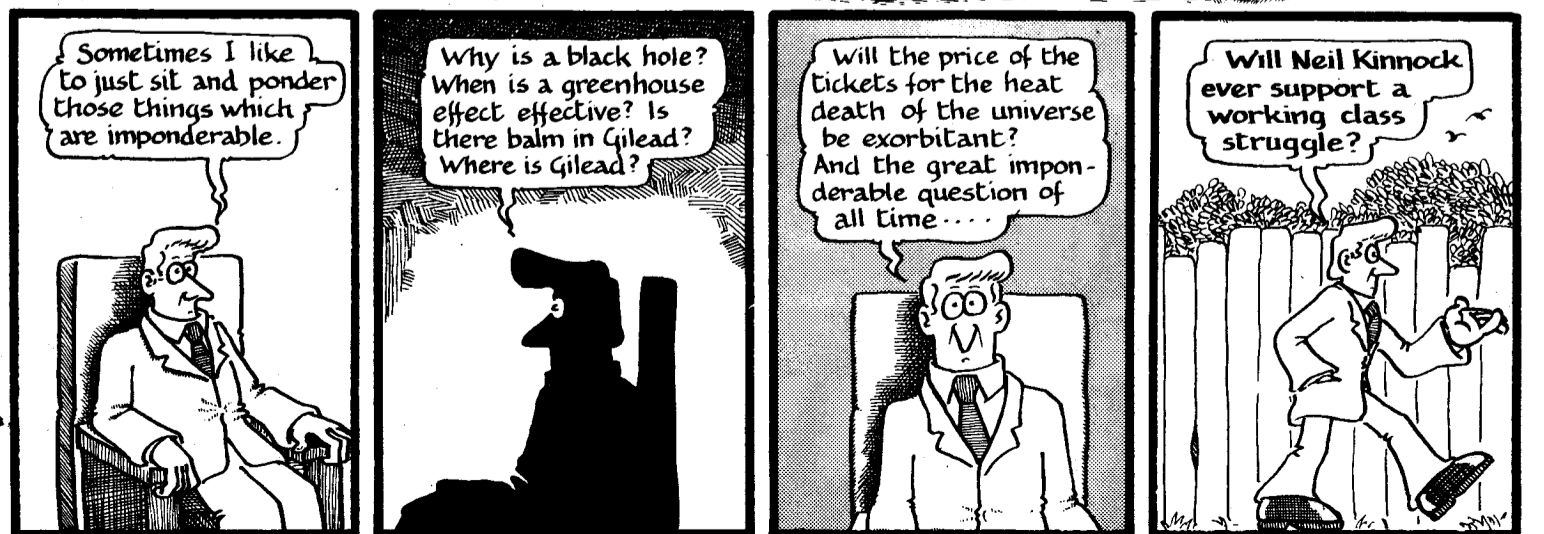
But as the class struggle develops the basic currents within the Labour Party are becoming clearer. The open right today has its bastion in the 'new realists' of the TUC and in the parliamentary party and some sections of local government — its presence in the constituencies is now getting relatively weak.

The LCC, the 'Kinnockite' left, is trying to organise itself but is hampered by the fact that the real base of the Labour left must be the trade unions and the local activists in areas like Liverpool and the big cities — precisely the left Kinnock has refused to support.

The real challenge in the Labour Party today is not to build simply a small sectarian left but one capable of acting in the real class struggle. A left based on the type of united action that has come up around the miners strike, defence of local government, defence of Greenham, defence of unilateralism. A left that tries to unite the entire Labour Party in action but is prepared to act *itself* if the Labour leadership is not prepared to support those in struggle.

Today, because of his actions, that necessarily means a left which is independent of Neil Kinnock.

A PIECE of the ACTION



Scotland

Spread the action

WHEN THE SCOTTISH TUC called a day of action for the miners, the conference hall erupted with chants of 'here we go, here we go, here we go'. And Scotland is raring to go on 9 May. An 800-strong rally in Glasgow four weeks ago raised an instant £15,000 for the miners' strike. Industrial solidarity and material support has grown as each week passes.

The miners have had large donations from Albion Motors in Glasgow, from the Yarrow ship yard, and from Rolls Royce in East Kilbride, to name but three. Govan shipyard on Upper Clyde takes weekly mass collections for the dispute.

By Carol Turner

Print workers at the Glasgow Daily Record have raised £2000 with a promise of more to follow. And Scottish SOGAT '82 have promised to boycott any paper which prints 'interfering' articles without allowing the miners the right of reply. NUPE, NALGO and the Scottish teachers union have all made substantial donations to the dispute.

More support comes from the Scottish DHSS section of the Civil and Public Servants Association, who have appointed liaison officers in mining areas to deal directly with miners' welfare benefit problems. The national conference of the CPSA's DHSS section, meeting mid-May, will hear an executive recommendation that this initiative is adopted throughout the country.

The arrival of Scottish miners, on the march from

Fife to Glasgow, at Polmaise pit in Stirlingshire last Wednesday coincided with Wills Tobacco workers unloading £300-worth of food they'd brought for strikers and their families. Like the rest of Scotland, miners' wives there are organising action committees in support of the strike.



Mick McGahey

Now the day has been named for 9 May, there are demonstrations called in seven Scottish centres: Edinburgh, the capital city, and home of the Scottish NUM; Dunfermline, at the centre of the Fife coalfields; Inverness, the central Highlands town; Ayr, a coalfield town in the south west of Scotland; as well as Glasgow, Aberdeen and

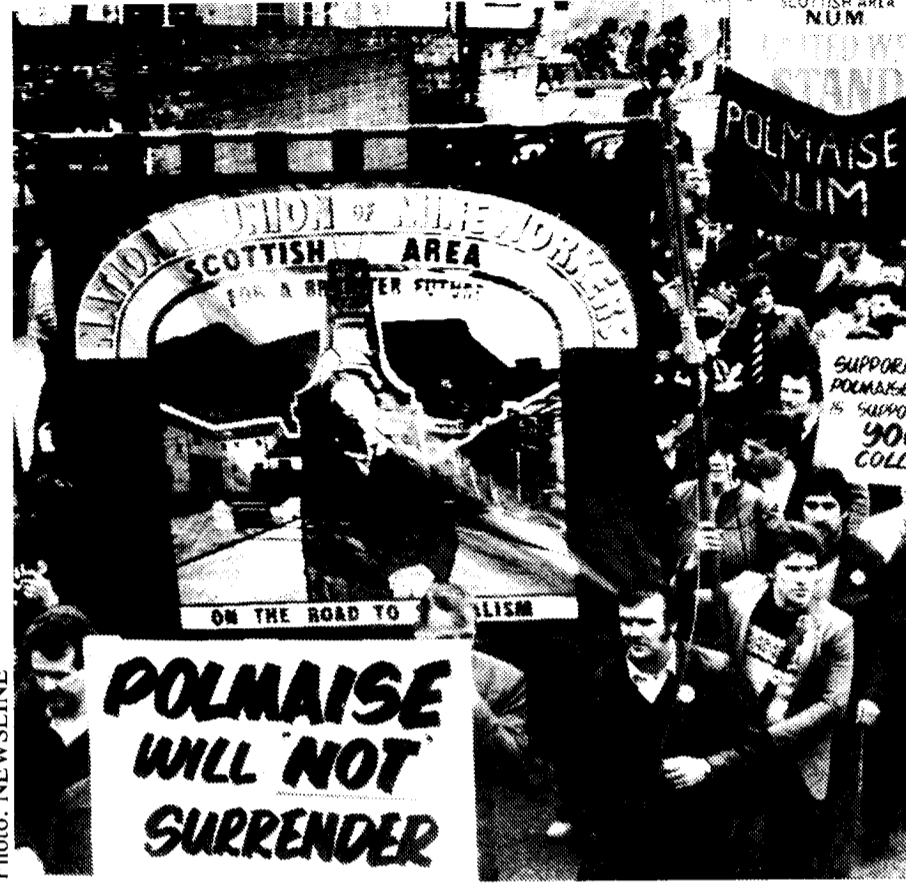


Photo: NEWSLINE

Dundee.

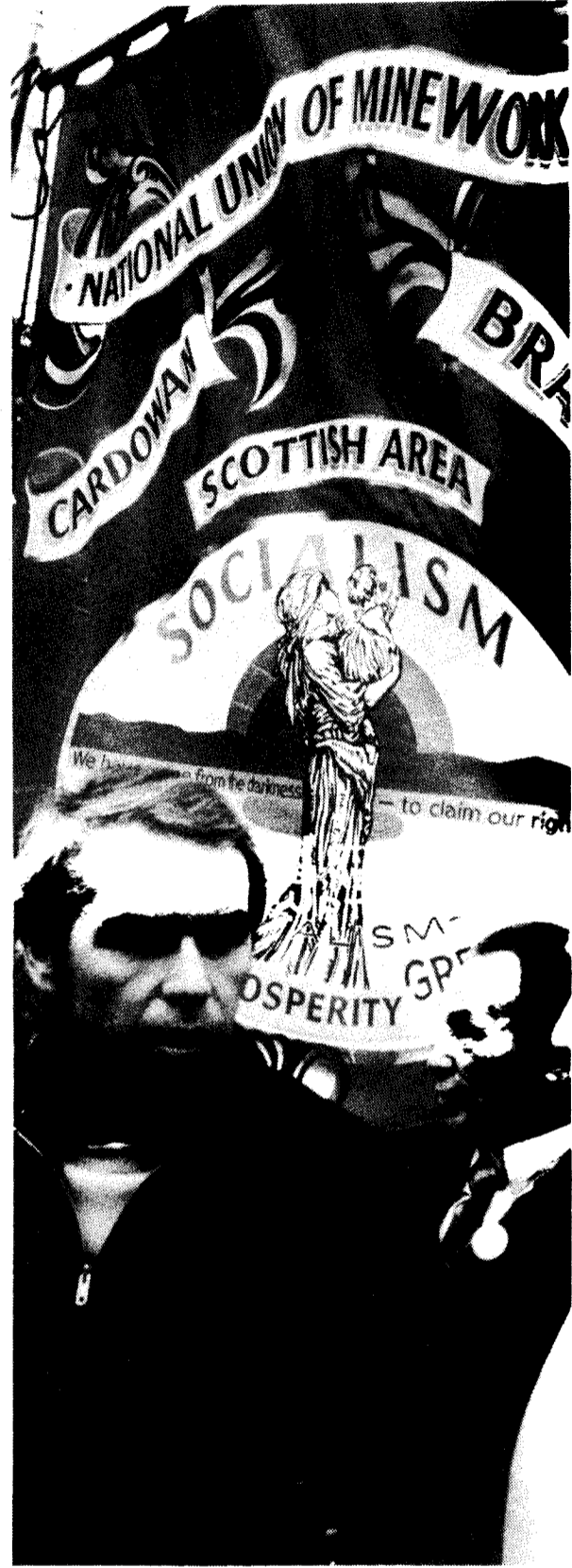
There can be no doubt that the Scottish labour movement is foremost in supporting the dispute. Scotland's Mick McGahey, vice president of the NUM, was among the first to respond to MacGregor's attempt last week to intervene in the dispute with a phoney offer to slow down pit closures.

McGahey said it was 'the hangman offering an extra two inches of rope — but you end up just as dead'.

Preparations are already underway. Edinburgh has fixed its march and rally. Glasgow Trades Council will be discussing the day of action when it meets this Wednesday. Scottish TUC assistant secretary Dougie Harrison

confidently predicted that 9 May will prove 'the miners have the solid support of the Scottish people'.

Now it's up to the rest of the British labour movement to respond to Arthur Scargill's call for a march on Nottingham by demanding the TUC organises a national day of action and makes the call **All Out For The Miners!**



Scargill calls Notts march

OVER 7000 trade union and Labour Party members marched through Cardiff on Saturday on the Wales TUC demonstration in solidarity with the miners.

At the concluding rally Arthur Scargill told marchers that 'the time has come to tighten the knot'.

By Pat Hickey

The strike is biting, and it is now time to stop all dispensations that are keeping some industries running. 'The sooner industry is hit, the sooner the strike will be successfully concluded.'

He called on all miners to join the strike, and for support from all trade unions, citing the decision by ASLEF to levy 50p a week on all members as an example to follow.

But support must be more than moral and financial. Other trade unions should now join the miners in the fight against the Tories.

The Scottish TUCs strike for May 9 is a good start. The Wales TUC, at its conference next week will be discussing a motion from NUPE Divisional

Council calling for similar action.

Clearly the British TUC must now be made to fall into line.

The most important call Scargill made at the rally was for a mass demonstration in Nottingham:

'I ask you to make this national demonstration the biggest ever seen in Britain.'

'Those same police who are arguing that they're only giving the workers the right to go into work will kick lumps out of you in exactly the same way as they are kicking lumps out of our lads. If the police say we can't go in then we'll walk in.'

Arrested

'If it means that we'll be arrested for going to our own demonstration or going to our own picket lines to talk to members or any trade unionists, then so be it.'

The national demonstration in Nottingham will be a major confrontation with the Tories and the police. The blockade of Nottinghamshire which they are now running could not stand a mass mobilisation of miners and other trade unionists.

The response to the call



Photo: NEWSLINE

The blockade of Notts would not stand up to a mass mobilisation

from the marchers in Cardiff made it clear that there will be massive sup-

port for the NUM's call. It should be made the occasion for the whole move-

ment to show its defiance for the Tories and their police bullies.

Edinburgh gets organised

By Duncan Smith, NUPE South Hospitals branch

LAST SATURDAY delegates from TGWU, AUEW, NUPE, NALGO and the Scottish teachers union among others attended a conference called by Mid Lothian and East District Trades Council to discuss progress on the miners strike.

The meeting was addressed by the chairperson of the Scottish NUM central strike committee which has its headquarters at Dalkeith, outside Edinburgh. He had just returned from a visit to Ollerton picket line, Nottinghamshire.

Delegates reported on regular collections being taken for the dispute. The meeting asked the NUM to provide speakers to visit workplaces in the Edinburgh area to make sure of the largest possible turnout for the Scottish TUC's day of action on 9 May. A substantial turnout is expected for a march to Meadows Park on that day followed by an afternoon rally.

