

A Socialist ACTION

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30p

THATCHER

THE TORY government has received a huge slap in the face with the jury's 'not guilty' verdict in the Clive Ponting, Belgrano secrets case.

The result was greeted in the Old Bailey courtroom with gasps of surprise and then cheers of applause.

Opposition MPs are demanding the heads of those responsible — John Stanley, Armed Forces Minister and Michael Heseltine, Defence Secretary.

Clive Ponting, Assistant Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, passed confidential documents to Labour MP Tam Dayell, concerning the events leading up to the sinking of the Belgrano.

By Valerie Coultas

Ponting maintained that he had acted out of principle to expose the government which was 'deliberately misleading' parliament over the true events.

The civil service, he maintained, in the last analysis had to defend the 'national interest', even against the government.

The judge, Mr Justice McCowan, clearly took the government's part throughout the trial. He made the legal ruling that 'duty' meant 'official duty' and not moral or civic duty.

The 'interests of the state' applied to the policies of the state — whichever government was in power, he told the jury.

The jury clearly disagreed with him and came to their own conclusions.

They made a political verdict, indicting the Tory government.

This was a truly amazing result given that 80 jurors had been vetted before the trial began and that all the names were checked by Scotland Yard



to ensure that none of them had criminal records, and by the Special Branch to sift out those with extreme political views.

The government is now under increased pressure to scrap section 2 of the Official Secrets Act (why give Sarah Tisdall six months for doing a similar thing?). But also Margaret Thatcher herself is vulnerable to the accusation of deceiving the House.

After all, as one political leader commented, why go for the monkeys when you can get the organ grinder?

TORPEDOED



Unions must back the NUM

AT THE beginning of last week the Tories, the media, and the labour right were eagerly awaiting the collapse of the miners' strike. The miners have proved them wrong. After 11 months they are determined to fight on. The pressure must now be put on the government and the NCB to return to negotiations.

The day of action on 11 February showed what can be done to support the miners even in the absence of clear leadership from the official movement. In the build-up to

24 February and 6 March a great deal more can be done to win the unions to support for the miners.

The need for this backing was underlined by the High Court decision to ban mass picketing in South Wales — a decision which has wide implications for the trade union movement.

It will undoubtedly be used as a precedent which gives legal status to the Department of Employment's guidelines on picketing. These have never before been tested in court.

They will now be tested in the class struggle. Teachers, local government workers, and local councils are preparing for struggle. In those struggles, solidarity will be vital. Thatcher has deep problems — even the Falklands factor is no

longer the jewel in the Tory crown. As these fresh forces come into battle the Tories' problems will deepen. Now is the time to mobilise behind these struggles.

There must be an all-out mobilisation for the 24 February demonstration in support of the miners. Democracy Day, 6 March, should be turned into a day of joint local government/NUM action.

The TUC right wing will try to prevent this happening. But every class conscious worker knows that the maximum unity is essential in the fight against the Tories. The demonstration and the day of action offer the opportunity to build that unity. The miners remain in the forefront of the struggle, and the main question remains that of winning the unions to back the miners.

Socialist ACTION

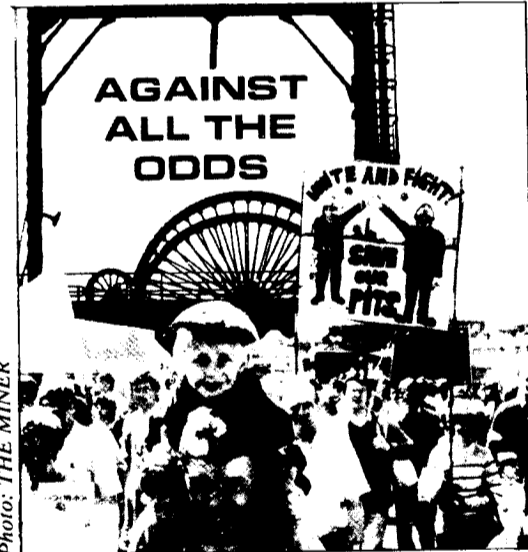
Stand and fight

LAST THURSDAY's decision by the NUM executive to continue the fight for a negotiated settlement, and to refuse to give the NCB a blank cheque for pit closures surprised most of the Tory press as well as many on the left. The rejection of such alternatives as a return to work without an agreement — in reality an agreement would be imposed — and for a recall TUC — a dangerous option in the present situation — was a victory for the left in the union.

The slowdown in the return to work is a vindication of this strategy by the NUM and a blow to the NCB's hopes of rapidly reaching a point when 50 per cent of miners are back at work. The reality is that 60 per cent of all miners, the overwhelming majority of those who came out on 6 March, 1984 are still on strike. The NUM, and Arthur Scargill is a long way from being a spent force.

This fact is a vindication of the intransigent leadership given by Scargill. The Tory press, and the right wing in the movement — witness Basnett's attack on Scargill on the eve of the NUM executive meeting — regard this stand as destructive lunacy. The truth is very different. At BL, and later at British Steel, the leadership of the unions threw in the towel at an early stage in the fight and became complicit in the closure programme.

The result in both cases was wave after wave of redundancy, with no resistance from the work forces concerned. The membership were left leaderless and isolated in the face of the onslaught on jobs. Militants at local level were unable to substitute for this lack of leadership and generate a fight back.



In the NUM, as a result of this stand there is an extremely strong left wing which remains intact and in fighting order. It has built links across the trade unions and into the Labour Party. It is a formidable force for the Tories to deal with in their efforts to destroy the NUM as a fighting force.

For the left in the movement the stand of the NUM has demonstrated the importance of waging a fight against the Tories and the right wing — however difficult the circumstances. This lesson will be of major importance in the coming local government battle. It will also be important in the wage struggles of teachers, local government workers, and others in the coming months.

The number of days lost in strikes, excluding the miners, increased by 30 per cent in 1984, clear proof that the organisations of the working class are still immensely strong. This strength is the bedrock on which the left can build in the next period. Out of the coming struggles the labour movement must forge a leadership which is like that of the NUM — a leadership which stands and fights.

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That sinking feeling

IT IS not just that politics of the labour movement that are being fundamentally shaken up by the miners' strike. Major shifts are now being forced out into the open in ruling class politics.

The dominant element in the situation is of course the economic crisis. There is no doubt that the Thatcher government completely underestimated the economic price it would have to pay for the miners' strike. While the ruling class is perfectly prepared to pay any monetary price to defeat the NUM nevertheless the impact of the strike has completely thrown off course the government's short term economic plans.

Put most directly Nigel Lawson's planned give away budget in March has already had to be cancelled. The rapid rise in interest rates will significantly slow economic recovery. Nigel Lawson is now rated in the polls as the least popular Chancellor of the Exchequer since records of that type began.

While there are other factors behind the rising economic problems of the government — notably the policies pursued by Reagan in the United States — nevertheless there is no doubt that it is the miners' strike which has seriously inflamed the situation. The plunging pound is just the symptom.

Major shift

The political consequences could be clearly seen in the opinion poll published in last weekend's *Sunday Times*. This for the first time for a year saw a major slide in the government's popularity — down to 37 per cent for Labour and 37 per cent for the Tories.

When a government begins to find itself in trouble, as this one is, then blows begin to rain increasingly rapidly. The verdict on Clive Ponting is obviously a purely political decision by the jury — a vote of no confidence in the government's actions on the Belgrano affair. It

is going to be another huge source of problems for the government.

In short what the miners strike has done is provide the background against which every other problem of the government has become enormously magnified. No matter what the immediate outcome of the strike, Thatcher has been dealt a major blow. In that situation other ruling class political forces are beginning to put forward their alternative.

By John Marshall

Undoubtedly the most skillful manoeuvring in the strike, from a capitalist point of view, has come from Owen. For most of the strike he has positioned himself 'to the right' of Thatcher — calling for earlier use of the law, for 'Scargillism' to be utterly smashed and so on. Now however Owen has turned up on Thatcher's 'left' — calling for reconciliation, no vengeance etc.

There is no contradiction in Owen's position. He just has a different formula for how the bourgeoisie should rule than Thatcher. He believes the key thing is to gain a firm right wing grip inside the trade unions rather than a central direct assault on them. Owen's formula is to link up with the new realists in the TUC. As moves such as the ban on unions at GCHQ get in the way of that Owen opposed them.

Decisive

The really decisive question however is what attitude the trade union bureaucracy is going to take to Owen's overtures. Neil Kinnock is not going to move towards any deal with the Alliance — at least not until after he has made an attempt to win



Photos: JOHN HARRIS (Report)

the next election. But the new realist wing of the TUC is now in full flight — and is likely to be further strengthened by David Basnett's retirement. Here there is a very significant reservoir of forces seeking deals with the Alliance.

Also coming up is the orientation of Maxwell's *Daily Mirror*. Maxwell himself has been giving great prominence in his speeches to those, such as Macmillan, advocating national governments coalitions and so on. At the Southgate by-election the *Mirror*, for the first

time, studiously avoided calling for a vote for Labour and merely advocated a vote against the Tories.

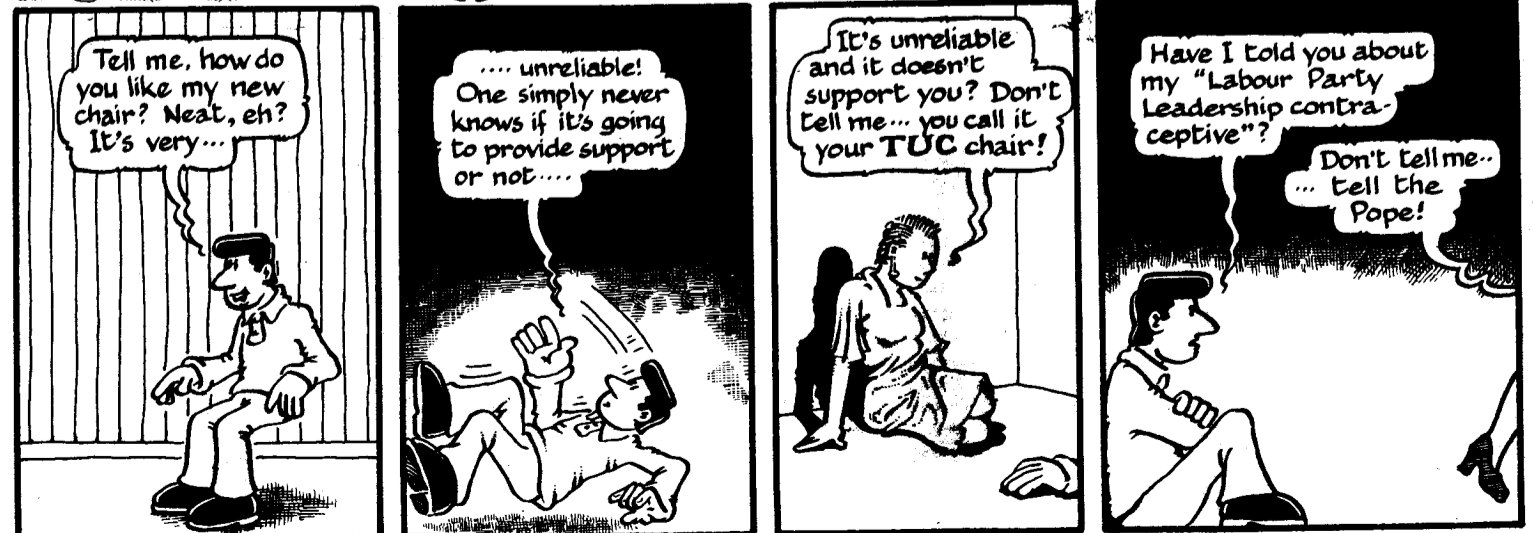
Sharply right

Kinnock, with Hattersley playing a vanguard ideological role, is attempting to take Labour sharply to the right to take advantage of the problems which are brewing for Thatcher. The sole thing on which all forces are united are that Scargillism — that is anything which threatens to bust through

the basic interests of capital — must be isolated and crushed. The different forces involved simply disagree on how it should be done.

