

# A **Socialist** ACTION

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# FIGHT FOR

# AMNESTY

NEIL KINNOCK has clearly stated his intention to continue the scabbing role he played in the miners' strike. His statement last week that the NCB should only reinstate miners 'who have been undertaking legitimate trade union activities and who have not been guilty of any serious offences' is treachery to the victimised miners — and to the NUM's fight to defend jobs in the mining communities.

Over 700 miners were sacked during the strike. Others have been victimised since. There are over 2000 court cases outstanding. Every single one of the miners charged faces the threat of dismissal by the NCB.

The position of the labour movement, and the Labour Party, on all these cases without exception must unambiguously be that they are victims of class war, are class war prisoners, and are the victims of class justice.

The labour movement must fight for total amnesty for *all* the miners sacked as a result of this strike, and for full support for the political prisoners. We should make no distinctions between those sacked for 'serious' offences and others. Every single victimisation was of miners fighting not only for their own jobs but for those of the whole working class. They are fighters for our class who deserve our unconditional support.

What makes the hypocrisy of the Tories' defence of 'law and order' even clearer was explained by Tony Benn last week when he pointed to the amnesty granted by the Tories to Ian Smith and his supporters as part of the settlement of

the 'Rhodesia' problem.

Smith's racists were guilty of mass murder, executions of African political leaders, and horrific crimes against the people of Zimbabwe. They were all pardoned without exception. The Tories, as always, show a loyalty to their class which Kinnock never shows to his.

We can expect little of the leaders who scabbed on the strike, but Kinnock now proposes to scab on the victims as well. The left must ensure that the labour movement does not allow this to occur.

The miners' support committees should take as their chief task raising money for, and getting resolutions of support through all sections of the movement for, those who have been victimised.

## Trials

Many of the trials in the coming months will be turned into show trials. We must campaign in support of the victims at each and every one of them.

The families must be protected from hardship and Labour must pledge in its manifesto that the next Labour government will pardon each and every single miner and restore their job.

The fight to commit the movement to support those sacked, and those imprisoned, is a key task of ensuring that the miners remain at the centre of the struggle of the trade unions and Labour Party. It is also part of the fight to settle accounts with the traitors in the labour movement.

The strike is ended but the fight goes on.





# .Amnesty for all...Amnesty for all...A

## Scots Labour conference

The Scottish Labour Party Conference on 8, 9 and 10 March this year, often sets the scene for the annual round of labour movement conferences. This year it was the first conference of the labour movement after the miners' return to work.

Not surprisingly the strike dominated proceedings and conference was angry.

Eric Clarke, speaking on the emergency NUM resolution against victimisation, explained that 240 Scottish miners had been dismissed so far. 'Reinstate every one'.

Talking about the miners' struggle now, he said: 'Our slogan, to take over that of the GCHQ workers, is that we are still fighting on.' Clarke called for the resignation of Wheeler, the Scottish NCB area director.

Reflecting attitudes towards the miners and miners' wives' movement, conference gave Clarke its longest and most enthusiastic standing ovation.

After Kinnock's first major speech to the labour

movement after the strike, delegates gave him a cool reception.

Three Fife delegates, including strikers' wives, made a silent protest. They turned their backs on the stage, and posters on their backs said: 'We are turning our back on you, because you turned your back on us.'

Ellen from Fauldhouse Women's Support Group explained the protest. 'Eighteen men have lost their jobs at Fauldhouse, 18 should get their jobs back.' She condemned Kinnock's speech to the conference, describing his call for a selective amnesty as 'a betrayal'.

The *Glasgow Herald*, commenting on the contrast between the reception of Kinnock and Clarke's speech, said: 'The half-

hearted response Kinnock received was in stark contrast to the standing ovation given to Mr Clarke...He must be concerned at the lack of impact which could not be put down entirely to the simmering hostility in the hall.'

Resolutions on energy policy and civil liberties provided hooks on which further debate on the miners was hung. The greatest cheers came for a speaker from TASS who criticised the reaction of the rest of the movement to the miners' strike. 'We gave iron rations to troops in the front line and what they needed was reinforcement.' He made an appeal for the 16 March Labour Party demonstration in Glasgow for an amnesty in the Scottish coalfield. A standing ovation was reserved for a young miner from Monkton Hall colliery and the Edinburgh YS. 'We are,' he said, 'at the end of the beginning.'

What was that beginning? 'We are at the beginning of the fight for socialism in Britain. Scargillism is under attack from some quarters in the movement. But what it means is standing and fighting. And nobody can take that away from us.'

In the debate on civil liberties nobody dared to repeat Kinnock's stab in the back to the miners' picket line, made last September at Labour Party conference. All the resolutions unequivocally attacked the police and designated all violence in the strike as the responsibility of the state. They demanded police accountability.

Since the miners' strike, the whole debate on the police and the state has substantially shifted to the left. Stormy applause greeted the executive recommendation to pass all the resolutions — which then went through virtually unanimously.

So, the desire to settle accounts with Kinnock and Willis for the role in the miners' strike was



Photo: G M COOKSON

there, reflected in every debate. But, as always when the labour movement leadership is in trouble, its Scottish components close ranks.

Almost unbelievably, Saturday's Scottish press was full of the story of a new alliance. McGahey, Scottish NUM leader, spelled it out: 'I am so pleased that the Scottish miners are inviting Mr Kinnock and the general secretary of the TUC to our gala day in June. And it will demonstrate our solidarity as a movement.'

Asked about discontent over Kinnock's role in the strike, he said: 'I have no dispute with the leader of the Labour Party.' And, at the preconference briefing for the left, from Scotland's LCC, regroupment behind Kinnock was presented as the main lesson of the miners' strike. But, explained an LCC spokesperson, this alliance would have to be defended in the conference — first of all against the miners!

Security at the conference was indeed tight. Guards were employed. Close scrutiny was made of all credentials. Only a side door to the hall was used. Miners who lobbied

delegates were firmly kept out. The delegates who made their silent protest at Kinnock's speech had their posters ripped off and were evicted by security guards.

Conference was allowed to let off steam. Many fine words were spoken. But the abiding image is of the invitation to Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis to lead the gala of those they betrayed.

This political orientation was reflected in the only other major item of party campaigning — local government. Resolutions from the Scottish executive for the fight against rate-capping — regardless of illegality — were firmly rejected.

'Labour leaders were clearly relieved that the party had opted to approve the policy of non-compliance with government-set targets, including resisting budgets in the courts, but had pulled up short of law-breaking,' said *The Scotsman* on 9 March.

Kinnock got through his first test by the skin of his teeth and the aid of the leadership of the Scottish NUM. The LCC provided the guard required to keep conference in order — but at the cost of considerable

strain, even to the ultra-flexible backbone of the Scottish TUC.

Their line has created a wave of revulsion in the Scottish labour movement.

But the Scottish labour leadership still has to hold its breath until it has passed the hurdle of the 16 March amnesty demonstration.

### Scotland

#### William Brash, sacked miner from Bilston Glen

I WAS sacked for breach of the peace — struggling with the police on a picket line at Bilston Glen last July.

Like the others who have been sacked, you couldn't class that as a serious offence, or sackable. Between Bilston Glen and Monkton Hall, two pits in the Lothian coalfield, there have been 117 sacked, and the total is rising.

Up till now 63 of these have been from Bilston Glen, and 14 from my own strike centre, Mayfield near Dalkeith — out of just over 100 strikers.

I was sacked because the management didn't want me, or people like me, active in the industry. They

thought that once they got the people active on the picket line out they would get everyone else back at work.

But even at Bilston Glen, even at the end, there were still 600 on strike. The Coal Board were claiming 1300 back at work — they must have been counting the guard dogs and security men!

There have been 117 sacked in two pits alone in Scotland, and 240 altogether. More men are getting letters all the time.

Albert Wheeler (the area director) wants to make a name for himself — he wants to be the next MacGregor.

But so many miners have been sacked that it's obviously been victimisation. And the fight goes on. We'll be fighting till every single sacked miner is reinstated.



Photo: G M COOKSON

### South Wales

## No problem with Kinnock?

Hew Edwards, Chair, Tower Colliery NUM

I BELIEVE that the return to work without a negotiated settlement and the guarantee of re-employment of our sacked comrades was bitterly wrong. I do not think it was the policy of Arthur Scargill.

Of the 142 already sacked in South Wales, we were told at the Saturday 9 March area conference that 80 had been taken back. But it's not clear if they will be employed for a month, or if they will get the benefits due according to length of service.

I think it will be difficult to get the other 20 per cent back without a big fight, especially the ones occupying pit winding

gear in North Derbyshire. The area manager has made it clear he doesn't want them re-employed here.

There are approximately 240 court cases pending, with a range of charges. The area executive's approach appears to be to take it softly, and to get a deal with the Board. I think this is wrong.

The area executive has promoted the idea of setting up a support fund, to support any miners sacked. I know there are problems with how the sacked men are to be supported, with the possibility of writs being taken against the NUM for misappropriation of union funds.

But setting up a

support fund now is a tacit acceptance that a certain percentage won't get their jobs back. It will create an attitude amongst the membership that enough is being done.

The Board can't be trusted on anything. Pressure has to be constantly maintained for the reinstatement of all miners sacked during or because of the strike. We can use tactics like work-to-rule and rigidly sticking to the Mines and Quarries Act.

Kinnock has sat on the fence right through the strike, but now says that miners on charges like obstruction or unlawful assembly should get their

jobs back. We demand that he should call for the dropping of all charges taken against NUM members during or because of the strike. After all, their only 'crime' was to fight for the right to work.

I find it unbelievable that Mick McGahey could say that he has no differences with Kinnock. Kinnock has been responsible for undermining the fight put up by the NUM, and I'd like to hear McGahey's reasons for his statement.

Of Kinnock I would say this: that those he has stepped on to reach the top rung, he will meet on the way back. He will be remembered by the NUM as the traitor to his own class.

## 240 and rising...

PRESS officers of the National Coal Board in Scotland have a new definition of a serious offence.

'It was nothing,' said the *Scotsman*, 'to do with the law of the land. Rather it was an act regarded as a serious act by the Board itself.'

Such 'serious acts' are clear from the sacking of Bilston Glen branch secretary Jackie Aitchison, one of 63 sackings at the pit at which half the NUM worked throughout the strike.

Jackie was sacked for failing to wear a safety helmet on Coal Board property. The line around Bilston entrance had been repainted. Bilston's six permitted pickets found that where they had always stood had now

been defined as Coal Board property.

They refused to move from their traditional spot.

The statistics of the sackings — read victimisations — in Scotland are great indeed. Wales, with double the number of miners (20,000) has had fewer than a quarter of those dismissed in Scotland.

Sackings are continuing. The total to date is 240 and rising.

They so far include three NUM delegates, plus at least two branch chairpersons, four branch secretaries, and a treasurer. The number sacked who were on strike committees is 'very high' according to NUM leaders.