Labour Party calls for levy Get money rolling in

IN AN important turn towards support for the miners' strike the Labour Party NEC last week called on all local branches to levy their members at 50p a week for the strikers.

The strike will be long — both the miners and Thatcher are determined not to lose. Thus financial support is getting more and more crucial.

In south London some parties are already organising for levies. In Manchester the Rusholme ward of the Gorton consti-

tuency is organising for weekly collection of the 50p levy through the membership secretary. Many local parties have been collecting while out canvassing for the local elections this week.

Every single Labour Party branch up and down the country should be organising to raise this levy. It is the most vital act of material solidarity that the Labour Party can offer the miners right now.

This financial support must also be extended into the unions. ASLEF has already agreed to raise a similar 50p a week levy from its membership. But there's no need to wait for



Photo: GIM COOKSON

call for it, levies can be established in every branch and workplace from now. And it doesn't have to 50p a week. Kestrel Marine

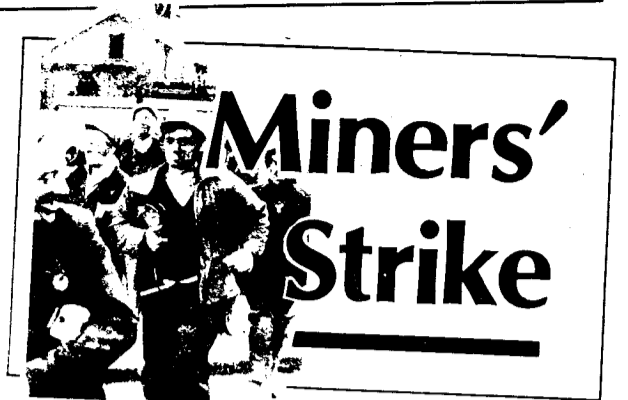
in Dundee raised £10 a head one week, and is doing so for a second time shortly.

In Manchester the local confed has called an emergency shop stewards' meeting in works' time to discuss support for the miners. Arthur Scargill has been invited to speak. At this meeting it will be argued that all the Manchester engineering factories should twin with striking Lancashire pits and raise regular levies and collections.

The miners need other kinds of support too, on the picket lines and at rallies and demonstrations. But right now

money is the chief mechanism to keep the wheels of the strike rolling.

Let us know about levies in your area to help inspire others to get the money going in.



Lancs NUM offices occupied

STRIKING Lancashire miners have occupied their area union offices in Bolton declaring it the Lancashire strike headquarters.

Last Friday Lancashire NUM called an area delegate meeting to endorse the decision of the special delegate meeting for all-out strike. After debate the right-wing got the meeting recalled for Monday to allow time for branches to discuss over the weekend.

In response pickets from Bold colliery, out on strike for the last five weeks, occupied the offices saying they weren't coming out until all of Lancs is on strike.

Bolton Trades Council organised food and refreshments for them over the weekend.

By Monday Parkside colliery, not previously on strike, had mandated their

delegates to recommend strike action, while another pit, Bickershaw Sidings only voted by two votes to stay in.

By Phil Rogers

On Monday morning there were 30 pickets from Bold in the offices and 300 outside from Bold, Sutton Manor and Parkside who refused to allow the meeting to take place. The office was declared the strike headquarters, and banners and placards festooned it announcing this fact.

Sid Vincent, area secretary, had to cancel the meeting, and is sending a letter to all branches recommending abiding by the delegate conference decision.

The Bold pickets occupying the union offices say they will not budge until every Lancashire pit is out on strike.

CARDIFF

MINERS from Tower and Maerdy lodges met with Labour Party and trade union members to form a support committee in Cardiff last week. The first job for the committee will be to collect money and food for the strike.

Mary Holmes, a miner's wife from Maerdy, explained:

'There's a lot of hardship now. One woman, Lucy — her son and husband work at the colliery — is getting £7.17 for three.'

'We're coming to the end of all we saved. It's only through people like you we can survive. But we're not begging.'

'We're telling you the facts of life. We need

financial and moral support. The Tories want to starve us into submission. There's no way they are going to win.

'We've already fought in our valley for hospitals, trains services and buses. All we hope is working people will unite behind us now. It's not really our fight, it's everyone's.'

After the Wales TUC march, the support committee held a bucket collection outside the Welsh Rugby Union cup final and raised over £500.

The committee plans regular distribution of *The Miner* to LP and trade union branches, and plans are in hand for tours around local factories to organise levies for the strike.

HUDDERSFIELD

THE TRADITIONAL Huddersfield May Day Rally was turned into a demonstration in support of the miners last Saturday when 350 people carrying trade union and Labour Party banners marched through the streets of the town.

Speakers at the rally at

the end of the march were Tom Megahy the Labour-Euro MP for the area, Laurence Conlon, leader of the Labour group on Huddersfield council, and Colin Sweeting, secretary of the Emley Moor NUM lodge. Collections are being organised and a social is planned.

Manchester May Day March Support the miners

Monday 7 May
Assemble: 11am Strangeways

Rally with: Jack Taylor, President Yorks NUM
Bob Litherland MP

Sponsored by: AUEW North and South DCs, UCW, Lancs Assoc of Trades Councils, Bold NUM.

Led by Bold NUM colliery band

SOUTHAMPTON

A WELL attended meeting in Southampton heard Terry Thomas, vice president of the South Wales miners put their case.

Other speakers included Tony Woods Chairperson of the SE region of the TUC as well as representatives from Southampton Labour Party and the local trades council.

Money was presented to the meeting by dockers, hospital workers, power workers, railworkers and post office engineers. A

collection at the meeting also raised a further £150.

South Wales miners are permanently based in Southampton with an office provided by NUPE district council. A continual tour of workplace meetings is being organised and a social evening with miners' choir is to be held on 5 May.

On that day a Hampshire-wide demonstration is being held called by the regional council of the TUC. It assembles by Asylum Green Avenue Road at 11.30 and will march on to a rally at Hoglands Park.



Photo: BRENDAN YOUNG



Photo: PAUL GIBBS

Miners' lock out

LAMBETH TOWN HALL hadn't seen anything like it for years. Six hundred people jammed its main hall. All the seats were taken and others, disappointed as reluctant stewards locked the doors, had to go away to the nearest pub or cafe.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that in south London there is a lot of support for the miners. And if you had been a bit unsure about that, your doubts would soon have gone away when you heard the waves of applause that nearly lifted the roof, when Kay Sutcliffe from the Kent miners' wives called for all-out support for the miners. I am sure that after that speech Ted Knight must have felt his stirring collection appeal had been made just that little bit easier.

And what a collection! All told the audience coughed up £2,250. Then Jack Collins secretary of the Kent miners took over the platform. He told the audience: 'When the Red Army stood on the Volga before the Nazis it said not one inch more. Now the British working class must say we stand on the line of the miners and tell Thatcher not one inch more.'

Other speakers all of whom pledged all-out support for the strike, included Jake Ecclestone NUJ, Paul Boateng, GLC Councillor, Richard Balfe, local Euro-MP, Joan Twelves from Vauxhall Labour Party, Jack Dromey TGWU and Tony Benn MP.

Meetings like this, which was organised by Vauxhall and other south London Labour Parties shows what can be done to help the miners' struggle. Of course for Labour and trade union militants in south London the meeting is only one step along the road to helping the miners win their strike.

A social is being organised for 4 May, collections and other solidarity meetings are being planned. More details from Joan Twelves on 582-2955.

CLEVELAND

CLEVELAND ASSOCIATION of Trades Councils organised a public meeting of over 200 people people in support of the miners. The speakers were: Tom Callan, General Secretary of Durham NUM, Billy Stubbs (NUM Executive Committee member for Durham) and Wendy Cousins, the branch secretary of the South Tees Health branch of NUPE.

Earlier in the day, Wendy had led 30 NUPE members from South Tees hospital to visit the miners' picket at Deerness pit. A collection raised £420 for the dispute fund.

Amongst the decisions taken at the meeting were:

- To picket a meeting of Cleveland Transit Executive, the local bus company, in support of moves by local Labour councillors to stop any further use of Cleveland Transit buses for taking Cleveland Constabulary to picket-line duty in Nottinghamshire.
- To organise weekly workplace collections for the NUM hardship fund.
- To arrange for donations of food to be centralised at the Middlesbrough NUPE offices for transportation to the Durham picket lines.
- To encourage local trade union branches and work-places to 'twin' with

a Durham pit, to visit that pit's picket lines and provide regular collections of money and food.

The meeting was told by the NUM officials that the strike was 100 per cent solid in the Durham coalfield, despite no strike pay being received. 'If we have to eat grass, then we'll eat grass' said Billy Stubbs. A free cafe for miners has been set up in a social club in Easington.

DONCASTER

Labour women support the miners rally

Saturday 5 May 2.30pm

Hall Cross Comprehensive School, Waterdale, Doncaster

Speakers include:
Joan Maynard MP
Frank Cave NUM

Miners' Support Committee

Bristol

c/o TGWU, Transport House, Room 1, Victoria St, Bristol BS 1
Tel: 0272 293001 ex 55

Manchester

c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Rd, Victoria Park, Manchester 14

Preston

c/o John Parkinson, Trade Union Centre, St Mary's St North, Preston

Huddersfield

c/o Friendly and Trades Club, Northumberland St, Huddersfield

Vauxhall

c/o Joan Twelves/Greg Tucker, 1 Alverstone Hse, Kennington Park Estate, London SE11

Southall

c/o 14 Featherstone Rd, Southall, London

If your local support committee is not included here it means we have no address for it. Send it in!

15p
**Socialist
 ACTION**
 Supplement

Labour's alliance for socialism

IN JUNE 1983 the Labour Party suffered its greatest electoral defeat for a generation. It naturally provoked an enormous debate.

As a contribution to this debate JOHN ROSS from Socialist Action interviewed TONY BENN on the way forward for Labour. The interview concentrates on two topics — the relationship between democracy and

socialism and the alliance Labour must build to defeat Thatcher and create a socialist society.

We think that the issues which the interview raises are of great interest and importance to the whole labour movement, and we hope to print a series of replies. The interview took place just as the miners' strike was beginning.

It's obvious, to go back to the June election, that this was a situation in which the Labour Party vote fell to the lowest level since the First World War. How do you explain this result? What do you think is the way out of this level of support?

Tony Benn: There's no point going back over the past except to learn from it. I think if you really want to find the roots of our defeat in 1983 you have to go back to the defeat of 1959, when Gaitskell responded to this by saying that the Labour Party had got to change. Labour had to abandon its socialist commitment. It had to become a social democratic party like the German SPD. And he began that process.

What Gaitskell was doing in 1959 is roughly what Hobsbawm is doing today. To introduce, using the defeat at the election as an excuse, the idea of a complete reconstruction of the Labour Party.

Gaitskell's attempt to bring about the first stage of revisionism, which was the abandonment of Clause 4, was formally defeated in the sense the conference wouldn't have it. But the impact of such a long campaign against the socialist commitment was felt right through the party and is still felt.

The second stage of revisionism was when Wilson, with *In Place of Strife*, began to chip away at the idea of the connection between the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

And again although that campaign was formally defeated the impact of it was very strongly felt and is still strongly felt. It was taken up as a theme by the Gang of Four when they left the Labour Party — a departure which was based on their hostility to an organic link between a political party and the trade union movement.

The third bit of revisionism, which was attributable specially to the Callaghan period, was when he wanted to centralise power in the party. This reached its climax with the imposition of the pay policy and the acceptance of the International Monetary Fund economic terms (in 1976) — a decision which was brought about by flying pickets from the international bankers who came to London and said that unless public expenditure was cut they

an interview with Tony Benn

would destroy the value of the currency.

This process reached its climax on the night of 2 April 1979 when Callaghan made it clear that if the attempt was made to put into the manifesto one commitment to the abolition of the House of Lords — it was a symbolic issue and not the substance of the question — he would resign the leadership only three weeks before the general election.

These three attempts — the one to get rid of socialism, the second to get rid of the trade union connection, and the third to dispense with conference or party democracy — were three tremendously important stages in the process of weakening the Labour Party. And

Over the years the Labour Party had moved substantially to the right

each of them had their impact and each of them carried the support of a sizeable number of Labour Members of Parliament — some of whom of course defected to the SDP.

In parallel with these processes there were a number of other things that were happening. First of all there was Tony Crosland when Secretary of State for the Environment saying 'The party is over'. Crosland himself, although a social democrat and sup-

posedly believing in high public expenditure, accepted the IMF cuts — which meant the end of the public expenditure alternative to socialism. This also was very important.

And when of course the monetarists arguments were accepted by the cabinet in 1976 that was a part of it.

It is furthermore true that when Labour prime ministers, without necessarily telling the cabinet, accepted unilateral nuclear rearmament — notably the Chevaline project — that was very significant. Because that really undermined the Labour Party's claim to be the party of international detente and dialogue.

All these factors came to a head after the 1979 election when the movement — and I say the movement advisedly because it included the trade unions affiliated to the party as well as the constituency parties — resolved to do a number of things.

First to bring the policy of the party leadership back to the policies of the conference wanted — i.e. to be in favour of public ownership and a planned economy. Secondly to continue to assert its opposition to the Treaty of Rome because that would be an

obstruction to it. Thirdly to reaffirm its position, that dated right back to the 1960s, for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

And having got those policies put into place by very big majorities at conference then the party decided to follow it up by the necessary democratic changes — changes which included the right of local parties to reselect their candidates; secondly to go for an electoral college which made the leader accountable to the whole movement and not just to a secret ballot of the parliamentary group; and thirdly to attempt to make the manifesto the property of the movement rather than simply the property of the Prime Minister, the leader of the party, the shadow cabinet or whoever it had been before. The third point lost.