One thing is certain. No matter how the miners strike ends now there is going to be no return to stability in British politics. British bourgeois politics had already become fundamentally unhinged with the formation of the SDP and the rise of the Alliance. The effects of the miners strike are only going to deepen the effects of that political recomposition still further.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



#86 2-85 © CORMAC

THE ELEVEN months of the miners' strike has produced the most important development in the British labour movement since the 1920s. For the first time since the general strike in 1926 a mass class struggle current with a class struggle leadership has emerged in Britain. The Scargill leadership of the NUM has demonstrated over a year of the longest mass strike in British history that it is, in Scargill's words 'a leadership which stands and fights.'

The programme on which Scargill stood for President in 1981 was the one which the NUM fought for in 1984/5. That programme, which included: No pit closures other than on grounds of exhaustion and democracy in our union so that conference decisions are carried out, was one which was incompatible with the immediate interests of capitalism.

The *Yorkshire Miner* in December 1981 put the matter squarely. 'You can either elect a leader who is prepared to stand up and be counted on the major issues — job security, pay, hours, protection of earnings, pensions, health, safety and the like — or you take another path. That path is the path of British Leyland... Such a path can never be trodden by miners. We come from a proud and dignified tradition, but over the years so much of our energy has been spent battling on two fronts: with the Coal Board and with the national leadership of our own union. Now, however, at long last we have it in our power to elect a leader who will fight tooth and nail for the men he is privileged to represent. Without question such a man is Arthur Scargill.'

The emergence of this current within the British labour movement, with its long-established tradition of collaboration with capitalism, is an event of truly historic importance. It represents, in the present crisis of British imperialism, a first approximation by the British working class of a leadership confronting the present crisis in the interests of the working class.

It is not surprising that this leadership has earned the hatred of the dominant sections of the labour bureaucracy. They have been as keen as Thatcher to see the defeat of Scargillism, because its class struggle methods are a threat to its policies of collaboration. David Basnett spoke for the dominant sections of the trade union leadership last Wednesday, when he attacked the miners' case and denounced Scargillism.

By Pat Hickey

In fact 'Scargillism' will be the most abiding gain to come out of the miners' strike. For 11 months the miners' strike has been held together not simply by its rank and file but by the Scargill leadership of the NUM. It has mounted the longest mass strike in the history of any imperialist country. It is that which will be remembered when the dust has settled. It is an incredible achievement of class struggle leadership.

No matter what the outcome of the strike, and that still remains to be fought for, the militants and membership of the NUM will not, unlike almost any other strike, return to work feeling they have been betrayed by their union leadership — and they will be right. They will feel betrayed by Willis, Kinnock and the TUC — and they will be right in that too.

For the debate over Scargill and Scargillism in this strike is no academic one. It is an issue of the entire future of the labour movement and the single most important question of orientation for the left in the coming period.

The emergence of Arthur Scargill and the forces he represents within the NUM, and the support the strike has generated, were the *only* way a class struggle leadership in Britain could ever be born — out of the greatest class struggle within Britain for 60 years.

The world would indeed have been a very nice place if a perfectly organised class struggle left wing

Scargill's 'left' critics



across the unions and the Labour Party could have existed prior to the strike. But unfortunately immaculate conception occurs only in mythology. It is precisely *out of* the strike that the first class struggle leadership with a mass base has emerged for 60 years.

The fundamental choice the left has is whether it sees that development as an enormous step forward — in fact as an historic step forward — whether it identifies with it, or on the contrary if it sees what has emerged as some sort of dangerous diversionary development in the class struggle.

Put another way, is Scargillism a banner the left should be proud to take up or not? Does Socialist Action regard itself as a 'Scargillite' paper for example? Or is the Scargill leadership of the NUM something from which the left has to take a substantial distance?

What in fact *has* marked out Socialist Action from the rest of the left during the miners' strike is that it does very consciously regard itself as a Scargillite paper — and far more so than 11 months ago. Its position has been, and is, that what Arthur Scargill and the forces he represents have achieved in this strike is an indelible and wholly positive development in the class struggle. Scargillism will enter as a positive and constitutive element into developments of a left in Britain. It is something to be completely identified with — and this despite the fact that Scargill was and is a left bureaucrat.

Furthermore, given the enormous impact of the strike, there was and is no room for intermediate positions. One is either *for* Scargill and Scargillism — which does not at all preclude taking up important issues

of difference — or one is basically against Scargill.

The fruits of that latter manic sectarian approach are now beginning to appear with all their consequences for a radical disorientation of the left.

Wild

The most wild and complete disorientation on this has of course come from *The Next Step*, journal of the Revolutionary Communist Party. This leads its February issue with the claim that: 'The miners' leaders have abandoned the strike.' Its centre pages, headed 'Not fit to lead', claim: 'Rank and file miners have been left out in the cold. Without leadership they are battling on because they have no choice but to fight. That is how it has been since day one of the dispute.'

The RCP then establishes its revolutionary credentials by restating its support for a ballot and carrying a spirited defence of the Nottinghamshire scabs, who, it claims, have been made 'scapegoats' for the rotten line of the NUM leadership.

If the RCP's is a line carried to lunacy, the Socialist Workers Party has been equally critical, if less consistent. Its initial orientation was to launch vicious attacks on the leadership of the strike — the tone being captured in one article entitled 'Yorkshire puddings' on the Yorkshire area NUM.

By mid-summer however, with its drive to recruit miners to the SWP, *Socialist Worker* had made a sharp turn. It realised the basic feeling in the ranks of the NUM and dropped its attacks on Scargill.

With its 2 February issue however

Socialist Worker slips back into its old line. Its front page warns: 'This is no time for unconditional surrender by the miners' leadership.' The whole issue of the paper is devoted to the lessons of defeat, with the strike almost being referred to in the past tense — while 130,000 miners are continuing the struggle. Such a position is a stab in the back to the strike — and *no* signs of 'unconditional surrender' have been coming from Scargillites at all.

The SWP's rank and filist line has totally blinded it to the possibility of differentiations in the bureaucracy, and the importance of these differentiations for the class struggle. It shares with the RCP the infantile belief that the British working class is really very politically advanced, and that the only obstacle to its advance is the labour bureaucracy.

Benn

The fact that Scargill, Benn, Livingstone and their base is a minority within the working class at this point seems to escape their attention. Thus instead of fighting with the Benn, Scargill, Livingstone leadership and base against the right wing who have betrayed the miners at every step, they divide against this current. This position is sectarian abstention from the real class struggle. Since reality does not conform to the picture of the revolutionary rank and file confronting the bureaucracy so much the worse for reality. Amongst those who have not fallen into this sectarian trap, however, there are equally false positions.

Failing to recognise the fact that

the Scargill leadership is in advance of the overwhelming majority of the working class at this stage, the refusal to recognise the real balance of forces in the labour movement, and the long road ahead before this can be qualitatively changed, leads to such absurdities as the editorial in *Black Dragon* No 4 (the bulletin of the Mineworkers' Defence Committee).

This claims that the balance of forces is such that not only could a 24 hour general strike be delivered on 11 February in the face of TUC hostility, but goes on to set 6 March as the day for beginning an *indefinite general strike*. At the MWDC conference in Sheffield a number of left groups put forward resolutions which demanded a recall TUC to call a general strike. Others demanded that the MWDC set up councils of action, and constitute itself as an alternative 'rank and file' TUC.

The common thread in all of these ultra-left demands is the belief that the working class is really revolutionary now, and needs only the correct call for it to respond.

The reality is that the Scargill wing of the movement is very much a minority, and the Scargill leadership is only the first step in breaking the grip of reformism and class collaboration on the British labour movement. Failure to understand this fact will lead to disastrous mistakes.

The logical consequence of these positions is to fall into the rightist error of the SWP, and conclude that 'we are closer to 1927 than to 1925'. The reverse is the case. We are in the *first* stages of a new phase in the class struggle in Britain. The Benn/Scargill/Livingstone current is the key development in this stage. It is the most advanced mass political current in Britain. It is, in Lenin's phrase, the 'next link in the chain'. Those on the left who fail to grasp that link will miss an historic opportunity in the struggles ahead.

SWP

For the SWP's absurd defeatism — the view that the working class has now suffered a defeat qualitatively equivalent to 1926 — is finally also a product of its failure to understand the nature of the Labour left which has emerged and of the 'Benn-Scargill-Livingstone' current of the Labour Party. If one sees this current as a *right wing* shift in the working class, the development of dangerous illusions in bureaucrats, then the world is bleak indeed. Not only are severe setbacks being suffered in the class struggle, but no one is learning anything from them.

If on the contrary Scargillism is seen for what it is, a major step in the *leftward* movement of the working class, then the world is a very different place. It is historically *inevitable* that a profound radicalisation and politicisation of the working class necessarily starts among a minority. Scargillism is a product of the unevenness of the radicalisation. The first approximation of a class struggle current and leadership. Much greater ones are to come.

Scargillism is a product of the shift of sections of the working class to the left, not of a move to the right. Regrettably the working class will go through far greater struggles, and have to fight against far more devastating defeats than anything seen with the miners, before it shakes off its shackles of reformism.

Finally, ultra-leftism and despair go hand in hand. The real process of the strike has seen the longest mass struggle in British history. One of the greatest strikes in the history of any country. Out of that has emerged the first mass class struggle current and leadership for 60 years.

The entire international and domestic political situation is *radically* different to 1926. Scargillism, and the current in the labour movement it represents, is a wave of the future and not of the past. Failure to understand what an historic step forward it is for the British working class is at the bottom of the present despair gripping the pages of much of what has now become the truly *ultra-left* press.

TORY JUSTICE

Class war prisoners

THE TORY GOVERNMENT are not only using every piece of slander they can find against the miners, they are also punishing them with vicious sentencing in the courts for minor offences. A staggering total of 10,520 miners in England, Scotland and Wales have been arrested in the first 10 months of the strike. The number of miners sent to prison or detention centres so far is 148.

Leon Brittan has said that even when the strike is over miners will be hounded by the police and

the courts. These men and women are class war prisoners. They are not criminals. The labour movement has a duty to rally round to defend them, their families and the cause for which they have fought.

Below we publish a selection of reports from different areas to illustrate the way in which British justice is class justice — no justice at all if you are a striking miner or a woman from the mining communities.

THE SOUTH Yorkshire Defence Campaign is a new campaign comprising miners, miners' wives, members of black organisations, miners' support groups, trade unionists, Labour Party members and women's groups which aims to publicise the treatment of miners and their families at the hands of the police and courts. The extract below is from Bulletin Number 3 of the campaign.

This week (end of January) sees the first trial of miners in Sheffield for unlawful assembly.

Ten defendants arrested at Orgreave on 31 May are to be tried before the Crown Court. If found guilty, they could face a life sentence.

To be arrested for unlawful assembly you could be one of three people gathered together for seemingly 'an unlawful purpose, or a lawful purpose unlawfully carried out'.

In this case it is the way in which they allegedly intended to prevent the coke lorries leaving Orgreave which provoked the charges being brought.

You don't have to do anything. You could be at a meeting.

The charge of unlawful assembly is rarely used. For criminal activity, the police use Section 5 charges (eg threatening behaviour).

Hundreds of miners on picket lines have been picked up under Section 5 on previous days on the same circumstances.

But there are also 600 people who have been charged with unlawful assembly or riot, which is yet more serious.

Riot is defined as, 'tumultuous disturbance of the peace, assembling with a common purpose



... to the terror of the people'.

Anyone who was at Orgreave or who has seen videos will know who was terrorising whom, and who was rioting ... and it wasn't the pickets.

A political decision must have been taken to change the type of charges being brought to try to make an example of the miners.

Case 2:

Robbie Andrews from Cresswell (after spending three months remanded in custody) got 9 months jail for hitting a scab, Paul Spray from Bolsover. The scab actually started the fight but he was not charged.

When Derbyshire miner, Mick Machin hit another scab, Malcolm Wagstaff, he got 16 days

Jailed for picketing

TERRY FRENCH has been sentenced to five years imprisonment in Wandsworth jail, for allegedly assaulting a police officer. Arrested when picketing at Wivenhoe oil terminal in Essex, in an attempt to stop scabs violating TUC policy, he got involved in a fight where a policeman ended up with a broken nose.

The jury wasn't able to come to a decision in the first trial. On re-trial the judge gave him five years! Terry's real crime was being a militant leader of the strike. He led the march from Snowdon pit to Nottingham coalfield early on in the strike. As his wife Liz says in a letter to supporters: 'I know he will carry on the fight for justice inside prison as he did out.'

