

**Socialist**  
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# Socialist ACTION

## Poland five years on

SOLIDARNOSC was born in Poland five years ago in August 1980. It was the largest and most prolonged movement against the bureaucracy seen in Eastern Europe since the 1920s.

Contrary to the Polish government's claims, its basic demands were intolerable to capitalism. Its first statements spelt out its commitment to Polish socialised production relations.

Indeed Solidarnosc's suppression belies any claim that 'socialism actually exists' in Eastern Europe. What 'socialist' regime needs to crush ten million of its own workers demanding workers' management, strict material equality, and an end to bureaucratic privilege? The view that Solidarnosc's demands 'threatened socialism' has no foundation.

But Solidarnosc's rise also posed sharp questions for Western socialists. Capitalist Western Europe, with NATO rockets pointing East, gives the Soviet bureaucracy its most powerful support: genuine popular fear that World War II barbarism will again march East — only this time armed with modern weapons.

Solidarnosc's meteoric rise also illustrates one aspect of why the 'soviet threat' is illusory. It shows just how weak is a bureaucracy with no independent source of income or power, when workers rise against it.

The Soviet and East European bureaucracies are not aggressive juggernauts waiting to roll across Europe. They are weak cowardly bureaucratic castes wedded to the status quo and with no historical future. The 'defence' we need is to smash Reagan and his allies' war drive and make common cause with the working class of Eastern Europe for socialist democracy throughout the European continent — not some defence against a non-existent threat from Eastern Europe.

Solidarnosc contributed to giving a glimpse that this vision of unity of the West and East European working class is no historical utopia. The tremendous power of the East European working class was revealed to the entire world during Solidarnosc's rise.

A key weakness of Solidarnosc was that its leadership could not realise the potential the movement created. A mass Eastern European opposition, conscious of its international role, and dedicated to rescuing socialism and Marxism from the dead hand of 'official ideology' will not emerge overnight in Eastern Europe — and will not emerge spontaneously. That is excluded given the deadening hand of Stalinism in Eastern Europe. It will demand the conscious efforts of Marxists in Eastern Europe — and throughout the world.

The only perspective which made sense in Poland was to aim at a democratic socialist Poland, understanding on the one hand that this would lead to a showdown with the bureaucracy, and on the other that it would place Polish workers in radical opposition to the Western capitalist powers and their objectives both in Europe and in the Third World.

But Solidarnosc's leadership did not have such a clear perspective. This is what lay behind the tactical temporising which culminated prior to the imposition of martial law.

As the coup neared Solidarnosc's left wing prepared an 'active strike' but Walesa temporised. When the Vatican concocted a deal with Jaruzelski to back fake 'independent' unions, Walesa was caught on the hook. Behind all this was the issue of the perspective of what type of society to create in Poland — a problem that confronted Solidarnosc from its outset.

The problem could be put the following way. In Nicaragua the leadership was ahead of the movement. But in Poland it lagged behind it.

The intense and wide-ranging debate which still lives in the pages of Poland's underground press provides ample evidence that sections of Solidarnosc can and will rise to the needs of the political situation in that country. That summer of 1980 in Poland was a beginning, and not the end, of the rise of the political movement of the working class in Eastern Europe.

Solidarnosc lives; Solidarnosc will rise again! That remains a perspective in Poland.

# The right wing's Congress

AS WE go to press the outcome of the crucial AUEW executive decision on Tuesday night on continuing to take government funds for ballots is not known. Nor is the reaction of the TUC to the AUEW's open flouting of its decisions — although Willis was working assiduously throughout the opening of the congress to bring about a reconciliation.

But no matter how sharp the intra-bureaucratic clash becomes — and it has a dynamic of its own which is not necessarily under control — there should be no confusion on the core of the matter.

The TUC congress on Monday and Tuesday did not vote to reject the line of the AUEW and the EETPU on the government trade union legislation. It simply rejected openly adopting that line.

On all practical matters the general council, backed by the majority at the congress, voted to accept the AUEW/EETPU line of accommodating to the Tories anti-union laws.

By Dick Carter

But the truth is that the general council position, formally necessary as it was, is as flat as pancake. The reality is that the TUC has made no effort in practice to implement the Wembley conference decisions.

The core of the formal declaration of these decisions was that the strength of the whole movement should be used to defend unions facing attack by the Tories. That is exactly what has not been done — as the NGA and the NUM could amply testify.

Eric Hammond gave the game away when he said that the real thinking behind the Wembley decisions had been to wait for a future Labour government to repeal the legislation. There had never been any understanding by the general council that these laws were going to have to be taken on and defeated in struggle.

While speaking formally in favour of the continuation of the Wembley conference line Bill Keys of SOGAT, and chair of the TUC employment committee, in reality totally accepted Hammond's framework.

Keys announced that 'How the TUC will respond to the government legislation is the most important issue we're dealing with this year.' But then his argument for opposing Hammond, and upholding Wembley, was simply that 'There can be no alteration of the Wembley policies if we want to get rid of this legislative framework in the future.'

The congress vote — by 4,649,000 to 4,585,000 — to support the miners' resolution on amnesty was a wonderful black eye for the general council, and a significant achievement, but it did not hide the fundamental challenge from the extreme right wing.

The AUEW and EETPU's declaration that regardless of conference decisions they would continue to take government money for ballots was in effect proposing that the union movement should accept the anti-union legislation in its entirety.

Motion 6, moved by the EETPU to the congress was explicit. It stated unions should simply defend their members 'by whatever lawful means are most appropriate.'

As Eric Hammond spelt out the implications in this speech, 'A flexible attitude to the 1984 Act has served us (the EETPU) well — not so the Wembley package.'

## Wembley

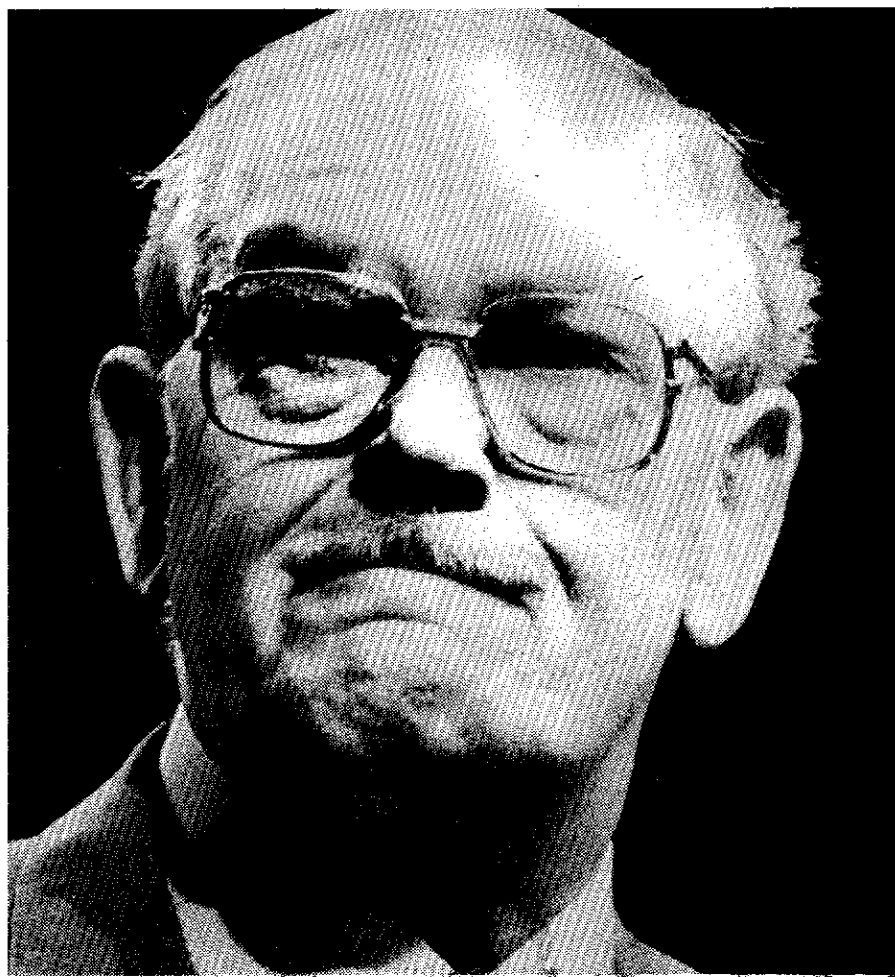
The resolution adopted by the congress, composite 2, called for 'total opposition to this unjust, anti-democratic, and anti-trade union legislation.' It reaffirmed the Wembley conference decisions of the TUC and called on a Labour government to repeal the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts — as well as the 1984 Trade Union Act. It all sounds rousing stuff.

In other words, the Wembley decisions were to be upheld not for struggle but simply as a marker — so that a future Labour government would overturn the legislation.

Willis's line was identical. He stated in his speech 'We're not departing from Wembley — that would be giving a signal we are giving up our policy of opposition. But nor are we being daft and embarking on a collision course of defiance which would result in desperate losses.'

While the AUEW and EETPU right were formally voted down the essence of their policy, that there should be no active challenge to the anti-trade union laws, was fully accepted.

The right wing also made the running on the single union and 'no-strike' deals which the AUEW and EETPU are



Terry Duffy



Norman Willis

vigorously pursuing. No effective opposition to these whatever has come from the general council.

The GCHQ debate on the first day of congress was equally turned by Willis into an opportunity to conciliate with the extreme right wing. The call for a day of industrial action against any attempt to victimise continuing trade union members at GCHQ was the minimum needed. But pride of place in the debate was consciously given to Eric Hammond — with his announcement he would ballot EETPU power worker members on supporting the action.

Willis was able to follow that up with the ringing declaration that 'If this battle is to be won Eric we need the electricians and engineers in this congress.' The whole aim of the way the debate was set up was to allow maximum scope for unity with the AUEW and EETPU.

There is however one fact which does underly the real division in the TUC. This is that the majority of the trade unions, and the general council, actually would like the greater part of the 1980, 1982, and 1984 Acts repealed. The difference is that the AUEW and EETPU leaderships would not.

After all, why should they? Those Acts did not fall from the sky. They were precisely modelled by the Tories on the functioning of the EETPU and AUEW right wing. Duffy and Hammond do not want fundamental parts of these Acts repealed at all. That is what underlies the sharpness of the intra-bureaucratic clash.

It is the forces which underly this that means that, finally, the TUC almost certainly will split. Because the AUEW and EETPU really are pioneering a new type of

trade unionism in Britain. One far more directly tied to the employers and state than anything seen previously in Britain this century.

As we go to press it still seems likely that the TUC will successfully try this time round to find a way of avoiding a split — although that is not fully certain. But that will only be to put off further a division which the right wing is now openly trying to impose on the whole movement.

## Apologies

For reasons beyond its control Socialist Action has not been able to maintain its usual coverage this week. We apologise to our readers.

We will however be back to normal next week.

# Why railworkers voted "No"

**RAILWORKERS, and the entire working class, suffered a severe defeat last week when NUR guards voted 'no' to industrial action against the imposition of driver only operation.**

The 'no' vote followed a rapid build up of industrial action in Glasgow, South Wales and London.