These changes, which involved in my opinion the *renewal* of the Labour Party, did clarify the situation to the point that a number of Labour MPs who had been out of sympathy from the early Gaitskell days right through to the end — I take Jenkins as an example but there were others of course as well — decided to make a break with the party. And the mass media then used

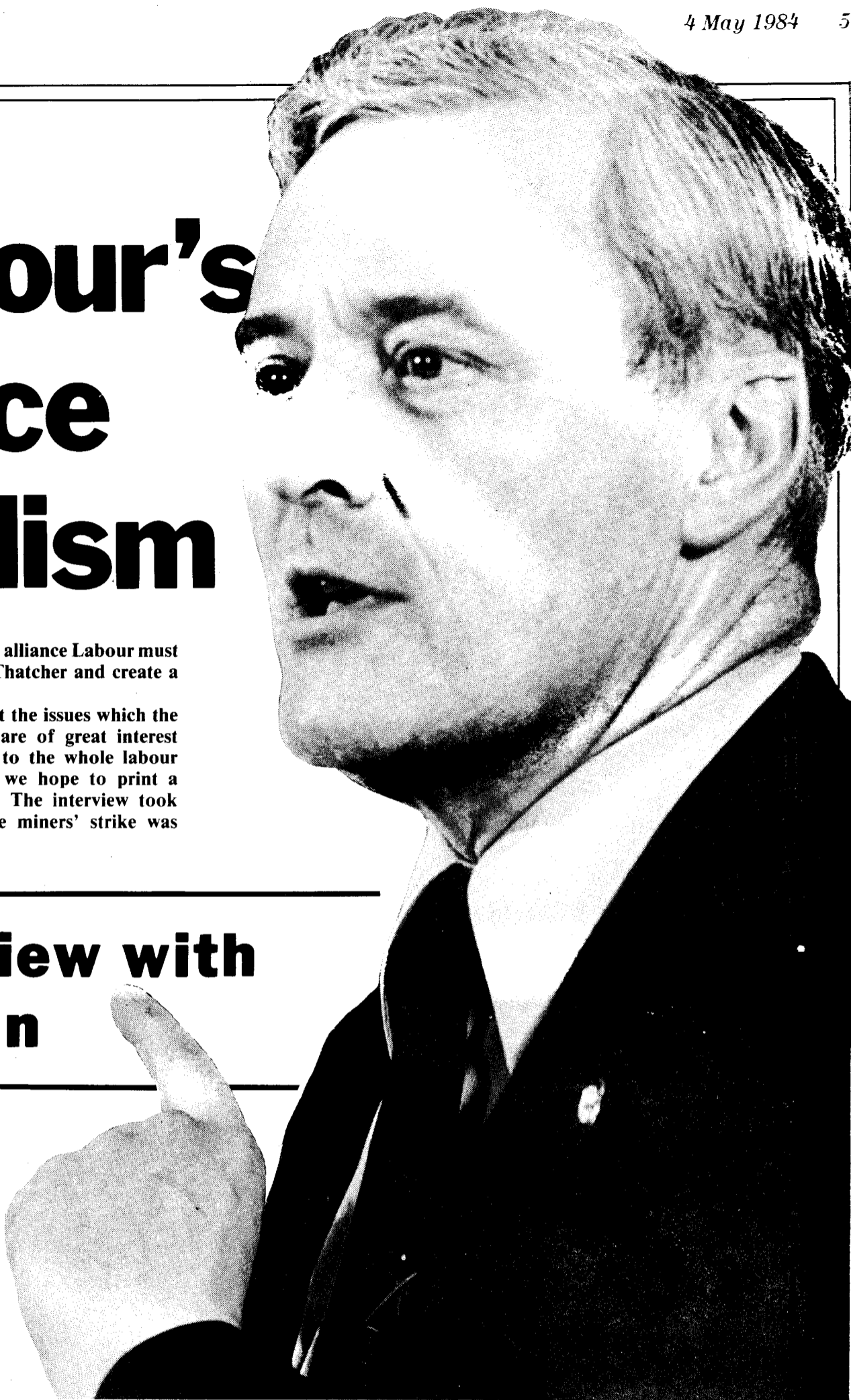
the defectors to attempt to destabilise and damage the Labour Party by saying it had lurched to the left.

Actually what had been happening over the years was that the Labour Party had moved substantially to the right. I was looking at the election address for 1910 in my old constituency and found that retirement at 60, triennial parliaments and the abolition of the House of Lords were party policy in 1910.

What had happened was that there had been a shift to the right from probably about 1949, but certainly from 1959, and in the last period the party reasserted itself and re-established its claim to be socialist and expressed the determination to be more open and democratic. But the SDP, which had enormous media support, was able to do great damage to the party.

I think the second thing that happened during that period which contributed to our defeat was the support given by the parliamentary leadership to the Falklands war.

There is no doubt whatever that the war should have been seen by the party as being something wholly different from the way it was presented by the



prime minister. We should have opposed the task force — as some of us did. We should have demanded the UN solution. We should have argued for a quite different response.

But by not doing so first of all we added credibility to the jingoism that Mrs Thatcher deliberately created. But secondly we fatally damaged our position as a party that believed in international settlement of disputes other than by force.

And I think these things, the process of renewal of the party — which was inevitably inward looking because you had to do it inside — the destabilisation by the SDP and the media, and the jingoism released by Mrs Thatcher which we had not openly and clearly enough opposed — or which we had not opposed at all — these three factors contributed to our defeat.

However having said that, the programme itself did attract the support of eight million people — which is amazing considering what happened. And at least we were defeated on a programme that would stand the test of time. If we had drafted the type of programme the SDP wanted we would have been defeated and lost our credibility for the future.

And I think as the months have gone by it has become apparent that this programme, far from being an extreme programme, was an absolutely basic minimum programme. And I cannot think of a manifesto of a party defeated in an election that had so many self-fulfilling elements in it.

Everything that we warned about then has turned out to be right. And of course after the election we proceeded, by the new electoral system that we had chosen, to elect a new leadership ac-

countable to the whole movement. And that process can never be changed.

The reselection in my opinion cannot be changed because it would precipitate the whole argument again in a way that is wholly unconstructive. The policy I don't believe can be changed but of course there is going to be a lot of discussion about policy and I'm totally in favour of discussion about future policy because we don't want to tie ourselves down four years before an election — allegedly four years before an election — to every detail now.

What will be important, and what is of critical importance, is that whatever developments of policy are made they are made by the conference and are not erosions of the conference position presented in some way as if there has been a new think without actually a new discussion and a new decision.

So protecting the rights of the conference to make the decisions, protecting the rights of the college to elect the leader, protecting the rights of the constituencies to choose their candidates and protecting the rights of all of us to defend ourselves — as with the miners, or Liverpool or whatever it happens to be between now and then — and the process of preparing for what lies ahead are crucial.

And I'm not just talking about preparing for office, I'm talking about preparing for what lies ahead. These three elements of support and solidarity on the one hand, of discussion and democracy, and of preparation. These are the three tasks that we've got to undertake now.

And if we do that then I think we shall come through this period as the only serious and explicitly socialist alternative to what is a very deep crisis in the capitalist system in Britain.



Extra parliamentary struggle

One of the questions which comes up very centrally now is how the role of the Labour Party is seen in the important struggles outside parliament — the miners, Liverpool and Greenham are obvious examples.

Well I think our function is to support these struggles. I've never had the slightest doubt about that.

My period out of parliament, the nine month period when you have the opportunity of seeing the political system from the bottom and not the top, reaffirmed that totally.

Wherever our people are involved in struggle — whether its ASLEF as it should have been in 1982, or whether it is the NGA, or whether it be Cheltenham, or whether it be the miners, or whether it be Liverpool, or whether it be London, or whatever it may be — the function of the labour movement, trade unions and the political party and the parliamentary party — is to support. And to give all the support that is called for in these absolutely crucial struggles.

And if that is done then it will be quite impossible for the media to play their second game — which will be now to split the new parliamentary party from the party as a whole. We have to build up a new relationship between the parliamentary leadership and the movement as a whole — and I might add between the trade union leadership and the trade union movement as a whole.



How do you see the Chesterfield by-election fitting into this process of renewal?

The Chesterfield by-election was very interesting in the sense of being the last, and I hope decisive, round in the battle between the SDP and the media on the one hand and a socialist Labour Party on the other.

A battle that began in Lincoln in 1972 when Taverne stood with the active support of the press and went right through to Bermondsey where Tatchell was the candidate and was attacked not just by the SDP and the media but also by certain very significant elements in the Labour Party leadership.

It seemed from the very beginning that this was going to be the issue in Chesterfield.

What was interesting about it, if you look at it from that point of view, was that the media began their campaign very very early. They began as soon as Eric Varley resigned. They devoted, I suppose, more attention to the selection conference than they did to most by-elections. And they ran two lines.

One was that if I was selected this would be unacceptable to the leadership of the party and reopen the so-called splits which they had used to try to destabilise us. And secondly that if I were selected Labour would lose the seat.

These were very very powerful arguments to deploy. *Newsnight* and *ITN*, as well as the popular press, used these arguments as hard as they could and failed to influence the Chesterfield selection conference.

In the Chesterfield selection conference what was interesting to me was that the trade unions were the ones who were clearest in a way about what it was about — or at any rate were very clear about what was at stake.

Then came the election where again the same arguments were used that a candidate who was unacceptable both to the party leadership and the media would be elected and would lead to a disaster for Labour.

Then tactical voting became the ma-

Chesterfield

for theme. *The Times*, Vincent Hanna, *Newsnight* and others tried to play the tactical vote as hard as they could. Therefore to devise a strategy to beat the Labour Party that was the prime task.

The strategy which was accepted, and carried through, was to by-pass the media and to go straight to the people, and to call in the support of everybody who was ready to come. We had a massive campaign which was very collective in character. There were three parallel parts to the campaign. One was that it was obviously a platform for the national leadership to use. Secondly

there was a very good, the best I've ever seen, electoral organisation. People who came in were immediately able to be used without any waste of time.

And then there was political discussion on the doorstep of a kind that reached an enormous number of the electorate.

Thirdly we had the campaign, which I was personally involved in, of going round to meet people. I think in the course of that campaign, if the polls mean anything, half the electorate claimed actually to have seen the Labour candidate.

And we had enormous meetings.



Photo: GM COOKSON

Hobsbawm's Errors

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Turning to more recent events a broad debate has taken place since June 1983 on the future of the Labour Party. It seems to me there are really three phases since June. At the election one of the main aims of sections of the Tory Party, and the capitalist press, was to try to eliminate a Labour or socialist party as the alternative to the Tories — to try to create more or less a two capitalist party system as in the United States. This attempt failed both at the election and in the period afterwards.

Secondly Chesterfield showed that the press, Tories, and SDP cannot eliminate socialism as a mass political current.

However all this still leaves Labour in a minority position at the present time. So far since June, if you put it that way, an essentially defensive battle has been waged — one that has been successful. But how do you see the Labour Party actually going forward now to win over new layers of support and to win back support which deserted in June 1983?

Yes, that is the crucial question.

I think that you have to be clear that when a big event, particularly a big

defeat, occurs, as in June, a lot of people have got their own axe to grind and will come along and try to grind that axe. I think that Hobsbawm's analysis, which has become much discussed because of its direct nature is the most dangerous.

What he is saying is that we *could not* have won because of certain sociological changes in the class structure of society. Now that is manifestly untrue.

First of all it comes from somebody who isn't even a member of the Labour Party. And although he's very ready to criticise the Labour Party for having an internal debate, he is a member of a party that actually put up candidates and cost us at least one seat — in the case of Willie Whitlock who was defeated as a result of an intervention of a Communist candidate. So that isn't a very credible argument.

But the other point is this. It doesn't take account of two obvious facts. One was that when we had a working class that was sociologically composed in such a way as to virtually guarantee a permanent Labour government i.e. in the inter-war years, we never had a majority Labour government.

Secondly it doesn't take account of the fact that as recently as March 1982, just before the Falkland's war, the government's popularity and the Prime Minister's popularity was the lowest ever. And that there has been in any case a long term decline in Conservative support over many many years.

So I don't think his arguments are relevant. What I think he's trying to do, and this is based upon his own experience of fascism before the war and his own attachment to the policy of the Italian Communist Party, is to build up a sort of popular front which would include the Communist Party and also include the SDP, which he for some strange reason regards as vaguely progressive, in order to beat Thatcherism — which is equated in his mind in some way with what was confronting the western world before the war.

Now I think this philosophy is quite wrong. I think it is a strategy of pessimism, tactics of defeat.

On the other hand many of the things that happened within the Labour Party, and the left of the Labour Party, from 1979 to 1983 were very much directed towards building that winning alliance which Hobsbawm himself says can only be won by repudiating the Labour left.

Take for example the powerful campaign in favour of women's rights, the campaign in favour of a change in policy towards Northern Ireland, or the open advocacy of policies designed to eliminate racism, and the attempt to establish greater police accountability, Industrial democracy, workers control.

All these ideas, which were advocated and debated within the Labour left, were ideas that if properly and passionately put forward would be alliance-building ideas. And I personally for a very long time have seen the Labour Party as the true alliance of progress and have tried over ten years or more to get the Labour Party to open itself to affiliation from other groups who represent different interests — the women's movement, the community groups and so on.

I think an awful lot of our prospects for success depend on whether we are prepared to pursue those areas of campaigning, and to remain absolutely openly committed to support people who are engaged in fighting on different parts of the front like the industrial struggles of the moment, or Cheltenham, or local authorities, Liverpool, London, Greenham and so on.

It also depends on whether we are ready to discuss much more openly the whole socialist alternative and to open up the dialogue within the socialist movement between the various strains, tendencies, groups or whatever. Because if you don't do that then of course the Labour Party could decline back into the idea of how much of an injection of public money would be needed yet again to keep capitalism going. And I've no doubt that you can keep it going for a year or two more with bigger and bigger injections of public money but that's not what we're about.

And I think that the third ingredient, preparation, is of critical importance.

Preparation not only in terms of what we would do when we were in office, which is very important, but also preparation in the sense of the politics of the here and now and us, against the then and there and them — which is what



parliamentary democracy tends to be about. We can't view things as if somehow a Labour government would be the kingdom of heaven on earth. A sort of quasi-sanitised revolution that when there is a Labour government it will be alright but until then things are going to be awful.

I think that in the category of preparation we have really to think very hard about one aspect of the credibility problem. This is not just that people don't trust politicians, but whether it is credible to present the answer to our problems as a solution dependent on the transfer of all power to the top.