Islington, Barking and Dagenham, Lambeth, Kensington, Wandsworth Miners' Support Groups, along with Kent NUM have called a demonstration at 1pm outside Wandsworth prison on Saturday 16 February calling for Terry's release. (Tooting Bec tube, buses 49, 249 or 44).



this man the two miners now face the possibility of ten years in prison.

Dave and Chris spent four weeks in prison, locked up for 23 hours a day in London before they were tried. They were told they could only be released if they lived in London.

After 7 weeks they won the right to return home if they agreed to having no further involvement in the dispute and no further contact with miners.

Dave had to give up his position as branch secretary. While Dave was in prison a return to work was being organised at Manton.

Case 5: Branch officials seem to be a particular target for arrest. Ken Moulds, Dinnington's delegate was arrested in mid-January for obstruction after being deliberately picked out and assaulted by the police.

When he shouted to a friend that he had been lifted the friend was ar-

rested with him. Five other branch officials were arrested in the same week.

Case 6:

Three miners Gary Mould, Mick Jones and Willy Bannister, pleaded guilty to the charge of arson in Stoke-on-Trent Crown Court three weeks ago.

Three miners, Raymond Patton, Stephen Lowe and Paul Nixon pleaded not guilty. Five of the miners were sent down for two years each. One miner, Paul Nixon who had pleaded not guilty, admitted in court that he had acted as a 'look out' in the incident, which involved burning a coach at the firm Thompsons which carried scab miners to work.

Why did Paul get off and not the other miners who also pleaded not guilty? Paul had gone back to work.

(All the information from Yorkshire comes from the South Yorkshire Defence Campaign)

'Women are turning political'

LORRAINE JOHNSON is a member of the Bold miners' wives committee. Her speech, reprinted below, was made at a recent Labour Herald meeting in Manchester town hall.

WE started our wives support group six weeks into the strike. There were two reasons for this — support for our men and concern for our families.

We're now 11 months into the strike. We still support our men and we're still concerned for our families.

Women have been working in the kitchens 12 hours a day. Women have worked in the food centre. Women like myself, who'd never been to a meeting before this strike, have been going round speaking at meeting, saying what we think.

No one was more surprised to see women on the pickets than the NUM and our husbands. But we went picketing. Now we stand side by side with the men on the picket lines.

We've been out collecting money: on pub collections, on sponsored walks. We collected money for the children's days out, for

children's parties, for clothes and food.

Everybody's supported us a lot, the trades unionists, the councils. Without the support of the councils we'd have been finished. They helped out with the gas and electric bills, which was what was worrying a lot of people.

We've had our phones tapped, we've suffered police harassment. We had a 13 year old girl arrested — they tried to charge her with soliciting. We've been followed by police bikes — 'chips' we call them — everywhere we go.

Our lads have had windows smashed. It's all over the news when working miners get their windows smashed. Our lads have had their windows smashed — you don't see that in the papers.

We'd never been political till this strike started. When Thatcher came to power she took

milk off our children. We let it go.

When the strike started she took £15 a week off us — now it's £16. Not satisfied with taking milk off the children, they're taking the bread off them as well now.



Lorraine Johnson

Some single lads have not received a penny for 11 months, except for the money we've raised for them. Some of them have got no shoes on their feet.

The children are wearing shoes from last May. That is our next step — to make sure they don't go back to school with cardboard on their feet.

From miners' wives everywhere I want to thank everyone for the

support we've had. Especially before Christmas.

Margaret Thatcher thought that she could use the miners' wives to force a return to work. After 11 months, haven't we proved her wrong?

One woman's husband wanted to go back to work. When the letters came from the NCB she burnt them. When they phoned him up to persuade him to return to work, she told them he was out. That woman fought and fought to keep her husband out on strike.

One good thing to come out of this strike is

women turning political. My father was a steel worker, so I was brought up to vote Labour. But I didn't understand why. All the women voted Labour, not knowing why they were putting that cross on a piece of paper.

Now we know. Now I know what it's like for people who are victimised, for lesbians, gays and blacks who are victimised.

I want to finish off with a poem. It's from the book *Women Against Pit Closure*, and it was written by a woman called Betty, from Darlington:

They tried to starve us out
you were there.
We needed food and donations
you were there.
We needed strength on demonstrations
you were there.
When we needed help to picket
you were there.
Whatever help or task
we only had to ask.
We need not have worried
you were there.
The papers tried to tell us
you weren't there.
Maggie tried to tell us
you weren't there.
Oh where could they be looking,
what did they think they were cooking?
You certainly showed them
you were there.
Words can't express our thanks
for being there.
We will always remember
you being there.
And if you ever need us
you only have to call us
And we can guarantee
we'll be there.

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES NATIONAL MARCH TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Chesterfield — 9 March

Exhibitions ★ Stalls
Street Theatre ★ Speakers Corner

Rally in Saltergate Football Ground, 11.30

For more information contact:
Kate on Chesterfield 79729, Kath on Sheffield 381954

Fidler's Ferry shuts

Fidler's Ferry power station in Lancashire has been slowed down since a week last Thursday due to lack of oil and coal supplies.

This is due to the action of ASLEF and NUR members in the area at Warrington Quay depot and TWGU members in-

side the power station. Colin Lenton from Bold NUM commented 'If all the power workers in this area had followed Fidler's Ferry's lead we would be sitting pretty now. The North West TGWU has been very helpful in giving us support.'

MWDC Conference

No to left ghettos

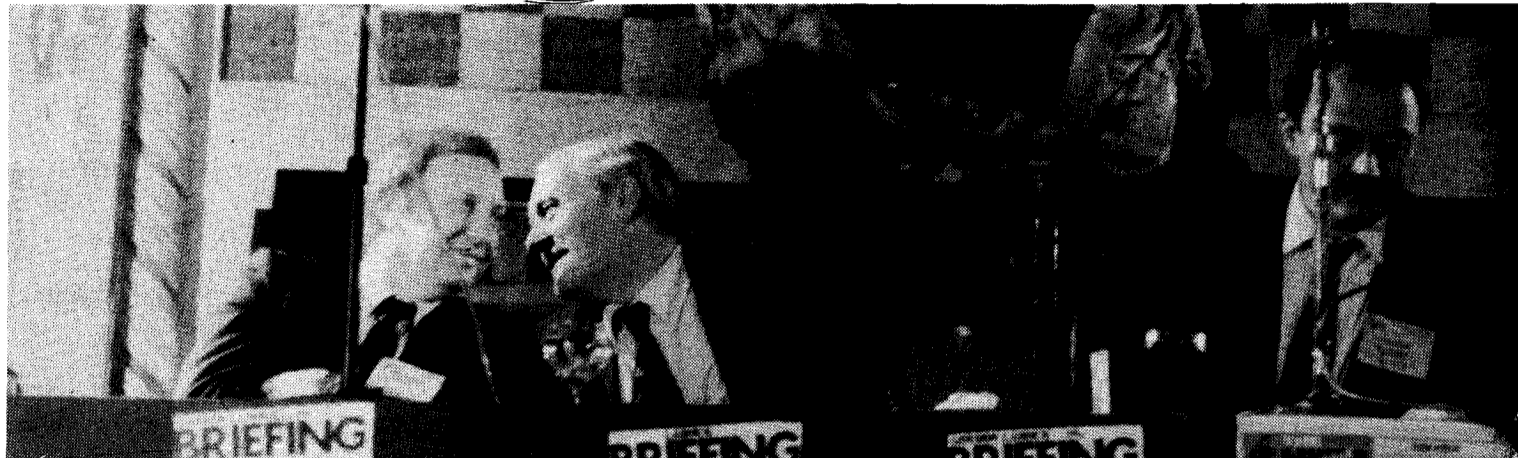
THE MINEWORKERS Defence Committee, established at Labour Party conference in October last year, had a massive potential to boost solidarity with the miners struggle.

Assembling a platform of Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn, Jimmy Knapp and Ken Livingstone, it showed that a powerful alliance was being constructed that could aid the consolidation of a national solidarity movement.

Since that time two lines have been clashing inside the committee about how to go forward.

One was towards the labour left to consolidate those links. One was away from it.

The conference in Sheffield revealed the MWDC going away from those links into a left ghetto. Valeri Coultas reports.



TO UNDERSTAND what happened last weekend in Sheffield it is necessary to know what orientation had been fought for up to that conference.

BLACK DRAGON issue 4 spells out the Chartists' views of what the committee should become.

'We see ourselves as having to perform the functions of an alternative TUC', explains Chris Knight on the page 8 of the bulletin.

In the editorial he suggests that the MWDC not only can but already has organised a general strike.

'We know for certain that we have collected enough official backing from unions with weight to deliver a massive 24 hour general strike on February 11. Through actions in key sectors we can bring much of the country to a halt' (!)

Ignored

This view, around which a whole series of small groups on the left coalesced at Saturday's conference, essentially saw the MWDC as an alternative to the TUC and the Labour Party leaders and to the NUM, as a platform for left phrasemongering giving advice to the NUM about how to run their strike.

There was another view of this committee put

forward by Socialist Action.

It was to build on the gains of Labour Party conference. To see the committee for what it actually was — not an alternative TUC but a co-ordination of the solidarity movement through and alliance primarily with the Labour left and the NUM. This involved playing down the rhetoric and consolidating the alliances the committee could make around practical tasks — like a national demonstration.

But so concerned were the Chartists Tendency to use the committee as a platform for their confused politics that when it came to the key meeting between the Liaison Committee, the South East Region TUC, the Campaign Group, the MWDC on Tuesday 29 January these leftist declarations were able to be used by the stalinists to stop a united front solidarity movement being established.

One key group was only present in small numbers at such an important meeting — the NUM.

Thus the die was cast. The Liaison Committee decided to go ahead with its demonstration through traditional CP channels, refusing to even contemplate changing the day at the request of the NUM members in the meeting.

The leading Labour Party figures in the

On Tuesday, negotiations between the NUM and the NCB are due to begin. We have arranged for simultaneous parallel negotiations to take place, here in County Hall, between the area leaderships of the NUM and those of us in the wider movement who believe we can deliver on February 11th and March 6th. Two delegates chosen by each of nine NUM areas are meeting under the chairmanship of Ken Livingstone, alongside representatives of our committee, the LCDTU, SEERTUC, the Campaign Group of Labour MPs and numerous unions. We know for certain that we have collected enough official backing from unions with weight to deliver a massive 24-hour General Strike on February 11th. Through action in key sectors, we can bring much of the country to a halt.

STRENGTHEN OUR NEGOTIATORS' HAND! EVERY NEGOTIATING SESSION WITH THE N.C.B. MUST BE MATCHED WITH A SIMULTANEOUS PARALLEL SESSION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF TRADE UNION AND LABOUR ORGANISATIONS WHO CAN DELIVER A GENERAL STRIKE IN THE EVENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OVERPLAYING ITS HAND.

BLACK DRAGON MINEWORKERS' DEFENCE COMMITTEE. A collage of text and images including dates (Feb 9, Feb 11, Feb 24, Mar 6) and phrases like 'National Conference of the Mineworkers Defence Committee', 'National Day of Action in support of the Miners Strike', 'National Demonstration in support of the Miners Strike', and 'GENERAL STRIKE'. It also mentions 'SEE page 3 EDITORIAL for details of ROLLING PROGRAMME' and 'SEE page 5 KEN LIVINGSTONE writes to ARTHUR SCARGILL'.

meeting remained silent presumably being unable to defend statements written in their name without their full knowledge or consent.

The editorials of Black Dragon spelled out the public orientation of the committee often deliberately ignoring the advice of committee meetings.

The forces that were attracted to the first solidarity conference, (1,600 people), criticised by some as being a rally,

did not turn up to the second conference (350 people).

And a much narrower layer of the solidarity movement passed resolutions from Newham and Leicester that urged the NUM 'not to compromise on pit closure', and from Coventry and Reading which called for councils of action to be established and the general strike to be called ...

From Basingstoke came the call for a recall TUC to call a general

strike. At this particular stage of the strike a recall TUC is unlikely to win more than the NUM gained in September.

A general strike is therefore not posed and neither therefore is the transformation of the solidarity committees into councils of action.

The way forward for the solidarity movement was always through a practical orientation based on alliances with those fighting the Tories be it the NUM in the coalfields or

the Campaign group in Parliament, not by left declarations against these groups.

The way to put the pressure on the left leaders in the TUC to give more concrete support to the NUM is by developing concrete calls for strike action now around days of action as the 17 January rail strike proved.

