

Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No. 193. August 23, 1984. 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

STOP PRESS: NATIONAL DOCK STRIKE LOOMS
BSC has announced that it intends to provoke a national dock strike over the dispute at Hunterston. It will begin on Thursday morning (August 23) to use unregistered labour to unload coal from the Ostia for Ravenscraig steelworks. There will be a national dock workers' delegate meeting on Friday to decide a response.

TUC: don't rat on the miners

SUPPORT THE NUM PICKETS

By John Bloxam

THE hollowness of the NCB's massively publicised strike-breaking attempts is underlined by events in the coalfields and by MacGregor's own latest outburst.

Ten days ago MacGregor was boasting that the wind was now at his back and the strike was beginning to crumble. On Tuesday his desperate 'lock Scargill up' speech was a tacit admission of failure. It was a compliment to the effectiveness of the picketing.

Outside the main scabbing areas, the numbers returning to work over the past week have been tiny. Only hardened, isolated, unrepresentative right wingers have returned.

They have used everything except helicopters to get them to the pit top. Even then, some have been turned back. The solitary scabs in Kent and South Wales gave up after one day, and the one at Easington (Durham) was turned back by pickets on Tuesday.

The NCB have to lie even to get their figure of 0.15% working in the 'solid strike' areas. Most of the numbers given by the NCB come from Bilston Glen, and they are claiming more than three times the figure given by the local NUM. And at Castlehill (Fife), the local strike committee said the two scabs claimed by the NCB were in fact nurses the union had told to return.

A further indication of the strength of the strike came after a special lodge meeting at the South Celynen pit (South Wales) on Tuesday. Threats to close the pit within a year and leave a nearby pit working the same seam open had led to reports of a possible revolt in the branch. But of the 200 at the meeting, only eight insisted on a ballot and a return to work.

Continued on page 3

**Lobby TUC
Sept. 3rd**



John Harris (IFL)



John Harris (IFL)

Socialist ORGANISER

By any means necessary!

WHEN the press, TV and politicians — amongst them Neil Kinnock — denounce "picket line violence" they don't of course, have in mind the savage, indiscriminate, vindictive and highly professional thuggery of the massed armies of truncheon-wielding policemen in their government-issue bovine boots and helmets, some of them mounted like Cossacks.

They mean the mass picket of unarmed miners fighting for their jobs — miners, and sometimes miners' wives, who do not carry truncheons, who do not make cavalry charges into defenceless crowds, who are not like the police, specially trained thugs who make a living out of it — miners, who in addition to facing the picket line violence of Mrs Thatcher's scab-herding private army, risk arrest, vicious beatings in police stations and certain fines and possible jail sentences when they get to court.

To the media and the politicians — including Neil Kinnock — it is the most natural thing in the world that the police should have the right to inflict as much violence on miners in the course of doing their strike-breaking "duty" as some tinpot Chief Constable thinks necessary. It is unnatural, unacceptable and, when it happens, outrageous that picketing miners should defend themselves or go on the offensive and hit back.

Pit-butcher MacGregor, who is hiding behind the vast armies of police thugs and their violence and relying on them to protect him while he inflicts the atrocity of pit closures on mining communities — MacGregor now publicly demands that Arthur Scargill be tried for inciting miners to violence!

The campaign against "miners' violence" in the media and from clap-trap talking politicians is nothing but dirty "war propaganda" by those who cold-bloodedly decided to start this bitter class war when they provoked the miners' strike so they could smash the NUM. The miners are the main victims of this violence.

It is scandalous that Neil Kinnock lends weight and credibility to Mrs Thatcher's dirty war propaganda against "miners' violence" by denouncing picketing miners who stand up to the scab-herding police thugs.

The question of violence is increasingly becoming the dividing line separating the serious left in the unions and the Labour Party from the Kinnocks, the Stan Ormes and the Healeys.

Sabotage

An important new development is the recent sabotage of vehicles used by scab haulage firms. It is perfectly reasonable for miners to seek out and immobilise vehicles used for strike-breaking. This strike has now gone on for half a year of bitter, uneven conflict. Miners are right to take the war into the enemy camp, where they can. To hell with the legalities! Chief Constables and the Tory government have been making up the law as they go along since the strike began.

Socialist Worker, which of course, fully supports the pickets against the police, was wrong to condemn such tactics. They wrote: "However the tactics of hit and run raids by small secretly organised squads should be an issue. History shows that successful strikes are won by mass action and mass pickets — not hit and run raids. It also shows such raids can give trade union officials an excuse not to deliver solidarity. Orgreave was a far greater threat to the Tories than the recent destruction of a score of lorries."

Guerrilla

Yes, but what's wrong with guerrilla action too? It is not true that it must be either mass picketing or sabotage — neither in practice nor in logic. There is no evidence of a drift by militant miners into indiscriminate petty terrorism and away from mass picketing.

The sabotage has been well directed and has had exactly the same objective as the mass picketing has. It very effectively did in a small and precisely chosen area what the mass pickets attempt to do wholesale throughout the country.

There is nothing wrong or counter-productive about that. Guerrilla action is normally a part of conventional war. What is surprising is that it has taken so long to develop during the Tories' war against the miners. It would have happened long ago in a comparable American strike.

Socialist Worker seems to be groping towards some sort of Queensbury Rules of class struggle. It seems to say that the only permissible way to stop scabs is by mass picketing. That is just childish.

There are no Queensbury rules in a class struggle. That, surely, is the message that comes out of the obscenely hypocritical double-standards with which the media and the politicians approach the question of picket line violence, condemning and blaming the miner victims and praising and exonerating the mercenary thugs in blue responsible for the violence.

Victory to the miners!

Call Kinnock to order!

NEIL Kinnock is after a change of image. Recent opinion polls suggest that whilst the Labour Party is now topping the Tories in opinion polls, Kinnock's popularity as leader is declining rapidly.

A Gallup poll published by the Sunday Telegraph showed Labour leading the Tories by 39% to 36%. It also found that those who felt Kinnock was proving to be a good Labour leader had fallen to 37%, as against 43% in July. 44% positively thought he was proving to be bad.

This decline is a bit of a shock for Kinnock and the Labour leadership, and for those in the party who insisted that Kinnock, the sanitised and de-politicised blue-eyed boy-wonder would do Labour a power of good.

So Kinnock's advisors are developing a new image for him, intended to dispel the accusation that he is politically lightweight. In place of the playboy who appears in pop videos, Kinnock is to make a series of 'hard' political speeches over the next year.

The miners' strike is obviously a headache. Kinnock is terrified both of losing votes by making too firm a commitment to the miners, and of doing damage to his credibility by remaining too distant. So far he has combined lukewarm verbal support with treacherous condemnation of the miners' violence on picket lines.

His refusal to be firm and principled has won him the contempt of most striking miners.

Part of the new 'Kinnock means business' image, apparently, is the attempt to clamp down on the left in the Labour Party, beginning by introducing the option of new selection procedures.

Kinnock is being helped and prodded by the campaign launched by union-busting Labour Party member Robert Maxwell's Daily Mirror.

In fact, though, the new rules — which devolve the actual decisions about selec-

tion to the local parties — is relatively timid. It is more a focus for the soft-left and right wing to organise around in localities than a head-on fight.

It is, however, an indication of the direction in which Kinnock is going. The idea that many on the left had last October, that Kinnock's leadership was at once a victory for the left and a way to unite, is being proved completely false.

Kinnock is not interested in unity to fight the Tories and for working class interests. He is interested in isolating and defeating the left who do want to fight, to support the miners and defeat the Tories.

The serious Labour Party left must treat Kinnock's latest manoeuvres as a warning of what to expect. We must get these softer left-wingers who backed Kinnock for the leadership to draw up an honest balance sheet of his leadership so far.

The miners' strike is an acid test. A Labour leader who proves himself no good in such a class battle will never be good for anything the labour movement needs doing.

Kinnock's attempt to undermine re-selection must be defeated at this year's Labour Party conference. Kinnock must be called to order.



On whose side?

Vicki and Robert Smails from Rhodesia village in Notts spoke to Sue Carlyle about Neil Kinnock. Robert is a member of the NUM South Yorks Area, living in Nottinghamshire.

Vicki: What about Kinnock?! He's a waste of time — well in my opinion he is. He's sat on the fence, watching which way the wind blows. One minute he's on the miners' side, the next minute he's on the other side. I just don't know about Neil Kinnock.

I don't think the whole of the Labour Party are like him. Some of the Labour Party is like that, but there's a few that have come out firmly on our side, and they are brilliant — Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, people like that.

Rob: The difference between Dennis Skinner and Neil Kinnock is that Dennis Skinner knows whose side he's on but Kinnock doesn't. Apart from that Skinner's not only been brought up amongst us, he's actually come and seen what the fight's about instead of stopping down in London.

Kinnock's not really a leader is he? Well I don't think he is

The leadership should have the conviction to come out and back us or come out and deny us — one way or the other.

On TV the other day Eric Heffer was after everyone donating a day's wage, which is a good thing, but it would be better if it were given freely, without any begrudging.

As I see it in this strike, we're in a war. There's no getting away from it. Don't get me wrong, I don't condone a lot of this violence to scabs' cars and the like, but nine times out of ten the violence is started by the police anyway.

But when it boils down to it and when it comes to the crunch we are in a war, a class war, a war for our jobs. You've got to get angry about it to win the war. I mean we could all stand back and do nothing . . . but if we all stopped at home we'd never win. After five months I feel bloody angry.

Every time Neil Kinnock comes out and condemns pickets, he should come out and see for himself. He'd know what it feels like if he went to a picket line.

Frank Chapple

Stalinism upside down



support — sent their soldiers and tanks to crush the Hungarian anti-Stalinist revolution.

Chapple and Cannon had got their training as hard-nosed machine operators in the CP. In fact Frank Chapple first learned to be a strikebreaker in the CP!

During World War Two, the CP was committed to boosting production, bitterly opposed to all strikes and tried to break strikes that occurred.

Those were the days when Party Secretary Harry Pollitt could publicly declare that "Today it is the class conscious worker who will cross the picket line."

It was the time when the very powerful US CP campaigned to have striking American coalminers conscripted and put under military discipline as a means of forcing them back to work.

This phase reached its peak in 1945 when the British CP was to the right of the right wing of the Labour Party. It opposed the Labour Party decision to break the wartime coalition and go for a Labour government. Instead of a Labour government the CP wanted a coalition of 'Labour, Liberals and Progressive Tories'. Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden were the 'progressive Tories'.

The CP didn't become left and militant again until about 1947, when the cold war got serious. Many of the things the right wing of the CP say today, like, for example, the defeatist mouthings of Professor Eric Hobsbawm, are an identifiable throwback to those days.

Chapple and Cannon never forgot their basic Stalinist training of those days. When they went over to the right wing in the late '50s they were nothing but Stalinists who had turned themselves inside out. They served different masters with the old methods of bureaucratic gangsterism.

Chapple is now outspokenly hostile to Stalinism. He often says things which would come better from the trade union left but which nevertheless need to be said. His is a bourgeois anti-Stalinism and anti-Communism in contrast to the working class socialist hatred and condemnation of police state Stalinism to be found, for example, in the pages of Socialist Organiser.

The irony of it is that if you turned this dirty little scoundrel upside down you'd probably see it plain and clear still stamped on his bum: 'Made in Moscow'.

"What is needed is for magistrates to start meting out penalties that are consistent with the level of violence. Clearly they are doing nothing but slapping the wrists of people when they put £5 or £50 fines on."

"The magistrates are entitled to levy prison sentences on people who get themselves involved in that way to make it clear that our society is not going to stand for this sort of thing."

Who said that? Some spluttering Tory gent from the Shires? In fact it was last year's President of the TUC, Mr Frank Chapple.

You will remember Jack London's famous definition of a scab. "After God had made the alligator and the rattlesnake and the slimy toad he then gathered up the left-overs and made a scab."

But do you know what He did then? He used the venom dripping rattlesnake's tongue to scrape the droppings off the floor and with the resulting poisonous goo he made Frank Chapple.

Chapple and the late Leslie Cannon were given control of the Electrical Trades Union by the courts after the incumbent leaders — who were members of the Communist Party — were declared to have got to power by ballot rigging. Since then they have run this union for twenty years as their own small version of a police state.

Union members are tyrannised over and subjected to vicious disciplinary procedures by the union leaders who pay more heed to the bosses and governments than to their members.

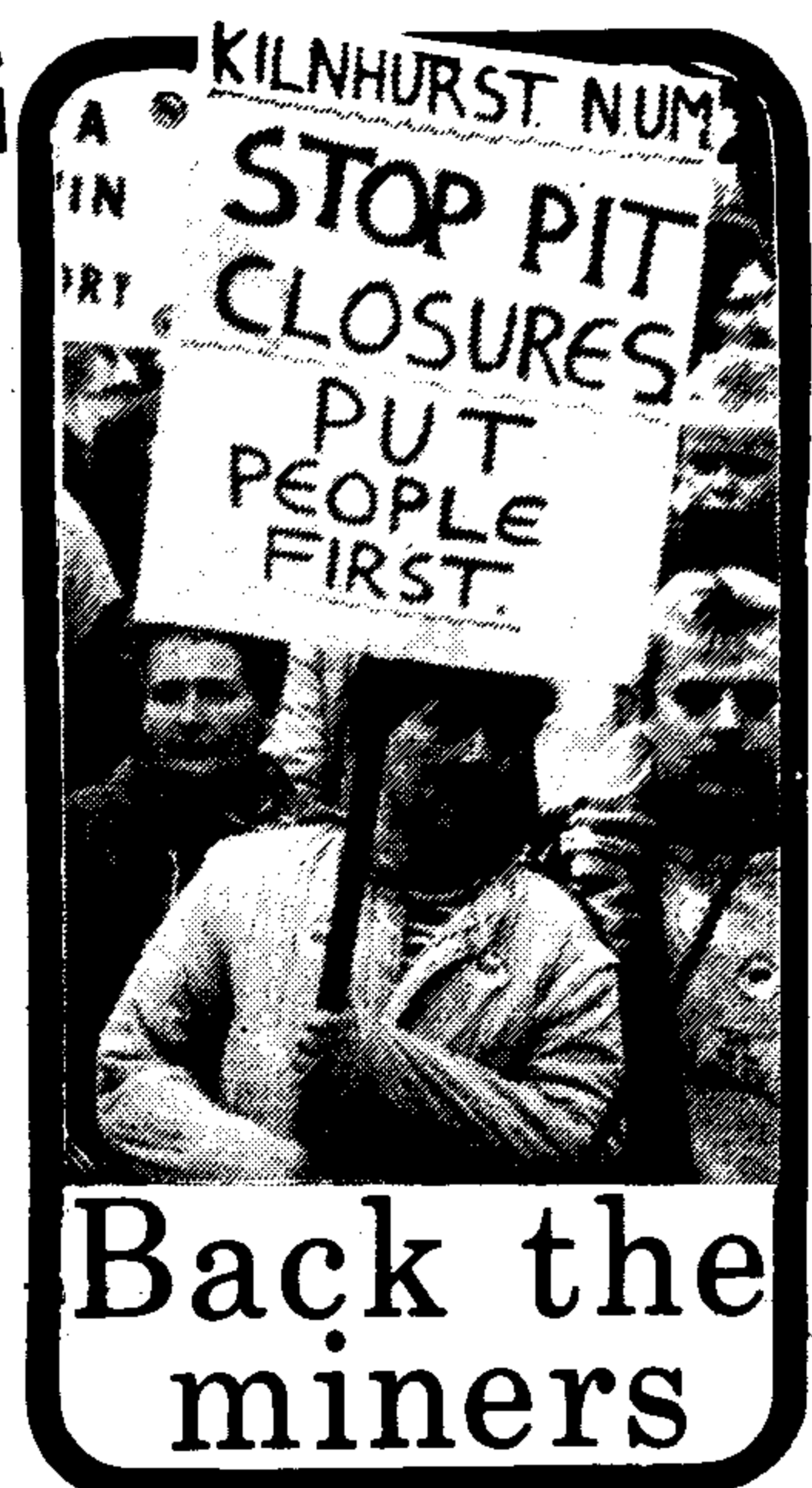
The ETU leaders are now the pioneers in negotiating binding no-strike union recognition deals, especially with foreign companies in Britain. They will lead the fight at the forthcoming TUC conference against solidarity with the miners. Chapple supports the anti-union SDP.

