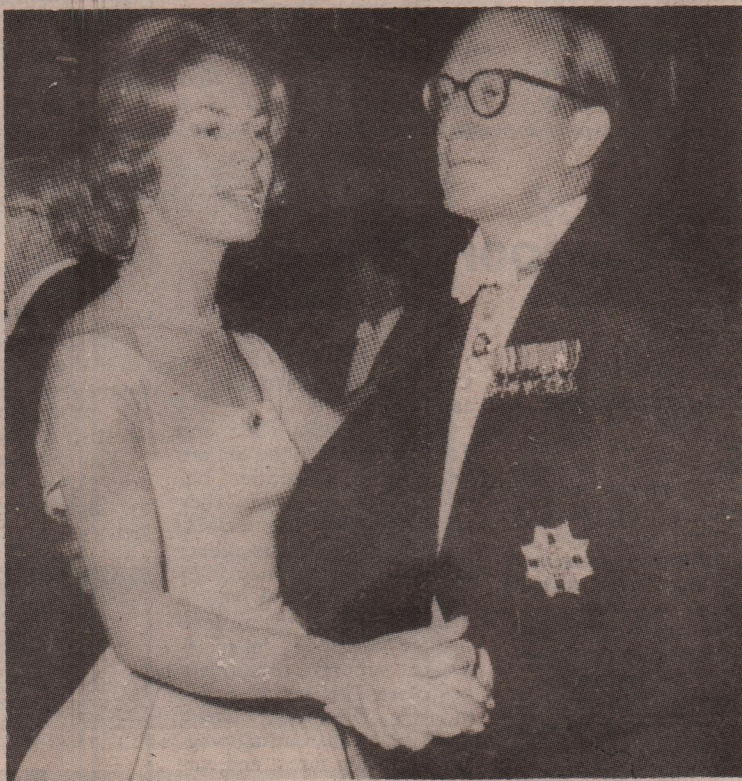


Socialist Organiser

No.221 March 28 1984 25p Claimants and strikers 10p



BLOOD ON HIS HANDS. Sir Arnold Weinstock is worth about £10 million. He is managing director of GEC, which has a 50% share in a South African electronics company.



BRITISH AND US BOSSES PROFIT FROM APARTHEID

BLOOD ON HIS HANDS: Lord Carrington, director of Rio Tinto Zinc and Barclays Bank, two of the most profitable multinational giants in South Africa.



BLOOD ON HIS HANDS: Henry Ford II, chief of the Ford Motor Company, which is the largest firm in the South African car industry.

MILLIONAIRES BEHIND THE MURDERERS

ON THURSDAY March 21 South African police shot down 19 black people in Langa, in the Eastern Cape.

The blacks were in a funeral procession. According to a priest who was an eye-witness, "The procession was walking peacefully... Not many were

aware that [memorial] services had been banned by the authorities...

"[Then] the police was there. There was confusion and then the shooting started. The people ran for their lives".

Since then at least 60 more blacks have been killed, many by the police. On Tuesday

26th 200 protesting blacks were arrested.

Politicians world-wide with the practically sole exception of Ronald Reagan, have condemned the Langa shooting. Yet South Africa is one of the major sources of profit for US and West European capitalism — especially British

capitalism.

Companies like BL, Rio Tinto Zinc, Barclays, GEC and others draw huge profits from the regime enforced by the apartheid police.

Black miners in South Africa supported the British miners' strike. Now it should be the turn of British trade un-

ionists to support black workers in South Africa.

Over recent years the black workers of South Africa have developed a growing new trade union movement. These non-racial unions want links with British trade unionists at all levels. We must do all we can to support them

INSIDE: STUDENTS p.3 RATE-CAPPING p.5-7

The class struggle in Britain 1984-5

By Martin Thomas

The 1984-5 miners' strike was the greatest strike in British working class history. This chronology of the year's events, supplementing the SO special issue 'Magnificent Miners', tells the bare bones of the story from day to day.

MARCH-APRIL: THE STRIKE BUILDS UP

Thursday March 1: Local pit manager announces closure of Cortonwood colliery in Yorkshire. Immediate unofficial strikes in South Yorkshire.

Monday March 5: Yorkshire area council calls area strike from March 9. Nearly half Yorkshire miners are already out.

Tuesday March 6: Ian MacGregor announces plans for 20 pit closures and 20,000 job cuts in 1984-5. Says there may be compulsory redundancies.

— Scottish area council calls area strike from March 9. Polmaise has already been out against closure from February 20 and pressing for area action.

Thursday March 8: NUM executive meets, sanctions area strikes in Yorkshire and Scotland and any other areas that may call action. Votes 21 to 3 against a national ballot. Tories announce increased redundancy payments for miners.

