

Socialist Organiser

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Willis crawls to Thatcher

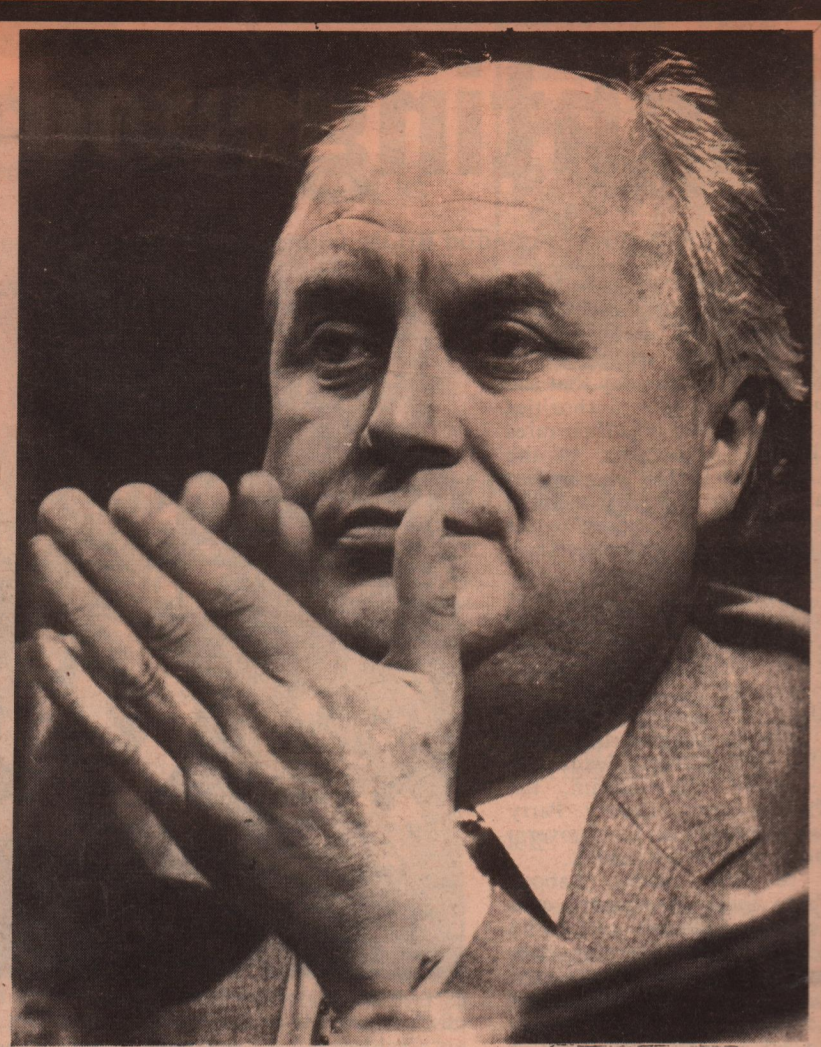


Photo: John Harris

NO SELL-OUT! BACK SCARGILL



Photo: John Harris

WHEN THE latest attempt to restart talks with the Coal Board failed, NUM leaders returned to their areas 'to continue to mobilise as effectively as possible'.

And what did Willis and the other TUC leaders 'monitoring' the strike do? They went crawling on their bellies to Thatcher!

Their audience with Thatcher had been asked for without the NUM's knowledge. It was granted because Thatcher recognises the job Willis has been doing to help the Tories defeat the NUM.

It is just another miserable episode in the long-running saga of TUC attempts to stab the miners in the back. It is a *blow* against the miners because it gave the utterly intransigent Mrs Thatcher the chance to appear 'reasonable' and 'approachable'.

After numerous private meetings with MacGregor and with the NUM and NACODS executives, Willis is pushing a so-called compromise document. In fact, the Willis-NCB document demands the NUM's acceptance of the Coal Board's right to close 'uneconomic' pits. For the NCB it is "a bottom line position".

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All the to-ing and fro-ing about written agreements and agendas is irrelevant: what Mr Peter Walker and the coal board mean, but have not yet said, is that talks cannot begin unless Mr Scargill is ready to say he will do what he is told. He is not ready, yet; but when he is, it does not matter in the slightest whether he communicates the fact by letter, by mouth or, as is most likely, through a third party like representatives of the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

From the
Economist

Fighting rate capping

By Mick O'Sullivan (London Bridge committee, in personal capacity)

THE PHONY war between the government and the rate-capped local authorities is fast coming to an end.

March 7 is the day that the non-precepting authorities (i.e. those that levy their rates directly, as opposed to the GLC and ILEA, who collect a 'precept' via the borough councils) have chosen to set their budgets without setting a rate.

Underneath the present shouting match between the councils and the government, three different groupings are beginning to take shape on the labour movement side.

On the extreme right is the Labour Party leadership — John Cunningham, the Parliamentary Labour Party spokesperson on local government, and Neil Kinnock.

At the recent Labour Party local government conference Kinnock called on Labour councils to stay within the law and do the best they can by benevolent administration within the limits set by the Tory cuts. A 'dented shield' is better than nothing, he said.

This speech gave a boost to the right wing among Labour councillors. But they do not hold the majority. The biggest grouping among the councillors follow the line of the Association of London Authorities (ALA: a grouping of Labour councils in London). They hope that by tactics of calculated defiance and 'going to the brink' they will be able to force a deal with Tory Environment Minister Patrick Jenkin.

This deal would include an upward revision of their rate-cap limits, thus enabling them to raise the rates further. The shortfall between the increased limit and their desired budgets will be made up by selling off council property, by raiding reserve funds, by 'creative accounting', or by cuts in services.

The official ALA line is 'no cuts', but their real bottom line, it seems, is no compulsory redundancies.

For most of the rate-capped councils, this scenario is a viable proposition — this year.

Thus for them March 7 will not mean going illegal — but that they postpone setting a rate as part of hard negotiations with the government.

They see themselves as following the example set last year by Liverpool City Council. Liverpool started out with a policy of mobilising the local working class and confronting the government through a deficit budget. It failed to set a rate because six right-wing Labour councillors reneged.

Then, after the May coun-



'Save Liverpool' demonstration, November 1983. Photo: John Smith.

cil elections, the Council leaders decided not to use their now-solid majority to set a rate, but instead to negotiate with Jenkin. They came up with a deal in July.

But that deal leaves Liverpool in an even worse position this year: according to council deputy leader Derek Hatton, they need a 220% rate rise or 6,000 job cuts to balance the books.

Similar deals in the rate-capped authorities this year will have the same effect. They will not be a victory, but in many respects a defeat.

Individual councils will be isolated. Many will push through cuts in services. The discipline of the Tories' Rates Act will have been accepted. And the chance to open a second front alongside the miners will have been missed.

As in Liverpool, demoralisation will develop among workers, who will see that they have been the councillors' foot-soldiers.

Last Wednesday, 13th, Jenkin ordered very big

increases in the rate-cap limits for three of the councils. Hackney's limit has been raised from 114p to 147p; Lewisham's from 87.5p to 99p; and Leicester's from 16p to 25p. Islington was also granted a small increase, from 111p to 112p.

These moves indicate that Jenkin sees deals of the sort described above as an acceptable outcome, and is prepared to manoeuvre to make them possible. They also show Jenkin's awareness of the tremendous power that a united stand by the councils would have, if they remained solid.

Last year he had to send an emissary to the City of London to assure them that he would get a deal with Liverpool. At the same time he could not find anybody to take over running Liverpool if he got the councillors legally disqualified.

Jenkin will probably let March 7 come and go, just waiting for the councils' united stand to fall apart.

But there is a third element on the labour move-

ment side. Underneath the councils, a powerful movement is beginning to emerge within the Labour Parties, and more importantly within the council unions.

Joint Shop Stewards' Committees have been formed in the boroughs, and the London Bridge combine committee across London.

At the stewards' level, the opposite trend to that of the councils dominates. It is against any sell-out, and determined to fight on the principle of the Rates Act.

This militant mood is also spilling over into other issues. Under the auspices of London Bridge, dustmen are beginning to meet to discuss the problems of privatisation. The Local Government and Land Act — one of Thatcher's earliest major laws, but to this day unchallenged — is being taken up.

In Sheffield, after a discussion on rate-capping, the stewards adopted the London Bridge policy and added in their own demands for flat-rate pay and single status.

All this has been able to develop because of the broad unity achieved around rate-capping, at least up to the point of defiance on March 7.

The key, of course, is the shop floor. While the situation there remains uneven, the months of propaganda work carried out against rate-capping and against any council sell-outs have laid the basis for a mass movement.

The first major test will be March 7, when major demonstrations will take place in all London's rate-capped boroughs.

These demonstrations will be organised not by the councils but by the local joint trade union committees, and coordinated by London Bridge.

If we have done our work properly, then the councils' limited stand will have opened a Pandora's Box, with workers mobilised, willing to fight, and looking to the councils to stand by their promises of no sell-out.

AIDS panic hits FBU

THE Fire Brigades Union has instructed its members not to give the kiss of life to dying people if they are suspected of being homosexual.

This is just the latest consequence of a media-inspired panic about AIDS that is spreading with an infectiousness the disease itself could never possess.

What it means is added suffering for gay men, who are being fingered as a threat to the lives of 'decent people'. Such changes in public attitudes

towards gay people as have been achieved over the past decade are under threat of being reversed as a result of the AIDS scare.

The hysteria is based on ignorance and prejudice.

The idea that AIDS can be caught off cups, beer glasses, toilet seats, etc., is ridiculous and irrational. If it were so, it would long since have ceased to be gay men who are mostly at risk — and there could be no grounds for singling gay men out for special treatment.

