

A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

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Thatcher heads for June poll

KINNOCK'S ROAD LEADS TO DEFEAT



LAWSON'S BUDGET is the final brick put in place to allow Thatcher to call an election. The two pence off income tax, the failure to increase duty on drink and cigarettes, the promised cut in interest rates to feed through to mortgage payments, are all designed to clear the way for a May/June election. Short of some disaster, and probably subject to the test of the local government polls, we are going to a summer election.

And the truth is Labour is in a disastrous state to face it. For four years Neil Kinnock has steered Labour to the right. And now it's reaping the whirlwind.

Each struggle which could have been used to turn the relation of forces against Thatcher — the miners, the NGA at Warrington, the fight to defend the councils, Wapping — has been sabotaged or attacked by Kinnock. Each step that could have been taken to widen Labour's appeal — above all to radically expand its appeal to women, black people and youth — has been rejected.

Kinnock has accepted that major problems facing the country are the *Militant* tendency, the power of the trade unions, and 'looney councils' — not unemployment, poverty, racism and the arbitrary power of employers like Murdoch. He has presented Labour as little different to the SDP and Alliance — and sometimes, as on Zircon, to their right.

Given that, little wonder that the Alliance has continued to cut into Labour's support. If what Britain needs is the politics of the Alliance then why not vote for the real thing rather than a pale imitation?

Some in the labour movement genuinely believed that to win, Labour must go right. Even if what Kinnock was doing made you sick in the stomach at least it would win Labour the election — and that was the most important thing.

Now the record is clear. Not merely was what Kinnock doing, nothing to do with socialism, it had nothing to do with winning the election either.

There is a clear reason for that. The Tory government could only be defeated by moving the relation of forces in favour of the working class

and against Thatcher. Every struggle that Kinnock sabotaged and attacked was another nail in the coffin of Labour winning the election. Every section of the black community Kinnock attacked, every demand of women he rejected, prolonged Thatcher's days in office.

It is desperately late to change course. But it is vital. Labour has to start to support those fighting Thatcher. It has to change its path drastically to the left to start picking up support in the working class, among women, in the black community, and among youth who are all Labour's natural constituency.

The left has two jobs. First it has to fight with every ounce of its energy to win the election — not just in working for Labour but in supporting

every struggle and every policy that can turn the tide for Labour. Second it has to make clear *why* Labour is fighting with its back against the wall. Because for four years every proposal and every initiative of the left has been rejected — and the right has steadily led Labour towards a defeat.

The left has to try and turn that situation round. It has to make clear who is responsible for the situation. Most of all it has to point a way out for the labour movement.

Precisely because it is the right, and those who have bloced with them inside the party, that have led Labour towards a disaster it must be the left that leads it out of that mess. That job has to start now, continue through the election and go on after it. It is a hard route, but it is the only one there is

Labour must change course

Socialist ACTION

The Broadwater frame-up

AS WE GO to press the jury has retired in the Broadwater Farm 'murder' trial. Their verdict is pending.

But the verdict of every person looking for the truth is already clear. The trial is a straight frame-up. It proceeds by the same logic that led to the frame-up of the Birmingham Six for the Birmingham pub bombings. The police, and government, demand victims to show they are 'in control' of the situation and to intimidate the community. Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite, and Engin Raghip, were picked out to be those victims. It could have been almost anyone else in Broadwater Farm or in the black community.

The trial is no different to the wave of prosecutions for riot, affray and murder which followed the miners' strike. There too, the state was taking its revenge — on that occasion against workers who fought in defence of their jobs and communities. Last weekend was the anniversary of the death of David Jones, killed on a picket line during the miners' strike. No one was brought to court for his 'murder'. The events at Broadwater Farm were caused by the death of Cynthia Jarrett during a police raid on her home. No one has been brought to trial for her murder either. But Dean Hancock, Russel Shankland and those framed for the Birmingham and Guildford bombings are still in jail. And if the state has its way three more black comrades will be joining them.

Even in its own terms, the Broadwater Farm trial is grotesque. There are no witnesses. The only 'evidence' is the 'confessions' of the accused. And these 'confessions' — drawn up whilst the accused were in police custody — are all denied and refuted by them.

The utter groundlessness of the police case has been thoroughly exposed in the course of the trial:

- The 'confessions' of three of the accused who, being under 18, are legally defined as 'juveniles', have been found to have been forced and inadmissible. Charges against them have had to be dropped.
- One of them, mentally retarded, was not only forced to give his own confession but, in open contravention of judges rules, was pressured by police interrogators to give information about others.
- A key prosecution witness admitted that not only had he openly lied in court about events at Broadwater Farm but that he had received police protection, including free accommodation, had been given £40 to £50 by the police and had been 'fixed up' with two jobs by them.

The fact that the judge did not, under such circumstances, dismiss the case against all six is a travesty of justice in itself. The judge has not even directed the jury to find the accused 'not guilty'.

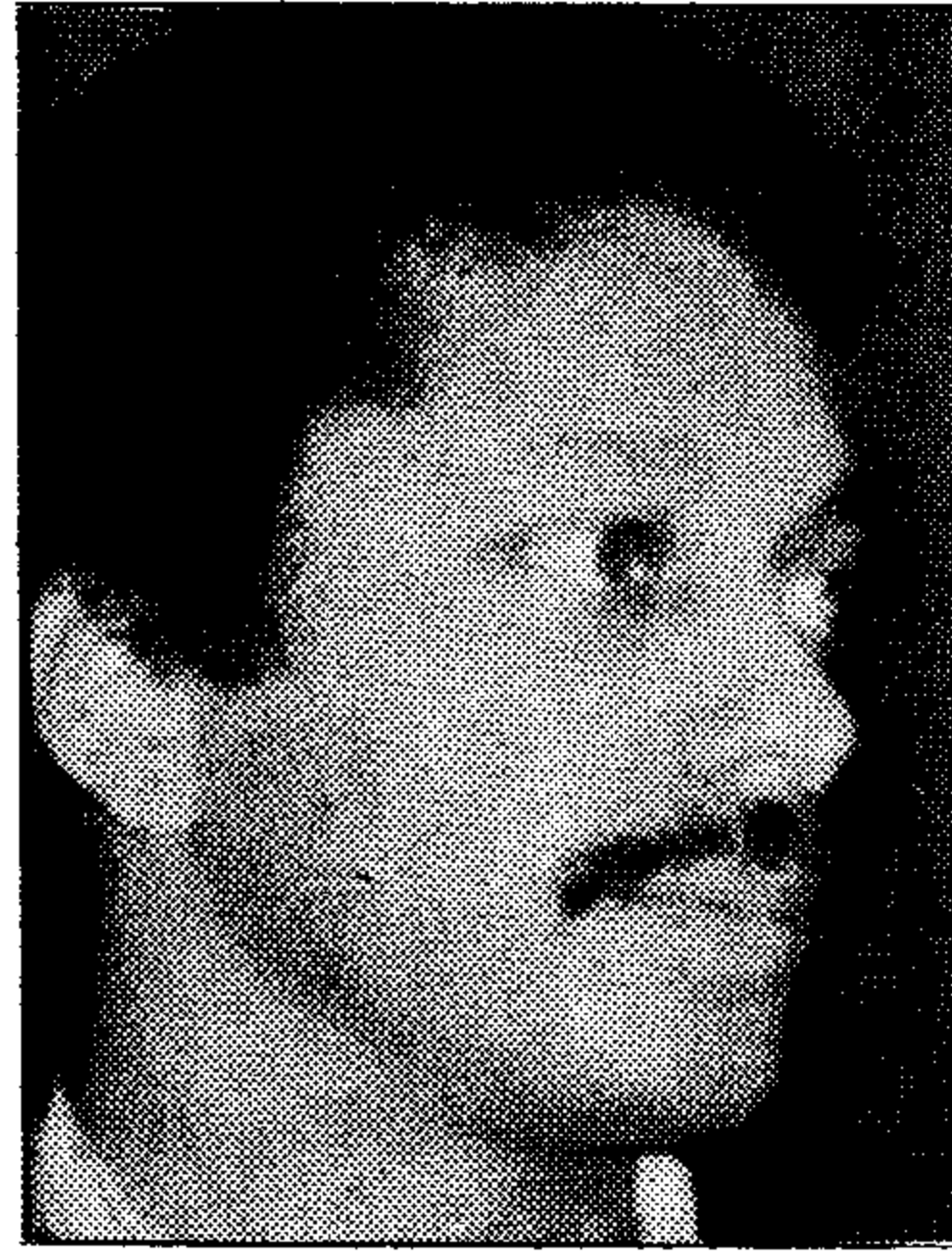
These trials are not about 'justice'. They are expressions of judicial revenge. No matter whether it be supporters of freedom for Ireland, miners, printers at Wapping, or residents of Broadwater Farm someone must pay for the 'crime' of fighting back and opposing the attacks on them.

Increasingly openly the police and the courts are the instruments to deliver 'retribution'. With ever growing arsenals at their disposal the police are playing an increasingly prominent role. Whether or not they seek to justify it by divine intervention the role of the police as spearheading the drive against black people fighting racism, or workers in struggle is increasing.

It was revealed in the Broadwater Farm trial that the police had planned their riot at Broadwater Farm for over a year. The protests at Cynthia Jarrett's death was simply the occasion for these plans to be implemented.

Whatever the outcome of the trial dozens of black people still remain charged with offences arising out of that police riot back in October 1985.

All charges should be dropped. All those already imprisoned or fined should be released and compensated. The police's actions should be subject to an open public enquiry, and they should be disbanded and their riot squads disbanded. The entire labour movement has a stake in this. It is not an affair for the black community alone.



MARC WADSWORTH's chair's speech to the Labour Party Black Section AGM, held on 14 March in Nottingham, reviewed the work of the Black Section over the last year and outlined its perspectives for the next. Its message was that the black community must not accept political agendas set by other people, it must impose its own agenda and demands. We print here the part of the speech (edited by Socialist Action) that outlines the basis on which the Black Section, and the black community, can work with white sections of the left.

BLACK Section is, in our view, the most advanced form of black self-organisation we've had in Britain. Why? Because it answers the question — how are we to relate to the monolithic Labour Party which, in the inner city areas where we are concentrated, controls so much of our lives. And because we are entirely clear on the question of black national liberation.

Our policy on Azania has enabled us to go forward with clarity of purpose on initiatives like the newly formed Black Action for the Liberation of Southern Africa. It has also meant that we have made the link with the importance of supporting Palestinian self-determination and freedom for the Irish people.

We have made it clear that we are about power not sterile oppositionism, like some of our detractors in the so called radical black 'community politics'. Ours is not to sit on the side-lines and whimper, having delivered our black votes to Labour at election after election. We have got to get stuck into the task of self-organising inside the party and fighting for democratic rights on our terms. In doing this, we reject the old godfather politics used by white barons of rotten boroughs like Sparkbrook in Birmingham to manipulate and control us. We have proved we can soundly defeat these elements.

Expelled

We took on and beat Labour's deputy leader, Roy Hattersley, after Amir Khan and Kevin Scally were expelled from Sparkbrook party. What the campaign for the Reinstatement of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally (CRAKKS) did was to demonstrate our ability to unite the 'left' on a principled bases with our banner. We have since built on that as joint chair of Labour Left Liaison, with Steve Jomoa taking on the Militant tendency in the YS this year, and with our close collaboration with the Campaign Group of MPs.

We are firmly on the left, apart from anything else our anti-imperialist policies demonstrate that. We condemned the American bombing of Libya with the connivance of the Thatcher government. What this clearly revealed was that the

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation is an alliance to smash national liberation struggles, not an alliance for peace as is claimed. We call for Britain's withdrawal from NATO.

The left must also learn that black people can and must lead the left. We're not something optional to be added on if white people find there's room in the struggle. We're a vital catalyst without which there can be no true socialism.

Guard

As the struggle gets sharper, we must increasingly guard against the germ of 'ultra-leftism', the blight of personality politics, and the curse of self-destruction. If we're to win our demands, we must broaden our support inside and outside the party.

Perhaps the most rewarding challenge before us will be reaching the hundreds of thousands of black workers who face racism not just from the employer but also the trade union bureaucracy.

Our work to promote self-organisation in this hugely important area will reap the dividend of helping to liberate the most oppressed section of our class. It will also give black workers greater control over the union block vote which represents so much power at the Trades Union Congress and Labour Party annual conference.

But as we begin to make this break-through, we continue to reject tokenism — the politics which says that one black person being 'allowed' to make it in the power structures means the system works. With our appearances on the Wapping picket line, raising funds for the National Communications Union workers during their dispute, and solidarity work with the Kenure plastics and Wheeler's restaurant workers we've shown whose side we're on.

Our work with the youth is particularly crucial because we've seen in Brixton, Handsworth, Hackney, Newham, Southall and St Paul's that they are at the sharp end of state oppression.

Black women are another essential ingredient of our liberation struggle and they will be speaking on their own behalf at this conference.

Individual black sec-

Setting the black agenda



The Black Section AGM was featured on the front page of the best selling Caribbean weekly, The Gleaner — illustrating Black Section's deepening impact within the community.

tions have made a mark by their activity. I spoke at one of Nottingham East's marches in the city protesting against the imposition by the Tories of racist visas. Members of the Black Section leadership joined the support committee aiding the 42 sacked Kenure Plastics workers — which was chaired by Madhav Patil. His black section, Southall, went on to run the picketing of Southall's 'colour bar' trades and social club. Hounslow took on the case of the black Hell's Angel John Mikklesen, who was killed by the police like so many of our brothers and sisters.

Campaign

Birmingham comrades were at the heart of the Campaign for the Reinstatement of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally. As soon as we had won that they had to take up the case of the sacking of the vice-chair of the city-wide black section, Phil Murphy, from Birmingham race committee because of his outspoken black politics.

In Lambeth, the black sections have held together, forcing our involvement in the parliamentary selection process — one of the party's Achilles heels. We've also played a leading role in the recruitment of black

school governors. We know how real power for our people will be achieved. It won't be easy. There are no short cuts. We must deepen our roots in black struggle and strengthen our alliances on the left.

So far we've had a number of significant successes. Town halls around the country will never again be the same, and soon this will also be true of the House of Commons.

Some people, fearful of our progress, have called us wreckers, loonies, extremists. The leader of our party stooped as low as to call us 'repellent' — an adjective I have yet to hear him use on racist PW Botha. Our three leaders of councils — Bernie Grant, Merle Amory, and Linda Bellos — have been vilified by the Tories, aided and abetted by the gutter press. The Labour leadership's response to the Tory 'race attacks' has been to add to the chorus against us, not join us in taking up the anti-racist cudgels.

Failure

This failure has been a betrayal of an important section of Labour's working class support; the black section which, in many crucial inner city seats, six of which our Black Section supporters

will be fighting at the next general election, will decide whether or not Kinnoch is to form a government. We want to see a Labour government in this country — but there will be no socialist government which doesn't answer to the needs of the black community.

We have been sold out too many times before to write Labour a blank cheque which can be filled in after our votes are safely in the bag. Before that happens, this time, we are going to make sure the black community's minimum demands are heard and that the most senior people in this party have given us cast iron guarantees — then we'll decide. We know we can't leave them to their own devices.

Process

This Black Section annual conference is a watershed in that historical process. Before us for debate are the major issues of jobs, immigration laws, education, anti-imperialism and the intervention of black politics into the parliamentary arena of struggle. Our decisions will tell our people whether or not we have come of age. I sincerely hope the message that will echo throughout black Britain after today will be — forward to an anti-racist, socialist victory.

