

Socialist Organiser

Miners' solidarity conference Dec 2

From 11.30am at Camden Town Hall,
Euston Rd, London NW1.
Inside: special four-page broadsheet

T&G FINED; TORY ASSAULTS ESCALATE



Askern Colliery, Doncaster: police stand by while pit hut burns in the colliery yard. They deny setting fire to it, but as the police were in occupation it seems that no-one else could have done it. The hut was used during nine months of peaceful picketing. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Every union is at risk

weakness, the government is out to get a spectacular show of obedience from the TGWU.

Other unions involved in the Austin Rover strike have convinced the company that they 'disavowed' the strike. TASS is trying to persuade the court that it did not 'encourage' or 'promote' the strike.

The TGWU has been fined for contempt of court because it defied an injunction to call off the strike, which had been called without the ballot required by Tory law.

If the TGWU doesn't pay — and it is bound by union conference policy not to pay the fine — then its funds could be seized.

Behind this case stands not only the threat of Tory-enforced ballots for every future strike, but a whole string of court actions against the NUM.

Scabs are trying to get control of NUM area funds in North Derbyshire and Yorkshire passed to receivers. And they are trying to get the national executive members made personally responsible for the £200,000 fine against the union.

The TGWU's actions so far have encouraged the Tories. Although the TGWU did not disavow the Austin Rover strike, it certainly did nothing to encourage it. Clearly top TGWU officials hoped that the strike would die and that having beaten the strike

Austin Rover would call off their court case.

Austin Rover — and behind them the government — are not interested in that sort of gentlemanly play-acting. They want the TGWU on its knees.

If the TGWU submits, it will be stacking the odds against every future strike in Britain, and betraying the NUM.

The TGWU should start off by calling a 24 hour strike, which it should appeal to other unions to make a general strike. It should explain to its members, and all other trade unionists, that the attack on the TGWU is inseparable from the Tories' assault on the miners, and that every union is at risk.

THE Transport and General Workers' Union's General Executive Committee — a broadly-based committee of working members — meets

next Monday, December 3. It will discuss the union's response to the £200,000 fine imposed by the High Court on Monday 26th, with

two weeks to pay.

It has a heavy responsibility. Made bolder by the TUC's

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Scots solidarity

By Callum McRae

AROUND 250 people attended a conference in Edinburgh last Sunday called by the Trades Council Miners' Support Committee to build solidarity action in Lothian Region.

The conference heard Eric Clarke, chairperson of the Scottish NUM, pour mockery on the idea that the strike was collapsing.

He attacked the apologists in the leadership of the labour movement who paid more attention to the opinion polls in the capitalist press than the clear mandate from their own rank and file.

To loud applause he pointed out that the likes of Jimmy Reid — who has sold his soul to the Daily Record (Scottish sister paper of the Mirror) that regularly uses his column to hammer home the attack on the miners which he started in the Observer — will be dumped by their new masters just as soon as they have outlived their usefulness — exactly the same fate that awaits the scabs.

After Eric Clarke the conference was addressed by trades council secretary Des Loughney, who launched an appeal to raise £30,000 by Christmas, and announced

that the trades council had organised a march and rally for Edinburgh on December 15, to be addressed by Tony Benn and a national NUM speaker.

The main part of the conference agenda was given over to discussions on how to build support in the workplaces for the miners.

Although the conference had its weaknesses — it had mainly attracted white collar workers, for example, — it was useful in that it was a working conference from which a real increase in local activity should spring.

Many speakers stressed the importance of the twinning of workplaces and strike centres, and how this helped, not just to increase the amount of money in workplaces, but to cement the links between miners and other workers.

The chairperson of Lothian's central strike committee, Ian Dalkieth, pointed out the danger that some local strike areas could end up with unequal shares of support money under the twinning arrangement. Clearly some method of ensuring a reasonably fair distribution of funds will have to be agreed by the support groups. But this needn't cut across the very important tactic of twinning.

School janitors

By Callum McRae

FOUR Lothian school janitors have been viciously victimised for refusing to handle "scab coal".

The janitors initially refused to accept the coal when it was delivered in a lorry owned by Bruce Lindsay Waldie, a local coal merchant, to Lasswade school.

Waldie's were blacked by the NUM after it was discovered that they had been picking up coal granted as dispensation for schools and hospitals by the NUM, and then selling it privately.

The next day, the lorry returned for another attempt, accompanied by Lothian Region Janitorial supervisors. This time the coal was successfully delivered. The janitors, however, locked up the boiler room, and refused to touch it.

Lothian Region then suspended four of them. Another two were not suspended for technical reasons, but they immediately came out on strike in support of their colleagues. NUPE made the strike official.

And by the Tuesday, they had been joined by the cleaners, also on official strike.

The teachers, meanwhile, had sought the support of their union, the EIS, for supportive strike action. It was not forthcoming.

The leadership did offer its "moral support" but refused official backing "because of government legislation".

Despite this cowardly stand, 55 out of 70 odd EIS

members came out on 24-hour unofficial strike action the following day.

That day another attempt was made to deliver scab coal, this time to Esk Valley College. The janitor there refused to handle it and was also suspended.

By this time NUPE had circulated a letter to all educational establishments in the Lothian Region, informing their members of the situation and calling on those in Midlothian District (which covers Lasswade and Esk Valley) to take strike action in support.

A meeting was also fixed for Thursday night for all janitors in the district. It was at this meeting that disgraceful scenes took place, which, it seems, were orchestrated by management stooges amongst the janitors.

First an EIS rep, from Lasswade (one of the strikers who had been invited by the NUPE area official) was asked to leave. Then, to their astonishment, were the striking cleaners, all NUPE members.

Thereafter the janitors voted not to take action in support of their colleagues.

At the time of writing the Lasswade janitors are still refusing to handle coal, though the Esk Valley janitor has been forced to back down and as a result has had his suspension lifted.

The best hope for the Lasswade janitors is that a Lothian-wide meeting planned for the near future will reverse the Midlothian decision and end their isolation.

Labour Against the Witch-hunt AGM 1984
Saturday December 8

Registration from 11.30 am at County Hall,
London SE1

The meeting will review the year's work, consider future activities, and elect a Secretariat for the coming year. Make sure your Labour Party or trade union organisation is represented.

Contact: Keith Litchman, LAW secretary,
11 Wilderton Road, London N16

CND conference '84

Weakening the fight for unilateralism

THIS year's Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament conference marked a further shift to a more conservative stance by the peace movement.

On most of the key issues at conference the leadership had their way.

The idea of 'non-nuclear defence' (meaning strong regular conventional armed forces) was supported by a big majority of conference.

The CND leadership are tagging along with the Labour Party leadership and clearly wish to blur the distinction between multilateral and unilateral disarmament. This blunts the cutting edge of

By Tom Rigby, Peckham LPYS delegate to CND conference

CND's basic policies. unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from NATO.

However, conference did vote against the platform for an amendment from Peckham CND which reaffirmed the importance of CND's opposition to NATO.

There was no all-out offensive against unilateralism as there was last year, when the leadership tried unsuccessfully to make the nuclear

freeze [holding nuclear weaponry at its present level] a CND slogan.

A constitutional amendment proposing that we drop the word 'unilateral' from our aims and objectives was overwhelmingly defeated.

The really worrying thing about the conference, however, was the absence of any resolutions calling for mass action to build the campaign.

An amendment to the secretary's report proposed a mass demonstration in London in 1985, but chair Joan Ruddock skilfully managed to push it off the end of the agenda.

This year's conference was also visibly less oriented to the labour movement.

A proposal to allow Betty Heathfield to speak about the miners' dispute was voted down. So was an amendment from Southwark Youth CND which sought to commit CND to organising a shop stewards' conference representing workers on the Trident programme.

CND needs to build on the strength of the campaign — which is primarily its ability to mobilise thousands of people, like we did last June during President Reagan's visit.



The CND conference was generally more conservative. Photo: Andrew Wiard, (Report)

Owen: spitting on 1972

DURING the 1984 miners' strike SDP leader David Owen has consistently opposed the miners and called for the use of the Tory anti-union laws against the NUM.

During the 1972 strike, he put up flying pickets in his house.

Colin Dixon of Ollerton NUM is one of the miners who stayed at David Owen's house in 1972.

On November 9 he wrote an article in Tribune: "When Mr Owen speaks today of the 'mob' I would remind him that in 1972 we were part of the mob that he and his wife accommodated and offered every support and comfort".

David Owen's wife Debbie wrote to Colin Dixon:

"Dear Colin Dixon, I was sad to read your article in Tribune. It didn't sound like the man who came up to me at

Buxton [at the SDP conference this year] when we exchanged good memories of 1972. Your article spat on those memories and the good intentions of you and of us. So I had to write.

Yours sincerely,
Debbie Owen

Colin Dixon has replied:

Dear Debbie, With reference to your recent letter commenting on mine published in Tribune, Nov. 9...

Do you write for yourself or your husband? Why have you written to me of good memories of 1972? Don't you realise I too have vivid memories of 1972, and fond memories they were?

I am the same man I was in 1972, which is more than I, you, or anyone else can say of your husband.

For it is not I who have spat on these memories... It is not I who

has betrayed anyone. It is not I who has spat on the Labour Party and the National Union of Mineworkers and trades unionism which are the only protectors of the working class and without which we are prey to all the predators who would make their living and way in life on our backs.

It is not I who was a Trustee of the trust and loyalty of Labour Party voters who, enjoying that trust, secured high office within a Labour government. It was not I who spat on those who deposited that trust. It was your husband, David Owen.

It was not I who fought a long strident campaign to delay progress in the democratisation of the Labour Party so as to make our Trustees accountable. It was not I who spat on those attempts to do so. It was not I who panicked and spat on the

Labour Party when I failed and thought my way to leadership of the Labour Party and possibly Prime Minister was lost. It was your husband, David Owen...

I am the same man I was in 1972. I am the spitting image of what I was in 1972. Can you look at your husband, David Owen, and say the same?

And when you have looked I hope you appeal to your husband to rejoin the Labour Party in the same way that I appeal to working miners to rejoin the strike.

Yours sincerely,
Colin Dixon

CORRECTION: Last week's interview (SO 206) had Albert Bowns saying: "ASLEF in South Yorkshire are continuing to support us". It should have read: "Derby City ASLEF..."



Miners and wives picket scabs coming off the day shift at Killoch colliery, Ayrshire. Photo: Rich Matthews (IFL)

Back the miners



Out of their own mouths

The number of NUM members breaking the strike was just over 42,000.

Curiously the NUM could sometimes be underestimating its own strength. In North Derbyshire it says there are 3,500 working miners.

Figures supplied to the Observer by colliery officials suggest that 3,326 NUM members were working in the middle of last week, just under a third of the union's area membership.

The NCB official figure is more than 1,000 higher.

But closer examination of the NCB's North Derbyshire figures shows a lack of consistency. First, there is confusion over the inclusion of Bolsover Colliery, where the NUM miners are members of the Nottinghamshire area, not Derbyshire. That accounts for 494.

Second, in some pits, such as Shirebrook, members of COSA, the NUM's white-collar section, who are not in the Derby NUM area, are also included.

Thirdly, it would appear that 68 apprentices attending Grassmoor training centre (with union approval) are also in the area board's figures.

Observer, November 25

How they cook the figures

THE NCB's auditors refused to authenticate the board's national figures last Monday and would only confirm those for North Derbyshire.

The auditors, Thomson McLintock, were called in at the suggestion of a part-time board member, Sir Melvyn Rosser, to reassure public opinion about the authenticity of NCB figures.

With little preparation they were drafted in to observe proceedings last Monday. A furious row broke out, however, when they would only confirm that about 51,000 miners were working that day, whereas the board had calculated the number to be nearer 60,000.

The auditors were persuaded that they had not understood the figures.

In July, the Prime Minister and the Energy Secretary, Mr Peter Walker, told the Commons there were more than 60,000 miners working.

The board's internal documents show that this figure could be reached only by including: more than 3,000 men providing safety cover with NUM permission; 5,500 members of the pit deputies' union NACODS; 3,700 members of the white collar union APEX; and 14,200 members of the management union BACM — all of whom were not on strike.

Chapple and MacGregor

WE know why Margaret Thatcher put Ian MacGregor into the Coal Board. The Tories thought the NCB was full of mining engineers more concerned with digging coal than with boosting profits, and geared to consensus management. So in went MacGregor as a hatchet-man, flanked by Saatchi and Saatchi whizz-kids.

But who recommended MacGregor out of all the possible hatchet-men?

According to Malcolm Rutherford in the Financial Times (November 23) it was Frank Chapple.

The right wing leader of the electricians' union told the Tories "that it was essential to find someone who was not going to be frightened of Mr Arthur Scargill".

But has the FT got it right? Or was it a case of a hint going astray? Was Chapple really trying delicately to suggest himself for the job?

Notts power support

Fred Howell national officer of the Power and Engineering Group, TGWU sent the following message to a public meeting in Nottingham last week.

Please convey to the meeting the assurances of the power workers in the TGWU that they will do everything possible to assist the miners in their struggle to save pits and jobs.

We realise that thousands of miners and their families are looking to us to help achieve an early settlement which gives them some hope for the future.

We've been holding meetings of our members in power stations around the country and support has been con-

firmed from these power stations: Drax, Ferrybridge, and loads more.

Stocks of coal at most of these stations will allow three weeks supply. So as we enter the weeks ahead, the problem of maintaining electricity supplies will increase for the CEGB.

This period is vital if the government and the NCB are to be pushed into a settlement.

Now, more than ever in our movement, we need unity, solidarity and resolve to defeat the policies of slim-down, cut-down and shut-down, which have brought misery to millions on the dole.

Railworkers in Leicestershire

A question of loyalty

I'm from a depot in Coalville, nine miles from Leicester, right in the middle of a working coalfield. To the north we've got South Derbyshire, working and Nottinghamshire, working.

We've been in dispute with our employers, British Rail, for 34 weeks.

We've got 165 men employed at our depot. 100 are in the NUR and 60 are involved in the movement of coal. And those 60 men have not moved any coal from the Leicestershire coalfield for 34 weeks.