The demonstration on 24 February, now called exclusively by the LCDTU, should be built as widely as possible and

the 6 march should be built as a day to defend the cities and to support the miners.

The failure of Saturday's conference to involve broad forces from the Labour left, the NUM and the solidarity movement shows exactly where the politics of the left ghetto can lead you — up a dead end.

The early success of the committee in assembling such an alliance show where the solidarity movement with the NUM has to go to achieve real gains for the miners.

Second Miners' International Solidarity Meeting

An opportunity to meet miners from every coalfield and representatives of the worldwide solidarity movement with the miners.

Saturday 16 February 12 noon

Penrhwi-ceiber Miners' Institute Penrhwi-ceiber Cynon Valley South Wales

Speakers

Dai Davies (South Wales NUM exec) Tower Lodge NUM

Roy Butlin (Coalville NUR)

Lorraine Johnson (Bald Womens Support Group)

Malcolm Pinnegar (Leicester 'Dirty Thirty')

Kay Sutcliffe (Ayselham Women Against Pit Closure)

Anne Jones (South Wales Women Against Pit Closures)

Joe Mohammed (Notts striking miner)

Plus speakers invited: Ernest Mandel and speakers from Japan, Australia, USA, France, Belgium and many other countries.

Evening:

Social with Bar

Transport

Train from Cardiff to Mountain Ash. Minibus shuttle from Mountain Ash to Penrhwi-ceiber

Admittance

£2.50 waged, £1 unwaged, Free for strikers and families Organised by Socialist Action, PO Box 50, London N1. (Write or phone 01-359 8371 for more information).

These coaches are booked to go to the school from Manchester, two from London one of these is starting from Kent. Ring 01-359 8379 for details.

1975 - 1985

NATIONAL ABORTION CAMPAIGN

ten years of fighting for abortion rights for all women

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February 1945 it v the war would en not only in posse: Rumania but also slovakia, Hungary part of Germany.

Influence

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IN February 1985 the National Abortion Campaign will be celebrating ten years of fighting back against the anti-abortionists and for women's abortion rights.

We are planning events all over Britain, including:

- * NATIONAL RALLY AND DEMONSTRATION Glasgow, 16 February
* WEST MIDLANDS CONFERENCE Birmingham, 9 February
* MEETING WITH JO RICHARDSON AT THE HOUSE OF COMMONS London, 4 March

In addition, we are planning two major launches during the celebrations:

- * A new pamphlet 'Abortion: A Black Women's Issue?'
* An exhibition about NAC and the women's movement over the last ten years.

To do all this and more we need support and finance. We are asking you to SPONSOR the Tenth Anniversary Celebrations, and to send us a DONATION towards our special anniversary appeal. (You can do one without the other, of course).

Yes, I/we would like to sponsor NAC's Tenth Anniversary Celebrations. You may use my/our name on publicity material.

Name/Organisation

Address

I/we enclose £ for the Anniversary Appeal Please send/do not send a receipt.

Please return to: NAC, Wesley House, 70 Great Queens Street, London WC2B 5AX

Here we go ... again!

IN November, the London Labour Party women's committee (London Labour Women) put on Here we go, a women's benefit concert for the miners.

The show was a huge success. Tickets were sold out a week before, and £8000 was raised for Women Against Pit Closures.

They will be putting on another concert at the Piccadilly Theatre, on 10 March — to mark both one year of the strike and International Women's Day.

It will be called Here We Go...Again! and will feature Peggy Seeger, Frank Chickens, the Wandsworth Warmers, Shakisha dancers, Maggie Steed, Brig Keenan, Maria Tolly and Unique Patrol.

In the audience will be many women from the mining areas, as well as international delegations who are coming over for the Women Against Pit Closures event the previous day in Chesterfield.

Tickets will again be only £5 (£2 concessions), but the audience is asked to come prepared for a bumper collection, and to bring new children's shoes and gift vouchers from national stores (eg Boots, Marks and Spencer, Co-Op).

Leaflets and posters are available from Janice Muir, London Labour Party, 195 Walworth Road, London SE17 (phone: 01703 6511). For more information about the benefit contact Rachel Lever on 01-278 1341 or 01-251 1773.

PAST WEEK saw the fortieth anniversary of the great conference of Yalta. In February 1945 Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin met to try to determine the shape of Europe after the defeat of Hitler.

According to the accounts which have appeared in the press commemorating the event, Yalta was where an agreement on the post-war division of the world was arrived at. According to the right wing Roosevelt and Churchill 'betrayed' Eastern Europe and delivered it into

the hands of Stalin. For those who believe in the myth of the two 'superpowers' Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin were readily able to agree on a sinister division of Europe.

Yalta supposedly shows that there is no basic contradiction between the USSR and the powers of Western Europe and the United States.

But what really happened at that conference in the Crimea 40 years ago? **JOHN ROSS** looks at the reality behind the myths.



YALTA

Myth and

'I wrote out on a half sheet of paper:
Rumania: Russia 90 per cent — the other 10 per cent.
Greece: Great Britain 90 per cent (in accord with USA) — Russia 10 per cent.
Yugoslavia: 50 per cent — 50 per cent.
Hungary: 50 per cent — 50 per cent.
Bulgaria: Russia 75 per cent — the others 25 per cent.

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all done in no more time than it takes to set down.'

THIS WAS how Winston Churchill described his meeting with Stalin in Moscow in October 1944 which prepared the way for the great conference of Yalta in February 1945. The 'percentages' referred to the degrees of political influence to be exercised after the second world war in the countries of Eastern Europe by the United States, Britain, and their allies on the one side, and the USSR on the other.

Even Churchill appears to have been shocked at the ease of the whole operation and added to his Soviet host: 'Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an off-hand manner? Let us burn the paper. "No, you keep it", said Stalin.'

Churchill never had any reason to be disappointed in Stalin not keeping to the agreement which he had made. In December 1944 British troops in Greece, under General Scobie, began their attack on the positions of the Greek Communist Party — a country in which the USSR was supposed to have only a 10 per cent interest. Churchill recorded: 'Stalin adhered strictly and faithfully to our agreement of October and in all the long weeks of fighting the communists in the streets of Athens not one word of reproach came from *Pravda* and *Izvestia*.'

Further west, where Churchill had taken it for granted British, American and French interests would prevail, the story was the same.

In Italy an enormous working class insurrection liberated the northern part of the country in April 1945. Luigi Longo, one of the central leaders of the Italian Communist Party, described the situation in terms which have never been challenged:

'At the beginning of April more than 300,000 partisans began fighting in northern Italy and liberated one after the other the towns of Bologna, Modena, Parma, Piacenza, Genoa,

Turin, Milan, Verona, Padua and the whole region of Venice before the allied troops arrived. The partisans saved the industrial installations and lines of communication which the Germans were preparing to destroy, took tens of thousands of prisoners, and succeeded in capturing considerable quantities of arms.

'Everywhere the partisans set up national liberation committees as the authority and executed the main leaders of Italian fascism ... For 10 days, until the arrival of the allied troops and authorities, the national liberation committees directed the whole political, social and economic life of northern Italy.'

Longo also described what happened as the American and British armies began to arrive in northern Italy: 'When the allied authorities reached the north with their troops, they began to remove from important posts the men of the resistance appointed by the national liberation committees, and replaced them with officials from the old (fascist) administrative apparatus. And the Rome government, as soon as the allies handed over to it control of the whole country, speedily replaced all the people appointed to responsible positions by the national liberation committees with alleged "specialists", ie officials of the old administrative apparatus.'

The partisan detachments were disarmed by the allied armies and finally the National Liberation Committee for Northern Italy was itself dissolved. Throughout this entire process the Soviet representative on the allied consultative commission for Italy made not one single protest at what was taking place.

In France the pattern was similar. Large areas of the country in 1944 were liberated or dominated by the resistance. As de Gaulle admitted in his *Memoirs*: 'The leadership of the fighting elements was in the hands of the Communists'.

De Gaulle therefore acted swiftly to re-establish bourgeois order and as head of the French government on 27 October 1944 signed a decree dissolving the resistance militias. He followed this on 6 November by signing a decree permitting the return to France of the French Communist Party leader Maurice Thorez. On his return to France on 27 November Thorez issued the slogan 'One state, one police force, one army.'

The Communist Party began issuing instructions for the militias to disband. On 2 December de Gaulle went to Moscow, met Stalin, and signed a Franco-Soviet treaty.

The meeting of Churchill and Stalin in October 1944, and the Yalta conference of February 1945, in short at first glance, cemented in place the modern division of Europe. The eastern part of Europe was formally ac-

cepted by the British in 1944 and early 1945. The Soviet sphere of influence was to be kept as we will see, the capitalist economy of Europe was not carried by Stalin in turn guaranteeing capitalism in Europe.

with a poem. It's from the book *Women Against Pit Closure*, and it was written by a woman called Betty, from Darlington:

**WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES
NATIONAL MARCH TO CELEBRATE
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

Survival Chesterfield — 9 March

In Asia a similar limited, pattern was by the USSR to enter Japan. America and took it for granted maintain their predicament — and the French th

Exhibitions ★ Stalls
Pet Theatre ★ Speakers Corner
Saltergate Football Ground, 11.30
For more information contact:
Chesterfield 79729, Kath on Sheffield 381954

supported the rule in China. It is this world that press articles celebrating the ta.

rhetoric — by the left — Point of this ignored. Yalta reflected the 'coexistence' of the states on the bureaucracy to reverse is the suj

ere imposed by the relation at the time. We had no gain to them





YALTA

d reality



in the intermediate or long run. The Soviet bureaucracy under Stalin, in turn, was *incapable* of maintaining the accords it had reached at Yalta. No sooner had the 'accords of Yalta' been arrived at than they began to break up — although the speed of the break up differed very greatly in the different parts of the world. If Yalta set the seal on the end of World War II then the history of the post-war world may precisely be seen, from a certain angle, as the 'break up of Yalta'.

In order to see what is involved in this process, consider what actually would have been the shape of the post-war world if the agreements made in October 1944 and at Yalta had been adhered to. First the only countries to which Churchill acceded a majority Soviet interest were Bulgaria and Rumania. Yet by October 1944 and

February 1945 it was already clear that the war would end with Soviet troops not only in possession of Bulgaria and Rumania but also of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, and a large part of Germany.

Influence

In short the first demand of Churchill was that the Soviet Union actually *give up* its influence, and hand over to the United States and Britain, a large part of what it had taken in the war. In return for this the US and Britain offered precisely nothing — and indeed insisted that Stalin aid them by stabilising capitalism in Greece, Italy, France and Western Europe.

Furthermore the British and Americans made it quite clear that they

accepted Soviet influence in Eastern Europe as a purely temporary development. When on 11 May 1945 all US lease-lend supplies to the USSR were abruptly cut off this was explicitly explained by United States Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs Will Clayton as being due to the fact that: 'the lend-lease programme for the USSR should be so flexible that it could be cut off at any time.' The US War Department noted the decision as, 'a political weapon in connection with difficulties in Central Europe.'

US President Truman, preparing the Potsdam summit conference of July 1945, explained his policy towards the USSR succinctly when he said: 'Unless they (the USSR) did something to remedy that situation (in Eastern Europe) promptly they faced extensive starvation.' Truman argued that he had 'the cards in American hands' and that he proposed, 'to play them as American cards.' He concluded that, 'We didn't have to go to the Russians for anything and the Russians very definitely had to come to us for many things.' The use of the atomic bomb against Japan in August 1945 was intended by the Americans as a further pressure on the USSR.

The first successful test of the atom bomb, on 16 July in New Mexico, itself already hardened significantly the American position at the Potsdam conference. Churchill noted of Truman after he had received the news of the test that: 'He was a changed man. He told the Russians just where they got on and off and generally bossed this entire meeting.'

By January 1946 the American attempt to secure its positions in Eastern Europe was well underway. Despite the agreements of Stalin and Churchill the US government refused the recognition of the Bulgarian and Rumanian governments 'unless they comply with our requirements.' On 5 January Truman outlined that Russia must be faced 'with an iron fist'.

Rhetoric

Despite US rhetoric the situation it found itself confronted with in Western and Eastern Europe in 1945-46 was very far from being directly to its advantage. Although by mid-1945 the Communist Parties' policies in Western Europe had allowed the rebuilding of some political stability, and broken any immediate post-war revolutionary breakthrough, nevertheless complete economic dislocation and social instability continued to exist in most of Europe.