Friday March 9: Durham and Kent call area strikes; South Wales delegate conference recommends pits to strike.
— MORI opinion poll taken, shows 62% for strike.

Weekend March 10-11: Most South Wales pits vote against a strike. Notts delegate conference decides no action until an area ballot. Northumberland and Leicestershire leaderships vote against strikes.

Monday March 12: Flying pickets go into action. Scotland shut down; most of South Wales brought out; Harworth (Notts) also picketed out, by Yorkshire miners.

Tuesday March 13: Harworth still shut; Bevercotes (Notts) also picketed out.

— Police National Reporting Centre put into action. Some 8000 police mobilised.

Wednesday March 14: NCB obtains injunction against Yorkshire NUM over flying pickets. This will later be dropped. Pickets still spreading: NCB says that 132 out of 174 pits have been shut. Widespread police roadblocks.

Thursday March 15: Davy Jones, a Yorkshire miner, killed on the picket line at Ollerton, Notts. Notts miners' leaders call an area strike until Sunday, and Yorkshire temporarily withdraws pickets from Notts.

— NUM reports that four coal trains have been stopped by pickets in South Wales.

Thursday March 15, Friday 16th: Area ballots. Cumberland votes 383 to 109 against strike; Midlands, 7556 to 2804 against; South Derbyshire, 2303 to 453; Lancashire, 3765 to 2596; Notts, 20,188 to 7285; North Derbyshire, 4323 to 4307; North Wales, 595 to 276 against. Northumberland votes 52%-48% for a strike.

Friday March 16: NCB says only 11 collieries working normally.

Sunday March 18: Notts delegate conference calls for return to work.

— Police put up roadblocks to stop Kent miners at Dartford Tunnel.

Monday March 19: NCB drops court action against Yorkshire NUM.

— 42 pits working normally (says NCB), with most of Notts back at work.

Tuesday March 20: Leicestershire announces almost 90% ballot vote against strike.

— Pickets stop coal at Dover docks and at Scunthorpe steelworks.

Teachers fight for pay

In England

The Tories hoped that their victory over the miners would knock the fight out of the unions for a long time to come. But the teachers are proving them wrong.

The teachers have only begun to fight, but the signs are that the Tories have a full-scale battle on their hands. The NUT ballot has

produced a massive majority in support of the union's 'no cover' policy and for its wage claim.

In Tyneside and in Liverpool 94% and 95% voted for action.

This week selective strikes are scheduled for nearly 500 schools. There is talk of a national one day strike after Easter.

In Scotland

By Ian McCalman

THIS WEEK Scottish teachers continue their pay campaign with a demonstration in Ayr, home ground of Secretary of State George Younger.

Last week there was a distinct smell of a sell-out in the form of a pay-and-conditions package. But that was clearly rejected at a meeting of the Council of

the EIS (the main teachers' union in Scotland).

The decision to reject was helped along by Tory ineptitude, blatant right-wing scabbing, and rising militancy among teachers — displayed by a 300-strong lobby of the Council.

The mood for a fight has also expressed itself in electoral terms with a surprise victory for the Left on Glasgow EIS committee of management. The broad Left grouping, Campaign For a Fighting Union, now holds an overall majority on the leading body of the largest local association.

Hopefully this, combined with the strong left-wing presence in Lanarkshire, will pave the way for a more campaigning, democratic, and progressive union for Scottish teachers.

Younger's worries will no doubt have been increased by the astonishing Labour victory (with an 11.6%

swing) in a regional election within his constituency. Tory voters have been antagonised by the swingeing increases in rates due to drastic revaluation north of the border: but the swing is also partly due to the blame Tory voters have attached to Younger for his handling of the Scottish teachers' dispute.

Targeting of schools in his constituency for several weeks now has undoubtedly placed him under increasing pressure.

This week Glasgow teachers meet to resolve whether to go for a national Special General Meeting to discuss future stages of the pay campaign, which is now highly likely to extend into next session.

An important focus of the campaign will be a mass lobby of Parliament in May/June, in conjunction with the National Union of Teachers.

Campaign on Transport Bill

By Ian McCalman

ON TUESDAY April 2 thousands of busworkers and supporters will be marching through London to lobby Parliament against the Transport Bill.

If passed the Bill will:

- abolish road service licensing,

- break up and sell off the National Bus Company,

- break up and sell off Passenger Transport Executives and municipal operators. For unprofitable services which are continued as socially necessary, it will institute a dutch auction for subsidy.

- remove restrictions on minibus operation by 'voluntary' and 'community' organisations,

- allow cab-sharing at separate fares,

- reduce traffic commissioners,

- enforce competition, i.e. all bus stations must be open to all operators, councils can-

not favour municipal operators against private ones just because the latter have no maintenance facilities, etc.