Our normal tonnage is 135,000 tons a week to three key power stations, including Rugeley and Didcot.

In Coalville there are 2500 working miners and 30 on strike — known as the 'Dirty Thirty'.

What we've got is sixty railwaymen and 30 striking miners holding back from the power stations half the production of 2,500 working miners.

We've even got working miners driving lorries part-time, after they've finished at the pit. That's the kind of town I live in.

We've got nowhere to go for any help. On North West Leicestershire District Council, out of 19 Labour councillors we've got 11 working miners, two wives

Ray Butlin, secretary of Coalville NUR, Leicestershire told a meeting in Nottingham last week about their record of solidarity.

of working miners and two retired miners.

The nearest railway depot is Leicester — the one place where railwaymen worked during our own industrial dispute over flexible rosters, 2½ years ago. No support there.

Yet we've stuck it out for 8½ months, largely unnoticed.

There is tremendous pressure on us. The government is left with two options. They can either break the railwaymen and get these 22 million tons shifted that are at the pit-heads, or they've got to use troops.

So all the pressure is coming on the railway to get us back to moving coal by train. The government doesn't want to get into the political hotbed of using troops.

The 34 weeks that we've just completed has cost us hundreds of pounds in lost wages. For the first ten weeks of our dispute we only qualified for £1 a day from our union.

Yet my members live in streets of terraced houses where each side these working miners are bringing home £150 a week, with the artificial bonuses they are being

paid, and, as I've said, some of them are driving lorries, shifting coal from rail bunkers.

We've had a five-point closure threat. On September 28, our manager in Derby came down to Coalville and threatened us with closure. He said if we didn't get back to moving coal on Monday October 1, we'd be shut.

Just imagine the repercussions of that — a railway depot threatened with closure because we are simply following Triple Alliance policy.

On top of that, the same day — Friday September 28 — we had seven homes visited by the transport police, looking for items of railway property — I'm talking about cloths, bars of soap, tins of Swarfega.

Out of those seven three were dismissed from the railways. We are appealing to get them reinstated. These men were sacked as a punishment for not moving coal. Using the criteria on which my members were sacked, you could sack most of the British workforce.

Following the closure threat and the sackings, they shut us down completely on Sundays. More punishment. No engineering ballast work to be done, that's been suspended. There's no maintenance on our branch line done at all.

This week some documents were leaked to me by a mole in the planning office at Crewe of three meetings where they plan to rationalise our branch line.

They are going to make 118 men redundant over a four-year period. It's punishment because we supported the miners, and we're being successful.

There's talk of tarmacking over the base of a rapid-loading bunker which was built with EEC funds of £9 million for the exclusive use of the railways. Punishment for what we're doing.

There's a proposal in this document to chop out 14 out of 16 sidings, leaving us with

two. And there's more still in the document.

We've had individual members approached by management, men who work in isolation in signal boxes. Some members of management have spent two hours in a signal box trying to convince one of my members of the wisdom of going back to moving coal against the branch decision and union policy.

Now that is intimidation and that is what we are suffering everyday.

Out of it have come good things and bad things.

On the bad side you've got train crews in the East Midlands, not at Coalville, who are moving coal trains. They are breaking every condition of service.

Some of these men are doing anything to move the coal. Their greed is coming out. Just as it is with the working miners.

We've got old-hand drivers who talk about the 1955 rail strike as if it was last week. And we shan't forgive or forget the men who have scabbed in this dispute — the handful of railwaymen and the thousands of working miners.

But it won't deflect us from what we are doing. Because it is more than compensated for by good.

We've made friendships with other railway depots, particularly in London; we've forged an alliance with the 30 striking miners in Leicestershire; we even share the same office. That's a strong alliance and that will remain even when the dispute finishes.

These friendships will stand us in good stead when the miners' strike is over and if the railway unions get involved in their own dispute.

Railwaymen's wives have become friends with striking miners' wives. So you've got these marvellous bonds and these marvellous friendships which more than outweighs the bad.

This miners' strike is not just about pit closures. It's become a question of solidarity, a question of loyalty, it's become a question of trade unionism and standing up for what you believe in.



MARTIN SHAKESHAFT (IFL)

South Wales miners appeal to railworkers

Barking

Out for jobs

Domestic staff at Barking Hospital in East London have been on strike against Crothalls, the private firm which has the contract for cleaning, for nearly nine months.

They are fighting new hours and pay rates introduced by Crothalls which in some cases reduced the number of hours worked from 35 to 15, with no increase in the number of staff employed.

Two of the strikers spoke to Tim Anderson.

We're out for reinstatement. It's never been about anything else since we were sacked on April 12. We haven't done all this for the money. It's about jobs.

On March 19 the union told us that if we came out, Crothalls would sack us. We came out anyway.

I don't regret a minute of this dispute. If I was back in March, knowing what I know now, I'd do the same again.

There's about 60 of us still here, and we're all involved in the picketing.

Nobody has gone back, but a few have found other jobs or retired. And obviously some of us are less able to picket than others.

The union were really good at the start. They organised a bus everyday to bring people down to the picket line. But that's stopped now.

They didn't think we'd stick it out this long. They have backed down quite a lot. We are an embarrassment to them, and they don't know what to do.

We've had a couple of days of action. We thought they were really successful, but the union said they didn't think they were worthwhile. The union just wants to end this dispute.

After we'd won the industrial tribunal [the tribunal ruled that the women were 'unfairly dismissed'] - we didn't really want to go to the tribunal but the union leadership convinced us - we expected them to bring everyone out. But they obviously thought we'd go away and take the money.

Goodmayes Laundry - there isn't a laundry here any more - came out at the start of the dispute. But they went back.

We've had a lot of support on the picket lines. Miners have been here. They're really good on the picket line. We really like it when they come down.

We've had women from Greenham here - they all sat down in front of the bus - and there's been a lot of teachers on the picket.

In 1982, during the NHS pay dispute, we didn't think twice about coming out in support of the nurses, but unfortunately we haven't had much support from them in return. But some nurses have been over from Southend Hospital, and some of the London Hospital staff have come down.

I've spoken in hospitals all over the country and said that if hospital workers come out in support of us, their District Health Authorities will see that they're prepared to fight privatisation.

Kitchen staff at Barking have been told that as soon as we've gone, their work will be put out to tender. But they're still in there working.

It's been proven that privatisation doesn't work. Hospitals are not properly cleaned. Scabs have said: "Don't blame us, blame Maggie for the low standards" - but they are just playing Maggie's game.

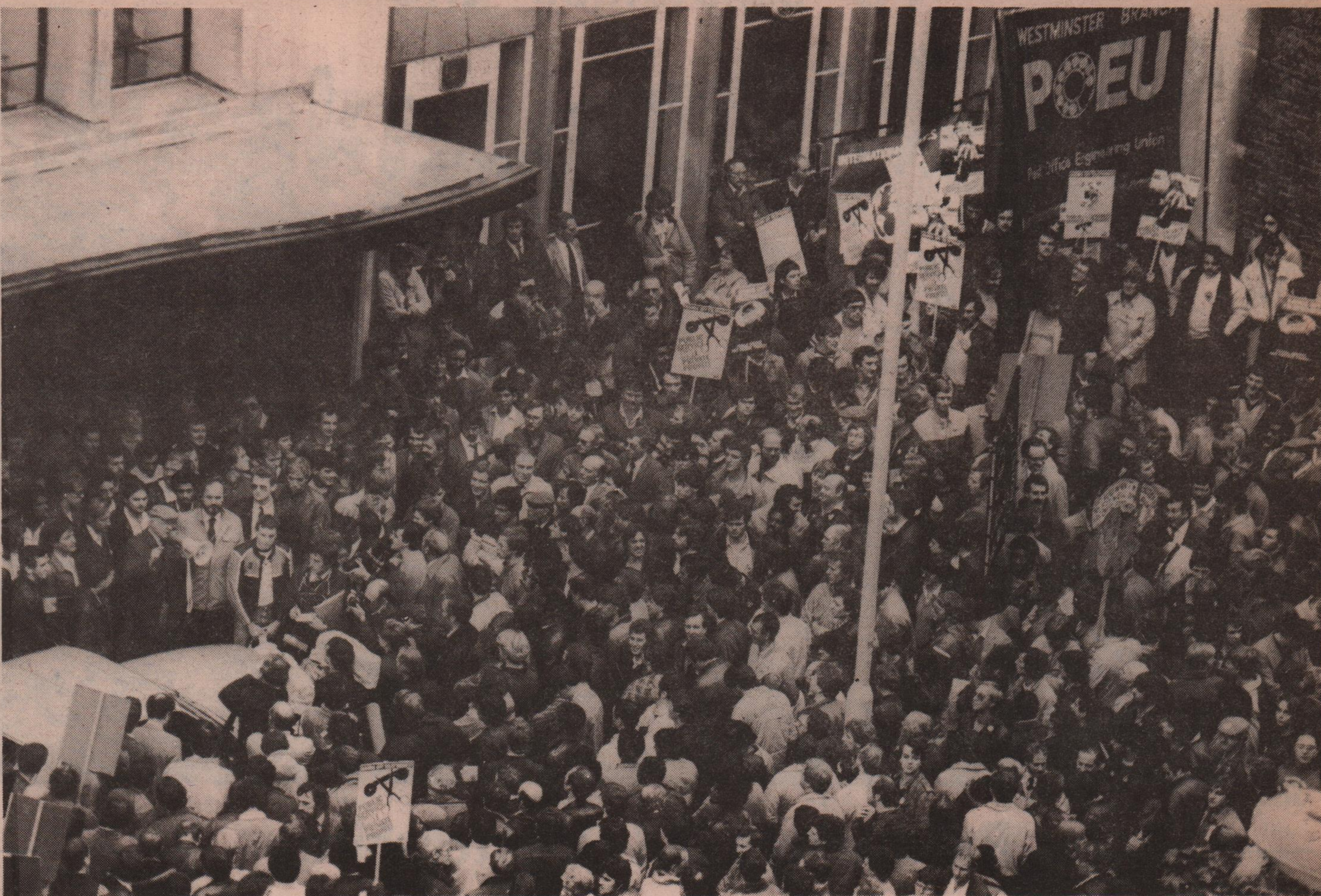
Working conditions are really bad in there. The scabs are trying to join the union. They don't believe they are scabbing on us.

Everyone in the hospitals should come out against privatisation. They'll tug on our heart strings about patient care, but we've got to say that it's us that are really concerned about the patients.

LOBBY

Redbridge District Health Authority
Demand the removal of Crothalls from Barking
December 11 at 1 p.m.
Chadwell Heath Hospital

Mass picket of Barking Hospital
Every Tuesday
Further information from Strikeline 592 5038



POEU protest at British Telecom HQ during the privatisation fight last year. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report)

Telecom engineers claim four-day week

By Ricky Houston

THE recent conference of the Post Office Engineering Union voted almost unanimously to claim a 32-hour 4-day week and to initiate a programme of industrial action, "up to and including all-out stoppage" following next June's annual conference if the claim is not met.

The vote was taken at the Special POEU Conference to discuss the NEC's broad strategy document which lays down fundamental policies as a basis for the POEU's response to British Telecom Public Limited Company, the attitude of the Post Office and Girobank management, new technology and the renationalisation of BT.

The POEU also reaffirmed its policy of renationalisation without compensation, and took it a stage further by reexamining nationalisation in its present form, to work out ways to further democratise it and make it accountable to the public need.

A combination of the POEU's

experience in the fight against privatisation and Project Mercury along with the miners' strike was shown by a number of delegates both at the conference and the Broad Left fringe meetings talking of the need to build for all-out strike in order to achieve the 32 hour, 4-day week. Also, the word "lawful" was deleted from the union's rule book at the Rules Revision session, in a direct reference to the Tories' anti-union legislation.

Step forward

This represents a major step forward from the POEU's response to those laws last year, when an injunction was brought by Project Mercury and the POEU complied.

The right wing were relegated to a small minority on the floor of the conference, although this does not mean that the right

wing are completely finished nor that the majority of delegates have swung to the extreme left.

New technology is being introduced in all three businesses employing POEU members, BT, PO and Girobank.

Within the communications industry the impact of new technology on jobs could be devastating. It is estimated if BT have their way only one in ten exchange maintenance staff will remain employed.

BT has suffered very little during the decline of manufacture in Britain, but as BT goes private, management's attitudes are changing.

Computerisation, the development of cellular radio links, digital switching networks, optical fibre cables, all these components of the "revolution" in information technology in the coming years will transform society. The possibility of a cashless society with "Big Brother" being able to "delete" you from subsistence is no longer an idle dream as the telecommunications network extends and expands itself.

IBM's TV advert, "Let's talk to each other" illustrates within one small computer network what is step-by-step becoming one extensive all embracing telecoms network.

Multi-national telecom giants such as IBM, IIT and

AT&T are competing for as much global dominance as they can achieve and their influence upon governments is strong.

As a speaker from the Chile Solidarity Campaign pointed out at a Broad Left fringe meeting, ITT was implicated in the overthrow of Allende's government.

The struggle of the miners was not ignored. Eric Clarke of the NUM spoke at a Broad Left fringe meeting, and so did one of the Leicester railworkers suspended for refusing to move coal.

A standing ovation was given at the conference to a Welsh miner as he thanked the conference for donations throughout the week.

The POEU is to merge with the CPSA Post and Telecommunications Group in February of next year, which should strengthen the new union's hand - although BT have just announced unilaterally the ending of the closed shop for CPSA and UCW grades in BT and no mention of this was made at the conference.

The task now facing the POEU is easier than when the fight against privatisation began. That campaign has heightened the awareness of the rank and file. And the current attack on jobs by BT has already led to sporadic fights in some areas against BT's job-shedding plans.

Teachers strike

By Ian McCalman

THE Council of the EIS, Scotland's main teachers union, meeting in Edinburgh last weekend, decided to go for two days strike action in December as part of their campaign to extract a pay review from the Secretary of State.

Having successfully implemented a ban on curricular development, the members have proceeded to a work-to-contract, which because of the devolved nature of the campaign, some local associations have interpreted more loosely than others.