Agricultural production in 1945 in the European continent was only half its pre-war level. Even in 1946 100 million people in Europe were receiving less than biologically minimum rations. More than three quarters of the major bridges in Western Germany had been destroyed. Industrial production in France in 1945 was only one third of its pre-war level and only thirty five per cent of its railway locomotives had survived the war. As the pro-American Walter Laquer accurately put it in his *Europe since Hitler*, 'The European economy in 1945 had ceased to be viable. Recovery in 1946 was followed by a new crisis in 1947.'

In Eastern Europe the destruction was even greater than the west. Poland had lost one in five of its population. Yugoslavia had lost 10 per cent of its people. Soviet losses are estimated at 20 million dead. Germany had lost five million people.

Furthermore, in addition to the threat of political upheaval due to the continuing economic crisis in Europe, the United States was threatened by a mass movement in its own army. American troops in Europe demonstrated for an immediate return to the US. United States forces in the Pacific reached the point of near mutiny to secure the same demands.

In this political situation the chief weapon adopted by the United States to attempt to secure its goals in Eastern

Europe was economic blackmail — coupled with a relaunching of remilitarisation as soon as the political situation permitted.

Already in January 1945 the United States had refused a Soviet request for a \$6 billion loan. Later in 1945 the Americans 'lost' a similar request for a \$1 billion loan. The US government made it known that it would only agree to these loans if the USSR agreed to 'work cooperatively with us on international problems in accordance with our standards.'

When in June 1947 the conference to commence Marshall Aid to Europe was held the Soviet Union participated in the conference and proposed that each country draw up a recovery plan to discuss with the United States. The US refused point blank and insisted that the plan must be adopted only on a Europe-wide basis, i.e. that Eastern Europe be considered with Western Europe and that the United States would be able to determine policy in both.

As the American ambassador to Moscow, General Smith, put it the Soviet's were: 'confronted with two unpalatable alternatives ... to refrain from participation in the Paris conference would be tantamount to forcing the formation of such a (western) bloc.' If on the other hand they attended the Paris conference and accepted Marshall Aid 'they would create the possibility of a certain amount of economic penetration ... among the (Soviet) satellite states.'

In short while Stalin kept faithfully to his part of the agreements at Yalta the United States and Britain had no intention whatever of keeping to theirs. The destruction of the capitalist economies by the Soviet Union after 1947 was a direct response to the attempt of the United States to economically undermine them through political threats and economic pressure.

The one major move by Stalin which clearly went beyond anything established at Yalta, the coup d'état carried through by the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, similarly came only after the United States, Britain and their allies had made it quite clear by the Marshall Plan that they intended to overthrow everything agreed at the end of World War II. The Soviet leadership, quite rightly, had not the slightest intention of allowing a rerun of World War II — only this time with a nuclear armed United States on its Western border instead of the German army.

In short, it is *false* to see Yalta as somehow a stable agreed 'division of the world' between the imperialist states and the Soviet leadership. It was the exact opposite — an unstable temporary agreement which was imposed by the relation of forces of the time and which imperialism would have attempted to overthrow if it had the chance. Stalin intended to stick to his part of the agreement — and did so extremely faithfully until 1947.

The US and Britain had no intention whatever of sticking to their side. Indeed *until this day* they have never abandoned the perspective of the restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe — as Ronald Reagan and Caspar Weinberger have graciously reminded us recently.

Yalta was a temporary equilibrium created by the clash of two completely contradictory and opposed class forces. On the one side was the non-capitalist workers' state of the USSR with its allies in the working class of Eastern and Western Europe. On the other side were the great imperialist powers of the United States, Britain and France. The division of Europe was not the product of a negotiated 'agreement' between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy but the result of an enormous clash of class forces — a clash that continues to the present day in Europe.

Behind Yalta lay not Churchill and Stalin but the greatest class struggle of the entire twentieth century. The Second World War.

AT THE MOMENT Eritrea is a northern province of Ethiopia. Its people have been engaged in an armed struggle for independence for 23 years, the longest war in Africa.

Eritrea has a coastline along the Red Sea. It lies across the sea from Saudi Arabia and has borders with the Sudan, Ethiopia and Djibouti. At its south end, it is close to the Indian Ocean. It is these strategic interests that have led first to the US, then the Soviet Union, backing Ethiopia's war against the Eritreans. That war has killed well over half a million people, the majority Ethiopian, and has displaced over three-quarters of a million Eritreans.

It was after the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal, which made the Red Sea of such importance to rival imperialist powers, that the modern history of Eritrea began. The British were established in Aden, and encouraged Italian imperialist interests to counter the French in Djibouti. In the 1880's the Italians ousted the Egyptians from Eritrea, had their occupation recognised by the Ethiopian emperor in an 1889 treaty, and by 1890 had declared their territory a colony — they then gave it its present name, which means 'red'.

They broke the treaty, tried to expand further into Ethiopia. They were defeated in 1896 by the Ethiopians in the historic Battle of Adowa, and forced to retreat to their new colony.

This is seen as the start of a process which created Eritrea as a political unit, as the colonialists built roads, two railways, two ports (which even today are the only ports in Eritrea or Ethiopia), factories and towns, and joined together parts of the nomadic desert west with the settled peasant highlands.

In 1941, the Italians were defeated by the British and the Eritrean resistance movement. A typical example of British trickery towards the people they now controlled was the different leaflets distributed by British intelligence during World War II. In one leaflet the Eritrean soldiers were urged to desert the Italians and join the British, and were given promises that they would be allowed to choose which form of government they wanted.

Another leaflet, distributed this time to the civilian population, was written by Haile Selassie himself. They were told that Selassie had come to restore the independence of Ethiopia, including Eritrea, 'whose people henceforth will dwell under the shade of the Ethiopian flag'. Until his overthrow in 1974, Selassie remained unbending in his attitude to Eritrea as an integral part of the Ethiopian empire. Many Eritreans increasingly saw it as another power seeking to regain its former colony.

A British military administration of Eritrea existed from 1941-49, and British interests predominated.

Global role

By 1949 the four Allies — Britain, USSR, US and France — had failed to reach agreement on Eritrea's future. Thereafter the US began to take over from Britain in playing a global anti-communist role, including within Africa and the Middle East.

Selassie granted the US a communications facility in the Eritrean capital Asmara in exchange for lend-lease aid. The Americans were looking for a stable, unified, firmly anti-Soviet Ethiopia under its wing.

Within 10 years, with the US and other Western powers sitting back and doing nothing Selassie had managed to whip up sectional interests in Eritrea, violate civil and political rights, crack down on opposition, then ban all parties except the Unionists. Finally he engineered a puppet assembly which voted to dissolve itself and integrate Eritrea fully in Ethiopia. By September 1962 this was done.

The opposition to this within Eritrea, so ruthlessly suppressed in the 1950s, refused to die. The armed struggle began.

The history of the Eritrean libera-

Africa's longest war

THE ETHIOPIAN famine continues to grab the headlines. But behind the starvation lies Africa's longest struggle for national independence. PAUL HIGHFIELD looks at the roots of Eritrea's fight for freedom.



ABOVE: Freedom fighters in Shael province, Eritrea



BELOW: mass exodus of Eritreans

Photos: EPLF INFORMATION DEPARTMENT

with the ELF-PLF still carrying on in its mainly diplomatic role.

The support the Eritreans have received at different periods is largely the result of whether or not the country concerned supports Ethiopia, rather than any full-hearted support for Eritrean self-determination. The US and Britain, want a stable, unified extended Ethiopian regime for strategic and security reasons. Now that the USSR has use of the two Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa for its navy, and thus a route from the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean, so does the Soviet Union.

Until 1975, the PLO, Libya and South Yemen backed the ELF, but then switched their support to the Derg, whilst Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the Gulf states continued to back the Eritreans.

Indeed, the *Morning Star* in its 5 November editorial goes so far as to state that the Eritrean cause is reactionary largely because of the sources of its support. This is plainly absurd.

Spectacular attack

Perhaps the British CP would care to analyse the USSR, and Cuba, from a similar standpoint, given that for a long time they supported the Eritrean's cause and have now switched allegiance, even though the Eritrean position has remained exactly the same?

By 1984 the EPLF was once more in a strong military position, launching a spectacular attack on the Ethiopian air force at Asmara airport, when one-third of the latter's Soviet air power was destroyed. May saw a major battle on the Red Sea coast, with a 15,000 strong Ethiopian battalion defeated. The EPLF has now pushed further south to re-occupy areas it held in '77-78. However, there are recent reports of renewed Soviet arms shipments and a possible new Ethiopian Red Star offensive.

Clearly a military solution is impossible — the Eritreans will not give up their fight.

Over the years the EPLF have set up mass associations of workers, women, peasants, youth, students and small traders, these bodies electing from their own members the 'People's Assembly' with responsibility for civil justice and economic affairs. Price controls and a network of cooperative stores have greatly helped the poor.

Over 80 per cent of Eritreans are still rural dwellers, 30 per cent of these nomads. Land reform has proceeded vigorously in most areas — more slowly in ex-ELF areas where there is opposition from landlords and rich peasants — with access to land for all.

Women now have the right, for the first time in most cases, to own land, and they take a far more central role in economic life: ploughing the land and crop threshing for the first time too. One-third of the EPLF fighters are women.

Currently the EPLF control only two towns of significant size, and in the rest — dominated by the Ethiopian military — they work underground.

It's up to us to make sure that Eritrea ceases to be Africa's forgotten war as well as its longest.

Many of the captured Ethiopian soldiers, most of whom are unwilling conscripts, have come over to the Eritrean side. Many thousands more are held in unguarded camps. Some who did escape in the past were executed on return to Ethiopia. This demonstrates the lack of support for the genocidal war within Ethiopia itself. The regime faces opposition from several liberation fronts, the largest of which, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, has very close links with the EPLF.

Prospects for a political settlement seem distant, with rival imperialist and Soviet interests predominating.

● **The Eritrea Support Committee (UK) has groups in London, Manchester, Glasgow, Sheffield, Birmingham and Liverpool. Write to: Eritrea Support Committee, BCM Box 865, London WC1 6XX.**

tion movement is complicated, not only because of often-shifting support from various foreign states but also because of the bitterness and civil war between the movements themselves. During the 1960s and '70s there were three main groups: the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the Eritrean Liberation Front-Peoples Liberation Forces (ELF-PLF), and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which is now the only movement with military forces inside Eritrea.

The EPLF was born out of opposition within the ELF in the late '60s to their leadership, the way the civilian population was treated, and the socially divisive way in which the guerrillas were organised by regional and religious origin. Three groups united under the slogans: democracy for the fighters, leadership in the field, and unity of the forces.

Both fronts were committed to a national democratic revolution, with peasants and workers as the vanguard both had opposition groupings within

them which, commentators state, were liquidated by the respective fronts; the EPLF has aimed to transform the social structure, sweep away old barriers and alter political consciousness. The ELF has in the main conserved traditional social and political patterns.

Civil war

In spite of the ELF declaring civil war on the EPLF, the two fronts at various stages moved slowly towards unity on certain questions, and by 1977-78 over 80 per cent of the territory was under the control of Eritrean forces. The EPLF offered to arrange a cease fire if a free referendum were held to decide Eritrea's future.

Since 1974 the Ethiopians had been under a new military regime, the Derg; they were now led by Colonel Mengistu and heavily supported by the Soviet Union, East Germany, and to a lesser extent Cuba (which had previously supported in principle the

Eritrean cause). Mengistu refused to listen and launched a major offensive in 1979.

The USSR has used the region to experiment with horrific weaponry, including cluster bombs, booby trap bombs, napalm, and has backed Ethiopian specialist murder squads. Were it not for USSR support, the Eritreans would undoubtedly have gained full liberation.

In 1980 the ELF broke ranks. It started dealing separately with the Derg, whilst simultaneously attacking EPLF positions, and blocking their land reform programme. Various attempts at negotiated settlements failed, and the Ethiopians launched Operation Red Star, with over 100,000 troops, to try and eradicate the Eritreans. It failed.

Like all their other offensives, in spite of Soviet military officers in the field and the best Soviet weapons. By 1982 the EPLF had pushed back the ELF into the Sudan and disarmed them leaving it the only movement with fighting forces inside Eritrea,

Target Labour Government

The Target Labour Government conference takes place this coming weekend in Birmingham.