It showed the tremendous unevenness between the areas where the strikes developed and other parts of the country.

TONI GORTON, an NUR guard, looks at the reasons for the 'no' vote. Socialist Action interviewed GEOFF REVELL, a member of the NUR executive, on his view of the ballot result.

## A battle lost

**LAST WEEK, British Rail guards voted by 4815 to 4360 a majority of 455 against taking industrial action against driver only operation and in defence of their jobs. Despite this big setback we have to prepare now for the next round of battles. If after a year of bitter struggle, miners' leader Scargill can urge his supporters to 'look further afield than the present situation' then so can we.**

But why was there a 'no' vote in the ballot when everyone from the national press through British Rail management, to activists in the union thought it would be 'yes'? Is it simply the case that following the defeat of the miners that workers are unwilling to struggle? It's true the impact of the miners' strike is an important factor in the 'no' vote but on its own it doesn't rule out action by workers today — as the rapid industrial action taken in Glasgow, South Wales and London showed.

First the stakes in this dispute were extremely high. Management made it very clear how high with almost 400 sackings and suspensions within days. Every guard knew they were voting for all out, indefinite strike action and a confrontation which would lead to a lockout of all their fellow workers.

In this situation they weren't confident that the rail union leadership was offering a strategy which could win.

The second element was the decision by the 985 Annual General Meeting of the NUR to operate within the framework of the ballot itself. The

**By Toni Gorton,  
NUR Guard**

AGM's narrow decision to ballot before strike action was reached only after repeated and personal intervention of Jimmy Knapp who promised that we should 'turn this into a sword to smite them with'.

Far from turning it into a sword, the ballot demobilised people. It reinforced fears of going it alone, of the division of grade against grade, and of ASLEF's '82 defeat. Knapp did not give a lead of the type showed by Scargill but orientated in exactly the opposite direction.

More specifically, the No vote came from areas which had not been prepared for struggle by solidarity actions taken during the miners' strike. Massive 'no' votes came

from the Midlands, East Anglia, Western Region excluding Wales and the South East.

Of course the NUR also has its scabs and its scab depots — who management cosset and treasure. There are older workers who are reluctant to endanger any redundancy money or their few remaining years of paid labour. And there are main line guards who believe their jobs are safe until all lines are electrified and high speed trains are routinely equipped with sliding doors.

Given the pressures, the proportion of the 'yes' vote was a sign of the willingness to fight by a significant part of the guards, traditionally the most militant sector of the NUR.

It must be clearly recognised that the union is weakened by the vote and concessions and compromises will be forced from it as a result. But the Tory government has won a battle *not* the war. They cannot yet feel great confidence in their ability to carry through with their full plans when in the limited days of struggle during August they were forced into promising guards that their jobs were secure. They must be fought for these jobs every inch of the way.



Photo: GRAHAM COOKSON

## View from the NEC

**VALERIE COULTAS and GREG TUCKER interviewed GEOFF REVELL, a member of the executive of the NUR, for his view of the outcome of the strike ballot and the situation following it.**

**What did the NEC decide to do in the light of the result of the ballot?**

Our priority now changes to the question of the sacked workers at Immingham, South Wales and Scotland.

We have to accept as an executive committee that this is the business of the entire membership of the union. You can't talk about the men who have been dismissed for carrying out the policy of their annual general meeting in the same terms as what happens over driver-only operation.

What we have to do now is to go to the British Railways board and make that perfectly clear to them. We're not going over there with our heads hung low because of a ballot that was on the imposition of driver-only operation. The ballgame is now completely different. The issue now is about workers victimised for carrying out union policy. We are going to ask the board to reinstate those people immediately with all the conditions they had before — every single one of them.

If they do not they will

find themselves in further conflict with this union.

**Do you think it's likely that local areas and regions of the NUR will continue to take action in defence of victimised workers?**

I would hope that no worker, wherever they are, will allow their comrades to be sacked for carrying out the policies of their union.

**Do you think the decision of the NUR AGM to have the ballot and comply with the Tory Trade Union laws was a mistake? A lot of NUR militants are saying that Scargill was right in the miners' strike not to go for a ballot, and that the NUR was wrong to decide to take this issue to a ballot in the first place?**

The AGM delegates were mistaken in their belief that they could conduct a ballot without the kind of interference from management that we've had in this one. The people who were sacked and dismissed in their letters had the very same words as appeared on the ballot paper 'You are in breach of your contract of employment'. The



Jimmy Knapp

question on the ballot was obviously designed to terrify them from taking action.

British Rail had a rolling programme as well. They didn't sack everyone at once. In Scotland and South Wales they gave them a week to consider their position. They left it for another week before they went for Immingham.

One of the reasons for bringing the ballot forward was to interfere with the strategy of the British Rail Board — which was almost daily putting further pressure on our members.

**Can I return to the question that we asked before. Do you think that the NUR AGM decision to accept the imposition of the Trade Union laws and go for this ballot as a way of fighting to defend guards' jobs was the wrong strategy to adopt?**

Yes. For the reasons I've outlined. I think they were mistaken in their trust that the bosses would allow the ballot to take place without interference. But on top of that you have to consider that if the executive committee had called a strike on driver-only operation at least 48 per cent of our member-

ship would have responded to that. I happen to believe that it would have been more — from day one we would have had more than 48 per cent.

Those people responding would have built up a momentum. Unions don't have the kind of membership where you are going to blow a whistle and everyone is going to go out. That kind of discipline, for all the reasons that are obvious, just isn't there anymore.

But we could have built on the response to strike action with far more than 48 per cent — we would have been able to bring

other sections out and that would have been enough to shut down the railway network.

So as a member of the NEC you would have preferred the union leadership to take a principled stand against driver only operation and to campaign for industrial action immediately people were threatened with the sack for refusing to take out those trains?

I believe if we were a campaigning union in the first place we wouldn't have to concern ourselves with whether to have a ballot or not. We were fast approaching a situation where the AGM decision on the ballot would have been pretty irrelevant. The pressure that was being placed on the NEC by the British Rail Board was designed to put us in breach of the 1984 Trade Union Act so they could stop that ballot on 29 August taking place.

How are we going to defend our policies on productivity over the next six months without being in breach of the 1984 Trade Union Act which the AGM sought to protect us from?

**So you would have preferred if the NEC had called industrial action without going to a ballot?**

Yes.

Can we ask you about

**Knapp's leadership of the union. Over the last three years Knapp has twice argued at AGMs in favour of being allowed to negotiate over operation. He lost that position. But this year he argued in favour of ballots and won the position and now we've got this result? What does that mean for Knapp as a trade union leader?**

It wasn't Jimmy Knapp who put the ballot item on to the agenda of the AGM!

**It is him who argued for it up and down the country beforehand!**

There was a demand for ballots though. And it was used during the miners' strike. People were wooed by the populist argument and the AGM was the first time this issue was put before the membership.

I think it might be a tactical mistake from the position we are in now to be against any ballot. But the kind of balloting that says before you can call a national rail strike you must ballot the membership is proved to be false. The Special General Meeting we have called will have to take that on board as well.

What position have they played their NEC in to carry out their policies. That's what we are going to have to consider.



# Rail

## After the ballot

**THE BALANCE** of forces has clearly shifted to management, but the very scale of government demands will force confrontation after confrontation with the workers who have not been decisively defeated and who have a proven will to fight. This will be the case however disorientated and dismayed they may be at the moment.

Tory plans for the railways have been dead clear for the past five years. They're outlined in the 1982 BR Corporate Plan and the 1983 Serpell Report.

Although drastic measures such as the closure of 80 per cent of the railways proposed by Serpell have not been officially endorsed, many are being implemented by the back door.

There are several options for the government in terms of labour power. At one extreme, some 90,000 jobs can be envisaged to go and on the other 'only' 38,000 by 1988. The moderate solution is the only one presently being tested. The government has to consider whether to switch to a still harder option.

Even with the collaboration of the old union leadership under Sid Weighell, the board had to force a showdown with the drivers and guards over flexible rostering in '82. The treachery of the TUC in its refusal to back ASLEF is a constant thought in railworkers' heads every time a fight over conditions of work is posed.

Another showdown over driver only operation has been on the cards for the past couple of years, only deferred because the government didn't want to take on miners and railworkers at the same time. Driver only is just the second big productivity measure in a substantial list that has to be won. More than this, the drivers and guards who traditionally have led resistance in the rail unions must be defeated so that the other grades will fall into line.

## Tribute

The present union leadership under Knapp responded with a vigorous national campaign during August urging industrial action as the only response suitable to BR's attempt to impose driver only operation outside the machinery of negotiation.

Their efforts can be contrasted with the Scargill campaign extending over two years. NUM members were told about the Tory hit list for their pits and communities. They were urged not to allow productivity measures such as piecework payments which increased divisions and self-interest among the members. The call for all out industrial action followed a six month overtime ban.

This was not the case in the NUR, whose leadership responded in a routine fashion, keeping the fight if any to the boardroom. Some 10,000 workshop jobs went without a murmur.

During the miners' strike itself, a promise from management that it

wanted 'stability' in the industry was bought for a measly five per cent wage increase.

This was a key part of the background to the guards' vote. A government and a management which had clear goals and a record of some success in imposing their plans; and a union leadership which failed to convince the membership it could win.

But the size of the vote, and the militancy of certain areas, shows a base from which a fightback can be organised. The evidence from those areas at the sharp end of the struggle is that taking actions stiffened the resolve of those participating and started to draw in those more peripherally involved.

Action committees were being set up, special meetings being held, debates resounded in mess halls in those areas.

By Toni Gorton

In that situation we needed a leadership that would stand and fight, mobilising the membership for struggle. It needed an approach which stood for a unified response by the entire union — even if led by the guards in the initial stages.

When the miners lost two ballots for strike action, they concentrated on getting their own house in order so as to carry out the fight for jobs and defend the union. We would be in a stronger position if our union does the same.

The NUR NEC have called a Special General Meeting for 12 September at Congress House in London. The two other ballots have been suspended. British Rail is demanding that all opposition to driver only operation is ended as the price for the possible reinstatement of the sacked guards, and that all opposition to productivity demands is ended as the logical outcome of the ballot.

Compromises will have to be made, but management has been forced into concessions by the impetus of the struggle. In the light of the ballot will they adhere to their written promise that there will be no compulsory redundancies, that every guard will have a job? The limited actions of the past few weeks have already cost more than the savings they envisioned from the removal of guards in the next period.

The campaign for a guard on every train must continue. The union is already winning the propaganda war for safe transport. Indeed, BR has deliberately withheld figures about the rising tide of assaults and vandalism on the system which discredit their case for the removal of the guard. People before pro-



Photo: MARK SALMON

fits is a useful argument in any campaign against productivity demands.

The decision to abide by the 1984 Trade Union Act must be reversed. These anti-democratic laws are designed to destroy the unions: The voice of members is expressed in their willingness to struggle and to lead others in action.

Branches of the NUR will now be considering how they wish to mandate their delegates to the Special General Meeting. Top of the list should be to insist the delegates call for immediate reinstatement of all sacked members with

no preconditions.