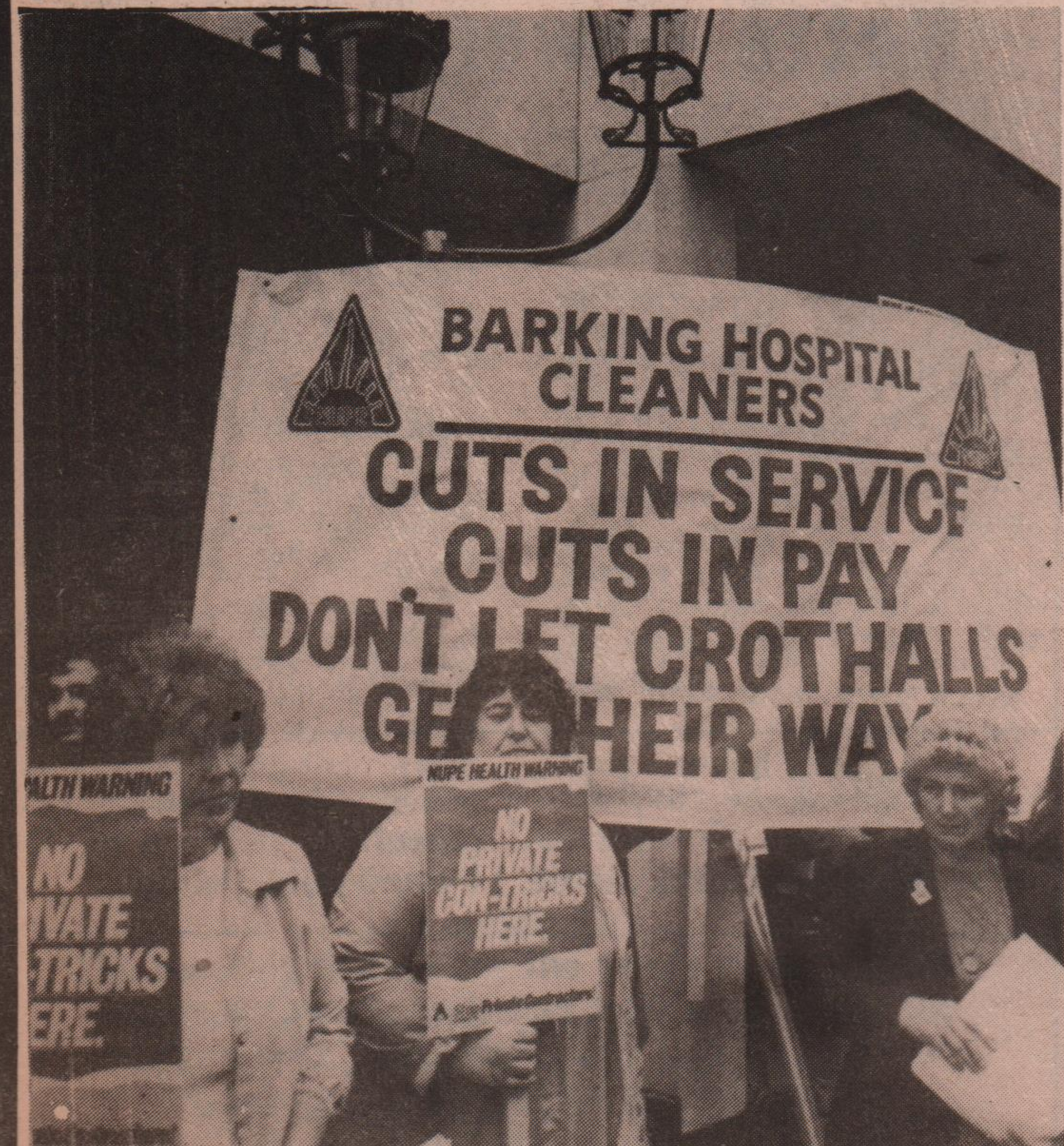
Fearful of local initiatives of this nature, sections of the leadership are now trying to rein in the action.

This is proving difficult, however, as it seemed to be the case in Glasgow where the local leadership has, in defiance of advice from the Chairman's Committee, proceeded to implement a ban on certain administrative duties.

The next stage of the campaign is a ballot of the membership seeking support for intensified strike action early next year.

Activists will now have to work as never before to get the membership out solidly in the two days of strike action and to get a big 'yes' vote in the ballot.

The strength of the left in the leading committees in Lanarkshire and Glasgow will be a decisive factor in ensuring the success of these developments.



Picketing the AGM of Pritchards, parent company of Crothalls. Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report).

Socialist Organiser

The South London group has just started its second estate sale.

Alongside the well-established Southwark estate sale, they are now doing one in Lambeth. First time round, last week, they sold nine papers.

And next week they plan to start a third estate sale, in Lewisham.

What South London are doing, other groups could do too! Send in reports to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Socialist Organiser

DECEMBER 2 CONFERENCE BROADSHEET

Back the pickets!

THE back of the latest, and most determined, Coal Board-Government offensive to defeat the miners' strike has been broken.

Despite further attempts to keep up the drift of strike-breakers - an extension of the Christmas bribe by a further week in South Wales and other areas, and a lump sum payment of £175 to all scabs - the numbers returning to work dramatically slumped on Monday even on the NCB's doctored figures.

The numbers were two-thirds down on the previous Monday - which forced the Guardian's Labour Correspondent to comment: "The board's hope of seeing half the NUM membership off the strike by Christmas is vanishing."

Indications

There can be few better indications of the strength and determination of the strikers than the way they have seen off the latest offensive, despite the intense pressures and hardships - 9 months on strike, the massive propaganda barrage, the onset of winter.

With around 80% of miners still on strike, the pressure is now back on the NCB and the government.

They have clearly been less confident than their Saatchi and Saatchi public image indicates.

And last week MacGregor once more let the truth out of the bag. No, he told the management unions, there was no guarantee ruling out

By John Bloxam

compulsory redundancies. Yes, he told the Harvard Business School Old Boys' Club in Paris, between 20,000 and 30,000 miners' jobs were for the chop.

The desperation creeping in is further shown by the NCB's latest open breach of its deal with NACODS. They have threatened to stop pay of deputies refusing to cross picket lines in Northumberland. The NACODS area council rejected this.

So the media and the government have now forgotten the 'back to work' figures, and rediscovered violence.

Recent reports from Nottinghamshire (see Paul Whetton's diary p.7) indicate that the scabs - Thatcher's 'new leadership' - have now decided to move towards a breakaway union. Resolutions have been tabled to end the overtime ban and constitutional amendments will be moved next month to make the area effectively autonomous from the national union.

Resistance

Faced with resistance among the rank and file strike breakers, the tactics of the scab leaders is clearly to move a step at a time, with the aim of provoking their own expulsion. But as with everything else, the final outcome will be determined by the results of the strike nationally.

A condition of victory will

be no separate negotiating rights for strike-breaking areas. This is a further indication of how high the stakes are.

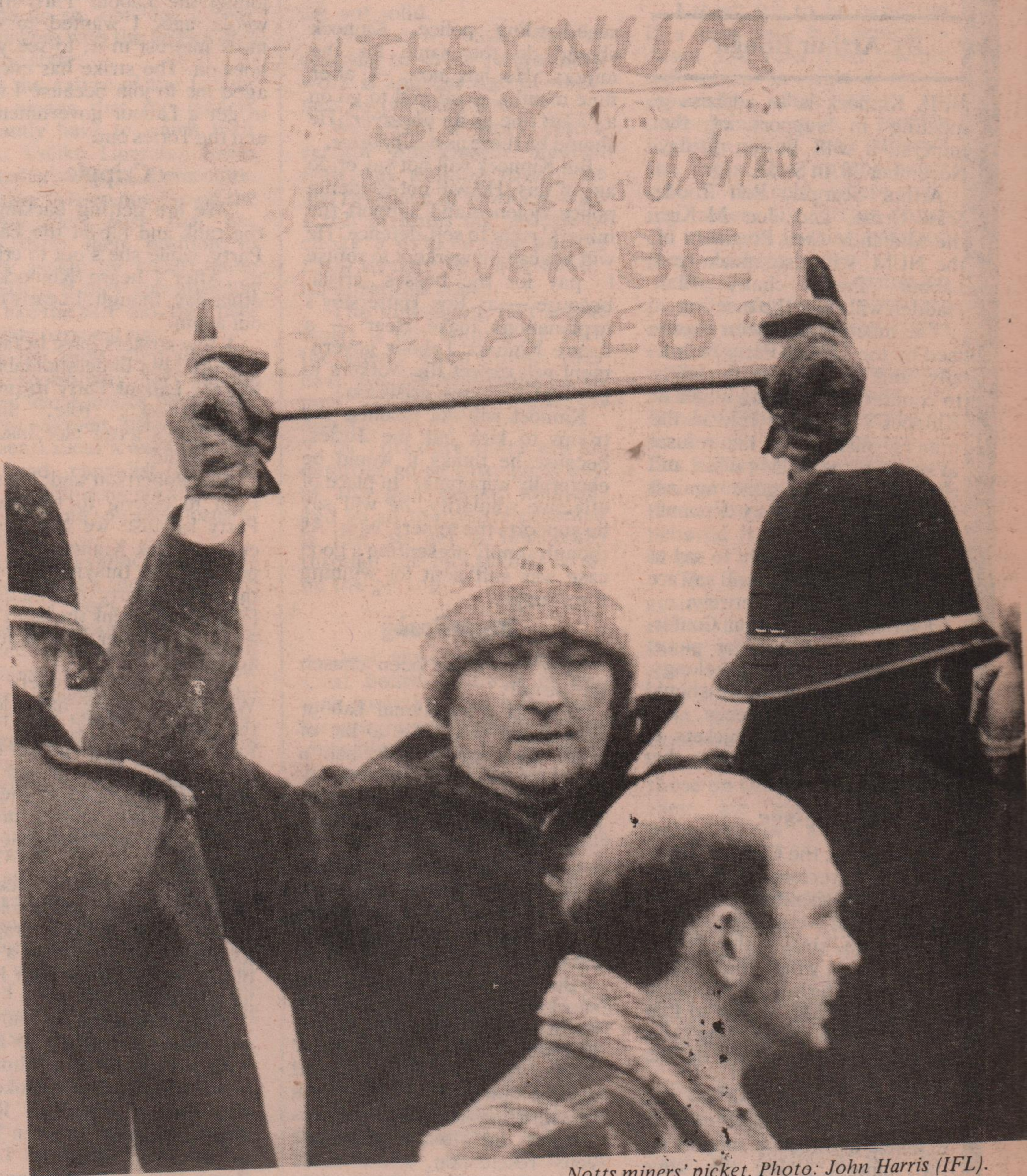
The majority of the TUC is still evenly divided between the ditherers and those who openly want to scab on the strike. As the manoeuvring and lack of action continues the need is urgent for the rank and file to throw its own weight effectively into the balance on the side of the miners.

Picketing of power stations has been stepped up. In Nottingham, the TGWU is now organising regular Wednesday evening pickets, and the Trades Council is now organising the same on Mondays and Thursdays.

Sunday

This underlines the importance of Sunday's solidarity conference, called by the Mineworkers' Defence Committee. A week before the conference, applications for delegates and visitors credentials had already reached 738 and it will certainly prove a massive display of solidarity with the NUM.

But it should also be more than this. And against those who want to talk about supporting the miners and do nothing in practice, it should provide a clear rank and file statement about the need to deliver action now - both implementing the TUC guidelines and organising towards a general strike to defend the unions.



Notts miners' picket. Photo: John Harris (IFL).

Stop coal and oil!

Seven steps for solidarity

■ Implement TUC policy: boycott scab coal and substitute oil.

■ Defend the unions: organise towards a general strike in support of the miners and against Tory laws. Now is the time to fight! Link other union demands into a common struggle alongside the miners.

■ Police out of the coal-fields! Labour councils

should block funds for the Tories' National Anti-Picket Police operation and demand the resignation of Chief Constables involved in it. Support the pickets' right to self-defence.

■ Support the Women Against Pit Closures groups: build a mass working class based women's movement.

■ Call the leaders to account: recall the TUC.

Recruit and organise in the Labour Party to build a left wing capable of replacing Kinnock.

■ Break collaboration with the Tories! Labour MPs should obstruct Tory business in Parliament; trade union leaders should withdraw from the NEDC and nationalised industry boards.

■ Kick the Tories out, fight for a socialist policy: open

the books of the nationalised industries; nationalise the banks and the financial institutions, and the supply industries, without compensation. Develop the energy, transport and steel industries under a workers' plan, with work-sharing with no loss of pay to guarantee decent jobs for all. Fight for a four-day week as a demand of the present strike, to safeguard jobs against new technology.

"I'm joining the Labour Party to get a decent leader"

By Arthur Bough

NEIL Kinnock is to address a meeting in support of the miners. It will be on Friday November 30, in Stoke.

Arthur Scargill, Ron Todd, Stan Orme, and Joe McKie, the Midlands Area President of the NUM, will also speak, and Labour Party chair, Alan Hadden will chair the meeting.

The meeting has been organised by the Labour Party nationally, and the purpose is clearly to counter the growing anger at Kinnock's scabbing role in the miners' dispute — his refusal to speak at the NUM rallies, and the fact he has gone against Labour Party policy by denouncing pickets' violence.

What Kinnock ought to say at the rally and what he will say are two different things entirely.

Labour Party Annual Conference put the blame for picket line violence where it belongs, with the police. Kinnock should condemn police violence, and support the right of pickets to defend themselves against that violence.

Stone-age

The Tories, the CBI, the Institute of Directors and other bosses' organisations are throwing their full weight behind the attempt to smash the NUM. They know what their class interest is. The bosses are out to cripple the trade unions so that they can force the working class to pay for the crisis of the bosses' system.

Kinnock should call for the entire labour movement to mobilise in effective support for the miners, giving the same solidarity as the bosses' organisations are giving to the NCB. Kinnock should be mobilising the working class troops to kick the Tories out.