John Henderson, NUM lawyer, commented

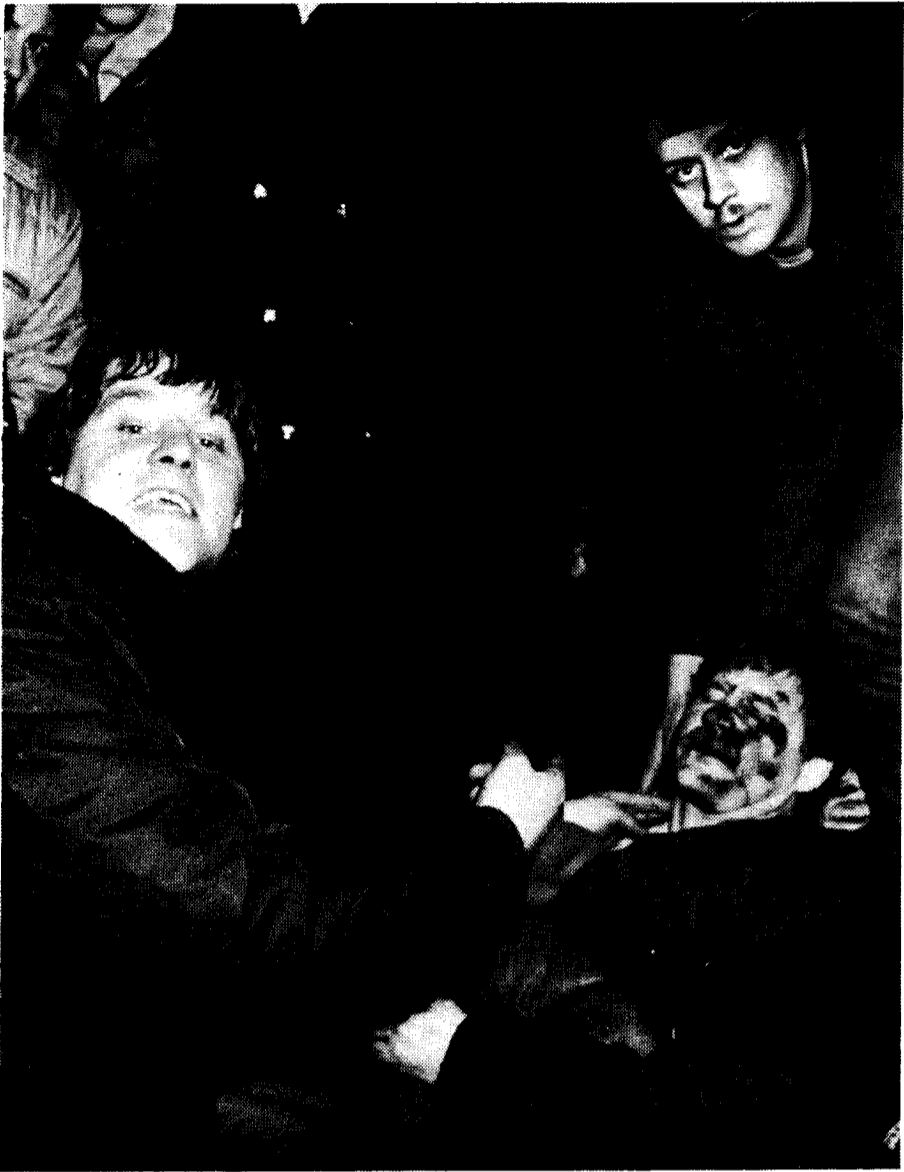
on the growing number. 'There is a pattern emerging which does not bear any relationship to any offence committed. Indeed there have been men sacked who have not committed any offence.'

'One point is that we have had Mr Wheeler (area director) saying these dismissals are for serious offences, while at the same time we have Sherriffs refusing legal aid because they are not. It does appear that the area director of the NCB is using all this as an opportunity to get rid of what he sees as militants — this is a golden opportunity, it may never happen again.'

In the Scottish coalfield, breach of the peace and obstruction remain the main convictions of the miners.

## for all... Amnesty for all... Amnesty for all...

## Notts and Derby



Police attack on pickets at Thoresby

## Notts frame up

By Jeremy Hawthorn, Peckham Labour Party

KEN PETNEY still awaits reinstatement after the court case against him at Nottingham Crown Court completely collapsed on the last day of the strike. Last May bank holiday a fight broke out in a Blidworth pub.

Rob Ellis, a local scab, pulled Petney off his chair and both fell to the floor. Smith, another scab, waded in with a chair. The brief fight was chaotic. Ellis had a broken ankle, Smith minor cuts.

## South Yorks

## Silverwood miners jailed

EARLY in November police besieged the Rotherham village of Sunnyside, the home of many Silverwood miners.

Philip Wainwright had joined three other scabs. He returned home escorted by five van loads of police.

Even more were waiting in the wings. After the flare-up which ensued from the police's attempts to intimidate a whole village, seven strikers were charged with besetting Wainwright's house and with obstruction.

It was a set-up job. The scab and his family were due to move the following day — they'd already sold their house.

At the beginning of this week, six of those charged

were sentenced to one month's jail. A seventh, Alan Rodgers, got a month's sentence, suspended for a year. The imprisoned miners are Alan Cresswell, Alan Farrell, and four brothers: Paul, David, Michael and Robert Boyle.

Including these, 17 Silverwood miners have been victimised so far. Fourteen have been sacked since the return to work. At Thurcroft, 15 miners have been sacked, and at least three at Kiveton Park.

But Manton colliery is in a league of its own. Although part of the Yorkshire NUM, it's actually in Nottinghamshire. Management there is refusing to recognise the union at all!

asked. 'You could get the sack from your manager,' was the answer.

Petney and Holroyd were both charged with grievous bodily harm. While the case was pending, Petney was asked to attend his pit 'for interview'. On legal advice he refused.

He was summarily dismissed. The manager said: 'I have thoroughly investigated the incident.'

Come the trial, the striking community had mobilised around the case. Strikers supplied material for cross-examination. Ellis' case suffered a severe blow when he admitted being known as 'Rob the gob'.

From the outset, Holroyd's 'confession' was questioned. The judge noted police irregularities. Ellis could not say how he got his injuries; Smith admitted he went in expecting a fight. Medical evidence showed Ellis' ankle couldn't have been broken in the way police claimed.

Other witnesses contradicted Ellis and Smith. The case was looking rickety.

Alan Radford held the court spell-bound when he described his examination by police. 'Police told me: "Ellis may cock his toes [die] tonight". And I thought, God, a murder charge. They were not joking.'

Like all other strikers, 'routine' questions included how long he'd been striking, whether he'd been picketing elsewhere, and so on.

Halfway through, the police case was in a mess. The judge saved CID, an embarrassing time by dismissing the case. In doing so, he played down the gross misconduct of the police, though he did criticise them for immediately forming a view of who was to blame.

Immediately after the acquittal, Petney's lawyers wrote to the Coal Board demanding his reinstatement. The NCB, so swift to condemn, have not yet replied.

How many more strikers have received, and are yet to receive the life sentence of the dole on such trumped-up charges? Their real crime, of course, is fighting for their jobs.

At one in the morning, four striking miners, Ken Petney, John Holroyd, Alan Radford, and Philip Humber — were arrested. The CID referred the case to the 'NUM charge centre' at Mansfield.

From the start, Ellis and Smith were treated as the victims. All four strikers were interrogated even though there was no evidence at all against Radford and Humber.

Both were threatened with affray charges. 'What does that mean?' they

## Dirty thirty fight on

**'BECAUSE we were situated differently, you could probably say that we didn't come out solely for pit closures and job losses.'**

'The main bulk of the lads that came out here, came out in support of their own kind — their own class in other coalfields — because they were in trouble.'

'But whatever the reason they came out, it's been proved — and they have had great difficulties because they don't live in the communities that have added so much strength to this strike — that nobody in this land has had as much mental pressure as the lads in this county and the lads in South Derbyshire. Nobody.'

'There ain't nobody knows anything like what we know about scabs, and we have told the other coalfields that. It broke our hearts when this dispute was called to an end, in the manner that it was called to an end, because we had all of the shit all the way through the strike. We're gonna have the shit at the end of the strike, and that's proved to be the case.'

Malcolm Pinnegar is the leader of Leicester-shire's 'Dirty Thirty', the only miners in the entire coalfield who supported the strike. Like strikers in other minority areas they have borne the brunt of opposition to the strike.

Now, with the return to work, they expect renewed efforts to isolate and demoralise them. In the Warwickshire pits the harassment is already underway. Striking miners have been degraded.

In Leicester and South Derbyshire there is another problem — the scab officials.

Jim O'Grady, one of South Derbyshire's 17 striking miners explained: 'The position that we are in now is that we have gone back to work. We had a vote and we all voted to obey the special conference decision.'

'It broke a lot of people's hearts. A lot of people didn't want to go back. But we recognised the situation we were in, being 17 of us.'

'It took us a long time to convince them that we came out because of a special conference decision and that we had to go back because of that decision. That's not to say that we have forgotten those men that have been sacked, left so to speak in the lurch.'

'The problem that we have got now with our own union officials is that they are trying to kick us out with a stupid rule that says because we haven't paid any of our union fees during the strike we are no longer bona fide, we are no longer financially members of the South Derbyshire NUM.'

'We are currently appealing against this decision. We have taken it to national.'

After 12 months of struggle those who struck in areas like Warwick, Notts, Leicester and South Derbyshire understand what's at stake. They know why scab officials want them out of the pits.

As Jim O'Grady put it: 'We also realised that if you were going to get rid of the likes of Ken Toon and the rest of the scab officials in that area, then the only way that you are going to get rid of them is to get down back into them pits, tell the people what went on during that strike, give your own experiences to them and show them that they don't have to follow the scabby line of people like Ken Toon.'

In the last year these strikers have relied on three important sources of support: the miners' wives and the Women Against Pit Closures groups; the

railworkers at Coalville who, despite all the pressure, refused to move coal; and the support committees.

The miners' wives have been amongst the first to draw the political lessons

of the strike for themselves and the working class.

Speaking to the Leicester Support Committee Kay Smith explained: 'The national women's organisation is still going to carry on despite the ending of the strike. During the strike women have become organised and active in lots of different ways: running soup kitchens, picketing, helping with collecting, speaking at meetings and so on.'

'For most women I know, even though this strike's ended they are not going to go back to how they were before. I know I'm not.'

Kay spelt it out when she said: 'I don't know what you will think of this, but I am going to tell you anyway because I am absolutely bursting. I have joined the Labour Party, and I am candidate for the Labour Party in Bosworth. I know I might not get in but if I can convince one person who is thinking of voting Tory, if I can just convert one to vote Labour, then I will feel I have achieved something.'

'Because the Tories have done nowt but slag the miners during this strike. And now I am going to have a go at them. But I can assure you of one thing, I ain't going to end up like Neil Kinnock.'

Kay's fight will be part of the ongoing fight emerging from this strike. Jim O'Grady probably speaks for all those who stood firm over the last year. 'I've heard it being said on radio and on TV about the short-comings and everything else of the strike.'

'And I have constantly heard people saying that Scargill is going to be around a lot longer. He's not going to disappear.'

'Well, I'm glad they recognise that, because people such as myself who weren't particularly politicised till this strike have turned into Scargills, and reckon that 150,000 have. They're going to have a lot more Scargills to deal with.'

## West German solidarity

**OVER 1500 trade unionists and socialists met last Saturday in Duisberg in the heart of West Germany's Ruhr area to hear a rally addressed by Peter Heathfield, Ron Todd and Anne Phillips from the women's support groups in South Wales.**

'When I came to Germany in July we had received £185.79 from the Bundesrepublik,' said Joe Holmes, the NUM's official German representative. 'Since then

over £250,000 has come to us through the office set up for us by the teachers' union, which organised 490 meetings.'

Another £250,000 was said to have been sent by the German union leadership but had gone through a fund established by the TUC and the ISTC — of which the miners had so far seen not a single penny!

Anne Phillips summed up the feeling of the meeting when she said: 'We have, after a year of struggle, had to suffer the indignity of bowing to

the power of the state. But believe me, they have not broken the spirit of the British miners.'

'I'm not here today in a mood of despondency,' said Peter Heathfield. 'My pledge to you is to continue the fight on behalf of all working people.'

'We both have right wing governments whose ability to pursue their capitalist policies is dependent on developing a passive, subservient trade union organisation. The miners of Britain say to Mrs Thatcher "No

chance". We fight on.'

German speakers were unanimous in condemning the strike-breaking of their own union leaders, who had permitted 1,760,000 tonnes of coal to be sent to Britain during the strike. Joe Holmes explained that a massive official conference scheduled for 12 January in Essen, had been cancelled when German trade union leaders had instructed their members not to attend because they did not agree with the strike's aims.

'When we struck for the 35-hour week, we demanded and got international support,' said Karl Gruener, convenor of the Bosch works in Dortmund. 'Our leaders are cutting our throats by refusing the most elementary trade union duty.'

More than £15,000 was collected at the meeting which heard that the NUM's office in Wuppertal would stay open for the next year to support the families of sacked miners and continue solidarity activity.



# The enemy looks at the strike

**THE OUTCOME** of the miners' strike has given rise to a rash of analyses—from the government, the NCB and the press. ALAN JONES assesses capitalist reactions to the strike.

THE first and most striking thing about every serious government and press analysis of the end of the miners' strike is how different it is from the rhetoric of 'surrender' and 'victory' which dominated the popular press in the week following the national delegate conference. *Nothing* resembling a euphoria of 'victory'—which might have been expected—appeared in any serious capitalist analysis in the entire week following the strike.