The good news is that Chapple is due to retire soon. That will be a good day for the British working class movement.

There is a crucial twist to the Chapple story. He was once a Communist — or rather a Stalinist counterfeit of a Communist. He left the Communist Party only in 1956, when many thousands of members of the then sizeable British CP resigned in protest when the Russians — with CPGB



Riot police push pickets about at Gascoyne Wood. Photo: John Harris



'Yes, we'll win'

By Tony Twine

"WHEN I see support such as the miners are getting here tonight I know that we are home and dry... It's not a question of if we win, but only when."

Peter Heathfield, NUM general secretary, was speaking at a public meeting of over 300 trade unionists and labour movement activists. Southampton.

Heathfield outlined the course of events throughout the five month old strike, laying particular stress on the 'denationalising, rationalising and non-negotiating' role played by current NCB chief, Ian MacGregor, fresh from demolishing tens of thousands of jobs at BL and British Steel. Negotiations with the Coal Board had not foundered upon the meaning of a single word (despite absurd media claims).

The problems arose because both sides held very different philosophies that reduced to a simple idea - people or profits. The Tories, having junked the mining industry Plan for Coal, were hell-bent on closing pits, even if it meant the certain destruction of live, human communities.

Over 160,000 striking miners would not let this happen, declared Heathfield.

The final arguments for solidarity were put by Notts striking miner (and Socialist Organiser supporter) Stan Crawford, from Bevercotes colliery. He vividly described police attacks and strongarm tactics used against pickets, and conveyed a strong impression of the cop-enforced 'total exclusion zone' existing around Notts area coalfields.

He echoed earlier calls for further working class support with a defiant parting salvo: "We will stay out and fight as long as the NUM wants us to... we'll not be starved and beaten back to work by this or any government."

TUC and the miners

Continued from front page.

A little reported but much more significant fact was the announcement on Monday that the CEBG had 'temporarily' shut down the three main coal-fired power stations in Yorkshire - Drax, Ferrybridge and Eggborough - to conserve coal, and is making a further switch to the much more expensive oil-fired operations.

This underlines the point made by Arthur Scargill in the latest issue of the Miner: "The nearer we get to our biggest ally, General Winter, the weaker their position. That is why they made August the month of intense propaganda."

Despite their public display of confidence, the ruling class must be worried. Even in the Notts coalfield, where 80% are

now scabbing, coal production is severely down and pit head stocks badly depleted. With continuing solidarity action on the railways, they are now only moving 20 trains a week on the 'pit-power station merry-go-round'. Their normal average is 175!

Details

On Monday, details of a secret meeting between the NUM and ACAS the previous Thursday were published. Arthur Scargill immediately pointed out that the meeting had simply been to explain the NUM's case. The way it was announced and the secrecy understandably caused resentment amongst some rank and file miners. But there is no indication that ACAS is effectively involved in the strike now, offer-

ing a threat to the miners and a bolt-hole for the NCB and government.

It is to the TUC leaders they are now looking to help them defeat the miners. They haven't been slow to respond.

On Monday the TUC Finance and General Purposes Committee told Murray to meet the NUM to discuss their call at Congress for 'full support'. And they made it clear to the press that they want to head off the appeal to Congress. David Basnett made it perfectly plain on radio on Tuesday: "You cannot allow a dispute like this to rumble on. It is disturbing our economy and it is disturbing our industrial relations". So they'll sell it out if they can.

Manoeuvre

The NUM leadership show no sign of falling for the manoeuvre. And the resolution and amendments supporting the NUM will probably be carried. They will be discussed on the first day of the Congress (Monday, September 3), coinciding with the lobby called for that day. A mass lobby will put pressure on any waverers and help make sure the various proposals (10p weekly levy; respect for picket lines; one day strike) are stuck to.

Many miners are now looking to support from the TUC, and there is a danger of too much reliance being put on it. The pro-NCB resolution would give the strike a boost and give the rank and file activists the authority of Congress in the fight to put them into action. But that battle will still have to be fought.

Danger

Another danger is the left trade union leaders may use the Congress as a cop-out, and hide behind what happens there and what doesn't happen afterwards. One of the biggest possible boosts for the strike now would be if those trade union leaders who talk about the need for physical action in support of the miners committed themselves to take such action whatever is decided at the TUC. They should say now that they'll organise to get their unions out on September 12, the day already fixed by the rail unions for a day's stoppage in London.

North East: back the pickets!

THIS week has seen the most concerted effort so far by the NCB to break the strike in the north-east. The Area NCB is prematurely claiming major success for its latest back-to-work campaign.

So far, however, only 23 out of 20,000 miners have boarded the three coaches laid on by the NCB. The Coal Board have admitted that mass pickets mounted at several collieries have blunted their campaign's cutting edge.

On Monday morning at Easington colliery, 700 miners supported by many miners wives turned out to prevent the scabs getting to work. As it was, only one man, Paul Wilkinson, reported for work on the NCB coach.

For about two hours he stood at the top of the road leading to the colliery entrance, surrounded by large numbers of police who obstructed attempts by lodge officials to talk to him.

Pickets, worried that police were trying to drive Wilkinson through their lines in a police van, overturned two skips at the colliery gates, blocking the entrance.

At 8.30, the police, heavily reinforced, and by now about 200 strong, began to form up in ranks in an attempt to force a way through the picket lines.

The pickets responded quickly with a push, which forced the police to give up after only a few minutes.

Meanwhile, Wilkinson was seen being bundled into a police van and was driven off soon after the police failed to make any impression on the picket line.

Since Monday, Wilkinson has become a minor media celebrity in the area since he vowed to keep coming back so long as free transport continued. He maintains that it is his disagreement with the NUM leadership's conducting of the strike which has led him to scab. In fact Wilkinson applied for voluntary redundancy before the strike and has been told by the NCB that he can work off his few remaining weeks during the strike.

One Easington miner summed up his feelings about Wilkinson when he said: "He is just being used as a pawn. I would be tempted to feel sorry for him, apart from all the trouble he has caused."

On Tuesday morning, about 600 pickets again turned up at

Easington, expecting another attempt by Wilkinson. The barricades at the colliery entrance were reinforced and the pickets waited for the NCB bus to arrive.

It was soon apparent that Coal Board and police tactics had changed. Police numbers were much reduced and Wilkinson did not show up at the colliery. It was rumoured that he was being kept somewhere in the village.

It had become obvious what these new tactics will mean from now on. They intend to use people like Wilkinson to tie down and demoralise hundreds of pickets whilst concentrating their efforts on other pits such as Wearmouth, where the NCB were able for a second time, to bus in 14 COSA (Colliery Officials Staff Association) members, despite heavy picketing.

The only response to the NCB's tactics can be to organise all possible physical support for the mass pickets.

'Workshop besieged'

Socialist Organiser spoke to Robert Smiles, who works at Manton pit. He originally came from Durham at the age of 11 when his parents came south after pits closed there. He still remembers the feeling of being an outsider and how keenly his family felt the upheaval, and that pit closures caused it. He doesn't want the same to happen to his family.

The police haven't come into our village much, but our local bobby has got himself moved to a desk job. At one time if there were kids making a nuisance of themselves then he'd have a word. Now we wouldn't dream of asking the police to do anything.

What about roadblocks?

Well the road turns into a little lane which joins with another which comes from Shireoaks pit - up to a fortnight ago that used to be as free as a bird, but of late they've started blocking there.

You've got blocks on the roundabout on Mansfield Road, roadblocks on the Sheffield road at the other side of Shireoaks pit. You can't come through Workshop, it's besieged and you can't get out of it.

So how have you been getting out to go picketing?

With great difficulty. We go up dirt tracks, we get out of the car and let it go through. We walk through fields. Police have found the tracks but each time we find a different way. I never realised just how many tracks there are.

How did it come about that women started going picketing?

Well it didn't start immediately. The union got in touch from Shireoaks on the need to form a women's group to distribute food parcels. One or two women went with their husbands to picket, and after that the Women's Action Group discussed it a bit and then more of them wanted to go. They sometimes go with the men, but now they also go on their own.

Do you find it an advantage to take women in the cars to get through road blocks?

It was once, but the police got wise to it and they know the car numbers. Also any car with more than one or two people they stop automatically as they come out of the village. So it's no special advantage now.

'A police riot'

Photographer John Harris talked to Ellen Taylor

the unwritten code of helping others when problems arise in the pits. He's not respected anyway because of the sort of person he is.

After the police violence, police were seen outside Silverwood Welfare, taunting the miners with ten pound notes - threatening to beat them up.

A man wandering around outside the colliery - at the back - was beaten up. And a young girl has also been beaten up.

At Gascoyne Wood, riot shields and steel toe caps have been used as weapons by the police.

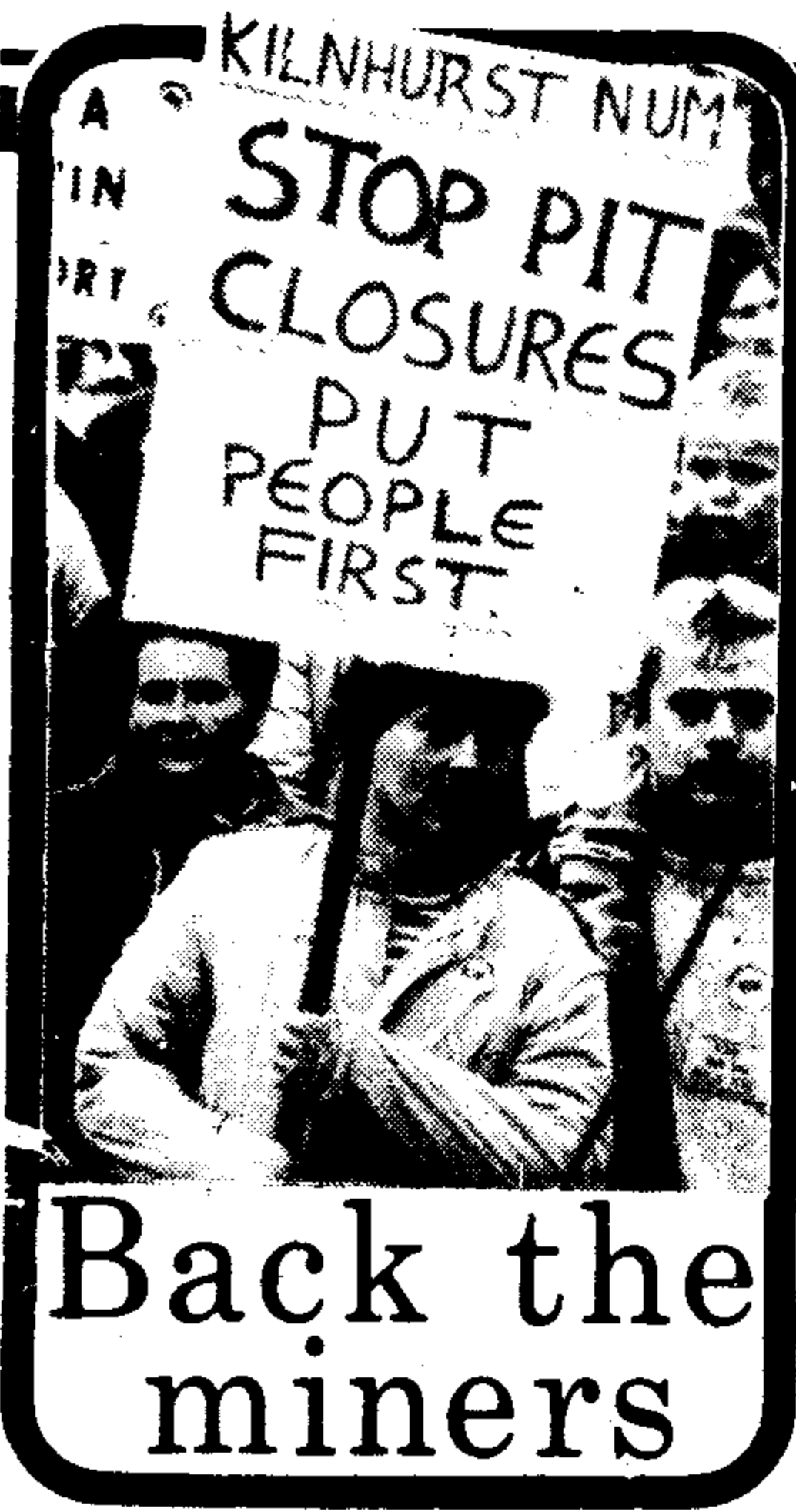
There's a photo in last week's Socialist Organiser of a car with its windscreen bashed in. It was part of a convoy going to a picket line. There was systematic smashing in of cars in the convoy by the riot police. Pressure was used to gain access to the cars under threat of arrest and un-named consequences.

IN Silverwood, at 3 am, flaming barricades were set up. Police moved in and gave the pickets a leathering. The action was probably started too early: there were too few pickets and it was easy for the police to move in. The pickets are now proposing to move back to picketing their own pits. I'm not quite sure why: it might be based on fear of police tactics which is understandable.

The news reported that miners were rampaging through the village. The reality was that miners were running away from rampaging police.

The man who's supposed to be going in at Silverwood colliery is 54 years old. He'll never work at the pit again: he'll probably accept redundancy. And the rest of the men have said that they'll not go back to work at the pit until he's sacked anyway.

The man's an opportunist. There's a strength of comradeship among the miners due to the life and death dependency in the pits. He's been known to break



A scab, not a hero

IN September the courts will hear the appeal of two Yorkshire miners to compel the union to hold a national ballot, declare the recent rule changed invalid and stop the union making the strike official. Socialist Organiser spoke to two Manton miners who had attended the union meetings at which one of the courtroom heroes, Bob Taylor, claimed there was lots of support for what he is doing. They don't wish to be named for now.

It's best to go back to the beginning of the strike. Before it started proper - we were out a week before as winders. At the first meeting of the winders we voted to a man not to strike. Then we were picketed out, and at a meeting the following Saturday we were told there was an area strike and that it was official. We'd been brainwashed by the media, so every man at that meeting, not just Bob Taylor, was up in arms. We wanted a ballot and we were furious because we couldn't get one. We wanted more details... but we were out on strike, all of us.

Six or eight weeks after that, and when everyone had learned, what was going on from the union's point of view, Bob Taylor and a few of his cronies forced a meeting because they wanted to initiate a back-to-work movement. He said he'd got about 100 people to back him.

At that meeting he got people's backs up rather than any support. He was trying to break the strike when it was solid.

That second meeting was different to the first. Nobody except Bob Taylor was interested in going back to work. Nobody was interested in a ballot. I can definitely say that - to a man. He had his democratic vote.

Now he's linked up with 'Silver Birch', this Chris Butcher, to scab on the strike. There's no way a man like him could get a High Court action against the NUM at such short notice. It's been planned by outsiders and financed elsewhere.

The media is playing along as well. It's well known that their houses are empty and their families are away - yet the media are showing letters coming through the letterbox from the inside as though they were living there.

There were about 500 present at the union meeting and there was no return to work. The last meeting dealt with the union change of rule on disciplining scabs. Taylor spent most of the time barracking and interrupting the chairperson. He had his chance to raise what he wanted.

Scots demo Sept 15th

THIS Friday, August 25, a shop stewards' conference in support of the miners is being held in Glasgow, organised by the Labour Party Scottish Council, the Scottish TUC and the Clyde Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. The conference will mark the start of the build-up to the all-Scottish demonstration being held in Glasgow on September 15, organised by the same bodies.