Last week a Tory Minister, Giles Shaw, went on to the picket line to give support to the

scab-herding police. Kinnock should do the same for the miners. He has now — after nine months — offered to go on a picket line as an *observer*. He should be there as a *supporter*.

But Kinnock will not say or do any of this. He will not condemn police violence and support the miners' right to self-defence. He will not call on workers to refuse to pay for the bosses' crisis, because — as Roy Hattersley's explanations make clear — a future Kinnock Labour government will expect the workers to pay for the bosses' crisis too.

Kinnock will not mobilise the troops to kick out the Tories, because he thinks it would be ectorally unpopular. In place of effective solidarity, he will say he supports the miners' *case*. As though simply presenting a good case was sufficient for winning the struggle.

Boomerang

Why has Stoke been chosen for the rally?

Stoke is a traditional Labour stronghold, and like a lot of other such strongholds has a very backward labour movement. Until recently the Labour Party locally was dominated by a stone-age right wing. This has now been replaced by a bureaucratic soft left. Last year Kinnock held a 1,000-strong rally in Stoke in his leadership campaign.

But Kinnock could be in for a shock. Even some of the soft left in Stoke have been appalled at Kinnock's role in the miners' strike. And they have turned against him in the Stoke North Constituency because of his support for 'one-member-one vote' reselection, which could have sabotaged their long time ambition of deselection right-wing MP John Forrester.

Kinnock probably also estimates that the North Staffs miners are likely to be the least hostile outside Notts. At the beginning of the strike North

Staffs miners voted overwhelmingly in a ballot not to strike. Only at branch meetings after they had been picketed out did they decide to strike.

Throughout, many local officials, while supporting the strike, have said that there should have been a national ballot.

As a result there has been a steady drift back to work in the North Staffs coalfield, with probably more than 50% now working.

However, Kinnock is likely to be wrong again. The scabs are unlikely to turn out to the meeting, and the hard core still on strike have become more and more hostile to Kinnock as the strike has gone on. Increasingly they say "Kinnock must go".

Miners who went to the NUM rally in Birmingham were not at all impressed with Kinnock's front man Orme. They are unlikely to be any more sympathetic to the organ-grinder himself.

A sign of the politicisation of the local striking miners is the number joining the Labour Party. Socialist Organiser spoke to two of them from Wolstanton Colliery.

John Ratcliffe told us: "I joined the Labour Party three weeks ago. I wanted to take more interest in it, to see what goes on. The strike has encouraged me to join because I want to get a Labour government in and the Tories out."

Cripple

"We are getting backing off the rank and file in the Labour Party, while she's out to cripple us. After I heard Kinnock the other day, though, I nearly came out again."

A few strikers have in fact — wrongly, but understandably — left the Labour Party in protest at Kinnock's role. Jimmy McMillan's letter (see inset) is an example.

Alex Robertson said: "It's our right to belong to the Labour Party because we are working class. I think Kinnock is a toss-pot, and I'm thinking of joining the Labour Party to get a decent leader, but I think the one I want — Denis Skinner — wouldn't be accepted."

Already twelve miners from Wolstanton alone have joined the Labour Party, and more forms are being given out every day. This influx should also shake up the soft left in the local Party because miners are no more happy with their role than Kinnock's.

As Alan Lockett, a picket at Meaford Power Station told us, "The Council's been dragging its feet for too long, and a lot of blokes have lost all faith in the local Labour Party."

The meeting is at 7.30 p.m. on Friday November 30 at the King's Hall, Stoke. Admission is by ticket, from the Stoke District Labour Party, 4 Robert Street, Tunstall, Stoke on Trent, or from the Regional Labour Party office in Birmingham.

For Kinnock it could be make-or-break time. Failure to come up with the goods in front of 2,000 angry miners who've been out for nine months could sound the death knell for Kinnock's credibility as Labour Leader.

Kinnock undermines Labour

Jimmy McMillan, secretary of Hem Heath NUM, told us:

I have left the Labour Party because I am completely disenchanted with the stance taken by Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party.

I am furious with him reiterating Thatcher's remarks on picket line violence, and the fact that he has never been on one.

I am also furious that he never challenged Thatcher on the social violence inflicted by this government and MacGregor on the families of striking miners — i.e. £15 being stopped from

supplementary benefits, holiday pay being withheld by the NCB, and coal allowances stopped.

I am furious that he snubbed the invitation from the leader of the NUM, Arthur Scargill, to join him on the platform at the recent five rallies held by the NUM, his reason being that he had prior engagements.

Kinnock should wake up to the fact that the miners are fighting to protect jobs and communities.

I believe that I am probably echoing the sentiments of thousands of other miners' and trade

unionists.

Kinnock, there are 23,000 of your countrymen making a stand against the policies of this Tory government. Why don't you do the same and bring credibility back into the Labour Party?

Because unless you do become more positive, then I believe that the Labour Party will not be the opposition or even the government of this country.

And even now I believe that would be the greatest political disaster to happen to the working class of this country.

The two Labour Parties - Kinnock's rank and

NOT so long ago Neil Kinnock was the blue-eyed boy of the Labour Party. His election to the Labour leadership was applauded by many in the Party as both a victory (or a half-victory) for the left, and a blow for Party unity. Left and right in the Party could stop their squabbles and get on with the business of winning elections.

Kinnock had a good sense for publicity — Tracey Ullman videos, appearances on the Tube. And, no doubt, it made a change to have a leading politician with a nice lilting Welsh accent rather than an Oxford plum in his mouth.

He seemed to get results in the opinion polls.

Weaseling

Now Kinnock is despised by the majority of striking miners because of his weaseling and equivocation on their struggle.

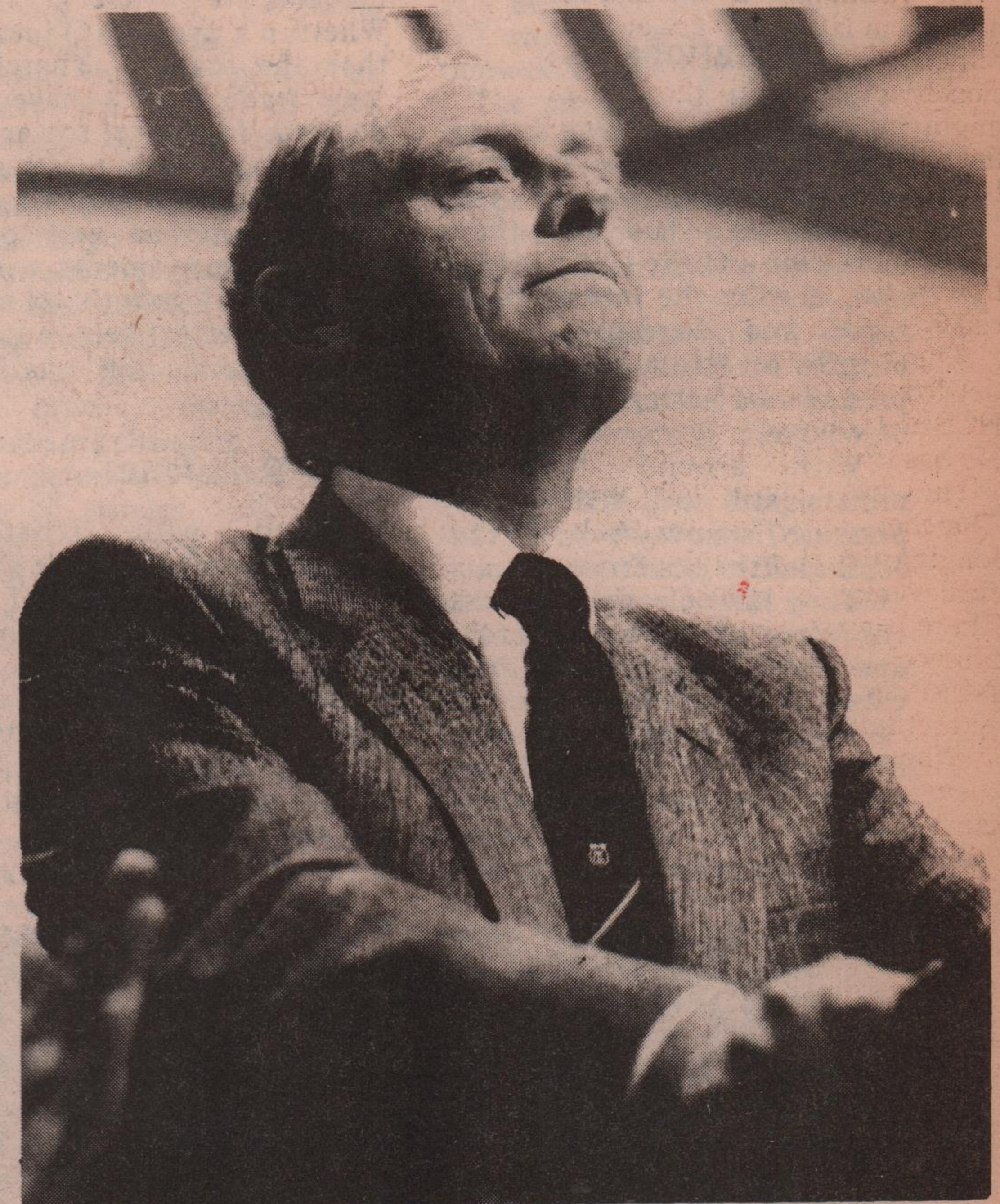
At Labour Party conference, Kinnock condemned the notion that Labour should embark upon "a political charge of the Light Brigade". More recently, referring to a First World War defeat, he said he didn't want a "Gallipoli". Condemning "all" picket line violence and equating pickets and the police, he declared: "I deprecate violence. I damn violence — all violence without fear or favour: And that is what makes me different from Margaret Thatcher — I do not have her double standards."

For Kinnock, "democracy is the only system we are prepared to use to wield power". Labour could not emphasise legality "as our main weapon for the future and then simultaneously scorn legality in the present".

When the Courts ruled against the NGA last year, Kinnock was forthright that all opposition should keep 'within the law'. No unlawful pickets, no unlawful solidarity strikes, nothing! What the judges say, goes.

Kinnock's pleas for obedience to the state machine are, it seems, an attempt to recapture votes. If the Tories can portray themselves as the party of 'law and order', then (he thinks) Labour will lose out. Therefore,

While rank and file Labour activists have been working hard to support the miners, Neil Kinnock has been sitting on the fence. Why? And what can we do about it? Clive Bradley discusses the issues.



Neil Kinnock. Photo: John Harris

Labour must prove itself to be a 'respectable' opposition party.

Kinnock's line is also a distinct political answer to the Tory attacks, and in particular to the attacks on legal rights for the unions. That answer is perfectly simple: wait, and a future Labour government will repeal the laws. Do nothing now.

Both lines of reasoning mean scabbing on the needs of the class struggle now. They tell us to stand by and watch, with a few words of protest, but no action, as the bed-rock organisations of the labour movement are defeated and crippled.

Even if Labour were to win in

a future election, after years of the labour movement submitting peacefully to Tory attacks, then a Labour government based on such a humbled and demoralised labour movement would barely be a government worth having.

In pure vote-catching terms, too, Kinnock's strategy is idiotic. It amounts to saying that a defeat in the here and now for the labour movement is likely to lead to a 'Labour victory' in a few years' time.

The truth is that the more victories the labour movement secures, the greater its strength and confidence, the weaker the

Back the miners



Break away in Notts

Paul Whetton's strike diary

Paul Whetton is secretary of the Notts miners' rank and file strike committee, writing in a personal capacity.

the media. If Kinnock wants to find out whether or not miners are starving, then he should get himself down to a picket line, and he can also see the truth about violence there.

There's been a big outcry about a scab was supposedly beaten up by strikers. The local NUM branch said that they didn't think their members were involved, but they were setting up an inquiry.

I think it's to be expected if a man sells his principles down the river that people will react in violent ways, especially when they are undergoing such terrible hardship. But why doesn't the press play up the other side of the coin, where striking miners are getting physical violence and intimidation from working miners?

There's a case coming up in court shortly of a striking miner who had scabs trying to saw his head off.

We had our Bevercotes NUM branch meeting on Sunday. The scabs sprang on us a vote on acceptance of the 5.2% pay offer and lifting the overtime ban. None of the strikers voted, because we believed it was totally out of order.

The branch has now gone against area policy and national policy. We warned them quite specifically that they were out of order, but they still insisted on doing it.

A lot of the lads on the floor obviously don't understand what it's all about, but those on the platform do, and they are manipulating to bring about a breakaway union.

Spencerism

People who have got nothing whatsoever to do with the NUM are spending quite large sums of money in order to set up Spencerism again in Nottingham.

At the power stations we're getting quite a lot of hassle now from the police. This morning, for the third time, our shelter at Westburton power station has been destroyed by the police, and they used labour and machinery from out of the power station to do that.

I was surprised that the High Court today [Monday] went that far against the TGWU. I would have thought that they would have wanted to take a low profile and not stir things up.

But if we can get the TGWU stirred up that much that they will come and stand alongside us, then we're starting to get somewhere.

On Sunday December 2 I'll be speaking at the support conference in London. I hope we can galvanise the rank and file.

We've seen exactly what change we're going to get out of the leadership, and that's absolutely zero. We just get words from them, and a lot of rhetoric. I'm hoping that the rank and file will start to mobilise itself from that conference.

Even now, the 'hard left' have not regained the initiative. Some attempts to push home the Kinnockites' advantage have been stopped — like the proposed change in selection procedure. But the right wing has held on to its positions after this year's conference; Kinnock still managed to get a standing ovation; and, even more significant, an economic policy document reflecting Roy Hattersley's mixed-economy thinking went through without serious opposition.

The problem is not just Neil Kinnock as an individual. If it weren't Kinnock saying the things he says, and doing the things he does, it would be someone else. He represents a definite force within the Labour Party and trade unions which has consolidated its position since the fall of Foot.

But there is more to it than that.

The Labour Party is the political party of the trade unions. Trade unions set it up; it was formed to be a political voice for the trade unions. But the trade unions are not controlled by rank and file workers.