You don't fight reaction by running away from it

ANGER, ANGUISH and anxiety have been the reaction of lesbians and gay men to the letter by Patricia Hewitt leaked to the *Sun*. Millions of lesbians and gays who might have been expected to support Labour on the basis of the party's policy have been shaken and confused.

Hewitt's letter, and Neil Kinnock's subsequent endorsement, are not just an outrageous assault on the human rights of millions of lesbians and gay men. It is also political suicide for the Labour Party.

The charge against the so-called 'loony left' is that by advancing the defence of the rights of lesbians and gay men London Labour councils are alienating Labour's traditional support. It is true that progressive social policies can be unpopular with sections of a politically backward working class which follows the ideological lead of the capitalist media and the rabid hostility of the tabloid press to anything socialist. But to adopt the approach of retreating before such prejudice is entirely misguided and completely incoherent, and for three reasons.

Peter Purton, LCLGR (personal capacity)

The first is a simple reason of fact. If London councils like Ealing, Haringey, Brent or Lambeth are 'loony' then so was the 79 per cent of the last Labour Party conference when it voted for the implementation of a comprehensive lesbian and gay rights policy. So too were Neil Kinnock and the entire National Executive Committee, which unanimously backed the successful resolution.

The victories won by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights at the last two national conferences were not accidents. They were won because the arguments

were unanswerable. Any party which claims to rest on socialist principles, on principles of equality and liberty, could not sit by and see the grotesque injustices suffered daily by lesbians and gay men in every walk of life and every corner of society. The most elementary adherence to even basic human rights must mean support for removing institutionalised discrimination against people solely on the grounds of their sexuality. Even the Alliance parties have such policies!

So, regardless of questions of 'electoral popularity', it would be necessary for a party devoted to equality to campaign for lesbian and gay rights. The alternative has terrifying implications.

Racist immigration policies may be electorally popular. That does not mean that the Labour Party should adopt them for the sake of electoral gain. Supporting capital punishment might win votes. That does not mean that Labour should be in favour of hangings. It has been rightly stated that heterosexism — discrimination against homosexuality — is the only remaining form of discrimination that is acceptable within the labour movement. That does not make it right.

Either the Labour Party is in favour of equality



for all, or it is not. It cannot maintain its present position of secretly being in favour of legislating for lesbian and gay rights, but publicly accepting the popular prejudices which make life unbearable for the millions of homosexual women and men.

But even in the crudest electoral terms, the current approach of the Labour leadership is disastrous. Every experience of fighting honestly on lesbian and gay rights, whether it be on local council policies, or around openly lesbian or gay candidates, is positive. The most recent council elections show that an honest campaign has actually benefitted Labour (as in Haringey or Lambeth).

But every time the Party has ducked the issue, as in the Bermondsey bye-election, or in local elections such as in Islington South, the ground has been conceded to the Tories and the Alliance, and the party has been routed. Honest policies,

honestly campaigned for and explained, have been successful. A dishonest approach of pretending that Labour does not support the rights of lesbians and gay men has handed a gift to the opposition and has left the field clear for bigotry and prejudice.

In such a climate, the massive prejudice which has been fanned for lesbians and gay men by the AIDS hysteria has been added to by the reactionary crusades of the religious fundamentalists and the Tories and Alliance. In addition to being a catastrophe for lesbians and gay men, such a policy is also a disaster for the Labour Party.

Make no mistake. If the Party refuses to fight on the question of lesbians and gays then the next people who it will be declared it is impossible to support are black people. Then it will be women. Then trade unionists and defenders of civil liberties. You never fight reaction by running away from it — because

the enemy simply increases their demands.

It is guaranteed that the other parties will try to exploit popular prejudice against the Party's policy and the positive attempts by Labour councils to implement it. Whether the Party wins or loses support depends not on the so-called 'loony left' attempting to defend Party policy; it depends on Neil Kinnock and Patricia Hewitt and the way they lead a general election campaign.

● **The Lesbian and Gay Pride Weeks Committee, in light of the growing attacks on lesbians and gays, is appealing for predominantly heterosexual organisations to support this year's lesbian and gay pride march, which is to be held on 27 June. For further information contact Mary Harper, 11 Rushton House, Albion Avenue, London SW8 2SE. Full details in our next issue.**

Black struggle

Black Section AGM.

ATTENDED by 160 delegates and observers, this year's Labour Party Black Section AGM was the most representative in Black Section's history.

The AGM held in Nottingham on 14 March registered an important geographical expansion from the existing London and Midlands strongholds of the Black Sections. The last year's activity had included the establishment of the first Black Section in Scotland, in Glasgow, the establishment of a Black Section in Manchester's Moss Side, and moves to establish Black Sections in Cardiff and Leeds.

The AGM was the best prepared in the Black Section's history with the conference booklet, distributed in advance, running to 30 pages of resolutions, reports, and other material.

Almost all resolutions passed at the AGM were either adopted unanimously or by overwhelming majorities.

Key policy positions were adopted on the police, on immigration laws, on education, and on parliamentary activity.

The position paper adopted on the police states: 'The police are the principal coercive arm of the state, charged with upholding the law by force. In Britain's unequal society, no section of the community suffers from the oppressive nature of the policy more than black people.'

It argues: 'Police atrocities against us go unpunished despite ample evidence of their lies and corruption before the courts... Police frame-ups of black people occur with sickening regularity'

Attacks

... Those organised attacks on the black community are being legitimised by new laws which curb our democratic right to demonstrate and protest. Police powers to detain without charge have been shamelessly extended. 'Sus' has been replaced by the back door so that black youth — already hammered by unemployment — can be ritually harassed by 'stop and search' tactics.'

It calls for: 'an end to the oppressive presence of police as a force of intimidation on council housing estates. An end to their dubious presence in schools... Given the deeply rooted racism, we do not believe the police force is a job fit for black people.'

The paper calls for the repeal of the 1984 Police

and Criminal Evidence Act, the Public Order Act, and the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and demands the police are placed under the control of democratically-elected authorities in all parts of the country. Black Section want to see racists and fascists dismissed from the police; disbandment of the 'support units' which have replaced the Special Patrol Group; and the setting up of a fully independent complaints body.

Ban

The AGM also called for a ban on the manufacture, stock-piling and use of fire arms, plastic bullets and CS gas; and a duty enshrined in law on the police to prosecute perpetrators of race attacks. The paper also calls for an insertion in council tenancy agreements of an eviction clause for racists.

The paper also called for no co-operation with police consultative committees, and states that 'self-defence is no offence when the state is either unable or unwilling to act to defend us against racists.'

The resolutions adopted on education strongly supported Brent and Haringey councils, and Bradford council in its fight over the Honeyford case. They called for an 'open door' policy for black parents so that full and equal participation can be achieved; racism in schools to be a dismissable offence for staff and pupils; support for mother tongue teaching; support for the introduction of anti-racist policies and rejection of so-called 'multi-culturalism'.

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Caucuses

Positions adopted also called for support for black caucuses in teachers unions appointment of more black school governors; an immediate allocation of £5 million from central government to combat under achievement due to racist teaching; immediate review of suspension policies which discriminate against black teachers, and more training courses to ensure a big increase in the number of black teachers.

The conference called for the abolition of the immigration laws. A parliamentary caucus was established with Bernie Grant as its secretary.

The AGM also adopted a resolution calling for a democratic secular state in Palestine.

Marc Wadsworth was re-elected chair of the Black Section, Gul Zarina Khan and Narendra Makanji were elected vice-chairs, Kingsley Abrams secretary, Sanjav Vedi assistant secretary, Linda Bellos treasurer and Madhiv Patil publicity officer.

Wolverhampton marches against racism

WOLVERHAMPTON, SATURDAY 7 March was the scene of one of the largest demonstrations of black people in this country. Over 4000 people massed to protest against the murder of 23 year old Clinton McCurbin by West Midlands Police. McCurbin's death was an act of wanton police violence, and a savage attack against the black community. Have the police declared war on black people?

In bitter, arctic conditions black activists from Brixton London, St. Paul's Bristol and Liverpool 8 demonstrated their anger against the latest in a long line of killings and maimings of black people — particularly black youth. This murder in broad daylight in a busy high street precinct, and in full view of Saturday shoppers, sent shock waves throughout the local black community.

By Steve Jomoa, National Youth Organiser, Black Section.

The Labour Party Black Section played an important role in organising black solidarity. Banners were out in force. Birmingham Black Section

rallied round and worked hard to mobilise black youth to publicly vent their sense of outrage. This was successful as militant black youth, including members of Black Section Youth, turned up in hundreds as a powerful contingent voicing collective rage and fury at police terrorism and barbarity.

Charges

Birmingham Black Section, in a widely circulated press release, are calling for charges of murder to be brought against PC Thomas and PC Hobday. Eye witness reports state they rained repeated heavy blows, brutally kicked Clinton McCurbin in the groin, overpowered him, forcefully squatted on his back, then sadistically grabbing his

throat choked him and broke his neck killing him instantly. Clinton's lifeless body was tossed carelessly like a piece of meat into a waiting police vehicle.

Natural

It is quite natural that the black community hold the police in bitter contempt. Leading the march for justice were the family of Clinton McCurbin. His brother, crying openly, and his distraught but defiant mother who advised 'fight, fight, fight' against such atrocities. She went on to say 'I want you to struggle to the end, don't give up otherwise...they will come again...and it may be your children next time.'

The McCurbin family were 'allowed' by police to lay a wreath outside the Next store.

The march was a radical protest of black anger, and Wolverhampton's mass demonstration represented a strong challenge to police brutality. From New Park to the town centre, a 2 mile journey lasting 2 hours, we saw loud chanting in-



cluding 'What next', 'Black youth have to organise and mobilise now to fightback and to defend ourselves by any means necessary', and 'Tottenham youth are warriors Handsworth youth are warriors/Wolverham-

pton youth are warriors.' The warriors song made the connection between all black youth in struggle.

In view of the latest police outrages the Black Section makes its position clear on the increasing police racism.

In Brief

Warshawsky: drop the charges

MICHEL Warshawsky, charged under Israeli law with having relations with Palestinian organisations, has just been released on bail after being held in jail for over a month.

The campaign in his defence, however, must not be slackened. Warshawsky, coordinator of the Alternative Information Centre in Jerusalem, still faces jail under an Israeli law which forbids contact between Israeli citizens and Palestinian organisations.

The Israeli government is stepping up repression on this front against the growing sentiment inside Israel for opening up a dialogue with the PLO. A number of Israelis are currently on trial for arranging a meeting with the PLO in Rumania. Warshawsky's case is a clear reprisal against the

AIC, which has been closed down by the police for six months. The AIC has publicised the Rumania cases.

A week before Warshawsky's arrest and the centre's forcible closure, AIC had organised a demonstration in Jerusalem calling for a fair and open trial for Vanunu. The centre has also been in the forefront of giving international circulation to the real situation confronting the communities in the post-67 Occupied Territories.

One of the cases against the AIC was that a book on torture techniques was found in its offices. They were charged with helping prisoners to resist the effects of torture! A petition and further information material is available from: The Committee for Freedom of Expression of Palestinians and Israelis, BM Box 9585, London WC1N 3XX.

Women's TUC rejects attack on abortion

THE TUC WOMEN'S conference opened in Blackpool 11 March, with 400 delegates attending. There was wide support for the women's TUC among all unions, including the traditionally male-dominated unions which sent delegations.

One important debate focussed on the Labour Party's decision to establish a ministry for women. Strengthening the links between trade union women and such a ministry, so that it could be made to work for women, was a demand from conference.

In an effort to get the TUC to take its female membership much more seriously, a motion calling for a women's department and greater resources was unanimously supported. Female employment has increased substantially over the past three decades but women often find themselves in the lowest paid, most vulnerable

positions. Amongst other things the motion debated called on the general council to 'enable the TUC to be recognised as the organisa-

By Pat Tough

tion most properly suited to improve the lives of working women'.

Other conference debates looked at the increasing attacks being made on all aspects of women's lives: health care, education, maternity care, child care facilities, to name just a few. An emergency motion, moved by the women's council, gave conference the opportunity to unanimously

reaffirm its full support for the 1967 Abortion Act against the backcloth of attacks from anti-abortionists such as the legal action earlier this month by an Oxford student trying to force his former companion to bear 'his' child.

In moving the motion, Brenda Dean attacked the role of all the 'pro-life' organisations. Women in the trade union movement would not stand on the sidelines and watch the erosion of women's abortion rights, she said.

Unfortunately, a compositing motion on South Africa, had the stuffing knocked out of it. It failed to give support to the ANC, SWAPO, COSATU and the anti-apartheid movement. No mention was made of any workplace actions.



Regional round up

North West supports Liverpool councillors

IMMEDIATELY IN the wake of the court decision against the 47 surcharged Liverpool councillors, North West Labour Party regional conference passed a resolution in their support despite vigorous opposition from the regional executive. The resolution called for a Labour government to 'lift any surcharge imposed on councillors and any ban from office'.

It also called for the power of the district auditor to surcharge councillors to be abolished and for the restoration of the rate support grant stolen by the Tory government.

Eric Heffer and Keva Coombes spoke in support of the 47 during the debate. The motion was carried 275:229 on a show of hands.

This year's North West party conference saw a new alliance of the left in the region forged. A Campaign Forum fringe meeting was attended by more than 80 delegates and observers. A *Tribune* rally took place at the same time, with an audience of six!

Organising its first fringe meeting ever the Labour Committee on Ireland attracted 35 trade union and constituency delegates, who were addressed by Eddie Glackin of Trade Unionists for Irish Unity and Les Huckfield, TGWU-sponsored MEP. A Justice for Miners meeting was attended by more than 50 people.

Closer liaison between local campaign groups, North West CLPD and lefts in the unions also saw some successes in the elections to the regional executive. A slate promoted by Manchester area Campaign Group won three out of the five Greater Manchester places and saw one constituency delegate, Paul Etherington, elected onto the conference arrangements committee with 290,000 votes.

Resolutions were passed calling for an end to all racist immigration controls and visas, in support of Viraj Mendis, for town-twinning and solidarity with Nicaragua, and in solidarity with the ANC and COSATU.

By Dick Withecombe

Unfortunately conference failed to overturn the regional executive's suspension of the regional women's committee meetings. The justification given for this ban was that Mr Peter Killen, the regional women's officer, wasn't able to attend them all because they met too frequently.

North West conference is a generally dull affair, dominated by the unions. In this election year heavyweights Larry Whitty and John Smith were dispatched up to rally the troops — the region has 20 marginals, the largest number in the country.

Whitty concentrated his fire on the left, warning of the 'danger of throwing the election away by public disagreements and recriminations'. Speaking at the Campaign Forum meeting, Eric Heffer replied by saying: 'The attack on the Liverpool councillors and on party policy is what divides the left.'

Other speakers at the Campaign Forum meeting were Cath Potter of Labour Women's Action Committee and Jim McGinley of Knowsley North CLP. Michael Hindley MEP chaired for CLPD.

Scottish conference

THE 1987 Scottish Labour Party conference concentrated on promoting the party as the only one capable of reversing the accelerating decline of the Scottish economy. Delegates heard a number of attacks on Tory ministers in the Scottish office and criticism of the Scottish National Party's attempts to put the 'doomsday scenario' at the top of the political agenda: that is what the Scottish Labour Party would do in the event of a reelected Tory government in Westminster and near obliteration for the Tory Party in Scotland.

The party leadership in Scotland concentrated on the theme of 'confidence and unity'. Controversial issues were wiped off the agenda. This meant that resolutions on Labour Party Black Sections and on Ireland were not debated.

A resolution that national Labour women's conference should elect the five women's places on the national executive was overwhelmingly carried on a show of hands, but lost on a card vote. Neither the TGWU nor GMBATU supported the resolution, but some unions did vote for it.