Re-selection for Labour MP's is well off the ground in many constituencies. Women MP's and black MP's are still likely to be highly under-represented in safe Labour seats as local parties stick to the traditional bias towards white men.

How should women and the left tackle this problem? Anne Pettifor's views are reprinted from the January issue of *Labour Briefing*. Jude Woodward replies for *Socialist Action*.

More women MPs

FEMINISTS in the Labour Party wanting to work exclusively to advance the interests of the women of our class, face major obstacles.

The reason for these obstacles is self-evident: the Labour Party is a men's party.

Any feminist working therein needs first to serve the interests of men who exercise power within our movement — before securing authority to advance the interests of women.

Thus most Labour Party feminists subordinate their work for women, channelling their energies instead into securing the support and authority of powerful men.

However, although Labour women accept as pre-conditions the constraints imposed on them by their membership of a men's party (and they do this because they recognise the Labour Party as the only democratic political force capable of advancing the interests of our class as a whole) — there is no reason for feminists to abandon completely the task of advancing the interests of the majority of working people.

All this has a bearing on the subject of women and their links with a campaign set up to advance left wingers, women and blacks in the forthcoming round of parliamentary selections — Target Labour Government.

The promotion of women parliamentary candidates, committed to advancing the interests of working class women, has been the foremost political objective of Labour Women's Action Committee.

WAC therefore welcomed the support of TLG in this objective.

However, it was not long before this worthy campaign came under the influence of those who believe that it is not sufficient to support women and black candidates, but that these candidates have to submit to tests to determine their position on certain policy matters.

A series of policy workshops and discussions followed: these differed markedly from the debate around the 1981 GLC manifesto — which had, after all, taken place within the democratic forums of the London Labour Party.

There can only be one purpose for these discussions, and that is the development of a particular line of policy on a

range of issues, followed by the testing of candidates to determine their suitability for support by the group around TLG.

For women the implications are straightforward: we will once again be expected to jump hoops and overcome hurdles — in order to prove our acceptability to a group of (mainly) white men — who have it in their power to organise for the candidatures of women. The same will apply to blacks.

It is my conviction that women and blacks will fail these tests; will stumble over hurdles and knock down hoops — and that white men will be justified (once again) in maintaining the status quo: the representation of women's and black interests by — white men!

Clumsy

In the selection process candidates undergo gruelling, if clumsy and inept, tests to determine their political acceptability to the constituency in question.

Any person aspiring to a candidature, and not carrying the weighty baggage of labour movement credentials awarded to those who have the time, mobility and approval of the men that run this party, knows full well how gruelling a test the selection process can be.

To add to this yet another test of acceptability — this time to a small group without a democratic mandate, can only be described as arrogant.

It is more than this: it is another block to women and blacks. These groups do not need to overcome any more hurdles to prove themselves acceptable to

the white men that control this party.

On the contrary, they need genuine and hard-worked for support to deal with the existing, quite formidable hurdles.

Women are quite familiar with the process whereby they create for themselves (through struggle) a small political space, only to find it being colonised by well-meaning, left-wing men.

This will happen in the forthcoming selection process: women who have made an effective case within the party for an increase in the representation of women's interests, and blacks who have done the same, will be overtaken by white men who will nobly volunteer to advance the interests of these groups; who will convince

THE OPENING of a new round of reselections has focussed attention on Labour's pathetic record in promoting women and blacks as parliamentary candidates, especially in safe Labour seats.

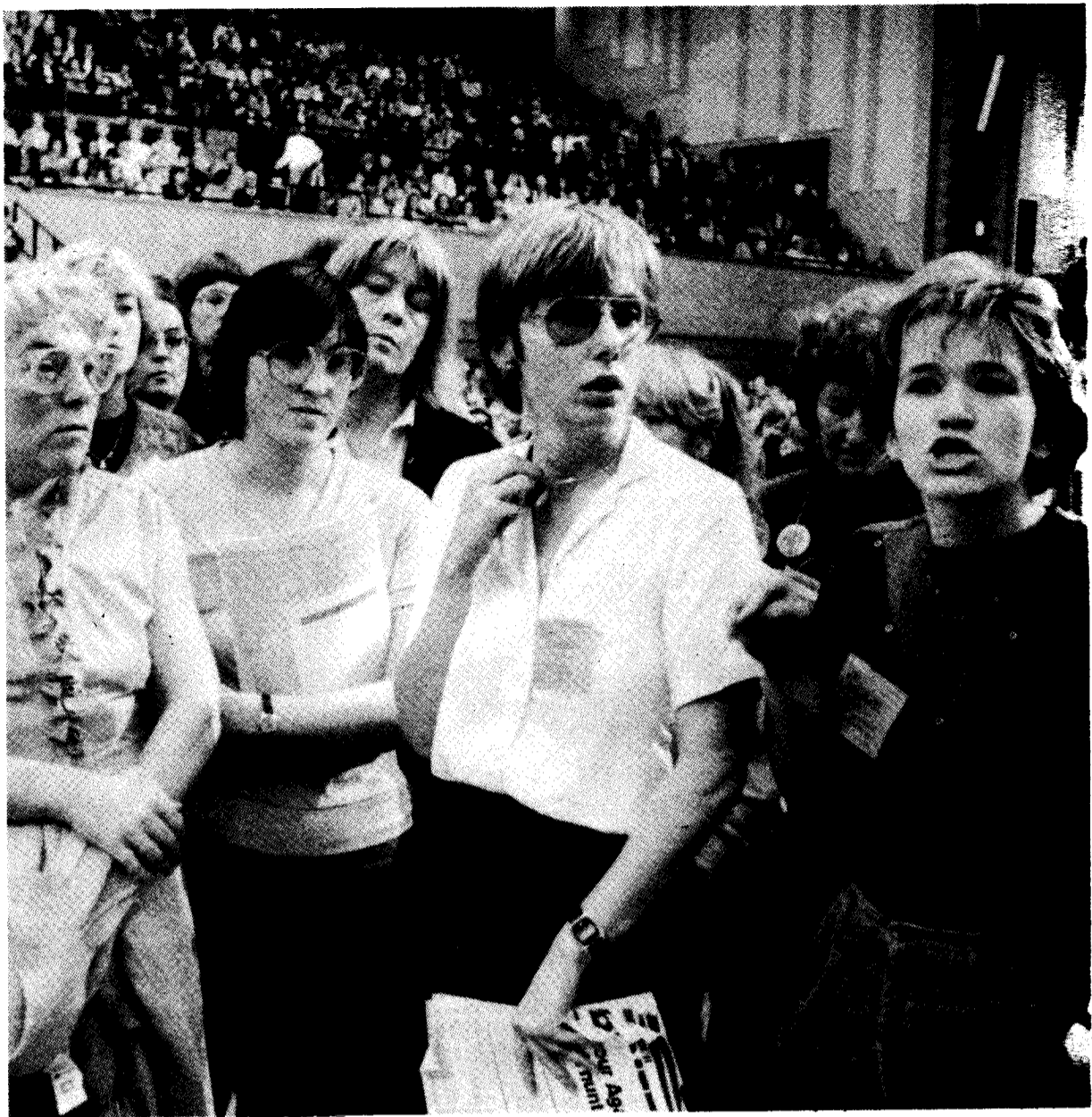
The Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC), and the Black Section Steering Committee have been in the vanguard of the fight for positive action to overcome this. And important advances have been made.

In most constituencies it is now impossible to discuss reselection without at least considering the question of women and black candidates.

But of course ritual knee jerks and fighting talk don't actually get more women or blacks into parliament, so the pressure is now on to turn words into action.

On women, the debate about what is to be done has focussed centrally on the polemic between Ann Pettifor of WAC, and Target Labour Government, with the issues being aired in *Briefing*, *Labour Herald*, *City Limits* and, most recently, *Tribune*.

It is unfortunate that the debate has centred on 'for or against' Target Labour Government, for the issues involved go a great deal deeper than this. Many of us who support



The dream ticket is no dream for Labour women

many on the left of their commitment to women's and black rights; and furthermore will argue their ability to advance these interests more effectively than these groups themselves could be expected to do.

These men will be hard left, theoretically well-developed men, but white men all the same they will be.

Feminists in the Labour Party, well schooled in subordinating their interests to those of men, should resist these moves. We should, politely, thank those male feminists volunteering their services on our behalf, and refuse their overtures.

Now is the time for all good feminists to come to the aid of the Labour Party, and to organise,

autonomously, the support women candidates need.

The Labour Women's Action Committee has already circulated briefings to its members and is drawing up a list of potential women candidates for circulation to parties. We need to do more: to raise funds for women on the parliamentary circuit in need of travel and

childcare expenses; to organise workshops on procedures, and to exchange best practice.

● Women wishing to support our national campaign to advance the candidatures of women, should write to the Secretary, Judy Sadler, at 56 Milton Road, London SE24.

Women will not fail the test

But Ann Pettifor's response to her critics in the latest issue of *Tribune* falls into a serious error. She suggests that raising the question of Ireland as such a policy touchstone is simply a manoeuvre to exclude women from selection.

Campaign

The idea that raising the vital issue of Ireland excludes women simply does not stand up to the facts. The Labour Women's conference has adopted the most progressive policy on Ireland in the whole British labour movement, and it was Labour women who spearheaded the fight on Ireland in defence of the Armagh women into the last Labour Party conference. Rather than excluding women, raising Ireland is more likely to make life difficult for a whole number of so-called left men.

So what is really at stake in the debate?

Reselection is upon us and women and blacks are absolutely determined that this time round they will not be excluded. Unfortunately the signs at pre-

sent do not suggest that the entire left is really as determined as it says it is to promote women and blacks.

There is a real backsliding already, more clearly seen in the editorial in *Labour Herald* of the week ending 27 January, which polemicalised on the grave danger to the movement of promoting women and blacks who hadn't been rigorously tested as to their attitude on the 'big class issues'.

Economism

Firstly this revealed a retreat into the kind of economism that declares that only the 'bread and butter' issues are the class issues, and issues of sexism and racism are not. And secondly it is simply bizarre to argue that the main danger confronting the Labour Party is a huge influx of right wing blacks and women into parliament.

Such polemics do not give women confidence that their interests will be upheld by at least some sections of the left.

Target Labour Government must make its position absolutely clear,

which will go a long way to quelling the fears and suspicions currently rife in WAC, even among those who voted for WAC to sponsor TLG.

Support

Firstly TLG must make it clear that it supports WAC's demand for at least one woman on every shortlist. Secondly it must go further than this and in some constituencies argue for all-women or all-black shortlists, including in safe seats.

Finally, it should actively promote WAC's list of candidates, who wish to receive Target Labour Government sponsorship, and put resources into helping them find constituencies where they stand a good chance of selection.

The left can say what it likes, but if all its campaigning efforts then go into finding seats for a small number of women, women will be forced to conclude that, as at every point in the past, we will only make progress and gain power through relying on our own strength. And our so-called allies will be viewed with a great amount of suspicion.

EXT TO the miners' strike, the attack on local government is the major question facing the working class. Following the Birmingham Local Government Conference the battle lines have been drawn.

Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin has given a clear answer to anyone who thought that the best course was to strike a deal with the Tories on the rate-cap proposals of the 1984 Rates Act.

He has flatly refused to discuss with the 25 Labour-controlled councils who will be worst hit by the proposals. In particular, he has stated that there was 'no prospect of our being able to accede to your request to abandon the penalty/target system and set aside the 1984 Rates Act.'

Neil Kinnock and John Cunningham have set out to sabotage the fight in advance. They have already proposed any illegal action on the part of Labour councils, arguing that Labour groups should stay in office and soften the blow.

Jenkin has made clear that softening the blow will mean administering the Tory cuts. Last July, when this issue was first discussed, only three Labour groups had discussed the question of refusing to make a rate. Now the majority of rate-capped councils are committed to this course, and it is conference policy to defy the law to defend jobs and services.

The right in the Party are preparing to carry out the same kind of betrayal of the local government struggle they carried out on the miners. Some councils will take the Kinnock road, but most are prepared to fight. Below, we look at two councils, Birmingham and Manchester and their different strategies.

No gays! No rates!