I think one of the reasons why local democracy is so relevant, and the question of workers control is so relevant, and so on, is because there is an inherent distrust, based on experience, of the idea that somehow it will all be done in Whitehall. Therefore the revitalisation of the traditions of local democracy which are expressed in the London campaign, and also expressed in industrial thinking through say the Lucas plan are so important. This is where the preparatory element comes in. Here and now we are preparing not just to defend ourselves but also to take over, through democratic process and enlargement of the democratic process. In this context I think we have to give an awful lot more attention to the idea of industrial enfranchisement.

The term franchise is a funny word. It means first the vote and also Coca Cola giving bottling rights to companies, but we should learn a lesson from Mrs Thatcher. She has not tried to take over public enterprise and run it in the interests of capital. She has used the power that the statute book gives her with a Commons majority to enfranchise capital against labour. To give power to capital to run their own affairs in order to beat labour. We should develop the idea of the enfranchisement of the working class.

Here the argument about the parliamentary road becomes much more interesting. You go there, you get a majority, you use your majority to enfranchise the working class so they can then advance their own interests without legal obstacles.

That is very different from the idea of taking the ownership of capital away, putting it in a state corporation, and running it on behalf of the working class whether they like it or not. This idea of enfranchisement, or empowering the working class through parliamentary action, would I think help to resolve some of the rather sterile arguments about what the role of parliament is as compared to the role of extra-parliamentary action. Because 'enfranchisement' provides a route that links outside of extra-parliamentary effort with the parliamentary route.



own position — use the ballot box to light a flicker of hope in what is a very dark period. That's the way I see it.

Could I sum that up as I saw it? Looking from the outside what Chesterfield proved was that the press, the media campaign, cannot eliminate socialism as a current in Britain — which is what they aimed to do.

That's right. Absolutely. They can't do it. And indeed the fact that they have to devote so much effort to attempting to do it is an indication of their assessment of how strong those ideas are. And that's where the element of hope comes in.

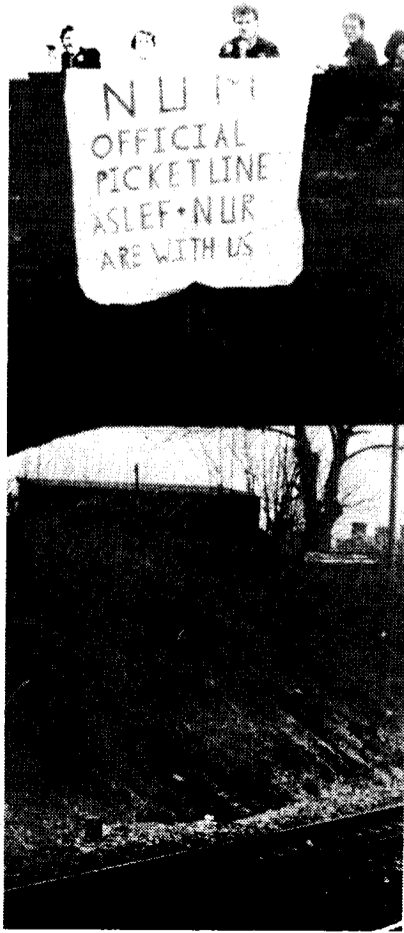
About 13,000 people attended meetings in a single constituency. I suppose there must have been 75 meetings. And we did actually by-pass the media.

When you get through to people and create the opportunities for getting through directly, then it seemed to me the right thing to do was to present with passion and commitment the policy of the Labour conference. And when that was done it was seen by people who heard it, and understood by people who heard it, to be highly relevant to their own immediate situation — unemployment, attacks on their unions, attacks on the health service. And it did produce a remarkable result.

Not only were there more Labour votes than there were in the summer but it completely counteracted what had been widely accepted to be the normal result where a sitting Labour member, for no very good reason, goes away and does something else — goes to Brussels as Jenkins or Marquand did, goes to the Lords as Whitelaw did. It absolutely counteracted that.

So it was a significant campaign in that it did dispose, I hope once and for all, of the idea (a) that the media can always win campaigns against Labour candidates they don't like, (b) that an open advocacy of conference policy is bound to be unacceptable to a 'moderate' town or electorate. And I think finally it gave people hope.

One must never forget that when unemployment creates a sense of fear and disillusionment and anxiety among the working population, particularly in industrial struggle, the ballot box is an alternative route by which people can express a view without penalising their



Democracy and Socialism

In relation to that argument I want to take up the recent Campaign group pamphlet *Parliamentary Democracy and the Labour Movement* which put forward a number of measures for radically extending democracy in parliament. Obviously no document contains everything but the Campaign group pamphlet concentrates rather narrowly on the area of parliament and the relation of the Labour Party to parliament.

In addition to these questions however there are very much greater areas in which the question of democracy arises. For example you've already referred to the question of industry.

MacGregor calls for a ballot of the miners on whether to strike. But the miners have no right to vote on the actual MacGregor plan itself. That is the real 'dictatorship of capital'. There is also the question of the civil service or the armed forces. What do you think on these areas?

The pamphlet was explicitly on the extent to which the labour movement was able, as things now stand, to use its parliamentary arm for the purpose of advancing its interests. It was narrowly conceived. It wasn't a major treatise on the whole future of democracy on a national scale. I think you're absolutely right to raise the question.

The democratic argument needs now to be made, I think, the main banner under which we campaign. Because what is happening is that as capitalism declines, and it becomes clear that it will have to hammer the working class to survive, then of course the battles by the government against the British people become an anti-democratic campaign.

We can see this on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, the attack on the metropolitan boroughs, the attack on the workers at Cheltenham, and so on.

I think it is very important that we raise the democratic question. Not only for reasons of industrial democracy which you refer to, or workers control, but also because if we don't raise the democratic question then the parliamentary elections are seen as narrow little popularity contests.

You've only got to look at the sickening contest between Gary Hart and Mondale in America to see where you end up when the democratic process becomes a choice of a personality, where politics are secondary.

That's why I've devoted so much of my attention, and I think its getting through now, to the Chartists and the Suffragettes. To reestablish the true nature of parliamentary power. And how the people can use it and what it is really about. And if you do that you can sweep away the personality cult.

I think we should be doing the same with local democracy and with trade union democracy. If that could be done, combined with the restoration or reestablishment of campaigns for common ownership and so on, I think we would be filling what has been a vacuum caused by the explicit abandonment of aspirations for socialist transformation which have characterised so much of the party since 1959. Indeed these aspirations have been abandoned since the 1950 consolidation manifesto which Herbert Morrison

forced through the party at the time.

Would it be fair enough, in other words, to say that at the present time you see the struggle for socialism very much developing on the terrain of a radical struggle for democracy?

Yes. I think that socialism and democracy are absolutely indissoluble. Socialism without democracy is no socialism at all and has no durability — because a regime that has socialist aspirations but doesn't have a democratic foundation is living on borrowed time. And democracy, if extended and developed is bound to lead to people wanting to use their democratic rights to produce a more egalitarian society.

So I do say that yes. I've seen that for some time now. The books I've written — *Arguments for Socialism*, *Arguments for Democracy* shows this. And the next one I hope will be *Arguments for Freedom* in which the question of freedom will be linked with the democratic argument and seen as a necessary preamble to the achievement of socialism.

Perhaps you could still develop that just a bit further because it seems to me the relation of democracy, socialism and current struggles is an absolutely central strategic question.

I think that when you look at it, and its only a matter of studying experience and no more than that, that what we are now witnessing is an absolutely major attack upon our freedoms in the guise of protecting them.

That's true if you look at the military side — where in the guise of protecting our freedoms from an attack by Russian generals, we've actually surrendered our rights of national self-determination to American and British generals. That's one aspect of it.

The other aspect of it is in the guise of rolling back the frontiers of the state

the frontiers of the state are being extended in order to protect the interests of capital and so on and so on.

So I think that freedom is a word we have to recapture for ourselves because freedom in its fullest context means the right to develop your life and future free from the dictates of capital — dictates that derive their power exclusively from extra-parliamentary centres. In many cases now from international extra-parliamentary centres — whether it be the media, the military, the civil services, the IMF, the EEC, NATO or whatever it happens to be.

I think the recapture of the word freedom for us is a very important idea — not the way it has been articulated by Mrs Thatcher, which is the freedom of the market, or the democracy of the shareholders meeting which is very different from one person one vote (and is of course 'one unit of ownership one vote') — and the rediscovery of freedom, and the reinterpretation or reassertion of the rights to democracy are necessary preambles to the achievement of socialism in Britain.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

So it is capitalism and democracy which are incompatible?

Totally. Absolutely. I've argued that for a long time. But I think that's becoming explicit now. Absolutely explicit.



Photo: John Harris

Coming on to another question of strategy there seem to be two models being put forward at present for the nature of the Labour Party itself.

One is that Labour should move towards a more individually based party with weaker links to the trade unions. The other has been expressed as developing a 'Party of Labour' — in the sense that the Labour Party was formed out of the trade union movement but there are now many organisations which have been formed which must be added to the Labour alliance, which you would support affiliating to the Labour Party. I assume you would support the second model for Labour as you have become centrally identified with it?

Yes. First of course you do need a much bigger individual membership. That's certainly true.

But secondly we are, and always will be, an alliance. If you take the register of groups within the party — which I was opposed to — once you identify the register the best thing is that each one of them becomes affiliated to the party. And then you have a further founding conference like 1918 when the sixty three registered groups affiliated. And when they affiliate then they have their own votes rather like the Socialist Education Association, the Fabian Society, etc.

There's absolutely no reason why the Fabian Society should have a vote for the National Executive but the Labour campaign for whatever it is shouldn't.

I am also extremely interested by that point because it seems to bring out something which I thought was implicit, or perhaps explicit, in what you were saying earlier.

You talked about the 'refounding' of the Labour Party — or a similar phase. It seems to me that what you are suggesting is that in some historical sense we are going through today a process which is equivalent to a new refounding of the Labour Party.

Yes I do believe that. And I think it's very interesting if you look back — and that's why labour history is so important at the moment for all sorts of reasons.



Photo: John Harris



Photo: GM COOKSON



Women's demands

One of the things that links into the question of the 'Party of Labour' is the proposals in the party to change the method of election of the women on the NEC, to elect them at the women's conference, and to have the right to put forward resolutions to the party conference.

Yes I'm in favour of the women's demands. Because I think despite all the achievements of the Labour Party, in seeking to represent working people it has not only failed over a long period to change the structures of power in society vis a vis capital and labour, but has failed to reflect the fact that women are a majority and are especially disadvantaged as a result of a whole range of factors. There has to be an element now of positive discrimination in order to correct it and in order to build the alliance which we're talking about. Which will be the broadly based alliance that will replace the Conservative Party and eliminate the SDP. I think that is absolutely the major consideration. I do think that is right.



A party of labour

You're really back to the Dundee conference of the TUC in 1883 when Henry Broadhurst, who was the general secretary of the TUC, and a Liberal, bitterly criticised Keir Hardie. The TUC in Dundee passed a resolution condemning 'irresponsible men who are causing dissension in our rank' — which was Keir Hardie.

The attempt to bring about the Labour Representation Committee, which ultimately succeeded, was the

product of a great deal of debate within the trade union movement. And I think we're not just refounding the Labour Party and reconnecting with socialism during a very deep crisis of capitalism but we are also rediscovering the relevance of a political role for trade unionism — because if you have non-political trade unionism then you end up in the sort of mess that the trade unions are in at the moment. And for twenty five years in parallel with revi-

sionism in the Labour Party you had of course a depoliticisation of whole chunks of the trade union movement and that's why we're in difficulties. So I think there is an historic refounding to be undertaken.

We've discovered that welfare capitalism, administered by non-political unions in conjunction with a non-socialist parliamentary party is a cul de sac.