However, the report from the Scottish executive, which was agreed by conference, contained a recommendation that the women's seats on the Scottish Labour Party executive should be elected by Scot-

tish Labour women's conference. A consultation process will now take place, to be completed by 1 June, to determine the composition of Scottish women's conference.

By Neil Cruikshank and Ann Henderson

Conference was dominated by the forthcoming election. This was the point made by Gavin Strang at the largest fringe meeting, organised by the Campaign Group. 'The left don't need lectures on unity,' he said. Strang reminded the audience that it was the right wing which had been disloyal to decisions of party conference.

The democracy theme was also taken up by Tony Benn. He emphasised that 'real democracy' is what's required: the power of peo-

ple to change society in their interests and not to be content with a parliamentary democracy which only manages it.

Pointing to the struggles of the miners, the printworkers, and Liverpool city council, he recalled the tragedy of the Labour leadership's response which allowed these battles to be waged without full labour movement support. Benn emphasised that the most oppressed groups in society, which the party claims to represent, are not accorded their rights in the party.

With only two women, and no black people, among the prospective parliamentary candidates in Scotland, there is ample evidence of this.

The meeting heard a call for more Campaign groups.

The meeting was also addressed by Atma Singh of Labour Party Black Section, Phil McGhee of CLPD, Jane Mitchell of Labour CND, Ann Henderson of WAC, Les Robertson representing the Labour Committee on Ireland, and John Brannan, convenor of the Caterpillar tractor plant where the 800 engineering workers have been in occupation since 14 January.

Black Section.

Labour CND also held a well-attended fringe meeting. The Anti Apartheid Movement and the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign were present at conference.

The fringe meeting jointly held by *Tribune* and the Labour Coordinating Committee was dogged by controversy. Many in the audience demanded a clear statement calling for an end to attacks on the left of the party.

Paul Thompson, LCC chair, reaffirmed that his organisation was in favour of 'dealing with undemocratic socialists in the party'.

International Viewpoint

AMONG the best publications for International Women's Day on 8 March was a special issue of the magazine *International Viewpoint*.

It contains articles on women from Western Europe to Japan, South Africa and Philippines.

A particular emphasis is taken up in an interesting article by Jacqueline Heinen, which examines the context of women's lives in Eastern Europe. It surveys the developments in women's social position, and women's response. The article demonstrates that in none of these countries have the initial promise of these revolutions been followed through into a fundamental change in women's position in society.

While women have been brought into the workforce in a major way (more than 50 per cent in Russia and East Germany), there are not even the beginnings of an attempt to make changes in the traditional family system — the private organisation of the reproduction of the workforce through individual families.

Social services are deprioritised, and the private family is ideologically and materially reinforced. This means women still act as domestic slaves, and carry out a double shift of work.

Paternalism permeates these societies. Women's role as mothers and

housewives is idealised as that of the 'true socialist' woman.

The article demonstrates the fundamental truth that women's oppression is rooted in the family system itself.

In tribute to International Women's Day the latest issue of *International Viewpoint* offers a valuable service of highlighting the conditions of women across the world.



International Viewpoint

carries news, documents and analysis of working class movements from around the world and is indispensable reading for all socialists.

International Viewpoint is available from most left book shops or by post from Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Subscription rates: 6 months £9.50 (120FF); 1 year £18.00 (200FF). Make cheques payable to PEC and send to IV, 2 Rue Richard Lenoir, 93108, Montreuil. Postal orders to PEC, CCP Account no 2-322-42T Paris. Bank transfers to PEC, BNP Robespierre, Account 230179/90, 153 rue de Paris, 93108, Montreuil, France.

Britain out in one parliament says Adams

GERRY Adams, MP for West Belfast and President of Sinn Fein spelt out a strategy for decolonising Ireland at a public meeting at Hornsey Town Hall, North London, on 10 February attended by 800 people. He went on to call upon Irish voters in Britain to only support parliamentary candidates committed to British withdrawal from the North of Ireland in the coming general election. **REDMOND O'NEILL** reports.

ADAMS began the meeting by saying how delighted he was to share the platform with the secretary of the Labour Party Black Section, Narendra Makanji. He appealed to: 'Irish people here to be mindful of the dangers of racism, because we have suffered what Black people here are suffering and we continue to suffer what they are suffering. We have a common enemy and we have a common struggle. The more practical acts of solidarity, like the one we have tonight, the better for both of our struggles.'

Adams pointed out that: 'none of the main British political parties have a policy on Ireland aimed at the decolonisation of the six counties and relinquishing of the British claim to sovereignty over part of our country.'

He explained that the Anglo-Irish Accord was merely an attempt to camouflage: 'this reality of the British claim to continued ownership of a part of Ireland. Hillsborough does not mark a new departure by the British insofar as it does not seek to change the constitutional status of the union.'

For this reason Adams argued that the Accord: 'cannot and will not create the conditions which would lead to a permanent cessation of hostilities, an

end to our long war and the development of a peaceful united and independent Irish society.'

The president of Sinn Fein then spelt out Sinn Fein's position on how such objectives could be achieved, namely: 'when a British government adopts a strategy for decolonisation. Such a strategy must have as its central tenet the abandonment of the Government of Ireland Act and an irreversible and public declaration by a British government that 'Northern Ireland' is no longer a part of the United Kingdom and that the British military and political establishment would remain there only for as long as it took to arrange their permanent withdrawal.'

'This would need to be accomplished within the shortest practical period and a definite date within the lifetime of the parliament would need to be set for the completion of this withdrawal. Adams went on 'It is my view that it's no business of the British government what happens afterwards. But for the purposes of the public debate I'd like to point out that it is Sinn Fein's view that within the new situation created by democratic measures it would then be a matter of business-like negotiations between representatives of all the Irish people to set the con-

stitutional, economic, social and political arrangements for a new Irish state.

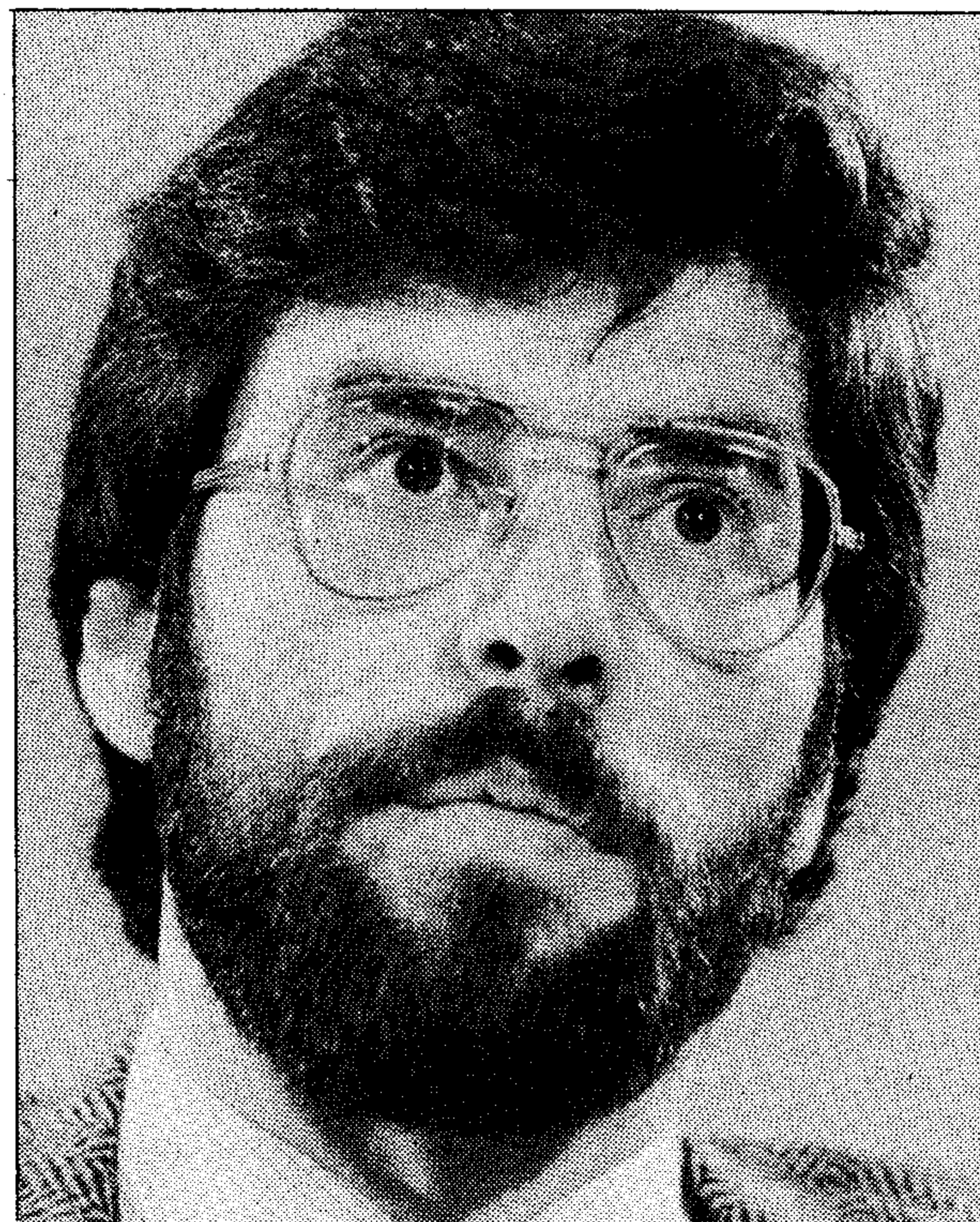
'Republicans have consistently asserted that the loyalist people must be given, in common with all other citizens, firm guarantees of their religious and civil liberties

'An all-Ireland constitutional conference consisting of elected representatives of the Irish people to discuss such arrangements, to draw up a new constitution for an independent Ireland and to organise a new system of government would be open to all significant organisations of political opinion in Ireland, including those without electoral mandates at this time.

'While this conference could have no influence on the decision by Britain to withdraw it would play an important role in organising the transition to a new governmental system. Such measures as part of a decolonisation strategy provide the only solution to our historical and current difficulties.

'This strategy is the only way that all the Irish people, regardless of the present political differences will be able to establish a peaceful, united and just society in our country. I have no doubt that the majority of people British people would welcome such an initiative and I also have no doubt, as everything else fails, that the British government will be forced to such conclusion.

'The only thing in question is how long and at what cost to the Irish people before such logical and commonsense steps are taken.



In this way Adams spelt out the agenda which Sinn Fein calls upon those in Britain who support Irish self-determination to adopt. It established a clear basis for united action for British withdrawal.

The recent decision of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee's consultative conference on Ireland to campaign to commit the Labour Party to a policy of British withdrawal from Ireland within the lifetime of the next Labour government, coincides with the central plank of the decolonisation strategy proposed by Sinn Fein.

The policy change by part of the soft left — and the pages in *Tribune* have subsequently been opened to all and sundry to attack the position — follows the strong support for Irish self-determination by the Labour Party Black Section, the National Organisation of Labour Students, the Labour Women's Conference and Labour Left Liaison, as well as the vote by the National Union of Mineworkers delegation at the 1986 Labour Party conference in favour of

British withdrawal for the first time.

As Adams correctly stressed, the decisive question in relation to Ireland is British withdrawal, and, taken together these developments open the way for making deeper inroads into the trade unions and the Labour Party around this objective of a commitment to British withdrawal in the lifetime of a single parliament.

The final part of Adams' speech was devoted to a call for the Irish in Britain to make Ireland an issue in the coming general election and 'not to vote for any candidate unless and until he or she gives a public commitment to work for and to support the decolonisation strategy I have outlined here.'

Despite Adams' fully justified attack on the despicable record of British Labour leaderships on the issue of Ireland we believe this is a mistaken tactic from the point of view of securing Irish freedom and independence. We will come back to this in the next issue of Socialist Action.

Greenwich and the shift of power inside the Labour Party

THERE is a serious shift of power taking place within the Labour Party. Increasingly power is being diverted away from the rank and file, from conference, and from the national executive, and into the hands of the parliamentary leadership. **ERIC HEFFER MP** explains what's going on.



THE transfer of power in the party into the hands of the parliamentary leadership is able to take place because nobody wants to be held responsible for rocking the electoral boat or be accused of helping the enemy remain in government. For example, the policy-making committees of the NEC are now joint committees with the shadow cabinet. Control over policy and its implementation has shifted decisively away from the NEC.

There have recently been two dramatic examples of where this leads. The NEC was allowed neither to see nor to discuss the defence campaign which the party launched last December. More recently, Labour's job creation programme document, which was drawn up by the leaders' office, was distributed to the NEC and collected back at the end of the discussion. Members were not allowed to propose any amendments to the policy or its presentation. No real discussion of these policies and their presentation took place at the national executive.

In the case of the defence campaign there has been a clear shift of emphasis away from conference policy. We are moving more and more towards a situation where the leadership of the party not only decides policy but also how it will be presented to the public.

And look at the results. By-election candidates are increasingly being 'packaged' by headquarters. In my view that is why the demand that the leadership must appoint by-election candidates is now coming forward. Of course, those who are pressing for that realise they cannot win the position right away. But it is part of a longer-term strategy for further removing power from ordinary members of the party.

We are moving closer to American-style campaigning where the candidates, not party policies, are presented for support. We are adopting the style of presentation that the SDP goes in for. In Greenwich, wherever Rosie Barnes went there were smiles all round — but there was little presentation of the policies of the Alliance.

There are some in our party who would welcome that. They don't want Labour to concentrate on its policies — and especially on its class politics and on socialism. Take housing. There are plenty of people living in terrible conditions of overcrowded and substandard accommodation. Labour's job is to get them into better homes. But we are hearing a lot of talk about 'choice'. Instead of concentrating on the need to improve the housing conditions of those people who simply have no choice our leaderships concentrating on people's right to buy their own homes. That means Labour is saying much the same as the Tories and the Alliance are saying.

There are many other examples. Will Labour take back into public ownership the services such as British Telecom and British Gas? What will a Labour government do to improve the health service and education, both of which have been dramatically run down under the Thatcher government? What about the deregulation of public transport?

Labour can only rebuild its electoral support if we are prepared to make clear statements about what we intend to do. That means emphasising our differences with the Tory Party and with the Alliance — just what Labour failed to do in Greenwich, with dramatic results. We lost the last general election not because we said where we stood, but because there was a breakaway from our party by the right wing, and because in the course of the election spokespeople for the party publicly attacked our policies. We have not yet learned from this.

The lesson of Greenwich is that if we appear like the SDP then people will say to themselves 'there's not much difference'. Labour should be saying we are the only alternative to the Thatcher government. The Alliance is simply the other side of the Thatcher coin. It is the second Tory Party in Britain.

Maghaberry picket

ON 8 MARCH 1979 an International Women's Day picket of Armagh women's prison was viciously attacked by the RUC. Every year since then on International Women's Day there has been an Irish and international women's picket in solidarity with imprisoned republican women and all Irish women struggling for their freedom. This year was no exception. **ANNE KANE** reports from the delegation.

OVER 100 women representing a wide range of women's and labour movement organisations participated in this year's delegation from Britain to picket Maghaberry women's prison organised by the Women and Ireland network. Women from 'WI' groups, the Labour Committee on Ireland (LCI), Labour Women for Ireland (LWI), CLPs, and the Campaign against Strip-Searching made up this year's delegation. It added its voice to the protest against the inhuman practice of strip-searching used as a weapon against women prisoners who are now held in Maghaberry.

After arriving on Friday evening, and being greeted by Sinn Fein, we went to stay with supportive families in nationalist communities in Belfast. Women on the delegation participated on Saturday in a day of workshops.