Certainly, Ian MacGregor indicated where he thought things should go in his interview with the *Sunday Telegraph* on 10 March. He stated: 'People are now discovering the price of insubordination and insurrection. And boy, are we going to make it stick.'

When informed that only 10,000 miners were still on strike, MacGregor commented: 'Oh, is that all. I'd hoped there'd be more, then we could let them off the payroll.'

The result of that, however, was that the *Daily Telegraph* carried a lead editorial the next day attacking MacGregor's remarks. It said MacGregor's was 'a phrase that is unlikely to be forgotten', and that: 'He has an opportunity now to turn coal into the thriving, modern industry he dreams of. He should concentrate upon that task and leave the talk to others. Talk is not his metier.'

The reason for a paper such as the *Telegraph* distancing itself from MacGregor's comments was not due to any 'softness', either on the issue of an amnesty or on the NCB's so-called right to manage.

A vicious offensive against the NUM is being, and will be, carried through by the NCB. But even the *Telegraph* realised that the narrowly economic considerations had to be subordinated to the much more fundamental political ones.

It was exactly on the political field that the outcome of the strike was almost universally analysed—as being different from anything which had been foreseen in March one year ago. Margaret Thatcher's off-guard remark during the strike, that she would 'never have believed' that the miners could still be out at Christmas, reflected general reactions.

Some immediate problems were shown in the remarkable opinion polls produced after the strike. Harris polls in the *Observer* found 72 per cent of the population favoured some form of amnesty for dismissed miners; 47 per cent, and 70 per cent of Labour Party supporters, believed that the miners had been right to go on strike against pit closures, as against 46 per cent who didn't.

The MORI poll for Granada TV's *Union World* found 57 per cent of miners supporting the national overtime ban, and 68 per cent ready to take industrial action against pit closures in their areas. Less than one in four miners believed they had suffered a defeat in the strike.

Perhaps most incredible of all, the Harris poll found 17 per cent of the population agreed with the statement that, the picketing tactics used by the miners in the strike were justified.

The last period of the strike also saw Thatcher's political support slipping significantly. The poll in the *Mail on Sunday* showed the Tories' standing falling to the same 35 per cent level as Labour, and the *Observer* found the *Times*' lead had been cut to four per cent.

But behind the immediate opinion polls, much more serious, longterm problems created or revealed by the strike, have pre-occupied the press. On this field it was logical that, apart from government circles, by far the most



sober analysis of the strike should come from the *Financial Times*. Under the title 'The class warriors' battle is over, but the war goes on', John Lloyd, the paper's industrial editor, surveyed the struggle in political terms (8 March). Industrial consequences were relegated to second place. He entertained no illusions that the end of the strike represented a stabilisation of the situation.

Lloyd's article started: 'It is important that the battle which the miners have just lost (a judgement on the war must be in suspense) was led by the most class conscious leadership group in the labour movement since the war. It was not just an industrial struggle of win-some-lose-some type; it was a very serious political movement and remains so.'

The article's assessment concluded: 'A battle is over; the war does continue.'

Lloyd was also clear about what he considered to be the threat posed by the leadership of the NUM. 'Class fighters, like Mr Arthur Scargill, Mr Peter Heathfield, Mr Mick McGahey and their activist supporters have a collective notion of the achievement of socialism which, though differing one from another in many important ways, agrees that it represents the rule of working class politics over society.'

'In their view, that means public ownership of all substantial enterprises, greatly extended union rights, a far higher provision of public services, a neutralist foreign and defence policy and an opening of at least the possibility of alliances with the Communist countries.'

'They are not old-style Leninists for whom bourgeois democracy is a total sham, although many miners' leaders, including some of the present ones, did believe this and Mr Scargill comes close. But they do believe that extra-parliamentary movements are of at least equal importance to parliamentary democracy. In particular, the force of a militantly-led mineworkers' union, willing to exercise its industrial power to the limit.'

'In "bourgeois terms" any Labour government created and sustained by the success of such an exercise would be undemocratic. In class terms, it would be a supreme expression of the will of the most conscious organised workers.'

Lloyd goes on to outline the dangers of the situation he saw, and how the ruling class must respond. In particular, he thought it necessary for it to make a turn, to establish new, more direct links with 'moderate' trade union leaders. Lloyd's analysis of this necessity is

worth quoting at some length. He started by noting the stakes posed in the strike for the Labour Party: 'New alliances had to be made — and they were. Gays and lesbians for the miners were only the most culturally improbable of the support groups; various ethnic organisations, women's groups and constituency Labour Parties and the many trotskyist factions inside or outside of them all provided the miners with a vigorous, efficient and national network of support and at least financial assistance...'

'For the Labour Party in its now continuous struggle to retain a shaky hegemony over the British left, this could mean one of two finely balanced outcomes. First, the network of "new alliances" led by the charismatic and apparently unbowed figure of the NUM president will continue to pose a threat to, and erode the base for, democratic socialism.'

'Being the mirror image of Thatcherism, Scargillism will have an appeal to many, especially the young who wish to see society change and perceive little opportunity for doing so through, for example, the young Fabians. The right-wing union leaders will not be able to control their militants because the government deprives them of a firm ground on which to stand — there is nothing to be got from tripartism: nothing but cuts in public services and exhortations to cut wages if employment is to be increased.'

'Thus the constituency Labour Parties, increasingly divorced from the ordinary working class and still swooning over the whiff of idealised proletarian struggle in which they headily participated, will increase the volume of their anti-leadership complaints.'

This was the outcome Lloyd feared. But he outlined a second alternative: 'that the defeat of the class-conscious elements has been so clear, so unequivocal that no one can fail to get the message save those few on Labour's backbenches whose class analysis roughly parallels that of the NUM leaders — or more accurately tails in behind it. There are no more than a score of these and while they are led by Mr Tony Benn and Mr Dennis Skinner, and will get more than their fair share of air time, their 1905 putsch has left the Winter Palace quite unharmed.'

'The outside left is developing its own right — Mr Tom Sawyer of NUPE, Mr David Blunkett of Sheffield, Mr Michael Meacher — and these men and their considerable following may cluck and tut that Mr Kinnock did not do

more sooner but they recognise that he is unassailable, should remain so and must get their support.'

The article went on to outline the conclusions capital must draw from this, most — interestingly indirectly revealing some current debates within the Tory Party. 'The hard truth about both these views, however, is that they depend very greatly on the actions of the government as to which of them will prove the more correct. In some respects the second finds some point of accord with the interpretation offered in a speech at Conservative Central Office on Tuesday night by Mr Norman Tebbit...'

'Mr Tebbit...forecast that the TUC might now be able to put behind it the insurrectionary road because of its abject failure, and that from here on in, strikes would be driven by the members' freely expressed wishes, not leaderships' war aims.'

'Mr Tebbit, who has moved in the past two years from the hammer of the unions to their protector within government, is now proposing a new relationship between government and TUC — not one of equals or (as he and others saw it) of over-weening estate dwarfing central authority, as in 1970-79, but of one interest group among others to be heard and consulted...'

'On this view then, we could be in for a new "steady state" of deferential but dignified industrial relations, in which union leaderships will remain ambitious for their members' material interests but no longer prescriptive as to their political intents.'

'As Mr Tebbit realises, the Labour movement will remain as fissionary a coalition as his own side of politics has proved in recent years and the constitutionalists within Labour's ranks will sometimes not wish to differentiate themselves too sharply from the insurrectionists. But they will not wish to again, as they did in the fateful congress last year, give paralysed assent to the mineworkers for every kind of mayhem and promise to support it.'

Leaving aside the ridiculous portrayal of Tebbit as a 'protector' of the unions, the message from that analysis is clear. The political price of the miners' strike has been extremely high. There is a danger of an unassimilable force continuing to grow in the medium term if the government does not make some tactical readjustments. Therefore a shift must be made, at least to seeking some more direct links with 'moderate' trade union bureaucrats.

The *Financial Times*' political

commentator, Peter Riddell, writing in the same issue arrived at an identical conclusion. Under the title 'A warning for Mrs Thatcher', he began by arguing: 'British politics is now entering a more fluid phase. Among politicians of all parties there is a feeling of uncertainty which both contradicts any supposed mood of triumph the government might have with the end of the miners' strike and raises questions about Mrs Thatcher's current approach.'

Riddell argued: 'Mrs Thatcher may have carried on being a crusader for too long. The public's mood may be shifting towards consolidation, just as many of the government's policies have in practice.' He warned: 'According to the latest Market and Opinion Research International survey in the *Standard*, the Tories have been losing support especially among the very groups (skilled workers, trade unionists and home-owners with mortgages) that were the basis for their gains in 1979 and 1983.'

Lloyd and Riddell might be considered maverick elements from a ruling class point of view, because of their occasional writing for *Marxism Today* among other things — although Norman Tebbit scarcely falls into that category! But they were not isolated voices.

The *Times* carried an extremely interesting leader the day after the strike ended. It has recently carved itself a position as an uncompromised, 100 per cent Thatcherite, 100 per cent Reaganite paper. So its comments can be taken as quite free of left wing ideological bias.

Having denounced 'the Scargill strategy of forging a private army of young shock troops hardened by their strike experience', and expressing the hope that 'the challenge and menace of Scargillism has been crushed', *The Times* concluded its editorial with the view that: 'The moderate miners also deserve the moral support of the government whose aim must now be to encourage moderate trade unionism everywhere by doing business with moderate trade union leadership.'

The paper returned to the same theme later in the week when it warned of 'sympathy' redeveloping for the miners, and that Thatcher should make an urgent ministerial broadcast to explain her goals.

The net analysis developing in sections of the capitalist class and media is clear. British capitalism understands that the political outcome of the miners' strike has not been as expected. The Thatcher government has been politically weakened, not strengthened, by the tremendous pounding it took from the miners' strike. Dangerous forces have been released into the body politic from Scargill's 'private army' — that is the thousands of NUM militants radicalised by the strike and their allies.

A joint interest, however is considered to exist with the TUC and Labour bureaucracy in attempting to contain and destroy these elements — furthermore it may be urgent and necessary to carry out policies to achieve this. Certain adjustments of tactics may be necessary to gain this.

The whole thing could of course be put more simply. In its own way the capitalist press is registering the seismic shock of the strike. For the first time since the 1920s a truly class struggle force with a mass working class base has been injected into British politics. If that is not contained and destroyed then the economic gains made by Thatcher in the strike are of no significance in the long run.

What good is a MacGregor rationalising a coal industry if political forces unassimilable by capitalism emerge?

Nigel Lawson may have said in Parliament that the strike was a good investment. But he was thinking about the economy. Just beginning to lurk somewhere in the bourgeoisie's judgement is the view that politically the miners' strike may have turned out to have been a very bad investment indeed.



# Women Against Pit Closures demo

## A NEW FORCE

'AS FAR AS we're concerned we're not at the end of our struggle, we're just at the beginning of an epic struggle.' Betty Heathfield summed up the spirit of the most historic celebration of International Women's Day, organised by Women Against Pit Closures and held in Chesterfield on 9 March.

That spirit, of the 9000 people who gathered from throughout Britain and the world, was one of determination to carry through to the end the solidarity, the awareness and the militancy of women that has exploded during 12 months of the most historic industrial battle in British history.

This battle has created an army of women whose fight can now only go forward. Who, as Betty Heathfield said, 'will stay with this struggle until we do finally win — and who are never going to go back.'

By Anne Kane

This huge Chesterfield rally was not just a tribute to the invaluable role of women in the mining communities during this dispute — to women, as Scargill said at the rally, 'who have stamped their mark indelibly on history and certainly on this dispute over the past 12 months.' It was also testimony to the new women's movement that has been born out of this strike, out of the struggles at Greenham and WAC's fight for democracy in the Labour Party.

This is a women's movement which has built on the gains of the '70s, which has broadened out to include a whole new layer of women, taking their struggle as women into every struggle to save jobs and communities, to defend democratic rights and to fight the war-drive. It is a movement which does not stop to question the value of women's self-organisation, but proves this through action of a most dynamic sort.