It's clear that compromises on driver only operation will be forced on our union in the wake of the ballot defeat. But that doesn't mean resistance should collapse. To the contrary, now is the time to step up the campaign against further productivity measures. British bosses have to do a lot more than introduce driver only operation to re-structure the industry to benefit their friends in industry.

And we need to get our own house in order. Defeated ballots are not the end of the story, as the miners union showed.

# Miners

## Amnesty for all

'RELEASE all jailed miners — reinstate the sacked miners', chanted the 500-strong crowd assembled to lobby TUC delegates on their first morning in Blackpool.

Undeterred by their two-hour rainy vigil miners, their wives, and their supporters chanted miners and Scargill songs as they waited for delegates and visitors to arrive.

Women from South Wales broke off their chorus of 'Here We Go, Here We Go, for the women of the working class' to greet the arrival of Betty Heathfield and Anne Scargill. The two stayed for a brief discussion about the mass trespass planned to celebrate the fourth birthday of the Greenham Peace Camp on 7/8 September.

By Carol Turner

Women Against Pit Closure groups from around the country, the demonstrators agreed, will be there in force. Meanwhile Lancashire and other miners handed out 'one industry, one union' stickers, while more waved luminous yellow flags which bore the legend 'Yorkshire NUM calls for the immediate reinstatement of sacked miners'.

Delegates were lobbied to support the Miners' union resolution calling on the next Labour government to immediately legislate for:

- a review of all jailed miners' cases
- a guarantee of reinstatement for all sacked miners
- the reimbursement of NUM and other union money confiscated during the dispute.

The NUM's resolution has now been composed with an amendment from the Communications workers.

No doubt many of those lobbying expected, though few knew then, that the General Council is refusing to support the NUM resolution. Instead it will offer its sanctimonious blessing to another composite moved by the NUR, and supported by ASLEF, which remains silent on the question of practical support.

## Glasgow hit hard

**RAIL WORKERS** in the West of Scotland were shocked and disgusted with the outcome of the guards' ballot. Guards at Glasgow Central feel abandoned but are determined not to go back without a national settlement.

Our priority now is for unconditional reinstatement of all 147 guards at Glasgow Central, along with the other dismissed guards. The Labour-controlled Strathclyde Regional Council are now calling on British Rail to reinstate the guards and have threatened withdrawal of subsidies to some lines if this does not happen.

This is a welcome change in attitude. At the beginning of the dispute Malcolm Waugh, chair of the Regional Transport Committee, called on the unions to accept driver only operation without any national agreement.

Pressure has come from regional councillors and a number of local Labour Parties for full support for the guards.

There is wide public support here for the guards' case. Thousands of signatures have been collected on petitions at Glasgow Central, calling for the retention of guards. Large donations have come into the hardship fund in Glasgow.

SOGAT workers here refused to print the job advertisements for the vacancies resulting from the dismissals at Glasgow Central and have given £250

to the fund.

Workers at the Glasgow BREL workshops have taken regular collections and a total of over £600 has gone to the guards at Glasgow Central. This is an important indication of the level of support as the workshops are themselves faced with virtual closure and the loss of almost 1500 jobs.

By Ann Henderson

It is clear that the confrontations with the British Rail board will continue. Driver only operation is only one part of the attack on the workforce. The importance of unity among all railworkers has been stressed in Glasgow.

On 17 April the Scottish Rail network was shut down and workers took action against the run-down of BREL workshops. They didn't need a ballot to pursue that course of action.

Union members feel that complying with Tory laws prevented appropriate action being taken nationally as soon as the guards were dismissed — although a successful unofficial 24-hour stoppage in the West of Scotland on the Tuesday

before the ballot reflected the support that exists for the sacked guards.

The Scottish Region of BR have banned all 'non-essential' overtime — and given the number of unfilled vacancies in the area this means stations are understaffed and maintenance work is not done. At the same time, management spent thousands of pounds placing advertisements in all the newspapers seeking to influence the outcome of the ballot. Over £15,000 has been spent distributing a copy of 'Modern Railways' to every Scotrail employee, promoting the achievements of Scotrail.

A meeting called by the NUR West of Scotland Council last Saturday made clear that despite the outcome of the guards' ballot we would continue to fight. Michael Martin, MP for Springburn, gave the commitment of the Scottish Labour Group's MPs to the campaign to save the Glasgow workforce and also for the fight for reinstatement of the sacked guards.

We now have to continue to build this campaign for reinstatement in the Labour movement — reinstatement without victimisation of any union member in Glasgow.

British Rail may now think that they can have a free hand with the unions; we have to show them this is not the case.



## Black-miners unity

**OVER THE** bank-holiday weekend, miners from Yorkshire, Notts and Kent came to participate in London's Notting Hill Carnival to build support for jailed and sacked miners. Like last year, the visit was organised by the Black Delegation to the Mining Communities and the Kensington and Chelsea Miners' Support Group.

The carnival committee donated two stalls and the Africa Liberation Committee shared part of their stall to help the miners and miners wives sell material for the campaign. In addition, the Lord Eric band shared its float with the miners — draped with banners made by the Black Delegation.

The visit helped to develop links made between the black and mining communities during the miners' strike, when the Black Delegation sent

groups of black people to mining areas, joined picket lines, and spoke at meetings.

This unity was manifested again when the miners received a warm reception from the carnival. Support for the victimised miners continues — a substantial amount of money was collected and many people wore the Black Delegation sticker 'Black people support the Miners' — Our struggles continue'.

The reception that the miners received was all the more enthusiastic when people realised they were donating one-quarter of their collection to the black miners in South Africa.

As usual police picked out the miners for special treatment. Threatening to arrest supporters who displayed miners' banners, they harassed collectors and then took the unprecedented action of throwing the followers of the miners' float out of the procession.

Notting Hill showed yet again the importance of the unity in action between the exploited and oppressed, nationally and internationally.

# Expanding the republican base

**AN PHOBLACHT**, the weekly paper supported by Sinn Fein, in its 8 August issue carried a major interview with **GERRY ADAMS**. The president of Sinn Fein outlined the situation of that organisation following the recent local elections in the north and south of Ireland.

Socialist Action is printing major extracts from the interview.

## What is your assessment of the local election results North and South?

As far as Sinn Fein is concerned, we set ourselves objectives for both election campaigns and in both elections we secured those objectives.

In the six counties we wanted to consolidate the republican position and to develop a new middle leadership in Sinn Fein. This we have begun to do.

Before the election we asserted that the SDLP would be forced to speak with Sinn Fein, whatever John Hume said, and this has happened. Furthermore, the British claim that 25 per cent of the Sinn Fein vote was personated (*fraudulent*) in previous elections was shown to be absolutely untrue.

In the twenty-six counties where, for obvious reasons, progress is much slower, we fought a low-key campaign and we set ourselves, both publicly and privately, minimum organisational targets. We believed we could get up to 40 seats and we got 39. Where we put in the effort we got the results. If there was some demoralisation with these results in Sinn Fein, that was mainly because RTE, in their coverage of the elections, hyped up the performance of the Workers Party.

All in all, in both election campaigns we got the vote we deserved and I am personally satisfied with the results.

## Could you elaborate on the apparent disparity in the development of Sinn Fein, North and South?

Firstly it is worth noting that even if Sinn Fein's performance and development in the North in recent years have received dramatic news coverage, this performance and these developments were possible because a fairly clear republican base already existed. What we have been doing in recent years has been to structure that base.

Outside of a few clearly identifiable and isolated areas, this sort of republican base does not exist in the twenty-six counties. Moreover, for the past decade and even longer, there has been no serious attempt to pull together any republican bases which do exist into a structured party organisation.

We still suffer the legacy of all those years in which the struggle in the twenty-six counties was perceived simply as supporting what was happening in the six counties. Section 31 (*excluding Sinn Fein from Irish television and radio*) has, of course, been another factor militating against the development of Sinn Fein.

It is for all these reasons that we see this phase in the development of Sinn Fein in the twenty-six counties as being largely about developing organisation. At last year's Ard-Fheis I expressed the hope that we would make organisational gains this year. Those gains are being made.

We are making our organisation more competent, more accountable and more relevant. Progress will take place slowly, but Sinn Fein will be all the better for being built on a good foundation.

**In some areas in the North, SDLP councillors have been forced to side with Sinn Fein on many issues, while in other areas they have kept their distance. Do you think that the emergence of Sinn Fein in electoral terms has proved divisive for the SDLP?**

I think the divisions within the SDLP have always been there, but that they have been brought slightly closer to the surface in recent years. The SDLP was founded as a coalition of establishment-type nationalist politicians who drew their support from the old nationalist base.

While the composition of the SDLP at leadership level has changed, the old nationalist grassroots in rural areas remain.

With the emergence of Sinn Fein as an electoral power, the SDLP grassroots have been able to work alongside republicans on issues which affect the nationalist people generally. This is especially true west of the Bann where it is recognised by nationalists that Sinn Fein is right in opposing loyalism. In such areas the SDLP cannot afford not to side with Sinn Fein. There would, perhaps, also be an element of opportunism guiding the SDLP in some areas.

The SDLP is an 'all things to all people' party and can, therefore, accommodate an Eddie



Photo: REPUBLICAN NEWS

McGrady, a Paddy Duffy, a John Hume etc. What all those people have in common is their general acceptance of what they would call constitutionalism, and their general rejection of republicanism.

To be honest, I wouldn't exaggerate the differences within the SDLP because what they have in common — a middle-class perception — would outweigh any of those differences.

There was always a class element to the struggle in the six counties and, when Sinn Fein began to put its radical politics to the electorate, the middle-class politics of the SDLP began to emerge more clearly than ever.

## What do you think will emerge from the London-Dublin talks?

It would be foolish to try and speculate, but what is interesting is the kite-flying that is going on at the moment, particularly on the British side.

This kite-flying coincides with a report published by the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, entitled *Britain's Undefended Frontier — A Policy For Ulster*. Written by a top Tory adviser T.E. Utley, along with John Biggs-

Davidson, Nicholas Budgen, Peter Lloyd and Patrick Macrory, this report recommends a joint 'Anglo-Irish security commission' to co-ordinate the campaign against the IRA, a military sub-committee made up of both Dublin and British counter-insurgency forces, and a secretariat for an 'Anglo-Irish inter-governmental council'. These are the very ideas that are being leaked at the moment.

So we can first of all conclude that given the British government's position — and in fairness to them they have been very, very clear — the Dublin Forum report is out and all its options are out.

What is clear is that they are not discussing anything that will make any meaningful progress towards Irish independence or peace. And it is hardly surprising that that is the case given the nature of both governments. What they are talking about is in fact how to defeat republicanism.

I keep harking back to the fact that the only thing that has survived out of the Sunningdale talks, the so-called Sunningdale agreement which was lauded at that time by Dublin and SDLP politicians as actually what Wolfe Tone had fought and died for,

the only thing surviving from that is in fact the Criminal Law Jurisdiction Act — a piece of repressive legislation. I have no doubt that that is what will come from these talks.

## Do the events of recent years suggest that more and more people are rejecting Irish constitutional nationalism as a means of achieving Irish unity?

Yes, but Irish constitutional nationalism is not aimed at securing Irish unity. The terms 'constitutional nationalism' are in fact a contradiction. What we are talking about is British constitutionality.