They are controlled by a more-or-less entrenched *bureaucracy* which generally, so long as it is able to do so, opts for a cosy relationship with the bosses and with the state.

But the nature of the Labour Party means that the leaders constantly have to watch their backs. Unlike Liberals, Tories and today's Social Democrats, they have to keep one eye on the *working class base* that has given them their position in society as big (or small) name politicians. If they just abandon ship, like the SDP did, they take a terrible personal risk.

The left itself often shares a big responsibility for Labour leaders like Kinnock being able to carry out their 'balancing act' between Labour's working class base and capitalist policies. Often the left does not fight the right wing and so-called 'centre' leaders.

Left-wingers knuckle under — or buckle under the pressure — or abstain from the struggle within the Labour Party, leaving the field clear to Kinnock, as if they hoped to build a whole new labour movement in parallel rather than changing the existing organisations of the working class.

To defeat the Kinnocks of this world, we must organise a left wing throughout the labour movement that is prepared to fight all the way — to transform, democratise and politically re-arm the labour movement to be able to win, and to drag the trade unions and Labour Party out of back-room deals in the corridors of power and onto the streets.

THIS broadsheet is produced as part of this week's Socialist Organiser.

Socialist Organiser is a weekly paper produced by organised left-wingers in the Labour Party.

This week's issue includes:
*The story of the tenacious solidarity of railworkers in Leicestershire, and other miners' strike news.

*The facts on new technology in the mines.

*Peter Hain on the Tory law's challenge to the trade unions' political levy.

*Interview with strikers at Barking Hospital — out for nearly nine months against private contractors Crothalls.

*CPSA national executive member Rod Bacon on why the CPSA Broad Left, the biggest in the trade union movement, has split, and what to do about it.

*and much more.
25p, 10p to claimants and strikers.



Kent miners in London. Photo: Andrew Moore

and the file's

Tories become, the greater Labour's electoral chances.

Kinnock's strategy leaves him dithering on the miners' strike, discrediting himself both with scabs and with strikers.

He vacillates on whether or not to join NUM leaders at their rallies. For Kinnock, to be closely aligned with the miners might 'alienate' too many potential voters, and damage Labour's election chances.

At the same time he can't be too distant. Outright condemnation of the strike would be too risky.

Kinnock wants the NUM to get round the table with the NCB and come to a *compromise*. He has tried to play 'mediator'.

He has condemned Mrs Thatcher for 'needlessly prolonging the strike' due to 'political vanity on a manic scale'. There is no reason, according to Kinnock, why the NCB and the NUM cannot come to a 'negotiated settlement'.

What such a negotiated settlement would look like is not at all clear. Kinnock's basic thought seems to be that any settlement is better than the strike continuing.

To want victory means to be in favour of the methods needed to win — and Kinnock, plainly, is not.

This is an account of Kinnock's activity in his own constituency, from a London Labour Party delegation which recently visited.

"Hardly anyone had a good word for Neil Kinnock. The general feeling was that he had sat on the fence and had let them down.

"They want and need his support. They want him to take the lead and argue their case, something that so far he has singularly failed to do.

"What really disgusted me was the fact that not once during the duration of the strike has Kinnock visited the striking miners in Oakdale. In actual fact he has not visited any of the Lodges in the area, nor the food distribution centre at Abertillery.

"He has not even written

them a letter of support. And this from someone who is not only the leader of the Labour Party but who is also their MP."

Kinnock's plans for Labour have an undercurrent to them which is even worse.

At this year's conference, he insisted in his speech that Labour would have no truck with the Liberal-SDP Alliance. During the miners' strike he could hardly say otherwise. But is he sure?

Hobsbawm

At last year's conference — when he was elected leader — Kinnock chaired a meeting addressed by Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm is a member of the Communist Party who has argued in favour of Labour forming a coalition with the Liberals and SDP, or at least an election pact.

The argument runs that the Tories now represent something so new and terrifying that they must be defeated no matter what the cost. It is a stale and vacuous re-hash of old Stalinist

arguments from the 1930s about a 'popular front' to beat fascism.

As Hobsbawm put his case, Kinnock nodded in agreement. And it is well known that some of Kinnock's advisers share Hobsbawm's line.

For some time, Kinnock had been the spokesperson for the party 'centre' — for those who talked left but could be relied on to do nothing left wing.

He opposed Benn in his contest with Healey for deputy leader in 1981. In the 1983 leadership elections he represented the centre option — opposed on the left by Eric Heffer.

Kinnock's victory represented a combination of ex-left wing pessimism, demoralised by the June 1983 election defeat and the industrial situation, and never-left-wing hope for a respectable future. And under his leadership, many of the soft left became even softer and found themselves a niche within a slightly altered Labour Party establishment.



Police in the Midlands. Photo: John Harris

A working class women's movement

By Jean Lane

AS a result of the miners' strike many women have become involved in political struggle for the first time in their lives.

Nearly all of the women in the miners' wives' committees that I have spoken to have said "I used to bring my kids up to respect the police, but they hate them now and I don't blame them".

Or they say: "I never realised how much the media lies. I used to believe what they told me about Greenham women and about blacks in London and Bristol, but not any more."

Or: "At the last election I couldn't decide whether to vote Labour, SDP or Tory. They all looked the same to me. Now, I don't like Kinnock, but Labour's the party of the working class — I'd vote for them."

Some say: "I think I'll join because it needs to be changed into a party that really does represent the working class."

History

And during this strike many women have learned about women's very militant history of struggle. From the matchgirls' strike of 18XX and before to Greenham Common, women have had to fight extra hard because we not only have the bosses and the state to fight — we also have the sexist attitudes of our class allies, the men in the labour movement.

Whenever working class women have fought — the Trico women for equal pay, or the Grunwick women for trade union recognition — we've had a battle on two fronts.

The battle won't end when the miners' strike has been won. Women will still have to fight not just for wages, jobs, nurseries and schools, but also for space in the labour movement.

In this society women's primary role is seen as bringing up children. Any paid work or any political affiliation women may have must be fitted in around that.

On leaving school, a man

doesn't consider "will my desire to have children prevent me from getting full-time work?" When he goes for an interview he isn't asked whether he will be leaving in a couple of years time to start a family.

And at work he doesn't think about whether the kids will hold him back if he considers putting his name forward for shop steward. He doesn't worry whether meetings will be held at times when he should be putting the kids to bed or making their tea. He need not be anxious about whether creche facilities will be provided at those meetings.

Both in the Labour Party and in the trade unions, women have had to organise to get the issues that affect them taken seriously.

For years we have had to put up with men who say: "Women only work for pin money" or "women aren't interested in the union or in politics. They never come to meetings. They never take an active part" — and at the same time actually discourage women from taking part by their attitudes and by the way the labour movement is run.

Women have been in the forefront of the fight against the Tories since 1979. And now the Women Against Pit Closures groups and the Ford women's strike are the last piece in the jigsaw. Or rather the last but one piece.

Unity

The last piece will be slotted in when the different struggles of working class women are joined together into one women's movement which has a programme for fighting the Tories and fighting for our place in the labour movement.

So many women have said during the miners' strike: "We don't want to go back into the home when all this is over" or "If we'd been organised before the way we are now we wouldn't have allowed that school closure — we'd have occupied".

The only way to prevent that happening is to form a working class women's movement which will continue these battles.

Basingstoke's example

Carla Jamison spoke to Tim Anderson about the work of Basingstoke miners' support group

We've collected £13,000 in cash, food worth over £5000, about 50 sacks of clothing, and antique jewellery valued at £13,000.

Where has it come from? In the first place, trade union donations and collections. The major unions that have been helping have been the UCW, EETPU members in the Sainsburys depot, and the local ASLEF.

We've been producing two regular bulletins — one produced by the Trades Council and going to all affiliated trade union branches, and the other one from the Labour Party, going to Labour Party members.

A lot of wards have got weekly levies going, and the rest of our money comes from street collections and bric-a-brac sales, car boot sales, that sort of thing.

We've taken two delegations up to Nottinghamshire, and every week we've had delegations of miners down here. We take the miners round any meetings we can get them into.

But the trade union full-

timers in Southampton have this body called the South East Region TUC Campaign for Economic and Social Advance Hampshire Campaign Miners' Support Committee. They claim to be acting on behalf of the whole of Hampshire.

They tried to stop us doing any work for the Notts miners — using smears and innuendos, that there was no such thing as the Notts Miners' Forum, and so on. But finally we got that stamped on by the NUM itself.

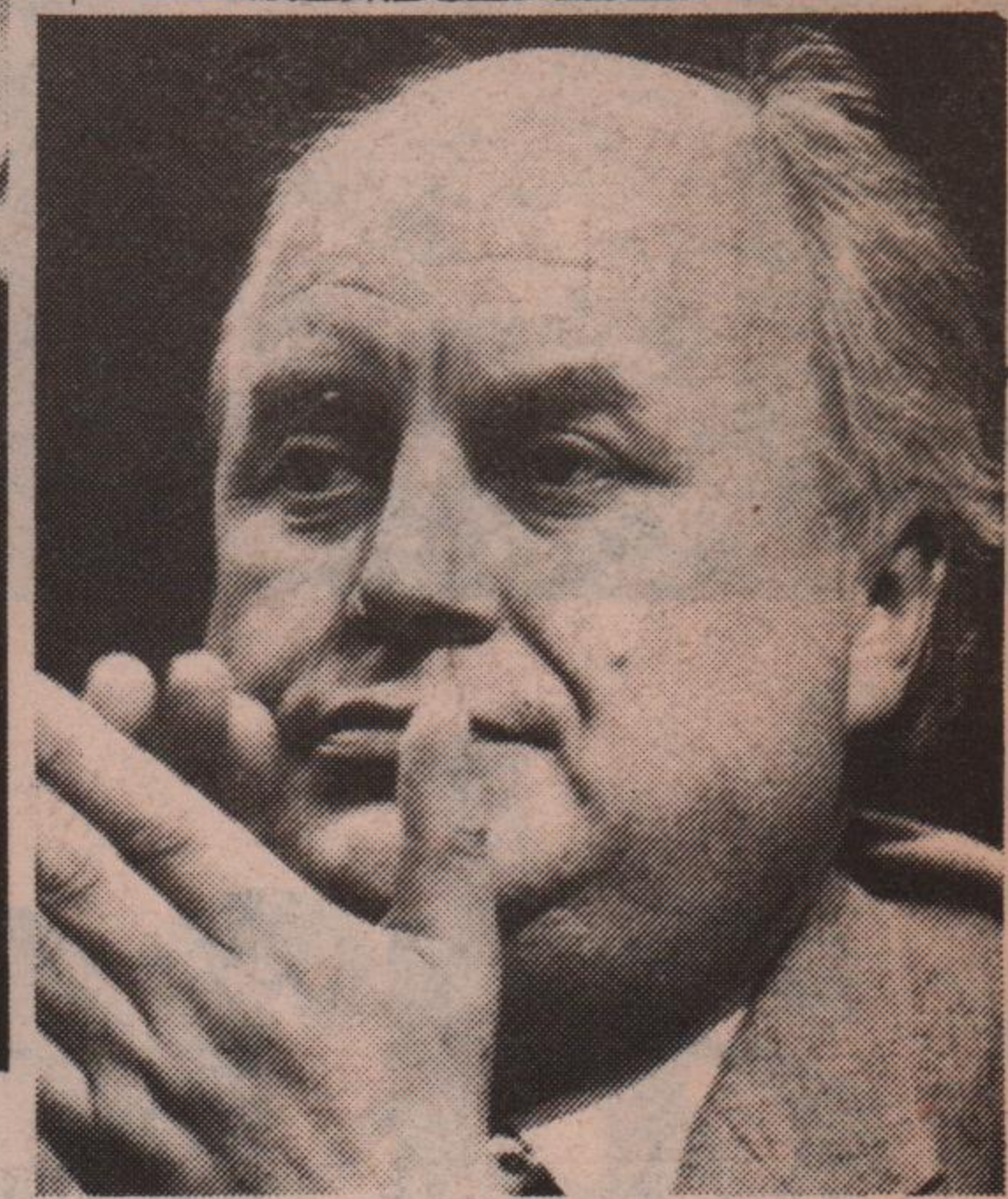
We've also had a lot of intimidation from the police and private security firms on the street collections. But we've ridden that out, and our street collections now go completely unhindered.

We just kept persevering and arguing with them every time.

The miners' strike has shown up a lot of things in the labour movement in Basingstoke. Unions that have hitherto seemed strong and reliable have proved incapable of organising anything, while other groups of workers have come forward. There's the same sort of thing in the Labour Party — a whole lot of new individuals have come forward and now want to be active in many directions.



Willis is ready to condemn picket line violence. This is the reality: a miner knocked down by a police horse-box and then run over by a police transit van at Rossington. Photo: John Harris (IFL).



Recall the TUC!

IN SEPTEMBER the TUC voted to support the NUM, but very little has so far come out of that decision.

Since the TUC congress, the Tories and the Coal Board have stepped up their war on the miners, coercing, bullying, injuring, jailing, and, now, bribing miners into giving in.

But instead of throwing its weight behind the miners, the TUC has tried to distance itself from them. Norman Willis, legless Len Murray's successor as general secretary of the TUC, has joined in the Tories' propaganda offensive against the NUM, blaming the miners for the increasing violence of the dispute.

The TUC and its leaders have torn up the decisions of September's congress.

Suicidal

The TUC's behaviour is nothing less than suicidal. Everybody knows — the Tories say it — that the miners are a test case for the whole labour movement. If they go down to the crushing defeat that Thatcher is aiming for, then the Tories will conclude that the way is open for an attempt to steamroller the entire labour movement flat.

They want nothing less than to destroy effective trade unionism, and they know that if they destroy this miners' strike they will have gone a long way towards achieving that goal.

They are now, for the first time, using the anti-union laws aggressively and systematically — and with great success in the Austin Rover strike. The £200,000 fine on the TGWU for refusing to let the courts dictate

to the union should alert the labour movement.

If the miners don't win this confrontation with the government, if they are beaten after nearly a year on strike, then the chances of a successful resistance to the anti-union laws in the period ahead will be greatly undermined and diminished.