Socialist students launch campaign

SOCIALIST Students met for an open conference about YTS, the miners and student union autonomy and rate capping last weekend.

The conference was followed by the Socialist Students in NOLS AGM.

Ron, a striking miner from Kiveton Park explained the need for students to carry on collecting and going on picket lines. The comrades from Essex University told how their student union bought miners' information packs. As the Tories think

that spending student union money in this way is not in the direct interests of students, the student union is being taken to court.

The conference felt that as NUS had clearly said it wasn't prepared to organise a defence campaign for student unions taken to court for a possible illegal donation then it would be up to us to help organise a campaign. We said we would push for NUS to cover legal expenses.

Hoping to make the links

between class war prisoners and student unions taken to court, the conference agreed to try to organise meetings with a miner and one of the jailed 37 from Cammell Lairds. The conference also urged every Labour Club and student union to adopt a class war prisoner.

The discussion on YTS centred around the government's proposals to make YTS compulsory. We decided to try to prioritise YTS for debate at NUS conference and support the YTURC lobby of Parliament.

Believing that gay men are a threat, and believing that AIDS is highly contagious are mutually exclusive and contradictory beliefs.

A tiny, tiny number of people have been diagnosed as having AIDS (120 — out of a gay male population of a million or so, and a total population of 60 million). You are far more likely to get killed crossing the road on your way home than to catch AIDS from somebody, merely because that person is gay.

The SSIN AGM launched the campaign to get Simon Pottinger elected to NUS Executive. We urged all supporters to either get elected themselves or to make sure that delegates from their college knew the policies Simon is standing on. Stickers and badges will be available soon.

For more information about Socialist Students in NOLS and the policies of Simon's election campaign, please write to 20A Upper Addison Gardens, London W14.



Miners in Armthorpe protest at the six-pickets-only ruling. Photo: John Harris (IFL).

The key

Continued from page 1

The good news for the miners is that the power to make 'peace' rests with the NUM and not the TUC.

Willis claims that the NUM has made significant concessions to the NCB and the Tories. He says they now acknowledge and endorse the NCB's commitment to "an economically sound industry", and accept its right to make the "final decision".

Certainly, these are concessions made against the advice of Arthur Scargill. But the NUM EC changed the "compromise document's" main references to pit closures on economic grounds with the result that the Coal Board refused to start negotiations.

Whatever Willis says the NCB insists that the differences were still "of principle". NCB mouthpiece Eaton said there was still "a yawning gap".

Scargill

Commenting after the last NEC meeting on Sunday night, Arthur Scargill made his position quite clear: "As president of the NUM, I will never, ever, be a signatory to the closure of any part of my industry; and no trade union leader worth his or her salt could ever sign such an agreement."

He went on: "My message to all miners is to stand firm in the face of the latest blatant rejection even to negotiate by the Coal Board."

The NEC's proposals "should have resulted in a resumption of negotiations immediately to deal with other aspects of the dispute such as the Coal Board plans announced on March 6 1984, the future of the five collieries and an amnesty for those who have been dismissed during the current dispute."

Willis, for all his talk about the gap being small, was noticeably silent on the issue of an "amnesty" for the 600 sacked miners. The NCB wasn't. It made its attitude plain in the press: "...it became known that the NCB had no intention of agreeing to the NUM's request that an amnesty should be declared on the 650 workers dismissed by the board during the dispute...Another 1500 cases are possibly pending." (Guar-

dian).

Striking miners have also made their position clear, time and again. Last Wednesday, the South Wales delegate conference decided that there would be no return to work until all those sacked have been reinstated.

Courts

The legal assaults on the union continue. The latest legal blow is the granting of injunctions to scabs from both South Wales and Yorkshire to limit picketing in their Areas. The ruling on Yorkshire limits legal pickets to six at 11 pits.

This ruling forbids the Area to organise mass pickets or guarantee to pay fines for arrested pickets.

Last Wednesday, the South Wales area delegate conference voted to comply with the court and appeal against their ruling. On Thursday the Yorkshire Area Council voted to do the same, in order, they said, to protect the funds and continue the strike.

The response on the ground, however, was to ignore the ruling. Many more than six pickets turned up at a number of the pits named by the judge. Mass picketing also continued: there were 1200 pickets outside Armthorpe on Monday.

Police

In the last two weeks we have seen a new upsurge of police violence, going hand in hand with the renewed legal attacks. Police have brutally waded into demonstrations and pickets in Scotland, the North-East and Yorkshire.

But miners and their families are stubborn people! Legal pressure, police intimidation, fantastic hardships and an intense propaganda campaign — all this has not had the desired effect. On Monday the NCB could claim only 1000 new scabs. It was a bitter disappointment to them. The great majority of those who came out on strike are still solid.

Despite the government's intense propaganda war against the miners, many workers continue to take solidarity action.

Workers on coal ships from the North-East voted overwhelmingly in a ballot at the

Editorial



Three strikers were injured by a tip collapsing on them at Silverwood. David Roper was buried for nearly 30 minutes. He was rescued by nearby pickets. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Back the miners



Pits where the strike

is one year old

THE official anniversary of the start of the miners' strike is March 6. However it was only made official on that day after a number of local disputes, provoked by the NCB, had grown into a groundswell.

Three weeks before March 6, on February 21, one year

ago this Thursday, Menvers Main and Wath came out over a management attempt to unilaterally alter meal times so as to undermine the effect of the overtime ban.

Socialist Organiser spoke first to Grenville Cowdell, secretary of Wath Main and then to Bernard Jackson.

Grenville Cowdell:

We were locked out by management on February 21 of last year after they changed snap time which had been in operation for over 20 years, due to the fact that our overtime ban was having an adverse effect on production.

We have been fully and totally involved in the dispute since then. We have had members arrested and imprisoned. One is in jail at the moment.

The strike set off in good spirit in Yorkshire — one miner asking another for support. There was something going on in Scotland and Wales, but they never got the support they deserved.

I think the government were hellbent on causing a strike in the industry. They knew full well that Yorkshire was committed to industrial action over pit closures following a ballot in 1981.

But when it became apparent to the government and the NCB that this wasn't going to be a flash in the pan strike, that it was serious, then the situation altered.

Policing became prominent, and violence from the police became more noticeable. For three months there

was nothing to speak of, then all of a sudden, riot gear started appearing, horses started appearing, and arrests and beatings became a common part of the dispute.

We have had several lads beaten, truncheoned, and kicked. Even after all this treatment they didn't break the lads' spirit, they still turned out. It was fantastic.

As far as our own branch is concerned, we are as solid now as we were on day one, except that we have four NUM members going in.

We had no option but to accept the court order restricting picketing because the consequences otherwise would have been a receiver put in charge of the Yorks Area funds.

Once the receivers took over the reins there would be no hardship funds for branches and fines imposed on our members by the courts would not be paid out of the money controlled by the receiver.

It was different in the case of the national union. The autonomy of Yorkshire would have been swallowed up. We would have been begging for everything.

Bernard Jackson:

The dispute began because the overtime ban was having too much effect. We were taken to a meeting with the area director and production manager. They pointed out that they wanted to have these shift changes so as to increase production.

We pointed out that the purpose of the overtime ban was to impede production. Had the pit been working normally, this would never have occurred.

At first we were asked to comply, but at the subsequent meeting we were told that management were going to apply the shift change from the next Monday morning.

We were on afternoons and Manvers were on days, so it happened that they came out and we were sent home. We, of course, supported Manvers in the decision they took.

It was a deliberate provocation on their side. They put notices up saying that if people did not comply they would be sent home.

From then on we were in a lock-out situation. But of course we supported Manvers.

In those three weeks we were locked out we put a picket line on. We were

three weeks picketing and fetching Treeton out. We went to the South Yorkshire panel for support which they said they would give.

Later, the NCB announced that Cortonwood was to shut in five weeks. So it became unanimous support from the South Yorkshire panel for Cortonwood.

The violence started from one side only. We were told only six pickets and moved on. At Welbeck the Chief Constable came out and read the Riot Act! He said you will not speak to the scabs, not swear at them, not shout 'scab' and then moved us 300 yards away from the pit and out of sight.

We shall abide by the decision to accept the recent court order so that we don't have our funds sequestered. The demonstrations can still take place with regards to the fight for our jobs and communities.

We have come too far and lost too much to be hoodwinked by bureaucrats who have used ex-NUM members at Wath Main as political tools to try and smash the foundations of what this union is about.

The more they try and suppress and keep us down, the more the working class will fight back.

is still solidarity



Mass picket of Carrington power station, Manchester, February 11. Photo: John Smith, IFL.

weekend to continue their blockade on moving coal to the South-East coast power stations. The vote was taken in response to an attempt by the Stephenson Clarke Shipping Company to break the eleven month blockade by taking out injunctions against NUS leaders.

The judge had suggested balloting the workers, but when workers voted against the shipping company the democratic judge granted them their injunction last Monday.

Rather than defy the law, the NUS leadership has backed down. But the blacking is still being carried on by NUR and TGWU workers, and may continue unofficially by NUS workers.

Power cuts?

The government has avoided widespread and significant power cuts, but last week reports showed the huge sums of money it is costing them: £2 billion, double previous estimates. And stocks are getting low in some key stations.

The sudden attempt to break the coastal blockade last week also showed their growing con-

cern with the stock levels in the Thames power stations.

And the strike is still hitting the economy and the government's economic strategy.

The key issue facing Thursday's delegate conference is how to break out of the isolation the TUC has imposed on the miners and how to increase the level of solidarity action. This can be done in two main ways:

*Support the South Wales Area's call to campaign for a recall TUC special conference. The immediate priority is to stop the TUC leadership selling out the NUM. Beyond that, the issue is still the fight to implement existing TUC guidelines.