The workshops, organised jointly by Sinn

Fein women's department and Irish feminist groups, covered strip-searching, military repression, sexuality, the trade unions, culture and women in Sinn Fein.

Speakers at the opening sessions reflected the intertwining of the struggle for Irish self-determination and the fight for the liberation of women in Ireland. Chaired by Sinn Fein, speakers included an ex-Armagh prisoner, Brenda Downes, Emma Groves from the United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets and Helen Mahony from the Dublin based Defend the Clinics Campaign.

The strongest theme to emerge from the whole day was the way in which women's sexuality has been used as a weapon against them in their struggle — both in the north, in the fight against direct British occupation, and in the south.



Helen Mahony protested against the clamp down by the southern Irish government, since January, against even information being given to women about abortion facilities in Britain. She explained that 'along with strip searching and rape this denial of information and counselling about pregnancy is a basic violation of the dignity of Irish women'.

The focus of the weekend's protest, was the humiliating and degrading practice of strip-searching. Introduced in November 1982, by November 1986 over 2000 strip searches had been carried out against women in Armagh. At Maghaberry strip searching is being systematically carried on against women prisoners.

Amongst the 20 republican women held there some have been strip searched literally hundreds of times. Those who are

strip searched most, as they go back and forward from the courts, are remand prisoners — women who have never even been tried.

As the ex-Armagh prisoner who presented the workshop explained: 'strip-searching has nothing to do with security. Women are strip-searched when returning to prison after giving birth, when menstruating, and after all routine court visits. When held in Brixton prison in London, Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer were strip-searched hundreds of times.

'Strip-searching is simply another tactic to harass and break women down. It is the ultimate violation of a woman's body. The last thing they can take from you is the privacy of your body.

It is very difficult to explain how terrible it really is, until it happens to

TWO INCOMPATIBLE forces are today tearing the soft left apart. The first is the deepening offensive of the right — the increasing demands it is placing on the soft left. The second, intersecting with the first, is the process of political recomposition taking place on the hard/Campaign left of the party.

The immediate development which has precipitated the crisis of the soft left is the offensive of the right after Greenwich. The 'soft left' as opposed to the right, could originally be defined as that section of the party which wanted to try to retain the gains of 1979-81 — above all the democratic reforms in the Labour Party and the adoption of unilateral nuclear disarmament — but tried not to go beyond that.

The soft left tied this to support of Neil Kinnock — who was in a bloc with the right wing. This right wing/soft left bloc has run the party since the election of Neil Kinnock as party leader in 1983.

Nigel Stanley, in his article in *Tribune* makes it quite clear that he is for this right wing/soft left bloc. He writes: 'party unity was a pre-requisite for electoral success...A good example of this new concept of unity is the defence campaign. A polarised Labour Party would have precluded it. Instead both sides of the party have made compromises here.'

Stanley makes it clear he is against left unity: 'The only basis for left unity at present, given the widely different perspectives on the left, would be the right. This would mean entering a similar period to that after the 1979 election where the party was deeply polarised.'

Success

Quite bizarrely Stanley claims that this right wing/soft left bloc is shown to be correct by the electoral success it has brought the party. Stanley speaks of: 'the first task set by the realigned left — a short term programme for electoral recovery,' and then claims: 'Kinnock's priority was to make the Labour Party electorally popular once more. This he (and others) have done, more than many of us expected.'

This analysis is quite extraordinary given the eight per cent fall in Labour's vote in Knowsley North, the four per cent fall in Greenwich, the general slump in Labour's position since the 1986 party conference, and the fact that Labour did not advance in the polls at all for three years after Neil Kinnock's election as party leader.

Far from being a success Kinnock's right wing course, the course of the right wing/soft left bloc, has been an electoral disaster. The real failure of Labour, the one increasingly understood on the left, is that Labour under Kinnock has refused to adjust itself to the working class as it is today. Kinnock's course has sabotaged support for working class struggles, such as the miners, Wapping, and trade union rights. It has been complicit in the attack on the inner cities — and on the councils trying to defend their populations. It has refused to change either Labour's policies or its structures to bring it into line with the revolution in the working class constituted by the massive entry of women and black people into the workforce.

Mismatch

As Ken Livingstone put it in a neat but correct formula, there is: 'a mismatch between the working class as it is now and the institutions of the working class.' The addition which has to be made to that statement is that this means not just changing the institutions of the labour movement, vital as that is, but that Labour's policies, and its support for struggles, must be brought into line with the new structure of the working class. These changes must take in both the Labour Party and the trade unions.

The right/soft left bloc, by accepting this rejection of anything that would 'modernise' the Labour Party, in the profound sense of bringing its structures and policies into line with the reality of the working class, has itself ensured electoral disaster for Labour.

The only way to success for the party is to break up this right wing/soft left bloc and embark on a policy of radically restructuring the labour movement to bring it into line with the new reality of the working class — 'refounding' the Labour Party as Tony Benn has put it.

Left

The only united left which would take the party forward is one which defends party democracy against witch hunts, defends accountability of MPs as won in 1979-81, grants the demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee and the Labour Party Black Section, turns to defending, not attacking, trade union rights, starts attacking capital, not defending it, and in short, adopts essentially the programme the left wing of the party is now advocating.

The logical organisational outcome of such a policy would be the split of the soft left/LCC, with one part going over to the right wing and another part joining with the left of the party. The choices now tearing the LCC apart — whether to unite with the right or the left of the party — are simply the organisational expression of that political choice.

Base

The situation is made still worse for the extreme right wing of the LCC, represented by Nigel Stanley, because the right wing of the party hold them in complete contempt, consider the soft left simply as a useful tactical tool for attacking the left, and completely refuse to accept even the changes won in 1979-81 — let alone the more advanced programmes which the left has developed since then and which are necessary to bring the Labour Party and trade unions into line with the reality of the working class today.

The right wing has tried to overturn mandatory reselection of MPs at every party conference since it was adopted. The right is now engaged on a full blooded drive, headed up through the *Daily Mirror*, *New Statesman*, and the right wing of the trade union bureaucracy — taking in James Callaghan *en route* — to overturn unilateralism. The 'soft left' therefore inevitably now has to choose between its verbal support for the principles won in 1979-81 and its bloc with the right.

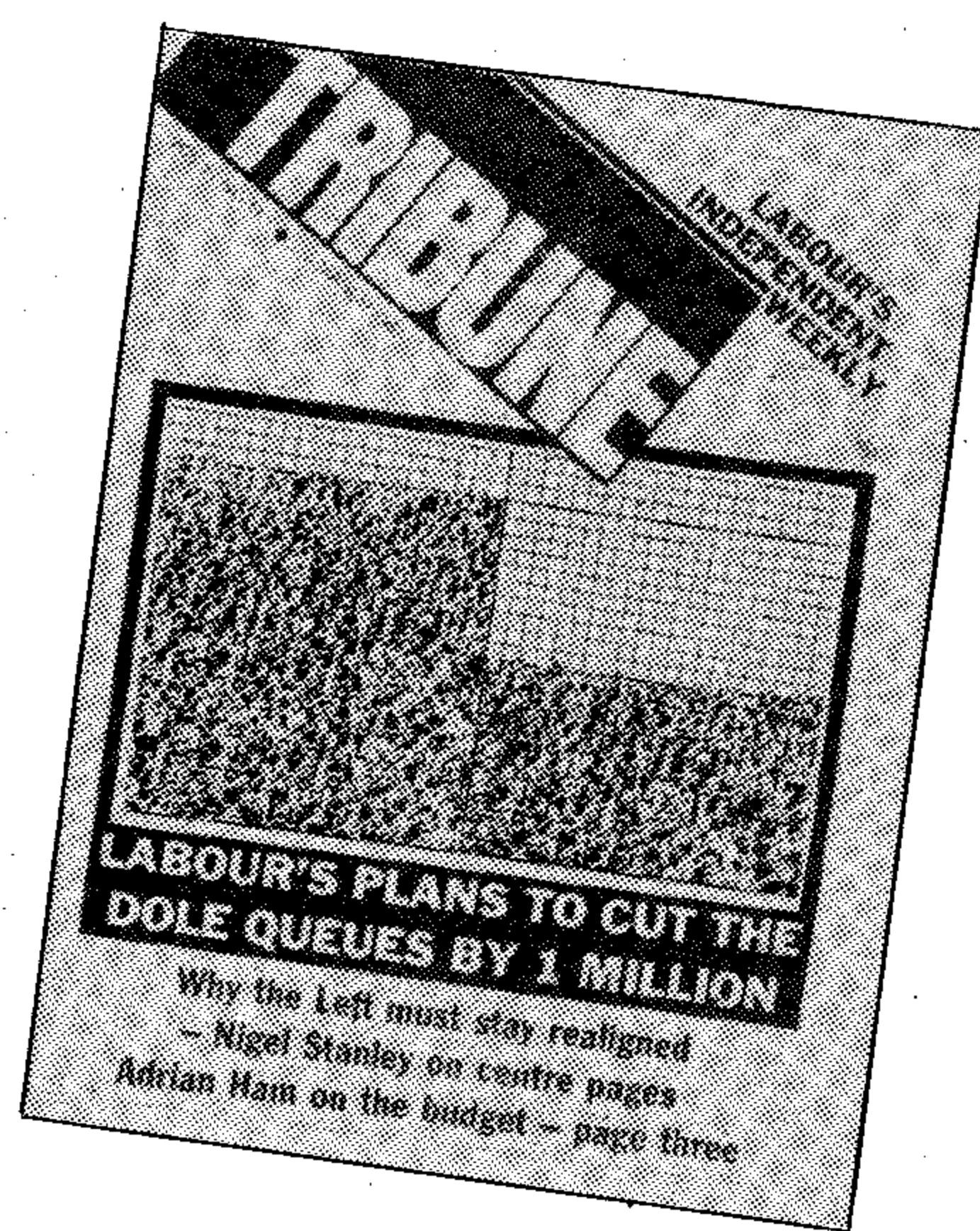
The party defence document *Modern Britain in a Modern World* first brought this policy crisis to a head for the base of the soft left by the fact that Labour, for the first time, pledged that every penny saved on nuclear weapons expenditure would be spent on conventional weapons. A Labour government was now pledged to maintain military spending at the highest level of any country in western Europe. The TV political broadcasts launching this campaign were the most explicitly militarist in the Labour Party's entire recent history. Building more tanks, not hospitals and houses, was not a platform to inspire even the soft left, nor, in the real world, is it a very good platform for winning working class votes — in addition to the much more profound political objections to this policy.

A wave of opposition to this campaign swept party activists. The apologies which the soft left were forced to make for this campaign didn't convince even their own members and produced a crisis of confidence among their supporters.

Outcome

The issue of reselection is even clearer. At least on unilateralism Labour remained formally pledged to the policy — although in practice the way to overturning it is being prepared. But with reselection it is openly overturning of the previous gains made in 1979-81, and weakening accountability of MPs is what is involved.

The question of reselection already divided the LCC executive — paralleling the discussion on their relations with Labour Left Liaison. Livingstone argued against any weakening of the present system of accountability of MPs to their general committees. The LCC 'right wing' argued for replacing it with a system of 'One Member, One Vote' — which in practice would be to destroy any accountability of MPs to



Ken Livingstone



Peter Hain

Why the soft left is

THE CRISIS developing in Labour's 'soft left' since last autumn exploded into public last week. In the pages of *Tribune*, extreme right wing Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) supporter, Nigel Stanley, launched an attack on Labour Left Liaison for exploding the soft left — and on other members of the soft left for supporting it. The same week the result of the ballot of its members was announced in which the LCC voted by two to one to overturn Labour party policy on the reselection of MPs — the LCC thereby openly attacking, for the first time, the democratic gains achieved in the Labour Party in 1979-81. Simultaneously the *New Statesman*, which acts as the weekly organiser for the right wing in the party, launched a call for a right wing/soft left bloc to purge the London Labour Party.

Labour's 'realigned left' is on the point of exploding. JOHN ROSS looks at the developments ripping the soft left apart — and what attitude the left should take to its crisis.

the only body capable of monitoring them, their GCs.

The right wing of the soft left has since been prepared to go still further than the LCC vote. *Tribune* editor Nigel Williamson wrote in last week's *New Statesman*: 'Deirdre Wood's defeat was, of course, partly due to the sustained and unpleasant media campaign waged against her. But therein lies the point. By-elections are now such a centre of national attention that the Labour Party has a duty to itself and its supporters all over the country to choose candidates who cannot so easily be subjected to such damaging, personal campaigns.'

Opposition

'It now seems clear that had Les Huckfield been allowed to stand in the Knowsley North by-election last November (a right I championed in *Tribune* at the time) then that seat would have been lost, too. I reluctantly conclude that Labour's national executive was right to impose George Howarth.'

Nor merely does Williamson now support the right of the party leadership to impose candidates on local parties, but no candidates unacceptable to the right wing media are to be selected! The logic of this would be that there must be right wing candidates throughout the country — as clearly anyone else is unacceptable to the media. The selection committee of the Labour Party will be Mr Rupert Murdoch — and this from someone like Williamson, who claims to be on the left!

The way the demands of the right wing on the soft left are becoming more remorseless is shown clearly in last week's *New Statesman*. This carries a call for a purge of the London Labour Party. Its front page cover is entitled 'The London Effect'. Its target is the legacy of the GLC.

In its previous issue the *New Statesman* had editorialised that: 'it is no longer enough, for example, simply to let a number of local organisations remain dominated by a self-perpetuating clique of activists of whatever ideological stripe'. In last

week's issue it extended its target not simply to the injunction that 'Trotskyist groups are poison' but to a full scale assault on London's white collar trade unions: 'White collar trade unions, like the local government, teaching, further education and even journalists unions tend more and more to use ward and constituency Labour Parties to further the aim of militant union branch leaderships. Thus the teachers union in inner London uses its powerful machine against the Inner London Education authority, which is labour controlled.'

Also coming under the hammer are the leadership of the black community. According to the *New Statesman*: 'Ethnic minority politics ... are very radical at its activist-leadership level. All of the black leaders — Lind Bellos of Lambeth, Merle Amory of Brent, Bernice Grant of Haringey together with leading activists like Mar Wadsworth of the black sections campaign and Diane Abbott, prospective candidate for Hackney North, are on or near the hard left, and most have shown little sign of seeking a better relationship with the party yet. They do differ



splitting



Nigel Williamson



left is going to be forced to choose rather openly between its bloc with the right wing and its support for working class, women's, black and other demands.

This fight is going to extend right into the core of the soft left itself. Livingstone has shown no sign whatever that he is going to retreat on women's, black or lesbian and gay demands — or the legacy of the GLC on these issues. He has hit back through the pages of the daily press and his column in *Tribune*. Livingstone will demand the support of the soft left in this fight — support which can only be given through breaking off the soft left's bloc with the right.

The fight in the London party is therefore almost certain to spill over into a central blow up in the soft left at a national level — as Blunkett has been pursuing a quite different course, in practice backing Kinnock, over the fight in local government.

It is against this background that the centre spread in last week's issue of *Tribune* by LCC right winger Nigel Stanley must be understood. This article is both a sustained diatribe against Labour Left Liaison (LLL) and the damage it is doing to the soft left. It is worth quoting at some length,

Realignment

Stanley writes: 'In the Labour Party conference edition of *Tribune* last year, Nigel Williamson contributed what was seen as an obituary of left realignment. "The soft left has probably become the least coherent grouping in the party at present," he wrote. This analysis was ringingly endorsed by Ken Livingstone at fringe meetings and, just in case not every delegate had read that week's *Tribune*, the various far-left briefings serialised extracts in a way reminiscent of Jeffrey Archer and the *Mail on Sunday* throughout the week.