The self-organisation of women has made the fight for women's liberation integral to every struggle of the working class. It has shown as ludicrous those who would call such organisation 'divisive'.

There was no hint of defeat about the rally last Saturday. There was a spirit of great hope, and awareness of the tremendous links which have been built between the different experiences and struggles of women during the last year.

As Betty Heathfield explained: 'We women have decided to celebrate not in pessimism but in great optimism, because throughout this whole strike we women know that we have been under-reported. We have been misrepresented in this strike, and they have tried their very best to ignore us — and we are still here.'

There are now many thousands more women in the mining communities whose eyes have been opened to the struggles of other women. They understand how the women at Greenham, women internationally, and 'those

women who had been fighting for years for women' have been misrepresented by the government and the media.

Betty spoke for many more women throughout Britain when she said that thousands of new campaigners for the disarmament movement had been produced by the strike. Her aim was 'to see women's peace movements springing up in every mining community.'

Ann Lilburn, chairperson of Women Against Pit Closures, explained

**THE MINERS' STRIKE** will surely be remembered as the most historic struggle of the working class in Britain since the general strike of 1926, and perhaps the most titanic struggle since the days of the People's Charter. But above all it signifies two important realities about working class politics.

Firstly, it has clarified the role of the TUC leadership and their cohorts in the Labour Party. They have revealed: themselves as the greatest obstacle to achieving decisive victories for the working class.

Secondly, it has demonstrated in action the emergence of a class struggle leadership in the person of Scargill that is capable of galvanising the spirit of struggle of rank and file militants, and developing the lessons which can be drawn at each stage of the struggle.

The Labour Party conference last year was the moment when all the most important elements came together in stark relief. The role of the trade union bureaucracy, with the issue of the court injunction against the NUM on conference floor, was a harbinger of things to come.

But the leadership of the NUM demonstrated that it really is a leadership of a qualitatively different type — by supporting the demands of the Women's Action Committee, black section movement, and Labour Campaign for Gay Rights.

And it wasn't simply that women had emerged as a major force in the dispute, or that the mobilisation of the black community in support of the miners at Notting Hill Carnival was being paid back in kind.

It is unprecedented for there to be a major force in the labour movement willing to champion the struggle by black people to have the right to organise inside the Labour Party and to have elected representation at all levels



Chesterfield International Women's Day rally

how women not only in Britain but internationally drew inspiration from the women in the 1984-85 mining dispute. The solidarity produced by the strike was shown in the broad representation of women speaking at the

rally.

These included women from Greenham Common, Joan Ruddock of CND, Jo Richardson MP, SWAPO, the ANC, the French trade union federation, the CGT, women from Grenada, from the German trade

union group in support of the British miners, from the Cypriot women's organisation, from SOGAT, and from the Dublin Trades Council.

Chesterfield football ground was festooned with banners from a myriad of

women's peace groups, Women Against Pit Closures groups, trade unions and political parties.

Stephanie Kent from the ANC focussed on the importance of Britain's apartheid connection in undermining the British miners' strike. South African coal, cheap and profitable under apartheid, cost Britain £9 per tonne to import. British coal cost £13 a tonne to mine. During 1984, 150,000 tons of South African coal had been imported to Britain according to the NUM's figures.

Greetings were read out to the rally from many other trade unions, political parties and women's groups.

Apart from this striking display of internationalism, the other central feature of the rally was the profile of young people. The many hundreds of youth at this rally who identified with the struggle of Scargill and the Women

against Pit Closures are part of a new current of youth whose political ideas have been forged by this dispute.

These young people are a potentially formidable force in British politics, which — unlike the women — are still waiting to be organised.

Arthur Scargill summed up the significance of the rally at Chesterfield when he talked of the miners' strike creating a new force 'which has transformed the face of British politics.' The 1984-85 dispute has broken the mould of British politics, and things will never be the same again.

Women have come forward and led this force for change. And in so doing have taken a step to a new mass women's movement. As Betty Heathfield said, 'this is a movement of women which 'shall never look backwards, but will always look forward with optimism'.

## Blacks and miners fight together

mental is because a Labour Party in a real alliance with black people will be a very different kind of Labour Party. The Kinnocks and Willisles fully realise the significance of this. That is why they fight the black section movement as vehemently as they fought against building the solidarity necessary to win the miners' strike.

So what of the aftermath of the strike? What now of the Scargill-black section bloc in particular?

By Mike Wongsam

The end of the dispute must be the beginning of a major effort to shift the balance of forces between the militants and the scabs in the labour movement.

Moreover, the 5.5 million votes cast at Labour Party conference against black sections, came overwhelmingly from the trade unions. The struggle for black self-organisation and representation in the party must be taken through the trade unions.

This means posing the question of black caucuses in unions which have a

large black membership. It also means that the militants and black workers must continue the alliance constructed at Labour Party conference in order to fight the scabs and realise the right of black people to organise within the movement.

Both struggles must continue as a permanent feature of labour movement politics in the coming years. These struggles will initiate a revolution in the labour movement — a struggle for a leadership modelled on the Scargill leadership of the NUM.



Black support for the miners



# 'THE BEGINNING

**STAMPING FEET,** clapping, singing, and chanting rang through Chesterfield's football stadium on 9 March at one of the most memorable celebrations of International Women's Day ever seen in this country. Thousands of women and men descended on the town from every pit community throughout the land.

The day was organised by Women Against Pit Closures, when the miners were still on strike. The decision to put extra energy into getting a good turn-out on the day — although most miners had returned — paid off.

**COMRADES AND friends,** I want to bring warm fraternal greetings from the national executive committee of the National Union of Mineworkers, to this international women's rally. I have never felt as proud to be bringing greetings as I have today to women who have stamped their mark indelibly on history, and certainly on this dispute over the past 12 months.

My friends in the media have got a problem. They can't attack Tony Benn. They'll try. And they're having a problem with me. But they're having a bigger problem with you.

You see, these journalists don't go to normal schools. They go these new computer schools which programme them. And they've been told by Mrs Thatcher, and that Mr Walker, to put it out that they have won. They don't find that a big problem because they've been saying that for 12 months. But the problem that they find is the fantastic, amazing sight of miners, members of the women's support groups families and workers from other industries marching to work in victory.

I participated in the march at Barrow colliery near my own home. When I arrived at the gates of Barrow colliery there was a handful of pickets. We turned away. The assembled motley crew of journalists said, 'Mr Scargill why did you turn away?'. I said: 'Because I reacted as any decent trades unionist should, and so should you. *You don't cross picket lines.*'

This is the only sort of rally that could stop me in mid flow.

You see, there have been historians already comparing the 1984-85 dispute

The rally proved an ideal opportunity to put the return to work into perspective and to give a new direction to the continuing work of the women's action groups.

Each speaker received a warm welcome from the crowd as they mounted the platform. Betty Heathfield gave a strong, fighting speech. 'We are not defeated,' she insisted. 'We have gone back with pride and dignity.'

'We have defended our union against the most dastardly government ever known in this country. We are stronger today than ever. There is a strong body of

with 1926. They've been pontificating from their Fleet Street desks or their *Daily Record* offices in Glasgow, about what is right and what is wrong, about the lessons to be drawn, and the conclusions to be drawn. They don't know what they are talking about.

In 1926, miners didn't go on strike, they were locked out. In 1984 they took strike action. In 1926, they were fighting to stop a decrease in wages and an increase in hours. And after seven months, they were starved back into work with longer hours and lower wages.

In 1985, at the end of the most historic strike in history, Britain's miners marched back to work on Tuesday having seen the 1984 closure programme *not* implemented, the five pits still open, a new procedure giving an appeals body intact, and above all, this union refusing to acquiesce to the closure of pits on so-called economic grounds. That's a victory.

There have been casualties in this dispute. We have just paid tribute to those that have paid the ultimate price. They died not only for the fight to save jobs and pits. They died, because they believed in their trade union.

And if there's any individual in the miners' union, or anywhere else, who still asks the question of why they should have supported the fight of the National Union of Mineworkers, it's because people like Joe Green and David Jones gave their lives for the British trade union movement and the right to work. That's why they all should have supported us.

There were those unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress,

women in every pit. We can't look backwards.'

Ann Scargill repeated the theme that the fight must go on. But the crowd went wild with enthusiasm when Arthur Scargill arrived.

As he walked across the field to the platform, the stadium shook with stamping feet, and the refrain of 'Arthur Scargill, we'll support you ever more'.

When he rose to speak, he was at first drowned out by the chanting and singing. His half-hour long speech was punctuated by the audience's loud approval.

We reproduce that speech below.

particularly those in the power industry, that should hang their heads in eternal shame for what they have done during the course of this dispute. They can come forward with whatever arguments they wish. But they will never be able to erase the fact that when the chips were down, they supported Margaret Thatcher and turned their backs on the NUM. For that they'll be stained until the end of time.

Of course something approaching a thousand of our members have been dismissed for the most trivial of reasons during the course of this dispute. This government, and its American appointee, now seek to impose the Americanism that we have seen deployed in the mining areas of the United States here in Britain.

This union has got a responsibility. Those men who have been arrested and jailed are, as far as I'm concerned, political prisoners. They've been jailed because they fought for this union, and we should all stand up and say straight-forwardly what we mean.

Those of our young people, and those of the women's support groups who were arrested in the most brutal way, have been criminalised by a state that's deployed every possible tactic against the miners' union. They sought to defend their system against the demand of a union and of a movement that sought only the right to work. This is a stain that the next Labour government has got to wipe clean. It's a stain that they have got to take on board.

And I appeal to all of our parliamentarians, I appeal to all those in the trade union movement — when this union talks about amnesty, for god's



Photo: G M COOKSON

sake stop the equivocation. We want an amnesty for all our members who've been sacked in the course of this dispute. They've a right to their jobs back. Their only crime was fighting for the right to work.

A women's movement was established during the course of the 1984-85 strike in the mining areas. It not only transformed the lives of women who, until that time, had had a narrow vision of what their role was and should be. It transformed our lives in the union.

And if there's one thing the union's got to do it's to say to the women's

support groups: this is not the end, it's the beginning. Because you're part of this union and must remain in existence. I want the women's groups to go away from rallies like this and rededicate themselves to the struggle.

This dispute has not ended. The strike has come to an end, as the government fights a war of attrition. The miners' union and the women's groups, together with those sections of the labour movement who have supported us consistently, have now got to adopt new tactics. That means an increase in determination on the part of the women's movement to defend the



Photos: MARK SALMON





# NOT THE END'



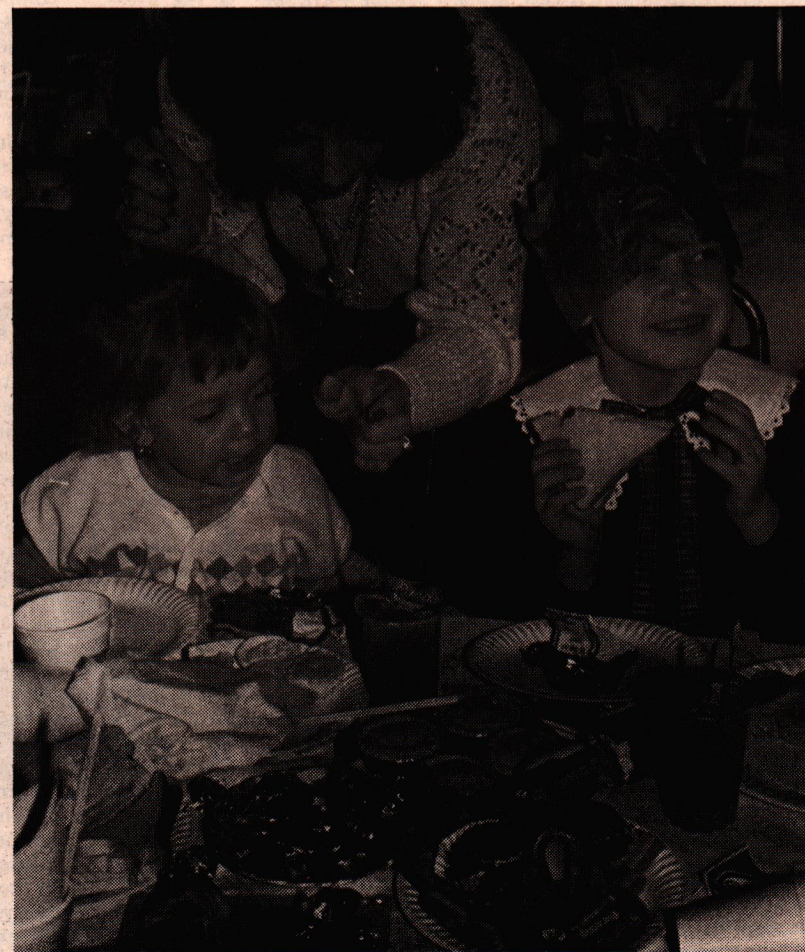
NUM. It's your movement. You've made yourselves part and parcel of the strike movement.