*The NUM should start a campaign for extended general strike action in solidarity with the miners.

Notts resists scab union

KEEP NOTTS National

IN January a special delegate conference to deal with the Notts scab miners was postponed because the NUM was having 'talks about talks'.

Since then, the NUM has organised the 'Keep Notts National' campaign, and the expulsion has been left on ice. But the scab leaders in Notts have not been marking time. They are organising a break-away union.

They have refused to meet the national NUM officials. They have suspended and now threaten to expel, NUM Area Secretary Henry Richardson for the 'crime' of carrying out NUM

policy. They are allowing widespread recruitment into the pits of men who take strikers' places. They are campaigning to get the overtime ban lifted.

But their campaign to organise a separate scab union is meeting with considerable resistance amongst rank and file scabs. Five branches — Bever-

The NUM's support for the recall of the TUC Congress would give the campaign a real basis, and start a debate throughout the labour movement on both the record of the TUC and the need for the rank and file to support the NUM.

Strike March 6!

The NUM should add its weight to the call for strike action on March 6, joining together actions in support of the miners with the TUC's 'day of action' over rate-capping. Just by adding its voice to the call, the NUM could significantly increase the chances of a one-day general strike on that day.

More importantly, the NUM could commit itself to mobilise its resources to help in campaigning for industrial action. NUM speakers and pickets should tour factories, speak to shop stewards conferences, etc., urging them to take action.

The open treachery of the TUC adds new urgency to the fight for solidarity with the NUM. The answer to the official block on finance for picketing is to raise money for picketing for individual pits: we must step up fund-raising.

All these actions don't stand or fall on the decisions of Thursday's delegate conference. But that conference could give these actions a decisive boost, and take decisions that had a real chance of breaking the miners out of their present isolation.

cotes, Bentinck, Bolsover, Bilsthorpe and Ollerton — have voted to retain the overtime ban, strikers and scabs voting together!

In January, many rank and file scabs were clearly shaken up by the immediate threat to expel them, and the clear choice between Lynk's company union and the NUM. The campaign to re-recruit rank and file scabs to the NUM ground to a halt in January when the Notts Area was not expelled. What's the point of signing forms?, many said.

Lynk has used the intervening time to continue to organise.

Discussion

Scargill and the rise of the NUM left

By Tony Dale

IN A dozen years Arthur Scargill has risen from rank and file branch member at Woolley in Yorkshire to the position of leader of one of the longest and most bitter strikes the British labour movement has ever seen.

The bosses and their press — and their toadies in the Labour and trade union movement — now call everything that is best in the British labour movement by the name of "Scargillism".

Scargill is the hero and champion of militant workers throughout Britain. The story of Scargill's rise from the rank and file is much more than an interesting tale of one person's rise to power in a union. It is the story of how the left organised to free the NUM from the old right wing leadership and how they turned it into the most militant trade union in Britain.

The NUM (then the Miners Federation of Great Britain) had a very militant reputation for a long time. But after World War Two and nationalisation the right wing gained a grip over the NUM, turning it into a very passive organisation.

This "right wing" included some Stalinists like Arthur Horner who were in practice for to the right and working very closely with the Coal Board.

Inactive

The union was largely inactive as its members jobs, wages and conditions were attacked and eroded.

Between 1957 and 1971 the NUM tolerated pit closures and a contraction of the industry which would be unheard of today. The industry was decimated and the union — then led by "Communist" Will Paynter did nothing. The miners' inability to fight back continued while the right wing ruled over the union.

Then the left began to organise to confront the old right wing leadership. This movement started in Yorkshire where the area union was still controlled by the right.

The real shake-up in the Yorkshire area and in the NUM as a whole started in 1969. In October unofficial strike action started, organised and led by the Yorkshire left. Flying pickets were used to spread the strike to other areas.

It lasted two weeks. Some of the demands for the strike were not won, but the full wage claim was agreed to. This was the spark which reignited the latent militancy in the Yorkshire area and soon, in other areas.

During the strike the official union structures were used as far as was possible to organise the action. But where the right wing could use the official structures as obstacles, an alternative unofficial organisation was thrown up to spread the strike throughout the industry.

This militancy in unofficial strike action was followed up by an offensive at Conference.

The left won NUM commitment to strike action if the wage claim was not met.

This led the NUM to the 1972 strike. At the start, the strike was very disorganised. Then left wing militants organised the flying pickets.

The crunch came at Saltley Gates in Birmingham. There, with the backing of the Birmingham labour movement the miners' flying pickets closed the last major coking plant left open.



The Battle of Saltley, 1972

Victory at Saltley Gate was clinched by strike action by the local labour movement. This solidarity action had to be fought for. It was only after Arthur Scargill haranged the AUEW local leadership that solidarity strikes and victory were ensured.

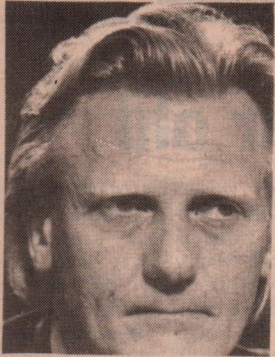
In his recent book on Arthur Scargill, Michael Crick quotes what Arthur Scargill said to them:

Demand

"Will you go down in history as the working class in Birmingham who stood by while the miners were battered, or will you become immortal? I do not ask you — I demand that you come out on strike."



Prison warders confront demonstrators outside Wandsworth Prison where Kent miner Terry French is imprisoned for five years. Photo: Andrew Moore



Tarzan turned

TORY Defence Minister Michael Heseltine failed to keep a speaking engagement with Strathclyde University Tory Club on Wednesday of last week (13th) when confronted with 400 student protesters.

Some 250 demonstrated outside the student union building, while another hundred or so staged a sit-down protest in the corridor outside the venue for Heseltine's meeting.

With the help of only a flak jacket, and 1,500 Royal Engineers, Heseltine had evicted 150 peace campaigners from Molesworth the previous week. The student protest was in response to this.

Confronted with the protesters, and lacking his army boot-boys — and flak jacket — Heseltine decided that discretion was

the better part of valour. (Is this really the spirit that won us back the Falklands?). He offered to meet a delegation of six protesters if, in exchange, he was allowed in to address the Party faithful.

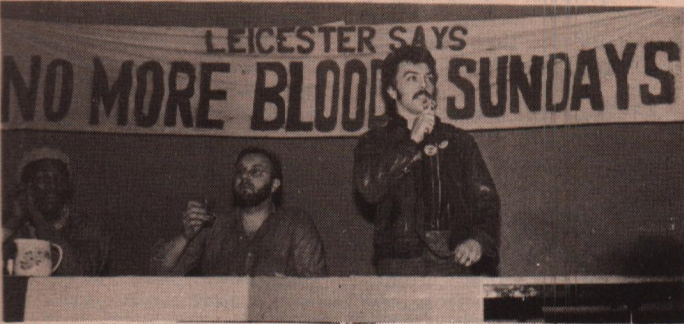
His less than generous offer got the thumbs down from the protesters. Flanked by Tory Club stalwarts, Heseltine held a perfunctory press conference on the steps of the building he had failed to enter and retreated to the more comfortable surroundings of his hotel room.

The Tory Club is now denouncing the successful demonstration as an infringement of freedom of speech. Not surprisingly though, its members show no concern for the freedom of speech and freedom to protest of the Molesworth peace campers.

In any case, no denial of freedom of speech was involved. The students did not prevent access to the meeting — faint-hearted Heseltine simply chickened out of going through the protesters.

Meanwhile, various Labour Club members who, in addition to demonstrating, had also paid the £1 admission fee to the meeting are now rightly demanding that the Tory Club refund their money, given the non-appearance of the speaker.

So far, though, the Tories have refused to cough up the money. Assuredly, this is private enterprise at work!



Leicestershire miner — of the "dirty thirty" — addressing a rally commemorating 'Bloody Sunday', when British troops shot dead 13 unarmed civilians in Northern Ireland. This year was the 13th anniversary. Many miners have seen the similarities between police state operations in the coalfields and what is happening in Ireland. Mark Salmon

ALL local miners' support groups have now been banned from sending delegates to the Glasgow Miners Support Group (MSG), by origin a joint Trades Council-Glasgow District Labour Party body, but now a Communist Party-controlled rump.

Most people active in support of the miners in Glasgow are in one of the ten local support groups. At one fell swoop, therefore, virtually the entire miners' solidarity movement in Glasgow has been disenfranchised.

There were just ten people present at the MSG meeting which took this bureaucratic decision — two of them were from local support groups, four were Communist Party (CP) members, and two were Labour Party members who, given their politics, should be in the CP. The guilt must be laid directly at the feet of the CP.

A fortnight earlier, at the previous MSG meeting, the CP had pushed through a resolution banning attendance by delegates from the local Mine-workers' Defence Committee (MDC). A Socialist Organiser leaflet subsequently distributed at the AGM of Glasgow Trades Council warned: "If MDC delegates are banned from meetings of the Glasgow MSG — who will be next?"

The CP was pretty quick in coming up with the answer —

just about every miners' solidarity activist in Glasgow! So much for the idea of a "broad democratic alliance".

The threadbare motivation for the decision was the need to exclude "disruptive elements" from MSG meetings (i.e. people who ask questions or voice any kind of criticism). A variety of lies, half-truths, and stock-in-trade denunciation of "ultra-leftism" were thrown in for good measure.

Tongue-in-cheek, the CP has declared that delegates from trade union and Labour Party branches will still be accepted at MSG meetings. But the local support groups unite the activists in the two wings of the movement. And the right-wing nature of local Labour Parties has often necessitated the setting up of local miners' support groups as a precondition for building support for the miners.