'At the same time a new alignment of the left was proclaimed to the world, Labour Left Liaison would put the socialist stuffing back into the Kinnockite Labour Party and, what's more, had something new to offer.

'This was the first such coalition, we were told, to put the demands of women and black people first, and it secured the endorsement of the Women's Action Committee and the Labour Party Black Sections ... some influential individuals associated with the realigned left were impressed by this coming together ...

Disaster

'But then came disaster. The annual meeting of the LCC was dominated by alleged "right-wingers" who voted down links with Labour Left Liaison ... Ken Livingstone, newly elected to the Labour Coordinating Committee executive, reported the AGM decision this way to the eager readers of *Tribune* on 28 November: "As with any decision which is more influenced by sectarianism than policies, it was a wrong decision."

What this really means is that Labour Left Liaison is putting insupportable pressure on the LCC, and Nigel Stanley demands that people like Williamson stop confessing in public its weakness, and people such as Livingstone stop calling for 'unity on the left' — and instead get on with the serious business of uniting with the right to smash the left.

This pressure the LCC is under is

now getting fairly intense because it is the LLL dominated constituencies that are delivering the goods for the campaigns inside the party — not simply for the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) but also for the Women's Action Committee and the Labour Party Black Section.

Voting

Analysis of voting at last year's Labour Party conference showed that nine out of ten constituencies submitting resolutions supporting Black Sections were 'hard left' constituencies. A roughly similar proportion exists for constituencies supporting the new appeal for the election of the women's section of the NEC by the women's conference put out by the Women's Action Committee. In the run up to this year's conference the LCC will be actively sabotaging the campaign for defence of reselection of MPs.

In fact all this is provoking a major crisis for the LCC — and is why Stanley is so vituperative in his attacks on Labour Left Liaison. For Stanley, and the extreme right wing of the LCC, issues of women's and black demands were a convenient smokescreen behind which they put nine-tenths of their energy into fighting the left. The right wing of the LCC never actually believed it would be expected to deliver something for women and black rights — the only thing it expected to 'deliver' was knocking left wingers off the NEC. The LLL, by actually demanding delivery of practical support, and not resting content with verbal genuflections, has exploded the entire plan of the LCC.

Strategy

Furthermore the LLL's strategy is not based on some inner party manoeuvre. The bringing together of Labour's traditional working class base — represented by figures in the party such as Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, together with the new movements of women and black people based on the enormous expansion of the working class since World War II, is exactly the type of alliance which is needed to rebuild Labour as a mass working class party today.

The soft left is disintegrating not because of internal party manoeuvres but because the essential principles the Campaign Group and Labour Left Liaison have fought for are correct. Naturally the politics of that campaign left can be built on and extended. But they are the indispensable nucleus around which the left in the party must be built.

Policy

The soft left is disintegrating because, as a whole, it has defended no principles — except, as Nigel Stanley admits, of forming a bloc with the right to attack the left. That policy had some success as long as all it was confronted with was the infantile ultra-leftism of *Labour Briefing*, or the crude workerism of *Militant*. It cannot deal with the type of politics that has brought together the Black Section, the Women's Action Committee and CLPD in Labour Left Liaison and is increasingly linking the LLL and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs.

And as the soft left comes apart the situation in the Labour Party is going to be radically reshaped.

but they feel themselves to be representatives of an alienated, poor and discriminated against minority ... many have also made common cause with gay and feminist campaigns'

Campaign

The aim of this *New Statesman*/right wing campaign is to smash to pieces the alliance of working class organisations with women, the

black community, the Irish in London, and the lesbian and gay community put together by the GLC under Livingstone — and replace it with the old regime of a London Labour Party run by right wing trade union barons.

It is on this line that TGWU chairperson Brian Nicholson, who is also the chief organiser of the right wing on the TGWU executive, has launched his 'Londoners for Labour' campaign.

This development means the soft

left is going to be caught in a tremendous crunch in the London Labour Party between the right wing on one side and the hard left on the other. Furthermore all the campaigns which the soft left claim to espouse to establish their 'left' credentials — the demands of women, the black community, lesbians and gays — will be objectively lined up in the same camp as the hard left — because smashing support for their demands is precisely what the right wing in London is demanding. The soft

Unilateralism & foreign policy

Power or purity?

IN THE Socialist Action issue of 9 January (no 156), Carol Turner in an article called 'The soft left and unilateralism' argued that *Chartist* and other 'soft left' groups had already begun to betray Labour's commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament. *Chartist* strongly denies this charge and nowhere in the editorial that she quotes rather selectively from (*Chartist* Jan/Feb), was there any evidence that this was our view. Indeed the editorial was quite specifically talking about how Labour's non-nuclear defence policy might be achieved given all the forces that are lined up against us.

Contrary to your assertion, our editorial did question the overtly militarist tone of the recent party political broadcast that launched Labour's defence campaign. And indeed the vast majority of *Chartist* supporters would support Britain leaving NATO and cuts in Britain's defence budget.

However we argued that the overriding priority if we were to avoid electoral suicide, was to reassure ordinary people that 'they will feel safer without nuclear weapons and US nuclear bases'. At this late stage this can only be done by stressing a commitment to maintaining our conventional capacity at least until after the election. Clearly for your reporter, like some others on the left, this kind of realism is tantamount to treachery — five more years of Thatcherism appears to be their preference.

In a breathtakingly illogical argument Carol Turner totally confused unilateral disarmament (which she appeared to think was party policy) with a non-nuclear defence policy which is party policy and which *Chartist* is quite as committed to as she is. Ironically of course this is the same confusion which dogged the party throughout the campaign in 1983 and which probably lost us the election.

The stark reality is that there are only two options for those of us on the left who still care about disarmament — about removing cruise and Trident in the lifetime of a Labour administration and breaking down the cold war posture of the superpowers in Europe. We can either try to engage with the real world and listen to the worries and insecurities that still influence the vast majority of voters that we will have to appeal to in a general election which could be less than four months away. Or we can consign ourselves to five more years of ideological purity and political insignificance under a Thatcherite government.

In the best of all possible worlds (the dream-world that Socialist Action seems to inhabit) a natural majority of our supporters would be only too willing to build the first barricades to challenge the vast array of forces that will confront an incoming Labour government committed to its present defence policy. In the real world, removing US nuclear bases and cruise missiles and cancelling Trident, and more importantly demonstrating for the first time in history that a

nuclear power can give up its nuclear weaponry, will be no mean feat. Indeed it's a programme which we can be proud of, but which has the added advantage of being achievable.

By Andy Gregg,
Chartist Editorial Board

It is surprising that a political tendency which claims to model itself on the ideas of Trotsky shows so little understanding of the necessity of transitional programmes in the struggle to obtain political power. It is also interesting that Carol Turner chose to attack *Chartist* and *Tribune* rather than John Lloyd, the editor of the *New Statesman* who has openly challenged the party's non-nuclear defence policy and questioned whether it will lose us the next election. Of course it is still possible that our defence policy will lose us millions of votes if it becomes the arena for further in-fighting in the party as Socialist Action appears to want.

Clear

Poll after poll has shown that Britain's membership of NATO is still popular. This does not mean that we should rush to support it, but it is undoubtedly true that we will stand a much better chance of popularising an out of NATO position when it becomes clear after the election of a Labour government that continued membership obstructs a British Labour government's ability to carry out its disarmament and defence policies.

Undoubtedly the US and NATO will try to block a Kinnock government's attempts to carry out even the present limited policy that Socialist Action is so disparaging of. But this non-nuclear defence policy will mark a momentous change in itself, and will lead into the next phase.

This will be the time to build a campaign to get Britain out. We do not have time before an election to make such a fundamental change in people's perceptions.

Socialist Action's constant carping confirms them as a group prepared to jettison the chance of electoral victory in order to strike their favourite pose as politically pure. This stance is exhibited rather well in the article by the constant use of such patronising doggerel as 'the objective interest of the population of this



country' (ie what we think the people should believe rather than what they actually believe).

The overwhelming popularity of nuclear disarmament is held in the article 'to have been demonstrated time and time again on the streets of Britain and across Western Europe'. Would that this were so, but unfortunately however large our demonstrations are, they have not yet provided us with an insurance policy against the election of right wing regimes with massive parliamentary majorities.

Carol Turner makes no attempt in her article to distinguish between defensive and offensive conventional weapons. Indeed she takes the convenient but hardly massively popular line that any defence spending is militarism. This is a perfectly honourable position for pacifists to adopt — but then they tend to supplement their account with a strategy of non-violent resistance.

Summit

What kind of defence does Socialist Action want for Britain? I am not aware that pacifism is a position that an orthodox Trotskyist group has ever adopted.

But then these thorny defence issues confront us with difficult questions which have to be answered by actually getting one's hands dirty and admitting the possibility that some defensive spending on conventional weaponry may have to be countenanced. These are not the sort of questions that Socialist Action can solve by appeals to Trotskyist dogma so presumably it prefers not to deal with them at all.

In fact moving NATO towards a policy of non-provocative conventional defence and away from a policy of nuclear first strike is the way to break down the superpower blocs in Europe and make nuclear war less likely. If NATO won't move in this direction, and insists on threatening and coercing a

Labour administration, then we will be in a strong position to start pushing for withdrawal. This approach is the way to start challenging the cold war ideology and militarism that could eventually destroy our world.

Opinion

Socialist Action and the hard left do not have the monopoly on the commitment to ensuring that the Labour Party carries out its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament if it is elected. All sections of the left are committed to this aim. What separates *Chartist* from the position of groups like Socialist Action is the fact that we are prepared to face the difficult question of how to change public opinion and carry it with us to build mass support, rather than just assuming that all we need to do is to get the correct policy through the party's annual conference. Ramming people's 'objective interests' down their unwilling throats is not the best way to ensure that we are ever in a position to make Britain non-nuclear.

Third Road Socialists in *Chartist* and elsewhere are accused by Carol Turner of 'first accepting the framework of the other side and then finally surrendering the terrain altogether'. Far from it. What we are actually trying to do is to build massive support for a programme of radical economic, social and defence policies by campaigning in a way that attempts to carry support with us rather than constructing an ideologically pure position and damning those who don't support every iota of it. This sometimes means that we have to prioritise certain demands which are more achievable and put others like withdrawal from NATO and cutting defence expenditure on the back burner.

There is nothing weak or soft about this transitional approach. That is the nature of politics as Lenin and Trotsky themselves in far more difficult situations than those that we face today.

Socialist Action's reply

STARTING FROM the real world is high on the *Chartist*'s list of priorities when it comes to discussing the Labour Party defence campaign. And so it should be. As Andy Gregg accepts, there are a 'vast array of forces' lined up against Labour's nuclear disarmament policy. Winning support for it is no mean task, and the national campaign launched by the party leadership at the end of last year occupies an important position in that process.

That is precisely why so many unilateralists are critical of the campaign. Far from building support for nuclear disarmament, they believe that the Labour Party campaign will contribute to undermining it, and that will play into the hands of Labour's enemies who oppose nuclear disarmament.

The campaign ties Labour to a militarist policy which is politically indefensible and disastrous in terms of popular support. But according to Labour's 'soft left', not a breath of dissent must be heard against it.

Andy Gregg's view of events is that a campaign which emphasises a strong NATO and promises to build up conventional armaments will 'reassure ordinary people'. That way Labour will get elected and the party can go ahead with its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

In fact Gregg even suggests that the defence campaign is only for consumption during the general election. He says: Labour should be 'stressing a commitment to maintaining our conventional capacity at least until after the election.' (our emphasis) What sort of argument is that?

There is no example in history to say that lying to the electorate wins support for left wing policies.

Pressures

But even if the *Chartists* believed such a scenario were possible in the real world of British electoral politics, how could they ever begin to imagine it would be possible in the real world of internal Labour Party politics? The launch of the defence campaign has been the opportunity for the party's right wing to declare open season on unilateral nuclear disarmament.

The idea that Labour can sneak through a policy of nuclear disarmament under the noses of its many and powerful enemies in Britain, quite frankly, is ridiculous.

Yet that is exactly what we must conclude Labour's soft left is arguing for. Nowhere does Andy Gregg politically support the pro-NATO position taken by the party leadership; nowhere does he argue in favour of strengthening conventional arms.

The starting point of Gregg's reply is that the soft left are every bit as committed to nuclear disarmament as we are. He even points out that 'the vast majority of *Chartist*

supporters would support Britain leaving NATO and cuts in Britain's defence budget'.

By Carol Turner

Somebody's real world is going to prove illusory — and we don't believe it is likely to be ours.

Either the *Chartists* believe that there is a 'Soviet threat', or they do not. If they do, they shouldn't be squeamish about saying so — a lot of important real events hinge on it. If they don't, there is no justification for arguing support for a campaign which is based on a lie — because, like all lies, it will rebound.

Protest

The Soviet threat is at the heart of Labour's defence campaign — and that is why it is so open to attack from the enemies of nuclear disarmament. If there is a Soviet threat then the only effective way to repel it is through nuclear weapons — conventional ones won't do the job. If there is no Soviet threat then conventional arms build-up is both a waste of money and reactionary.

Let's examine who in the real world wants nuclear weapons and who does not. All the proposals to get rid of nuclear weapons have come from the Soviet Union. All the reasons put forward to reject those proposals have come from the United States and Western Europe.

Put bluntly, the USA wants a nuclear arsenal because that is the cheapest way of pursuing an imperialist foreign policy. The United States and NATO's nuclear weapons have nothing to do with 'defence' and everything to do with intimidating the rest of the world.

Campaign

Those countries like Britain and France which want to maintain 'independent' nuclear forces, do so to prop up their own imperialist position in the world and also vis a vis the strongest imperialism, the USA. Other West European countries, like West Germany, which do not possess nuclear weapons but support the NATO alliance, do so because that safeguards their imperialist interests.

Nuclear weapons align us with imperialist foreign policy. Fighting to get rid of them aligns us with those who are fighting imperialism.

Not only does the Labour Party defence campaign cut across support for unilateral nuclear disarmament per se, it also makes a nonsense of the party's claim to support those in Central America, South Africa and elsewhere fighting for their liberation.

Conventional weapons have nothing to do with defending 'ordinary people'. Like nuclear arms, they too are employed in the interest of defending imperialism.

From no point of view does Labour's defence campaign bear close inspection. And that means electorally as well — the main basis on which Gregg attempts to defend it. The frantic tone in which his article is couched would tend to bear us out: 'for your reporter, like some others on the left, this kind of realism is tantamount to treachery — five more years of Thatcherism appears to be their preference.'

The disparaging phrases with which Gregg attacks his opponents in this debate are designed more to wall the ranks of the soft left off from the discussion than to reply to the concerns of unilateralists. But this is not surprising.

In the early 1980s, the great majority of what has become Labour's soft left fought side by side with those who are now critical of the defence campaign to win the nuclear disarmament demand. We believe that a significant number of them remain today committed to that demand.

That commitment is helping to exacerbate the growing strains that the soft left is experiencing as the 'unity' line to which it was won by Labour Coordinating Committee, *Tribune* and others is exposed as an electoral failure. Andy Gregg is putting the internal world of the tendency he supports in front of the real world and in front of the need to defend nuclear disarmament.

The outlines of a Labour Party campaign for nuclear disarmament are already clear. Such a campaign would start by explaining that the Soviet Union offers no threat to the working class and its allies. It would explain that the best way to ensure all nuclear weapons are abandoned is by seriously fighting in support of those who are struggling for their liberation. And it would explain that the resources released by abandoning nuclear weapons could be diverted into meeting the needs of the working class at home and the oppressed internationally.