I don't mean to be coy or clever, but I don't believe that Dublin is serious about Irish unity. They are partitionist in their outlook, partitionist in their politics and their ideology. I don't believe that the SDLP leadership is serious about Irish unity. They are a social democratic party in the six-county context.

What we have witnessed in the last two years is that, with the rise of Sinn Fein, the Dublin government has been forced to give the impression that it is concerned and that it is doing something. This has all been for the benefit of the SDLP. What emerged from this flurry of

'concerned' activity was the Dublin Forum report. Besides that, a few civil servants were appointed to issue statements on a regular basis from Dublin ministers about the situation in the six counties.

They also try to persuade the British government — 'look, we want rid of the IRA, the best way to do it is by classical counter-insurgency, by isolating them, and to isolate them you produce something which will satisfy to some degree the aspirations of the electorate of the twenty-six counties and make the IRA's situation untenable in the six counties.'

## But what of nationalist voters in the North who, for want of a better word, see constitutional nationalism as a real political option? For them is the lesson of the last two years not that there is no way left but armed struggle?

That will only become apparent as Sinn Fein develops and I don't know if all the people in the six counties who are anti-unionist would ever come round to supporting the armed struggle. But I do know that it is up to us to, at least, give them a political alternative to the SDLP.

As we develop our

organisation, then that question will be answered, but certainly anyone who takes seriously the question of Irish independence must conclude that after the last two years, and after the last 15 years of the SDLP, constitutionalism is not the way to go about securing freedom, and they must start looking at the alternative.

## In the twenty-six counties where will Sinn Fein get its voter support?

Obviously, the policies which we are pursuing are socialist republican policies — I use the words socialist republican simply to mark the difference between our republicanism and Fianna Fail's. The voters we're targeting are people who have become aware that the social and economic difficulties of the twenty-six counties cannot be solved within a twenty-six county context. In other words we have to show that there are logical and sound political, economic and social reasons for Irish independence, as well as patriotic reasons.

## Do you think that Sinn Fein has successfully expounded that idea to the public?

No. Sinn Fein has only been successful in those areas where we have first consolidated our base and have worked consistently alongside people.

In the areas where we have organised, we have reached a combination of people who would support the republican position on partition, on the right to self-determination, and the right of the IRA to engage in armed struggle, along with people who accept our policies on the economic situation and have seen us working on the ground.

When we develop our organisation into a relevant party, the vote we will want to be targeting is a Fianna Fail or Labour vote at present — the nationalist rump of Fianna Fail, and the urban, traditional Labour Party. But we're not going to be able to take these votes in any great measure at the moment.

## What is the strategy of Sinn Fein in the coming year, and what in particular would you like to see coming out of this year's Ard-Fheis?

First of all our policy is to try and fuse all the local struggles — whether it's consumers, unemployed, trade unionists, women, youth — with the national question. To bring about a struggle which has a correct, principled position on partition, and which has a non-opportunistic and consistent position on social and economic questions.

We have an internal conference next September, before the Ard-Fheis, to conduct a national review of the local government results and to assess our progress mid-term.



# Democracy and revolution

American settlers slaughtered the native Indian population, the Australian whites slaughtered the aboriginal population, in New Caledonia the French Caldoches moved in enough whites to outnumber the Kanak population, but in South Africa the black population is there and is *five times* the size of the white population.

It is this situation that sums up the basic character of apartheid. It is not simply discrimination, or even the expression of racist prejudice, it is a *state* system of a particular type. The struggle of black people can only be victorious through smashing that state system completely.

It is against this apartheid state system that the South African revolution is inevitably directed, and it is this that gives the struggle of black people its fundamental dynamic. The character of the struggle that black people are engaged in assumes the form of a revolutionary struggle for democracy and national liberation, summed up in the slogan of majority rule — one person, one vote. That is the key to every other demand — including the transfer of the land to the black majority population, and the development of the struggle for socialism.

## Axis

The struggle for socialism in South Africa passes *through* the struggle for national liberation and democracy. It is through this struggle for democratic demands that a violent clash will unfold with the capitalist class in South Africa.

The first step in developing a correct appreciation of the dynamic of the South African revolution is to reject the economic and wrong schemas of forces who attempt to explain that the key demands in South Africa are in the first instance directly anti-capitalist, for the nationalisation of the top monopolies and so on. Revolutionary democratic demands, in every aspect, constitute the cutting edge and axis of the South African revolution. Other struggles will unfold from this axis — not the other way around.

The cornerstone of this approach is to recognise that the state that exists in South Africa is *not* a nation state. It is a state of the white settler class, from

which the black population is excluded. The struggle of the majority of the population is a struggle to create a single nation, and a single nation state, in South Africa.

This perspective is directly counter to the white settler state — which insists that there are at least four nations inside South Africa, and proposes an ideology that corresponds to this — that of 'separate development' and the creation of bantustans corresponding to the different tribal and supposed 'national' groups which they define.

## Land

The reality of this latter racist approach is starkly revealed by the fact that these so-called separate nations in South Africa, which constitute the overwhelming majority of the population, are confined to 13.7 per cent of the land, whereas the white minority holds more than 80 per cent.

The black struggle in South Africa has gone through several different stages of development. Initially even the most advanced forces of the black population accepted this framework of separate nations — and the African National Congress was originally formed with the aim of creating a single African nation out of the different tribal groups, while it accepted the whites' definition of separate white, coloured and Asian nations.

This led Trotsky in the 1930s to suggest that the course of the liberation struggle in South Africa would pass through a stage of partition and the establishment of a separate African state. This is what corresponded to the existing consciousness of the most advanced forces among the black majority population and was correct at that time as an application of the right of nations to self-determination. But it is today bypassed.

## Soweto

In the 1970s another huge leap forward in the struggle was taken in identifying the existence of a black nation comprising *all* the black, Asian and coloured people of South Africa. This was the tremendous advance registered by the black consciousness movement, the leading force of the Soweto uprising.



Soweto uprising in 1976

Its leader, Steve Biko, not surprisingly, was categorised as 'coloured' by the South African racists.

However while this consciousness of a necessary unity of all the black people of South Africa was a vital step forward it did not provide an adequate framework for countering the 'separate

nations' ideology of the white supremacists. Today the leadership of the national liberation struggle puts forward the clear and unambiguous position that there is *one* nation in South Africa, comprising *all* who live in it. The national struggle is for the forging of a nation state that corresponds to that reality. Whites will have to accept the authority and legitimacy of *that* nation state. The whites have no special rights, they *do not* constitute a separate nation. That is a basis of any revolutionary strategy in South Africa.

It is in this context also that the land question comes to the fore. As long as the majority of the South African population is confined to 13.7 per cent of the land there can be no resolution of the national question. The national liberation struggle must and will necessarily involve a tremendous class struggle in the countryside against the white capitalist farmers, in order to make land available to the population as a whole. Without taking the land from the white settlers there can be no successful conclusion of the national liberation struggle in South Africa.

Any attempted solution which does not resolve this question, as for example occurred in Zimbabwe, is *not* capable of meeting even the democratic and national aspirations of the black population as a whole.

## Goals

In order to achieve these goals of the revolution a movement which insists upon the right of one person one vote, and which understands this can only be achieved through the violent overthrow of the apartheid state, is vital.

The white settler ruling class is thoroughly opposed to *any* democratic system in South Africa, because it is directly and fundamentally counterposed to their own class interests and their own rule.

In the present political upsurge the destabilisation of the South African economy has meant that sections of the

**BLACK PEOPLE** in South Africa are not simply victims of super racial prejudices and discrimination unparalleled in the world. Terms like racism are totally inadequate to describe the situation. The attitude of individual whites, and laws can be described as 'racist', but the apartheid system is *more* than that.

The South African *state* itself is based on outlawing black people in their own country — summed up by the brutal pass law system whereby blacks are considered 'foreigners' within South Africa.

Officially, blacks cannot cross a road without showing a passport, every street is a border post. They have no right to own land. They have no rights to live in the cities.

## Black

The vast bulk of black workers are still official categorised as 'migrants' whose only recognised place of residence is in a distant bantustan. They have no right to bring their wives and children to live with them.

And, of course, blacks are deprived of a vote — deprived of any right to even minimal control over the political system in their country.

Other settler states in history have in practice operated in this way. But there is a fundamental contradiction for the South African whites. The white



Nelson Mandela

# tion in South Africa



Steve Biko

power does not pass into the hands of South Africa's workers and peasants to that degree even the democratic revolution will be aborted — as innumerable examples from Zimbabwe to India show.

But the line of march is clear in South Africa. The black working class must throw itself totally into the democratic revolution. It must seek to lead it — in alliance with the black peasants. How far down that line of march to a workers state in South Africa the working class will be able to go depends on the relation of forces that emerges in the struggle itself. The more that the black working class is able to take up and lead the democratic revolution the closer it will come to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Any turning away from the the tasks of the democratic revolution, any leaving of the leadership of the struggle to any other force, will both serve to abort the democratic struggle itself and leave the working class further away from the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

There was a famous maxim of the French revolution 'On s'engage et puis on voit' — one engages in the struggle then one sees what happens. Today the working class must take the leadership of the democratic revolution in South Africa. This struggle to overthrow the apartheid state will be what determines how far every other struggle in South

## Democratic

Africa can go — including the struggle for socialism. It will be carrying through the democratic revolution to its conclusion, not making an attempt to skip over it, that will determine the success of the socialist revolution in South Africa. The carrying through of the transfer of political power into the hands of the workers and peasants — and that means their black majority — that is the strategic line of march of the South African revolution within which all other tasks are situated.

This also determines how all organisations claiming to lead the South African revolution are to be judged. The criteria of a correct orientation in South Africa today is not a formal commitment to socialism — still less emphasis on economic struggle. It is a radical and unswerving commitment to carrying through the democratic revolution. That is the correct line in South Africa.

Unequivocal commitment to one person one vote; the unambiguous understanding that this can only be achieved through the violent overthrow of the apartheid state; an understanding that the tasks of the democratic revolution can only be fully achieved through the transfer of political power into the hands of the working class; therefore the necessity of the radical destruction of state power of apartheid and the capitalist class, these are the criteria of a correct strategic line in the South African revolution today. All other tasks, including the attack on the economic bastions of the capitalist class which will open up the way for socialism are situated within that political framework and flow out of it.

Only such a political line will ensure the complete destruction of the apartheid state. Only such a political line will finally open up the way for socialism in South Africa.

rent round of the struggle.

The new upsurge in the national liberation struggle has deepened the discussion in the black and non-racial trade unions about their political perspectives.

This discussion has centred on the issue of affiliation to the mass organisations that led the boycott campaign against the 1983 and 1984 racially-based elections. And a discussion had begun on what 'independent working class politics' means in the context of apartheid. It also begins to pose directly the overflowing of the democratic struggle against apartheid into directly socialist tasks.

It is the much greater development of working class organisation that gives the current upsurge in South Africa its unprecedented scope and intensity — which takes it far beyond any previous experience in that country. It gives the present upsurge the character of being a much closer approximation to a general insurrection than either the first period of the struggle against apartheid leading to Sharpeville in 1961, or to the 1976 Soweto events.