It is particularly ironic that the CP should decide who can and cannot attend MSG meetings — only 23% of its 4,000 members in Scotland pay membership dues! This is hardly a recipe for democratic organisation.

Labour Party and trade union branches should move as quickly as possible to get the ban overturned — before they find themselves banned from MSG meetings as well!

elected as Vice-President in 1973. In 1981 Scargill was elected President with a triumphant 70% of the vote.

The left in the NUM had understood and acted upon the great lesson of British trade union history: that the left must combine the fight for elected leadership positions in the union with campaigns to commit the union to a militant fighting strategy based on organising the rank and file to defend their interests.

The major failing of the left in the NUM was that it did not organise their large numbers of supporters into a national rank and file organisation.

With the absence of rank and file organisation, the militancy of many miners was isolated and underused. The militant national leadership was also "isolated", cut off from certain key areas.

Campaign

The Scargill leadership tried but did not get the necessary backing for strike action in a series of ballots in 1977, January 1982, October 1982 and March 1983 over pay and closures.

If an organisation of active and coordinated militant miners had existed, then they could have strengthened the campaign and organised to get a yes vote to back Arthur Scargill.

A rank and file movement could have organised militants in areas such as Nottinghamshire and Lancashire to win miners to militant trade unionism.

It could have fought to replace the area leaderships.

The history of the left in the NUM over the last 20 years has been a history of learning from its experiences and making good the union's weaknesses. The high point of this story of the renewal of NUM militancy was the election of Scargill in 1981.

One of the main lessons of the 1984-5 strike is that the left in the NUM should now create a rank-and-file movement — to back the leaders who fight and replace those who won't.

Which way forward for the NUM left? What do you think? Let us have your views.

Paul Whetton's diary



Police occupy Houghton Main. Photo: John Harris.

Only on our terms!

I THINK the government believe they are onto a winner and they're out for blood. But we're not ready to cave in, so the dispute goes on.

The only way it can end is for the NUM to sit down and negotiate a settlement on our terms.

I think the TUC is frightened to death of us winning this dispute and what they are trying to do is take the steam out of the situation and get an "honourable draw", but of course that's no good for us. We've got to go in and negotiate on our terms. We cannot abandon the central issue which caused us to come out on strike in the first place. We cannot abandon the position taken on behalf of the 600 of our comrades who have been sacked or the 150 who are already in jail, and who are shortly going to be joined by others.

Any negotiated settlement has got to be on that basis — no pit closures, those sacked to get their jobs back and an amnesty for those in jail.

Hardship

The return to work figures issued by the Coal Board remain much lower than they were a few weeks ago. While some of our comrades are being forced to give up the strike due to hardship, the fact remains that there is still a solid core out on strike.

The courts are once again taking up the role of the government in deciding the number of pickets. They've got no right to do that.

I think the courts did that in order to create an excuse to further sequester area funds which are being used to pursue the strike.

By complying with the ruling, what the Wales and Yorkshire Areas have done is said yes, but there is nothing they can do to enforce it and the members will continue to picket as they see fit, which they have every right to do, no matter what the courts say.

The media has never recognised the fact that there are any strikers in the Notts Area but we have got strikers and



Miners' wives on February 11 demonstration in Barnsley. Photo: John Harris.

we've had strikers since day one. We've been going into Yorkshire to show our solidarity with our comrades for a considerable time now. We shall continue to do so and the law cannot stop us.

The recent threat to sack two women canteen workers in Bevercotes would suggest that management got panicky after they successfully turned back a number of miners on the picket line.

We shall stand shoulder to shoulder with these women as members of the same trade union. They are two of our members and we will not allow management to victimise them.

We had our union branch meeting — Bevercotes — on Sunday and it was a big lift for the lads to be able to go along and win on everything that was raised. A lot of working miners voted with us to keep the overtime ban on. Having successfully got rid of

the Notts Area.

Unless we take action now the breakaway moves in Notts could spread, to areas like South Derbyshire, for example.

If a Special Delegate Conference does take place this week, then that must be an item on the agenda. Though more crucially, that conference must underline its support for the strike and insist that the strike goes on. There must be no attempt to sell-out or fall short on the original argument that we came out on strike for.

While Willis and Co. may try to negotiate with the Tories, I think they are frightened that the strike will get out of their reach and that is why they are falling over backwards to try and get a negotiated settlement.

But if they don't come out and organise the support instead of organising the sell-out, they will then have to admit that they are powerless and be forced to recall the TUC Congress.

On Sunday we'll be in London for the demonstration in support of the miners. What we need to get across to those who participate is that a walk around London on a Sunday is not going to help us win the strike unless we all go back to our areas and campaign for industrial action in support of the miners.

As far as the Ponting case is concerned, Clive Ponting as an individual is not important. He's an SDP-Liberal type who until recently spent his entire life enacting government policies at a high level within the civil service.

What it did reveal was the way in which the government has been telling lies and then trying to cover it up. Neil Kinnock should have been pressing home his attack on the government, whereas he seemed to go so far and then to draw back.

At the weekend we had a dayschool in Ollerton with Socialist Organiser and other speakers concentrating on raising the political issues around the strike. I hope that was the first of many similar meetings where strikers can come along and discuss all the issues involved in this dispute.

Sacked for striking

Jean Lane spoke to Catherine Black, a NUM member sacked for being on strike

I WORK at Bevercotes canteen as a canteen assistant. I've worked there for about three years before the strike started.

I got a letter last Tuesday saying that they wanted us to state our intention by Friday about returning to work, as they were finding it hard to replace us. In other words if we don't return to work we'll be finished. That's me and Grace Phillips. This has happened to nobody else.

We think we got the notices because last Thursday we went lobbying in Sheffield and we were plastered on TV. And then on Thursday night we went picketing at Bevercotes, and we turned three cars and a motor-bike back. I think that's what did it, because the other canteen women at other pits haven't received anything.

I think they picked on us out of temper because we gave them such a scabbing on Thursday night, turning them men back — that's the first men that have been turned back in months.

I used to picket there regularly, twice every day. But then I was needed in the kitchen. We used to do every day. In fact we used to picket other pits as well.

None of the surface nor face workers have received these notices either.

There are about 12 canteen women at Bevercotes. They're all scabbing except me and Grace. They were on strike for ten days, then they went back.

I wrote back and told them we are on industrial dispute and we'll come back when it's over. If he's bluffing, we'll hear no more.

If he's going to carry it out we'll get a letter by Tuesday or Wednesday telling us we're sacked.

We already have a case going through the courts against the Coal Board over equal opportunities. There are men employed in the canteens and they are on full surface wages. We're not. We come under catering pay.

They are doing the same job as us but they get more money. We work from 5 am till 1.30 with a half an hour break. The men work less hours than we do and they get longer breaks.

They have 8 rest days, we have three. They have a coal allowance, we don't. There's single women working in the canteens, divorcees, widows, and they don't get the coal. But any women workers should be on the same as the men.

Another canteen took them to court and won the case a couple of years ago. They had to back-pay the whole lot. So we are

Back the miners



doing the same. It started before the strike.

With the sacking, I think we're a test case, because the striking women at the other pits, Ollerton and Bilsthorpe, haven't had the letter. But they may sack them if they get away with it on us.

Getting the letter has made me more defiant. In fact my first response was, if the paper had been any softer than I'm running short of toilet roll. It won't drive me back. I'm still fighting for my job.

I might not want to keep it when we win, because I don't want to work with scabs, but I'm fighting for it because they'll not take it away from me. It'll be my choice, not theirs. I fought for my job and I'm going to keep it.

It sickens me that we will have to let scabs into the new union. I don't think it's right but then again I can see the point of having to build a majority for the NUM in the area. But it's sickening.

Return to work

It's a hard pill to swallow. I think that if they are let in there should be restrictions on them, like on standing for office. I don't think that any single union scab should ever be able to hold office again. Don't penalise them for five or six years, but for ever. This could die down and in five years they reappear and in ten years we'll be in the same situation again. And they'll do the same thing again.

It wants to be made safer, surer this time. So that no-one has to go through what we've been through. I'd never like to see anybody else go through this.

And having said that I would never change my mind. If we could turn the clock back to a year ago, I'd still do exactly the same thing again. There's not one day of the strike I regret. Not one day.

About the sacking, I'd like to know why they victimise two women. They've got loads and loads of men who are doing exactly the same thing as us — picketing. So why pick on two innocent women, when all we are doing is backing the union?

I think it's because they think we're the easiest to get away with. They took on women because they think we won't fight. But we'll fight harder. All it boils down to is victimisation.

They also think they can drive a wedge between the men and the women, but they're in for a shock, because I think the men will back us just as soon as anybody else. But it's sickening that they've got to sink to that level.

Notts strikers need money

Send money or invitations for fund-raising visits to the Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committees.

North Notts: Strike Centre, Ollerton Miners' Welfare, Ollerton, Notts.

South Notts: Miners' Strike Centre, c/o AUEW, 218 Mansfield Road, Nottingham.

150 WINNERS IN JAIL



W

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SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Economics of the rat-race



Triumphant Tory at the 1983 conference

"THE pursuit of equality is a mirage", said Margaret Thatcher in 1975.

And opposition to the idea of social equality is a central aspect of the ideology of the Thatcherite Tories.

The Tories have always been a bosses' party, working in the interests of big business. But the rise of Thatcher and the Tory 'drys' since the mid-'70s has introduced something new into the Tory Party. It has even shocked old guard Tories, like Ted Heath and Harold MacMillan.

In an interview in Weekend World in January 1982, Brian Walden said to Thatcher: "You've really outlined an approval of what I would call Victorian values". She replied: "Oh exactly. Very much so. Those were the values when our country became great."

Doing away with the welfare state is an important aspect of this ideology — though they rarely say so openly.