The STUC is calling for support for the demonstration so as to increase pressure on "our government" for an "amicable resolution of the differences outstanding between the NUM and the NCB".

Whilst the bureaucracy seeks to dampen down militancy and contain it within safe limits, class militants must follow up this Friday's conference with a concerted effort to break the stranglehold of the bureaucracy in Scotland and mobilise support for the September 15 demonstration on the basis of agitation for a general strike.

What does this mean concretely?

Resolutions should be moved at trade union branches to be sent on to the STUC forthrightly condemning the STUC's call for an "amicable resolution" and demanding that the September 15 demonstration be part of a movement towards a general strike in support of the miners and against the anti-union laws.

However negligible the impact of such resolutions on the STUC General Council itself, they will certainly raise the idea of a general strike amongst broader layers of the trade union movement and further develop the momentum towards such a strike.

Within individual workplaces, shop stewards should be producing their own leaflets and holding sectional and mass meetings not only to ensure a good turnout for the demonstration but also to take up the arguments on the need for a general strike and generate support for it.

And the Broad Lefts/rank and file groups in the different unions also need to prepare their intervention into the demonstration, both by



Miners from Cortonwood colliery march to the TUC. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

mobilising support for it and also producing leaflets for distribution on it explaining the logic of the general strike slogan and publicising follow-up meetings where further discussion about organising support for a general strike within their own particular unions can take place.

The run-up to the September 15 demonstration must also be taken as the opportunity to transform the various miners' support committees in Scotland. At the moment, especially in the West of Scotland, such committees do valuable fund-raising work, but politics is kept out of them by the controlling influence of the Communist Party.

Labour Party branches need to be out campaigning for support for the demonstration on the basis of the demand for a general strike, and in opposition to Kinnock's repeated attacks on "picket line violence"

The strike will hold'

What's your assessment of the so-called back-to-work movement?

It's a Coal Board and media ploy. Silver Birch is a front - obviously on the NCB pay-roll. A handful have gone back but this is to be expected after 24 weeks on strike.

The cost of getting one or two in to work is vast and they can't do anything productive when they do get there.

It would be easier and cheaper for the NCB to pay them to stay at home.

They won't do this so that they can get more pictures of violence on the television.

Will the strike hold if it has to go into the autumn?

The strike will hold through the winter if necessary. We have gone too far for too long to even contemplate returning to work without a victory.

Solidarity of outside workers and trade unionists has proved not only to miners but to the government, and the Coal Board,

Stan Crawford spoke to Socialist Organiser.

that as long as we are out we will be fed and looked after.

How do you think policing might develop as strikers' tactics become more militant?

Some think that the police can't do much more. I believe the policing could turn into professional strike breaking squads. After all, in 1926, troops and tanks were used to break strikes. And plastic bullets have been used in Ireland for years and are ready now.

It wouldn't take much for them to be brought into action as TV has shown them recently being used in Belfast.

But this type of action would stiffen the strikers' tactics - we'll fight fire with fire.

What position has the strike reached?

A low point has been reached in Nottinghamshire. The strikers think they are being forgotten by the rest of the NUM, including the leadership. A few of the single

Out of their own mouths

There's no drift back

Right-wing newspapers are delightedly sighting rebel miners crossing picket lines or going to court more often than the Loch Ness monster this silly season. The coal board's propaganda is inflating the significance of this "drift back to work": it is hardly even a trickle for the moment, with a rise of only 700 in those working since the start of July. There now seem to be 48,000 of Britains' 180,000 miners working - about 8,000 more than in April. Virtually all the non-strikers are in the Midlands. In other areas the strike-breakers are more conspicuous for their bravery than their numbers. The Bilston Glen pit near Edinburgh, with 100 of its 1,900 miners in on Wednesday, took star-billing in the return to work show.

The campaign of the miners opposed to the strike is now well organised, with access to finance from sympathetic businessmen. Starting next week, selected pits will be chosen - jointly with local coal board managers - for a brave attempt each Monday to get some miners to bus past the pickets to work.

The Economist

lads are drifting back to work, due to lack of money. What is needed is a leading union figure to listen to the lads. The Notts lads need to get some kind of demonstration going, to bring to wider attention that they are there and fighting.

The NCB says underground conditions are causing the closure of coal faces, do you believe this?

In some cases, yes. But everything shown on TV and in the press may look bad to the non-miner, but any miner can tell you that these conditions are seen every working day and are continually worked and coal is produced.

Examples shown on television can be repaired quite easily in very short time, and would not hamper production.

This is simply another NCB tactic to create fear of job losses. The same was said about Bilston Glen six weeks ago, yet when 30 men returned, within two days it was claimed that coal was being produced normally.

There's your unsafe pits for you!

Coal Board tactics fail

IN THE latest efforts to engineer a return to work in Scotland, the Scottish NCB declared a week last Wednesday, (15 August) that two of the three faces at Castlehill pit, part of the Longannet complex in Fife, would be abandoned.

945 miners work at Castlehill, over half of them on the two faces to be closed.

The Coal Board attempted to put the blame for the closures on the NUM and claimed that a

deterioration of underground conditions, due to lack of repair work, was the reason for the closures.

Scottish NCB director Albert Wheeler alleged that the NUM had consistently refused to allow sufficient numbers to go down the pits and do repair work.

In fact one of the abandoned faces had hit a major geological fault before the start of the national strike and was already effectively finished, while the second face was only 150 metres away from a faulted area and had, at most, only another six months' production left.

It is also a lie to claim that the NUM had prevented the carrying out of necessary repair work. At no time in the two months prior to the announcement of the closure has the pit management ever asked for more men to do repair work. When management had asked for extra men before then, the NUM had provided them.

And as for the Coal Board's claim that over £1½ million worth of equipment had had to be abandoned, much of the equipment was obsolete and, if the Board really wants to salvage the equip-

ment, it would still be possible to do so.

But the Coal Board is more concerned with using the abandonment of the two faces as a propaganda point. It deliberately shut down two faces in an attempt to put the blame on the miners' strike.

As Tom Coulter, NUM branch secretary at the pit, pointed out: "In our opinion it's just a huge propaganda exercise aimed at stampeding the men either into coming back or taking away safety cover."

Nor is this the first time that the NCB in Scotland has employed such tactics. During the strike at the Bogside pit in January of this year, management switched off the power and then prevented safety cover miners from going down the pit for over 48 hours.

It was then claimed that the pit had to be closed due to the NUM's failure to provide adequate safety cover.

But it had obviously already been scheduled for closure.

The latest Coal Board tactic has nevertheless been a failure, as only a handful of miners are working.



Stan Crawford. Photo: John Harris (IFL)

Notts strikers need money

Send money or invitations for fund-raising visits to the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committees.
North Notts. Strike Centre, Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Ollerton, Notts.
South Notts. Miners' Strike Centre, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER WEEKEND SCHOOL

August 25-27, in London

Plenary sessions on THE MINERS' STRIKE and THE POLICE AND THE STATE. Workshops: workers in South Africa; workers in Poland; general strikes - France 1968, Britain 1926; debate on 'alternative defence'; forum on the Labour Left today; the politics of Ken Livingstone; working class women's movements in history and today; series on labour history; series on basic Marxism; Middle East; Cuba; Central America; the Marxist theory of imperialism and capitalism in the Third World, should boxing be banned; and more...

For details and registration (£4 waged, £1.50 unwaged), write to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1.

Mines not missiles

By Jill Mountford

WHAT do you get when the strongest and fastest growing group of working class women unite their struggle with the well-known struggle of the Greenham peace women? Answer: A chance to change herstory.

Women from mining communities in Yorkshire and Nottingham linked up with women from peace groups and Greenham Common and organised a four day 'Mines Not Missiles' march. The women met up at Capenhurst Uranium plant, where the leafleted about the dangers of plutonium, a by-product of Uranium, the atrocities suffered by the black South African people who mine it, and how the British bosses, who have financial interests in these mines, plan to expand the nuclear power industry in this country.

Such an expansion clearly means the dismantling of the coal industry, and therefore the breaking down of a powerful section of the organised working class.

The women marched through towns, en route, leafletting and collecting for the miners' hardship fund.

They arrived in Stoke late Saturday afternoon, where they were welcomed by North Staffs miners' wives and women from local peace groups.

Despite many setbacks the Florence Support Committee and miners from that colliery had organised a great social.

During the evening I spoke to Brenda Ralfe, Carol Stocks and Gladys Metcalf, miners' wives from Yorkshire who were on the march. I asked them how important they felt it was for women in the mining communities to join forces with the peace women:

"Vital! We didn't realise how closely linked these struggles are. A bigger nuclear industry means a smaller coal industry. That's what this fight is all about.

I've had a woman say to me today in Chester, 'You miners are greedy, always striking for more money'. I ask you, the strike is 23 weeks old and she thinks we are striking for more money. I feel sorry for these middle class women. They're supposed to be educated but

they know nothing. They don't know the real truth. I do and I'm supposed to be thick. I'm proud to be working class. I feel superior for the first time.

The Greenham women have had the same sort of treatment that we've had in the papers and on telly. Their names have been dirt, just the same as our names are now. My heart goes out to these women, they've been doing a tremendous job and have taken a lot of hassle.

Before the strike me and my husband had meat every night for tea. We all did, we all spent money on furniture and clothes that we didn't always need and now we've had a chance to stop and think about it all. And I tell you, I for one won't go back to the old ways. We're all a lot healthier for it. Plenty of fresh air on demos and picket lines, not so much rich food and beer. We're fighting fit. The Tories think they'll starve us back, but I've got news for them: we've never felt so good.

The papers keep saying how this strike is breaking up families and how the wives aren't behind the husbands. I've one thing to say to them. Me and my husband have never been so close; but at the same time, my place is no longer in the kitchen, and he'll tell you that's what he thought before this strike. I'm now on the picket line with him and because of this we've had to start sharing the housework and kids more. And that's got to be good.

Changed

Our whole family has changed. The Tories are supposed to be the party of the family. Well, I look at it like this. If they really were the party for the family, all of us who work would be working a four-day week. This would give us more time with our families and it would help solve the unemployment problem. See what I mean?

My kids have never been so happy. This time last year they were want, want, want. Not now. They see more of their father and there's no pressure on them like there is when he's on shifts. This goes for the whole community. We're loyal to each other. Neighbours are neighbours once again. We're getting stronger, not weaker.

There was this police sergeant - just like Adolf Hitler. He ended up arresting four women. He arrested one for going to the toilet because with the toilet on this picket line you've got to have two police women to escort you, wait for you and escort you back.

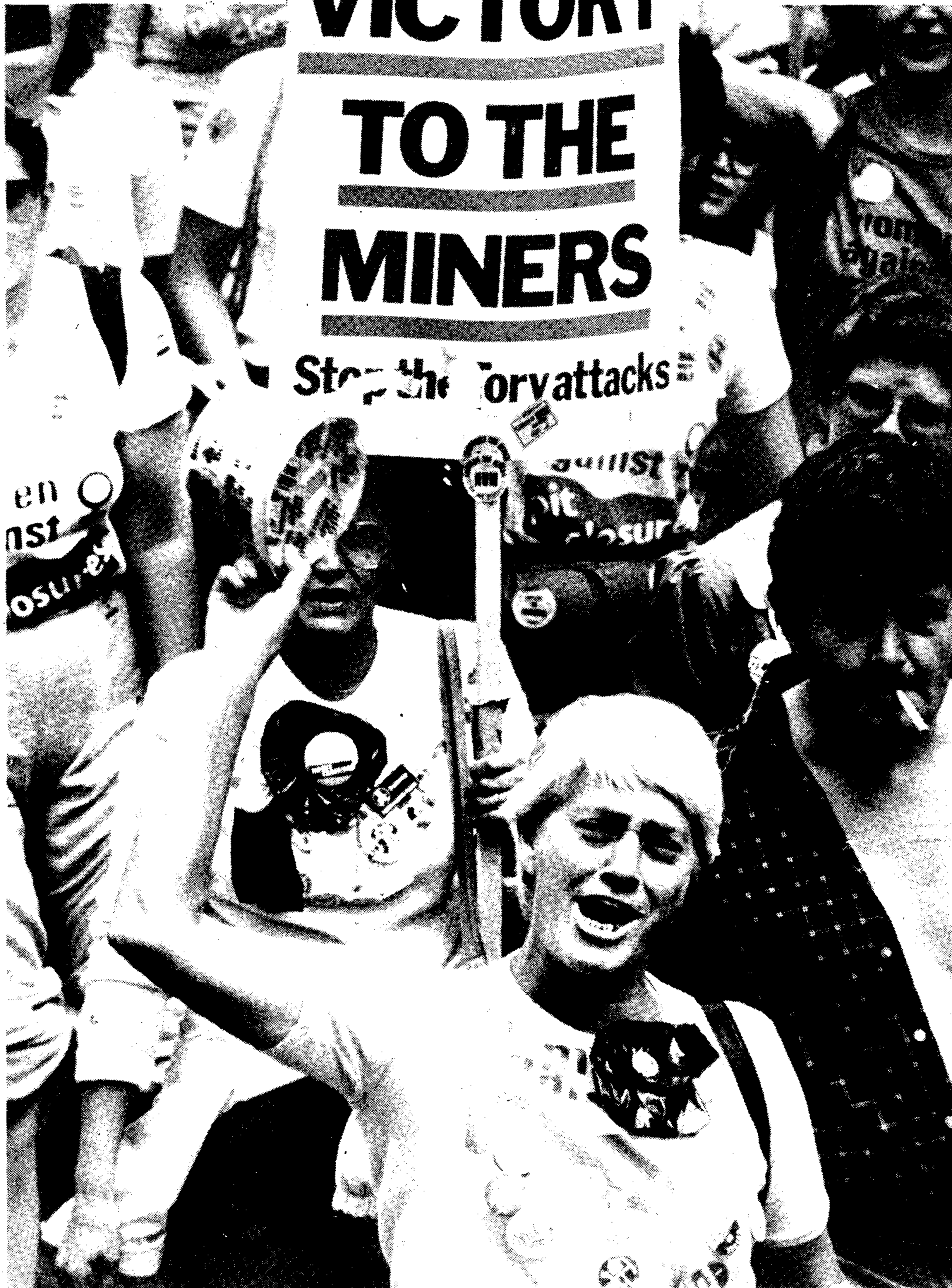
One woman didn't know this so off she toddled to the toilet. They arrested her because no policewoman accompanied her.

And then they arrested one for shouting 'boulder'. I mean we weren't allowed to shout 'scab'. So he arrested her.

Then he arrested another one, I don't know what for.

Finally there was a woman just down the road from me who held a 'Coal not Dole' sticker up to a bus. The sergeant came marching up and he tapped her on the shoulder and said, "I'm not having none of this on my picket line!"

Anyway, right down at the end there was this bobby stood all on his own who was sauntering



The Women Against Pit Closures demonstration, August 11.

NALGO's vote

By Ann Crowder, East Midlands NALGO delegate to TUC

THE crucial vote on the resolutions supporting the miners and the amendments at the TUC may be the NALGO vote. According to speculation in the press it will be.

The right wing union leaders are hoping to use NALGO following the successful move by 50

NALGO branches to call a national conference to discuss a motion calling for a secret ballot before donating any more money to the NUM.

At the last NALGO NEC meeting the right wing within the union used the impending conference to put off discussing support for last week's Women Against Pit Closures demonstration.

In fact the 50 branches who supported the call for this conference are small branches, mostly police branches and electricity and gas branches. A special conference is unlikely to overturn the decision of this year's conference to support and donate large amounts of money to the NUM.

The response amongst NALGO members for collecting the levy has been tremendous and the right wing will be unable to push for an avoidance of voting on the amendments at the TUC.

The argument for voting for the FTAT amendment for a 24 hour general strike has still to take place at the delegation meeting on the Sunday before Congress.