At the least the fight will be much harder, more drawn out and more damaging to the labour movement than it need be.

The TUC's behaviour towards the miners is leading the entire labour movement towards a disabling defeat.

Mobilise

The working class movement needs to be mobilised — and there is still time to mobilise around the miners and fight back. The magnificent hard core of striking miners have resisted MacGregor's Christmas-money bait. But the number of strikers who were persuaded to become scabs and traitors to the labour movement must be a worry to us.

We should not leave the miners alone to stand up to the Tories. They have shown that they will not give in — but still they need help!

If the labour movement rallies to the NUM it can explain what's going on to the working class and win the propaganda war with the Tories and their media. We can win the working class to active sympathy and solidarity. The TUC can play an irreplaceable role here.

For that reason militants should demand the recall of the TUC. The policy decided in September has not been imple-

mented: the leaders need to be called to order. The use of the anti-union laws has been stepped up, and needs to be responded to by a united movement.

Campaign

A Trade Union Congress meeting in present conditions would be a parliament of the working class where the crisis we now face could be discussed. The campaign in the trade union branches for a recall TUC congress will involve local discussions of what to do to help the miners and resist the Tory offensive.

It can help set up a ferment in the labour movement; it will give a focus to the concern militants now feel. It will focus the movement on the burning issues of the High Court dictatorship over the unions set up by the Tories and now activated.

Willis

The labour movement can begin to feel its own strength, to reassert that it is a broad and powerful movement, in the course of fighting for a recall congress.

Nobody with any sense will expect an adequate and decisive lead from Willis or Basnett. But conceivably they might not have any choice but to do more than they are doing now and to stop acts of scabbing like Willis's attacks on the miners. Even the Basnetts don't want the NUM to be crushed, and are subject to pressure from their members.

In any case militants would be greatly strengthened by a TUC congress where the Tory offensive and the failure to implement September's decisions made up the agenda.

Solidarity

There is no reason why the call for a TUC congress should cut across the urgent need for immediate solidarity with the miners. The discussion in the union branches and shop stewards' committees about the need for a working-class congress to decide what to do now would be far more likely to increase the chances of immediate solidarity action.

Recall the TUC!
Smash the anti-union laws!
Victory to the miners!

Disrupt the Tories!

About time too! The protest mounted by left Labour MPs when the Tories announced a cut of £1 in social security benefits for striking miners was like a breath of fresh air.

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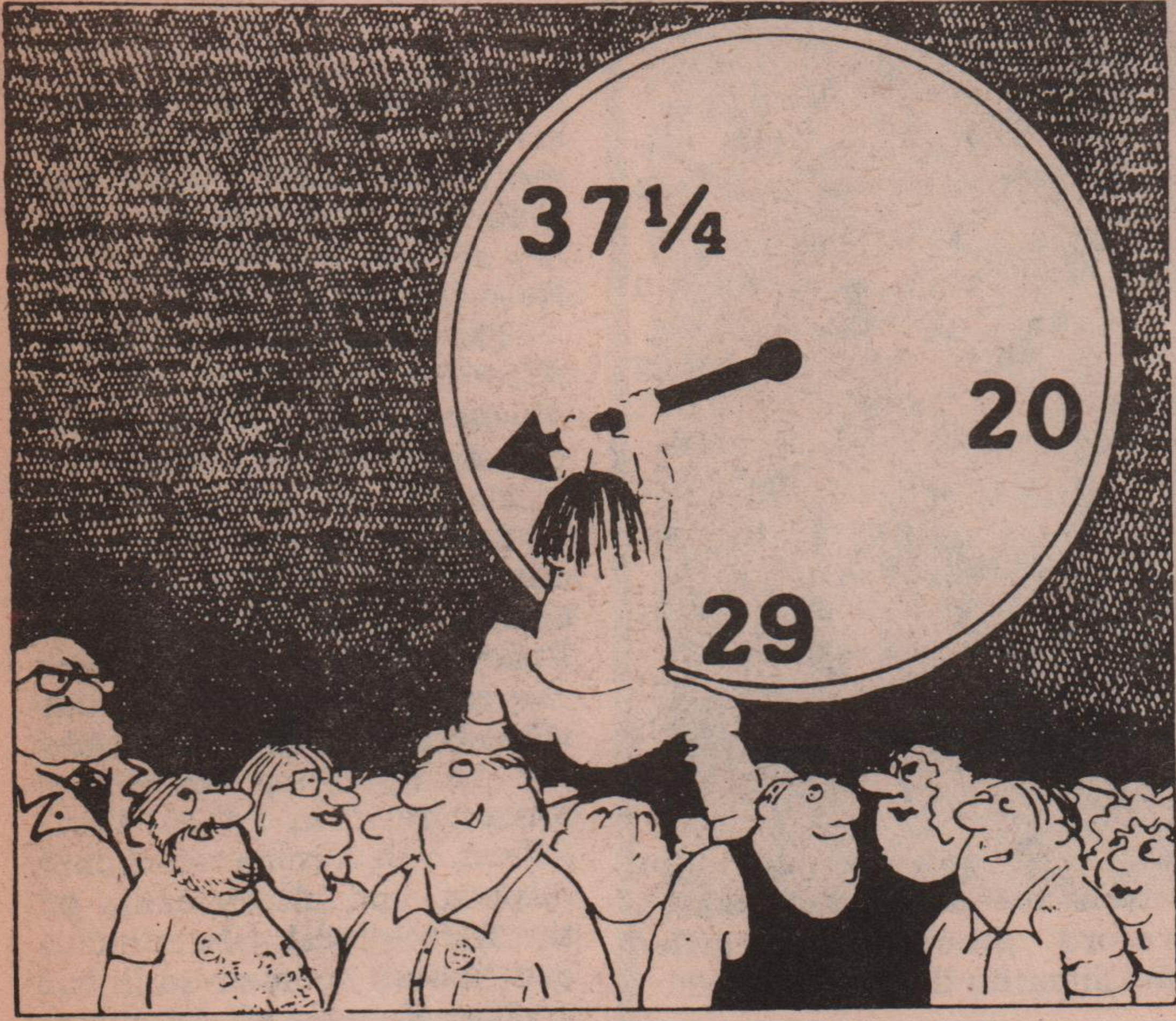
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SCIENCE

Technology and the mines



A shorter work week can give the benefits of new tech to workers

By Les Hearn

NEW Scientist is continuing its tacit support for the miners' case. In last week's issue, Michael Cross (whose previous writings I summarised a few weeks back) previewed a Channel 4 programme called "Undermining the Industry".*

According to this programme, new technologies in mining will change the face of the British coal industry more than the NCB and the government admit.

It shows how two leaps in productivity are being made — first with MINOS, a computer that allows full knowledge of what is going on underground and can therefore reduce the time machinery is out of action, and secondly with FIDO, a system that monitors the movement of shearing machines as they cut into coal faces and can reduce unnecessary stoppages of work still further.

MINOS is already in operation at the showpiece colliery of Selby, where production is running at four times the average per work and may go higher. FIDO is estimated to reduce labour requirements still further, cutting the number of workers per coal face from 7 to 3.

Of course, socialists are not opposed to improvements in productivity. We would like to see these improvements benefit workers by reducing dangerous and drudging work.

However, the aim of the NCB's research is the opposite to ours.

The new automated technology only works in thick, regular seams of coal, and the thin, faulted seams of the Scottish and Welsh coalfields would not be of any use to the Coal Board of the future.

The communities in these "peripheral" areas would there-

fore all be abandoned as the Coal Board got rid of an estimated 60% to 80% of its work-force.

On top of this squandered human resource, the NCB would also be "sterilising" coal reserves. Closing a mine is virtually equivalent to writing off its remaining reserves as it is very difficult, if not impossible, to reopen a closed mine. Subsidence, flooding and spontaneous combustion and other deteriorations take place once maintenance ceases.

Steve Hewlett, maker of this TV programme, estimates that some five-sixths of Britain's 45 billion tonnes of coal reserves may be "sterilised", leaving only a few large fields, such as Selby and the Vale of Belvoir, both only good for another 30 years. Total reserves would fall from 300 years' to 50 years' worth.

This doesn't bother the NCB and its Tory controllers. The streamlined industry would produce coal as cheap as any in the world and would be an attractive prospect for taking over by private industry. No doubt, the Tories have already thought of selling off Selby.

Hewlett regards it as an irony that "whether they know it or not, the miners have the best interests of the country at heart". I suspect that the miners and their millions of supporters will not find this ironic at all.

But even though we are convinced of the miners' case, it is nice to read, as Michael Cross writes, that "the striking miners, far from advocating a return to the past, are laying the foundations for a sensible energy policy for the future".

*Channel 4, Wednesday November 28.



Simon Bolivar led Spanish America's struggle against Spain in the early 19th century. But independence did not end imperialist domination.

IN 1519-21 Spain conquered Mexico, and over the following decades it rapidly built up in America the first great colonial empire of the capitalist era.

In India and in Africa, as we have seen, the colonial regimes acted as a sort of funnel, strapped onto a modified local pre-capitalist economy, and pumping out wealth into the channels of European capitalism. Spanish America was not quite the same.

Nor, generally, did it follow the other example of European colonialism, in North America and Australia, where the local population was almost completely wiped out and replaced by European settlers pursuing capitalist development.

The Americas had perhaps 100 million people before the Europeans arrived. Less than three million of these lived in North America or in present-day Argentina, Brazil or Chile. The vast majority were in present-day Mexico, Central America, and Peru, where they had elaborate civilisations but were technologically not very advanced.

Those densely-populated areas became the main centres of Spanish America. The native ('Indian') population was decimated by war, forced labour, and imported diseases — in Mexico it was reduced from 25 million to 1½ million in one century — but remained the basic labour force for the Spanish regime.

Elsewhere in the Americas, where the native population was sparse or was wiped out completely (as on many Caribbean islands), African slaves were imported. But in the Spanish possessions African slavery was a relatively minor element, except in Cuba.

Today 'mestizos' — people of mixed race — are the dominant ethnic type in Latin America; but countries vary widely, with Bolivia and Guatemala having an Indian majority in the population and Argentina and Uruguay being almost entirely white.

"At first the Spaniards simply picked up the gold already mined by the Incas and used for ritual", records Immanuel Wallerstein. "It was a bonanza. Just as this was running out, the Spaniards succeeded in discovering the method of silver amalgam which enabled them profitably to mine the silver which existed in such abundance".*

A yearly succession of treasure fleets made their way across the Atlantic, laden with silver. Potosi — now a small, poverty-stricken town in Bolivian highlands — became, in its heyday around 1600, as large and perhaps as rich as any city in Western Europe. It was producing half the world total supply of silver. The human cost? Eight million Indians killed by forced labour in the silver mines of Potosi alone.

Why poverty?

Looting El Dorado

El Dorado was the 16th century European free-booters' name for a mythical city stacked with gold somewhere in South America.

In fact the continent was a real El Dorado for infant European capitalism, filling huge treasure fleets of silver and gold. The price was the decimation of the local population and a legacy of economic underdevelopment.

This article by Martin Thomas is the fourth in a series on the roots of Third World poverty.

The huge gains made from the silver trade have convinced many Marxists that Spanish America was fully capitalist.** But not every trade economy is capitalist. Capital is not just wealth from trade, but wealth which constantly expands itself through reinvestment.

Although fortunes based on the silver trade played a big role in the emergence of the capitalist world economy, they were generally not *capital* in America.

Even metropolitan Spain's economy was still based on feudal privilege rather than capitalist enterprise. The treasure of the 'Indies' (as the Spanish called America) was consumed in luxury and military display.

Antwerp

Spaniards of the time complained that their country was "the Indies of other foreign kingdoms". The silver quickened capitalism not in Spain but in Italy and north-west Europe. Much of it went to Antwerp, which in the 16th century was "as much (if not more) the true capital of the Atlantic as Seville or Lisbon... a system of exchange, circulation and banking came into being, centred on the Scheldt port, and extending as far as Germany, England and even Lyons".***

And in Spanish America a new feudalism was established.

Spanish settlers grabbed huge areas of land — the 'latifundia'. A fantastically unequal distribution of landownership was set up which continues in most of Spanish America to this day. In 1970, over 60% of Latin America's land was in big holdings (more than 500 hectares), whereas in Africa and Asia 75-80% of land is in holdings less than 20 hectares.

The Indian and mestizo peasants were tied to the latifundia by a system called debt peonage. The Spanish land-grabber would grant the peasant a little land, some implements and some seed or livestock, in return for labour and loan repayments.

Formally the peasants are wage-labourers. In fact they can never get out of debt, and the landowner is local magistrate and governor as well as employer. This system is by no means abolished in Latin America even now.

At the beginning of the 19th century almost all the Spanish-American colonies won independence. But there was no great stride forward into capitalist development.

In fact the hold of the landowning oligarchies tightened. Manufacturing industry — which had been quite active under Spanish rule, though in feudal guild forms — initially declined.

Spanish-American feudalism,

resting as it did on the super-exploitation of the Indians, lacked the dynamic conflict between cities and countryside typical of West European feudalism. Landowners generally lived in the cities. There was not much of an urban merchant/industrial class fretting against feudal limitations.

The British politician George Canning greeted Latin American independence with some excitement: "England will be a workshop, and Latin America its farm". This prospect suited the Latin American oligarchies quite well.

Trade increased. Spanish-American manufacturing industry, relatively robust against the feeble competition of Spain, was crushed by the competition of Britain's new factories. But cities were still rich.

Dependent

Capital circulated increasingly in Latin America under this 'imperialism of free trade', and towards the end of the century new industries arose in Mexico, in Brazil, in Chile and in Argentina. But its scope was limited. Most Latin-American countries became economies dependent on a single export — coffee, bananas, tin for Bolivia, nitrates and later copper for Chile.

Some leaders of the independence struggle had hoped to unite former Spanish America in a single state. They failed. The division of the region into several states led to those states

being integrated into the world economy as separate (relatively weak and small) provinces, relating more to Europe (and later the US) than to each other. In 1966 only 10% of the trade of the Latin American Free Trade Area was within LAFTA, whereas over 60% of Western Europe's trade was internal.