A big part of the new Tory philosophy is based on the ideas of Milton Friedman, the guru of 'monetarist' economics.

According to Friedman, the state should only provide a bare minimum of services — police, military forces and a stable currency. Apart from that, it should keep its nose out. Welfare systems, Friedman believes, have a morally corrupting effect on society.

"The difference between Social Security and earlier arrangements is that Social Security is compulsory and impersonal — earlier arrangements were voluntary and personal. Moral responsibility is an individual matter, not a social matter". ("Free to Choose").

In other words — scrap Social Security.

Friedman's ideas have been most fully implemented by the 'Chicago Boys' of General Pinochet in Chile.

The effects of these policies were catastrophic for Chilean workers. Wages fell by over half; unemployment soared; the social security system completely collapsed. And of course it was combined with one of the most brutal, murderous dictatorships in South America.

Cecil Parkinson, however, thought Chile had its good points: "There is a good deal of similarity between the economic policies of Chile and those of Great Britain", he said in Santiago in 1980.

And another big ideologue of the Chilean junta is Friedrich von Hayek — who Thatcher proclaims as her main inspiration. Hayek, like Friedman, advocates completely doing away with the welfare state, nationalised industries and — of course — powerful trade unions.

A slightly lesser-known 'theorist' of this ilk in Britain — but very popular with Thatcher's co-thinkers like Reagan in the US, is George Gilder.

Gilder is also against Welfare Benefits, especially for women:

"The man has the gradually sinking feeling that his role as provider, the definitive male activity from the primal days of the hunt . . . into modern life, has been largely seized from him; he has been cuckolded by the compassionate state."

Black women are even less deserving:

"Any increase in the independence of black women, secured both by welfare and by jobs, will only further expand the appalling percentages of black children raised without fathers."

So the Tories, basing their views on those of 'thinkers' like Friedman, Hayek and Gilder, really do want to do away with the Welfare State.



Tory pigs at party conference

Photo: John Harris.

Poverty killed Helen

By Paul Collins

THE tragic ice-home death of lone mother Helen Smith and her children signals a dual warning to government ministers and the labour movement.

Many other one-parent families will have their lives destroyed unless radical moves are made to help growing numbers in poverty.

But as Thatcher's family policies spell disaster throughout Britain, socialist alternatives presented by the Labour Party and trade union leadership remain inadequate.

Media efforts to blame the Smith family for their own fate show how far the Tories have polluted the social climate.

Helen Smith, with her son Michael, 13, and daughter Natasha, 11, were among hundreds of thousands of low-income one-parent families in Britain.

But rather than mention the huge rise in the proportion of single parents rearing children on the breadline, some newspapers sought to convince readers that the Smiths perished through waste.

It was the extravagance of Helen choosing to send a child on a school trip abroad at the apparent expense of heating their South London council maisonette.

And the profligacy of rate-capped authority Southwark squandering money on "madnesses" like a creche for town hall staff and a women's workshop teaching carpentry and joinery.

Nothing about the millions of pounds denied Southwark and similar areas to meet the needs of lengthening queues of monetarist victims. Nothing to indicate that one-parent families have under half the income of two-parent families, and the gap in living standards is widening.

Nothing which questions the profits of gas and electricity boards too quick to disconnect families who cannot pay their bills. In the Thames area alone,

over 12,000 homes had electricity cut off, and 10,000 had gas cut off last year.

And nothing to reflect the demand for positive action to end the special disadvantage of women raising children alone in a man's world.

The precise cause of the Smiths' deaths — from poisonous fumes or hypothermia — is irrelevant. The certainty is that a

young woman and two children died unnecessary deaths.

How many more one-parent families must suffer stunted lives — with too little to eat, insufficient heating in sub-zero temperatures, skimpy clothing and countless other deprivations?

One in seven families in Britain is a one-parent family. Forty per cent live in poverty on supplementary benefit — and the numbers have soared by 37 per cent since 1979.



Rich people having fun

Half the homeless families are one-parent families. Recent examples include those who occupied the town hall of Labour-led Camden Council to win their way out of death-trap hotels.

The case of the Smiths stresses the urgency of left solidarity to support councils like Southwark to defy Jenkin's punitive laws, despite the weakness of Kinnock, Cunningham and Co.

It also underlines how socialists who purport to be feminists must ensure the labour movement is committed to dynamic initiatives to redress the balance between the sexes on taking office.

One-parent families are often found in the worst and oldest housing. Black one-parent families tend to get the rawest deal — and wait longest on waiting lists for transfers to better accommodation.

Helen Smith, from Trinidad, must be seen as another casualty in our racist society.

Assault on the welfare state

By Clive Bradley

"THE most radical dismantling of the Welfare State since Beveridge". That is how Labour MP Michael Meacher described the proposals being put forward by social services secretary Norman Fowler for the 'reform' of the Welfare state. The 'Beveridge Report' in the early '40s marked the beginnings of the modern Welfare State.

Top of the list of Fowler's proposals is a reduction in benefits, to provide an 'incentive' for those on the dole to find work.

The plan is to end the automatic increase of benefits in line with inflation. The Tories

claim assistance for rents or rates.

They are also alarmed at the cost of the state earnings-related pensions scheme (Serps) under which the state pays a pension to those not covered by private schemes. Fowler proposes to wind up Serps altogether.

And the plan would include ending special payments to the poor for heating, clothing, furniture and so on.

These proposals would mean an immense attack on the welfare state. The Tory government is well-known to be eager to cut back on its spending — in accor-

dance with its monetarist economic quackery. Fowler's package is the most comprehensive plan yet to carry through a substantial dismantling of the welfare system.

Benefits now are absurdly low. People 'living' on supplementary benefit are expected to pay for electric, gas, water and other bills as well as feed and clothes themselves on less than £25 a week. Full unemployment benefit is only £28.

To fail to increase these benefits — even minimally in line with supposed price increases, will mean more grinding poverty for millions of people.

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Why the Tories don't like juries

THE Old Bailey trial of the Mangrove 9 in 1971 took the fight of Notting Hill's black community against police harassment right into the nerve-centre of the British legal system, challenging the Judge, the Police and the Court procedures, and disrupting the smooth routine of Police repression.

With the unexpected help of a mainly white, working class, jury, the Nine won at least a partial victory: they were cleared of 25 out of 31 charges, including the most serious ones. Five were acquitted and four got suspended sentences.

The jury simply decided that the police were liars. And, indeed, the evidence in support of this view was overpowering.

The charges were of riot, causing an affray, and causing grievous bodily harm. The police brought these charges in order to hit back at the black community in Notting Hill which had dared to stand up to them.

In June and July 1970 the Mangrove Restaurant was raided nine times by police supposedly looking for drugs, which they never found, and its licence to stay open after 11 p.m. was revoked when the police lodged an objection. Thereafter, those who ran it were repeatedly dragged into court, accused of serving food after hours.

Marched

On August 9, 1970 the local black people marched in protest at this police harassment. Without any 'provocation' — other than the outrageous sight of blacks daring to protest — police baton-charged the march. The marchers naturally fought back.

The charges against the Nine arose from this battle. The first time the police brought the charges they were thrown out by a local magistrate, and it is pretty certain that it was on the initiative of Scotland Yard, backed up by the Director of Public Prosecutions, that other charges were then substituted and a decision to press ahead with prosecutions taken. Later, by a legal trick, the original, more serious charges were re-introduced at the Old Bailey.

Neither the harassment by local police bully-boys, nor the

THE jury in the Clive Ponting trial slapped Mrs Thatcher's government in the face when it ignored the judge — who came within an inch of directing them to convict — and acquitted Ponting. As Tony Benn indicated in last week's Socialist Organiser, there have been many famous examples in history of juries defying judges and governments like this.

Such a case was that of the Mangrove Nine in the early '70s when a mainly white, mainly working class jury threw out police charges against black militants and by implication accused the police of framing them.

The jury system is one of the best bulwarks against state and police tyranny — which is why they have abolished it for Republicans in Northern Ireland.

Constance Lever wrote this account of the famous Mangrove 9 trial.



Darkus Howe

intervention of the higher police authorities in pressing the changes was accidental.

The police must protect the private property system of the wealthy against its victims. To forestall trouble they tend to pick most on those who stand out, who have the rawest deal, and try to terrorise them into submission.

Their first targets are the homeless, the unemployed, the Irish labourers, the blacks. And when such people fight back, it worries them.

The Mangrove was a community restaurant, one of a network of community organisations. The Nine included men and women, youth and adults, workers and students, the highly political and the politically inarticulate: the restaurant and its clientele were harassed so as to stamp out a centre of black consciousness.

This sort of insolent thuggery and racist provocation is a regular part of the sporting life enjoyed by the honest-copper-on-the-beat in all the cities of

England.

When the Mangrove blacks responded militantly, refusing to be cowed, the police countered first with a baton charge and then by mobilising all the power the police and judicial establishment could muster.

Because the police threw all they had at the Nine, the result of the ten-week trial was a serious smack in the face for the police.

The trial itself was not quite what the police had bargained for. The accused did not act like frightened and malleable pawns of the Court, silent and kow-towing.

Instead, they turned the trial into an indictment of the police and the system. Three of them, Darkus Howe, Rhodan Gordon and Althea Lecointe, conducted their own defence. They all refused to shut up when told to, rejected the Judge's rulings that statements about police brutality in Notting Hill were irrelevant, and even provoked "His Honour" on several occasions into walking out of his own Court.

Ritual

With these tactics they broke through the hidebound ritual of Court procedure and managed to actually talk about their lives and experiences, and about their conflict with the police, to the ordinary men and women of the jury.

Normally the jury is segregated in its box, silent and forbidden to ask questions. The accused are in the prisoners' dock, silent and forbidden to explain themselves or address the jury directly: they answer only when spoken to, and only to the point of questions put to

them.