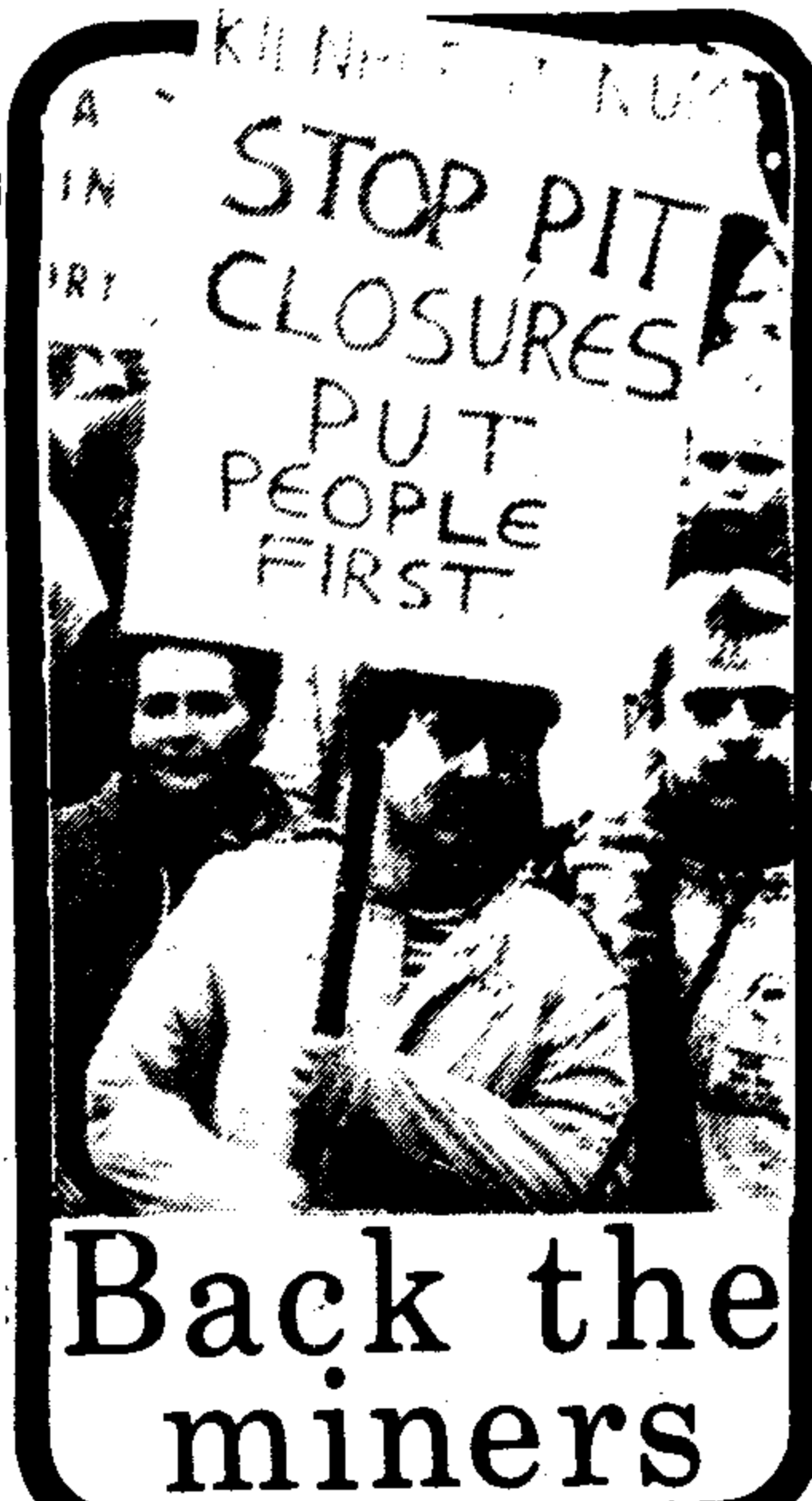
NALGO branches which meet before then should pass motions calling on the delegation to support the amendments for general strike action.

around. Then he stood there and said "Hello Ladies, (yes, Ladies!) - why don't you talk to me?" We said, "Because we don't want to talk to you, we don't talk to any of you. Go up there with the rest!"

Then he said, "I don't wish to stand with that lot. I don't want to be associated with them. I'm local. I don't want to do it. I hate being here, but I'm knocking on for retirement age and I've got my orders - I've got to come. Here I'm stood and here I'll stay, but I'm not having anything to do with the Mets."

The sergeant saw him talking to us so he came marching up to him. You could see that he was giving him a telling off. That sergeant carried on at that bobby all night.

He said he was a village bobby. Lived with miners all his life and he couldn't stand what was being done to them, so much he wouldn't stand next to the other police.



Back the miners

Cynics of the NCB

CONCESSIONARY coal has continued to be delivered to old people and those families in special medical need during the dispute.

The Coal Board quite cynically exploited the issue, refusing coal supplies to some families with health problems, because they are members of striking miners' families. Recently a dispute arose over distribution of coal.

In Kiveton Park, South Yorks, Albert Bowns, branch delegate, spoke to Socialist Organiser:

"Since day one, coal has been distributed by our members who are on strike, working 8 hours a day on a voluntary basis. Weeks ago certain area directors in South Yorkshire were refusing hardship cases. For instance one striking miner who needs constant daily baths because of a bowel disorder had his coal stopped.

It was discovered that in the Doncaster area, members of COSA, the white collar union dealing with wages, who are still working, were receiving the same coal loaded by NUM strikers.

The NUM declared it would only load for pensioners and hardship cases and that they wouldn't load and deliver coal to scabs.

The Coal Board directors retaliated by cutting off all free coal distribution so we threatened to stop safety cover for pumping and winding down. Our branch put on a 24 hour picket and after three days management climbed down.

The situation now is that they agreed to hardship coal but it shows how far from humanitarian concerns they are, to use pensioners and sick people in this strike.

ANNE BURRELL, of Rhodesia Women's Action Group wrote this poem to show women that anybody can stand up and speak at meetings "because if you're on the right side and know what you are speaking about is true, you'll get the confidence."

Asked to a meeting to stand and speak,
To a housewife like me, that was quite a feat.
For no one is more shy than I used to be,
But after the first time it's as easy as ABC.
In a kitchen, a picket line or fund-raising,
All our efforts, the men are praising.
So pull together girls and work as a team,
It's not as difficult as it may seem.

At home I refuse to sit and sigh,
And when it's all over I'll hold my head high,
Knowing for sure that I've done my bit
While others, at home, were content to sit.
So pull together girls and work as a team,
It's not as difficult as it may seem.

A striking miner's wife am I,
And to me it's a case of do or die.
For women are strong and women can cope,
We can't afford to let our men lose hope.
Women are standing alongside the men
And will do so, no matter what, why or when.
So pull together girls and work as a team,
It's not as difficult as it may seem.

In a soup kitchen you'll find us working,
It's hard work but we're not shirking.
All of our resources are put to the test,
But each one gladly gives her best.
None of us trained as a cordon-bleu chef,
But at the end of the meal, nothing's left.
So pull together girls and work as a team,
It's not as difficult as it may seem.

'Just like Adolf Hitler'

Vicki went with other women to picket at Calverton. There were women from Yorkshire, Notts, local women from Calverton, some from Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures, and some from Brookhouse - a couple of hundred in all.

EXACTLY four years ago one of the most important chapters in working class history was written by the workers of Poland. A wave of illegal strikes engulfed Poland and ended only when the government conceded the right of the workers to organise independent trade unions. No other Stalinist state has ever allowed an independent workers' movement to exist. In Poland, Solidarnosc was outlawed after only 18 months, when martial law was declared in December 1981.

Poland had its own separate Marxist tradition, whose best known personality was Rosa Luxemburg. But Polish reaction and by Stalinism. In 1938, Stalin declared the Polish Communist Party to be incurably infested with "Trotskyists and fascists" and disbanded it. Membership lists were passed to the secret police of the Polish capitalist

dictatorship.

Then in 1944, when Russian armies occupied Poland as the German army retreated, a recently recreated puppet CP was installed in power. By 1948 Poland was a rigid Stalinist state. The only 'unions' were police state pseudo-unions designed to help control the workers.

It 'thawed' in the mid '50s. The workers revolted in 1956 and again in 1970. Poland tolerated peasant farmers after 1953 when forced. The powerful Catholic church was and is a strong independent power in the state. This limits the power of the State somewhat and means that Poland is — even today — one of the least totalitarian of the Stalinist states.

In 1980, when the government tried to cut living standards the Polish workers exploded. Alexis Carras tells the story.

August 1980

THE BIRTH

Solidarność

ON August 14, 17,000 workers at the Lenin shipyards came out on strike. In Gdansk, the Baltic port, the lifeline of Poland's sea link with the West, the workers who in 1970 had toppled prime minister Gomulka from power were once again on the move.

Within 48 hour another 30,000 workers in surrounding factories had also struck in support. Elmor, Klimo, Opakomet, Techmet, many other factories, too numerous to mention, were at a standstill.

"Reinstate Anna", a woman crane driver at Lenin shipyards, a trade union representative who had just been sacked by management for her activities, which stretch back to the unofficial strike committees of the early and mid-1970s.

"Get rid of the national trade union bosses."

"Free trade unions democratically elected by the workers locally and nationally".

"A monument to honour the 200 strikers shot down in 1970 by the militia".

"Wage rises of 2,000 zlotys a month".

"The price of meat to be pegged at its pre-July 1 price".

"Broadcast and television to the radio and workers' demands."

These were the slogans of the Lenin shipyard workers.

Friday morning, 15th August. Public transport at a standstill. 8,000 workers at the 'Paris Commune' shipyards in Gdynia, just outside Gdansk, come out. Representatives of the individual strike committees which were automatically thrown up by the strikers, hurry to the Lenin shipyard.

Friday night the negotiations with the management break down. 110 delegates elected by 17,000 workers refuse the management's compromise offer of 1,200 zlotys.

Saturday morning the negotiations start again. Outside the hall thousands of workers are shouting "2,000! 2,000!" and "Walesa, Walesa" — the name of the acknowledged strike leader, just reinstated by management along with Anna Walentynowicz. He had been sacked in 1976 after the strike events and again in January of 1980 for his involvement in KOR (Committee for the Defence of the Workers).

Agreement?

11 o'clock Saturday morning: agreement is reached. Wage rises of 1,500 and written guarantees that no worker will be persecuted for involvement in the strike.

Walesa emerges from the hall. Thousands of workers don't want any compromise. All the demands must be met. Nevertheless, he is given a hero's welcome, tossed in the air by his mates, shouting "long may he live to be a hundred".

It looks as though the strike movement in the Lenin shipyards is over. So sure are the management and the government that Wojciechowski, head of the state news agency PAP, calls an interview with foreign correspondents to assure them that the crisis is past and that work will resume as normal on Monday.

He is to be bitterly disappointed.

It is still touch and go in Gdansk as to whether to resume work. The mood is one of frustration. It's no longer simply a matter of a few thousand zlotys more, or the price of meat. Any gain the government gives now with one hand, it will take back in the autumn, through inflation and other price rises. The deeper grievances, awoken by the

strike come to the fore.

As one of the strikers says, "35 years is enough". 35 years of bureaucratic rule, of queues, of undemocratic "unions", of lies and repression!

A tiny spark is needed and the government's hopes of once again containing the anger of the workers would come crashing down.

That spark was the worker delegates from other factories and shipyards arriving by now at the Lenin shipyards.

Stay out

They plead with the Lenin workers. "If you go back now," says a bus driver, "no one else will get anything." With the Lenin yard returning to work the back of the strike wave would be broken. Smaller factories and other scattered groups of workers would be easily isolated and smashed.

The Lenin workers agree. Walesa agrees — "We have no right to turn our backs on the others. The strike must

continue until the victory of all."

Saturday night, Sunday morning. The MKS is set up — an inter-factory strike committee, representing strikers from all the plants which have struck. By Monday it is in effect controlling the strike movement in 18 shipyards and factories in Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot. An alternative power, workers' power, is coming into being in this sprawling Baltic conurbation. The central strike committee is made up of two delegates from each factory and place of work, accountable to the individual factory committees and mass meetings. Its power stretches to plants over 100 miles from the recognised centre of the strike movement — the Lenin shipyards.

A panic-stricken bureaucracy urges Gierek to cut short his summer trip in the Crimea, where he was conferring with that other friend of the working class, Leonid Brezhnev, top bureaucrat in the USSR. Gierek, forever struggling the Polish workers of his own

humble origins as a coal miner, first in Belgium and later in the Silesian coal fields of Southern Poland, had dealt with a similarly grave situation in January 1971. It was he who took over the reins of power after Gomulka's fall. Then in an unprecedented (for a Stalinist leader) series of meetings with striking workers in the Baltic ports, he managed to get them to go back to work. By talking tough he asked for a mandate, for the government to prove itself, and he got it:

"So I am talking to you the way I spoke to my miner friends in Silesia. I say to you: help us! Help me! You cannot doubt my goodwill . . . As to your demands, we will do our utmost. The Party will be renovated; we will get rid of the incompetents . . . Accept it, help us, and on our side, we will do everything we can to ameliorate this tragic situation. That is your duty."

The workers, then, accepted their 'duty'. Surely they would do so again. Yet Gierek, that Monday night on the television, despite all his gravity and promises, was like an anachronism. In the few weeks that he was in the Soviet Union, Poland not only continued to regard him cynically, but had totally slipped away from him.

His attempt to divide the growing opposition movement between the 'just' wage demands and their frustration with the bureaucracy on the one hand, from the allegedly sinister, 'anti-socialist' designs of the dissidents around KOR, was a fiasco.

Nor did he offer anything concrete.

The meat price rises would still remain. There was absolutely no question of free trade unions and certainly no end to censorship.

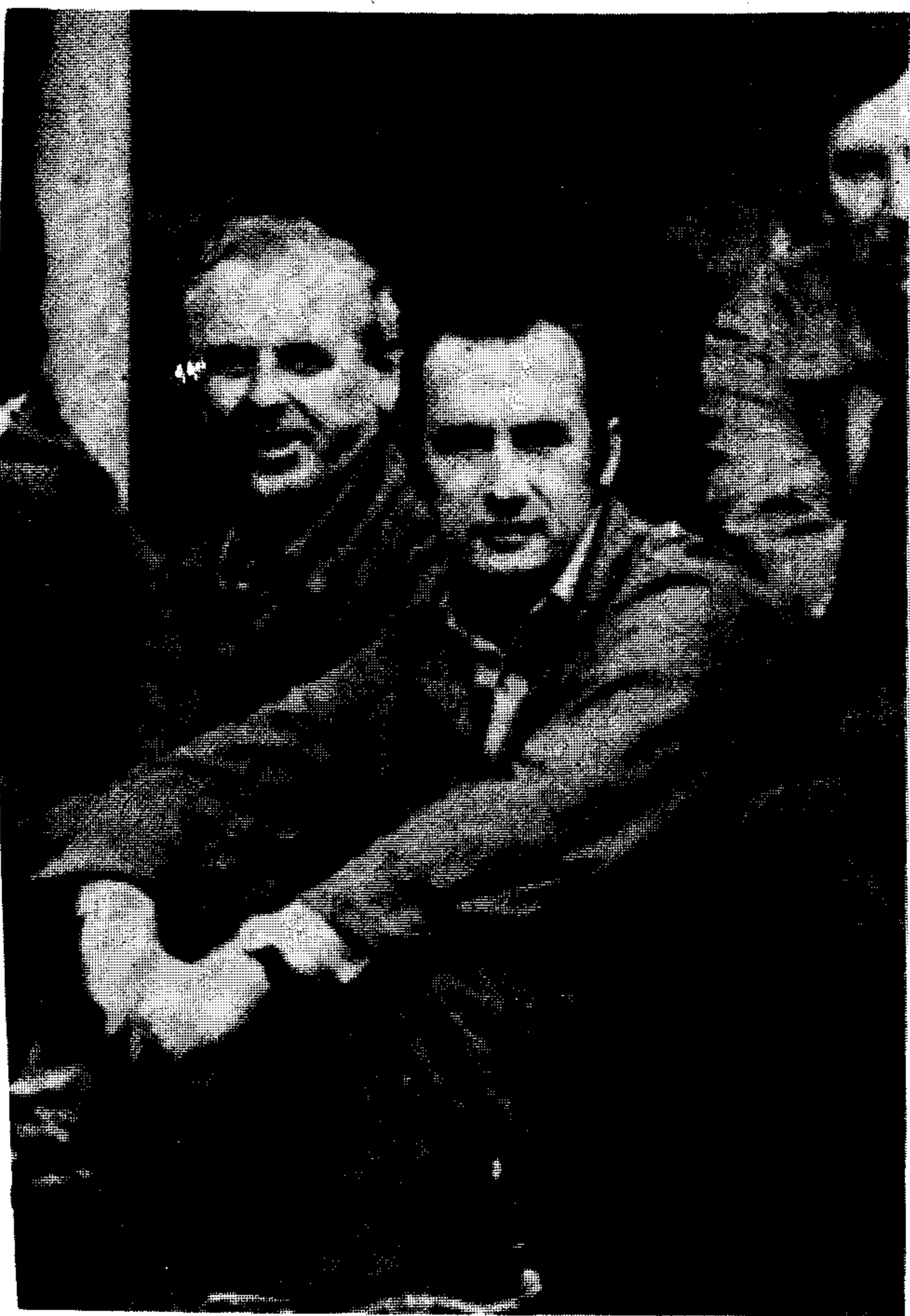
There were certain limits that 'socialist' Poland could not go beyond, without provoking the 'disquiet of its friends'. Once again no real concessions, only promises and dark threats of Soviet invasion.