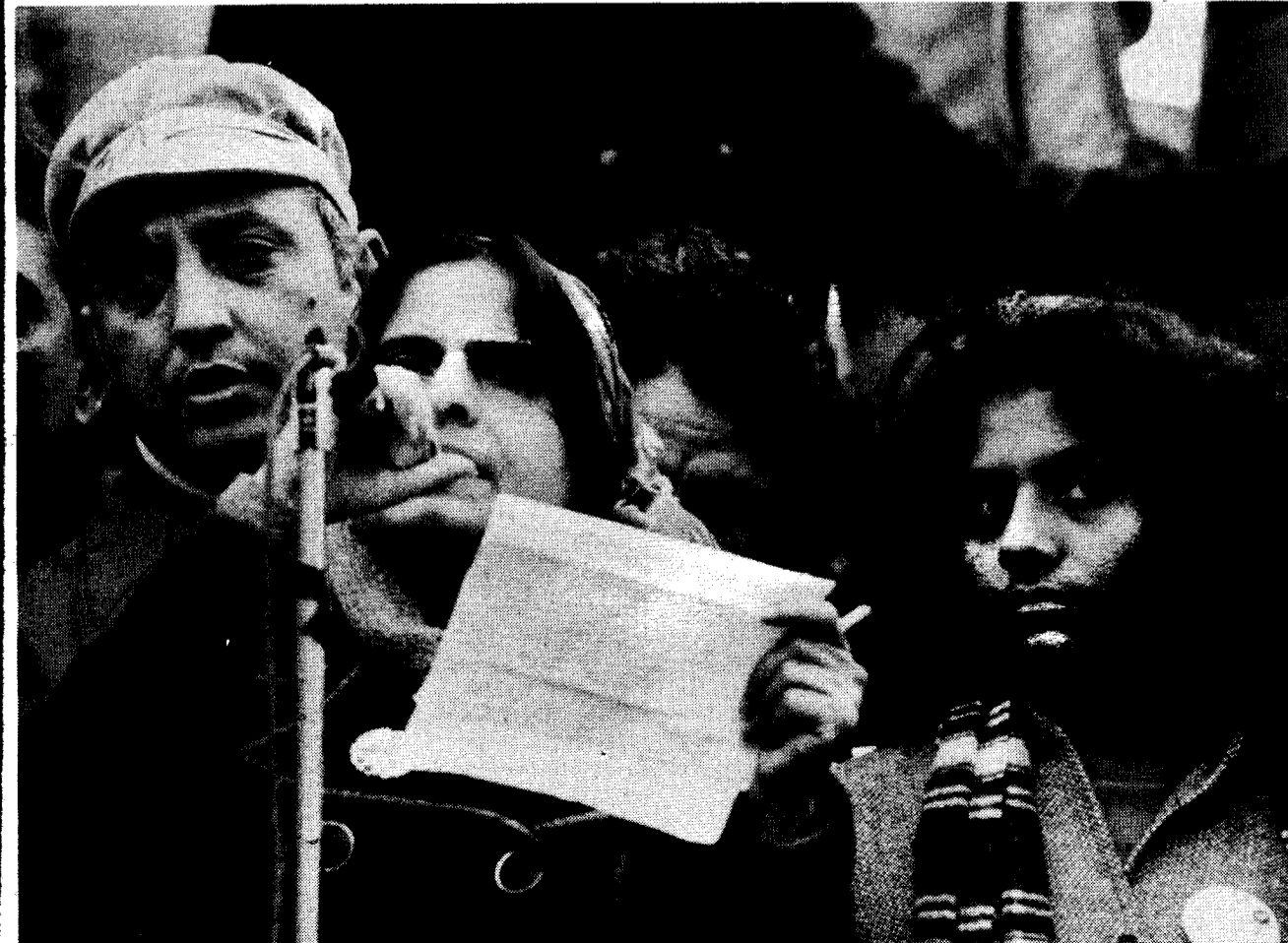
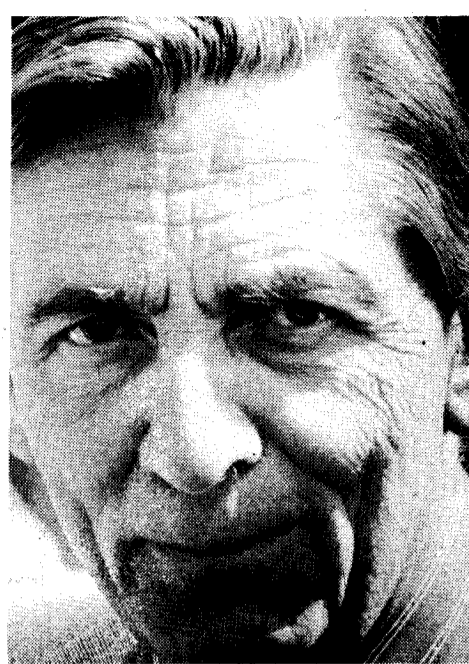
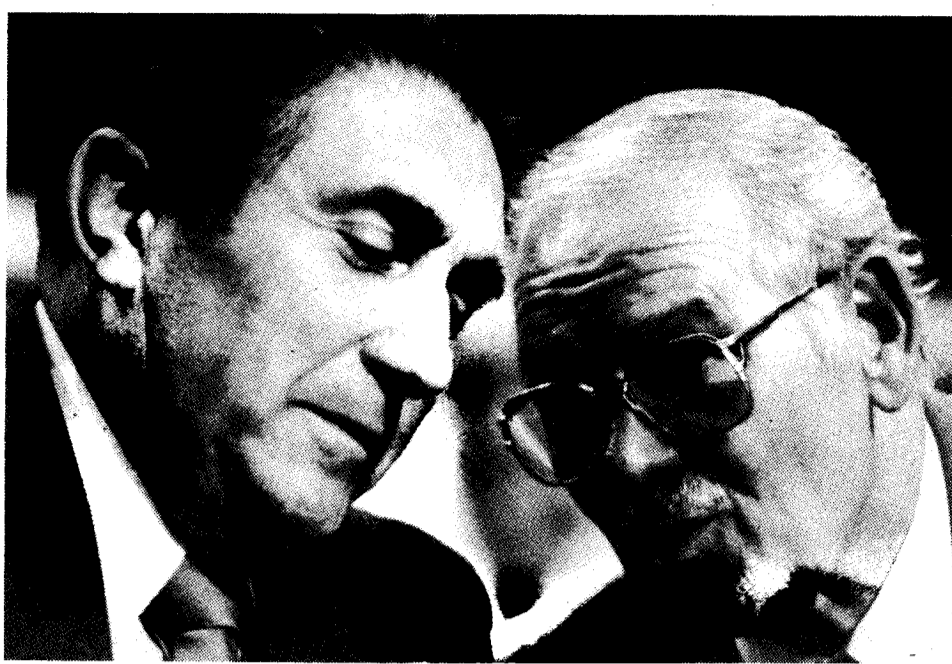


Photo: GM COOKSON



Photomontage: TATE



The trade unions

Taking up another crucial question of developments in the trade unions is obviously absolutely central at the present time. Just before Chesterfield you wrote an article for *Socialist Action* on the political levy. In that you took up the question of the trade union movement and the general council of the TUC. How do you see the present situation in the trade unions — in particular the policy which has become known as the 'new realism'?

What's called the 'new realism' is just the language of the media to celebrate discreetly the swing to the right among the general council. I don't think it's a new realism at all. It's the new language to describe defeatism. And of course the way in which the TUC general council is now elected, which means it is longer accountable to the con-

gress but is on a different electoral system has contributed to that.

But having said all that, it's also necessary to say that some of the radicalisation that's now occurring is occurring in areas which you might be slightly surprised to find.

For example if you take the question of whether the TUC should continue to attend NEDDY or not it is David Basnett of the General and Municipal Workers, and Alan Tuffin of the Communication Workers, who are most determined that they shan't. So one should never assume that because a process is being described in the way you say — the new realism — you must never assume that there is some necessary connection between public service unions, and white collar unions with conservatism. Indeed some of the strongest radicalism may well emerge from those unions that are by

no means made up of members in blue overalls, who work on the factory floor.

Again that's why I think Hobsbawm is wholly wrong in his analysis.

But what we need is a campaign for political action in the trade union movement and the 24 March conference in Sheffield (of the Broad Left Organising Committee) is about the re-founding of a socialist tradition within the trade union movement. Its very straightforward.

Perhaps you could develop that just a little bit more. Obviously it's interesting not simply because of the position the trade unions occupy within society but that they were one of the traditional areas of weakness of the Labour left itself. Bevan was con-

sistently voted down by the bloc vote of the trade unions while enjoying the support of the CLPs.

How do you see the question of building a left wing to fight for political trade unionism, as you put it?

You've got to be clear about it you know. This theory and I'm not saying for a moment that you embrace it, but this theory that you're describing, is that what happened in the Labour Party from 1979-83 was a product of a bed-sitter brigade who moved from constituency to constituency. It is rubbish.

It was the policies of the TUC, and the policies of the Labour conference in which the trade unions predominate that changed. And the whole idea of scapegoatism, which first of all explained everything that happened in terms of constituency parties, then in terms of the so-called *Militant* domination of the constituency parties, then in terms of a few named individuals (of whom I was one) was of course totally untrue.

None of these changes could have been carried through — neither the EEC view, nor the anti-nuclear view, nor the demand for a socialist industrial policy, or industrial democracy, or reselection or electoral college — could have been carried through without overwhelming support from the trade unions.

So there is a complete change from the days when Bevan was fighting against what were then very autocratic trade union leaderships who were the praetorian guard of a right wing parliamentary party. That's no longer true. And I don't believe it will ever be true again. So one has to see the question in that context otherwise you begin to believe the left is weak. It isn't weak at all it's very strong. If you doubt it look at the amount of time the media and civil service have to devote to trying to destroy it. Because they know it is deeply entrenched in the interests and the aspirations of active members of the Labour and trade union movement.

Now then you've got the problem of the non-active members — which is where the media come in and try to create a gap. But then when you do have an opportunity to test that out in certain circumstances, as for example in the Chesterfield by-election, it turns out that the electorate as a whole are prepared to accept and support policies that had previously been attributed to a little hard left group living in a bedsitter.

You see I think there is a new perspective of confidence to be built up there without being complacent or thinking there is nothing you can do. There is strength there on which to build and we must build on it.

Tasks for the left

How do you see the tasks in say the next two to three years for the left inside the Labour Party. What are the fundamental areas on which it should concentrate its attention, resources, organisation and so on?

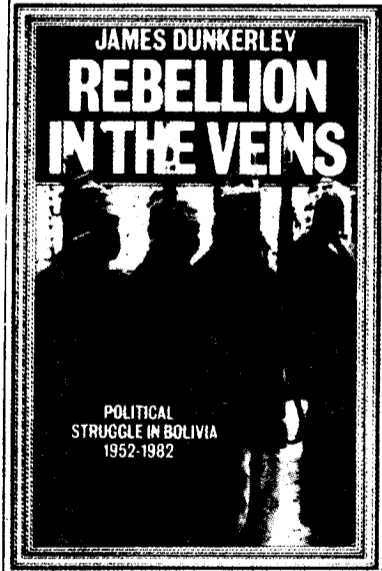
I think three things. Support, solidarity — that is supporting people in struggle and also I might add supporting the leadership that's been elected. I think its very clear that at an absolutely critical level, which is the level of the parliamentary alternatives open to people in the election, you have to stick by the leadership elected by the electoral

college that the left fought for. I think that's very important.

Secondly demanding the right to discuss, that is to say we've got to destroy once and for all the idea that if you're discussing socialism that is divisive. You must discuss and the enlargement of the socialist debate nationally and internationally is very important.

Thirdly the area of preparation. We've got to prepare. And a great deal of the confidence we need to fight the current battles will come from the fact we have shown solidarity, we have been ready to discuss, and we are in the process of preparing.

NEW FROM VERSO THIS SPRING NEW FROM VERSO THIS SPRING



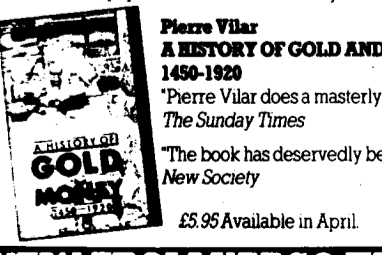
JAMES DUNKERLEY
REBELLION IN THE VEINS
POLITICAL STRUGGLE IN BOLIVIA 1952-1982
Rebellion in the Veins demonstrates that behind the succession of military coups in Bolivia lies an exceptional and coherent record of political struggle. The country's location at the heart of Latin America has not, however, guaranteed it the attention it deserves. Dunkerley here redresses the balance in a masterly survey of Bolivian society since the early 1950s.
Cloth £20.00, paper £5.95. Published in May.



Edited and Introduced by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray
I ... RIGOBERTA MENCHU
An Indian Woman in Guatemala
Rigoberta Menchu is a young Guatemalan peasant woman, already famous in her country as a national leader, whose life reflects the experience of repression and resistance common to so many Indian communities in Latin America. The anthropologist Elisabeth Burgos-Debray has undertaken an ambitious series of interviews with Menchu.
Cloth £18.50, paper £5.95. Published in June.



Ibn Khaldun: The Birth of History and the Past of the Third World
Ibn Khaldun, the most celebrated thinker of the Muslim Middle Ages, is the subject of this intriguing study. Thinkers as diverse as Ernest Gellner and Arnold Toynbee have paid tribute to the lasting fertility of Ibn Khaldun's work. English-speaking readers now have an opportunity to appreciate some of the richness and diversity of the Arab intellectual heritage.
Cloth £20.00, paper £5.95. Published in May.



Pierre Vilar
A HISTORY OF GOLD AND MONEY 1450-1920
"Pierre Vilar does a masterly job here."
The Sunday Times
"The book has deservedly become a classic."
New Society
£5.95 Available in April.



Now in paperback
Lucien Febvre & Henri-Jean Martin
THE COMING OF THE BOOK
The Impact of Printing 1450-1800
"This is one of the most exciting scholarly books ever written on printing... it is a serious work - marvellously rich and stimulating. It is to be read..." Hugh Trevor Roper in *The Sunday Times*
£5.95, available this month.

NEW FROM VERSO THIS SPRING NEW FROM VERSO THIS SPRING

Unity

And for the elimination of this SDP/Liberal Alliance which is a virulent strain of anti-socialism with very dangerous potentials within it.

That obviously would mean that you think for socialist discussion to go forward in a united fashion you have to have real democracy within the party and an end to witchhunts.

Yes. Certainly. You've simply got to accept, a socialist party must accept, that the future lies with a discussion about socialism including all the tendencies within the party.

And I think its interesting, in passing, that it is the socialist press that is under attack. The Communist Party is attacking the *Morning Star*, John Silkin's attacking *Tribune*, and the National Executive has been attacking *Militant*. There is undoubtedly a vested interest in certain parts of the bureaucratic establishment in preventing presses which contain the ongoing socialist debate from operating. And I think that's a very important issue just to put on the record.

Organising the left

Do you have any ideas or proposals on how the left wing of the Labour Party should organise itself, and the left wing in the trade unions. There is the Campaign group of MPs in parliament, but there is nothing equivalent in the Labour Party.

I think the Campaign group is a great development. It came out of the events of 1979-81 and in fact came into being after 1981. So it's been going for a couple of years in various forms. But its idea is not to be a parliamentary faction battling internally but to be a forum which connects the parliamentary par-

ty with the movement outside, which the old Tribune group was never prepared to do. And it's done very useful work in my opinion. It's promoted and developed quite a number of useful initiatives.

I think if you're looking at the movement as a whole it mustn't be factional in intent or nature. It must be really a movement for the regeneration and advocacy of socialism wherever you happen to be. Whether you're in the trade unions, or the local party or whatever.

It should be constructive and active in its concept and should have a very strong element of socialist education. And people who are involved should always be there when they're needed.

And I personally think there is a tremendous audience for this type of work. But it should now be very open in nature and should be prepared to encourage discussion and debate — and not narrow or inward looking in character.

I think inevitably from 1979-83, when we were engaged in an historic task of saving the Labour Party for socialism you had no alternative but to fight it out in a way that, it could be argued, was a diversion from fighting the Tories. But it had to be done that way, there was no alternative.

Now I think it's an outward looking type of socialist education that's required. And there's room in that for all sorts of opinions.

Summary

To make sure that I've correctly understood what you're outlining would it be fair to summarise your views roughly as follows.

Firstly the party has elected a leader by a democratic process — a leadership which must be accepted and must be supported.

Two that the party must unite itself to the maximum extent to fight against the Tories, the Alliance, and the threats against the labour movement.

Thirdly that within that framework the party must have a broad discussion on policies, structure and so on which in many ways actually amounts to a re-founding of the Labour Party — not of course going back to square one but a re-founding on a higher level of an alliance for socialism.