That would be a defensible and coherent policy on which Labour could fight an election, and build support for nuclear disarmament. It is a policy which all unilateralists should be arguing for.

South African NUM congress



FIFTEEN THOUSAND delegates and supporters assembled in Soweto at the beginning of the month for the fifth annual congress of the South African NUM. The mineworkers union is the largest and most militant of the country's expanding trade unions. Its 360,000 members are the backbone of COSATU, the 600,000-strong non-racial trade union federation. JON SILBERMAN reports.

At the congress opening a giant poster of Nelson Mandela was unfurled to massive cheering and applause. It is illegal in South Africa to publicly display the ANC leader's photograph. But by the time of the end of conference rally the Jabulani stadium was decked with portraits of Mandela and other banned leaders.

This reflected the extremely political nature of the congress proceedings. The union's president, James Motlatsi, said 'We want to tell Botha that our organisation has taken a political stance because in the five years of its existence it has found politics were responsible for our problems.'

Motlatsi targeted the government's state of emergency but explained that it wouldn't be sufficient to roll back the mass movement. 'Today the government plans lie in ruins' he said. 'It was the rising tide of opposition which was increasingly gaining a national and generalised character that forced the government to declare a national state of emergency.'

'What the state has failed to understand is that to stop the liberation march, it will have to stop the nation.'

As part of its desire to actively participate in the anti-apartheid struggle for national liberation the congress endorsed the Freedom Charter, the liberation programme of the South African people drawn up at the Congress of the People in 1955.

The Freedom Charter is the programme advanced by the African National

Congress for the South African revolutionary struggle. One of its proposals is for the nationalisation of the mines. The South African NUM congress also decided to promote closer cooperation with 'progressive organisations fighting apartheid'.

The congress also adopted a resolution calling for a 'democratic socialist society controlled by the working class'. This follows COSATU's decision last year to initiate discussion with its constituent organisations on 'the principles and policies of workers democracy and control' and on 'the socialist solutions we need and how to achieve them'.

The anti-apartheid struggle was at the heart of the action proposals adopted by the NUM, in particular the proposal to abolish the migrant labour and hostel systems. The union challenged the Chamber of Mines to issue a declaration of intent to abolish the system or face a struggle for control of the mines.

The union has put a 30 March deadline on such a declaration, threatening industrial action. The system involves workers travelling hundreds of miles, in many cases from other countries, and being billeted in cramped, single-sex hostels with appalling food and medical standards. Upwards of 20 workers are crammed into a single room with no privacy at all.

The hostels are run by *indunas*, tribal representatives used by the mining bosses to encourage divisions within the workforce



COSATU members mourn the 177 miners who died in the Kinross mining disaster last year.

along tribal lines. The union is proposing to immediately replace the *indunas* with directly elected worker representatives, pending the complete abolition of the hostels within one or two years.

'We will fight every inch of the way' James Motlatsi emphasised 'to destroy the hostels, *induna* and migrant labour systems. 1987 will be the year when mineworkers take control'.

The NUM congress also drew up a wage claim and is pressing the Chamber of Mines to start negotiations on it in April instead of May. The claim is for a 55 per cent increase in the miners' average pay of £110 per month.

The union's general

secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa made clear that 'the demand is not only based on union calculations of the industry's capacity to pay but also a way of changing the distribution of income in favour of labour' wrote Anthony Robinson in the *Financial Times* of 11 March.

The union is also proposing that mechanisation of the industry be subject to negotiation. The Chamber of Mines claims that labour costs constitute 45 per cent of total costs and has embarked on a major mechanisation drive aimed at boosting productivity and axing jobs. The union is demanding the right to be involved in mechanisation plans before their implementa-

tion.

Last year the union settled for rises of between 19.5 and 23.5 per cent after originally submitting a claim of 45 per cent. Questioned as to whether the union would similarly settle for less than 55 per cent this year, Cyril Ramaphosa said 'I leave that to your judgement. But 1986 is not 1987'.

In that time the union has been subject to substantial growth. In just 18 months, since the founding conference of COSATU in November 1985, the union has increased its membership by 100,000. It now organises just over half the country's miners and is particularly strongly based in the gold mining industry.

Nicaragua: contras in trouble

AFTER THE MISERABLE failure to seriously challenge the Sandinistas on the military terrain, the ill-famed contras are facing increasing difficulty getting their act together. Their failure has precipitated the worst crisis they have ever had. COLIN ROBERTSON reports.

ARTURO Cruz has just resigned from the leadership of the United Nicaraguan Opposition, the political umbrella that organises the contras. Cruz is a former member of the junta government in Nicaragua installed after Somoza fell. Cruz is an ex-director of the Central Bank and ex-ambassador to the US.

UNO is led by a troika composed of Cruz himself, Alfonso Robello, another former member of the junta government, and Adolfo Calero, who represents the National Guard wing of UNO. Calero is the only one of the three who has real military backing in the

form of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force.

The disputes between the three led to the resignation of Calero from the UNO leadership.

Obviously the US administration, after the Irangate fiasco, is being forced to change course. The major difficulty facing the Americans is the fact that the military performance of the contras makes them an extremely unattractive option for US foreign policy vis a vis the Nicaraguan revolution.

Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, son of Pedro Chamorro, assassinated by Somoza and owner of the opposition daily *La Prensa*, had been

substituted for Calero. The change is aimed at improving the image of the contras and leaving its leadership in the hands of anti-Somoza pro-imperialists. It is also designed to give the contras the 'respectability' they so badly need.

The change is designed to get the approval by US congress of more funds for the counter-revolutionary armed activities of the contras inside Nicaraguan territory.

The contras are highly unpopular due to the horrendous atrocities they have committed against unarmed civilians, including children and women. Their 'performance' makes it extremely difficult for would-be supporters to come out openly in their favour.

One of the main difficulties of UNO is the lack of control over funds and military activities by the

political leadership, that is Cruz and Robello over Calero. Calero has been denounced by the 'fighters of the south front' of having received all the money coming from the US and not having given them a single cent.

However, the problems have found no solution and the racket has continued unabated. The money comes from the ayatollahs in Iran, straight into the pockets of the leaders of the contras — courtesy of Oliver North, Donald Regan, Admiral Poindexter, and Reagan himself. Cruz has openly acknowledged having received US\$7000 monthly from the White House.

The leadership of the contras met recently in Costa Rica and tried to heal the internal rift to no avail. Cruz has finally decided to resign from the leadership on UNO, mainly because despite all the efforts to bring the contras

under the leadership of 'respectable' personalities, Calero remains strong.

The differences that have emerged with UNO now appear to be unbridgeable. Besides, the uncertainty about getting more aid from the US administration after Irangate an additional factor is demoralisation.

This does not mean that American imperialism has decided to respect Nicaragua's right to self-determination. It means that US policy is temporarily in disarray.

New means will be found to attempt to crush the Nicaraguan revolution. Solidarity must be stepped up. Nicaragua must survive.

● *Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign rally, Stop Blood Money: 7.30pm, Tuesday 24 March, Westminster Central Hall, Storey's Gate, London SW1.*

World in action

Mexico

Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, son of 1930s populist president Lazaro Cardenas and leader of the Democratic Current group, has been expelled from the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), Mexico's ruling party for the last 70 years. The Democratic Current and Cuauhtemoc have been voicing criticisms of the PRI's record and especially of its internal undemocratic practices. This affair may well open a split both within the old ruling party and within the regime itself.

The episode comes in the wake of the all-time low standing of the PRI among the Mexican masses and in the midst of an acute economic crisis. The PRI has lately been increasingly exposed to accusations of corruption and persistent failure to give a solution to the deteriorating plight of peasants and workers.

Spanish state

An impressive show of strength was staged by the Spanish working class when marches were organised to protest against redundancies and defend jobs from falling under the axe. The demonstrations took place in at least 30 cities. They are an expression of the working class growing dissatisfaction with Felipe Gonzales austerity economic policies. In Madrid the demands displayed on the banners of the demonstrators were defence of jobs, real wage increases and a shorter working week. Marches in the south involved thousands of landless peasants and agricultural labourers.

The police clashed violently with the workers. The marches are widely viewed as a rehearsal for the general strike being prepared for April.

South Africa

The Swedish Social Democratic government has decided to impose a total boycott on trade with South Africa. If followed through in all its consequences, this measure would deal a serious blow to the apartheid regime. In itself it represents a huge success for the anti-apartheid movement internationally and in South Africa itself. *Sanctions now!*

Philippines

After winning the February referendum by a substantial majority, president Aquino has retaken the political initiative. First she has bombastically announced that the government will carry out a vast land reform that will include even the sugar cane plantations owned by her family. This measure is obviously designed to try to reduce the growing peasant support for the New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas.

Secondly, the government has resumed talks with the Moro National Liberation Front, the organisation that leads the armed struggle of the Moslem rebels of the southern islands. The possibilities of an agreement look slim. A colossal confrontation still looms large on the horizon.

Brazil

The Brazilian government has decided to suspend the payment of interest on its \$68 billion standing debt owed to foreign banks. This highlights the atrocious balance of payments situation of the country and simultaneously underlies the unbearable burden on the economy that servicing the external debt represents for Brazil. However, the decision does not imply that Jose Sarney, Brazil's president, has adopted a policy of breaking with the diabolical debt-spiral that grips his and so many other Latin American countries. Sarney wants Brazil to be allowed to pay only half of the interest due every year to foreign banks.

This represents no threat to the international financial system. Moreover, there is already talk in the financial community that such a course is plausible if Brazil is prepared to adopt more austerity economic policies.

Socialist Action and the NCU dispute

SOCIALIST ACTION carried material throughout the NCU dispute pointing to the role played in sabotaging that struggle by John Golding and the NCU executive. While not agreeing with all the policies pursued by the *Militant* dominated Broad Left, **Socialist Action** called for building the Broad Left as the only alternative to Golding inside the NCU today — the forum in which militant workers seeking an alternative to Golding would organise. Articles submitted for publication by **Socialist Action** supporters in the NCU in London were rejected for publication — not, as is stated in the article which follows, primarily even because of the issue of the Broad Left but because they did not even mention the issue of Golding and the role of the NCU executive. The line taken by the paper was confirmed by a meeting of the **Socialist Action** editorial board. The following article represents a minority view among **Socialist Action** supporters incorporating views in the articles that were rejected. **Socialist Action** reaffirms its view that those like John Golding, the trade union bureaucracy, constitute the single most important line of defence of the employers and the capitalist class.

FOR telephone engineers, the three week strike which ended on 12 February marked a watershed. After 100 years without a national strike the rank and file rebelled, took their leaders by the scruff of the neck, and made themselves a real union!

This will be a priceless gain in the struggle against BT's estimated 70,000 redundancy plans. How to build on it, and prepare for the next strike in defence of jobs, is the question now facing hundreds of new union minded engineers who have come forward from the picketlines.

But why, after dragging our leaders kicking and screaming out on strike, did we vote by 2-1 only three weeks later to go back and accept defeat? On the face of it the NCU faced none of the problems which dogged the NUM or the printworkers at Wapping: the strike was solid, with no evidence of a drift back to work, hardship was as yet minimal, and despite a massive press cover-up the strike was biting.

True

To say that we were sold out is true. Golding and his executive never wanted a strike, and did nothing that wasn't designed to get it called off in three full weeks. But this doesn't explain how we managed to come out on strike in the first place, despite our leaders, or why we voted ourselves back to work three weeks later.

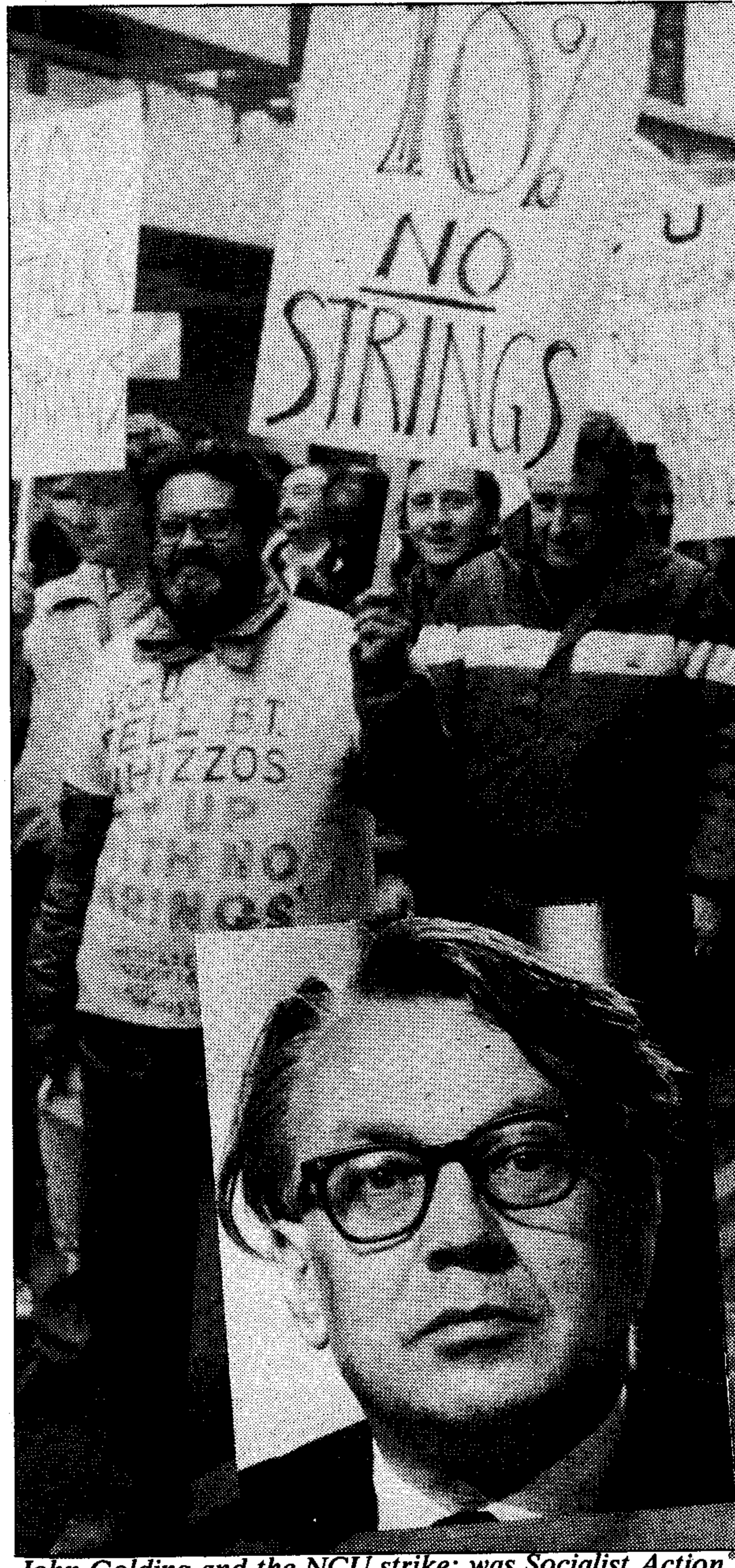
In fact we overlooked the most important lesson of the miners and the print-

workers struggles: the primary reason that they failed to win was not that they didn't wield the same industrial muscle as telephone engineers, or lacked the 100 per cent backing of their union members. It was that they were forced to fight alone! Every serious attempt by workers today to defend themselves brings them very quickly into confrontation with not only their own employer, but with Tory laws on ballots and picketing, with the courts, in the form of injunctions and fines and sequestrations, and with the police, through intimidation arrest and frame-ups.