Mass meeting in the Lenin shipyards

OF

W



Above: during the occupation.
Below: Anna Walentynowicz, crane driver and militant victimised by Stalinists.



bureaucracy's authority is crumbling. As part of the regime's psychological pressure to force the strikers back to work, it dropped thousands of leaflets over the shipyards, warning the strikers of the untold damage they were inflicting on the Polish economy.

The workers who printed the leaflets have now come out on strike.

The discipline of the Gdansk workers is exemplary. There are 24 hour pickets on the gates of the Lenin shipyards, by now covered with flowers sent from every corner of Poland.

Workers everywhere know about their action, despite the government's attempts to isolate Gdansk from Poland and the world on the night of the 15th when it cut all communications with the Baltic ports. The pickets search everyone entering the yard. Bottles of vodka are gently confiscated and their contents thoroughly emptied. They cannot afford any unnecessary excuse to allow the authorities to intervene.

Nearby a cross erected in honour of fellow workers, the victims of the government's

bloody intervention in December 1970.

Inside the shipyard the workers are holding continuous meetings and discussions. Working class democracy in action, a million miles removed from the dull yes-manism of previous official trade union meetings and assemblies.

Yet in Warsaw, Jan Szydlak, head of the state unions, is still furiously maintaining that "the authorities have no intention of transferring power to anyone else — nor of sharing it with anyone."

Propaganda

Meanwhile the television and the radio are keeping up a constant barrage of propaganda against the Baltic port workers. Pictures of idle sea ports, of the 63 stranded ships waiting to unload petrol and fruit for the Polish consumers. Tons of goods waiting for export, losses of millions of dollars a day, losses the Polish economy, on the verge of collapse, cannot afford.

Yet these pious wailings on the ills of Poland do not cut much ice with the rest of

Poland. After all, who are the ones responsible for the impasse, the workers or the bosses? As for the rotting fruit, it was touch and go whether you could get to the top of the queue to buy some anyway.

The continual spread of strikes and the threat of strike action is the best gauge of the effectiveness of the government's propaganda.

Its arrest of the dissidents involved in the Self-Defence Committee (KOR/KSS), especially the editors of the illegal paper 'Robotnik' (Worker), whose sales in recent weeks have climbed to tens of thousands, hardens the situation even further.

The arrest on Wednesday night, August 20, of 14 KOR members, including Jacek Kuron, is followed the next night with the arrest of a further 20 KOR activists in Warsaw.

At the same time the government's lack of progress in the negotiations at Gdansk leads to the sacking of Tadeusz Pyka, head of the negotiating team and vice-prime minister and his replacement by Jagielski.

1. Free trade unions — independent of the Party and the managers, in accordance with convention 87 of the ILO, ratified by Poland.
2. Guarantee of the right to strike and the safety of strikers and all those who help them.
3. The right of free expression, publication and printing as guaranteed in the Constitution. The cessation of all repression against independent publications and access to the media for representatives of all Churches.
4. Re-establishment of all rights for those dismissed after the strikes of 1970 and 1976, and the rights of students excluded from higher education because of their political views. Freedom for all political prisoners, in particular E. Zadorozynski, J.M. Kozlowski, and an end to all repression on grounds of beliefs.
5. The mass media to inform the country about the creation of strike committees and united strike committees and to publish their demands.
6. Concrete actions to be taken for the ending of the crisis. For example, publishing of all information to do with Poland's socio-economic situation. The opportunity must be allowed to all social strata and groups to participate in discussions on a programme of reforms.
7. Payment of strikers for the holiday period.
8. 2,000 zlotys a month increase on the basic wage for every worker, to compensate for the increased cost of meat.
9. A sliding scale of wages.
10. The domestic market to be fully supplied with foodstuffs and exports of the surplus to be limited.
11. The introduction of a card rationing system for meat until the market is stabilised.
12. The suppression of 'commercial' prices and the sale of goods for foreign currency in the domestic market.
13. The appointment of managers solely on the basis of ability and not of Party membership. Eradication of the privileges of the police, the secret police and the Party apparatus by giving them family allocations equal to those of the workers' families and by the elimination of the system of special shops for the bureaucracy.
14. The right to retire after 35 years of work, at 50 years of age for women and at 55 for men.
15. Elimination of any difference between the two systems of retirement and pensions by levelling-up.
16. Improvement of working conditions, medical services, and the other services that workers need.
17. The creation of crèche facilities and nurseries in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of working mothers.
18. The extension of the maternity leave period to three years, with pay.
19. The shortening of the waiting period to be allotted a house.
20. Increase from 40 to 100 zlotys in the allowance for moving house.
21. Compensation for those factories working continuously with no free Saturdays, by lengthening the annual holiday period or by the allocation of special public holidays.

By Monday August 25, the Inter-Factory Strike Committee grouped over 400 factories, representing hundreds of thousands of workers in Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot.

With the strikes spreading to other towns, as well as breaking out again in regions which had been hit in the previous weeks, the government is forced to make concessions.

Most of them are totally cosmetic. They involve a large-scale reshuffle within the ranks of the Party leadership. After the sacking of Tadeusz Pyka, the vice-prime minister, the Prime Minister Babiuch, Szydlak, the head of the state trade unions, Tadeusz Wraszczyk, head of the planning commission, and Jerzy Lukaszewicz, the chief of propaganda policy, are sacrificed to the anger of the working class too.

In the meantime, Josef Pinkowski, the new Prime Minister, has been instructed to begin negotiations directly with the Inter-Factory Strike Committee.

Continued next week.

Steel and mines

Steelworkers in Nowa Huta near the Southern city of Cracow had come out and strike committees were being formed in the Silesian coalfields. This last event is particularly worrying to Gierek himself. Silesia is his traditional political base and the miners there are the highest paid workers in the country.

During the earlier strike movements they had played no role. Every day the strikes increased. By Wednesday, in Gdansk alone, 260 factories grouping 120,000 workers were on strike. The MKS was growing daily stronger. 500 delegates were by now represented in it, the majority in their late teens or early twenties.

All of them had torn up their official union cards, just to underline their hatred of state unions.

As an added rebuff to Gierek and the bureaucracy

the workers were categorically refusing to negotiate on a plant by plant basis, correctly viewing this as an attempt by the party and the government to split their forces.

Tadeusz Pyka, the deputy prime minister, and his official entourage of trouble-shooters, which included Jablonski, the President of the Polish Republic, and Stanislaw Kania, Central Committee secretary in charge of the army and security forces, were hardly making any progress with the Gdansk strikers.

In negotiations with sections of the MKS, which bothered to go and meet them, they would offer concessions and perks.

The workers would accept but when Pyka asked them about a return to work the following morning, the answer was always the same — "that issue would have to be discussed by the rank and file".

The government's rage could barely be contained.

In Szczecin, the second largest port, over 40 factories and all five of the shipyards were on strike. Transport in the city was at a standstill.

Prime minister Babiuch and his delegation were in Gdansk, making no progress in their mission to break the strike.

Meanwhile strikes were breaking out in other smaller cities. In Koscierzynia, Lembork and Ustka. In the city of Elbag on the Baltic, eight factories formed their own MKS.

A comical incident at Gdansk shows how the



Gdansk: workers prepare to defend the occupied shipyard with clubs

General strike

Defend the Tamils

By Edward Ellis

THE Sri Lankan government's violent repression of the island's Tamil minority continues, in particular in the north of the island, around Jaffna, where the majority of people are of the oppressed Tamil nation. Tamil villages have been burned down and bombed from the sea by state 'security forces'.

The repression is focussed on the Tamil Tiger organisation, nominally in reprisal for guerrilla actions carried out. But the extent of the government brutality is far wider than just the members of the Tigers.

The government is trying to intimidate and terrorise the entire Tamil people of Sri Lanka.



The results of terror against the Tamils. Left: a dead body. Right: a building is gutted.

Women

Demonstrations of women have been organised against round-ups by troops of hundreds of male Tamil youths.

Meanwhile, Jaywardene's government is attempting to steamroller through Parliament a proposal for a regionally-weighted second chamber as a 'solution' to the crisis. This proposal has been rejected by the Tamil people. The Tamil United Liberation Front has said it will have nothing to do with the proposal; and even ex-Prime Minister Mrs Bandaranaike of the Sri Lankan Freedom Party has come out in muted opposition.

Workers' unity

Reports suggest that in the south of the country, the situation is different: Tamil and Sinhalese plantation workers have been able to establish a degree of unity around class demands. The social structure of the Tamil community in the South is distinct from that in the north.

Left parties, notably the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP), associated with the

British Militant tendency, and the JVP have been banned. The NSSP are campaigning for the lifting of the ban, and

an end to the repression of the Tamil people, and for the re-employment of workers sacked after the defeated 1980

general strike.

Both the Tamil people and the NSSP deserve our support and solidarity.

Nicaragua: elections and US lies

NICARAGUA goes to the polls in November. But most of the important bourgeois opposition parties, some of them linked to the US CIA, who have long been clamouring for elections, are refusing to take part. This is because they know that the Sandinista government is sure to win, and that it can win more or less fairly.

By not taking part in the election they hope to avoid giving it credibility and no doubt they will say afterwards that the election was a sham.

Their boycott makes a government victory even more certain.

Arturo Cruz, a former Nicaraguan ambassador to the US, and an ex-member of the Sandinista government, was reckoned by many commentators to be the likeliest challenge to the Sandinistas.



Sandinistas triumph over Somoza, 1979

Part of Cruz's programme was for 'dialogue' with the US-backed 'contras', the guerrillas waging war on the borders of Nicaragua,

some of whom are former thugs of the old Somoza dictatorship.

He established a political party - 'Democratic Coordinator' - composed of an alliance of four parties, two trade unions and private businessmen.

Since the Sandinistas predictably refused to hold such a 'dialogue', Democratic Coordinator has withdrawn from the election and Cruz has returned to Washington.

Opposition

Six opposition parties are standing - three to the right of the government and three, apparently, to its left. None are likely to pick up much support, although they will probably pick up a few seats in the 90-member assembly.

94% of the eligible population have registered to vote; and the voting age has been lowered to sixteen. In particular it is revolutionary youth who are likely to give the Sandinistas their majority.

The right wing parties are alleging government obstruction of their campaign, but it is too early to judge. What is certain is that the Sandinistas do have, and will prove to have, a popular mandate. Their victory will go a long way to disproving the hypocritical lies of the US that the Nicaraguan government does not have the support of the Nicaraguan people.

Labour Party Witch-hunt in North Staffs

From Alistair Scott

MEMBERS of North Staffs Labour Briefing are witch-hunting Socialist Organiser supporters in Stoke. North Staffs Labour Briefing is a queer animal. It is dominated by a clique of soft lefts (in fact soft right might be a better description).

For example, the Secretary of North Staffs Labour Briefing, Andrew Dobraszczyc, who is also Secretary of Stoke District Labour Party, some weeks ago opposed a proposal to make the miners' strike a central part of the local election campaign.

The Labour Party had, he said, more important things to do, like saying what the Council was going to do on housing, etc. Anyway, the miners' strike was only a mirage, it would be over in a few weeks and everyone would have forgotten about it. Some mirage!

At the beginning of the year the soft left voted down proposals from Socialist Organiser supporters to organise a campaign against health cuts. One of them argued that Briefing was there to produce a magazine not organise campaigns!

The only proposal which was carried was to organise a meeting with a speaker from the Thornton View hospital occupation.

Immediately that decision was carried Andrew Dobraszczyc said in a huff "Well, I'm not organising it". Eventually it was agreed that another member, Clare Slevin, would organise the meeting. Six months later, nothing has happened.

Suspend

A month later, at the February meeting it looked like the soft left had decided that what with all these lefties coming along meeting after meeting expecting them to do something, and with a debt of about £200 already built up on the magazines this Briefing idea just wasn't worth it. They decided to suspend all activity until future notice. Everyone would be informed when the next meeting was to take place.

Recently, SO supporters discovered that the Briefing group had been reassembled and had produced an issue of the magazine. They had been excluded, though one of them, Arthur Bough, was an elected member of the editorial board.

Yet they are otherwise very 'broad minded' and all-inclusive. The last but one issue of North Staffs Labour Briefing contained an article by local MP and arch-witch-hunter John Golding. The soft left are prepared to tolerate him in their midst but not to tolerate anyone who politically criticises them.

The soft left have not witch-hunted SO supporters in Briefing in the way John Golding goes about witch-hunts via expulsion. They have organised a witch-hunt consistent with their politics - the politics of bureaucracy and petty intrigue.

A few weeks ago after the local SO Miners Strike Bulletin publicised the statements of the soft left about the strike being a mirage, the soft left became furious. They turned up to the miners support committee and in a rotten bloc with Militant supporters got Arthur Bough removed as convener of the support committee.

Soft left

At the meeting they made scurrilous suggestions that SO was using support committee funds to finance the production of the SO "Collier" bulletin, and implied ludicrously that SO had done nothing to support the miners. In fact the local SO group has done more consistent work in support of the strike than anyone locally - producing leaflets for the miners' wives' committees, collecting money in street collections and the Labour Party levy, and as a result of the work done with food distribution SO supporter Jill Mountford has been made an honorary member of the miners' wives' committee.

The soft left who dominate North Staffs Labour Briefing are in practice totally hostile to the politics of Briefing nationally. It gave them the cover of a well-known left organisation whilst allowing them to remain hostile to the politics of that organisation, closeted away in their own local ghetto. At the same time their bureaucratic control of the local organisation prevents the left organising a real local Briefing group.

Such a situation poses serious problems for Briefing nationally. Local autonomy for Briefing groups is one thing, but witch-hunting bureaucrats using Briefing's name as a cover is surely something else.



Over 3,000 people marched from Hyde Park to Jubilee Gardens in London last Saturday, August 18, protesting at the continuing occupation of Northern Ireland by British troops. The occasion was the 15th anniversary of the sending in of the army. The demonstration also focussed on the murder of Sean Downes by the RUC the previous Sunday.

Argentina

Thatcher Lies about Belgrano

Socialists and the war

Clive Bradley reviews "Argentina - The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule" by Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, published by Verso at £5.95.

WHEN the Tories took Britain to war against Argentina in the spring of 1982, the first concern of most socialists was to argue and campaign against the Tories and oppose their war.