A tremendous intertwining of the democratic revolution and socialist revolution is developing South Africa. Its axis is that it is through the democratic struggle to smash the apartheid state that the perspectives of socialism will be opened up in South Africa. It is that democratic struggle that will open up the perspective of the overthrow of South African capitalism — and the expropriation of its imperialist backers.

The South African revolution is still not a matter of short term struggle — there should be no illusions on that — but the different elements that will go to make up that revolution are coming together in a more and more clear cut way — not just in theory, but in the living experience of the struggle itself.

Firstly we see its character developing as a nationwide and national struggle. All areas of the country have experienced distinct waves of protest, none are immune. Secondly the protests involve every section of the black population — African, Asian and 'coloured'.

Many areas of the country have become virtual no-go areas with barricades and militarily organised exclusion of the apartheid police and army. The local 'separate' administrations of the black areas have been dismantled by the blacks themselves. Only five of the 38 black local councils established in the 1983 reforms continue to function. Black collaborators have been driven out of their posts. And in all these developments we see more and more clearly the leading role of the black working class.

The road of the South African revolution is clear. The black working class must place itself at the head of the nation. It must carry through the destruction of the apartheid state — a destruction that can only be achieved through violent revolution. Through this struggle it must fight to transfer political power into the hands of the black working class and peasants. Only by these means can even the democratic revolution in South Africa be carried through to conclusion in every aspect including the transfer of land to the black majority and the achievement of the task of national liberation.

## Theory

But the arrival of the black working class in political power necessarily means something else. There is no 'Chinese wall' between the tasks of democratic revolution in South Africa and those of socialism. The conquest of political power by the black South African workers and peasants, along the axis of the struggle for democracy and against the apartheid regime, means the revolution will begin to grow over from the democratic tasks to socialist ones.

Will this struggle to overthrow apartheid result in the creation of a workers state in South Africa? No one can be certain. That will be determined in struggle itself. But to the degree that

white ruling class have suffered real economic damage. Some sections of the ruling class have even begun to demand quite radical reform of apartheid.

However, we should be quite clear what this means. It does not mean that sections of the white ruling class think it may be more profitable to abolish apartheid as such. None stand for any real system of one person one vote and the right of blacks to the land held by the white settlers. Big capital think that the offering of radical reforms and concessions within the framework of maintaining intact the apartheid state might be more effective in heading off the present upsurge of the black masses than using more and more military repression. They favour only limited transformations of the economic system.

circumstances at all. With the whites so hostile to even the most minimal concession to the black masses it is exceedingly unlikely that a programme even of minimal reforms can be drawn up that would be both acceptable to the whites, and be sufficient to head off the present wave of black revolt. This is what the imperialists are looking for — together with the more far-sighted sections of the South African ruling class. But whether they can get it is altogether another matter.

In this context of a white ruling class united in its opposition to the end of the apartheid state, and with a virtually undivided base in the white population as a whole, the question of armed struggle and the violent overthrow of the state is directly posed.

While it is clear that no overthrow of apartheid is possible without an enormous mass struggle in the cities and in the countryside, it is also the case that black people have to build their own armed power to counter the military might of apartheid. The *Economist* recently has taken pains to point out that the real threat to the apartheid regime in the present upsurge can easily be overestimated if it is forgotten that the South African state is armed to the hilt, with a loyal army, and the black masses at present have to largely rely on sticks, stones and petrol bombs.

## Socialist

It is elementary for British socialists to defend the right of black people of South Africa to arm themselves, and to fight gun in hand. Indeed we give them every encouragement in doing so. Fortunately against virtually no other regime in the world is the legitimacy of armed action so widely accepted as against South Africa.

But the entire key to the revolutionary struggle in South Africa finally lies in the black working class itself, which has to be able to come forward to lead the nation in the struggle against apartheid.

The whole aim of the white ruling

class, through apartheid, was to prevent the formation of a stable, urban black working class. By classifying the majority of workers as 'migrants', and as 'casual labour' and responding to labour unrest by expulsion to the bantustans, apartheid hoped to prevent stable forms of working class organisation developing among black people in the cities.

## Boom

This policy failed mainly due to the economic boom of the late 1950s and 1960s and the increased need for skills — which demanded a stable workforce. As a result the black urban and mining working class is now 8-9 million strong. On this basis the most lasting feature of the black upsurges of the 1970s was the mushrooming growth of the independent black and non-racial trade unions.

These unions grew out of the specifically industrial struggle — beginning with the Durban strikes in 1973, and throughout the Soweto events. They really stabilised themselves through the even greater waves of industrial struggles in the early 1980s.

All these industrial struggles necessarily involve direct confrontation with apartheid and not just with the company bosses. This dynamic develops directly because of the discriminatory labour legislation, and the attempts to use the apartheid state and its laws to smash strikes. But in general the strikes and struggles led by these unions had an essentially industrial character.

However with the new upsurge of the mass struggle against apartheid the activities of the unions increasingly interlock with the mass national liberation struggle. The highest point of this interconnection has been seen with the mass 'stay aways' — for example the stay away in the Vaal area south of Johannesburg in November last year which was organised collectively by the UDF, the community organisations and the independent trade unions. This was one of the most effective actions organised against apartheid in the cur-

white ruling class have suffered real economic damage. Some sections of the ruling class have even begun to demand quite radical reform of apartheid.

However, we should be quite clear what this means. It does not mean that sections of the white ruling class think it may be more profitable to abolish apartheid as such. None stand for any real system of one person one vote and the right of blacks to the land held by the white settlers. Big capital think that the offering of radical reforms and concessions within the framework of maintaining intact the apartheid state might be more effective in heading off the present upsurge of the black masses than using more and more military repression. They favour only limited transformations of the economic system.

## British

The same applies to the sections of the US and British ruling class which are beginning to raise the issue of reform of apartheid. The problem is that they don't know what such concessions would be. They simply think it should be the minimum necessary to head off the rising rebellion but at the same time to hold the foundations of the apartheid state intact.

This framework means that the possible political comprises imperialism could propose are rather narrow. Meanwhile PW Botha's National Party remains convinced that any partial concessions would simply have the effect of fanning the flames of the South African revolution — as the 'constitutional reform' of 1983 dramatically indicated. And at present the majority of the white population rather evidently agrees with Botha.

The attitude of Botha's white base is perhaps shown up most clearly on the relatively straightforward issue of the demand for the release of imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela. Whereas 90 per cent of blacks demand his release without conditions, 57 per cent of whites oppose his release under any cir-



# Nicaragua's economy at war

LAST WEEK Socialist Action carried the first part of an interview we conducted with TREVOR EVANS, an economist working with the Nicaraguan Economic and Social Research Institute. This week Trevor considers the impact of the war and the criticism of those who argue the Nicaragua hasn't experienced a real socialist revolution because a significant part of the economy remains in private hands.

**How has the increase in contra attacks, the war, affected the economy?**

The war is a sophisticated strategy by the US. I don't think that the US have any illusions that the contras can undermine the Sandinista government. Since 1982 they have failed to take or hold any significant part of Nicaragua. What is involved is a war of attrition and in that it complements the efforts of the US to cut off financial aid to Nicaragua and block its trade link.

Above all the contra attacks are aimed at economic targets and especially the development programmes initiated by the revolution — the cooperatives, the investments in the state farms, and also at the social programmes, the health centres.

According to the latest figures from the United Nations in 1983-84 Nicaragua lost production of the order of \$300m as a result of the contra attacks. That is about three quarters of the value of total exports. So the first effect of the contra attacks is the serious effect on production.

The second effect is that a large percentage of resources have to be devoted to defence. By 1985 around one half of the government budget had to go on defence expenditure — around one-quarter of the total economy. So huge quantities of labour have had to be diverted from development to defence — thus worsening the labour shortage.

**So how has the government responded economically to these problems?**

By 1984 serious problems were emerging. Whereas workers can get the basic six foods at official cheaper prices it was becoming much more difficult to get other essential goods at official prices — shirts, trousers and shoes for example. People therefore have had to go to the free market where the prices are much higher.

What had been happening was that members of the informal commercial sector buy up goods cheaply at the official price and then sell them again and again until the final consumer can only get them at much inflated prices.

As a result of that situation the government introduced an emergency package of measures in February. This has several components. Firstly it tried to increase output by attracting people back from commerce into production. This will make more goods available and reduce the number of people living off the difference between official and free market prices.

The government also attempted to reduce the amount of money in the economy by cutting the government deficit so as to prevent free market prices rising so much. This meant freezing expenditure in real terms on social programmes, and with great reluctance eliminating subsidies on basic foods.

Although official prices have therefore gone up, they are still lower than free market prices.

**How has this affected popular support for the revolution?**

Last autumn the situation was very grim in Nicaragua. There have been shortages of a number of basic goods — also conscription was unpopular among some sectors. However despite the very gloomy situation, the FSLN won 67 per cent of the vote in the election. My impression is that the situation is rather more buoyant now even though in any fundamental sense the situation is equally difficult.

The war has eaten away at popular living standards, making life particularly difficult. But you have to remember that people have an enormous investment in the revolution. Many people lost someone in the insurrection against Somoza and so, even though life is difficult, my impression is that support for the revolution remains solid.

**Can you describe the likely effect of the US trade embargo?**

The possibility of a trade embargo has been there for some time. The US used its majority votes in the World Bank and so on to cut off finances to Nicaragua in 1982. So since then trade with the US has been reduced to about 18 per cent of exports. Nevertheless this trade is important and the loss of dollars is important.

However the embargo was announced just after most of this year's harvest had been sold. So, from Nicaragua's point of view, it happened at the least damaging time it could.

A number of other countries have come forward to take the products that were exported to the U.S. Canada is taking the shellfish and beef, and fruit is going to Europe.

But exports are not the most serious aspect of the embargo. The most damaging is the question of spare parts for the machinery in the country — which is mainly old. When the machines break down spare parts have got to be got from the US since that's where most of the equipment is from. Now when that starts occurring



CIA agents lead contras near Costa Rican border



Sandinista soldiers prepare defence of Managua

real problems may result.

The response of other countries to the embargo has been excellent. It was condemned by many countries in Europe but particularly by those of Latin America — even by relatively conservative countries.

An interesting expression of the political support that Nicaragua is currently getting from other Latin American countries is the fact that the Nicaraguan ambassador in Britain has been elected as the spokesperson of the Latin American lobbying by all the Latin American diplomats.

In short the effect of the US-financed contra war has been very serious economically. Since 1982 it has completely changed the whole tenor of the revolution in Nicaragua. Instead of a programme of economic and social transformation, the country has had to be pre-occupied by defence of national sovereignty and survival. The government takes the threat and possibility of direct US military intervention very seriously.

Ultimately although European and other pressure on the US not to invade is very important, the only real guarantee Nicaragua has against invasion is its own preparedness to defend the country — and the fact that the US military authorities will know that the country will be defended every inch of the way.

Some people on the left here say that Nicaragua's is not a proper revolution, it's not a socialist revolution. Not all the means of production have been nationalised, the Sandinistas are still allowing the capitalists to operate, and indeed they are even subsidising some of them, etc. How would you answer this type of criticism?