All of us in this stadium have got a responsibility to those that have been sacked during the course of the dispute. We've got to collect in every town and village throughout the British Isles in order that none of those sacked suffer as a consequence of what has occurred. We've got to take this fight forward and step up the campaign.

The women's support groups have got to take on a broader role. You must become involved in the wider issues. Learn and understand the fact that rate

capping affects each and every one of us. And that the peace movement is of absolute importance to every man, woman and child.

This dispute has cost this government, and as a consequence the tax payers, £7 billion. Now, for the benefit of the *Daily Star* and the *Daily Express*



— that's a lot of money. At a time when they can't even find the money to keep a kidney machine operating to save a man's life, they're prepared to spend 50 per cent of the annual expenditure of the health service on trying to smash the NUM.

They're spending millions upon millions of pounds on weapons of death and destruction. If this government really meant that it doesn't want to deal in uneconomic ventures, let them close down the cruise missiles programme and end the missiles programme in Scotland.

I'm sure that remark will get my phone tapped now. I'll tell you what, they'll have some cracking conversations to listen to. I can just imagine them listening in to Arthur Scargill telephoning Tony Benn.

'Hello Tony,' 'Hi, Arth.' 'Tony, I'm wanting to keep the pits open.' 'Great.' 'I also want to retain jobs.' 'My God.' 'And I want to have peace in the world rather than war.' 'Goodness me.' 'And I want to see a better quality of life for human beings.' 'Great Scott!' 'Heseltine, get your flak jacket.'

They'll be absolutely beside themselves. They just haven't come to terms with the fact: they don't have to tap our phones. We'll tell them what we want. We want a better life, a better world. We want the right to work. That's what we want.

Of course, there have been those that have said: 'What have been the positive achievements of the miners' dispute?' Well this rally is one of them. We've more here than Chesterfield football club can get.

We've developed friends throughout the world. Not only with trades unionists but with ordinary men and women who are not prepared to stand idly by whilst the miners were ground into the dust. Example after example can be cited to demonstrate what real internationalism is. The ship workers, the port workers, and the miners; the seamen didn't move a ton of coal for the entire 12 months of the dispute. That's real internationalism.

And in a lesson to those trade union leaders who are apparently more interested in getting a seat in the House of Lords — as Tony Benn pointed out on *Question Time* the other night — we had the best display of internationalism we've ever seen on Tuesday.

The Australian government contacted the seamen's union of Australia and said: 'Now the strike is over, will you now release the coal and let it be transported overseas?' The Australian seamen's union cabled the NUM in Sheffield and said that they would only release coal when the NUM told them that the strike was at an end. Only then would they transport it abroad. That's internationalism, that's trade unionism.

When I listen to our people in the National Union of Journalists — you know these people in front here with their cameras, waiting to see if I pull my coat this way or that way — I say why don't you practice a bit of trade union commitment? I don't mean putting a fiver or a quid in a bucket. When they tell you to put the filth out on TV about our movement and these brave women, refuse and black out the screen. That's trade union commitment.

I've come to this rally today to talk in the most optimistic way about the next step in our campaign. The fight goes on to save our pits, our jobs and our industry. It goes on with the total involvement of the whole wider movement to preserve our communities. To preserve a culture and a way of life. To enable us to further tap the marvellous latent talent and ability, that we've all seen released during the course of this dispute.

If we allow the marvellous actions of the women's action groups to

dissipate, it would be an act of criminality.

Each of us today has got to dedicate ourselves to a public campaign to save the mining industry, to develop and expand the industry in line with the Plan for Coal. There must be no pit closures. There must be no reduction in manpower levels. There must be no victimisation. But above all, from this day forward, each and everyone of us should say that we owe it to all who participated in the dispute to take it one step further.

We've got to do things in a tangible way. And I've already made, together with Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey, one of the first steps to show what we think about the efforts that have been made. I'm sure you'll agree with us.

The miners' headquarters in Sheffield will be built, hopefully, within the next period — if we're not sequestered too long! In the entrance hall of the major trades unions in Britain — indeed in the major institutions of Britain — there are normally plaques to those who have led the union or to the worthies of the trade union and labour movement.

Well as far as I'm concerned — as far as I or Peter or Mick are concerned — we don't believe that we or any of our predecessors belong in there. We believe that there should be three plaques erected in the entrance hall of the new headquarters in Sheffield. And I hope that you'll agree that we've made the right choice.

The first will be a plaque to honour the memory of David Jones. The second is for Joe Green. And the other will be dedicated to the achievements of the magnificent women's support groups during the course of this dispute.

Comrades, I want to say from the bottom of my heart how grateful I am for the efforts that you put in during the course of the past 12 months. But I also want to plead for some more effort — to direct every penny that's raised to the miners' solidarity fund in order that every penny shall go to those that have been victimised until we can reinstate them in the industry.

I want each and every one of you to raise your eyes and to take the struggle forward. To become part and parcel of the peace campaign. To become part and parcel of the campaign to stop the attacks on local government and upon your communities and your way of life.

I believe that this movement has transformed Britain in a way that was unthinkable only 18 months ago. You've changed the face of British politics. You've demonstrated what you can do provided you're prepared to stand and fight. You've proved to be a glowing example not only to those who created and built our movement, but also to those in the trade union movement who stood to one side during the course of this campaign.

We should ensure that in the days, the weeks and months that lie ahead, that we lift this struggle on to a new plane. That we translate into action the kind of views that have been expressed at this rally today. If we do that, we shall not only march to victory, and save the pits and the jobs of those that we are privileged to represent.

In the process of doing that, we shall lay the condition for transforming for ever the kind of society in which we live.

We shall transform it from one that preached war to one that preaches peace.

We shall transform it from one that preaches greed to one that preaches care.

We shall transform it from a capitalist system to a socialist system of society.



# Two crises in British politics

FOUR YEARS ago, in March 1981, the biggest structural change in British capitalist politics since World War I took place with the split from the Labour Party to form the SDP. The miners' strike has now brought about the biggest event in working class politics since 1926 — the emergence of the Scargill wing of the NUM, the first mass class struggle current in the labour movement for 55 years. JOHN ROSS looks at the historical reshaping of British politics which is taking place.

THE framework of the old British political system — both working class and capitalist — was created by the events which unfolded in British society from the beginning of World War I up to 1926.

At the level of capitalist politics, World War I smashed the backbone of the mass Liberal Party — the force which until then had been the chief alternative party to the Tories. In December 1910, at the last general election before World War I, the Liberal Party won 272 seats and the Labour Party only 42.

In 1916, under the strain of war, the Liberal Party shattered between the supporters of Lloyd George and Asquith. By 1924 the Liberal Party had only 40 seats in Parliament and Labour 151. The Conservative Party remained, and even increased, its strength. The old Liberal Party never recovered from its 1916 split. Under the impact of war the entire party system changed from a basically Liberal-versus-Tory contest to a Labour-versus-Tory system.

This two-party system of politics remained clearly dominant for six decades until 1981 — when the SDP was formed from the split in the Labour Party. That split was necessitated, for capitalist politics, both by the historical decline of the Conservative Party and the destabilisation of Labour. The SDP, in alliance with the Liberals, produced the electoral eruption of June 1983 and the tremendous fall in the Labour Party vote of that year. Since 1983 a new three-party system has been clearly established in British politics.

If World War I set in place a new Labour versus Tory system, then the defeat of the general strike of 1926 dictated the type of Labour Party which existed within that political framework.

In the period prior to World War I enormous forces had been developing in British society — the rising clashes



which smashed the Liberal Party under the strain of the war. The pre-1914 strike wave, the struggle of Ireland for independence, and the suffragettes had dominated the pre-war period.

World War I deepened still further the convulsion in working class politics. Out of it emerged on the one hand the Communist Party and on the other a mass class struggle current in the trade unions — symbolised by AJ Cook's leadership of the miners and by the rise of a left wing mass Minority Movement.

To contain and defeat these currents was the most urgent task facing British capitalism. It was a task achieved by a combination of repression, concessions, and above all by strengthening the Labour bureaucracy.

At the level of enforced concessions, 26 out of the 32 counties of Ireland were granted independence in 1921 — and the British government immediately lined up with Orange bigots in the

north, and green Tories in the south, to enforce partition.

Women were granted the right to vote in 1918 — which failed even remotely to fulfill the needs of liberation but was nevertheless a tremendous advance.

Having thereby isolated the miners from some of their strongest potential allies, successive Tory governments turned their attention to preparing to smash the strongest section of the working class — as well as the mass class struggle current which had emerged from it. From 1921 onwards British government policy was dictated above all by preparation to confront the miners. In the confrontation itself the Baldwin government utilised the TUC's betrayal of the general strike to isolate the Miners' Federation and crush their strike.

The defeat of 1926 in turn established the nature of the mass labour movement for the next half century. The Minority Movement was weakened by the defeat and then destroyed by the policies imposed on it by the stalinised Communist Party. The leadership of the miners' union, Cook and his supporters, was isolated. After 1926 any sort of mass class struggle current disappeared for almost 60 years as a significant force in the British labour movement.

The new, completely dominant, trade union leadership which consolidated itself out of the defeat of 1926 was symbolised by Ernest Bevin and Walter Citrine — class collaborationist bureaucrats down to the tips of their fingers.

Bevin had become leader of the TGWU in 1921, Citrine general secretary of the TUC in 1926. Bevin used to like to boast that he was a supplier of labour to the economy in the same way that capitalists were suppliers of capital. His speciality was destroying left wing opposition within his own, and other, unions — as with the London bus workers in the 1930s.

After Bevin's permanent departure to become foreign secretary in 1946, and Citrine's departure from the scene in 1945, the resolutely right wing line of the trade union bureaucracy shifted not one inch to the left. Figures such as Deakin, Carron, Tewson and Woodcock dominated the movement in the 1950s and early 1960s — and were the mainstay of support for the policies of Hugh Gaitskell and Harold Wilson.

The combination of a Labour-versus-Tory political system with a completely dominant right wing bureaucracy within the Labour Party and the absence of any serious class struggle currents in the labour movement, established the framework of British politics from the aftermath of World War I until the beginning of the 1980s. That framework undoubtedly was frayed by the late 1960s and early 1970s — with the rise of the new Liberal Party and the student and working class radicalisation of the late 1960s and 1970s — but it was not broken up in its qualitative features.

The Liberals, despite gaining almost 20 per cent of the vote in 1974, could not crack the framework of two-party politics or splinter one of the other major parties. The reflection of the rising working class radicalisation in Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones was only that of a leadership which permitted others to take action — and only before Jones and Scanlon completely capitulated to Wilson in 1975 and became an active force in breaking up working class struggle.

When that 60 year political framework is understood, then it can be seen what a political earthquake is the almost simultaneous emergence within bourgeois politics of the SDP and within working class politics by the emergence of the Scargill leadership of the NUM. The creation, almost at the same time, of the SDP and 'Scargillism' reflects the break up of the entire political equilibrium of society that was created out of World War I and its aftermath.

The fact that the two fundamental shifts in capitalist and working class politics emerged so close together in time reflects that the entire society is in motion. Its political structure is beginning to break up.

The consequences of the emergence of the SDP have already begun to work themselves through the labour movement. The 'new realist' policy of the TUC, of Hammond, Graham and Duffy, is not simply a trade union line. Their conclusion is a complete political realignment, the reorientation of the Labour Party to coalition with the SDP-Liberals and a qualitative weakening of the links between the trade unions and the Labour Party.