For it was a sickening adventure designed to restore the prestige of British imperialism and boost the popularity of the Thatcher government.

The 'Falklands factor' - a potent brew of national pride amounting to chauvinism - certainly helped the Tories win last year's election.

One reason why was that the leaders of the labour movement did not fight the beat-the-drums chauvinism of the Tories and thereby helped them cash in on the war.

Some 'left wing' intellectuals, like Eric Hobsbawm of the Communist Party, afterwards even drew the ridiculous conclusion that what the war proved was the need for socialists to compete with the

Tories on their own terms - to try to be more nationalist than they are.

Socialist Organiser campaigned against the war, and argued that a victory for Britain was a defeat for British workers.

The re-election of the Tories proved us right about that. But we argued that it was the job of Argentinian workers to oppose their own ruling class as well. That the seizure of the Falklands/Malvinas islands was not part of a genuine national liberation struggle but a reactionary, nationalist adventure.

For the Argentinian bourgeoisie and the ruling military junta, the Falklands war served the same purpose as it did for the British ruling class.

This book, written by two Argentinian socialists living in exile in Mexico argues that the Argentinian working class should have opposed the junta's war.

Dabat and Lorenzano put forward an impassioned case against Argentinian nationalism, which pits them politically and theoretically against many of the myths of the Latin American and international left. Many of the political and theoretical points they make are similar or identical to what Socialist Organiser supporters said during the war and in its immediate aftermath.

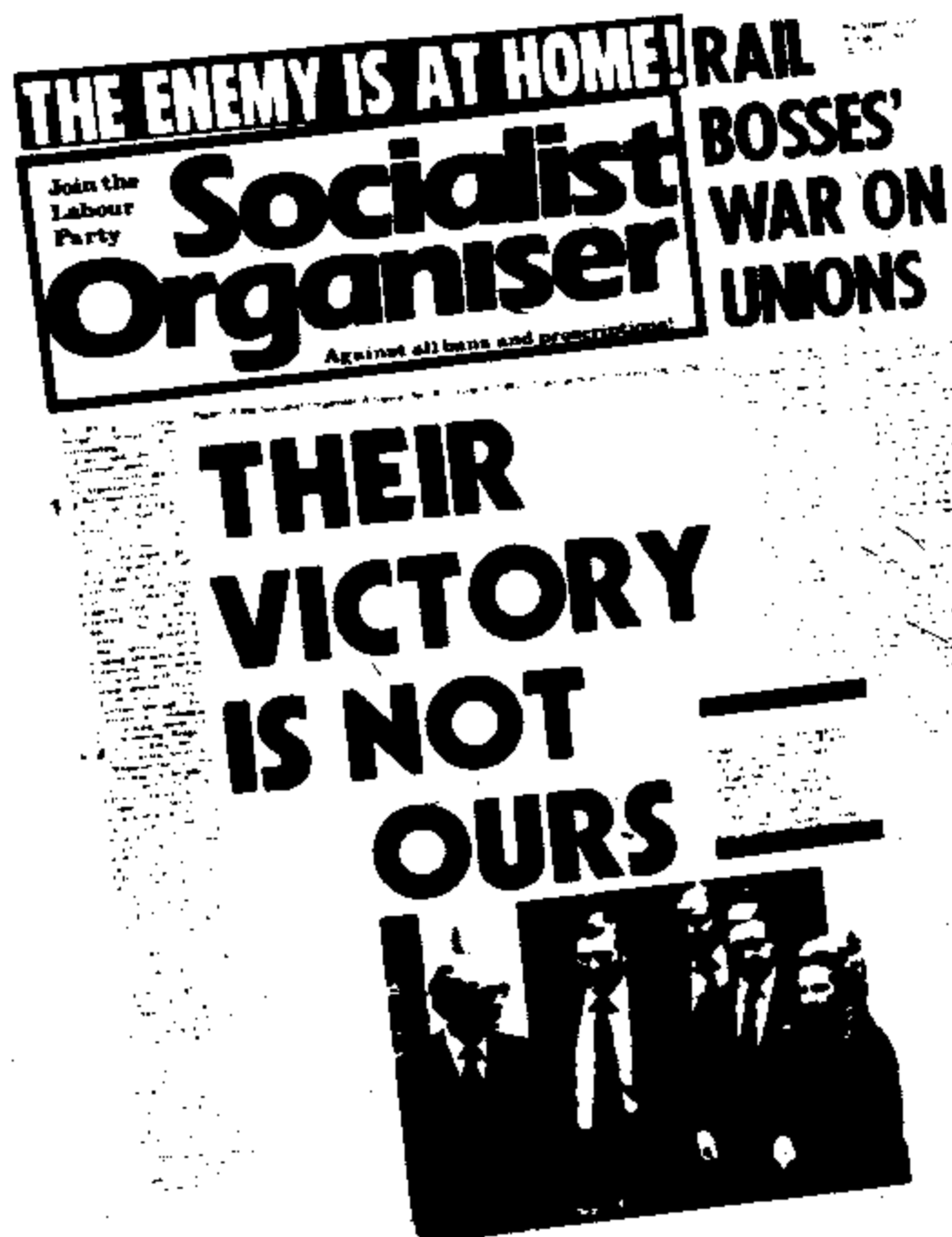
The first point of their argument would be hotly contested not only by Argentine nationalists, but also by the majority of those in the world today who call themselves Trotskyists.

"Argentina is a politically independent country which is inserted into the world market in a way that combines financial and technological dependence with its emergence as a regional power". (p.1).

The authors take up Marxist arguments on the national question, and persuasively counter standard left wing assumptions that non-imperialist countries like Argentina necessarily suffer from 'national oppression'. What is particularly forceful in their argument is that they locate their analysis firmly in the tradition of Lenin, showing that theories of 'neo-colonialism' or 'semi-colonialism' held

by many socialists are at odds both with reality and with the classical Marxist positions.

As they put it, "the right to national self-determination . . . is a political claim of a democratic character which has nothing to do with economic or cultural nationalism" (p.9, emphasis in original).



In other words, assessing political independence is distinct from assessing the relative strength of weakness of particular 'national economies': and from that point of view, Argentina is indisputably an independent state which has developed as a regional power in Latin America (some

THE Tory 'War Cabinet' of 1982 lied to the House of Commons about its battle plans in the South Atlantic.

Mrs Thatcher has continued to lie ever since.

In particular they lied about the circumstances in which the battleship Belgrano went to the bottom of the sea taking 368 of the crew with it.

Secret papers leaked to Labour MP Tam Dalyell suggest that there was a secret decision to

extend the so-called 'exclusion limit' around the Falklands in order to sink the Belgrano.

In fact the Belgrano had been heading for home and therefore was no threat to British lives, when it was sunk.

It was sunk because Mrs Thatcher wanted to undermine a peace initiative then being made by Peru. Nothing but the victory and the prestige and political boost it would bring would satisfy her.

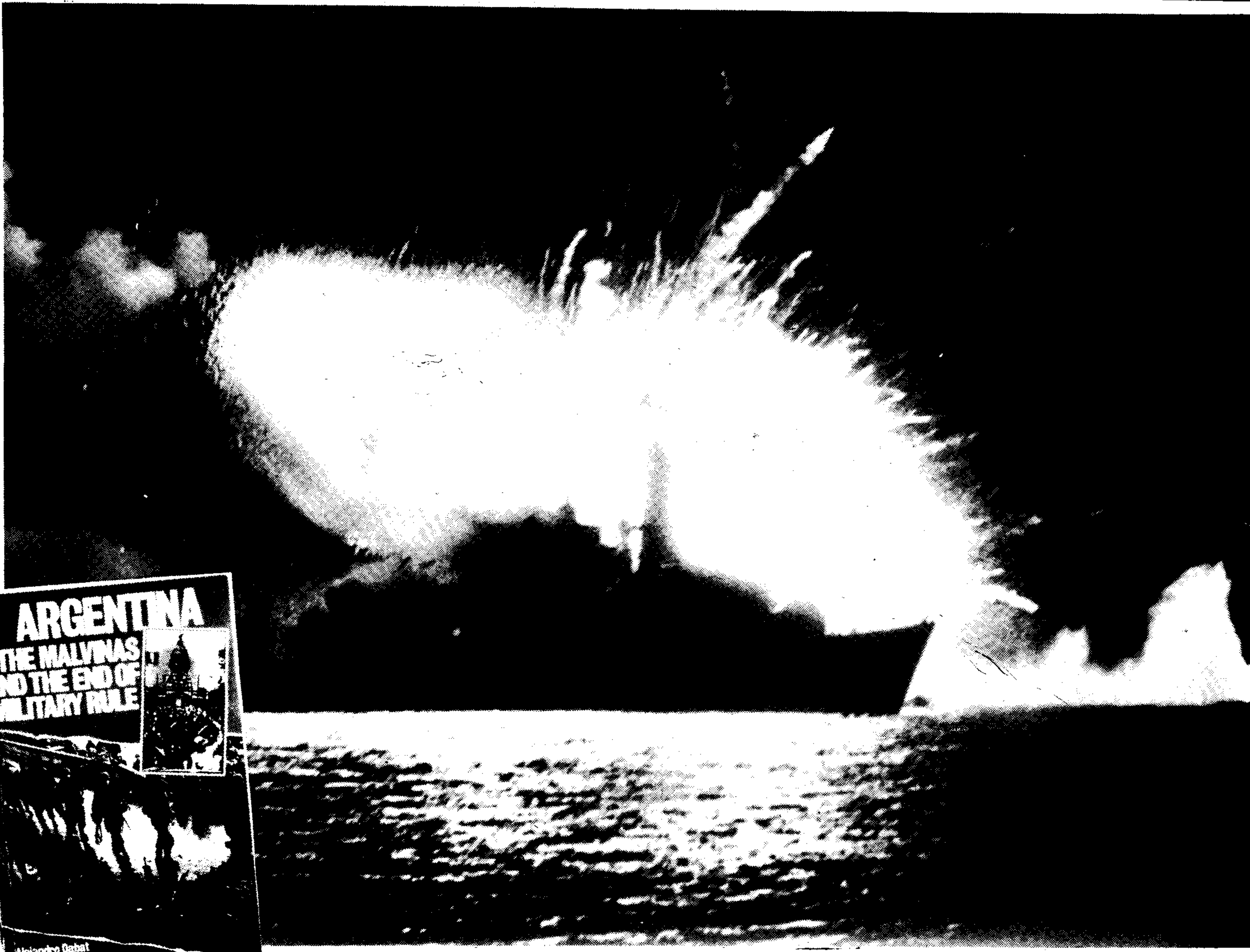
The Argentine military junta

had invaded the Falklands to head off a rising wave of discontent and opposition within Argentine. In turn, the then very unpopular Thatcher used the war they started to her own political advantage.

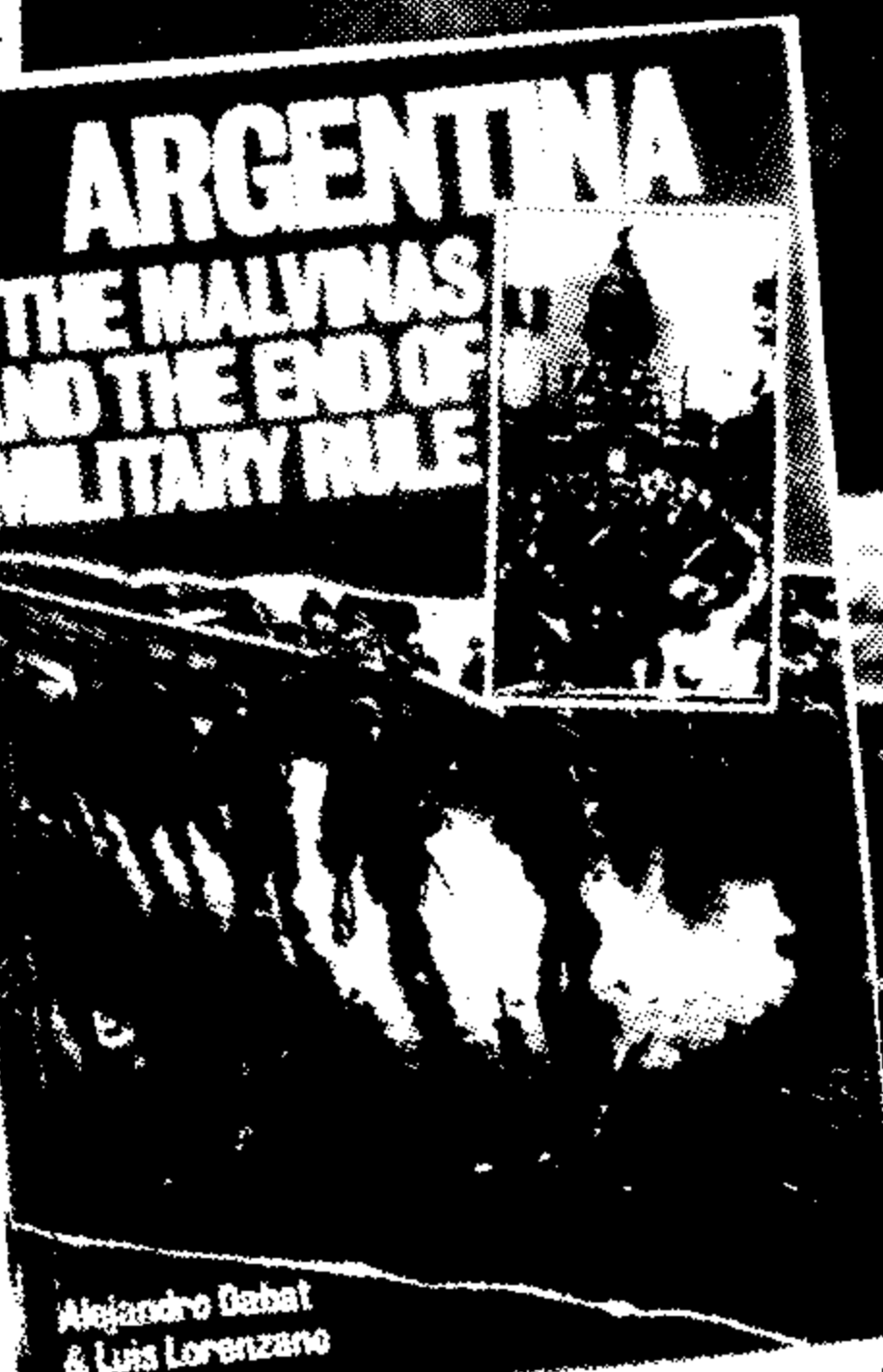
In the war, reactionary on both sides, Mrs Thatcher won and went on to the election victory of June 1983; the junta lost and quickly crumbled, opening the way for a restoration of democracy in Argentina.

The Tories deliberately concealed the truth about the sinking of the Belgrano from Parliament at the time and later blocked attempts by a Commons Select Committee to get at the truth.

Now lying is the daily bread of ruling class politics. It is Mrs Thatcher's trade. But to get caught out blatantly lying to the House of Commons is a serious matter for which ministers have usually been sacked. This revelation is therefore a serious blow to Mrs Thatcher.



The South Atlantic war: the sinking of HMS Sheffield



socialists have defined it as a 'sub-imperialism').

Their second major claim is that "Britain . . . plays a completely marginal role in Argentinian political and economic life" (p.1). Therefore, they argue that what they consider to be "Argentina's legitimate claim for the return of the Falklands/Malvinas is a non-essential point, less important than, for example, the recovery of popular sovereignty, the surmounting of the socio-economic crisis and the establishment of social and political democracy" (p.2).

Dabat and Lorenzano analyse the development of the workers' movement in Argentina. Argentinian capitalism, they argue, is undergoing a deep-rooted crisis which can be resolved either through its destruction and social and political reorganisation under popular, working class control, or through state terror and 'genocide' carried out against the Argentinian people.

In the face of this crisis and attempts to drive down working class living standards and destroy the popular organisations, the Argentinian masses have waged a militant struggle against a succession of dictatorships.