Firstly there is the issue of what happened in 1977 to 1979. I think it wasn't simply a political revolution, it wasn't simply a change of government. It was a genuinely popular revolution. The urban and agrarian workers participated in overthrowing the government and the process of social transformation. So I think it was a social as well as a political revolution.

Since 1979 the govern-

ment has had to develop all sorts of novel forms to deal with the type of development that they face. Part of that included maintaining a capitalist sector of production.

One of the lessons of the revolution however is the innovation the FSLN have introduced in forms of social control. So while it is true that part of the economy remains in private hands, the FSLN have evolved forms of

social regulation and control that try to ensure these private sectors are subject to social regulation. The government is constantly having to deal with a large number of contradictions and problems at the same time. It is also constantly having to achieve a balance of domestic, international, economic, and political contradictions. Constantly the government is having to choose the lesser of

several evils, dealing with the problems as they come up, and decide the best option at any moment to pursue the aims of the revolution within its general philosophy.

In this sense the criticisms of comrades in other countries don't take account of this. They just miss what it is like having to try and manage social transformation in an under-developed country that's facing a war.

## IRELAND UNFREE

Workers at Dunne's supermarket in Dublin have been on strike for over a year now after being sacked for refusing to sell South African goods. They have won world-wide fame — and set an example for the rest of the European working class.

THE LABOUR Committee on Ireland this week announced that it is bringing Mary Manning, leader of the Dunnes' workers anti-apartheid strike in Ireland to this year's Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth. It is seeking co-operation from a range of sympathetic organisations to ensure that her visit wins the wide support in Britain which it deserves.

The strike at Dunnes started over a year ago on 19 July 1984 and has continued to win support ever since. The picket line in Dublin's Henry Street is an essential part of any visit to Ireland — and has seen Bishop Tutu as well as Arthur Scargill come to pay respects to the women's stand and record their support.

In Britain the demand for a boycott of South African goods has focussed on the government and consumer selectivity. In Ireland — thanks to the determined stand of the distributive workers' union IDATU led by militant left-winger John Mitchell — this struggle won the support of shop workers themselves.

Many big stores conceded to pressure early on and quietly withdrew South African goods from their shelves. The Dunnes management, steeped in old-fashioned methods of bullying their predominantly young female workforce, and

disregarding the union, failed to reckon on the determination of Mary Manning and her eleven colleagues.

The strikers freely admit that they knew nothing much about South Africa or Apartheid a year ago. It all happened so quickly. One minute Mary Manning was sat on the food checkout counter and Tuesday morning shoppers were stepping out into the drizzle with bags full of groceries. The next moment she was refusing to ring up South African goods on the till and suggesting the customer bought some other brand.

Management staged an immediate showdown, demanding to know which staff were supporting the boycott and which were not. There was instant union backing, and further provocations by management — who fired all eleven union members. By tea time nineteen year old Mary was on television explaining how she had been persuaded to act by a union circular reporting the IDATU conference decision to boycott all South African goods.

In August this year the strikers set out on a fact finding visit to South Africa which included a visit to Winnie Mandela. They were held in the airport in Johannesburg and sent back to Ireland without setting foot outside.

This strike is not just the longest running industrial action taken in solidarity with South African blacks — it is the *only* one and should be the focus for raising support for the boycott throughout Europe.

Irish workers have a fine record of solidarity. Many estimates suggest that financial support for the British miners strike ran at an even higher rate in Dublin than in Birmingham. Anti-apartheid campaigners in Britain have a perfect demonstration of practical actions that can be taken to aid the struggle in South Africa and focus attention on the abhorrent regime. Financial support for the Dublin strikers is vital.

Those wishing to get written material on the anti-apartheid strike or hear Mary Manning in other towns should contact LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX



FEW WORDS are used in discussion on socialist strategy on the left as much as 'hegemony' — the working class has to fight for hegemony in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the working class in Britain has to fight for hegemony in uniting the whole of the exploited and oppressed against capital.

Directly tied to the idea of hegemony however is that of alliances. Because hegemony necessarily involves leading, and allying, with other social forces. Internationally the most important such alliance is that of the working class and peasantry. But uniting the working class internally — and the achievement of alliances — with women, blacks, the unemployed, youth, and many other social layers are decisive aspects of the struggle for the hegemony of the working class.

The concept hegemony is not a new one. It was coined as a political term by Russian Marxists in the 1890s. It was strongly defended by Lenin but its origins go right back to Marx himself.

JOHN ROSS looks at how the concept of hegemony originated in the first writings of Marx.

MARX noted from his earliest writings that every revolution involved an alliance. In the case of the French revolution commencing in 1789, for example, the capitalist class united with the peasantry and working class to overthrow the feudal nobility and monarchy.

But the basis of this alliance was that the bourgeoisie, peasants and proletariat had real interests in common. Indeed one class can lead other social forces in a revolution precisely because it represents not only its own but also wider social interests. In Marx's words:

'The class making a revolution comes forward from the very start ... not as a class but as a representative of the whole of society, as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class.'

## Struggle

'It can do this because initially its interest really is as yet most connected with the common interests of all other non-ruling classes.'

This alliance is in fact necessary for victory. Because 'each class could actually overthrow its predecessors only by liberating the individuals of all classes from certain chains which had hitherto fettered them'.

In order to engage victoriously in political struggle — and above all to make a revolution — a class necessarily must represent in struggle not merely itself but also interests of society as a whole. Without representing such interests a class cannot conquer power.

As Marx put it: 'No class of civil society can play this role without awakening a moment of enthusiasm in itself and in the masses: a moment in which this class fraternises and fuses with society in general, becomes identified with it and is experienced and acknowledged as its universal representative; a moment in which its claims and rights are truly the rights and claims of society itself and in which it is in reality the heart and head of society.'

'Only in the name of the universal rights of society can a particular class lay claim to universal domination.'

A revolution, therefore, develops not in the crude, transparent and simple form of 'one class against another' but through a process in which one class represents in a concentrated form all the progressive development of society — and develops alliances on that basis — and where another (ruling) class represents the concentrated oppression in a society. As Marx put it:

'Revolutionary energy and spiritual self-confidence are not enough to storm this position of



Marx discussing with Parisian workers

# The vanguard of humanity

liberator and to ensure thereby the political exploitation of all the other spheres of society in the interests of one's own sphere.

'If the revolution of a people and the emancipation of a particular class of civil society are to coincide, if one class is to stand for the whole of society, then all the deficiencies of society must be concentrated in another class, one particular class must be the class which gives universal offence, the embodiment of a general limitation; one particular sphere of society must appear as the notorious crime of the whole of society, so that the liberation of this sphere appears as universal self-liberation.'

'If one class is to be the class of liberation par excellence, then another class must be the class of overt oppression.'

## Strength

The above description — which applies rather beautifully to the dynamic of the situation in South Africa or to the struggle against Somoza — was exemplified for Marx, for example, in the French revolution — where the notorious oppression by the French feudal nobility and monarchy allowed the French bourgeoisie to come forward as the leader of the nation:

'The negative general significance of the French nobility and French clergy determined the general significance of the class which stood nearest to and opposed them — the bourgeoisie.'

A revolutionary class, therefore must necessarily put forward its goals as universal interests of society — a classic example of which is the ringing tones of the American Declaration of Independence. In the case of the French bourgeois revolution, the capitalist class proclaimed the right to private property not as a right of particular class but as a universal right — and furthermore the revolutionary bourgeoisie was prepared to act on this. In Marx's words

'Liberalism, ie liberal property owners, at the beginning of the French revolution gave private property a liberal appearance by declaring it one of the rights of man. They were forced to do so if only because of

their position as a revolutionist party; they were compelled not only to give the mass of the French (rural) population the right to property, (but also) to let them seize actual property.'

More generally: 'each new class which puts itself in the place of the one ruling before it is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to present its interests as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality.'

A rising class must conquer political power in order to express its interests as the general interests of society: 'every class which is aiming at domination, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, leads to the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination in general, must first conquer political power in order to represent its interests in turn as the general interest.'

## Class

This reality affects also the members of the class engaged in the revolutionary struggle. A rising class can conquer only knowing that it is fighting for universal interests of society. To complete a quotation given above:

'The practical task of each newly emerging class was bound to appear to each of its members as a universal task, and when each class could actually overthrow its predecessor only by liberating the individuals of all classes from certain chains which had hitherto fettered them.'

The working class however is the most revolutionary class in history because its goals are necessarily not the liberation of one class, and the continuation of the oppression and exploitation of another, but the liberation of the whole of humanity. Unlike all other ruling classes, the working class does not live on the exploitation of another class.

In Marx's words what is involved with the working class is 'the formation of a class with radical chains, a class of civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes.'

Therefore, 'The proletariat ... is compelled as proletariat to abolish

itself and thereby its opposite, private property, which determines its existence and which makes it proletariat. The proletariat executes the sentence that private property pronounces on itself by producing the proletariat.'

This role flows not from the moral superiority of individual workers but from the nature of the proletariat as a class. 'It is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do.'

## Victory

The victory of the working class is, in Marx's phrase, the necessary fundamental step in 'general human emancipation.' The working class is the vanguard fighter for humanity. It is on this basis that the working class fights for hegemony in society.

These phrases of Marx have nothing to do with empty sentimentality. The working class, as the vanguard of humanity, is precisely the guardian of all progressive conquests of humanity — conquests which, in our era, the bourgeoisie has set about destroying. The working class bases itself on the greatest cultural conquests of humanity — and on the seeds of what is to come in the future.

In Lenin's words: 'Marxism has won its historic significance as the ideology of the revolutionary proletariat because, far from rejecting the most valuable achievements of the bourgeois epoch, it has, on the contrary, assimilated and refashioned everything of value in the more than two thousand years of the development of human thought and culture.'

It has other implications as well. Again in Lenin's words, in his famous *What is to be Done*, 'Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected.'

In terms of agitation and political work, 'the Marxist ideal should not be

the trade-union secretary, but the *tribune of the people*, who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class of the people it affects.'

In Lenin's words any retreat from the struggle for hegemony represented a capitulation to reforms. 'To preach to the workers that what they need is "not hegemony, but a class party" means to betray the cause of the proletariat to the liberals; it means preaching that Marxist labour policy should be replaced by a liberal labour policy. Renunciation of the idea of hegemony is the crudest form of reformism.'

The idea of the hegemony of the working class is the most fundamental of all political perspectives. It flows directly from Marx, through Lenin, to the current debates on strategy on the left.

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and the other great 'classical Marxists' presented the working class as the vanguard of humanity and all its progressive aspirations. Marx's support for the North and ringing denunciation of slavery during the American civil war; Marx's support of the German and Italian struggles for national unification; Engel's constant work in support of the struggle of Ireland for independence from Britain; Luxemburg's condemnation of the death penalty; Lenin's support for national self-determination; Lenin's demand for land to the peasants; the Communist International's call 'workers and oppressed nations of the world unite' all embody that approach.

## Inspiration

It is also easy to see the forces with mass appeal that embody, to different degrees, such a hegemonic approach today. When a Fidel Castro, or a Maurice Bishop, or a Malcolm X, or a Che Guevara or a Tomas Borge explain the goals of their struggle they do so in a terminology which sometimes seems humanistic. They speak of the great achievements of their revolution, their class or their race in terms of 'human dignity', or 'national liberty' — not in terms of meeting outputs on steel quotas or purely wage demands.