Equally, 'Scargillism' is only just beginning to work its way through the labour movement. Out of the miners'

strike has been forged a new force of tens of thousands of people who have been through the greatest political event of their lives. The new 'baseline' of radicalisation in British politics is no longer 1968, or even the working class struggles of the early 1970s, but the great miners' strike of 1984-85.

The nature of the forces which are emerging is clear. Their core is the militants of the NUM — the greatest layer of class struggle fighters to exist in the British labour movement since the creation of the Communist Party. But thousands and thousands of women, blacks, trade unionists, young people and Labour Party activists have oriented to this strike. The *Financial Times* paid it a rather fitting compliment when it called this force 'the greatest civilian mobilisation since the Second World War'.

The NUM, the miners' support committees, the women's groups, the trade union solidarity, are beyond doubt the greatest social movement in Britain since World War II. These forces have an even more advanced ally today in Gerry Adam's Sinn Fein in Ireland.

It is out of these forces, the 'Scargillites' who dominated the miners' strike and made it their own, that a class struggle left wing and a revolutionary marxist current in the labour movement are going to begin to be forged. They constitute the greatest opening for internationalist, political marxism to break out of its historically-imposed isolation and strike real roots in British society.

In 1979, under the whiplash of economic necessity and the historical decline of the Conservative Party, Margaret Thatcher set about trying to remake British politics and British society. Her first political product was Dr Death — the grisly face of David Owen and the SDP. Her second political creation was the 1984 miners' strike and the first mass class struggle current and leadership in the labour movement for six decades.

The next decade of British politics will be the full working out of the new political forces which are being created before our eyes. Those who do not understand that, are living in dreams of the past — not preparing for the struggles of the future.

No-one is going to be able to put back together the old pieces of British politics.





# Breaking our chains

'WHAT WE have been shown by ancient Rome on a monstrous scale, is being repeated in England of the present day. The nation which subjugates another nation forges its own chains.'

In these words Karl Marx spelt out to the First International the significance of British rule in Ireland for the British working class and for democracy in Britain. One hundred and fifteen years later this same truth has, in 12 months of heroic struggle, been brought home to literally thousands of men and women in Britain's mining communities.

The miners, and the women of the mining communities, have experienced a level of repression which is certainly quite new in post-war struggles in Britain. But it is not at all new in the British state as a whole.

On the contrary, one of the most profound and, for the ruling class, disturbing results of the last 12 dramatic months is that a section of the miners and their communities now grasps from personal experience exactly what type of 'British justice' has been normally reserved for Ireland — and more recently for Britain's inner city black communities.

A truly revolutionary change in consciousness has occurred as some thousands of men and women understood the fact that the 'chains' used to try to smash down their struggle for jobs and communities were 'forged' on the streets of Belfast and Derry, and in the fields of Armagh.

Once that fact sinks home its consequences are quite clear, and are perfectly formulated by Marx: 'Quite apart from all the phrases about "international" and "humane" justice for Ireland — which are taken for granted in the International Council — it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connexion with Ireland. And this is my fullest conviction...'

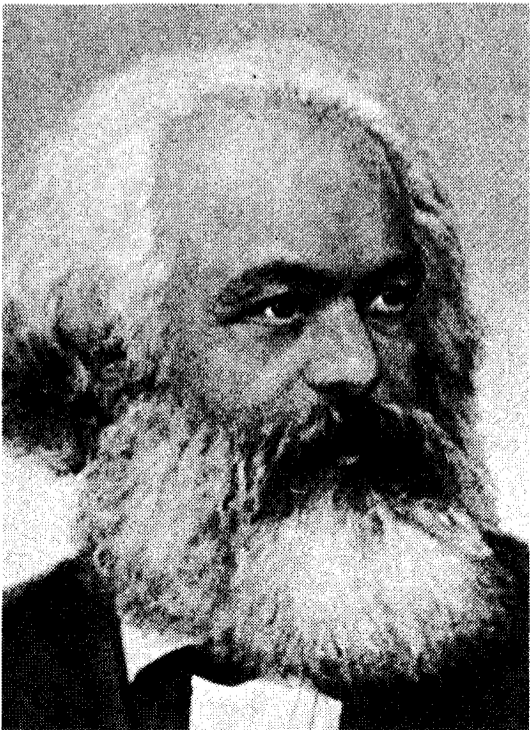
'For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy...Deeper study has now convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will never accomplish anything until it has got rid of Ireland...The English reaction has its roots in Ireland.'

These words are equally relevant today. Virtually everything that has been thrown at the mining communities in the last year — from mass arrests, police occupations of pit villages, police riots, road blocks, and effective curfews — was first pioneered against the nationalist population of the six occupied counties in the North East of Ireland.

No one can convince the men and women who have been on the receiving end of these methods here in Britain that they are the means to fight isolated groups of criminals or terrorists. The miners know from personal experience that the methods developed in Ireland, and used against their strike, are methods of mass repression and intimidation against entire communities.

And if that's true in Armthorpe and other parts of Yorkshire then it must be equally true in Ireland — where the only distinction is that the repression is on a far grander scale.

In one go the British state has done more to undermine its own multi-million pound propaganda about Ireland than thousands of articles in socialist newspapers can ever do.



Bobby Sands' funeral

# Labour and Sinn Fein

By Redmond O'Neill

THE MOST remarkable aspect of the miners' 12 month struggle was the way it demonstrated in practice the sort of alliance of the exploited and oppressed which the British working class must forge in order to wage any serious struggle against the British bourgeoisie.

With the miners were the women in the mining communities, the Greenham women, the left wing of the Labour Party and trade unions, the gay support movement, the black support movement and so on. Against them were the bulk of the official leadership of the labour movement, alongside the parties of the capitalist class.

However, the miners, from the first days of their strike, had another ally — one which may surprise some British socialists — Sinn Fein in Ireland. In an interview with this paper, Joe Austin, chairperson of Belfast Sinn Fein, explained their position:

'We give complete and unequivocal support to the miners. The nationalist population in the North of Ireland may not understand all of the ins and outs, but they see the miners getting battered by the police every morning on TV and they view anyone that is involved in struggle as a comrade.'

This position of Sinn Fein and its general objective of linking up with the left wing of the British labour movement does have fundamental significance for the class struggle in Britain. Because what is posed is the possibility of an alliance between the British working class and

the people of Ireland against the British ruling class. And that really is a powerful combination of forces.

In fact the entire, elaborate system of censorship, propaganda and repressive laws like the Prevention of Terrorism Act exists precisely in order to prevent such an alliance coming into being.

Just as the miners' strike in Britain has brought into existence a class struggle of a kind not seen since the '20s in this country, so too, the Irish struggle — which has been on a qualitatively higher level than anything in Britain — has brought into existence an even more politically advanced mass leadership in the form of the Adams leadership of Sinn Fein.

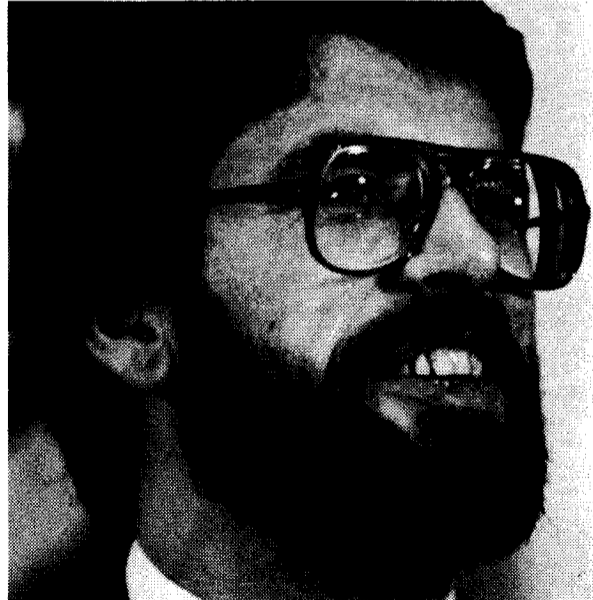
And just as the struggle for the defence of democracy and democratic rights like trade union rights has been a central concern of

the 'Scargillite' left in Britain, in Ireland Sinn Fein has won the leadership of the most militant sections of the nationalist population of Ireland on the basis of its unwavering commitment to and struggle for the most elementary democratic right of all — the right to the national independence of Ireland from Britain.

As Gerry Adams put it in his speech to the 1984 Sinn Fein Ard Fheis: 'We will continue to campaign for the restoration of Irish democracy and to articulate the desire of our people for freedom and independence, regardless of Dublin smears or British violence.'

'Ireland geographically, historically and culturally is one nation. We as one people have the right to be free, and in that freedom the divided sections of our people will find the will to unite, regardless of religious affiliations.'

In the course of that struggle for Irish freedom from Britain, the Adams leadership of Sinn Fein has emerged as a force which recognises that only the Irish working class has an interest in carrying that struggle through to the end, and that in order to do so it will have to champion all struggles against oppression in Ireland — above all that of women. So too, it will have to use all possible avenues of



Gerry Adams

struggle — the military campaign, elections, trade union work and mass campaigning.

What is now emerging in the British state is the possibility of an alliance of truly historic significance between the revolutionary nationalist Sinn Fein leadership and the class struggle forces emerging in the British labour movement. Such an alliance is a step on the road to welding an alliance between the Irish people and the British working class.

Such an alliance has not been brought into existence since the days of

Chartism when the second national charter petition of 1842 incorporated the demand for freedom for Ireland into the demands of the mass British working class movement.

Sinn Fein's total support for the miners enormously contributes to creating a mass working class current which consciously seeks to recreate the alliance between Ireland and the British working class on the only basis possible — namely, the British working class itself championing the Irish struggle against British rule in Ireland.

John Sturrock/Network  
Victor Patterson



# Nicaragua solidarity takes off

IN 1984, the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign (NSC) held its annual general meeting discreetly, on a Sunday morning, during the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign AGM. This year, the NSC AGM took place over the weekend of the 16 and 17 February, with over 120 delegates, hosted by the Manchester Town Hall. The Manchester City Council had just signed a friendship agreement linking Manchester to the Nicaraguan town of Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic Coast.

The comparison illustrates the fast growth of the national solidarity campaign, prompted by the increasing intervention by imperialism against the revolution in Nicaragua. Last year saw the first organised delegations and work brigades sent from Britain, joining the already extensive international solidarity presence that any visitor can witness — probably the largest of its kind anywhere since the Spanish civil war. All who took part (including Mr Kinnock?) have come back with a strong determination to extend solidarity with Nicaragua. Also last year, the first 'Container Project' was shipped with many badly needed items of equipment and supplies collected throughout Britain.

This AGM set clear perspectives for the NSC. Its central priority will be work in the labour movement, with a particular emphasis on the trade unions — especially important given that the TUC still refuses full recognition to the main Nicaraguan union confederations, the CST and ATC. This orientation reinforced that adopted one week earlier at the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign AGM, which also decided to concentrate on furthering solidarity in the unions and Labour Party.

In words the idea is not new. The problem remains how to do it.

A national representative from NALGO gave valuable advice on how to organise the trade union solidarity conference planned for the autumn. Centred on Nicaragua, but with a Central American dimension, this will be the major event for 1985. It will give activists the basis for taking practical solidarity into the trade union movement, for developing a membership drive and for building support against intervention.

The conference will aim at putting pressure on TUC policy, organising an official TUC delegation, and helping to extend active solidarity around the second Container Project. It will be backed up by some specialist delegations to Nicaragua by, for example, health workers, students and teachers. Above all, it must be a working conference, not a rally, which genuinely organises important sections of the working class movement around what is today the single most important international task — defence of the Nicaraguan revolution and self-determination for the peoples of Central America.

One further way trade unionists can develop the links that are needed is by twinning with their equivalent union in Nicaragua, or with local branches. This idea of twinning has been applied very successfully to many labour councils such as Sheffield, Lambeth, Liverpool, Manchester. But twinning must not

stop short at purely formal gestures by left local government.

As the delegates from Liverpool forcefully argued, council twinning has to be used as a lever to promote direct links throughout the local community, amongst local trade union branches, trade councils, Labour Parties, women's organisations, amongst every kind of popular organisation in our communities. This provides

a concrete focus for raising political and material support — as Bolton Trades Council are doing by twinning with the regional CST (Confederation of Sandinista Workers) in Ocotol, near the contra-infested border with Honduras.