In the mid-1970s, a series of mass strikes developed that began to challenge the foundation of the system. In July 1975, action by workers in the capital, Buenos Aires, quickly spread into a national general strike. Known as the 'Rodrigazo' (after the economic minister Celestino Rodrigo against whose policies it was aimed), it lasted for eleven days until Isabel Peron gave in to the workers'

demands.

Mass strike movements continued after Peron's regime was replaced by the military in 1976, particularly in those sections worst hit by the economic crisis. The dictatorship responded with massive repression, carrying out the 'dirty war' in which thousands of people disappeared.

Opposition

The official opposition parties - the bourgeois Radicals, the Peronist Justicialista Party, the Intransigent Party and the Movement for Integration and Development and the Christian Democrats - united in the Multipartidaria, were forced to lead the mass movement. By the end of 1981 huge demonstrations - 50,000 in November - opposed the regime. By March 1982 violent confrontations were breaking out throughout the country between the mass movement and an increasingly terrified repressive state machine.

The junta's adventure in seizing the Falklands/Malvinas islands was intended to head off this movement by reuniting the 'nation' around a 'patriotic' project. It was also, Dabat and Lorenzano argue, an attempt to boost "the claim of Argentinian monopoly and finance capital to have a major stake in the distribution of the world market, and hence in the oppression and exploitation of proletarians other than their own" (p.79).

It was consequently a completely reactionary war; and the authors have harsh words to say about those Argentinian

socialists who supported it, with varying degrees of qualification.

On the main 'Trotskyist' group, the PST of Nahuel Moreno, they comment that their position "was pure fantasy . . . In reality, all these currents supported the war tout court (completely), the rest of their positions being exposed as empty rhetoric" (p.107).

In varying degrees this was also true of most of those throughout the world who called themselves Trotskyists.

The authors list a number of organisations who opposed the war, including some Trotskyists.



The authors claim that real Argentine working class support for the war was minimal: "During the two months or more of the conflict there was not a single truly proletarian mass demonstration, not a single pro-war demonstration emanating from the rank and file. The workers retreated to their factories and refused to involve themselves in the jingoistic fervour" (p.109).

If this is only half true it adds a new dimension to the condemnation deserved by those socialists inside and outside Argentina who supported the junta's war: Not only did they part company with Marxist principles, but they were also stupid victims of the official propaganda of an extremely vicious military dictatorship!

There are, I think, some weaknesses in Dabat's and Lorenzano's position. They argue strongly for the development of a mass anti-militarist movement, independent of the bourgeois parties that could link together the struggle for democracy and the struggle to solve the economic crisis in the interests of the masses - i.e. for socialism. The programme they put forward, however, is very limited and is not fundamentally a revolutionary one.

It calls for price controls rather than working class control over wages; a reduction in military spending and military salaries rather than abolishing these institutions and arming the masses; and a tax on big capital and landowners, rather than their expropriation.

Their resolute opposition to Argentine nationalism is not in doubt; but sometimes they still use populist and nationalist expressions - and their programme calls for "the expropriation under workers' control of enterprises acting against the national and popular economy" (p.192).

Nevertheless, this is an important and valuable book, a healthy tonic antidote to the nationalist myths often passed off as revolutionary socialism.

THE MAFIA AND THE U.S. UNIONS

Andrew Hornung reviews "Crime Inc.", 9.00pm Wednesdays, ITV. Last week's episode dealt with the involvement of organised crime in the American trade union movement.

THE huge success of Mario Puzzo's book, "The Godfather", lay not simply in the racy, violent tale it told, but in the author's ability to make gangsterism look like nothing more than another version of the American Dream. In the mob wars no one gets hurt except the other side's soldiers or, occasionally a cop — really also another soldier.

The key to this was the virtual omission of any references to ordinary people: wars are fought without so much as a stray bullet, men become masters but you never see the slaves and fortunes are amassed with nobody coming out the loser except other fortune hunters. It is as if there is a horrific boardgame called "Mob Monopoly" which doesn't affect non-players at all.

Puzzo's preference for cheap thrills and reactionary sentimentalism — albeit accompanied by a great deal of fine observation — was wholly predictable. The author claimed no other purpose than to make a million out of writing a novel.

But, is it not reasonable to expect a little better from ITV's much proclaimed documentary, "Crime Inc."? Unfortunately, "Crime Inc." isn't better, and its recent section devoted to the involvement of organised crime in the US trade union movement was Puzzo all over again — minus the thrills.

The programme concentrated on Mafia links with transport unions, in the Teamsters Union and in the docks of the eastern seaboard. It focussed on the FBI's successful indictment of several hoods operating out of Miami, an action made possible by using as bait a small-time container-yard operator who had been forced into working with the crooks.

His own workers are invisible. Were they unionised before the mob arrived or not? What was their reaction to having mobsters on the payroll? Silence. Apart from a single reference to a worker killed reputedly by the mob for opposing them, the real victims of the hoods are ignored.

Again, in the section devoted to the Teamsters, a single brief reference was made to a union reform committee, but not enough to counterbalance the cops and robbers focus of the programme.

Other documentaries have managed to paint the real living picture of union corruption, mob violence, rank and file resistance and state activity. "Harlan County USA", for instance, gives a moving and accurate picture of Tony Boyle's rule over the United Mineworkers of America, his ordering of the slaying of the Yablonsky family, the subsequent victory of the Miller-led coalition that reformed the union and, indeed, that coalition's shortcomings.

Inconsistent

The message of the ITV documentary is basically that the FBI is the only agency that can curb the mobsters. This is not only absurd by revolutionary socialist standards, but inconsistent with what other sections of the same documentary series have shown: that the FBI has often worked hand in hand with the Mafia.

According to "Crime Inc", gangsters got their first foothold in US trade unionism when union leaders hired them as picket defence guards. This "evidence" comes from an ex-Mafia boss.

Illustrating this statement were unattributed film clips accompanied by an anonymous voice declaring that what we were watching was a battle between thugs hired by the union and thugs hired by the employers with the pigs in the middle (no, that's not how the voice put it).

Now this is a straightforward lie, if lies can ever be said to be straightforward. The longest of the clips actually showed a shoot-out between armed deputies, enlisted by the police, and pickets in the 1933 Tube Company Plant near Pittsburg.

As other pictures (not shown by ITV) reveal, the cops played an active part killing pickets and didn't leave the job only to the deputies, many of whom quite likely were hoods.

What is of greater political importance is that the period of the Tube Company strike, the



Top: three scenes from the Edgewood strike. Bottom: street battles in Minneapolis, 1934.

period of the late Depression years, when the industrial unions created in the early 1930s were still being shaped, was not characterised by increased gangster control over unions. It was characterised by the emergence of a more militant, less corrupt trade union federation, the CIO.

It was further characterised by the organisation of armed workers' defence squads in many strikes.

The Tube Company strike was only one in a rash of ferocious depression clashes between organ-

ised labour and the employers who were backed both by the state (cops, national guard and deputies) and mobsters. These clashes, the Autolite strike, the Flint sit-down, the Akron strike and others saw the creation of organised workers' armed squads.

The best documented and one of the best organised of these was the "citizen's army" that beat back the bosses in the great Minneapolis Teamsters strike in 1934.

Of course, to show this class war in its true light would be to invite very different conclusions from those flattering to the FBI. It would be to show how workers have fought violence with violence and purged their unions themselves of rotteness and corruption, both by gangsters and by reactionary conspiracies like Catholic Action.

To show this, and in the middle of the miners' strike too... well, that really is asking too much!

But it is really a very modest plea to ask of the ITV to give an account of Mafia involvement in US trade unions which shows the union rank and file both as the real victims and as the actual and potential agents of change. After all, even the film had to admit that the FBI took years to make their arrests and that it merely led to one gangster taking over where another had left off.

ITV claim that "Crime Inc." cost a fortune to make. Maybe so. But so long as it adopts the themes of the cheap dime novel it will be no more than an occasionally titillating and historically trivial documentary.



Leon Trotsky

On 14 March at a quarter to three in the afternoon the greatest living thinker ceased to think. He had been left alone scarcely two minutes, and when we came back we found him in his armchair, peacefully gone to sleep, but for ever."

From Engels' speech at the graveside of Karl Marx.

It is 44 years since one of the 20th century socialist movement's greatest minds, that of Leon Trotsky, ceased to think. On August 20, 1940, Leon Trotsky, who together with Lenin, had led the Russian workers' revolution of October 1917, was struck down with a blow to the head from an ice pick wielded by an assassin sent by the Russian dictator Stalin. Stalin was the leader of the Russian bureaucracy which had displaced the workers as rulers of the USSR. Trotsky would have been 61 on November 7, 1940.

No other socialist militant has ever had so broad and deep an experience of all the phases of working class struggle as Leon Trotsky had. In his teens in Tsarist Russia he was jailed for helping workers set up illegal trade unions. During the 1905 Revolution he was — still in his 20s — the leader of the Workers' Parliament (Soviet) in St. Petersburg (now Leningrad), after which he was jailed and exiled.

He was for 20 years before 1917 a revolutionary socialist agitator, journalist, and a theoretician of the workers' movement. He was active in France, Austria and the USA as well as in Russia. He helped organise the first stirrings of resistance in France to the great slaughter that was World War I.

Back in Russia after the Tsar was overthrown in February 1917, Trotsky was again elected leader of the Petrograd Soviet. (During the war, St. Petersburg, because of its German-sounding name had been renamed Petrograd).

October revolution

Trotsky joined Lenin's Bolshevik Party and was immediately elected to its Central Committee, receiving more votes than any other member apart from Lenin. In October 1917 he was the central organiser of the working class insurrection organised through the Soviets.

When full-scale civil war broke out, which soon merged with the invasion of armies from no less than 14 capitalist states, including Britain, Trotsky, as Commissar for war, was first the organiser and then the leader of the newly created Red Army.

With peace, Trotsky, like everyone else, turned to reconstruction work. Following the defeat of workers' revolution in the rest of Europe, a new ruling elite based on the state bureaucracy took control in the USSR. Trotsky separated himself from the bureaucracy and together with the incorruptible Bolsheviks, went into opposition. Defeated, he was expelled from the USSR. Many of his comrades were jailed or sent to Siberia, where eventually they would be slaughtered.

In exile again, Trotsky became a far-sighted critic of Stalin's Communist Parties. In the period before Hitler came to power in Germany, crushing and destroying the German labour movement, Trotsky wrote many prophetic pamphlets and articles to warn the German workers against the policies of the mass German Communist Party which were to lead to their destruction.

But Trotsky was now isolated. He would die isolated with only a tiny handful of supporters.

Throughout the '30s he watched helplessly as one after another, the Stalinists and reformists led the European labour movements to destruction at the hands of fascism and reaction in Germany, Austria, Spain and France. His voluminous writings on these life and death questions armed only small minorities and had no effect on the Stalinist and reformist led mass workers' movement. It would be decades before they became widely known to new generations of socialists.

In a private diary, he wrote in 1935 that he felt, watching the European labour movement go to its destruction, like a wise old physician forced to watch the destruction of someone he loved whom he knew how to save but was prevented from saving.

The Stalinist domination of the would-be revolutionary sections of the European labour movement isolated and paralysed him.

He would never escape from the nightmare. He witnessed the Stalinist bureaucracy consolidating its power in the mid-'30s by waging a murderous, one-sided civil war on the Russian workers and peasants. He saw Stalin and Hitler make a pact to partition Poland and the Nazis, with Stalin's backing, overrun Western Europe.

Trotsky's life was entwined with the greatest achievements of the labour movement and with its descent into the abyss in the 1930s. The very manner of his death symbolised perfectly the fate of the mass revolutionary movement he, together with Lenin, had organised and led.

Yet Trotsky never gave up. He reasoned, analysed and wrote: he worked to prepare the future of the labour movement. He told the bitter truth come what may. His writings are of immense value to the labour movement today — though he would surely have great contempt for those degenerate "Trotskyists" who treat them as holy writ.

The following passage, sometimes called Trotsky's Testament, sums up Trotsky's personal philosophy. When the future generations he talks of here have finished off class society they will remember Trotsky with love and gratitude.

"For forty-three years of my conscious life I have been a revolutionary; and for forty-two I have fought under the banner of Marxism. If I were to begin all over again, I would... try to avoid making this or that mistake, but the main course of my life would remain unchanged. I shall die a proletarian revolutionary, a Marxist, a dialectical materialist, and consequently an irreconcilable atheist. My faith in the communist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

Natasha [Natalia Sedova, his companion] has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression, and violence, and enjoy it to the full."



Deputies attack a crowd of pickets near Pittsburg, 1923. Photo: Library of Congress.

Science Docks

Dust on the heels of profit

By Les Hearn

AS farming has become more mechanised, farmers have had to enlarge and regularise fields so that their expensive machinery can be used more effectively.

This has involved uprooting hedges, demolishing stone walls, and felling trees.

Recently, guaranteed high prices for grain have encouraged farmers to increase arable acreage by draining marshes, cutting down woods, and turning grasslands and uplands over to crops.

Since Britain (and the EEC) is self-sufficient in grain, the surplus is bought by the government at a generous price and stored at great expense. The predicted surplus this year amounts to nearly 20% of the total harvest.

Environmentalists have long protested at the unnecessary and harmful destruction of the complex and ancient communities of plants and animals found in Britain's marshes, heaths, hills, woods and hedgerows.

The end result of such practices are the endless "prairies" of East Anglia - windswept wheat-fields stretching for miles.

But is this actually bad? Ignore the environmentalists for a moment and let us suppose there is a market for all the grain we can produce. Is this really the best way to produce it?

A recent study by agricultural scientists suggests not for they conclude that one-fifth of Britain's arable land is in danger of excessive erosion. In particular, the scientists (from Silsoe College, Cranfield Institute of Technology) say "if current rates of erosion on sandy and sandy/loam soil continue, it is doubtful if continued use of these soils can be maintained into the next century."

Thus, current farming practices are leading to a catastrophic decline in soil fertility. How is this happening?

Life on earth is only "skin-deep," as it depends mainly on the fertility of a six-inch covering of top-soil.

Top-soil is constantly eroded by the action of wind and water but is simultaneously replaced by the break-up of rocks and the decay of plant and animal matter. Erosion of top-soil can be slowed down or stopped if the soil is anchored by plant roots and

shielded from wind and rain by plant leaves.

But plough up grassland and chop down trees and the protection is removed.

Of course, while the crops are growing, there is some protection, but the fields are frequently bare, particularly during the wet and windy winter months. Uprooting hedges and other wind-breaks makes it worse.

The Silsoe scientists found that heavily-wooded or other untouched soils lost only about a gram per square metre through erosion each year, far less than the rate of replacement.

However, a field of winter wheat planted on a slope could lose 2.4 kilograms of top soil per square metre per year - 2,400 times as much!

Indeed, in one storm on the Norfolk "prairies" in 1975 nearly 20 kg per square metre was swept away.

Such erosion leads to a loss in fertility and already some farmers have had to abandon fields due to falling yields.

Areas most at risk include Norfolk, parts of Notts, and the Vale of York. Though the process is a fairly slow one, the Silsoe scientists believe it needs to be tackled now.

Dr. Roy Morgan, head of the college's Soil Erosion Unit, says the best way to stop erosion is to put the land under grass or to bring back crop rotation so that the land can lie fallow periodically and "recover". Of course, this would hit the sacred profits.

Some researchers are looking at different methods of tilling. One suggestion is to plough corn stubble into the soil (rather than burn it) so that it can build the soil.

Most ironic of all is the suggestion of planting hedges as wind breaks.

The problem of erosion in Britain is not so great as in the American dust-bowl disaster of the 1930s, or in the modern Sahel region and other parts of the Third World where poor peasants are forced to cultivate the margins while the best soils are used by multinationals to grow cash-crops.

However, it is an increasing problem, in which the chaos of capitalism many produce a dust-bowl, just as the madness of imperialism may produce a radioactive dustbowl.