Worse: from the late 19th century, large parts of Latin America became semi-colonies of the US. In 1895 an official US diplomatic note declared: "Today the US is practically sovereign on this continent, and its fiat is law". The US never quite acquired that full control, and especially not over the larger states to the south; but it was a powerful force backing up the oligarchies, and in Central America it regularly intervened with direct military force at the least sign of reform.

Depression

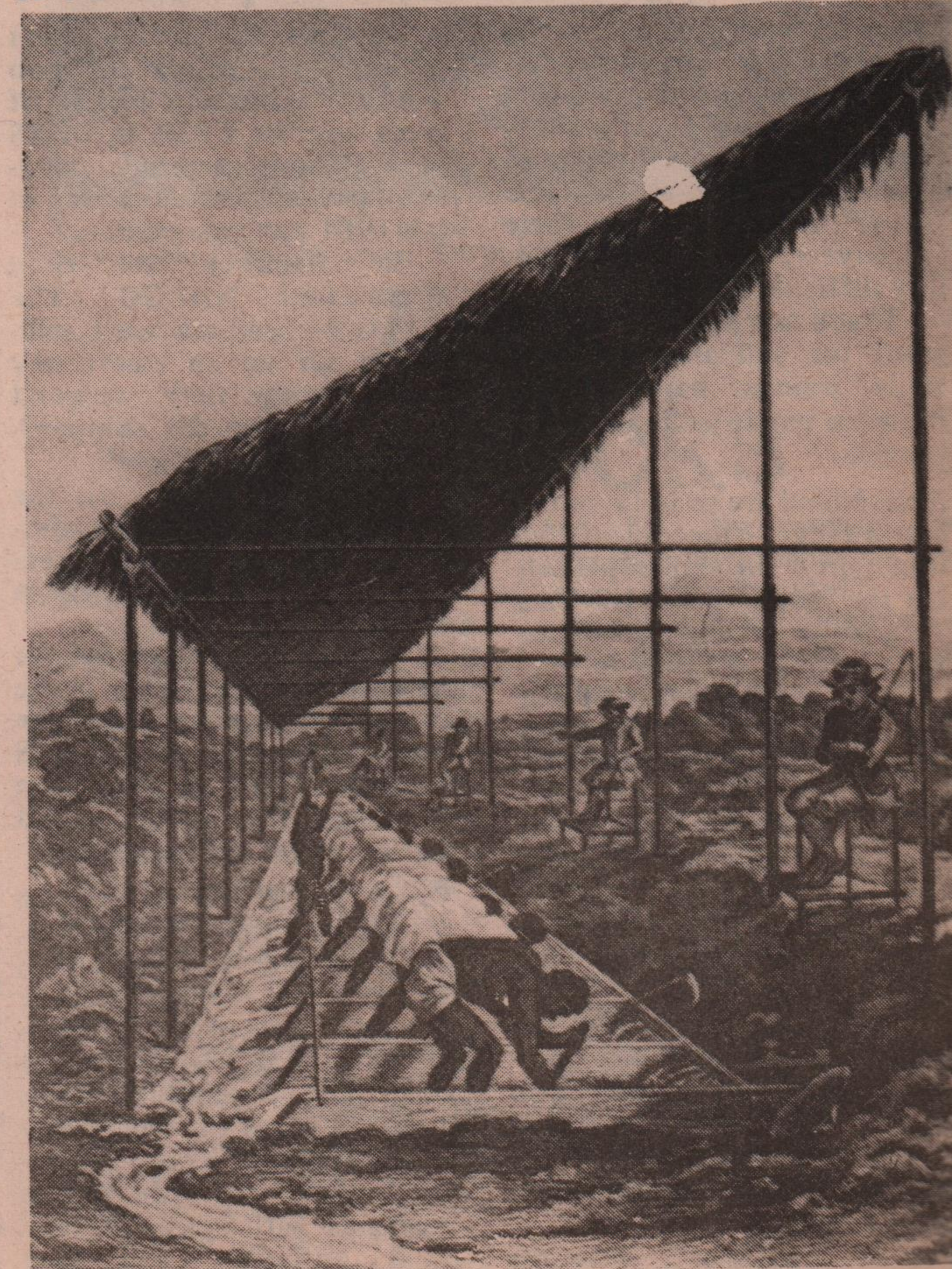
The depression of the 1930s threw the old oligarchic export economies into crisis: between 1928-9 and 1932-3 exports declined over 60% for every major economy in Latin America. Nationalist revolutions and reform efforts, from below and from above, followed. The local industrial capitalist class began to play a bigger role.

Latin America today, alongside tracts of poverty as bad as any in the world, has a sizeable middle class not very different in living standards from Western Europe. But the old oligarchies only began to fade seriously, in most countries, after the Cuban revolution in 1959.

*The Modern World System' vol 1.

**Andre Gunder Frank, 'Capitalism and underdevelopment in Latin America'.

***Fernand Braudel, 'The Mediterranean in the age of Philip II'.



African slaves in the diamond mines of Brazil under Portuguese rule.

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DHSS strikes and claimants

CPSA activist Rod Bacon spoke to Martin Thomas and Steve Battlemuch about the debate on emergency procedures during strike action in the DHSS and Department of Employment.

Martin. As I understand, most people on the left in the CPSA are in favour of boycotting emergency procedures during strikes in the Department of Health and Social Security (DHSS).

There's an obvious rationale for that in terms of strengthening industrial action. But the obvious argument against it is that it means trying to hit claimants. In practice it would probably mean an opening for the government to organise scabbing under the pretext of humanitarianism.

Rod. The only way we are going to be effective is by involving every member of the union.

If you operate emergency procedures, that means cooperating with management to undermine the strike.

Cooperate

I think we should black emergency procedures within DHSS and DE. We should get every member out on strike. But we should cooperate with NALGO and the UCW [post office workers] to set up emergency payments centres which will ensure that claimants get some money.

There are a lot of people in the DHSS who say that the only way to take effective action is to pull out the plugs and have no emergency procedures being operated anywhere. I don't go along with that.

Martin. So you're saying that you want to provide some emergency cover — as workers in other essential services do when they strike — but you want someone else to do it for you.

And moreover, the people who are going to provide the cover are not going to do it as a matter of trade union cooperation — they are going to do it because local authorities have statutory duties and NALGO members will be forced to do it by their employers, and under incredibly difficult conditions.

That's not going to be very good for solidarity between trade unions, or solidarity between employed and unemployed.

Rod. No. If we're in favour of emergency procedures, we don't do it through approaching the employers in the local authorities or the post office. We approach the unions.

Now if they reject operating emergency procedures, then we'll have to reassess the situation.

But there are certain advantages which NALGO members and UCW members can obtain from their employers for providing this extra service.

The thing is, within the DHSS we couldn't just operate emergency cover. You would have half an office doing the work while the other half was out on strike. It just wouldn't work.

It's a different situation from providing emergency

cover in a mine to stop it becoming dangerous, or running casualty services in a hospital during a strike.

If you put to our members that half of them are going on strike, and half of them are working emergency procedures, then the whole feeling of collective action begins to dissipate. That's certainly been my experience in my office.

I think there is a genuine sympathy for claimants in DHSS offices. A lot of DHSS workers are ex-claimants themselves. They would have no objection to an emergency service being provided in other areas, as long as the unity of their own action was not destroyed.

Steve. Another problem is that when the computers come out — Newcastle and Washington, or Livingstone and Reading — and we operate emergency procedures in the local offices to cover them, it is an absolutely intolerable work pressure for our members.

The overtime ban goes, whatever we say, and members get very demoralised with the union. They've got three or four times the amount of work, management telling them to do it — and the union telling them to do it too.

Martin. It seems to me that on the basic issue of principle we are agreed — in favour of some form of emergency cover. What we are discussing is ways of doing it.

Approaches

But you talked about approaches to NALGO and UCW rather than their employers. Have those approaches been made?

Rod. Only for a very short period — a matter of two weeks — and in a couple of areas has the CPSA in DHSS and DE not operated emergency procedures. That was in the 1981 pay campaign.

In Hackney we then approached NALGO. The NALGO members were willing to set up an emergency centre, and they screwed their employers for compensation for the extra work.

Now the policy of the CPSA, as decided at conference, is to go in that direction — to approach those unions.

We can't talk about all-out strike action by CPSA if the two strongest elements of the union, the DE and DHSS workers, are to continue working. The strike would just never get off the ground.

Steve. There is a motion up to this year's pay conference, on December 6, from DHSS South Notts, instructing the National Executive Committee to hold an urgent meeting with NALGO and UCW to draw up plans for emergency payments, and also instructing branches to hold urgent meetings with claimants and local authority and post office workers.

The left wing must itself on the rank and

On November 3 the Broad Left in the civil service union CPSA — the biggest Broad Left in the British trade union movement — split. The rival groups — the official Broad Left, in which 'Militant' is strong, and the 'Broad Left 84' — are holding conferences on December 8 and 7 respectively, after the CPSA special pay conference on December 6.

Rod Bacon is a member of the CPSA National Executive Committee, vice-chair of the CPSA DHSS Section Executive, and a leading activist in the Socialist Caucus faction of the Broad Left. He spoke (in a personal capacity) to Martin Thomas of Socialist Organiser.

Martin. Why did the CPSA Broad Left split?

Rod. It was a bureaucratic faction fight between two groups — on one side the Militant tendency, and on the other the Labour Group/Communist Party.

Both groups have always had a bureaucratic attitude — fighting for leadership, electioneering, election slates — and they felt at National Executive Committee level that they could no longer work together.

On several issues they were on opposite sides — the Newcastle/Washington dispute, donations to the National Union of Mineworkers.

Martin. My impression is that a major issue behind it was electoral calculations. The Labour Group/CP — now called 'Broad Left 84' — thought that they could do better in union elections than Militant.

However, if they were within the same Broad Left as Militant, they had to agree to slates which gave relatively good representation to Militant. If they had their own group, they could run against Militant, defeat Militant, and

then either steamroller them or force them into agreements favourable to the Broad Left 84.

Rod. I think that's probably a long term objective. Nobody in Broad Left 84 that I've spoken to recently is naive enough to think that they are going to win a clean sweep on the National Executive in 1985.

They may well be building up a centre ground, inviting a lot of the people who are now part of the right wing organisation to join with them in an anti-Trotskyist, anti-red, sensible middle-of-the-road Labour Party type of grouping, to win elections in 1986.

But basically it was the battles on the National Executive Committee that caused the split — with Militant moving fast towards the left. They're leading a strike at Newcastle and Washington that's been going on for 26 weeks now, and that's made them a lot more left wing than they've been in the past. And the Labour Group really cannot work with that kind of political drift, though two years ago they could work

quite well with Militant.

Martin. What will be the immediate effects of the split?

Rod. The right wing will win control of the union.

Socialist Caucus, along with the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Labour Group, is fighting for a united left slate of the two Broad Lefts.

But the probability is that both the Broad Left 84 and the official Broad Left will run full slates against each other — and the right wing will win the NEC.

Martin. How would you assess the Broad Left NEC's record on the Newcastle/Washington dispute?

Rod. The record is pretty diabolical.

350 CPSA shiftworkers in the Newcastle and Washington DHSS computer centres have been on strike since May 14 over management's attempts to alter the existing shift system. These changes involved workers starting an hour earlier in the morning shift and finishing 51 minutes earlier on evenings. The real motive was to cut the Shift Disturbance Allowance by 9½%, or between £10 and £20 a week.

At a meeting on November 1 management's latest offer was rejected by a majority of ten to one. During the dispute about 2500 workers out of the 7000 on site have been threatened with suspension.

The Militant tendency, who dominate in the Newcastle DHSS branch — the largest branch in the CPSA — thought they could win it as a localised dispute.

They engineered a motion that went through CPSA conference in May saying that we should support the Newcastle shiftworkers but also operate emergency procedures in the

local offices. You couldn't actually vote against that motion because if you voted against it, then you were voting against the strike of the Newcastle shiftworkers.

They localised the dispute. After 20 weeks they had got nowhere. The members out on strike were looking for escalation.

So Militant went for bringing out the other computer centres — Livingstone and Reading. Socialist Caucus comrades supported this, but we also argued that we should not be operating emergency procedures in the local offices. It is a national dispute, and all elements of the DHSS, local offices included, should be involved in it.

The Broad Left 84 members on the NEC voted against bringing out Living-

stone and Reading. They came up with an alternative suggestion, rather cynically cobbled together in my opinion, to bring out a few selected offices of the DHSS and Department of Employment (DE).

That alternative strategy has collapsed. There is virtually nowhere where members in DHSS and DE are prepared to come out on indefinite strike on their own. There is more of a feeling for bringing out Livingstone and Reading, and then escalating the action through the local office network.

So the end result is that no action has been taken to escalate the dispute.

There was an NEC meeting last week in which myself and Kevin Roddy of Militant put down a motion for the NEC to support blacking emergency procedures in the DHSS and to bring out Livingstone and Reading. That motion was defeated.

Martin. What lessons do you think there are for Broad Lefts in other unions?

Rod. I suppose there is a tendency in all Broad Lefts, once they get into positions of power within the union, to drift towards the bureaucracy and detach themselves from the membership.

Most Broad Lefts are based on electoral politics. The two leading groups in the CPSA Broad Left are not arguing principally over policies to fight for among the membership — they are fighting over who has the biggest control of the leadership of the union.

You do have to bear in mind that the Broad Left in the CPSA, even dominated by Militant, is a lot better than



The Birmingham/Oxford DHSS dispute, October-December 1982: both Militant and the soft left let down the rank and file. Photo: John Harris

base d file

the Broad Lefts in other unions dominated by the Communist Party, which are secret Broad Lefts and often operate by invitation only.

I think there is only one real way of approaching the job of politicisation in unions — and that is a rank and file orientation. There is no way you can avoid this sort of bureaucratic split if you have a bureaucratic orientation, if you are just interested in seizing the leadership.