Both jury and accused are in the hands of the Judge, the lawyers and the police, who understand each other well and are accustomed to the rituals of the courtroom — rituals strange and inhibiting to the laymen involved.

The officials and police are members or servants of the ruling class, either hostile to, or without real understanding of, the lives and experiences of most accused and also of most jurors, the majority of whom are from the working class.

The mumbo-jumbo and ancient ritual of the courts serves to block direct contact or real communication between the accused and the jury.

The Mangrove Nine cut through the barriers of courtroom procedure.

They refused to behave as individuals charged with crimes, unsure and apologetic, but acted instead as representatives of a militant black community challenging police and Court intimidation.

And their community backed them up: every day of the 49-day trial they packed the public gallery to give solidarity.

The acquittals proved that it is possible — sometimes — to beat the police frame-up system, and to disrupt the rusty machinery of the courts. But not only that.

Class lines

A majority of the Mangrove jury were workers, and only of the eleven were black. It is known that the jury divided along class lines, with the middle class members inclined to believe the police and favouring conviction.

It seems that some of the workers knew better. Eventually they compromised on the basis of agreement on acquittal on the most serious charges.

And when the trial ended, seven jurors joined the Nine to spend three hours chatting and drinking, like old friends long kept apart.

Whatever element of accident there may have been in the Mangrove verdict and in the composition of the jury, the trial does show that the jury system can be a weak link in the chain of boss-class control, which can sometimes be used to their advantage by militants.

Nor is this new: in 1794 a London jury acquitted Hardy, the Republican, of treason — and the London crowd carried him in triumph through the streets.

And in 1833 a jury of Clerkenwell tradesmen took over the conduct of a trial, insisted on asking their own questions and brought in a verdict of justifiable homicide on the killers of a policeman who had taken part in an attack on a demonstration.

They were themselves feted as popular heroes.

That is why in times of social crisis the rulers can no longer use the jury system and must substitute the blatant repression of internment without trial or martial law.

Meanwhile the courts are their courts, the law is their law. And our strength — the strength of the working class and of the oppressed minority groups — is in the factories and on the streets. But when we are forced onto their ground we must know how to fight there too.

Science

'Safe in our hands'

By Les Hearn

IN case anyone actually believed Margaret Thatcher when she said "the National Health Service is safe in our hands", this week's Science Column examines some of the more and more compelling evidence that health cuts are not just harmful but are actually causing deaths.

Months of misery.

Waiting lists are a good indicator of the health of the NHS and these have been growing. Outpatient waiting times have gone up by 20% with general surgery up to two months and gynaecology to three months. The *minimum* wait for eye operations is nearly four months and children can wait for seven months for orthopaedic surgery.

Shortage of beds has even resulted in emergency patients being turned away. In London some 140 critically ill patients are being refused admission to their local hospitals. The Emergency Bed Service (EBS) then tries to place them and in one-fifth of cases has to order a hospital to make room after four or more refusals. Despite the EBS 2% of these patients die before a bed is found.

Cases turned away include a six-week-old with pneumonia, young children with asthma attacks, a pregnant 15 year old and a 74 year old who died three days after being rejected by six hospitals. In another case, a newborn baby died when doctors were unable to find her a cot in an intensive care unit in time. Her mother is in a coma following an accident with anaesthetic which seems attributable to staffing cuts.

The EBS recently issued a "Yellow Alert", requiring hospitals to free beds for emergencies. This was an unprecedented step since the hospitals were *not* in the grip of an epidemic. Hospitals are now working close to the margin of capacity and all it takes to overwhelm the system is a cold snap. The effect of an epidemic now doesn't bear thinking about!

Mindless DHA threatens brain unit.

One of the cruellest cuts proposed recently was described by Andrew Veitch in the Guardian at the end of last year.

The Rivermead rehabilitation centre treats people brain-damaged through accidents, strokes or tumours. In one case, 16 year old Maria White was left unable to walk, talk, see or feed herself by a brain tumour. Seven months in hospital brought little progress, but after six months at Rivermead, she can talk, walk, is learning Braille and goes to Speedway each week.

The alternative would have been lengthy hospitalisation, having everything done for her (incidentally, more costly in the long term). Nevertheless, Oxfordshire District Health Authority have decided to cut one-third of

the beds, move the unit miles and sell off the land to make up a shortfall in government spending.

An occupation by staff and patients forced a withdrawal of the decision pending consultation on the unit's future.

Heart patients victims of the heartless.

It is rare to see a cut having such a direct effect as the following one.

The heart unit at Guy's Hospital, South London, has 160 adults and babies waiting for open-heart surgery. Without this they are expected to die within a year. Already, waiting times for urgent cases are *four months* while "non-urgent" ones have to put up with being semi-disabled and in considerable pain for eight months. And yet the local Health Authority is proposing to close the unit for six weeks until the start of the new financial year. This is because surgeons have been operating at "too high" a rate and have used up the unit's allocation for this year.

Health Authority officials are clearly disgusted with this direct consequence of the Tory squeeze but seem to have no idea of trying to fight the cuts.

And elsewhere . . .

*One NHS hospital in Bath is cutting its vast list of children waiting for ear, nose and throat operations by paying for them to go private. Thus the crisis-hit private sector benefits from the Tory stranglehold on the NHS.

*The longstanding scandal where people with kidney failure are effectively murdered by the government's refusal to pay for enough kidney machines continues.

*New liver transplant centres have just learnt that their *promised* allocations have been halved.

*Despite the ample warning by the progress of AIDS in America, the government's response has been "pathetic".

*Cervical smears which could save 1000 lives a year are being restricted, rather than expanded.

*Staff shortages mean that many elderly and handicapped patients are going without hot meals, an important psychological support for people who may be frightened and lonely.

*Medical teaching is being damaged as patients are rushed out of hospital before students and newly-qualified doctors have a chance to learn from them. This is an attempt to make scarce beds go further. It also results in patients going home to inadequate circumstances and perhaps before they are strong enough to leave hospital.

Info: mainly from the Guardian.

Science Column 4th Anniversary. Don't forget that all donations are welcome to our birthday fund, for the only regular science column on the Left. Gifts to your SO seller or to SO Science, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



Honest coppers on the beat?



The truth about Dresden

By Martin Thomas

DURING 1985 we will hear the official story of World War Two over and over again, as we come up to the 40th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe.

A lot will be glossed over — like the bombing of the German city of Dresden on February 14-15 1945 by British and US planes.

That air raid killed between 100,000 and 250,000 people — as many as the Hiroshima atom bomb, and more than twice as many as died in all the air raids on Britain during World War Two put together. Practically all were civilians. Many were refugees. The city had no air raid defences.

Dresden had little significance as a military or strategic target. In fact the air raid was concentrated on the city centre and residential areas: rail links through Dresden were cut for only three days, and most of Dresden's major factories were hardly touched.

The raid was deliberately designed to cause huge civilian casualties, in order to demoralise the Germans.

The air raid used conventional bombs — but concentrated in such numbers that they caused a fire-storm. Whole blocks of buildings caught fire. The fire heated the air above them so much that an artificial tornado was created, pulling air, objects

and people from round about into an inferno which eventually covered at least eight square miles of the city.

In those eight square miles it was practically impossible to survive. People who had found shelter in cellars died from lack of oxygen.

No-one knows exactly how many people died because the pre-war population of Dresden — 600,000 — had been swollen to at least twice that number by refugees. But the terrible effect of concentrated bombing and fire-storms was well known.

Firebomb

The RAF had fire-bombed Hamburg, killing over 40,000 civilians, in July 1943. It also fire-bombed Kassel, Darmstadt, and Brunswick, though with smaller casualties. A US fire-bomb attack on Tokyo in March 1945 killed almost as many as the Dresden raid.

At about this time the Allied air forces were rejecting frantic demands from Jewish organisations that they should bomb the railway lines leading to the Nazi death camps. Not enough planes, they said — not enough bombs.

The British and US governments did not fight World War Two for democracy and civilisation. For them, all that was secondary: their chief aim was to defend and strengthen the world position of British and US imperialist capital.

The Great Terror

Tyranny and murder in the name of communism

50 years ago Stalin's Great Terror was getting under way.

The isolation of the Bolshevik Revolution in the backward, war-ravaged USSR had already shifted power from the working class to a privileged bureaucracy. The Terror consolidated the bureaucracy's rule and destroyed its last links with working class politics and with Bolshevism.

Patrick Murphy tells the story.

BY 1934 Joseph Stalin had eliminated the most serious opposition he had faced within the Soviet Communist Party and was clearly the leading figure in the Soviet Union.

Trotsky had been exiled, oppositionists associated with him had been arrested, exiled, or murdered. The less committed had confessed their mistakes and begun to pay homage to Comrade Stalin.

However, none of the ruthless faction-fighting, persecution or repression of the first ten years of Stalin's leadership could compare with the vicious reign of terror that was unleashed after 1934.

In December 1934 a leading Communist Party boss, Kirov, was killed by a young oppositionist. There is still argument about who was behind Kirov's death, but on balance it seems that Stalin himself ordered the murder.

Kirov was a rival to Stalin within the Party. He represented a faction which had had some success at the recent 17th Congress of the Communist Party in urging moderation and less repression.

The assassination gave Stalin the excuse to unleash one of the most brutal and widespread purges in human history.

Immediately the murder of Kirov was blamed on a 'terrorist conspiracy' involving foreign powers, fascism, Trotsky and internal dissidents. Two prominent old Bolsheviks, Zinoviev and Kamenev — broken and defeated oppositionists — were arrested and forced to confess to conspiring with Trotsky and foreign powers against the Soviet Union.