But this is not populism — as the accusations sometimes runs. In a nation oppressed by imperialism the working class must literally 'place itself at the head of the nation'. A decisive part of the liberation of humanity is to free the black population of the world from 2,500 years of domination by white Europe and its offshoots. The tremendous international impact of the women's movement is equally a revolt of the majority of humanity — and one which will continue to develop long after the working class has taken power.

Unless the working class champions every single one of these struggles it is not a hegemonic class but, to that degree, a pitiful plaything of capital. In Lenin's phrase 'Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected.'

That, and only that, is the basis of the potential of the working class to become a ruling class — that is to become the real hegemonic class of society.

- (1) Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (MECW), Vol 5, p60.
- (2) MECW, Vol 5, p290.
- (3) Marx and Engels, *Early Works* (MEEW), Penguin edition, p.254.
- (4) MEEW, p254.
- (5) MEEW, p254.
- (6) MECW, Vol 5, p205.
- (7) MECW, Vol 5, p60.
- (8) MECW, Vol 5, p47.
- (9) MECW, Vol 5, p290.
- (10) MECW, Vol 4, p36.
- (11) MECW, Vol 4, p37.
- (12) MEEW, p254.
- (13) MEEW, p257.
- (14) Lenin, *Collected Works* (CW), Vol 31, p317.
- (15) Lenin, CW Vol 5, p412.
- (16) Lenin, CW Vol 5, p422.
- (17) Lenin, CW Vol 5, p323.



# The AUEW votes

**THIS WEEK, balloting starts for the election of president of the AUEW. The three main contenders are Gerry Russell, a current executive council member, Bill Jordan, a divisional organiser in the Midlands and a vice-chairperson of *Mainstream*, and John Tocher, the candidate of the Broad Left, and a divisional organiser in the Manchester area. Given the importance of the AUEW and the record of the Duffy leadership of the union, the election is not just of importance to AUEW members. Tocher's campaign is winning wide support.**

**JOHN TOCHER gave JON SILBERMAN his view of the chief issues in the election, about recent developments in the union, and more generally about the situation in the aftermath of the miners' strike.**

**Socialist Action is calling for a vote for John Tocher in the election. It does not support all his views expressed here.**

FIRST you've got to look at the role of the AUEW over the last nine years or thereabouts — in the TUC, in the Confed, and in the Labour Party. The union has not stood for progress. It has stood for reaction, compromise, apathy.

We've seen the biggest decline in engineering and the biggest engineering union hasn't been heard on any real issue — apart from whiffing and whuffling about the need for the return of a Labour government. And that's very sad, given the momentous problems.

On the question of youth — boys and girls leaving school — they've not uttered a word; the leadership's failed to defend traditional apprenticeships and have instead gone along with 'training to standards'. On the question of new technology, one of the biggest issues where we should be concentrating on the need for a shorter working life and a shorter working year and working week, again not a dicky-bird.

On the question of jobs, not a fighting approach anywhere — not even prepared to defend their members, or assist their members as they go into struggle.

On the question of trade union influence on the shopfloor — there's even been collusion with the employers on issues such as Derek Robinson's dismissal, which was the testing ground of the employers and the establishment on the mettle of the AUEW.

And on the question of wages, they have not attempted to defend our members' living standards. They have not genuinely campaigned for an improvement. And one wonders back to 1979, when there was a kerfuffle with regard to the shorter working week and conditions. The members won a breakthrough, and then it was dissipated by the inept leadership in their negotiations with the employers.

The other important issue is the changes that they've brought about in the constitution which have undermined the membership's involvement in the union and so weakened the union's ability to act on behalf of the members.

In fact, the whole stance of the union has been wrong. If our

members put forward an aspiration, immediately it's diluted. The members are told 'it's impossible, it's ridiculous, we can't achieve that' — they're making excuses before they've even presented the thing to the employers. And I suspect now that there's a form of informal discussion taking place that nobody knows about, where there's a whole manner of 'understandings' reached with the employers.

With the Conservative government's approach to disciplining the trade unions they have neither the moral courage nor the desire to fight back. They take the view that if we compromise, we'll get through to a greener pasture. But once they've compromised, the Tories are back again with another dollop of legislation. So they're obliged to compromise again, and they will continue to compromise until you won't recognise the structure of the AUEW. The whole concept of the union is in jeopardy, and will remain so until there's a radical change in leadership.

## Rules

At the recent rules revision meeting the executive was permitted to present a solicitor who explained to the meeting 'you need to change your rules to accommodate the law'. And rules were changed. Quite frankly, we're committed to oppose that anti-trade union law and the attempt to keep within it will lead to greater problems in the future. Where there's injustice, our members will — irrespective of the law — take action. And national officers of this Union don't have the power to outlaw such action.

But executive council, in taking the stance that they do, have caused the trepidation of many of our members, and officials, when they're dealing with adversity, as to whether or not they'll get the official support of the union. They're continually looking over their shoulders. We've reached a stage now where shop stewards can't act in confidence that their union will support them.

This also applies to the question of accepting government money for ballots. The stance of the ultra-right on the executive — and it was 6-4, the vote for the acceptance of

funds — is that they're prepared to have a split with the TUC over this issue. And we know that some elements within the union are meeting in the guise of the *Mainstream* organisation — with the EETPU and the Nottinghamshire scab miners' breakaway 'union'. And we know that some of them have had discussions with the SDP. They're taking a very tough line with the TUC.

This is the amazing thing with these people: they're very tough with other trade unions, they're very tough with their own members, but if they meet an angry employer — you can't see them for dust!

But I don't think our members will accept a situation where our union is suspended from the TUC. It's going to rebound on them, especially in the light of the political levy ballot. The membership did not vote to stay affiliated to the Labour Party to then be suspended from the TUC — and so lose the Labour Party affiliation.

There's also a genuine suspicion of members towards state intervention into the internal affairs of the union. No Conservative government is going to give a union £1.2 million to fight on behalf of their members against the employer.

They want postal ballots because members will be at their home when they vote — they won't be voting at a branch or at their workplace; it gives an opportunity to the newspapers to push and shove for rightwing candidates.

The stance of the executive on this question was too much even for a right-wing loaded national committee. So they censured the executive. But they didn't go on to the next stage of saying 'right, we're censuring you, and you shall donate the money that you've already received to the NUM, and you shall not participate in any further acceptance'. What national committee decided was to have another ballot and put 'both sides' to the membership!

Now what is the other side? There are six men who sit on the executive that voted one way and then there's the rest of the



John Tocher, Broad Left candidate for AUEW President

Photo: J.R. SMITH

executive, almost the entire national committee, the TUC and the rest of the labour movement — now these are not two equal sides. There's one bloody side that should be put to the membership.

The national committee also decided, against executive council's position, to affiliate to CND. That was marvellous.

But there again, the vote to affiliate was marred by the subsequent decision to continue with the previous policy of multi-lateral disarmament. And when the general secretary received a letter from

Trade Union CND congratulating him on the decision of the union to affiliate — and he got an atrocious letter back from the general secretary, putting forward his own personal views. The general secretary should not be doing this — he's the scribe of executive council, he is not the 'leader'.

On these and other questions I think that there will be further opposition to the executive because they have adopted a ridiculous stance and are in general out of touch with the membership. I think also that the outcome of the miners' strike will have an effect.

## Miners

Many of our members don't live in, nor have they been associated with, mining communities. Yet they still recognise that the miners' struggle was a very principled one, where they were fighting for their jobs, their future, their communities and their industry. And they were really fighting on behalf of us all. And as more and more is coming out about the miners, more and more people are beginning to realise the correctness of the miners' position: the Orgreave trial for instance; the viciousness of the Coal Board, supported

the miners and their leadership.

That's going to work its way through. Even people in the steel industry who were convinced by Bill Sirs are now beginning to realise that all the practices they were encouraged to be involved in — accepting foreign coal to keep the steel plants running — is for naught. On top of the 60 per cent cut in steel production under MacGregor, they've now got another dollop: Ravenscraig is at risk. Their reward is not 'you've been faithful servants, and so your jobs are guaranteed'. Their jobs are still in jeopardy.

So the miners' strike has produced a major shift. That's reflected in Ron Todd's election. And hopefully, it will reflect in my election — especially in the light of the record of the AUEW executive during the miners' strike.

Not once throughout the entire strike did the executive give Scargill or Heathfield an opportunity to write an article for the *Journal* to present their case. Instead the nuclear industry was given every prominence with chairmen or managing directors being invited to write in. And the donations made at national level were a disgrace. The miners' strike has really shown up the lack of leadership in the AUEW.

## Change

Our members are coming to the view that it's time for a change. I think they want to get back to a leadership more in keeping with the early 1970s. Because the miners' strike has, and this is the other side, given an example of what real leadership is.

Our members on the other hand, have gone through a period where they were promised by the Duffys that there's an easy way of achieving good wages and conditions. You can see their approach to this by their preparedness to go along with 'non-disruptive' clauses. Our membership would have been satisfied with that leadership if they'd received good wages and conditions — but they haven't. Now we must give the members a choice: are they just prepared to accept the pottage they've been offered, or are they prepared to struggle for something better?

This involvement of the membership is the key, irrespective of the outcome of the election. In the event of a change in leadership, there's not a magic wand. We'd be misleading the membership if we said 'vote for Tocher, and then you can forget about things, you'll end up with decent wages, there won't be victimisation' and so on. That change in leadership though would facilitate the involvement of the membership.

That's the key to the success of the union. You'll never get anywhere without campaigning and involving the membership.



The best of friends: Robert Maxwell and Terry Duffy at Labour Party Conference

Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN





# NGA makes deal with Maxwell...

AN AGREEMENT has been reached in the 11-day dispute with Robert Maxwell over the production of the racing newspaper *Sporting Life*.

But this is only a temporary let up in the war between the press barons and the Fleet Street unions. Maxwell has made no secret of his intention of breaking the power of the print unions by moving out of central London to the docklands to introduce new technology and slash the workforce. He restated his intention of moving the production of *Mirror* newspapers in July.

## Own

Maxwell has not got all his own way in the outcome of the settlement. He has failed in his original intention of transferring the production of *Sporting Life* out of Holborn circus to the Oyez press in Bermondsey, south London. The NGA has preserved the principle that papers published by national newspaper proprietors should not be moved from Fleet Street.

Maxwell was also forced

to back down over his threat to produce a large print run of the *Mirror* in Manchester due to NGA and SOGAT resistance. SOGAT warned Maxwell that they would pull out workers in Scotland producing the profit making *Record* if he went ahead with this.

But strings are clearly attached to the deal from the union's point of view which has not yet been accepted by the chapels. The *Sporting Life* is to be sold, most probably to the *Racing Post*, the firm that was

threatening Maxwell with a rival racing Daily. The 300 staff of the newspaper have been told that they will be 'absorbed into Mirror Group Newspapers' staffs under a policy of no automatic replacement, with a promise that a new, free London evening newspaper is to be published next March. Maxwell is out to renegotiate the terms and conditions of employment at Mirror newspapers and it looks likely that 100 jobs of *Sporting Life* workers could go in these negotiations.