IN SEPTEMBER the Tory-controlled Rugby council deleted sexual orientation from their equal opportunities policy and declared this to mean a de facto ban on gay people. Since then, the Tories have been on the run, pursued by a partnership between the gay community and the Labour movement.

The council certainly did not expect the consequences of their action to be:

- the biggest demonstration ever seen in Rugby, with over 1000 people (the largest demonstration before that was 47 which included the cops!);
- constant picketing of council meetings, organised by Rugby NALGO and the local Labour Party;
- 72 per cent of the local population opposed to the ban, and the local paper joining in condemnation of the council.

Faced with this pressure, the local Tory Party is in disarray.

They have followed two courses. First a ban on all further discussion of

this issue till June. They called an emergency council meeting to pass this unprecedented decision in January.

Second they are now saying that they never have, nor will they ever, discriminate against 'homosexuals'.

This public rhetoric was simply exposed by NALGO's demand that, if that was the case, they should include the term 'homosexual' in the equal opportunities policy. The Tories turned this down.

By Frank Elvy

In response, the 'Stop the Lesbian and Gay Ban' have called a mass lobby of Rugby council's budget meeting on Wednesday 27 February. Our slogan will be: no gays, no rates.

Further, the campaign is meeting with NALGO officials to discuss what action they can take. At the end of the day NALGO's position will be crucial to the outcome of this campaign.

● Assemble outside Rugby town hall at 6.30pm on Wednesday 27 February for the Stop the Lesbian and Gay Ban picket. Bring your banners.

THE SAFE Labour seat of Ealing-Southall has shot to national prominence. Veteran MP Syd Bidwell is the object of a vigorous campaign to replace him with a black candidate at the next election.

Unfortunately, the way in which this campaign has been carried out so far has given plenty of ammunition to Bidwell and his supporters, enabling them to threaten the local party with NEC intervention. It is in this aspect, rather than the rightful demand of Southall's black community for a black MP, which has brought recent media attention to the constituency.

At the June 1983 election Bidwell's majority increased. This was due solely to the loyalty of the large Asian community which has shown on the streets and at the ballot box its opposition to Tory policies.

Battle for Southall

From its heroic battles against the fascists and the state in 1979 (when Blair Peach was killed), to the strike action welcoming the People's March for Jobs, and now a magnificent unstinting solidarity with the miners, the Asian community has shown its class loyalty.

By Peter Purton, Ealing-Southall

Now the demand is being raised for the Labour Party to respond by choosing one of its number to sit in parliament. In order to win this fight there has been a mass recruitment drive in three central wards.

They now have between them 1900 members and have elected 45 Asian

Manchester

Fight the Tory axe

MANCHESTER city council is among those Labour-controlled authorities hardest hit by the Tory local government axe. It is not a rate-capped authority, but is severely affected by overspending penalties. The council recently launched its fightback campaign at a public meeting.

This fightback begins after a protracted battle by right wing councillors to keep the left out of the Labour group. After many months of delay, the left are now in control.

DUNCAN EDWARDS asked **GRAHAM STRINGER**, newly-elected leader of the council, about the campaign.

What place in the campaign does the petition have?

Our petition will show the government the measure of our support and will explain to the people of Manchester what the issues are. It will help increase our support.

We already have the support from Manchester people. Over 60 per cent of people voted Labour. What we are doing is explaining what is going on, what is happening week by week.

What are the developments that took place recently at the meeting of the local authorities under attack?

We demanded a meeting with Patrick Jenkin on the basis of resolutions that had been passed by the councils — the authorities weren't asking to meet Jenkin to talk about the details of the Rates Act, we were ignoring the details of the Act.

The resolutions passed by councils effectively asked for the suspension of the Rates Act, for the abolition of targets and penalties, for a lifting of the rate limitations on the rate-capped authorities, and for the restoration of the Rate Support Grant that's been taken away from local authorities.

There has been a lot of discussion on specific tactics. Is there now a unity on tactics to be employed?

The basic strategy is simple: no cuts in services. The specific tactics will however depend upon the specific situation the local authority finds itself in.

It depends entirely on what the financial situation is, and the legal situation. Basically a majority of rate-capped authorities are going for a tactic of not setting a rate.

There's been a tremendous struggle for accountability and democracy in the Manchester party. Is this now resolved? Can we count on the whole of the Labour group?

Well, there are 79 Labour councillors, 99 councillors all told. I wouldn't guarantee that all 79 would vote for whatever tactic the party and the group decide on.

There are a dozen councillors who are still



Neil Kinnock makes his 'dented shield' speech at the local government conference

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

behaving in a roguish fashion. The important thing is to get 50 votes in the chamber.

What sort of involvement in the campaign has been sought of the council employees?

We have had a whole series of workplace meetings with shop stewards and union branch meetings. We invite union branch members to our committees. So there is a constant dialogue between Labour

councillors and trade unionists.

That process is continuing. We will need their support. They need to understand the situation we are in.

It has been noticeable that since the present leadership came to office a number of senior management have taken early retirement.

What we have been doing is attempting to set up an administration and committee structure that gives us control over what is a massive organisation of 36,000 employees.

The committee structure, the whole procedures, the support for members and the leadership of the council was very poor.

We are in the process of translating the political wishes of the party into actions by the council.

The effects of the cuts on women have been stressed. How will women be able to play a role in the campaign?

We are at present organising activity for International Women's Day. The events are not yet finalised. But it will be an important part of the campaign.

Apart from the petition, what other ways can the community get involved?

We will be having a major demonstration on 6 Mar-

ch. That will be a very important event.

At Labour Party conference it was decided to back local authorities that struggled against the government attacks, even to the point of breaking the law. Since then, with the miners' strike, we have seen the leadership of the party trying to distance itself from this.

The leadership aren't saying what we'd want, but they are saying more supportive things than they were 12 months ago when Liverpool was in dispute with the government. The situation isn't perfect, but it's better than 12 months ago.

Finally, is this the beginning of the end — or the end of the beginning?

We are in for a major crunch with the government this year. This is our best opportunity, when rate-capping is being introduced. If we lose this time it will be that much easier for the government next year to pick off authorities like North Tyneside, Liverpool, and Manchester who are not rate-capped this year.

This is the first attempt, and the resolve of a large number of councils is there. We just have to turn that into action. Then we can get the return of the money that's been taken from Manchester.



David Blunkett, leader of Sheffield council

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

Birmingham must fight

'BREAK THE poor not the law.' That was Neil Kinnock's advice to left wing councillors at last week's local government conference. It got little public support.

One exception however was Dick Knowles, leader of Birmingham's Labour-controlled city council. He warned his colleagues that 'defiance of the law is not to the advantage of the working class'.

But what will Cllr Knowles and his Labour group do to fight the Tory attacks? Birmingham is a case in point. Whilst not faced with rate-capping, Jenkin has set the city a spending target of £387.1 million. This is £33.4 million less than the

government admits Birmingham needs to spend.

The Labour group itself plans to overspend by £16 million, incurring huge penalties if it does. How will this extra money be raised?

Left wing activists in Birmingham District Labour Party have argued that the government will have to bridge the gap. After all, cuts in government grants have created the problem.

If the additional burden isn't to be passed on in higher rents and rates

then a mass campaign is needed to get that money back. This could form part of the national struggle launched by the rate-capped authorities.

Not for Cllr Knowles. His alternative is becoming increasingly clear. While promising a propaganda campaign to persuade the government to relax its cash limits and penalties, Labour will if necessary increase the rates.

Leaving aside penalties, this could involve increases of 35-50 per cent.

But the efforts of Cllr Knowles and his supporters to pass their proposals as 'socialist' have

met with increasing opposition. Labour activists know that, behind the rhetoric, substantial rate increases are a tax on the many thousands of workers whose living standards are already under attack.

Birmingham's Labour group has now decided to delay setting a rate. But in the coming months a decision will have to be made.

If — as seems likely — Cllr Knowles' campaign produces no concessions from Jenkin, the choices will be stark. Labour activists in Birmingham have to ensure the Labour group supports the national campaign.



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Cruise is still the issue

IN THE SPRING of last year the police and military authorities began to step up their harassment of the women at the Greenham Common peace camp. This went hand in hand with a changed emphasis in media reportage. From the grudging sympathy that many Fleet Street pundits had expressed for the 'courage and determination' of the Greenham women, stories increasingly concentrated on slander and vilification of the 'nothing but a bunch of freaks and misfits' variety.

This was just one example of the government's campaign to turn the tide on the anti-missiles movement. The Thatcher government has carried out a relentless battle to demoralise the activists and prove that the peace movement is losing ground.

At the same time, the leadership of CND has played into Tory hands by continuing to press on the movement itself a debate about the need to change the emphasis of the peace campaign. This is a continuation of the 'need to appeal to the middle-ground' campaign started in earnest a year earlier when Labour lost the general election.

The first proposal to 'modify' the aims of the campaign was the unsuccessful attempt to get 1983

annual conference to adopt a freeze campaign, an attempt which continued at the level of national council till last summer.

By Carol Turner

Now the terrain of that debate has changed. The adoption by the Labour Party of *Defence and Security for Britain* signalled a new direction for the debate. Both Euro-communists and Kincockites alike in the peace movement pounced on the opportunity to renew their relationship with the mythical middle-ground via non-nuclear defence.

Despite Labour's policy emphasis on remaining in NATO — a commitment directly opposed to the aims of CND — national council welcomed Labour's policy.

Resolutions to CND's annual conference attempted to 'improve' on it.

One, dropped from the final agenda, openly suggested an electoral alliance campaign. Another went further on the offensive by bringing forward the idea that CND should campaign equally against the Russian bomb.

Whilst the latter proposal received short shift from delegates to December's annual conference, a policy generally in favour of non-nuclear defence was adopted. Despite this, for the second year running, the CND leadership didn't get it all their own way.

Conference overwhelmingly supported an emergency resolution on Greenham, showing the commitment that still exists among the activists to keeping the anti-missiles campaign alive in 1985.

The recent eviction of Molesworth's Rainbow Village has brought the cruise campaign to the forefront again. Government claims for the demise of the peace movement have been shown to be hollow by the immediate reaction of the rank and file.

Such claims are further disproved — if such is needed — by the plans for a cruise conference and a women's peace conference which are well underway now. Despite concerted attempts to discredit the movement, activists are still committed to direct and effective action to get rid of American missiles from British territory.

CND's leadership would do well to note this commitment. The anti-cruise campaigners understand more clearly than they that a campaign against nuclear weapons aims to fundamentally change the status quo.

The movement of Greenham women, in three short years, has shown just what effect determined action can have. There is still a majority in Britain in favour of getting rid of American missiles.

The events at Molesworth last week — and the response of activists who went there this weekend to defend the peace camp — have reasserted that 1985 is still the year of the campaign against cruise missiles.

Molesworth & Greenham: one campaign

LAST WEEK'S forcible eviction of the Rainbow Village peace campers at Molesworth in Cambridgeshire has brought attention firmly back to the main issue facing the peace movement.

The eviction has highlighted the need for a massive mobilisation at Molesworth for the Easter action planned by CND as a central part of the campaign against cruise. The response of the movement over the weekend — to flock down to Molesworth to show the government that they simply can't evict the camp and continue building the second cruise base there — is an indication of the potential that exists to build a massive Easter demonstration.

HELEN JOHN told CAROL TURNER why the Molesworth campaign is important and explained her view of its relationship with the Greenham women.

THE presence of British subjects sitting on Ministry of Defence land at Molesworth — opposing the preparation of that land to house American missiles — has had sufficient impact on the government that they had to remove the peace camp. But to remove people from the land was a comparatively easy thing to do. To actually build the silos may prove to be very much harder.

Public opinion really can be galvanised on this issue. Do we need the 64 weapons that will go to Molesworth? Are they in any way defending us (or anybody else for that matter)?

This action by the government will reactivate the opposition to cruise within this country and internationally. There will be a very determined effort now to keep that base pinned down, so that every single move the Ministry of Defence makes is opposed.

And I'm sure that the government action will have an effect on the Molesworth activities

planned for Easter, that an increased number of people will turn out to defend their right not to have the weapons here.

The government have often acted as a catalyst that makes the peace movement more effective. I'm pleased to see they're still playing that role!

It has to be understood that we can't have a second Greenham in Britain. A broad campaign is needed to make sure that the issue of Molesworth is understood in this context.

The pledge campaign which has been undertaken by a small group of people focusing on Molesworth must now be put into maximum effect. It has built slowly and will develop over the next few months.