Throughout 1935 loyal Stalinists took all the major positions in the Party: all members were encouraged to join in a witch-hunt for secret 'Trotskyists'.

By 1936 the leading Stalinists were complaining that the ranks of the party were filled with too many liberals, and that there was too much reluctance in unmasking traitors, Trotskyists and spies.

It was, therefore, in 1936 that the most thorough and indiscriminate purge began. No section of Soviet society was safe from persecution — not even those who were carrying it out.

The chief of the secret police (NKVD), Yagoda, was eventually arrested and executed himself.

Leading Stalinists were executed or jailed for being disloyal. Most of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the senior layers of the military were swept aside. Scientists, engineers and managers were shot or imprisoned in their tens of thousands.

The treatment of fellow-Stalinists was the farcical side of the Terror. The terrible tragedy was the destruction of communist militants. Most opposition-



Stalin, gravedigger of the revolution

ists were wiped out ruthlessly.

So were foreign communists who had taken refuge in the Soviet Union. The entire leadership of the Polish Communist Party, which was in exile in the USSR, was executed.

Millions

Millions of people died in these purges, party members and non-members. Communists with foreign connections of any kind were particularly suspect. This was used to justify the execution not only of Soviet diplomats but also of many soldiers returning from service in the Spanish Civil War.

The more prominent Communists were 'tried' in a series of show trials, beginning in 1936.

In the first trial, Zinoviev, Kamenev and 14 others were brought into court. All but one were executed after 'confessing' and being found guilty.

In the second trial, 17 people, including the former Bolshevik leader Karl Radek, were accused of conspiring with Japan and Germany to divide the USSR between those two powers. They were found guilty. 13 were executed and four sent to camps. None survived.

Both of these trials heard

'evidence' which implicated Nikolai Bukharin, an old and respected Bolshevik and Stalin's partner in the battle with Trotsky in the 1920s. He had so far escaped the investigators. In the final show trial, in 1938, Bukharin was sentenced to be shot.

When the Great Terror (as it finally became known) finally ended, Stalin blamed the new head of the secret police, Yezhov, for the excessive brutality. He had him replaced by Beria, a personal friend of Stalin, and then executed Yezhov.

Purges continued right up to Stalin's death in 1953. Widespread purges were carried out against old CPers in the East European Stalinist states. But the scale of the 1935-8 Terror was unprecedented and remains unsurpassed.

Elimination

One result of the Great Terror was the almost entire elimination of the old Bolshevik party.

Of the membership of the CPSU in 1939, 80 per cent had joined since 1930. Of Lenin's Central Committee, only one member — Stalin — survived after the assassination of Trotsky in 1940. Thus, practically

everyone who had any independent communist tradition or status in the Soviet Union had been removed.

By the time Stalin's successor, Krushchev, confessed Stalin's crimes to the Soviet people in 1956, it was clear that the entire structure of the CPSU had been changed beyond recognition in the years of the purges.

There is no doubt that Stalin was an odious and brutal character, a tyrant and a man who contributed nothing positive to human history. Comparisons made by bourgeois historians between Stalin and Hitler are quite justified. But this alone cannot explain the depths to which he — and the USSR — sank in those years.

Stalin was a mediocre man who had played a secondary part in the Bolshevik revolution. After he became dictator, he had had to falsify history enormously to make it seem that his role had been much greater.

Links

Even when all effective opposition seemed to have been defeated, there were people in the Communist Party who still believed in communism in some sense — people who had some links with the revolution and with the old working-class movement. Most of these had joined the party before 1917 or in the immediate aftermath of the revolution.

Stalin had to rid the party and the state of these people if his dictatorship and the rule of the new bureaucratic elite were to be stabilised.

Those who were left when all this was done were worthless anti-communist, anti-working-class bureaucrats, who had achieved or held their positions by obeying orders and wiping out anyone with a fragment of commitment to Bolshevism.

Many Communist Party members today still wish to deny or gloss over the crimes of Stalin. Nikita Krushchev denounced Stalin's crimes at the 20th (1956) Congress of the CPSU and at the 22nd (1961). But today Stalin has gone a long way towards being rehabilitated in the USSR.

This is not all that surprising. It suited Krushchev to break with Stalin in 1956 — but he did not break with Stalinism.

Nine months after he denounced the bloody tyrant Stalin, Krushchev himself sent the Russian tanks to crush the people of Budapest. Stalin was dead; Stalin had been denounced and 'repudiated' by his hand-picked successors — but Stalinism was still alive.

That was the message of the Hungarian experience of the labour movement.

The likes of Krushchev, Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko and the modern rulers of the Soviet Union, are the sort of corrupt degenerate characters whom Stalin considered it safe to tolerate.

They took part in or encouraged the destruction of the Soviet communist tradition, and they benefit from its destruction.

Working-class communism will return to haunt those bureaucrats, who are — despite what they call themselves — among the world's leading anti-communists.

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THE BRITISH ROAD TO NOWHERE
The Labour Left and the break up of the Communist Party

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Industrial

Teachers to strike

Accidents
on
YTS

THIS week the Manpower Services Commission has instructed its staff not to reveal details of deaths and accidents on its Youth Training Scheme. They have been forbidden to say where, when and how the accidents have happened.

Up to now there have been seven deaths on the schemes and the MSC is under pressure to improve its safety record.

Even the Area Manpower Boards are not to be given details of accidents. These Boards have trade union representatives on them and are in fact the only way the labour movement can keep even very loose tabs on the schemes.

The MSC regional offices are badly understaffed. The officers responsible for monitoring health and safety standards are not qualified to do that job. The Health and Safety Executive has been cut and very few schemes are vetted by them. Seven retired Health and Safety Inspectors have been taken on by the MSC as a result of the pressure, but clearly these seven cannot even attempt to cover the whole country.

As part of the government's welfare cuts to allow for tax cuts, they intent to stop 16 and 17 year olds signing on. The only way unemployed youth will be able to get money is to go onto a scheme.

The necessary increase in available YTS places will increase the pressure on the already hopelessly inadequate health and safety monitoring.

The speed with which new schemes will have to be ratified and the panic to find enough places will certainly allow more unsafe, non-unionised, cowboy schemes to go ahead, no doubt resulting in more accidents and deaths.

BOTH the main teachers unions, the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, will be taking strike action after this week's half-term holiday.

The NAS/UWT is calling out all its members for the morning of Tuesday February 26, followed by selective strikes in ten areas the next week.

The NUT is calling out members on three-day strikes from among those working for education authorities which have threatened to dock pay from teachers refusing to cover for absent colleagues.

The stakes this year are a lot higher than last year. The employers have taken a much harder line, determined to force the unions to abandon for good

By Cheung Siu-Ming
Lambeth NUT

any attempt to restore pay levels established by the Houghton award over ten years ago.

Central government cash limits on local authorities and rate-capping in particular, will mean that many local authorities will make large cuts involving thousands of teaching jobs. The employers are trying to force teachers to trade a pay rise for extra duties, such as covering for absence and dinner-time supervision.

Finally, they will be looking to Keith Joseph to force through legislation on assessment of teachers.

The union negotiators know that their old tactics won't work this time. Now we will get nothing without confrontation.

Earlier talks on restructuring salary scales, which would have yielded "new money", ended when the NUT correctly refused to link it with changes in working conditions.

NUT members have bound their negotiators to reject arbitration. There was bitter anger over last year's 5.1% arbitration award. (The NAS/UWT also rejected arbitration, but only on the current 4% offer). There are no options open but to take strike action, however reluctant some NUT national executive members may be.

The plain truth is that the NUT executive has no strategy and no stomach for a fight — yet they find themselves pushed into a corner. They should have levied the members months ago

to build up the strike fund and to prepare the union on a war footing.

They should have started action earlier in the year, as the last conference demanded in September. They should have raised the issue of reducing strike pay from its present 100% level earlier.

No local authority has ever managed to establish in court that covering for absent colleagues (with no extra pay or time off in lieu) is part of a teacher's contract. The recent cases where the ILEA attempted to victimise NUT members taking such action unofficially have ended with the school governors upholding the teachers' appeal.

'No cover' is very popular because no teacher wants to lose preparation time or have extra pupils added to classes. The action is also an effective way of ensuring that supply teachers are employed.

This time, even some Labour authorities had threatened to dock pay against "no cover".

Sheffield council has now withdrawn the threat, but only because they wanted teachers' support over rate-capping. The ILEA, instead of docking pay, has penalised teachers by can-

celling all in-service training courses.

Therefore the NUT is gravely mistaken in not calling out London, Sheffield and other inner city teachers on strike. The NUT is going into battle with its strongest sections idle, leaving its weakest sections to fight against the most determined employers, those who are going to dock pay in retaliation for teachers' refusal to "cover".

Without these strong sections, the three-day strikes will not create sufficient disruption.

Worse still, the dispute will not be seen by NUT members as a national dispute. This involvement of the inner city teachers is crucial if we are to escalate the action successfully.

East London and Lambeth NUT gave a lead by calling a rank and file pay conference in January. Now this conference has been recalled for March 9 in London, to organise pressure on the executive to start a real fight.

All schools and associations should send delegates to this recall conference, bombard the executive with calls to ballot all members for strike action, and submit emergency motions and amendments on pay for the Annual Conference at Easter.



Striking domestics from Barking Hospital lobby Redbridge District Health Authority demanding that the scab firm Crothalls have their contract taken away.

NALGO strike

BY the time this issue of Socialist Organiser appears, NALGO members in residential homes in Strathclyde will probably be out on strike.

A NALGO member in one of the children's homes in Glasgow explained the background to the dispute:

"The central issue in the dispute is the increasing level of violence which staff are having to face, due to the lack of resources resulting

from cut-backs in spending by the council.