Twinning is just one area where co-ordination between solidarity work in the unions and in the Labour Party is essential. That is why the NSC AGM also adopted a motion calling for the Central America campaigns, and their local groups, to call regional forums to co-ordinate the work of local Labour Party and union activists. Many of these want to take up more consistent solidarity but don't have the time to

get involved in the regular work of the solidarity committees themselves.

By Martine Bonadona  
NSC executive  
(personal capacity)

However, there are particular political tasks which need more concentrated attention in the Labour Party. There is no doubt that Kinnock's trip to attend Daniel Ortega's swearing-in as President (even if it was a long time in coming), and previous trips by Alf Dubbs and Stuart Holland to the elections had tremendous political importance and help serve as a real obstacle to the US designs in Central America — not least because of the impact they have through-

out the Socialist International.

The only way to further develop Labour Party policy, and ensure its practical implementation, is to develop a source of constant pressure within the party. To this end the NSC, together with ELSSOC, have decided to try and establish a committee on Central America within the Labour Party to promote the campaign's objectives, put pressure on party policy, and draw on the untapped wealth of support amongst the party's rank and file. It is hoped such a committee can be launched formally at a fringe meeting at this year's Party Conference — with several preparatory meetings leading up to that.

The orientation towards

the anti-nuclear and peace movements the AGM decided on, would centre on building a peace conference in October on the theme 'From War in the Third World to the Third World War'. This event, particularly important given that some of the American ships stationed in front of the Nicaraguan coast may be carrying nuclear weapons, is jointly organised by ELSSOC and NSC together with CND and END. The umbrella organisation which provides the framework for this initiative is NICA (No Intervention in Central America), a co-ordination of many organisations supporting the solidarity movement.

There was also a long and fruitful discussion on

women at the AGM, as the women present felt that the revolution has raised several issues, challenged many beliefs, and deserved widespread discussions and actions. A national meeting of all women involved in solidarity work will be called on 20 April to consider some structure and activities on the issue.

Finally, the NSC AGM adopted a new constitution, a new structure and a new executive committee to carry out the huge tasks facing the movement. Out of the eight members of the incoming executive five are women. The whole weekend was a success, an inspiring start for the new NSC: a solid and dynamic solidarity campaign prepared to go forward.



## Nicaragua must win

By Brian Grogan

THE MINERS' strike mobilised everyone with even the least inkling of class struggle militancy. And rightly so.

The way the miners' struggle was fought and its outcome will have profound influence on the struggles of workers and the oppressed for many years to come. Yet this does not compare with the significance of the struggles in Central America — particularly in Nicaragua.

In Nicaragua there is a real government of the type that Arthur Scargill calls for — a government as loyal to our class as Thatcher is to hers. But such a government cannot be achieved through winning a parliamentary election. The Sandinista government was established as the direct outcome of the struggles of the workers, farmers and other oppressed in Nicaragua — against the local dictatorship there and its imperialist backers.

This is not to say that the Sandinistas are not popular or can't win elec-

tions. In the recent November poll, they received over two thirds of the popular vote, on a massive 80 per cent turnout.

The point is that such a government can only be established against the system. It has to break from capitalism and its forms of rule.

This is one of the reasons why the cause of Nicaragua should be of first-rate concern for all class struggle militants. The fight for solidarity creates the opportunity for us to explain what the goal and tasks of our struggles

in Britain ought to be about.

For the harsh truth is that the only way that workers will begin to permanently resolve the struggles in their interests is through establishing a government totally loyal to our class. That is to say, one that is based on our organisations and struggles and not on parliament.

To be sure, we will have to go through many more experiences of parliamentary Labour governments — including those dominated by the left — before this truth is understood by a decisive layer of working people. And until then the task of all socialists is to fight for the return of such governments. But no other type of government than that of the Sandinistas will solve our basic problems.

The other thing that the current struggles in Central America teach us is how to win a revolutionary major-

ity. The industrial working class in Nicaragua or El Salvador is qualitatively smaller than in Britain. Yet only the industrial workers have the social cohesion and organisation to establish a power against that of the capitalists.

What the Nicaraguan victory showed was the vital need for workers to forge an alliance with working farmers and other oppressed layers, particularly women, the oppressed nationalists and black people.

We got a taste of the power of such an alliance with the breath-taking role of the women in the mining communities. Deepening and extending this process is the clue to ultimate victory, as the Sandinistas have shown.

Seeing our allies in those most exploited and oppressed leads us to understand why internationalism is the only

realistic policy. The Sandinistas, following the example of the Cuban government, see the key to defending their revolution as extending it.

Revolutions cannot be exported, it is true. But the Sandinistas rightly appreciate that their revolution will be as much determined by the outcome of the struggle in El Salvador as any other arena. This understanding is also what led them to send support and solidarity to the NUM — despite all their concerns arising from the daily attacks of the US backed 'contras'.

The NUM found out it had more in common with French dockers, Australian seafarers and Irish freedom fighters than it had with working 'British' Notts miners — let alone TUC General Secretary Norman Willis, or Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

Indeed, reaching out to the freedom fighters in Central America, Ireland, South Africa and elsewhere not only weakens imperialism directly. It also restricts the resources available to buy off the likes of the Nottinghamshire miners.

For these extra crumbs which are thrown at such narrow layers of workers to secure support for the 'national interest' are, in the last analysis, made possible through the super-profits of imperialism's operations abroad.

Forging alliances with women, black people and other oppressed layers, as the NUM did, is just the other side of seeing our future wrapped up in the battles against imperialism in Central America and Ireland. All our struggles have to be thoroughly imbued with anti-imperialism. This is no less relevant in an 'industrial' dispute like the miners' strike.

Nigel Harris



# MANCHESTER STANDS FIRM

THE MANCHESTER Campaign against Tory local government attacks got under way on 6 March. Manchester saw its biggest ever demonstration when 15,000 marched in a tremendous show of unity between the council, the Labour Party, council employees and the community.

Every council was represented. Many workers took the whole day off. Forty per cent of the demonstrators were women.

At the rally Val Stevens, chair of the council's equal opportunities committee, spoke of the need for unity of those most under threat. Graham Stringer, leader of the council, explained that the Labour Party and council in Manchester was committed to defending

jobs, improving services, and that this local council would not make cuts, lose jobs, or raise rents — and it was not prepared to set a rate.

By Duncan Edwards

Bob Litherland MP gave support and paid tribute to the NUM, 'the greatest trade union in Britain'. A striking miner from Agecroft explained that now it

was the turn of the people of Manchester to act like the NUM. 'Trust your leadership, not the media,' he warned.

The following day, 7 March, Manchester city council refused to set a rate.

The following resolution was passed:

• This council recognises the continuing Conservative Government attacks on living standards and reiterates the council's policy of 23 March 1984 of protecting jobs and services and freezing rents. Since 23 March the evidence gained from representations and consultation with all sec-



Graham Stringer

tions of the community in Manchester reinforces the reasons for those policies.

In order to provide the necessary expenditure, having regard to the needs of the city, its statutory obligations, and legal

commitments, the council is currently committed to revenue expenditure to maintain its existing services of £286 million and has already identified in its assessment of needs and responsibilities, £33.5 mil-

lion of additional expenditure.

The government however have set a target of only £250.3 million. The council considers it will be impossible today for the authority to make a rate, bearing in mind the needs of the people of Manchester and the interests of ratepayers.

• This council will make further urgent representations to the Secretary of State to reconsider while there is still time, the level of grant targets and penalties as they will affect Manchester in '85-6, with a view to restoring grants and abandoning the harsh and harmful targets and penalty system.

The resolution went on to demand the restoration of funds which central government has denied the city, and also adopted a policy which includes no rent rises, protection of jobs and services, and no rate

rise above the level of inflation or the average wage increase.

In addition, bids proposals from council committees to create up to 2243 new jobs were passed, and the Youth Training Scheme rate was raised to £40. And the council is committed to oppose all forms of discrimination based on disability, race, sex or sexual orientation.

Budgets put forward by the Tories and Liberals were rejected. Labour's budget was passed, with 66 votes. There were 11 Labour abstentions and one Labour vote against.

The mood of the meeting was summed up by Councillor Frances Dore who said 'We are not here to protect ourselves, but to represent and protect the interests of the people of the city of Manchester.'

The meeting ended in celebrations, with councillors and supporters in the gallery singing the Red Flag.

# COLMAN ENGINEERS STRIKE

ON WEDNESDAY 6 March, the day after the miners' return-to-work, 150 engineering workers at the Trafford Park and Sale factories of Colman Fastners walked out in pursuit of a wage claim. Twenty months ago Colman Fastners was the scene of a struggle for union recognition.

The firm is not new to Manchester. For over 80 years it was unorganised. All attempts at unionisation were defeated by sackings and pay-offs.

When five workers were sacked in June 1983, they responded with immediate strike action, winning reinstatement and recognition for the AUEW.

Since then, the trade union has grown in strength. Colman Fastners has supported other struggles, taking strike action

over GCHQ, and campaigning for the miners.

The union is now turning its attention to low pay. The company's offer is worth five per cent. This would leave workers at Colman Fastners £20 short of the weekly average for engineers in the Manchester area.

Ken Ward, a machine setter, summed up the mood: 'We felt insulted'. Day De Havilland in the toolroom explained: 'We

have to fight back'. The vote at a mass meeting was about 70 per cent for strike action.

Support from the local labour movement has been instantaneous.

Local Labour MP, Tony Lloyd visited the picket line last Friday. Workers from nearby engineering factories have sent delegations and financial support. But most inspiring of all has been the support from the miners.

The strike committee at Agecroft have supplied a strike hut, the use of their van and other provisions — and their valuable advice. Colin Lenton, treasurer of Bold NUM has circulated an appeal to the

labour movement on behalf of the strikers.

'Colman Fastners,' it says, 'have been a regular contributor of support to the miners' dispute over the last 12 months, providing consistent financial support, physical solidarity on the picket line, and in helping to mobilise support inside the AUEW...'

'We will certainly be doing our best to return the solidarity we have received, by supporting Colman Fastners in their fight against low pay. We hope you can join us.'

• Messages of support and donations to: Colman Fastners Strike Fund, c/o AUEW House, 43 Crescent, Salford M5 4PE.

**HERE WE GO!**  
**YOUTH MARCH & RALLY**  
**LABOUR & T.U. FOR**  
**JOBS NOT BOMBS**

ASSEMBLE 1.00 p.m.  
**SATURDAY 16 MARCH**  
**FOLESHILL PARK**  
**HOLBROOK LANE COVENTRY**

[by DUNLOP]

**MINES NOT MISSILES**

COVENTRY N.W. LP YOUNG SOCIALISTS  
 Supported by COVENTRY NUM STRIKE COMM.  
 T&AWU 5/920 BRANCH, COVENTRY  
 MINERS SUPPORT COMMITTEE  
 & OTHERS, YCND.

# For a fighting LPYS

THE ANNUAL conference of the West Midlands Labour Party Young Socialists, which took place on 2-3 March, accurately reflected the impact of the miners' strike on the LPYS. The complete failure of the Militant leadership of the YS to organise any events throughout the year to demonstrate youth support for the miners accounted for the poor turnout on the demonstration held on the morning of the conference.

It also explains the pressure that yielded a unanimous vote for the Selly Oak resolution criticising the YS leadership and calling for a regional 'Youth Support the Miners' march and rally.

By Mick Burke, Selly Oak LPYS

The liveliest debates were on lesbian and gay liberation and on Ireland. Many LPYSs have supported the Anti-Gay Ban Campaign in Rugby. The call to support a similar campaign against Sand-

minority in the LPYS committed to developing support for workers' struggles, building campaigns like YCND, and defending the interests of the oppressed.

The regional bulletin, Youth Fightback, was the focus for this minority current and its theme was 'for a YS leadership that stands and fights'. Its influence grew considerably during the conference, and it now has supporters in 13 YSs.

Regionally, the next steps in this fight will be for a massive turnout on the Coventry North West LPYS 'Jobs not Bombs,

Mines not Missiles' march on 16 March, and Youth Fightback's dayschool on lesbian and gay liberation.