By Ian Grant on behalf of London supporters in the NCU

This is because the bosses and their government have made sure that any worker daring to take on a fight has to face the united strength of the whole of their class. If we want to win then we need to be able to use the whole weight of our class on our side. The mistake we made was to think we were different, that we could go it alone and avoid the problems the miners and printworkers faced. When after three weeks it became clear that this wasn't true the majority of engineers simply saw no way forward for the strike to go.

Neither of the union's main currents of opinion were prepared to tell the truth about our fight. The NEC and Golding played on the fears of a drawn out



John Golding and the NCU strike: was **Socialist Action** right to point the 'finger at his' role?

strike and sat back while it ran out of steam. The Broad Left constantly warned of an imminent sell out, but did nothing to lead the kind of fight that could beat BT and in doing so keep the NEC in tow.

Refused

Socialist Action refused to print the article we submitted to the 6 February issue of the paper, which tried to put forward, from the experiences of the miners and printworkers the lessons we had to learn if we were to beat BT. It substituted an article which concluded that the main task facing activists in the NCU was to build the Broad Left (BL).

The view expressed in SA mirrored exactly the preoccupation of the BL

throughout the strike with ousting Golding and the right wing from the leadership of the union. Rather than say what was needed for the strike to win, the BL was more concerned that blame for the 'inevitable' defeat was properly laid at the door of the right wing and that they themselves be elected in June. In the course of the strike however the Broad Left offered no serious evidence that it would have done anything fundamentally different from Golding.

Grasp

We will have to grasp that simply downing tools isn't enough. We have to go all out to build the strike in our own ranks, involving our spouses and families so

no one sits at home until its all over. We have to build the strike with other unions and in the Labour Party and make them understand that it's their fight too. We especially have to win support from women and from black people who come under particular attack from the Tories. All would gain from our victory. Only by campaigning for support from all these people will we be able to stand up to the use of the police, the law and the courts by BT to break our action.

Telephone engineers will have to build on the kind of international support which was offered in the strike this time, in any future action. We will have to take on a fight in the Labour Party not only for solidarity but to ensure that a future Labour government implements policies to defend us from the attacks of the bosses.

It would be surprising if the Broad Left were not to gain as a result of the strike in the NEC elections this year. However this is not to say that they represent a credible alternative leadership to the right. As the miners used to say: a leadership which guaranteed you could go to sleep at night confident that you wouldn't wake up in the morning to find they you'd been sold out! Such a leadership did not emerge overnight. Before it can be built in the NCU, telephone engineers will have to take a few more steps down the road we have started on.

Learn

In short we will have to learn that our fight isn't simply between us and BT — it's part of a class wide fight. The reality of our union today is that only a handful of Telecom workers have begun to learn this fundamental lesson. We must seek every opportunity to get that message across to more and more NCU members: in the fight against the new working practices which BT are now trying to implement, in the campaign to defend those workers who have been victimised and face the sack for the part they played in the strike, in the coming battles against the 70,000 redundancies BT is estimated to have in the pipeline, and in getting the NCU to play its part in building solidarity with other workers nationally and internationally who are facing the same attacks and the same enemy we are.

Inside the unions

■ Caterpillar



JOHN BRANNAN, convenor at the occupied Caterpillar plant at Uddingston in Scotland spoke to a fringe meeting at the Scottish Labour Party conference organised by the Campaign Group.

Brannan challenged the logic of the system whereby profit determines whether workers have jobs, whether steel is produced at Ravenscraig or tractors are produced at Caterpillar.

'We are fighting for the right to determine that we want to work for Caterpillar' he said. 'The factory belongs to us. The only thing we lack is someone to pay our wages.'

The occupying workers have built a tractor named the 'pink panther' which they have

donated to Nicaragua. They built it, Brannan explained, 'to highlight the closure of a plant which is making something that people need. We want to congratulate War on Want for accepting the tractor and for building a campaign for the tractor to go to Nicaragua where it belongs.'

Neil Kinnock visited the occupation on his way to the Scottish Labour Party conference where the Caterpillar struggle was, with the fight against the closure of the Golden Wonder factory in Broxburn, a feature of the conference. Tony Benn plans to visit the occupation 24 March. Huge financial support has been mobilised for the closure fight, which has also won international support.

On 5 March to coincide with a lobby of parliament, Caterpillar workers in Grenoble in Switzerland had a demonstration outside the US embassy and workers in Brussels stopped work for 15 minutes. These actions were coordinated by a European combine established in the last month.

■ Bosses interfere in NCU AGM

NCU members in the London City area were shocked last week to receive a scurrilous red-baiting letter from their former union branch secretary — now a manager and active strike breaker. Arriving five days before the City branch AGM, it is a clear attempt by management to influence its outcome.

By Jim Gordon and Bridget Elton

The letter comes in the aftermath of the NCU's first ever national strike, and is part of a management offensive against one of the strongest and most militant branches in the union. Since the strike more than a dozen branch officers and members have been subject to management victimisations ranging from arbitrary shifts of workplaces to suspension.

A campaign has been launched in defence of those victimised, and an appeal has gone out to the labour movement for support. London City branch is calling for strike action in the event of any sackings. Some of those

victimised are standing for office in this week's branch AGM. The management letter mentions these and other left wing activists by name, and warns NCU members against those who argue for solidarity with other workers in struggle, and who stress the need for politics in trade unions.

Using the old tactics of divide and rule, management are trying to smash the unity forged on the picket lines. NCU members learned during the strike the importance of support from the rest of the working class, when many union and Labour Party branches offered support, and MPs and others visited picket lines. The activists slandered in the letter were in the forefront of arguing for the need for this kind of support. Members know this and will not be fooled by management red-baiting.

No matter what the outcome of the AGM elections, the most important task is to build a united campaign in defence of those victimised, especially those threatened with the sack.

A day's wages for Socialist Action

Our fund drive still has a long way to go to meet its £10,000 target. To date, we have collected £2,371. The fund is due to be concluded at the end of this month.

The last couple of weeks have seen a pick-up in donations as our supporters have responded to our 'days wages for Socialist Action' appeal. Please consider making such a donation yourself. And if you can't get the actual money in immediate-

ly, please let us know what you are pledging before the end of the drive. Here is a list of donations to date:

Bristol	£84.39
Cardiff	£24.00
Huddersfield	£100.00
Leeds	£6.40
Newport	£267.00
E London	£439.50
NW London	£105.00
SW London	£133.00
N London	£112.41
OW London	£130.00
Swindon	£20.00
Anonymous	£687.40
TOTAL	£2,371.10

Celebrate!

EAST LONDON is out to turn the Fund Drive into a fun drive.

They plan to celebrate the struggles being waged by the working-class world-wide and make a little (or a lot of) money for Socialist Action in doing so.

They'll be mixing not just rum and coke but also politics and business and pleasure.

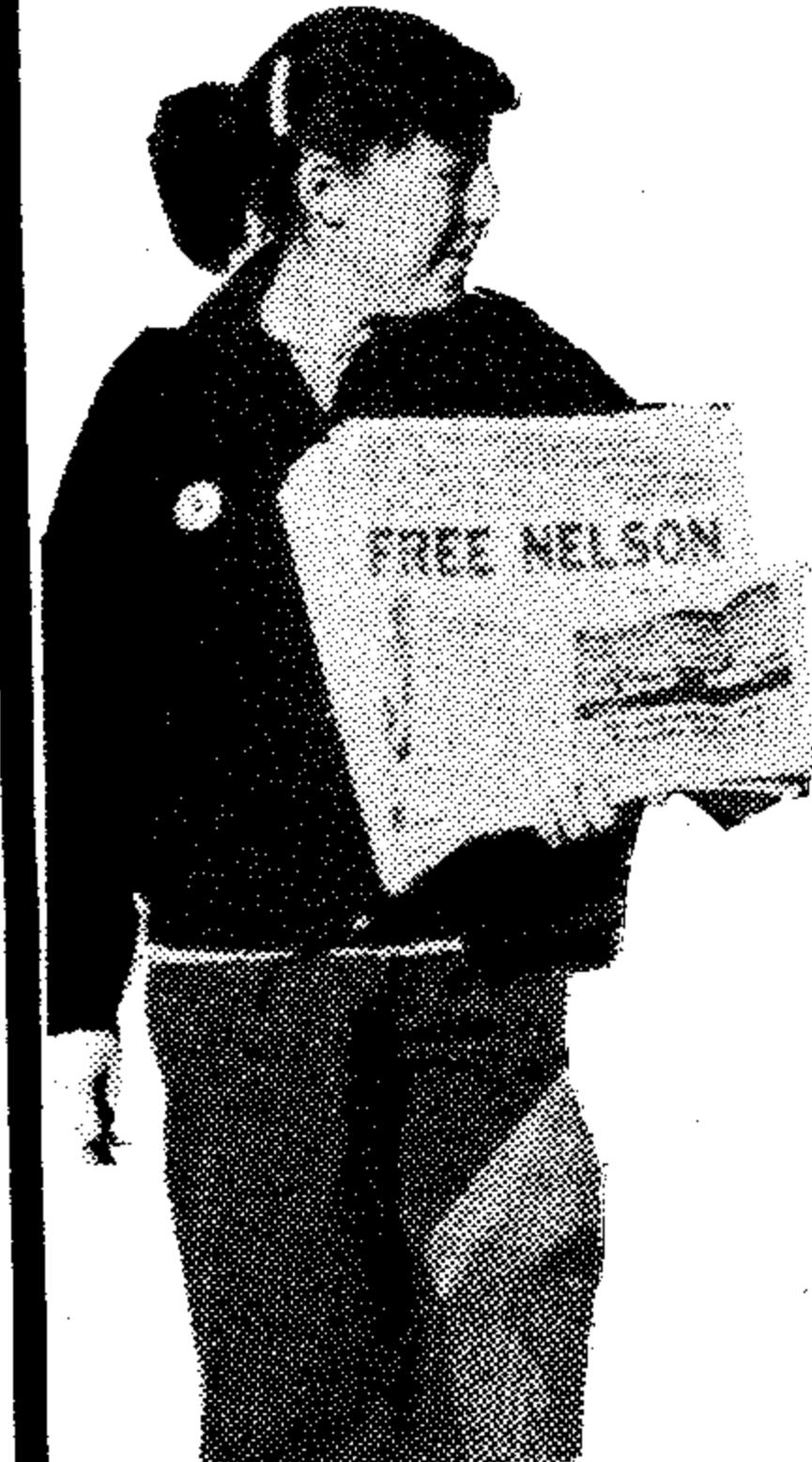
The fare for the evening's entertainment will be varied: a three-course sit-

down slap-up meal and drinks enlivened by cabaret turns, plus greetings in person from ANC, SWAPO, Women Against Pit Closures and others.

For just a 'fiver' they're inviting political friends and colleagues to join them on Saturday, 4 April.

Further details and tickets available from: John Barton, 107 Nevill Road, London, N16.

See you there!



'MY CASE' by Sammy Thompson

'I STAND for a united national leadership. I will work to consolidate the leadership. I believe in a strong national union which is prepared to fight for our industry and our members'. With these words, Sammy Thompson, general secretary of Yorkshire NUM, who is standing for election to the vice-presidency of the national union, outlines his priorities.

The material on the NUM in this issue of Socialist Action has been compiled by CLIVE TURNBULL and ANDY BUCHANAN.

'For a short period' Sammy goes on 'we have been on our knees but that has ended. We must now fight to preserve our rights and improve our standards, but to do this we need a united union.'

'The NUM has played a historic role in the British labour movement. It has provided leadership in struggle and ideas. This must continue.'

'Our union took the initiative to form the path-breaking International Miners' Organisation. It is admired throughout the world for its commitment to working class struggle.'

It stands alongside the valiant black South African miners. This must continue.'

Sammy Thompson's stand has the full backing of Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield who have been campaigning hard on the same platform.

Thompson details what he means by forging a strong and united national union.

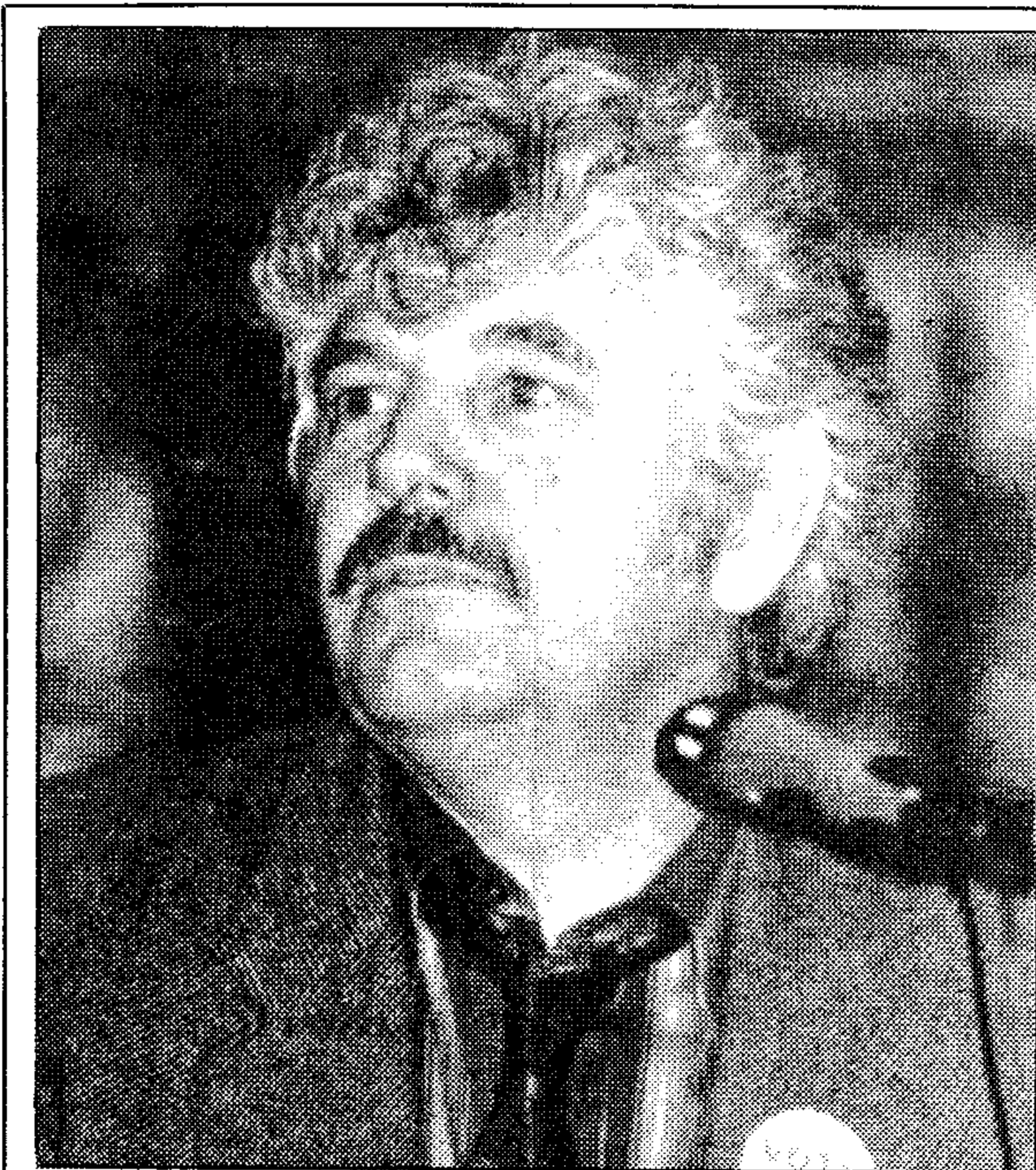
'I'll work closely with the other NUM officials, and particularly Arthur Scargill, to win back the miners in the Notts coalfield and others who joined the coal board union, the UDM.'