There are in other unions groups similar to the Socialist Caucus who are pressing a rank and file orientation, and they have to be built up. In fact, it is more important building up such groups than just assembling a Broad Left which is going in the wrong political direction.

Martin. What are the plans of the Socialist Caucus now?

Rod. The Socialist Caucus today voted to stay in the official Broad Left. We are going to work in conjunction with the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Labour Group to fight for a left unity slate against the right wing.



Kevin Roddy. Photo. John Harris

We are going to operate far more effectively on the various campaigns — have our own meetings, our own literature, bring out a quarterly newspaper. And we're going to try to attract a lot of comrades who are at the moment independent towards the Socialist Caucus.

We're not prepared to go anywhere near Broad Left 84. We recognise it as a right wing split.

Pay is going to be the major issue over the next few months. A lot of work has got to be done to engender membership confidence to take up a pay campaign, especially given the three per cent cash limit that has been put on us by the government. The only way to fight it is going to be an all-out strike in the civil service.

The second major issue in coming months is still the Newcastle/Washington strike.

There is also the question of the merger with the executive officers' [higher grade] union, the Society of Civil and Public Servants. A lot of the gains we have made in the CPSA on union democracy could be undermined by this merger, so Socialist Caucus will be fighting tooth and nail against a merger on this basis.



Gerry Downes (above), brother of Sean Downes who was killed recently by a plastic bullet, spoke in Edinburgh last week. Photo: Chris Hill.

Plastic bullets

By Callum McRae

"How long before they use plastic bullets against striking miners?" Gerry Downes, of the Belfast United Campaign Against Plastic Bullets, asked that question of delegates to Edinburgh and District Trades Council, at their meeting last week.

He made it clear to delegates that he wasn't scaremongering. Almost every piece of "riot control" equipment which police have used against pickets in recent months has been developed and tested in Northern Ireland.

British police at present stock 20,000 plastic bullets and you can be sure that they are not just looking after them for the RUC.

In Northern Ireland, plastic bullets have killed 15 people, seven of them children aged 15 or under. The most recent person to die was Sean Downes, brother

of Gerry.

He was killed by a plastic bullet shot at point blank range when police ran riot at a meeting in Belfast which was to be addressed by the American Noraid representative, Martin Galvin.

In calling on the trades council to take up the campaign to ban these weapons, Gerry pointed to the particular Scottish connection. Plastic bullets are manufactured in Scotland by Brocks Fireworks Company of Dumfriesshire.

It is not something they seem very proud of. As Gerry explained to the trades council, they took out an injunction (and an interim interdict in Scotland) to prevent various campaigns including the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science and the National Council for Civil Liberties,

from releasing a press statement condemning plastic bullets and implying that Labour councils should boycott Brocks Fireworks when buying for public displays.

These attempts to muzzle criticism of plastic bullets have not been successful, however, in that the injunction was overturned three weeks ago, and at the hearing at the Quarter Session in Edinburgh last week, the interim interdict went the same way.

Nonetheless, Brocks did manage to stifle criticism up till the 5th November, which is their main selling season.

After hearing Gerry speak, the council voted to support the call for a ban on plastic bullets and called on Edinburgh District Council to boycott all Brocks products.

They also agreed to take up the question through the Scottish TUC.

PROFITS & POVERTY

THE miners' strike is costing British capitalism about £240 million a month on the balance of payments, according to the latest official figures.

The total trade deficit for the first ten months of 1984 was about £1 billion.

Beneath the impact of the miners' strike, there are even worse problems for British capitalism, revealed by the trade figures.

In 1982 — for the first time since the Industrial Revolution — Britain imported more manufactured goods than it exported. The balance of trade has continued to get worse since then. There was a £5.4 billion deficit on manufactured goods in the first nine months of 1984.

The problem is covered up for the moment by Britain's vast income from oil. But while other big oil producers, from Indonesia to Trinidad, are industrialising, Tory

Britain is deindustrialising.

British capitalism's balance of payments is also helped by a large and growing "invisible" income.

This includes interest, profits, dividends, royalties, banking fees, etc — in short, the naked proceeds of overseas capitalist exploitation.

In 1978 the swag totalled £2.2 billion, net. Last year it was £3.6 billion, and this year it should be about the same.

Now almost all that net income goes to the top one per cent who control British industry and finance. Britain's employed and employing population is about 26 million. So the £3.6 billion net income means an average of about £14,000 a year each for that top one per cent.

The other side of that £14,000-a-year-each bonanza

for British capitalists: Latin America is expected to have to pay out \$45 billion net this year in interest, dividends, profits, royalties, etc.

The international banks and the Latin American ruling classes between them make sure that this cost is met mostly by the workers and peasants. Shared out between the bottom 80% of Latin America's 240 million people, the money squeezed out is about \$230 per year each.

The official figures — which probably paint the situation better than it really is — say that the bottom 80% gets about 40% of Latin America's income (in Brazil it's only 33% — in Britain, even under the Tories, the bottom 80% get about 60% of national income).

\$230 a year is therefore about a quarter of the average income of the mass of the people in Latin America.

International

Another coup in Bolivia?

By Steve Hobbs

A NEW military coup threatens in Bolivia as the militant workers' movement is involved in a major battle with the government of Hernan Siles Zuazo, which includes the Bolivian Communist Party.

A two-day stoppage two weeks ago has been followed by a general strike that began on Wednesday November 13. The strike is to force the government to find a solution to the country's severe economic crisis. As a result of the strike, Siles' government offered to call an early election next year.

The Financial Times on Saturday 24th reported that the COB (Bolivian TUC) had called off the strike because of 'fears of a military coup d'etat'. The government has not met the demands of the strike: on the contrary, it has introduced new austerity measures together with a currency devaluation.

According to the FT, the prices of some staple foods are to rise 300 per cent.

Inflation in Bolivia is running at over 1000 per cent. The country's current account deficit is around £242 million. To get international bank loans to finance its foreign trade, the government is being forced to try to satisfy demands from the IMF for increased austerity.

The COB has demanded a package of economic measures which include a price freeze, wage increases, and a default on Bolivia's foreign debt. At the beginning of the strike, COB

leader Juan Lechin stated that it would continue until these and other demands — for an improvement in food distribution and measures to tackle unemployment — were met.

Previous austerity measures by the Siles government — which came to power in 1982 on the wave of militant struggle against the military dictatorship that preceded it — have met with fierce resistance.

Strikes and national protests since 1982 have forced the government to introduce wage increases to compensate for such measures as the devaluation of the peso.

Earlier this year, the COB organised a series of general strikes against the effects of the economic crisis.

Precisely what the prospects are now is difficult to assess. The government has no intention of defaulting on its debt; but it is trapped between its creditors and the working class.

Populist gambits — Siles recently went on hunger strike to try to win sympathy — do not seem to have had any effect. The offer of early elections is a cynical manoeuvre, and even a section of Siles' own party, the MNRI, has said as much.

Meanwhile the army is looking for an opportunity to install another military ruler (of which Bolivia has seen only too many).

The Financial Times of November 22 quotes a 'military source in the capital' as saying that "The military is waiting for the situation to get so bad that there would appear to be no other way out but a coup."



Hugo Banzer (above) led a brutal coup to overthrow the previous Left government in Bolivia, under Torres in 1972.

Letter

H-Blocks

Hendon South Labour Party passed the following resolution at its September meeting:

"This GC calls on the Northern Ireland Office to make available a full range of educational facilities, including Irish language classes, to prisoners in Long Kesh (HMP Maze). The withdrawal of many facilities following the mass escape in 1983 has been used as a form of group punishment, giving the lie to the claim that prisoners there are treated the same as ordinary criminals."

A letter was sent to the Northern Ireland Office conveying the terms of this resolution. The reply received from Nicholas Scott confirms that "the full range of educational facilities has not for operational reasons been available" since the escape of prisoners in September 1983

and that "the evening class education programme has been temporarily suspended".

In my view, the withdrawal of some facilities for over a year cannot be regarded as temporary, and the punishment of one group of people (current prisoners) for the actions of another group (the escapers) is contrary to natural justice. I urge your readers to get their local Labour Parties, trade unions, etc., to pass resolutions on this matter and send copies to the Northern Ireland Office.

I would be interested to receive copies of any resolutions, letters, etc., on this subject.

Yours sincerely,
Dorothy Macedo,
Secretary, Hendon South
Women's Section

Socialist Organiser

Next year we fight for our life



Students picketing Kings College, Strand, on the Day of Action on grants and tuition fees, November 21. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni (Report)

Student grant cuts, fees

Force the LEAs to defy Tories

Socialist Students in NOLS National Organiser Dave Brennan spoke to Socialist Organiser.

The response to the National Union of Students' call for action against the governments' proposals to cut the minimum student grant and levy tuition fees has been tremendous.

Previously uninformed

students went on marches and occupied their colleges, making it clear that they understood just how many students will suffer if the government's proposals are carried out.

Students in Manchester and Sussex tried to occupy local Tory Party headquarters recognising that it is a fight directly against the government.

NUS responded immediately to the government's proposals, and the mobilisation showed that students will follow a determined lead. But now the initial reaction is over, the militancy has to be built on and redirected.

High profile

The campaign needs to keep its high profile — with demonstrations and sit-downs in the road and so on. But it also has to enlist the support of the labour movement.

Local councils will have to do the government's dirty work, levy the fees and not pay the minimum grant. And it will be college authorities that will keep students out of college if they can't pay their fees.

Simultaneously with the demonstrations and protests, we should be forcing college administrations and local

education authorities to refuse to cooperate with the government.

LEAs and colleges saying no to the Tories would be a tremendous boost to student activists and make government proposals unworkable.

Even if the government's proposals do go through, students on a minimum grant from non-cooperating LEAs would still get their grants, tuition fees would not be levied and colleges under the control of those LEAs would not refuse students who didn't pay their fees.

Durham University is planning action to force their LEA to keep paying the minimum grant. Manchester is considering a similar campaign.

It is possible that some more left-wing LEAs will agree, but hard campaigning will be necessary.

That campaign should start with Labour Clubs fighting for mandates on Labour councils to refuse to cooperate. Winning the support of council unions is vital — in the end, in a Tory LEA or a Labour LEA prepared to do what the Tories want, it is the Council workers who have to process the cuts.

NUS missed a chance in last week's action. Student unions were asked to occupy

and go for a national shutdown of colleges. Obviously it was very successful, but students unions were asking why they should occupy when their college administrations were fully supporting the shutdown.

NUS should have made it clear that we do have a quarrel with college authorities — we want them to guarantee that no student will be kept out of college for non-payment of fees.

Loans

The reaction of the Tory students has backed up what NUS has been saying. The proposed cuts are the start of loans instead of grants, and tuition fees are a form of privatisation.

And for those reasons, as well as because we support the right of 18 year olds to be financially independent of their parents, socialists should fight against proposals which at the moment only seem to hit rich kids.

Socialist Students in NOLS is affiliated to Labour Briefing. SSIN aims to organise the hard left in NOLS and NUS. SSIN's paper — Socialist Student is out this week. 20p from Dave Brennan, 20a Upper Addison Gardens London W14

Peter Hain, an organiser of the December 1 conference on defending trade union political funds against Tory laws, spoke to John Bloxam.

The response has been very broad — including some national unions, the Bakers, CoHSE, NUPE — though it would probably have been a bigger turnout if it were not for the understandable and correct concentration on the miners' strike.

Of course, we're still at the initial stages of the whole thing. Despite the work that has been done over the last nine months, it is still only gradually dawning on people that we are going to be fighting for our political lives next year.

We've had no hostility at all to the conference from the



Peter Hain

movement as a whole. There has been some criticism from some of those running Trade Unions for a Labour Victory. They are keen to play down the Labour Party dimension of the whole question of political funds.

I think we would be wrong to underestimate the importance of arguing in a bread-and-butter way for the importance of having a political fund, but I do think that the TULV elements who argue for playing down the Labour Party issue are naive.

The political levy is associated in most people's minds with the Labour Party — and if it isn't already, then the media are going to make sure that it is.

Also, I don't think we can see the threat to the political levy as a purely defensive question. It's also an opportunity to breathe new life into fairly fossilised links between the unions and the Labour Party.

I also see the fight on the political levy being inextricably linked with the miners' strike.

They are both part of building resistance to Thatcherism.

The leadership of the official movement seems to want to play the whole issue softly-softly — to think that we can win by default, rather in the way that we have maintained a high proportion paying the political levy by default.

Contracting-out

Contracting-out is an expedient, but it doesn't give a measure of real support, as is shown by the fact that there were only four million trade unionists voting Labour in 1983 at a time when there were six million affiliated members.

The view that we can just trundle along and hope somehow to slip through is, I think, fundamentally mistaken. We're attempting to put the whole emphasis at the level of rank and file work. The arguments have got to be had in workplaces where they've never been raised before.

I think it was understandable that the idea of a boycott of the ballots on political funds was raised, because of the correct position of boycott which should be maintained in relation to election of officials and industrial action.

But on political funds we don't have a choice.

After this conference on December 1, regional conferences should be organised in the spring, as broadly based as possible. Parallel with that, local Labour Parties should set up ad hoc working groups to see what can be done locally.

Defend union political funds

Conference to plan campaign around political levy ballots

Speakers:

Ron Todd
Mick McGahey
Ken Livingstone

Saturday December 1
Central Hall, London
10 am to 4.30 pm
Registration £3

FUND

Better but still not good — that was the response to our fund appeal last week.

Thanks to: D. Davies £25; Sally-Anne Gallagher £5; Mark Osborn £15; Graham Smallwood £3; Peter Kenway £5; Patrick Blandford £6; Will Adams £10; Les Hearn £10; Steve Harvey £15.

That leaves us still £103.32 short of the £800 which we needed urgently to get our regular budget

straight before we could start putting money aside for our premises fund.

On the premises, we're only waiting for a definite response from the landlord on certain details now — so please, let's get the £103.32 cleared out of the way and a good new start on the premises money next week.

Send money to: SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Southgate By-election
Labour candidate: Peter Hamid
Contact for helpers:
Cyril Goddard, 43 Chimes
Ave., 882 0360

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