But the struggle for a LPYS leadership more like the NUM leadership can only be successful if waged at a national level. The organisation of a similar current nationally, with its own bulletin, is an urgent priority.

• Jobs not Bombs, Mines not Missiles! Youth march and rally. Assemble 1.00pm at Foleshill Park, Holbrook Lane, Coventry, on Saturday 16 March.

# Teachers action spreads

THE NATIONAL Union of Teachers stepped up action in support of its pay claim this week, against the employers' derisory offer of four per cent. Teachers in 42 areas were called out on strike. The action involved about 6000 teachers in 353 schools.

In Scotland, the Educational Institute of Scotland, the main

teachers union, were also involved in action affecting 7000 teachers.

The National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education is balloting members on action after rejecting an offer similar to that made to the teachers. It will be asking its members to ban overtime working and cover for absent colleagues.

The employers have responded to the teachers'

refusal to cover for absent colleagues by threatening to deduct pay. The NUT has always insisted that such cover, and duties like supervision of meals, are not part of their contract. Solihull and Newcastle have started these deductions, and about 15 other authorities are waiting to follow suit.

The NUT executive's response has been to take these two authorities to court rather than step up

the action against them. If the courts run true to the form that they displayed in the miners' strike the NUT has little chance of winning the action.

The Tories are determined to hold the line against the teachers' pay claim in pursuit of their policy of holding down public sector wages. The NUT, as the main union involved, must go for an all out strike if the claim is to succeed.

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# SOCIALIST ACTION

Local government

# A bad beginning

FOLLOWING THE 50,000 strong demonstration of opposition to rate-capping, Thursday 7 March was the day that Labour councils and the metropolitan authorities took on the Tories. The reality was very different.

None of the four upper-tier authorities made a decision to defy the rate-capping laws. Instead, they opted for budgets and rate levels, that kept them within the law.

The 12 lower-tier authorities, which voted not to set a rate, have postponed the question of whether or not to obey the law. Hackney, with a hard-line resolution refusing to set a legal rate, is the exception.

But a clear conclusion from Thursday's exercise of presenting a united challenge to the government is that Labour is neither united nor committed to such a challenge.

The decisions by ILEA and the GLC, in particular, have made a very bad beginning to the campaign to defend local jobs and services. They have stumbled at the first real hurdle.

The GLC and ILEA were correctly seen as the leadership of the campaign. Their failure to confront the government by setting a rate will mean that the lower-tier authorities will be left to make

By Pat Hickey

their decisions on rate-capping individually.

The declarations that the upper-tier authorities will not implement cuts in jobs and services, and the pledges to oppose such cuts from Livingstone and others, is to be welcomed. But the GLC's refusal to give a clear lead is a real blow to the campaign.

Livingstone's argument that the GLC should not break the law, because it could avoid cuts with a budget within the law, is spurious. However, the refusal by John McDonnell and others to vote for a no-rate resolution had fallen, was factional stupidity.

The main object of Jenkin's strategy was not to impose major cuts on local government this year. It was to get the rate-

capping machinery into place for the future.

The GLC and ILEA decisions have opened the door in this regard. The various lower-tier authorities, which have failed to set a rate, will now confront the problem of running out of money at different times.

Dealing with the opposition one by one is precisely what Jenkin wants. Even in these cases, the authorities are differently affected by the rate-cap. Some will get by with 'creative accounting'. A few — it is not clear which yet — will face cuts.

The prospects for disunity are therefore greatly increased. The main point, however, is that the rate-capping machinery will be in place, allowing the Tories to tighten the screw next year.

## Jobs

The confrontation over jobs and services has been postponed, not avoided. The weakness shown last week, with Labour councillors urging each other 'you first' will encourage the Tories in their attack on local government. It will also assist those in the party, such as Cunning-

ham and Kinnock, who have placed obedience to the law above jobs and services.

The decisions of last July's local government conference, taken while the miners' strike was going forward, have not stood the first test. It is clear that if local government jobs and services are to be defended, the unions are going to have to play a much greater role than they have to date.

There can be no reliance on the Labour groups to lead this struggle. Some will fight. Others will attempt to back off.

The decisions not to set a rate will rapidly be tested in the courts. Labour groups will again be faced with the choice of obeying the law or accepting rate-cap.

The lesson of the miners' strike is clear in this regard. It is far better to fight with all the resources at one's disposal, even if at the end of the day the Tories succeed. Every battle slows them down, and makes their full programme more difficult to realise.

The more Labour resists, the closer will be the general election, and the better-prepared Labour

will be for it. Thursday 7 March was a very bad beginning, but it is by no means the end.

The real tests will come when the axe falls on jobs and services. The local government unions will have to lead the way in resisting these attacks.

The main failure in the

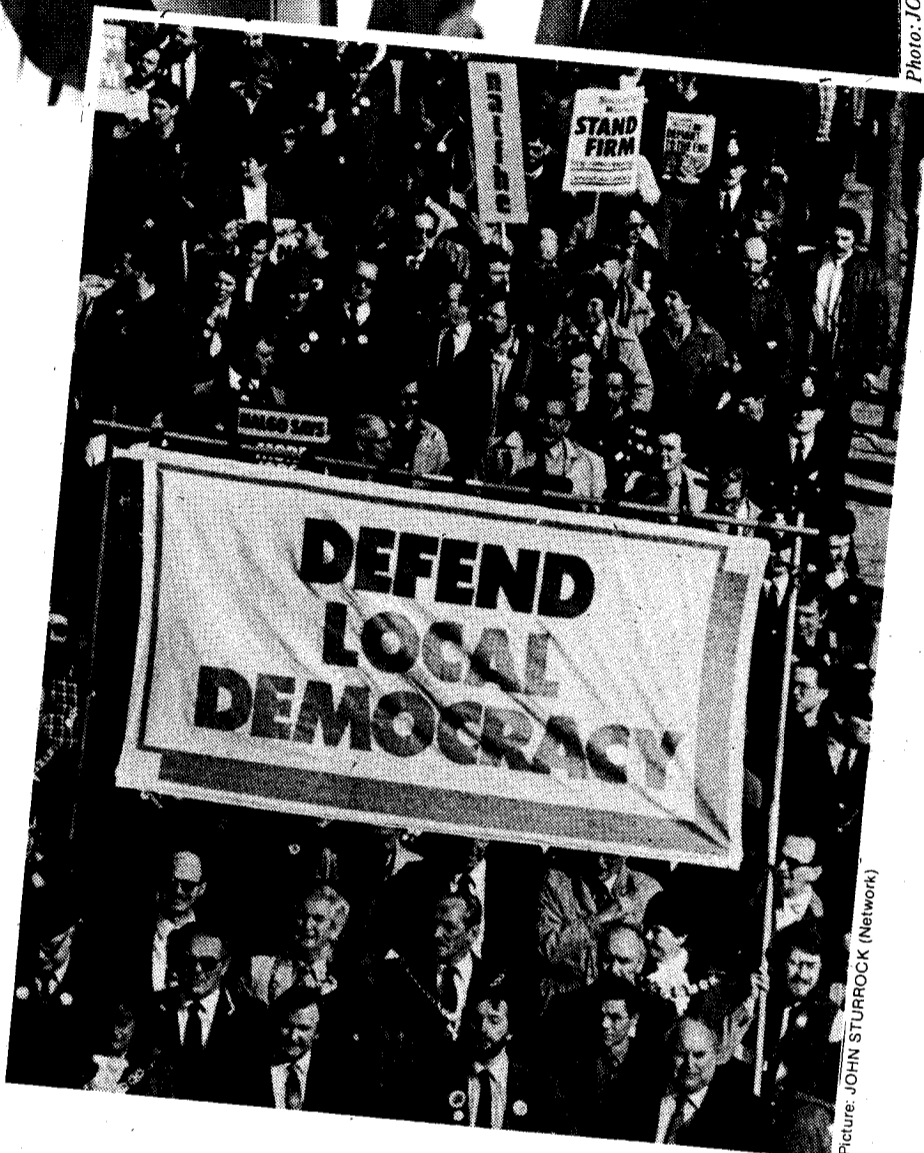
campaign so far has been that the unions, the constituencies and the Labour groups have not been united in a single campaign. Liverpool showed the way in this regard, but the lesson has not been taken on board by many authorities.

The best way to ensure

a united campaign, and prevent backsliding by Labour councillors, is to surround the Labour groups with the weight of the mass movement. We must learn from the bad beginning — the real battles are yet to come.

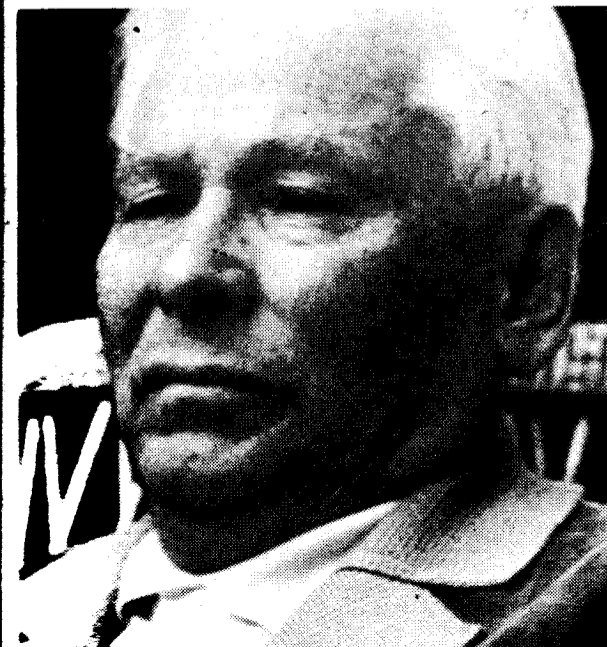


Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN



Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

# New bureaucrats for old



ANYONE who bothered to watch the television or listen to radio on Monday — or read the *Times*, *Guardian*, or *Telegraph* on Tuesday — might have been excused for giving themselves a pinch to see if they were dreaming.

The media seemed to be dominated by programmes praising the new general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachov.

According to Thatcher: 'I like Mr Gorbachov. We can do business together.' The *Guardian* waxed lyrical on 'A Soviet glimpse of Camelot'. Comparisons of Gorbachov to John Kennedy

abounded.

Only the new, 100 per cent Reaganite *Times* sternly warned in its editorial: 'In his public statements Mr Gorbachov has shown more interest in encouraging Western European countries and Japan to separate their policies from Washington than in proposing major steps which could lead to genuine progress in reducing tension between the military blocs.'

Apart from that severe rebuke however, praise of Gorbachov abounded as the first 'intellectual', 'post-war', 'cultured', 'university educated' leader of the Soviet Union. This was coupled with the now habitual sexist trash on his 'attractive', 'knowledgeable' wife.

The reasons for this

sudden outpouring of praise for the supposed incarnation of the 'red menace' were not hard to find. Almost every editorial on Gorbachov's accession spoke also of the arms control talks starting in Geneva.

The sudden outpouring of infatuation with the Soviet leader was very much linked to increasing disillusion with the United States' 'Star Wars' policy.

Denis Healey was perhaps the most florid in his radio interview on Tuesday morning. He announced that agreement with the Soviet Union was readily within reach and that the chief obstacle to 'arms control' was now the United States government.

Healey's statement follows a long line of other

West European Socialist Party leaders — Prime Minister Craxi of Italy, Vogel of West Germany, President Mitterrand of France — who have now attacked Reagan's 'Star Wars' project. Even those who backed cruise missiles all the way are pulling off from this new twist in the arms spiral.

Thatcher, in her tour of the United States accepted development, although not deployment, of the Star Wars weapons but was criticised for doing so in Britain, and has remained virtually isolated among West European capitalist leaders.

The idea of a defensive military screen for the United States which leaves Western Europe out in the cold does not appeal to West European

governments who are well aware of the ruthless intentions of the United States. A USSR reaction to this escalation by developing its own Star Wars systems — ones that would render the British and French 'independent' nuclear deterrents ineffective — is even less agreeable.

For that reason attempting to negotiate some sort of limitations on the whole project in the USSR-USA talks in Geneva has become a high priority for West European governments.

Understand that and you will grasp why flattery of the Soviet leadership suddenly became the vogue in important quarters of the British media on Monday and Tuesday.