The 'pledge' is simply that individuals undertake to spend a period of time — one or two days a month perhaps — at Molesworth. You go down to the place where the problem is presented and show that you're opposing what's happening.

Molesworth will be developing a whole range of non-violent opposition to the building of the

missiles site — that will take a wide range of forms that will be developed in the coming months.

There is no conflict at all between supporting Molesworth and supporting Greenham. It's the same issue: opposing cruise missiles. Greenham was the focus that started the campaign and emphasised the role that women have to play in opposing the weapons. That is in no way detrimental to a campaign being developed at Molesworth.

The two are complementary. Women have always played a part in Molesworth just as men have always played a part in Greenham — albeit a supporting part!

There was a need — and there still is — for women to oppose the military and civil authorities. That they are doing at Greenham where the missiles are currently based.

There was a large area of dissent about why men couldn't go to Greenham. There is *nothing* to prevent men going to Molesworth.

Mixed groups can focus on Molesworth, and that will in turn show a great understanding of why women should be supporting Greenham.

The people working hardest in the campaign against the missiles at the moment are those who have understood right from the beginning that direct action is much more valuable than all the leaflets, all the words in the world. The people who are opposing the government with their bodies, and who are prepared if necessary to face the penalties imposed under law, are opposing the mass preparation for genocide in the most direct and effective way.

Growing support for women's conference

THERE'S NO DOUBT that CND's decision to support a women's peace conference has tuned into a need widely felt among women active in the peace movement. At the third planning meeting, held a week ago, the gathering of women who want to help organise such an event had already grown from its humble beginnings at the CND annual conference last December.

September has been decided for the weekend event. And the next planning meeting on 3 March will settle the venue and begin in earnest the publicity needed to draw in as wide a range of women as possible.

Preliminary discussion about workshops for the conference have highlighted the need to involve women from the mining communities, as well as black women and women trade unionists.

From the conference it is intended to establish a national network of the women's peace movement and to publicise material from the workshops.

Taking place early in

the autumn, the conference will be an ideal opportunity to build support for the October national CND demonstration which CND national council will discuss later in the year. And it will be well timed too to build support for the traditional December action at Greenham to mark the anniversary — 1985 will be the sixth — of the announcement of cruise missile deployment in Britain.

By Annie Brady

Between now and 3 March women from the planning group will be busy soliciting broader

workshops and events over the conference weekend, as well as all the practical organisation that will make September a big success.

● The next planning meeting for the women's peace conference will be on 3 March at the YWCA Centre, Great Russell Street, London WC1 (nearest tube: Tottenham

Court Road), from 11am till 5pm. If your group is prepared to sponsor the event, organise a workshop, or help with any part of the conference organisation, make sure they are represented there. Further details phone: Margot Miller, Women's Peace Alliance, on Oxford 842480; or Judith Hanna at CND's Goodwin Street office, on 01-263 0977.



'We will be heard, we will be seen'

THE TWO-DAY working conference against cruise in Manchester on 16-17 March is an important event for CND and peace movement activists.

The emphasis of the weekend will be on organising nationally and internationally to get rid of American cruise missiles. The conference aims to provide a forum for a strategy discussion to win the struggle against cruise.

Two things should come out of the con-

ference. First an efficient network for spreading ideas and information about campaigning.

Second dispelling any feeling of isolation among local groups and removing the myth peddled by the media and the government that the campaign is a 'lost cause'. In the words of the conference organisers: 'We will be seen, we will be heard, and our resistance will be felt in 1985.'

Conference begins at 10.30am with an introductory session from sponsors and international guests

from Italy, Holland and Belgium. Workshops will follow.

Among the sponsors for the weekend are: Action 84, Molesworth, Trade Union CND, Greenham groups, and Cruisewatch — as well as national CND. Manchester Cruise Action Group is hosting and organising the event.

No resolutions will be taken at the conference, but suggestions from the workshops will be presented to the whole conference at its plenary session.

This is the first national conference against cruise, and it is already well-subscribed. Places are limited to 600, so your group should register now.

● Final date for registration is 1 March. Conference fee is £5 and accommodation is available on request. Meals will be provided (at 75p each) but must be booked in advance. Further details contact: Conference Against Cruise, CND Office, 61 Bloom Street, Manchester M1 3LY, or phone 061-236 1588.

A Socialist Action

Now build the 24th!



Photo: GM COOKSON

MINERS' PICKETS were swelled by thousands of supporters all over Britain in response to the regional days of solidarity action in the South East, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North West. The National Coal Board claimed this was an important factor in halving the numbers of miners' returning to work nationally.

In the South East thousands of workers took part in industrial action, solidarity marches and pickets of every major power station. In London train services were seriously disrupted by strike action at Marlybone, Waterloo, Kings' Cross, Willesden Junction and Streatham Hill. This happened despite the NUR leadership failure to mobilise. It was not until the previous Wednesday that many branches received material. Management blamed the weather for many cancellations which were in fact due to the action.

Fire fighters were answering emergency calls only. A number of school

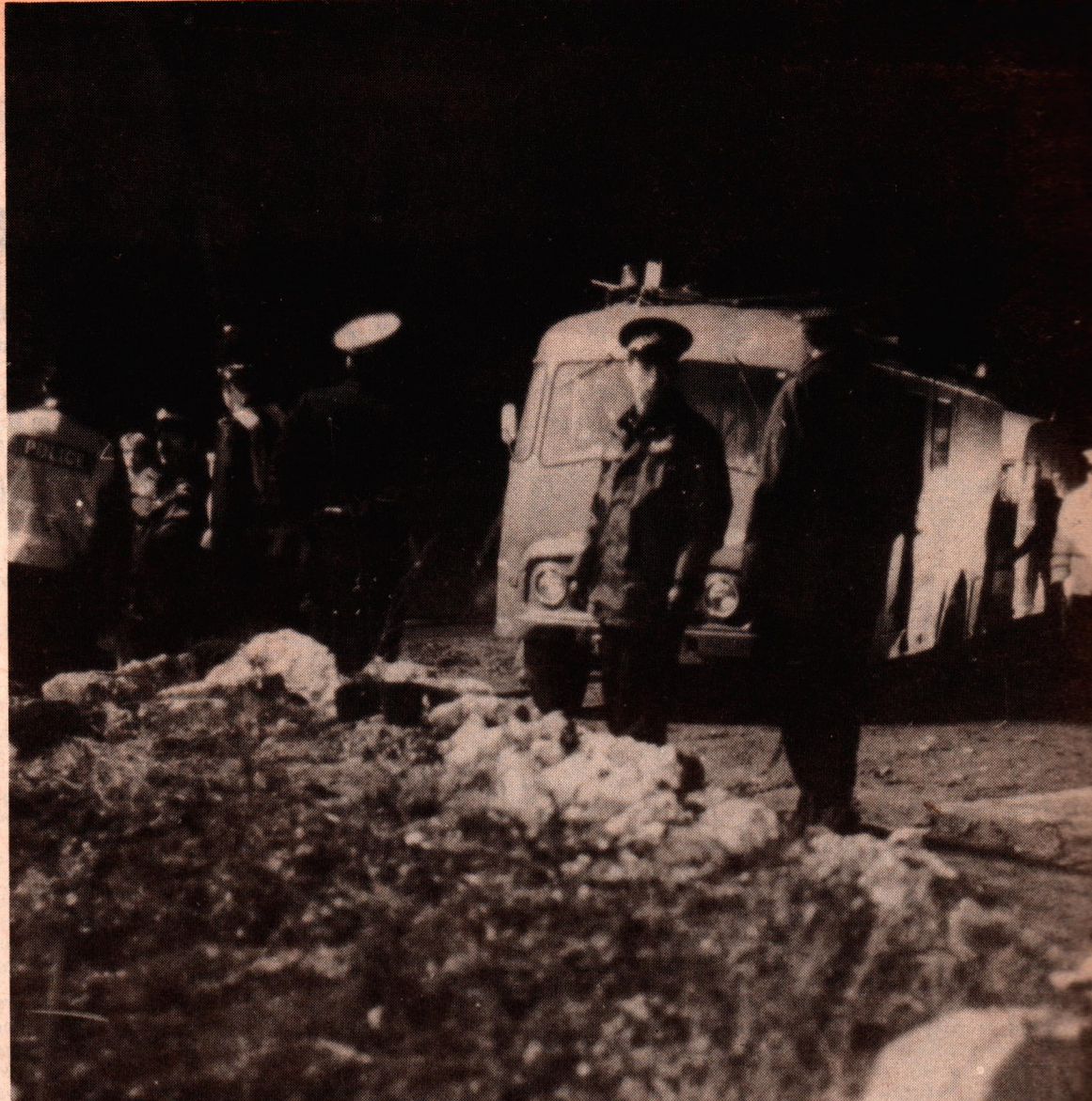
were closed or disrupted by teachers' taking strike action. Major pickets took place at power stations with over 1,000 at Neasden, and hundreds at Tilsbury, Didcot, Kings North and so on. A third of the manual workers at Fawley Power Station in Hampshire turned back at picket lines.

In Yorkshire there were local demonstrations of support for the miners and a big increase in picket lines at all of the main collieries. In the North West 700 people turned out to picket the Charrington Power Station.

So, no thanks to Kinnock or the TUC leadership, the left-wing of the labour movement was able

to turn out a major show of solidarity with the miners on 11 February. Now the task is to build the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trades Unions demonstration on 24 February into a truly mass demonstration of solidarity with the miners and to ensure that the 6 March Democracy Day called by the TUC is everywhere transformed into a joint day of solidarity with the miners and defence of local democracy jobs and services.

Both of these will have to be built in the teeth of the sabotage of solidarity and witch-hunting of Scargill by the TUC and Labour Party leaderships. For the 24th transport is being organised now from every major area with trains booked from the North West and Scotland already, and dozens of coaches from South Wales, Sheffield and the Midlands.



STOP THE MISSILES, SIGN THE PLEDGE

AFTER TUESDAY'S massive police and army attack on the peace camp at Molesworth, led by 'General' Heseltine, over 2000 demonstrators joined a weekend of mass protest at the base. The 7½ mile long fence was festooned with leaflets, posters and slogans in the style that has now become familiar at Greenham.

On Saturday, 21 people were arrested when members of the Rainbow Village were prevented from returning to their camp. On Sunday, police stopped cars and coaches several miles from the base, and demonstrators struggled through fields to the base. Clearly, the action of the government will make Molesworth join Greenham Common as a major focus for the activities of the peace movement. It is a great deal easier to remove the peace camp than to remove the peace movement.

Molesworth will now be a central focus for CND over the period to Easter, when it will be the focus of the Easter march. This march is set fair to be a second Aldermaston.

CND is planning three marches: from Leicester,

Stevenage and Cambridge. They will start on Easter Friday, 5 April and arrive at Molesworth on Easter Sunday, for an overnight vigil and a mass ringing of the base on Easter Monday.

Between now and the Easter march — and afterwards — CND is organising a nationwide pledge campaign, calling for non-violent resistance to the construction work at Molesworth.

Supporters are being asked to pledge a day, or days, a week in which they will participate in the protest at Molesworth. CND is asking people to pledge to participate on the days covered by their region, but this is not essential.

● *Details of the Easter march, publicity materials etc from CND 01-263 0977.*

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Defend Molesworth

MOLESWORTH
the second Greenham

THE DECISION TO BASE cruise missiles at Molesworth has been decided to place 10 flights of cruise missiles on the site. The missiles were designed for Greenham Common and the Molesworth site. The missiles are controlled by a computer system.

THE MOLESWORTH SITE is an 800 acre airfield, an area of open countryside. It is unused and unused, except as a centre for the RAF.

THE BASE they must start from work. Their first task will be to erect a security fence which will prevent anyone from entering the site. They will be working 24-hours a day. The work will be completed by the end of the year. The site has already been used for the construction of the base.

DEFEND MOLESWORTH is a unique opportunity to help to stop the construction of the base. The name of the campaign is 'Defend Molesworth'. The campaign is a nationwide campaign to oppose the construction of the second Greenham Common.

THE NATIONWIDE PLEDGE CAMPAIGN

CND is asking people to pledge to participate in the protest at Molesworth. CND is asking people to pledge to participate on the days covered by their region, but this is not essential.

PLEDGE NOW
To Defend Molesworth