By Valerie Coultas

Since the defeat of the NGA at Warrington the Fleet Street bosses — the three M's, Maxwell, Murdoch and Lord Matthews — have worked together to smash the power of the print unions. They hope

the unions in the industry will cut one another's throats in negotiating the new deals for the plants outside central London. The EEPTU has already signed a no-strike deal with Eddie Shah and SOGAT has made a similar offer to Murdoch for his new premises in the East End.

This will leave those who fight to defend jobs and working practices against the new technology deals isolated as we have seen with the 300 NGA members sacked for doing just that in Wolverhampton and Kent.

The power of the print unions remains. But it is clear from every recent battle in the printing industry that unless a united fight is waged by all the different unions together the employers will get their way and tame the unions in print once and for all.

## Why the LPYS needs a new leadership

In August a special issue of the North West LPYS bulletin *Youth Action* was produced. It carried an editorial statement 'Why the YS needs a new leadership' which we are printing below.

*Youth Action* can be contacted via Maria Walsh, 27 Landos Court, Miles Platting, Manchester.

BETWEEN March 1984 and March 1985 Britain was convulsed by a political earthquake. The 1984/1985 miners' strike was not only the longest mass industrial strike in the history of any imperialist country, it was also a tremendous example of class struggle in every sense.

The Scargill leadership of the NUM showed that class struggle is not simply about defending jobs and wages, it's about the working class forging an alliance with all the exploited and oppressed in militant struggle against the ruling class. The Scargill wing of the NUM began to forge such an alliance.

This was the key political lesson learnt by thousands of working class militants and youth during the strike. The fight in the labour movement now is between those who base themselves on this lesson and those who turn against it.

The strike gave a glimpse of what will be the real content of a struggle for socialism.

The militants of the NUM learnt they were part of an international class struggle and the value of international solidarity. Imports of cheap South African coal to sustain Thatcher during the strike contrasted with the support for the NUM from South African miners and brought home the need to overthrow the South African apartheid regime. Jaruselski's aid of coal for Thatcher contrasted with

fear their potential to transform the labour movement, and from those on the left who shrink from the choices involved in real class battles. The main task of the left is the defence of this Scargill leadership.

## Ideas

The political ideas of literally thousands of young people were shaped during the strike. As Scargill said during the strike:

*'How many times have we heard them saying "young people today are not like their forefathers. They're too busy making mortgage repayments". But now we are sick and tired of the Jeremiahs of the movement saying young people will never fight as well as the older generation that built the movement. I say without fear of contradiction, that if those who built the movement could look on this scene today they would salute our young miners.'*

The strike created a new opportunity to build a mass campaigning LPYS based on these youth and supported by that section of the labour movement which, like Scargill, began to overcome its aristocratic attitude towards youth.

The Militant leadership of the LPYS turned its back on this opportunity. Not one national demonstration in support of the miners was called. At no point did the LPYS leadership openly criticise and distance itself from Kinnock. Militant found itself consistently to the

right of Scargill during the strike, joined in the attack on Scargill and the NUM at the end of the strike and as a result found itself with 69 fewer LPYS branches represented than last year.

Peter Heathfield spoke for many activists when addressing NALGO conference: *'I used to buy the Militant out of politeness until Ted Grant decided to turn on the leadership of the NUM after the strike. Now the Militant is crossed off our list.'*

## Class

Instead of basing itself on the international class struggle the Militant leadership of the LPYS stands for building a Labour Party in Nicaragua against the Sandinistas, for building a Labour Party in Ireland against Sinn Fein, for black and white unity in South Africa against the independent struggle of the black working class, for a 'socialist federation' of Britain and Argentina against recalling the fleet during the Malvinas war.

Instead of standing on the reality of an alliance for socialism Militant stand for fake 'unity' of the working class which means adapting the struggles of the oppressed to Militant's own backward ideas.

Militant stands for Liverpool City Council's division of the working class against Scargill's support for black sections and the organised support of black people for the miners. Militant stands against the self-organisation of women,

even in the face of the gains of WAPC and Scargill's support for associate membership and for the demands of WAC in the Labour Party.

## Lesbians

The strength of the alliance between lesbians and gay men and the NUM is the way forward for the working class not Militant's claim that such struggles are divisive.

These backward ideas were responsible for the LPYS failing to lead youth and build out of every recent wave of youth and working class radicalisation from the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign, through YCND, the ANL, the women's movement, and now the greatest class struggle in sixty years. A leadership which fails this test should not be tolerated to speak in the name of socialist youth.

The choice is simple: the LPYS can continue with this leadership which has isolated itself from the class struggle or it can build a new leadership based on those class struggle militants who have not turned their backs on the miners' strike. A leadership which stands for the Scargill leadership of the NUM, for British withdrawal from Ireland, for a political dialogue with Sinn Fein, for the FSLN in Nicaragua against US imperialism. A leadership which supports black self-organisation and struggles like that of Liverpool City Black caucus, and which fights for the liberation of women.

The alternative course for the LPYS, based on

mass action, open debate and opposition to all witch hunts began to be built by the LPYS regional bulletins — in Scotland, the North-West, the West Midlands and Notts — which emerged during the miners' strike. The current around these bulletins firmly identified with the leadership and methods of the miners. Youth Action is one such journal, based in the North West.

## Fringe

This special issue of Youth Action aims to take one step further work done in building the left through our miners day-

school at Bold miners welfare, our solidarity with Liverpool black caucus, and co-ordination with other regional bulletins, in particular through the fringe meeting at this year's LPYS conference.

Youth Action is holding an open meeting on Saturday 7th September in Manchester to which we invite all interested LPYS branches and bulletins. We hope this meeting will agree to call a national conference on 19 October. BE THERE!

Contact: Maria Walsh, 27 Landos Court, Miles Platting, Manchester.

## Young workers fight slave labour

**HERITAGE Photo Frames employ 39, mostly young, workers in Broadheath, near Manchester. Take home pay for a full week is £46. Health and safety is non-existent.**

**On 23 August three workers, Ian Sumner and Margaret and Garry Graham were sacked. No reason was given, but it was obvious management were making an example of the three who were known to be members of the TGWU. IAN SUMNER told BILL ALDER:**

WAGES and conditions in the factory are a disgrace. One lad lost the tip of his finger on a machine that wasn't guarded.

Last winter it was so

cold that the toilets and drinks machine froze up. People were carrying stacked sheets of glass across the factory floor which has loose floor boards and patches of ice from a hole in the roof.

Now we're standing up for our rights. A majority of the workers have signed TGWU forms and are on strike.

We want two things: our jobs back and recognition of our union. Already we've had support from other trade unions, and suppliers have turned back at our picket line. Heritage owns another firm down the road, called Polo Pictures. We're putting our case to the workers there.

We're standing up for our rights and we'll fight on till we win.'



# Socialist ACTION

## The British connection

ABOUT 40,000 of the black miners on strike in South Africa work for Gold Fields of South Africa. This operates some of the most productive goldmines in the country and is part of a British mining investment group, Consolidated Gold Fields.

Gold Fields of South Africa has the reputation of paying the lowest wages in the industry, despite the fact that it can produce gold at \$111 an ounce — gold's current market price is \$333 an ounce.

Conditions in Gold Fields' mines are notoriously bad. At the highly profitable Kloof Mine, where gold is produced at \$83 an ounce, workers complain that no ceilings exist in the rooms — making them unbearably hot in summer

and cold in winter. Black workers are forced to accept appalling living conditions — bad food, overcharging by white shops, and continual abuse from white miners.

Gold Fields contributes about half of Consolidated Gold Fields' profits, and is linked to the giant Anglo-American Corporation — which has a 29 per cent stake in the company.

Consolidated Gold Fields has justified its position in its negotiations with the South African NUM by claiming that there are only 74 black union members at its Kloof mine. It does not explain how 13,000 workers at Kloof engaged in a strike and a widespread boycott in February this year.

Some observers believe that the South African Chamber of Mines has deliberately picked on Gold Fields and the other two companies to try and



inflict at least a partial defeat on the NUM. British owned companies are right at the forefront of this dirty game.

# Black miners shake South Africa

THE STRIKE by 70,000 black miners which began on Sunday is a potentially explosive deepening of the struggle in South Africa. Although the strike is confined to seven gold mines and collieries owned by three companies — Gold Fields of South Africa, Gencor and Anglo Vaal — the National Union of Mineworkers has warned that any action against the strikers will lead to action in other mines.

The NUM with over 150,000 members is South Africa's largest and potentially most powerful black trade union. It is also one of the fastest growing black unions. Its numbers have been more than doubled in the past two years, despite the enormous difficulties of organising in the industry.

South Africa's 550,000 miners are forced to live in compounds isolated from the rest of the community. Over 95 per cent are classed as migrants. Within the compounds they are forcibly divided along tribal lines by the companies using a method known as the induna system. Assisting the indunas are 'tribal representatives' — in reality mine police. During periods of unrest the tribal police and the indunas

become important targets for the workers because they are seen as tools of management.

The companies involved in the present strike are among the most repressive mineowners in South Africa. Other companies

By Pat Hickey

in the Chamber of Mines have conceded rises of between 17 and 22 per cent in response to the NUM's 22 per cent demand. The three companies which have held out are ones in which the NUM is more weakly organised.

But even in these three companies the NUM has been growing. In February this year two of Gold Fields' mines — East Driefontein and Kloof — saw major action by the workers.

At East Driefontein

the February action by 13,000 miners resulted in 813 dismissals and the arrest of 19 shaft stewards. Violence by police and mine security left well over 145 people injured, when police opened fire on workers who had sat down at the main gate.

One mine worker described the scene: 'We all sat still. Then they opened fire...live bullets, rubber bullets and tear gas. Chaos broke out. Workers were running in all directions. There was smoke all over. It was like a war.'

Despite the dismissals and the arrests the NUM has reorganised itself in the mine.

There is no doubt that the mining companies will attempt to crush the present strike using the police and mine security. The NUM's warning that action against the strikers will lead to solidarity action may well be put to the test.

The mining companies have traditionally reacted to strikes with brutal repression. In 1982, for ex-

ample, a strike by 70,000 miners left 10 dead and hundreds injured.

The black miners of South Africa are waging a heroic struggle for the most basic rights — the right to organise, the right to strike, the right to decent living conditions and working conditions, the fight to end the inhuman system of apartheid. The NUM has no strike fund, and the poverty wages of black workers mean that they will face severe hardship in addition to police repression. Financial aid and messages of support are vital.

The address of the NUM is: PO Box 10928, Johannesburg 2000.

● The Anti-Apartheid Movement has established a special fund, with Peter Heathfield as one of the trustees, to channel aid to the striking miners.

Send donations to: Emergency South Africa Miners Strike Fund, Lloyds Bank, 88 Tottenham Court Rd., London W1. Account no. 7092256, sorting code 301882.

## Come to Greenham

September 7/8

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The Women's Peace Camp at Greenham Common is still there and is celebrating its fourth birthday on 5 September. At the same time, 2-13 September, the Ministry of Defence is planning its largest mobilisation of non-nuclear forces since 1945 with the Brave Defender exercise.

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