Is that fair?

Yes. Together with the preparation for the future. I think the preparatory element is very important. And preparation in the broadest sense. Preparation for office, preparing for what you do in

the industry you work in, the factory you work in, the community you work in, the local authority.

Preparation which goes to such a point that it actually provides some framework for your current activities as opposed to just waiting for the day when 'it'll be alright' because there will be a Labour government. I think it is this preparatory element, which gives meaning and depth and reality to the discussion and to the solidarity and unity of the moment. Its got to rotate around a strong preparatory element.

Next Week

Peter Hain continues the discussion

© Copyright Socialist Action, April 1984.



£50 000 building fund drive

This Week's Socialist Action is what our paper is all about. A paper campaigning in support of the miners, Liverpool, Greenham, women's liberation, black sections and every struggle which is taking place today.

A newspaper debating socialism, its struggles and the way to achieve it with (in just the last few weeks) Tony Benn, Peter Heathfield, Helen John, Joy Hurcombe, Ken Livingstone, David Blunkett, Eric Heffer, Joan Maynard, Anne Pettifor, Ernest Mandel, Peter Hain, Bernadette McAliskey.

You don't have to agree with Socialist Action (most people don't!) to realise it is a distinctive voice which needs to be heard in the labour movement. One that pursues its own view and tries to give a platform to the entire left.

But that paper needs money. And

in our society a lot of money.

To continue to come out, and to grow, Socialist Action must find new premises this year. To achieve that we have launched a £50,000 fund drive for new premises.

Every penny that we collect will go to sustain and expand the paper. To bring out more special numbers such as 'Labour's Alliance for Socialism'.

We appeal to all our readers to send us a donation now so we can start securing our new building — and the future of your newspaper. Even better fill out the regular bankers standing order form on this page. This gives a regular monthly income to Socialist Action, no matter how small, which helps our entire work.

Please send donations, and the bankers orders, to Socialist Action, 329 Upper Street, London N.1.

Socialist Action Bankers Order Form

Date 19

To: (Name of your bank in capitals) of

(Address of your bank in capitals) Please pay to the credit of Socialist Action, Acc. No. 70372315 at Co-Op Bank, 08-90-33, 1 Islington High Street, London N1. Starting on (date of first payment) and thereafter monthly on the same date until further notice. Debit my A C No for the amount of £

Name Address

Signature

When completed and signed please return to: The Business Manager, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

Please do not send the Bankers Order direct to your bank. Thank you.



A first response

Socialist Action has invited various political views and figures in the labour movement to respond to 'Labour's alliance for socialism'. To get the ball rolling we asked John Ross to give Socialist Action's response.

From next week we will be opening our pages to supporters of the Labour Coordinating Committee, *Marxism Today*, and many others. We invite our readers to contribute.

The first reason Tony Benn's article is important is because it allows rational argument, as opposed to sectarian slanging, to be carried out among socialists.

What is most striking of all however is its integration of the overall strategic goals of the labour movement with the tasks that need to be achieved *now*. In reality it sets out an agenda for the left for several years.

Readers can judge for themselves Tony Benn's views. But we can indicate points where there is agreement and disagreement.

The points of agreement really do touch basic and fundamental issues. They can be simply catalogued for they centre on the link between democratic socialism and the nature of the Labour Party itself — or more precisely the real 'party of labour' which Labour must become both to successfully fight Thatcher and build a socialist society.

What is unique about the present situation of the labour movement — the feature which constitutes both the dangers and potential of the present political situation in Britain — is the nature of 'Thatcherism' itself.

Thatcherism is a government attempting to carry through a thoroughgoing and reactionary change in society. But based on a Conservative Party which *does not* have thoroughgoing mass popular support.

Thatcher

It cannot be repeated too often that Thatcher's 42 per cent vote at the last election was *not* a popular landslide. It was the lowest real proportion of the vote for any Prime Minister with a safe majority in parliament in British history. The result is a government carrying through a tremendous reorganisation of British society but *without* mass popular consent. That political reality explains both Thatcher's rapid 'banana skins' after June 1983 and then the renewed eruption of mass struggles in spring 1984.

The result is an inevitable and violent assault on democracy. Thatcher must abolish the metropolitan councils because she *cannot* win them in elections. She must have her extraordinary paraphernalia of secrecy and arbitrary actions, as at GCHQ, because she *lacks* a popular mandate for

what she is doing in these fields. Attempting to combat the most reactionary government for fifty years, the labour movement finds itself fighting not only for socialism in the future but for democracy and the most elementary rights today.

The ideals of democratic socialism, of Marxism, are today integrally connected with the defence of the welfare state, of jobs, of wages, and of elementary democratic rights.

In this struggle, precisely because it is defending just about everything that is worth defending in British and international society, the labour movement has the opportunity, and need, to place itself at the head of every socialist and genuinely democratic force in society — and to articulate their demands and aspirations.

Socialism

As Marx said a struggle for socialism becomes possible only when all evil in society becomes concentrated at one pole and all that represents progress at another. All proportions guarded, the struggle over Thatcher's government has become a fight about the entire future of a society. That explains the stakes involved and the turmoil produced.

Such a struggle is about far more than simply economic welfare or demands — vital to all as these are. Labour has to organise an enormous social alliance for progress, democracy, and

socialism. A real historic bloc that can smash Thatcherism and open up the way to a socialist society in Britain.

To achieve that the Labour Party must transform itself, to defend not just specific interests within capitalism but to displace that society altogether. Labour must project an entire economic, social, political, cultural and moral order which is superior to that of capitalist society. Labour must, in short, become a truly socialist party.

To achieve that alliance Labour has to change its own organisational nature and structure. Labour's alliance must be expanded not only to the organised working class and trade unions which formed it, and core, but also to the new ranks of white collar workers, public sector workers, women's organisations, black organisations and the many other currents and groups which have grown up since the Labour Party was formed in 1900.

To be victorious in its struggle Labour therefore must also transform, and enormously expand, its own political nature. The struggle for democratic socialism is necessarily a struggle for Labour to 're-found' itself on a new higher level. That is why, in a very real sense, bringing the Labour Party up to date means going back to its origins.

Those, in our words, are what seems to us the real tasks of the labour movement in Britain today.

They could be termed a Marxist analysis, or Gramscist, or 'reviving the traditions of British socialism', or, to shock people, Leninist. The words don't matter. What is important is that they provide a common framework for approach and work by the left wing of the labour movement.

This perspective, which is based on the key ideas of democratic socialism, and what Tony Benn terms Labour as the 'alliance for progress' (and which we would term a 'party of labour') is sharply counterposed to another perspective — that of the 'popular front' and coalition with the SDP / Liberals which has become associated with Eric Hobsbawm and *Marxism Today*.

These two strategies form the sole coherent perspectives for the labour movement today. They will continue to dominate the fight inside the Labour Party in the years to come.

But if there are big areas of agreement with Tony Benn, what are the differences? They can be outlined, dealing with the most important point, in the relation between parliament, mass struggle and the capitalist state.

Tony Benn's perspective is most decidedly not a 'parliamentarist' one — indeed one of the most refreshing things in the present debates on the left is that *no* perspective which is purely based on passing resolutions and simply parliamentary change is taken seriously any more. Socialism is based on an enormous transfer of power into the hands of ordinary people — not on reinforcing the grip of the corridors of Whitehall, the back rooms at Westminster, or creating two hundred and fifty versions of the National Coal Board.

Parliament

The argument about Marxism and parliament is not about a universal right to vote. *No-one* who is a democratic socialist, or a Marxist, can believe in creating a society which does not have a universal franchise. Nor is political discussion about some so-called political strategy of 'insurrectionism' — that is for children and not for a political current in the labour movement.

The question is one simple and fundamental fact. When confronted with the violence of the ruling class, and the labour movement, have the right to defend itself? Would it have been better or worse for humanity if the German working class had taken up arms and fought Hitler? Or the Chilean workers crushed Pinochet? (And, on a lesser level, does a miners picket have the right to defend itself when attacked by the police — or is this an example of 'lawlessness'?) To pose the question is in reality to answer it.

The labour movement today, amid the chaos and argument, is forging itself a new vision of socialism.

One based on the radical extension of democracy into every sphere of life — and that means first and foremost into capital's domination of society. Such a society requires an economy which is socialised in the true sense — both democratically planned and with a market in many fields to ensure the distribution of its goods and the meeting of its people's many needs. It is a society with a full and universal right of its citizens to vote — an enormous extension of democracy and not its restriction.

It is, in short, a society far closer to the original vision of Marx than anything which exists today in the societies of Eastern Europe — no matter what their achievements in other fields.

Society

To begin to create that vision of society, to link it to the struggles of the miners, to defend the cities, to fight for the liberation of women, to eliminate the blight of racism, to end joblessness and to finish with the many other evils of capitalist society is the single greatest political achievement of the left today. To translate that vision into the living struggles of the working class is the biggest task facing us.

But *it* is a socialism which is living, popular, and relevant in a way that nothing Labour has done since 1945 has been. Just look at the response in the cities to that.

Along the way there will be many tests of who is right and who is wrong on how finally such a society will be achieved. The important thing *now* is to start fighting for it. History will judge along the way who was correct.

Marxism

Lenin liked to remark that Marxism was powerful because it was true. Socialists who have confidence in their ideas have no reason to fear the judgement of events — nor to engage in petty sectarian squabbles or manoeuvres.

Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that socialists 'have no interests separate and apart from those of the working class as a whole'. No special manoeuvres, tricks or shibboleths. Just a defence of the interests of the working class and the labour movement whenever and wherever it is threatened. Just to participate in the struggle of people to take the running of society into their own hands.

That still remains the beginning and the end of all socialist strategy.

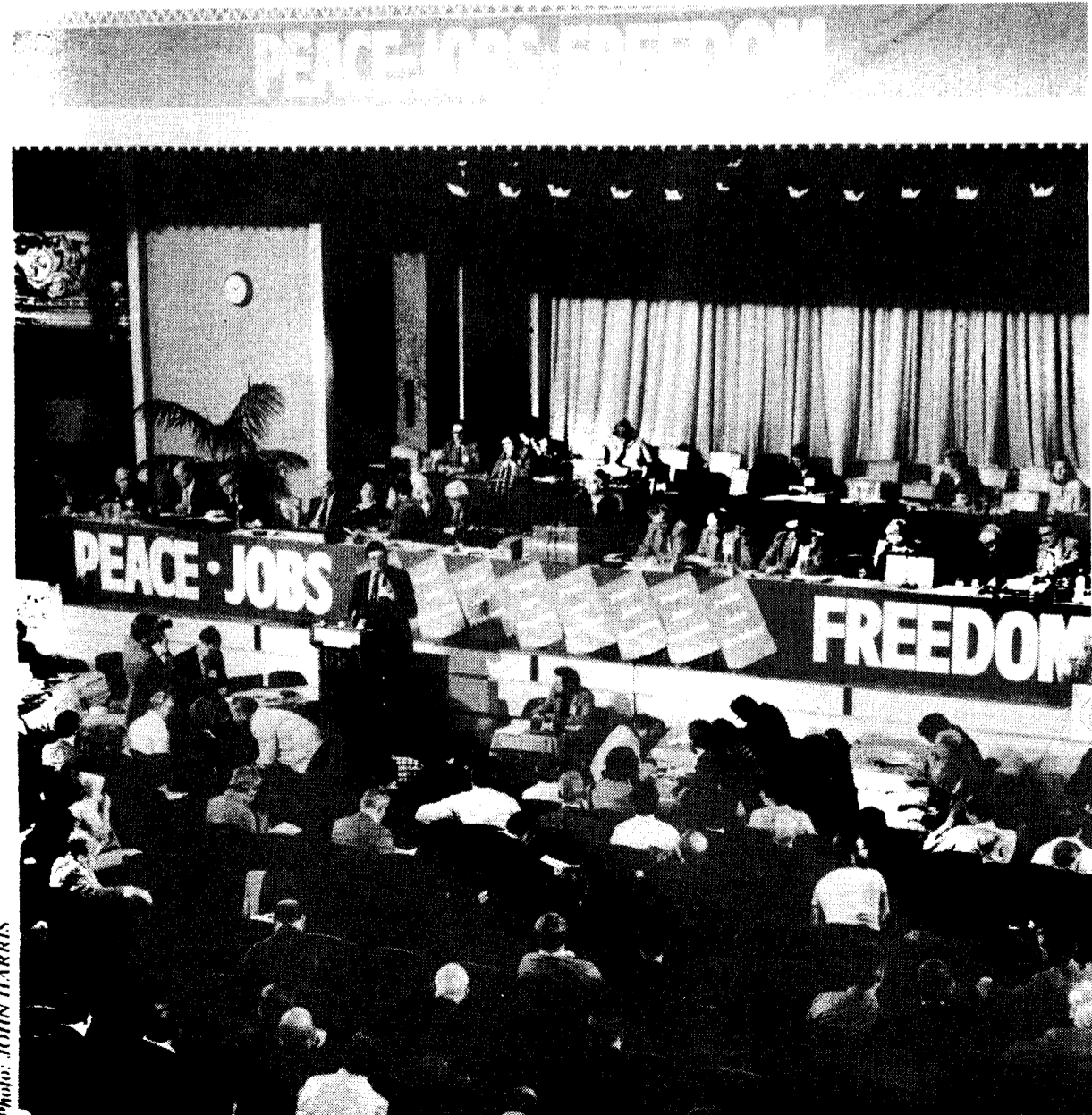


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

The 1980 special conference — still Labour's goal

PLUTO CRIME

AN EXCITING NEW CRIME LIST

*new authors, new angles,
detectives with a difference
crime with a political edge*

OCTOBER HEAT
Gordon Delbarco
£2.95 paperback 0-86104-744-3
£7.95 hardback 0-86104-770-2

MURDER IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
Manuel Vazquez Montalban
£3.50 paperback 0-86104-747-8
£7.95 hardback 0-86104-771-0

THE CHINA OPTION
Nancy Milton
£3.50 paperback 0-86104-746-X
£8.95 hardback 0-86104-772-9

MORBID SYMPTOMS
Gillian Slovo
£2.95 paperback 0-86104-745-1
£6.95 hardback 0-86104-773-7

'The first batch of pinko whodunits augurs well for the genre' *The Times*

Pluto's great new thriller prize

£2,000 is on offer for the best thriller with a political edge, sent to us by 31 December 1984.