"At Walladewell Children's Home (Balornock) a member of staff was assaulted by the same child three times in a single week at the beginning of February. The staff there demanded that an alternative placement be found for the child. Senior social work management did not accept their demand.

"Children used to be placed in children's homes for reasons of non-accidental injury, marital breakdown etc. But the closure of List I schools and assessment centres mean that their clients are now being sent to children's homes instead. They can be violent both to staff and to other children.

"The situation at Walladewell is one example of that. After the third assault and no back-up from management the staff decided on strike action.

"Two other children's homes have already come out in support of Walladewell.

"A mass meeting of NALGO members in residential homes was held on February 12 and a resolution was passed unanimously pledging escalated action if the child at Walladewell was not moved. The resolution further called for a programme of procedure in case of assaults on staff.

"A ballot on strike action is now being held, the result of which will be known by the end of the month.

SORRY!

IN my article in SO 215 you had a misprint. It reads "the priority has been changed so that weighting has now to be given to the upper end of the promoted scale and a single salary scale with common maximum". Where it says "promoted" it should have read "unpromoted", which obviously alters the whole sense of the passage.

Yours fraternal
Ian McCalm

Glasgow BR: action planned

"WE'RE getting there" is British Rail's latest advertising slogan. But for over a thousand workers at the British Rail Engineering Ltd (BREL) works in Springburn, Glasgow, "there" may well turn out to be the dole queue.

The Springburn BREL works, victim of several hundred job losses as recently as last summer, is now to lose a further 1,250 jobs by the end of the decade. Coming on top of the recent losses, in an area already blighted by high unemployment, a fight to defend every job is needed.

Management's plans were suddenly announced at the close of January, involving the axing of 200 jobs in the next twelve months, another 250 in the following year, and then further cutbacks leaving a workforce of just 500 hourly-paid workers, with corresponding cutbacks amongst office staff, by 1990.

Even then, further cutbacks are not ruled out by management: "This assessment (of 500) will be subjected to further analysis and evaluation.

The reason put forward for the job losses is a fall in the level of work due to a reduction in the size of the BR fleet; the purchase by BR of rolling stock requiring less repair work; the cessation of the current programme of asbestos-stripping;

and the completion of the present contract for refurbishment work with Strathclyde Regional Council.

Management had no problem



in pushing through last year's job losses: while railway workers, supported by miners and local tenants, demonstrated outside the works' front door, the jobs went out the back door through voluntary redundancy — the demonstration held in protest at the job losses was a one-off event and not followed up by consistent campaigning.

A more hopeful sign of a real fightback this time round is the drawing up and adoption of a model resolution by rail militants at a meeting held just after

the announcement of the job losses. The resolution calls for:

*Establishment of an officially recognised emergency coordinating committee with delegates from all workshops and sections of the railways in Scotland;

*Blacking of any work diverted from Springburn;

*Opposition to all job losses, including by 'voluntary' redundancy;

*Full support by the executive committees of the relevant unions for all measures taken in defence of jobs.

Birmingham post strike

230 POSTAL engineers at Birmingham's Head Post Office are on strike, demanding the reinstatement of a colleague suspended for carrying out POEU branch policy in defence of jobs.

The engineers have been working to rule since the beginning of the month, when the discovered a management document outlining plans to slash jobs by 50% over the next three years. The POEU Birmingham Power branch bulletin takes up the story:

"We have clear evidence that Post Office management has already implemented the first phase of the plan — they haven't recruited anyone to

By Jim Denham

replace members who have retired or resigned during the last six months. And yet the recruitment policy for engineers is to replace members who retire and/or resign.

"When we became aware of management's attitude the Branch decided to operate a work to rule, which means that any equipment will be blacked if it has been reset, repaired or maintained by anyone else but our members. This happened on Monday night with LA Chain. Management suspended one member so everyone walked

out. Since then we have been on strike and we will not return until the suspension is removed."

A strong picket has been mounted outside the Head Post Office, and the engineers intend to extend the picketing to the other main sorting office at Curzon St.

Branch chair Rob Harper commented: "This is the first time we have ever been on strike for more than a day. It shows just how strongly members feel. We are going to stay out until our member is reinstated."

Contact: Birmingham Power Branch POEU, 19 Newhall Street, Birmingham B3 3PJ.

Socialist Organiser

Free the pit strike prisoners!

WHEN he called on Mrs Thatcher, cap-in-hand and knees-to-the-ground, it is unlikely that TUC General Secretary Norman Willis raised with her the question of the labour movement's class war prisoners — the 150 miners jailed on charges arising out of the strike.

He went to sell out the miners and to ask Thatcher to get himself and the other leaders of the TUC off the hook.

Every day that passes without the official labour movement taking up the defence of those brothers jailed for their part in the miners' strike, is a shame and a disgrace on our movement.

These men are in jail for being good, serious, dedicated trade unionists. Because they made a stand on behalf of their fellow miners, and for the entire working class.

Of course, it is natural that our bloody-minded vindictive ruling class should deal harshly with these vigorous, principled working class fighters.

But it is unnatural and shameful that the official labour movement should quietly accept this treatment of our militants.

We must do everything we can to rescue them. The labour movement should launch a powerful campaign to get them out of jail.

The reason why Neil Kinnock, Norman Willis and the rest of them are silent on the class war prisoners is that they accept that the bosses' courts have a right to convict and jail striking workers on the say-so evidence of Mrs Thatcher's police.

Just as they accept that the police thugs in the coalfields have a right to use as much violence on the picket lines as they need to break the miners' lines.

The labour movement should not accept that the Judges and the courts have a right to jail striking workers. The courts are their courts, not ours.

The idea of neutral, fair and impartial courts is a good and attractive one. But it does not fit the reality of today's courts in Britain where industrial, class-struggle affairs are concerned.



Terry French (top) has been jailed for five years. He was arrested on the picket line and charged with assaulting a policeman. Last Saturday, 16th, a demonstration outside Wandsworth prison demanded the release of Terry and other class war prisoners throughout the country. Photos: Andrew Moore, Stefano Cagnoni (IFL).

When the courts seize and hold the funds of the miners during a long and costly strike that is not 'fair' or 'neutral' — it is a blow for the Tories against the working class movement. It shows that the courts and judges are in the enemy camp.

The courts now function in industrial disputes as open partisans of the bosses against the working class.

The present role of the courts in industrial affairs was honestly and candidly described by Master of the Rolls, Sir John Donaldson, when he said this:

"The legal system is not in practice even-handed as between employers and unions; current functions put the courts

almost entirely in the business of restricting or penalising the latter, and not of remedying their grievances.

In industrial affairs the courts are the courts of the Tory ruling class.

The jailed miners were tried in the courts of their enemies and they are now held in captivity by the jailers who work for their enemies.

They must be freed by the labour movement!

We need a powerful campaign to rally the labour movement around the demand for the release of all class war prisoners and an end to prosecutions arising out of the miners' strike.

Trade union and Labour Party

The Ponting iceberg

MICHAEL Heseltine is a very bad loser. Flouting the most elementary rules of cricket he launched into a character assassination of Clive Ponting during the debate in the Commons. For Heseltine, apparently, you are

not only not innocent until proven guilty — you are still guilty even when proven innocent.

The Tories are in a bad state about the Ponting affair. Armed Forces Minister John Stanley

has now spelled out the logic of the Tories' lies and deceits about the Belgrano very clearly: in the interests of 'national security', apparently, ministers can and must choose to hide things from Parliament.

The whole affair tells us a lot about the Tories, and about the Parliamentary system.

We can be sure the details about the Belgrano leaked by Ponting to Tam Dalyell are only the tip of the iceberg. You can bet that other civil servants will not be prepared to divulge similar information.

There is an enormous amount of what goes on in the real government of Britain that is behind-the-scenes; there is a great deal Parliament does not know and can never find out.

But the whole business has also thrown the Labour party leaders into a bit of a state.

Giving in

Kinnock — having provided several libraries' worth of correspondence between himself and Thatcher by calling her a liar then disgraced himself by giving in to her and accepting her word for it!

But there's a deeper problem, too. Where the Tories get up and say that lying is necessary; that slaughtering the Argentine sailors on board the Belgrano was necessary for 'national security', the Labour leaders don't really have an answer.

To say, as Kinnock and co do, that the Belgrano, or Ponting's leak — or unions in GCHQ — are not a threat to national security concedes the main point. What if they are?

What they should be hammering home is that there is no such thing as 'national security'. What the Tories want to keep secure is not the 3½ million people they have put on the dole, or the trade unions they want to smash, or the miners' families they want to starve, or the old people who are dying of hypothermia because of Tory government cutbacks.

The Tories want to defend their class, and the capitalist system.

'National security' is a Tory myth, and the Labour Party will never win the battle of ideas if it accepts Tory myths.

S.Africa police kill five

FIVE people were killed and many wounded as the racist South African police opened fire on an unarmed demonstration near Cape Town, on Monday February 18.

65,000 inhabitants of the shanty town Crossroads took to the streets as South African authorities planned to demolish their homes. These black workers are legally 'squatters', and the authorities want to move them to a new township, Khayelitsha.

As rumours of the forcible removal of people from Crossroads spread, demonstrations broke out, and violent confrontation with the police took place.

Crossroads and opposition groups are demanding that no-one be moved against their will.

branches should demand that the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions put their weight and authority behind the campaign for the release of the jailed miners.

Campaign

We must pass resolutions in labour movement organisations and organise regular pickets of the jails where our brothers are imprisoned.

We must say to those in the labour movement who are still turning a blind eye to the miners' epic battle against the Tories — look what they are doing to honest trade unionists because they refused to bow down to police rule in the coal-

fields! Help us to release them! Help the miners win!

Victory to the miners!



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