Extend the scheme

WORKING class action in the docks is growing, following the partial victory secured in the national docks strike a few weeks ago.

Now the prospect of a new strike is looming. The National Docks Labour Board wants to avoid it, but they may not be able to.

Dockers at Hunterston are blacking coal from the Ostia destined for Ravenscraig steel-works. The British Steel Corporation has argued that it is possible to unload the Ostia using only members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) without breaking the national dock labour scheme under which only dockers do such work at registered ports.

Last week the National Docks Labour Board deferred a decision on the BSC proposals and on Tuesday, 21st, it backed the

Behind the possibility of a national dock strike is more than just the immediate issue in Hunterston. Dock workers nationally are taking action. Clive Bradley reports.

dockers. After four hours, the Board agreed that unloading should not take place without the presence of registered dockers.

Since the dockers are refusing to be present, the ball is now in the BSC's court. If they try to move coal they will provoke a national dock strike. They may nevertheless be forced to provoke a strike in order to move coal

supplies which, they say, are urgently needed at Ravenscraig.

Tripartite talks are now going on between the TGWU, BSC and the Hunterston Port Authority.

But it's not only at Hunterston that activity is taking place in the docks.

In Bristol, 52 tugmen are on strike after their employer, Covey Ship Tugage of Avonmouth, suspended without pay four members of the TGWU for refusing to work with non-union labour.

Also in Bristol a dispute is developing over attempts by the port authority to use outside contractors to drive cranes, with registered dockers just observing.

Southampton

In Southampton's experimental 'freeport', just days after it opened, 1100 dockers in the neighbouring Southampton docks claim that non-union labour is

working in the 11 acre zone the 'free port', and demand the right to handle cargoes there.

In Immingham, where the previous national strike was sparked off, dockers are refusing to load iron ore onto lorries for BSC plant in Scunthorpe.

London

In Liverpool, there have been three disputes in the past week or so.

In the Port of London Authority, there is a dispute over 2.5% pay offer.

What all this indicates is that dock workers are ready and willing to fight. All that is needed is spark, as is kindling in Hunterston, for another national dock strike to take place. Such a strike as well as coming to the aid of the miners, should aim for the National Dock Labour Scheme to be extended to all ports.



Union day March, Liverpool. Photo: John Harris

Rail the grip tightens

By Rob Dawber

ALL movements of coal by rail are now more or less stopped.

Westhouses depot, just outside Chesterfield, joined the stoppage a fortnight ago. Coal by rail is now only going into Ratcliffe-on-Soar and High Marnham.

These two depots, plus Coalville in Leicestershire, are now under heavy pressure from management to work normally.

All money is being stopped and train crews are being sent home before having the chance to refuse. Part of the aim is to dry up the money being used to make up their wages.

One other note of hope from the railways, is the industrial action to begin on September 10 in protest at job losses and closures. The action is called "non-cooperation" - basically a work-to-rule or overtime ban to be decided locally.

The railways exist on overtime with something like an average 54 hour week and the rule book is about an inch thick, designed by management as an insurance policy to cover every eventuality.

If something goes wrong, then an inquiry will always find that an employee has not followed some rule. That means a work to rule will completely paralyse railworkers' jobs. This provides a good opportunity for linking up at rank and file level.

Worrying signs, however, are coming from the NUR leadership who at the demonstration in Derby on August 10 against the threat to jobs in BR workshops, stressed that it was only a demonstration about railways and asked the miners who went along to support to go to the back.

When BR Chair Bob "Magregor" Reid says the NUR/ASLEF action is only surrogate support for the NUM, they are cagey about the connection.

We should be saying that this is a common struggle against a common enemy.

We should join forces and strengthen each other.

Last week's paper

Last week's issue of Socialist Organiser left a lot to be desired in the way of neatness and presentation and, due to events at the printers outside our control, the two centre pages weren't properly paired up. The usual difficulties caused by producing a weekly paper on a shoestring were last week exacerbated by the indisposition of comrades and to cap it all the failure of our typesetting equipment on the first day of production. You saw the result. Sorry.

How to fight rate-cap

John Newman, convenor of Islington DLO spoke to Mick O'Sullivan.

What do you think will be the effect on the workforce in Islington of rate capping?

Islington council has done its own projection on rate-capping. The total loss from their budget will be approximately £8½ million. The effect on the DLO will be a job loss of 80. Across the whole of the borough, the loss could be 1,000.

How do you feel the council is shaping up to this threat?

Their strategy is not to fix a rate. They have said they are going to resist to the bitter end cuts in jobs or services. However the trade unionists in Islington have grave doubts that the council will either be willing or able to carry out this promise if the unions do not press them hard. The point is that without the trade unions solid backing they will not be able to resist.

What role do you see for the unions?

The leading one. We have put demands to the council that there will be no cooperation with cuts from the joint trade unions in Islington, whether this be from a council which has backed down or from the government commissioners.

What has been the council's response to this?

At present they are in recess and haven't come back to us. However I would stress that we don't see the council as the enemy, only that there are limits to what they can achieve as isolated individuals in the Town

Hall. We want to see a joint fight but this struggle cannot be about councils uttering fine phrases to the converted. They have got to realise that while their political future and prestige is at stake, it is our jobs.

What has been the reaction of the shopfloor?

We have had meetings over rate capping since the beginning of the year. We have had well attended meetings in the building department. The next stage for the trade unions in the DLO is to get committed support from the workforce to confront the government. We hope we will be able to present this as a united struggle not only of the workers in Islington but of a united struggle of all workers facing rate capping in the country. People are either going to take action to defend their jobs and services or they will see them disappear.

Do you think the existing trade union structures are adequate to organising this movement?

We have made a start in that we have a joint trade union committee. The leaders of all the unions are united around this campaign. This gives us quite a good base and makes our union structures more advanced than in many boroughs where the different unions don't really talk to each other.

However we would be under no illusions that we are going to have problems convincing the membership. The climate at the moment is one of fear at losing these jobs coupled with a growing disbelief that the unions are serious about defending jobs. The miners' strike is all important

in this: victory will show that militancy and tenacity pay. That is why it is so crucial that a unified campaign is built which inspires the shop floor, and draws them into activity by showing people that we mean to win.

It is because of this that our first job is to get as much co-operation with groups of workers in other boroughs. We want to see a trade union approach from all the affected boroughs.

What steps have been taken to achieve this?

At the moment we are at the stage of making contacts in the other boroughs. Initially this will be with the other London boroughs affected. It means that there are a lot of different initiatives from various trade unions. The main task will be putting these together. Once we have done this we will be looking for a much wider trade union involvement.

Once the trade union forces have been organised, what will they do?

We have already produced a leaflet for tenants explaining why they should cooperate in the fightback with the unions. We are also looking for involvement from voluntary organisations, tenants' associations, Labour Parties, etc., in a campaign coordinating committee.

The problem is convincing people in general that a fightback against plans to destroy local services and democracy is both worthwhile and possible. The trade unions have the national strength to organise and lead such a struggle to a successful conclusion.

Socialist ORGANISER If they use anti union laws general strike **Socialist ORGANISER** Vote on

STOP STEEL Police and courts help the

JOIN THE PICKETS Help the miners win

Subscribe!

Get SOCIALIST ORGANISER each week delivered to your door by post!

RATES: £5 for 3 months; £8.50 for 6 months; and £16 for a year.

Name

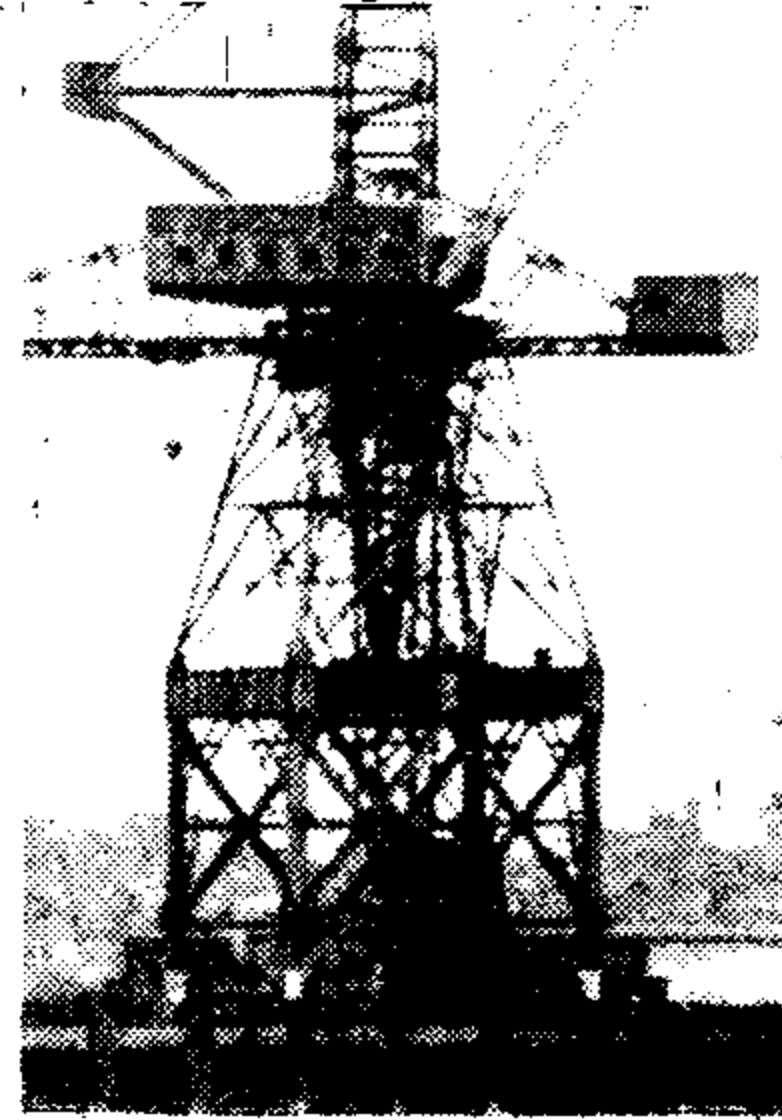
Address

Please send me months' sub. I enclose £

To: Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Socialist Organiser

STOP PRESS. At a meeting on Wednesday August 22, the strikers took a unanimous decision to stay in occupation. They issued a call to the labour movement to attend a mass picket at 7.00am next Tuesday, 28th, outside the gates, and to offer help to the occupation.



YCND's epic Bases Tour of 84 arrived in blazing sunshine on Wormwood Scrubs last Saturday. Most marchers returned home tired but enthusiastic about the prospects for the campaign if it continues to develop slogans such as those pictured.

Lairds:

DEFEND THE OCCUPATION

By **LOL DUFFY**, Secretary of the Cammell Lairds Occupation Committee.

MANAGEMENT intend to sack all those involved in the occupation of the naval destroyer and gas rig at Cammell Lairds shipyard in Birkenhead, as from 4.30 pm on Thursday August 23.

They announced their intentions at a meeting with stewards involved in the occupation on Tuesday afternoon, (21st).

They told us that as no agreement could be reached, they now considered the occupation to be unacceptable and those involved in the occupations should leave the vessels and give guarantees that they would not hinder their removal from the yard. Failure to comply with this would result in their being summarily dismissed for gross misconduct.

Those involved in the occupation had planned well in advance for just such a move, and we expect the dismissal notices to be followed by writs for our removal.

Meeting

A full meeting of the occupation will take place on Wednesday August 22 at midday, when final plans will be put into action.

What looks likely to come out of the meeting is a tightening up of the occupation, with safety work - which has been allowed up to now - being stopped.

Management have allowed us free access to the yard up to now, but they plan to end this on Thursday as well.

Another call likely to be made from the meeting is for other people to come and join us in occupying the vessels and a mass picket on the gates on Tuesday (28th).

There have already been offers to help occupy from the unemployed and from miners.

There is no doubt that British Shipbuilders are worried about a victory for the occupiers at

Cammell Laird. Of the 100 or so involved in the occupation there are only about 36 on their notice and those could easily be absorbed in the yard. But that would mean keeping militants in the yard to fight privatisation plans. And other shipyards would see that the government and the employers could be fought and beaten in their plans to decimate the industry.

We are confident that we can win this fight and management's latest plans are a sign of desperation on their part. This gives us the chance of involving the community and organised labour movement directly in our fight to save jobs.

The occupation has been made official by the GMBATU. Messages of support and donations have come from the following: Bearsham NUM, Bearsham Women's Support Group, Houghton Miners' Support Group, Point of Ayr Women's Support Group, Point of Ayr Striking Miners, Wallsend Shipyard Committee, Liverpool Corporation building workers, Wirral Trades Council, Wirral Trades Council Women's Group, ACTTS (TGWU) 1/208 branch, London, Boilermakers Joint Shop Stewards Committee, Vickers shipyard, Barrow, Neptune shipyard EETPU, TGWU 6/506 branch, Swan Hunters AUEW stewards committee, TGWU 6/612 branch, ACTTS 6/567 branch, Merseyside group of Labour MPs, Neptune and Heburn yards Confed committees, as well as the local unemployed group, the county council and the Merseyside Campaign Committee (apologies to anyone left out).

If you want to help us contact Lol Duffy, Secretary, Occupation Committee, c/o Birkenhead Unemployed Centre, Central Station Old Offices, 1 Argyle Street South, Birkenhead, L41 9BD, or phone 051-647 6122.



Falklands Task Force was Nuclear

By **Ken Coates,**
**Bertrand Russell Peace
Foundation**

examine not only the evidence concerning government deceptions, but also a number of related questions.

The original reproach concerning the development of the Falklands war was that the sinking of the Belgrano prevented the success of diplomatic initiatives taken within the framework of United Nations resolutions.

To this reproach it is necessary to add another: there seems to be prima facie evidence that the task force carried nuclear weapons into the nuclear-free zone area which is covered by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, thus breaching the British government's solemn pledges under the protocols which it signed to uphold that Treaty.

THE astonishing revelations which are contained in the official documents which have been leaked to Tam Dalyell demand an appropriate response from the labour movement.

It is quite clear that Parliament has been deceived, and indeed deliberately misinformed, and that efforts to arrive at the truth have been systematically obstructed.

No doubt the Parliamentary Labour Party will consider how to carry forward the indictment which Tam Dalyell's insistent questioning has made so necessary.

But before Parliament re-assembles, the labour movement itself needs to make its own assessment of this scandal. Quite clearly there has to be a full-scale debate at the Labour Party conference. This debate needs to

The immediate implication of the leaked documents is that there is now a major government crisis, since official duplicity has been clearly exposed.

In order to ensure that these issues are thoroughly ventilated, Constituency Parties and Trade Unions should table emergency motions to the Labour Party conference. All this new information, which has become available since the closing date for the receipt of motions for the conference agenda, will be beyond the reach of conference delegates unless the emergency procedures are activated.

These procedures allow debate on pressing matters which arise after normal conference arrangements timetables have been closed. But the definition of an "emergency" is not always un-

animously agreed by those responsible for preparing final agendas. For this reason I hope the largest number of affiliated organisations will take up the challenge, so that it can be clearly seen that the entire movement is troubled by this profoundly important matter.



Join the Labour Party.
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.
Subscription is £7 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

FUND

We've found ourselves new premises. We're waiting to sign the lease. And then we've got to do up the building before moving in. We think this will cost £2,000 (the place needs rewiring, for example). That's a lot of money to raise when comrades are well overdrawn, spending their money supporting the miners. But we can't move in till we've done the place up, so we've just got to get the money.

To kick off, we've received £100 in donations this week, with £50 coming from Chris Whytehead in Bristol. We want to give the fund a big boost at the Summer School by taking a large collection, and after that we will rely on the generosity and fund-raising expertise of our supporters.

For example, why don't you buy us a drink. We reckon that most comrades go to a pub at least once a week. When you're getting your round in, put aside the money for another one and send it to us!

All donations to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road, London N1 2SY.