For full details and conditions, contact Peter Ayrton, Pluto Press Limited, The Works, 105A Torrington Avenue, London NW5 2RX. Telephone: 01-482 1973.

PLUTO PRESS

What should the Labour left do about the European elections?

MANY comrades on the left of the Labour Party are not going to be able to whip themselves up into a lather of enthusiasm for the coming European elections in June. For the Labour left in the 1970s fought some of its most bloody battles against British membership of the Common Market. Many will remember how during the 1975 Common Market referendum Labour's Wilsonite right wing joined forces with Tory premier Heath, and the Liberals, to force through a ratification of Britain's membership of the EEC. If we are hostile to the EEC and its institutions, then why should we bother pounding the streets to elect Labour members of the European parliament?

The official Labour campaign of course will not be based on the demand for withdrawal from the EEC. Stan Newens, former MP and Labour candidate for Central London summed up the official line recently: 'Whatever your own position, we have to recognise that in the 1970s we lost the debate. And we never said that if Britain did go into the Common Market we would let all the British seats in the European parliament be taken by Tories'.

Labour's manifesto will fudge the issue of withdrawal, and stress Britain's demands for Common Market reform. So the first question the left has to answer is whether it should continue to oppose British membership of the market, and whether this is a viable basis for a campaign.

In our view there is no question that opposition to the EEC should be

maintained. Fighting the EEC is not a question of championing 'little England' against 'internationalist Europe', but of recognising that the market is a means of strengthening the European ruling class economically, politically and militarily against the working class.

By Paul Lawson

The Common Market is the institution which is used to co-ordinate economic 'rationalisation' — steel closures, mine closures, food price rises and the rest — against the working class. It is an essential component of growing military collaboration, which aims to strengthen European imperialism in the framework of NATO. Socialists should not be neutral on the building of anti-



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

'Hands up all those who want to stay in the Common Market'

working class alliances by the European bourgeoisie.

There is no contradiction whatever between being opposed to the EEC, and running an election

campaign to the EEC parliament on a withdrawal basis. A Labour campaign on a withdrawal platform would have allowed mass hostility to the EEC to be expressed.

In fact, some Euro-candidates like Les Huckfield will be standing on an explicitly anti-EEC platform, even if this is not the position of the official Labour campaign. In most areas of course the campaign will not be on a withdrawal basis. How can the left deal with this situation?

The temptation of left activists to avoid participation in the election should be avoided for two reasons. First, the elections will provide a test of mass opinion on the overall record of the Tories, especially if the miners strike is continuing. Second, the opportunities to argue the anti-EEC case will be numerous, whatever the position of the local candidate.

The general message of the need to fight the Tories must be taken into the campaign. Just because the elections bear the official imprint 'European', no one is prevented from building a protest vote against the full range of Tory attacks on the working class. Moreover in meetings and canvassing, the left will have every opportunity to stress its opposition to the EEC, and the need for withdrawal.

The 1983 general election represented a high point for the Tories, and an artificially low vote for Labour. The European election can be utilised as a

opportunity to reverse this situation.

The opposite temptation to abstaining from participation in the elections — uncritical participation in the elections — should also be avoided however. Neil Kinnock and his Labour Co-ordinating Committee flank-guards are attempting a wholesale 're-education' of the party on a position of reconciliation to EEC membership. Like the other 'Eurosociologists' the fundamental orientation of the Kinnock leadership is towards closer integration of the European

capitalist powers, as a means of fighting the economic domination of the United States.

If the new realism of the Kinnock leadership towards the EEC is to be fought, it means full participation by the left in the June elections, but on the basis of supporting workers struggles against austerity, on the basis of opposition to the missiles plans of the European imperialists, and on the basis of opposition to the capitalist Common Market. No to the capitalist market, for a socialist Europe!

Labour movement Palestine conference

By Phil Hearse

WHEN is a trade union not a trade union? The answer of course is — when it's the Histadrut, the Israeli Jewish labour federation. Despite the myths assiduously spread by the supporters of the Israeli state, the Histadrut is one of the fundamental supports of Zionism, and one of the main employers in Israel.

When is a Labour Party not a labour party? When it's the Israeli Labour Party, the party of Moshe Dayan and Golda Meir, the party of the European Jewish establishment in Israel, — a Zionist party which has nothing to do with the labour movement or socialism.

The Israeli Labour Party is however, affiliated to the British Labour Party through its British affiliate *Poale Zion*, casting votes through the 'socialist societies' section of the electoral college for positions in the party.

The links between the British labour movement and Zionism will be one of the main topics discussed at the joint PSC-LMCP labour movement conference on 19 May.

For many years Zionism and virtually uncritical support for Israel have dominated the British labour movement. The myths of 'socialist kibbutz, and 'progressive' Israel have only been challenged in the last few years. The Zionist movement has carefully exploited collective Western 'guilt' over the Jewish holocaust, and the accusation that anti-Zionism equals anti-semitism.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 should have dispelled many of the Zionist myths. But the plight of Palestinian workers in Israel itself and in the occupied territories, Gaza and the West Bank, is little known in the British labour movement.

The 19 May conference will hear Palestinian trade union speakers, and initiate a discussion on links and solidarity with Palestinian labour struggles. Out of the conference it is hoped to organise a labour movement delegation to Palestine, a tour of Palestinian trade unionists, and prepare the basis for beginning to raise the question of Palestine in a series of trade unions.

Labour Movement Conference on Palestine

with Palestinian trade union speakers

Saturday 19 May
County Hall, London

Sponsors include TASS, Bob Wright, Ken Cameron, Claire Short MP, Harriet Harman MP, Harry Cohen MP, Joan Maynard MP, Stuart Holland MP, Bob Clay MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP.

Credentials (2 delegates max per org.) £2 from: Labour Movement Conference on Palestine, c/o PSC, BM PSA, London WC1N 3XX

All out for democracy in Brazil

'THE BIGGEST DEMONSTRATION in the history of Latin America' — that's how people were describing the action taken by some one and a half million people in Sao Paulo, dancing, marching, singing and shouting their demand for 'direct presidential elections now!'

Yet this was only the last in a string of demonstrations leading up to last week's vote in the congress on an opposition amendment which would have given most Brazilians the first chance in their lifetime to elect their country's president.

A few days earlier one million people had taken to the streets in Rio. Even before that nearly two millions had demonstrated up and down the Brazilian sub-continent in a clamour for democracy that has cut right across the country's different regions and social structures. It's a fever that has taken hold of not only the big industrial concentrations of the south-east — the 'paradise' of multinational investment in the early 1970s — but also the drought-stricken peasant areas of the north-east, where 10 million people have died of starvation in the last decade — and frontier shanty-towns deep in the Amazonian far west.

The campaign has been organised by local and national unity committees of all the opposition parties and the mass organisa-

tions, featuring a caravan of touring speakers that has included not only leaders of the various parties, but also popular singers, TV soap opera stars, footballers, and even sports commentators acting as comperes at some of the rallies.

By S Piper

Predictably enough, the amendment to introduce direct elections was defeated last week. In a heavily-gerrymandered congress, it narrowly failed to get the required two-thirds majority, whilst the army put on a show of repressive force that hasn't been seen for several years. But a campaign of that size is hardly likely to go away overnight and nor will the acute crisis which the dictatorship is caught in. The military are deeply divided



Torture by the army in Brazil

and the regime has lost control over its own mechanisms for choosing a presidential successor, with warring factions publicly fighting and bribing their way towards the finishing post.

Which way things go in the coming months will de-

pend on two central aspects of the present situation. One is that, so far, the crisis of the military regime has not coincided with a crisis of bourgeois rule as such. On the contrary, up until now the campaign itself has been massively dominated by the different strands of bourgeois opposition.

These liberal politicians are now caught between their desire to negotiate a compromise solution that will increase their own share of power, and the need to maintain at least some credibility in the eyes of the 'monstrous' mass movement they have helped to unleash.

The second crucial aspect is the existence within the campaign of a militant, independently organised working-class current. This has a strong base in the unions, centred on the CUT, an independent trades union congress formed last year. But it also has a clear political expression in the five-year-old Workers' Party (PT). Both the CUT and PT have a very rudimentary level of organisation with the many internal problems to be expected in such new organisations.

So far, they have not been able to hold out a real

alternative to the hesitations of the campaign's liberal leadership. However, they do have a real mass influence. Their contingents have become more and more noticeable in pushing forward the demonstrations, and their most charismatic leader, Lula, has become increasingly the most applauded speaker in the direct elections caravan.

Much will now depend on this current's ability to pull together its own supporters into a pole of attraction for the movement as a whole. This will be the only way of resisting inevitable pressures to wind down the mobilisations, and of linking up the partial demand for democracy with a challenge to the regime's economic policies and the incalculable suffering they are inflicting on tens of millions of Brazilians.

Recent calls by the CUT for a general strike on these twin issues may offer a lead in this direction. Success will depend on overcoming in practice the divisions which still exist within the workers' movement, between the militant current and those sectors still looking to the reformist block dominated by the Brazilian CP.

Kinnock backs Blackburn witch hunt

THE POPULAR IMAGE of Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock will be severely dented once news of last Wednesday's national executive meeting gets around. For the NEC voted 14-12 to uphold the expulsions of six members of the Blackburn Labour Party, with the full support of Mr Kinnock who spoke in favour of the decision.

This opens the door to round-two of party witch hunts, headed this time by the dream ticket leadership. It strengthens the suspicion of many rank and file party members that Kinnock's new unity leadership heralds a right-centre drift away from party policies, using the witch hunt as a vehicle.

The NEC's call for a 50p weekly levy of party members in support of the miners is to be welcomed as strongly as its decision to expel the Blackburn 6 is to be deplored. But it follows vital weeks of indecision by the Kinnock leadership, when a clear statement of support for the flying pickets could have helped build the solidarity needed to successfully and speedily conclude the dispute.

Moves to expel the Blackburn 6 began last year, led by Councillor Gregory who has subsequently left the Labour Group of Blackburn coun-

cil. Rumours that he is applying to join the Liberals have yet to be confirmed. But Mr Kinnock will emerge with egg on his public face if it turns out he's supported the right in another fiasco like Newham North East which ended with MP Reg Prentice crossing to the Tory benches.

By Our Labour Correspondent

Joan Maynard, one of the 12 to vote against expulsion, summed up the vote. She told us: 'I'm absolutely opposed to the expulsion of these people. Whatever the rights and wrongs, the real issue is that there's nothing in it for the Labour Party but bad publicity at a time when local government elections are taking place and with three parliamentary by-elections coming



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

up. No one should be expelled for their ideas, the way to defeat them is with better ideas.'

The Blackburn 6 will have the opportunity to appeal the decision at Labour's final court of justice, party conference.

Meanwhile all constituency parties and affiliated organisations must protest in the strongest terms to the national executive, demanding party unity based on respect for all socialist opinion freely expressed within the party.

Yardley 5: the facts

BIRMINGHAM YARDLEY Labour Party recently established a new precedent by refusing to accept the transfer of three Labour Party members from other constituencies. In addition, it refused membership to two new applicants. All five are appealing to Labour's national executive. In the meantime, constituencies are asked to support them by the following resolution, a copy of which should be sent to the address below.

This CLP/branch notes with concern the refusal of transfer of three Labour Party members into the Acocks Green branch of Yardley Labour Party. These refusals amount to back-door expulsions and cut across party unity.

The five have produced a facts sheet outlining their treatment over the last year. available from: RM Reg Ex. 113 Edmund Street, Birmingham.

Black sections on the move

WHEN 1983 Labour Party annual conference remitted composite resolution 28, which called for proper black representation at all levels of the party, the national executive promised a working party to 'study how best to implement the principle contained in it'.

Since then, black members throughout Britain have been organising in their constituencies and in their regions. Some black sections are now established within constituencies and, in the case of Vauxhall party in South London, those black representatives have full voting rights.

Despite the national executive's tardiness — the working party met for the first time only a few weeks ago — London region for its part has stated its preparedness to enfranchise black members at regional level, if the NEC continues to drag its feet.

The resolution on this (Composite H) was passed by almost the two-thirds majority required for a constitutional change, despite opposition from some trade unions and from supporters of the *Militant* newspaper.

In the words of the national black sections' secretary, Billy Hoe Nong Pob: 'A million anti-racist

resolutions passed by GMCs meant nothing compared to composite H, which passed by such substantial majorities, is indicative that a major body of the Labour Party is at last acting positively.'

By Annie Brady

Black sections are calling on constituencies and affiliated organisations to put forward the following model resolution for this year's annual conference:

Conference recognises that whereas 80 per cent of black voters support the Labour Party, black people still remain the least politically represented group within the Labour Party and in the country generally. Conference therefore considers that positive action must be taken by the Labour Party to remedy this situation, and recommends the creation of Black Sections in the party as a base on which black people can devise and propose strategies for change so that equal representation and racial equality can be created through the development of a socialist society.

Constituencies are asked to slightly alter the wording of this resolution, to ensure that each one is printed separately in the resolutions booklet.



Photo: GM COOKSON



Liverpool 29 March

Photo: TIM RIGBY

Liverpool all set for Labour victory

LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL'S second budget-making meeting last Wednesday ended the same as its first: failure to agree. But the situation there is far from unchanged. With only a few days left before the local government elections this Thursday, all the signs are that support for Labour is growing fast.

Without doubt, Liverpool has led the rest of the labour movement against the Tories' attacks on local democracy. Last Wednesday's council meeting was opened by an address from Alan Duffy of Sutton Manor colliery, Lancashire.

As deputy council leader Derek Hatton pointed out, Liverpool's fight 'cannot be seen in isolation from other struggles against the Tory government'. A big victory in this year's elections will be further evidence

that Liverpool's first stand really does show the way for other Labour councils.

By Carol Turner

Labour candidates have been selected on a pledge to support the council's so-called illegal budget. The exception is Paul Orr, one of the seven budget scabs, whose appeal against deselection was recently upheld by the national executive.