'I'm not interested in

talking to the leaders of that disastrous break-away, which damaged us so much, about compromises and deals. But I am interested in talking to the rank-and-file miners about why they should be in the union which fights for miners and not in a tame bosses fan club.'

Thompson considers that among the key issues confronting the miners are

- getting rid of the Tories and getting a Labour government
- fighting to preserve the coal industry
- establishing a conciliation machinery representing all NUM members
- resisting new working practices and the 'Wheeler plan'
- fighting privatisation
- getting rid of nuclear power
- winning justice for the victimised miners.



Notts for Thompson

STEVE ABBOT, delegate to the Notts NUM area council from Calverton colliery, spoke to Socialist Action about why the Notts NUM is overwhelmingly supporting Sammy Thompson and about the situation in the coalfield today.

Hucknall colliery was closed at the end of last year. Blidworth, Creswell and Newstead now stand under threat. At Blidworth in particular investment and manning levels have seen to have been engineered to make the pits 'uneconomic'.

Steve Abbot explains that 'following the honeymoon period between the Board and the UDM during which the breakaway was consolidated, the Board was bound to bring their policy of pit closures on 'economic' grounds back into Notts'.

These closures are inevitably having an impact on membership of the UDM who have been con-

tinually assured that their jobs were safe. Steve explains that 'some still have the lemming attitude that they're safe at their own pit. Others realise that they're not safe, but they will take the redundancy money and run. But others are drifting back to the NUM.'

'Branches across the county are recruiting on a regular basis. We're working away at the UDM rank and file and men are re-joining the NUM on our terms.'

Last month the 200 winders in Notts decided to rejoin the NUM en bloc.

Commenting on the Notts situation, Arthur

Scargill recently described the UDM as being in 'desperate trouble'. Scargill defended his view as regards the UDM.

'There's a place in this union' he said 'for every single mineworker but as far as I'm concerned there's never ever got to be a place for the Lynks and Prendergasts.'

Steve Abbot says 'Sammy Thompson is the candidate who supports the existing Notts area view of the campaign against the UDM.'

'Eric Clarke on the other hand tends to the view that we should aim at amalgamating with the UDM — which would inevitably be on their terms. That would be a disaster for the NUM in Notts.'

'That why the Area and most of the branches have nominated Thompson, and are urging their members to vote for him.'

Scargill's view

SPEAKING AT a meeting in Barnsley organised by the NUM's North Yorkshire panel, Arthur Scargill said: 'Now I can't comment on the vice-presidential election. I'm not allowed. I leave that to the Daily Express, the Daily Mail, the Mirror, and to the scabs like the Sun and The Times.'

'Now if I were an ordinary miner and I

saw papers like them and The Scotsman and the Glasgow Herald supporting one candidate and opposing another from Yorkshire, I'd vote for Sammy Thompson a thousand times over.'

'Because if he's wrong for the capitalist class, and if he's wrong for the Coal Board he must be damn well right for the miners.'

Teachers strike

THE TWO major teacher unions — the NUT and NAS/UWT — are planning more strikes.

From the week beginning 23 March, areas as far afield as Inner London and Sunderland, Cheshire, Wales and Surrey will be hit by strike action aimed at Tory marginals. On 6 April, the borough of Barnet in London — which includes Margaret Thatcher's Finchley constituency — will be the target.

This follows the highly successful round of joint strike action by the two unions covering every area in the country. In London, 20,000 marched on 16 March.

NUT general secretary Fred Jarvis told 3,000 teachers in London's Central Hall, Westminster that it was symptomatic of Margaret Thatcher's morality that 'just as she expected GCHQ workers to sell their rights to be trade unionists for £1000, so now she expects teachers to surrender a basic right (to negotiate) in return for a pay offer whose value she grossly misrepresents!'

TUC leader Norman Willis said 'this fight must go on' and urged the merger of the two unions.

NUT executive member, Bernard Regan, who represents London teachers and chaired the mass rally urged a campaign of resistance to the imposition of the conditions imposed by the Tory government by teachers and the wider labour movement.

The two teachers unions will be considering further action at their annual conferences over the Easter weekend.

But the NUT conference is likely to be the scene of a major battle if the NUT executive meeting on 26 March upholds a move by NUT national officers to expel members of the union's Inner London Teachers Association.

The case of these NUT members who committed the 'crime' of organising action against Baker without NEC sanction has already been heard by the union's disciplinary committee. They were given a reprimand.

Now in a move which not only overturns every principle of natural justice but also seriously undermines the fight against the Tories

the officers are appealing against sentence — for being too lenient!

Ealing Nalگو strike

TWO-AND-A-HALF thousand local government officers in the London borough of Ealing are on strike. They are demanding that they receive the inner London weighting allowance of £1300. One of the strike leaders, EVE TURNER reports.

The ballot vote in favour of strike action was a massive 1500 to 500, the highest ever vote for strike action in our union according to Nalگو's press office.

The support for the action reflects the membership's deep-felt view that our claim is just. Local government officers in neighbouring Brent receive inner London weighting, as do teachers and local government manual workers in Ealing itself.

The strength of feeling was not at all understood by the recently elected Labour council who prior to the election had indicated sympathy for the claim.

Throughout nine months of negotiation since they have flatly refused to move.

The council's response to the limited and selective action we started was reminiscent of BT management's provocative suspensions in the NCU dispute.

They sent some members home without pay and sent letters to all staff threatening similar action and demanding a pledge to work normally, provoking 800 of our

members to walk out in a terrific show of solidarity. Successive mass meetings recorded bigger votes for all-out action and picket lines have been respected.

Previously unorganised staff have joined the union — nearly 400 new members since the original industrial action was initiated. There has been substantial involvement in the strike by the membership. Women members in particular have become very involved and the 'Black Nalگو' organisation has thrown its all into the dispute.

Weekly mass meetings, daily picket briefings, strike committee meetings and a daily strike bulleting have all contributed, and transformed a traditionally non-militant union branch.

Despite the strength of feeling Labour councillors are crossing the picket lines. They have sought to pit the manual workers against us and drive a wedge amongst our own membership by talking about the 'low paid'. But the membership remains united in the view that the best way of tackling low pay amongst Nalگو members is to grant our claim.

Support for the strike has come in from other Nalگو branches and from Ealing NUT and NATFHE. Within the local Labour Parties support at first stood with the council though this is beginning to change.

South Wales since the strike

SINCE THE end of the strike 14,000 jobs and half the pits have been lost in the South Wales area. The devastation of the coalfield contrasts sharply with the special relationship that South Wales president, Emlyn Williams, claimed he had with the Board at the end of the strike.

Six months after the world's media focussed attention on miners marching back to work at Maerdy, coal had ceased to be raised in the Rhonda valley.

The only pit to fight against closure was St Johns, under the leadership of Militant supporter on the South Wales executive, Ian Isaacs. The reality of the 'special relationship' was clear.

Des Dutfield, dubbed the Scargillite candidate in the election succeeded Emlyn Williams as Area

president. But Dutfield himself was quick to distance himself from the national president once elected. He backed South Wales policy, he said, not the national union leadership.

This was a situation wide-open for the Coal Board to exploit. It was no coincidence that it was South Wales that was picked for the first probe on six-day working. But as Sammy Thompson, Yorkshire NUM secretary explained at a meeting in Barnsley that it won't be long before similar proposals

would be made in Yorkshire.

'If George Rees (secretary of South Wales Area NUM) believes they can just do it in South Wales, without affecting any other colliery, or any other Area, he's living in a different world.'

'Haslam has said that all new coal reserves will have to have continental shifts ...'

'We've six pits in the Selby coalfield where I believe they'll be wanting continental shifts. We've got a big shaft being sunk at Maltby. They'll be saying before we start producing you've got to work continental shifts. We've got Calder Drift coming on in September: will they say before any more capital is invested you've

got to agree to continental shifts?'

The right-wing leaders of the trade union movement in Wales have pitched into the Margam fray. George Wright, leader of the TGWU, announced that if the NUM did not agree to the new pit, his union would talk to the Coal Board. And the EET-PU leadership, never slow to recognise a chance to scab on a struggle, followed suit.

Far from condemning such moves, Des Dutfield has explained how he did 'not regard Mr Wright's initiative as an unwelcome intervention. Obviously our TGWU colleagues are as concerned as we are about South Wales and the unemployed. I can fully appreciate their point of

view.'

Arthur Scargill is not without support in South Wales. Tower lodge has issued a leaflet as part of their campaign in support of the national union and organised a meeting that was addressed by Scargill and Thompson; other lodges such as Oakdale, Six Bells and Marine — whose own futures would be threatened by Margam — have also backed the national union's stance, as has the South Wales Women's Support Group.

A further hurdle to Margam being developed has emerged in the form of the pit deputies union, NACODS who have been calling unsuccessfully for national talks to resolve the issue of six-day working.

A Socialist ACTION

Black victory at NUS conference

BLACK REPRESENTATION and self-organisation was given a tremendous boost at the National Union of Students Easter conference here in Blackpool on Tuesday evening, when Pat Younge was elected vice president-education. Pat was supported by the black student caucus and by Labour Party Black Section, as well as by Campaign Student. He is a member of the Labour Party Black Section, and will be the only black person on NUS executive.

Polly Vittorini of SOAS and Robin Laney of Kings College, London report from Blackpool

Younge beat his rivals by 262 votes. Liz Millward, SSiN candidate, polled 179 votes; Matt Cole of the SDP, 160; and Tony Samthier of Communist Student, 140. The National Organisation of Labour Students stood no candidate.

Younge's victory is a vindication of the campaign in support of black self-organisation that has been waged in NUS. The fact that Socialist Students in NOLS stood a candidate against him is further proof of their opposition in practice to this demand.

Claim

NOLS also claim to support the black liberation struggle. The fact that they took no position on this election is a disgrace.

'We believe that it is important to give the liberation campaigns the space they need to develop,' said the NOLS manifesto, *Labour into the 1990s*. 'We also believe that it is important that the liberation campaigns have representatives at all levels of the NUS. This is one of the reasons we do not stand for all of the positions on NUS executive.'

Belief

Interviewed by Communist Student, NUS president and NOLS candidate Vicky Phillips said: 'I do not believe that it

(pluralism) is achieved by having a rep from each party on the NEC... there is certainly a need for better representation for black students.'

If NOLS believes what it says, how come they didn't call for a vote for Pat Younge in the VP-education election?

The same election also witnessed SDP students calling for a vote for Communist Student, whose candidate received the SDP's second preference votes.

Education was a key debate at NUS conference. But the main motion passed was empty platitudes, and devoid of campaigning content. The majority of amendments calling for action were defeated, including those calling for joint student-trade union action on the campuses.

Another amendment calling for the opening of a constitutional review which would allow NUS to call for a vote for candidates and parties during elections was also thrown out.

Debate

This debate took place in the context of NUS having submitted proposals to the Baker review. No censure of this was moved or passed.

However, the Baker review and the incorrect position of NUS were raised in the hustings for VP-education. Pat Younge's platform was a model for NUS.

Younge pointed out

that the NUS was wrong to make a submission to the review. No money for education was forthcoming from the Tory government, he pointed out.

In that context, negotiation was a substitute for campaigning action against Baker and the Tory government. Younge explained how NUS Wales, his own area, had used the Baker review as the springboard for student demos against education cuts.

The three NOLS candidates for NUS president, national secretary and treasurer — Vicky Phillips, Adrian Long, and Maeve Sherlock respectively — have all been returned by conference. No Labour candidates stood against them, but the posts were contested by Tories and 'pro-life' candidates.

The election of VP-welfare, being held as we go to press and for which no result is yet available, is contested by two main candidates. Jo Gibbons is supported by NOLS, and Simon Pottinger by SSiN.

Failure

In the wake of the siege and the massacres in refugee camps, NUS conference has yet again failed to prioritise a speaker on Palestine. A student from Bir-Zeit University present at NUS conference was not chosen in the ballot to select six priority guest speakers.

Campaign Student however, will be giving this student a platform at its fringe meeting later in conference, together with a speaker from the General Union of Palestinian Students.

With the exception of Pat Younge's victory, NUS conference taking place between Sunday 15 and Thursday 19 March has been a hollow affair. The students union has failed to take the steps necessary to develop the alliances and campaigns needed to mobilise students for a Labour victory.

STAND FIRM

against six-day working

THE COAL BOARD'S attitude to negotiations with the NUM has, since the end of the strike, been totally unacceptable. Preconditions have been attached to every meeting between the national union and the coal board on wages, and this has now spilled over into the South Wales Area on the question of the proposed Margam new mine.

The South Wales area director has imposed acceptance of six-day production at Margam before talks between the area leadership of the NUM in South Wales and the Board can take place.

By Nigel Bevan, committee member, Tower Lodge NUM

This has to be seen as a direct attack on the five day week agreement which was drawn up between the NUM and the Coal Board in 1947. The five day week agreement was a huge step forward inasmuch as it restricted the shifts worked producing coal to five days and guaranteed miners a full weekly wage.

This agreement was negotiated by the NUM and is the property of the national union.

It is estimated that the Coal Board's plan for Margam will take seven years to develop and will eventually create 800 jobs. This figure is in question because of the effect new technology is having on the number of people employed in coal mines today.

New hi-technology installations being designed, and the automation of every aspect of mining, will probably mean the actual figure employed when Margam eventually comes on stream will be nearer 400.

If you compare these 400 jobs, or even the 800 claimed by the Coal Board with the number of jobs that will be lost in the industry as a whole if the five day week agreement is lost, Margam pales into insignificance.

Six-day production in the UK coalfield would mean, according to Robert Haslam's information, in the region of 12,000 job losses a year.

The question of other unions taking control of Margam has been used to

UDM, ISTC and TGWU have been mentioned as prospective candidates if the NUM does not accept the Margam project.

new legislation and impose these conditions of work on every miner working on the UK coalfield.

We must stand firm and not accept what is effectively the first step to privatisation, the pre-nationalisation conditions that go along with it and the end of the coal industry as we know it.

If we as a union succumb to these pressures, and accept the six-day coaling concept at Margam, it will be a green light for the government and the Board to introduce



Two thousand miners and their families marched through South Kirkby 14 March in remembrance of David Jones, killed on the picket line during the miners' strike.

Scargill urges NUM unity

THE NATIONAL executive of the NUM has called a special delegate conference to consider the coal board's strategy to extend working hours. The executive decision follows a move in the South Wales coalfield to unilaterally talk with its area board on six-day working for the opening of a new pit at Margam.

Speaking at a 10 March 'future for coal' meeting in Barnsley, NUM president Arthur Scargill explained his views on Margam and urged a united stand against the board by the union.

'The policy of the union is against six-day working or a seven-day working week. There are 15 decisions of this union, either at the NEC or conference level denouncing any extension of the working week. In 1987, we should be fighting for a four-day not a six-day working week.'

'At the meeting of the NEC on 12 February, South Wales officials tried to con-

vey that the Coal Board proposal for an eight-hour day and a six-day week over a three week period, and then a week off, would actually, over the 4 week period, bring a slight reduction in hours. Well it's not true.'

'South Wales officials said that the Coal Board's proposal for an eight-hour shift for a six-day period is 144 hours.'

But if today a mineworker works the full number of hours to attain a full six-shift payment, he works 123 3/4 hours — which is less than 144!

'In other words they are asking every miner at the new Margam pit to work an additional number of hours for no more pay, working on a Saturday and possibly a Sunday on a 4-shift sequence.'

'The most diabolical thing of all' Scargill said 'is that no matter what the arrangement, when there's a national policy, it's determined nationally.'

'This union is nothing unless its one united union, not divided into sections, Areas, or divisions. Once an area goes its own way, it not only weakens the national union it weakens itself.'



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