Liverpool District Labour Party, on the

casting vote of chairperson Tony Mulhearn, has subsequently reinstated him as Labour's candidate. This is a controversial decision. Orr's constituency voted overwhelmingly not to accept the NEC decision.

The district party's action will be hotly contested at its next meeting, after the elections. No doubt there was concern to avoid unfavourable publicity on what is considered by some to be the wrong issue to fight on.

The district party are confident that Orr's reinstatement will not jeopardise the clear majority for Labour's budget expected after voting day.

Police Bill conference

THE ANTICS of the police during the miners' strike makes clear that the increase in police powers over the last few years have not been designed simply to deal with 'minority' groups.

The real purpose of the increased police powers has been the use of the police as a highly organised weapon against the whole labour movement.

An essential part of this operation is the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill. This Bill, which will be returning to the House of Commons for its last reading in the next few weeks will remove any shadow of doubt about the right of the police to use road blocks like they have done in the miners' strike.

The Bill will make them legal which means they will be used regularly against strikers. The Bill will also empower the police to use intimate body checks — of the mouth,

anus and vagina — and people can be detained without charge for four days and not given proper access to lawyers. The police will also be allowed to search the homes of people not suspected of any offence.

Unfortunately the labour movement has been slow to respond to the Bill. Perhaps it sees it as simply a 'black issue' which can be ignored, just as it has shamefully ignored other so-called black issues in the past. But now a labour movement conference has finally been called on the Bill by the National Campaign against the Police Bill. This will take place on Saturday 12 May from 1pm to 6pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. There will be speakers from the TGWU, the NGA, the National Society of Motor Mechanics and the Labour Party NEC.

On the following Saturday 19 May, the NCAPB is holding a national march assembling at Hyde Park at 12 midday.

Labour CND leads the left

SATURDAY'S ANNUAL MEETING of Labour CND swept out resolutions and candidates bent on fudging the issues of unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from NATO, confirming yet again that Labour CND leads the way on a determined defence of CND's aims within the Labour Party.

Delegates rejected outright a Birmingham resolution that 'a process of nuclear disarmament can be begun' by arguing for a non-nuclear NATO. And an Unxbridge Labour Party resolution on detente and non-nuclear defence had the sting in its tail removed by a successful amendment from Walter Wolfgang, Richmond Labour Party, which made clear that such discussions could take place only in the context of defending party policy and assisting 'progress towards general and complete disarmament'.

A composite from

Scottish and London Labour CND, comending

By Carol Turner,

Labour CND executive

the role of Labour CND at last year's party conference and listing campaigning action was carried unanimously. The pattern of the resolutions was repeated in the elections for Labour CND officers and committee members, when those associated with Labour CND's determined stand last year were reelected

and those with a hand in its shut-down last November resoundingly defeated.

Perhaps most telling of all debates were those on NATO. There was a discussion early in the meeting on a Worthing Labour Party resolution calling for publicity and discussion from Labour CND on the issue of NATO. An amendment designed to throw it off track by giving equal prominence to the Warsaw Pact Organisation was defeated, setting the tone for further discussion throughout the day.

When MP Denzil Davies concluded his address to the annual meeting by calling for a non-nuclear NATO, the audience erupted in pro-

test. Likewise, Pat Arrowsmith hit the same nail on the head when she criticised a model conference resolution from the Labour Disarmament Liaison Committee which included a demand for detente as 'an essential pre-condition for securing agreement on the control and reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe'. 'This is not CND policy and, Labour CND cannot possibly campaign for it,' she said to audience cheers.

Armed with the annual meeting's decisions, Labour CND executive shows every promise of forging ahead in 1984 with a campaigning outlook that will build on the gains of last year's committee. There is no doubt it will be the watch-dog of unilateralism inside the Labour Party.



Women protesting outside Armagh women's prison on International Women's Day

Labour women to discuss Ireland

HISTORICALLY there has always been a close link between the struggles of women in Britain for their rights, and the struggle of women in the Irish nationalist movement.

This link is summed up in the person of Constance Markievicz, a leading nationalist and former suffragette, who became the first woman to be elected to the British Parliament. Like the other nationalists, she never took her seat, but it underlines the point that the connection bet-

ween women and the Irish struggle has taken both forward.

By Steph Grant

That connection is being reasserted inside the Labour Women's organisation today. This year's conference, which takes place in Swansea on 12-13 May, will debate Ireland. It will focus on the treatment meted out to the women Republican prisoners in Armagh jail.

There is a barrier of silence preventing British women understanding what is going on in Ireland. But the effect on Irish lives is devastating.

The state aims its repression at the

Republican communities as part of its attempts to break the spirit of those fighting British occupation. And the women are among the first to suffer.

Since November 1982, every woman leaving and entering Armagh prison has been subjected to a strip search. So the five women on remand, who have to appear in Armagh Court twice a week, are strip searched twice within the 30 minutes it takes for them to be escorted to the court, appear and return to prison.

Women on trial are strip searched twice daily — they have no contact with the public, and yet this is done on 'security grounds'. Strip searching

means: being violently undressed, always in front of warders (sometimes male warders), internal probing and searching of sanitary towels.

Women arrested on the word of informers, and interrogated at Castlereagh, constantly report that threats of rape are a part of the interrogation procedure — one woman has actually been awarded an out of court settlement for technical loss of virginity while under interrogation.

Irish women have a claim on the sisterhood and support of British feminists, as this violence is perpetrated in our name ... and all these repressive methods will one day be used against feminists in

Britain (just look at Greenham).

At the picket of Armagh on International Women's Day, prisoners told us that searches decreased at the height of the pressure and publicity about Armagh last year, but increased again as soon as the campaign lost momentum.

This year's National Labour Women's conference has seven resolutions condemning the strip searching of women in Armagh jail.

They must be adopted. Fighting against what is happening to women in the North of Ireland is vital to ensure these methods are never used against women here.

Miners' wives to go to Greenham

By Jude Woodward

MINERS' wives are not just getting active in support of the current strike, but are drawing out the connection between their struggle and the struggle of the Greenham women. Over a hundred Kent miners' wives heard Helen John speak about Greenham in Aylesham last week, and over thirty of them agreed to lead a delegation down to the camp on Sunday 20 May.

The delegation to the camp on that day has the sponsorship of a number of London Labour Party women's sections, including Newham North East and Islington North. The Aylesham NUM ladies section and Briefing women are also supporting it.

At the Labour CND conference last Saturday a resolution agreeing to send a contingent of Labour CND women on the delegation was overwhelmingly adopted — four men who voted against were jeered by the meeting.

The women's caucus at the end of the conference agreed to raise it in CLPs and addresses were exchanged to help to organise it. Make sure your women's section is represented on 20 May.

Labour Movement delegation to Greenham
Sunday 20 May
Led by Kent miners' wives
For details phone Jude 01-272 9575 or Ilona 01-470 2927

Photo: DEREK SPEIRS

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

A Socialist ACTION

Make Nottingham another Saltley

ARTHUR SCARGILL's call for 'the biggest national demonstration ever seen in Britain' to break the police blockade of Nottingham must get the widest possible support from the labour movement.

Every trade union branch, every shop stewards committee and every Labour Party should prepare now to send their members.

The Tories are getting ready to reinforce the 'thick blue line' which is costing £2 million a day to stop effective picketing. The labour movement must help the NUM to break this 'thick blue line', and to take the working class a giant step forward in the battle against the Tories.

By Pat Hickey

The government knows full well that the miners can stop Thatcher, and is well aware that its position is not safe. The reason for the huge police operation in Nottinghamshire is that they dare not use the anti-union laws against the NUM. The legislation which made the TUC turn tail and run away over the NGA dispute has had no effect on the miners. The weakness of the Tories in this strike is obvious. The miners can win as long as the rest of the movement make sure they do.

Unfortunately, the labour leaders who have again and again refused to use the full strength of the working class are once more showing their true colours. They are long on anti-Tory talk and short on action.

The people who sold out the NGA will also sell out the miners. Terry Duffy has publically attacked Scargill's tactics. George Henderson national officer of the TGWU's construction section has also disagreed with the flying picket tactics. Roy Hattersley has insisted on respect for the law. Bill Sirs openly advocates scabbing.

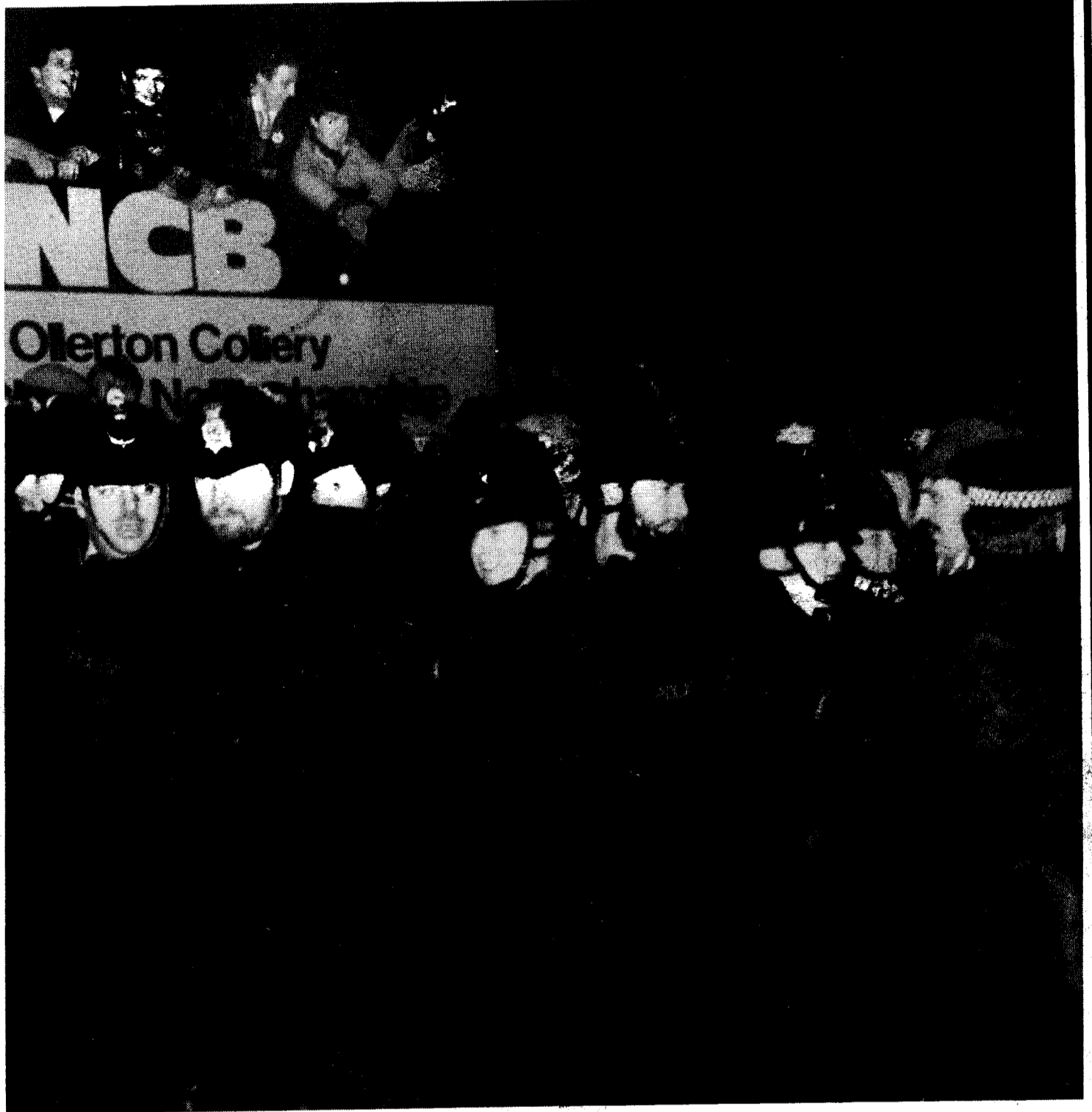
Such leaders would

hand the Tories victory on a plate. They have time and again demonstrated their ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of any victory.

The answer to them and to the Tories is to make the Nottingham demonstration a resounding success. Yorkshire NUM has already shown that the law can be defied. The police blockade can be broken. The Nottingham demonstration must be turned into the kind of show of solidarity that made 'the battle of Saltley Gates' the crucial turning point in the 1972 coal strike. And right to the fore in that march in Nottingham, should be Neil Kinnock, thus making clear that the Labour Party is with the miners and against Thatcher and her police thugs.

After Saltley Arthur Scargill said 'The events of today will go down in the history of the British working class movement as a historic day, when not just individual unions but British trade unionists decided they had had enough of police brutality. They had had enough of intimidation by the police in obtaining passage through the picket line for scab labour, and they decide to do something about it. We had a lesson in workers control. For the first time in many years the workers of this land decided that the nation would be defied; that the state system would be defied, and the gates of Saltley would be closed.'

The slogan now should be 'Make Nottingham another Saltley'.



SUBSCRIBE

RATES:
Inland
6 months £8;
12 months £15
Overseas
(12 months only)
Europe £17; Air Mail £24
(Double these rates
for multi-reader institutions)

Name

Address

Please send me as special offer
I enclose cheque/PO payable to Socialist Action for £

Send to: Socialist Action Subs, 328 Upper St, London N1 2XP.

Special free book offer!

Take out a years inland subscription and we will send you free one of these books:

Thatcher and Friends by John Ross

or

Over our Dead Bodies —
Women Against the Bomb

Introductory offer
for new
readers: Eight
issues for
just £2!

Stop Reagan on 9 June



NINTH JUNE is important because it is vital that the American people

says Helen John of Greenham Women Against Cruise

know that the British population do not feel comfortable with President Reagan. Because they don't feel comfortable with Reagan either.

They are waiting for him to be out of office so that some sanity and direction can come into their lives. We owe the rest of the world that responsibility.

Nobody must allow that man to come here and let him believe that he is welcome in our country, when those weapons are here and defended to such a degree that any unarmed British subject could be killed so they can defend those American weapons.

No way at all could a British soldier be sta-

tioned anywhere in the US and be given permission to even think about killing an unarmed American woman. And when you've got such a disparity we must make that clear to the American people. This man and the administration he represents are not welcome here and neither are the weapons.