- empower the Secretary of State to take control of local operations.

The Bill, in short, is intended to make sure that profit, not need, determines transport provision. Safety, timetabling, and fare levels must all be governed by this. The rapist in the rusty transit van has as much right to ply for hire as anyone else.

The White Paper which preceded the Bill was met with scorn by all sections of the industry — bosses, unions, councils, and passengers' associations.

The unions have sought to create a Popular Front by uniting with the Liberals and dissident Tories, in particular the Association of District

Councils, in a propaganda campaign.

But the Liberal Party and Tory opponents of the Bill are in favour of competition, but off the road, by tender. They are in favour of cutting costs, by cutting wages and reducing staffing levels. They differ from the government only in their presentation of the case.

Bus company managements support this more polite way of wrecking the industry. They are reducing manning levels, cutting wages, increasing fares, and cutting mileage now. They see the Bill as a nuisance, not an aid, in their fight against transport workers.

The way forward for bus workers and passengers is shown by Cardiff's fight against pay cuts and threatened redundancies. They stopped the job, refused to compromise, and with the support of other workers won everything they asked for.

Victory in Cardiff

By Martin Barclay

I asked Bob Imperato, TGWU branch secretary at the National Welsh depot in Cardiff, about it.

"The result has been a total victory for us.

We were called to London urgently on Saturday

[23rd] to find that management had withdrawn their ridiculous proposals.

They completely and utterly backed off.

Management claimed initially that the cut was due to losses at the depot, but when we put a package of economies to them they completely shrugged them off.

It only emerged later that the cuts were part of a coordinated strategy by NBC [the National Bus Company].

Our dispute wasn't really with National Welsh — NBC were behind them, actually attending two meetings, and obviously the government were behind the NBC.

They openly admitted that they were trying to make the service more profitable to make it more attractive for sale to private enterprise. After ten weeks and nine or ten meetings, every possibility of compromise was explored. But they weren't looking for any sort of deal: they were looking for a pay cut.

Our depot has been used as a test case for the rest of the industry. We can only hope that our successful resistance, with the financial support of depots up and down the country, will show that NBC can be defeated.

We won — you can do the same."

THE NATIONAL Bus Company drivers at the Cardiff depot have been on strike for ten weeks over proposals by management to make cuts in pay of £25 to £30.

The drivers returned to work on Tuesday March 26 after the proposals were completely withdrawn.

Continuing the fight

THE NORTH Staffs Trades Council Miners' Support Committee has decided to continue in existence until all miners are given an amnesty, and until all the class war prisoners are released from jail.

The committee decided to write to local MPs Mark Fisher and Jack Ashley, who have taken up the cases of four sacked workers at the Area Workshops. By taking up just these four, they imply that other miners, sacked for more serious offences, should not necessarily be reinstated.

The Committee supported the decision of the NUM to demand an amnesty for all sacked miners. When we circulate information about sacked miners, this will not include details of the crimes they are alleged to have committed.

The decision of the Support Committee to continue its work was followed by Stoke North constituency Labour Party, who also decided to write to the NUM saying that we remain willing to give support in any way to the NUM if they need it.

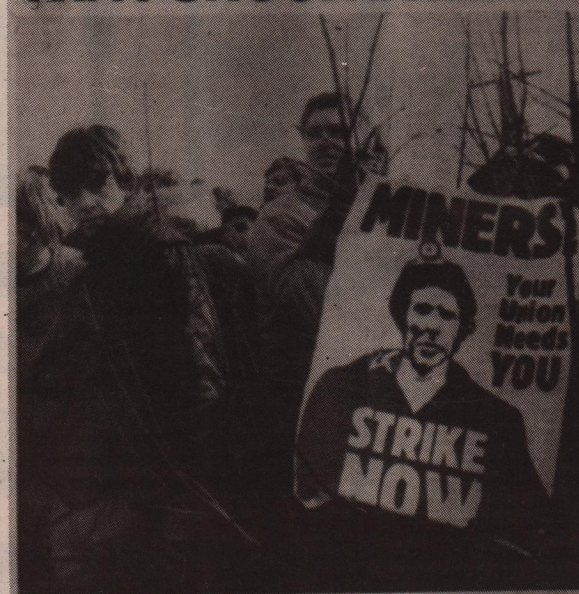
While the strike is over, the dispute is not. John Irwin, NUM Power Group secretary at Hem Heath colliery, told the Support Committee that a notice had been put on his door saying, "Irwin is sacked".

As John Irwin pointed out, there are hundreds of sacked miners available for flying picket duty round the country. They could ensure that 20 different pits are picketed each day, which would be a very effective way of ensuring that the question of the amnesty does not go away.

'Starved, battered, defiant: MAGNIFICENT MINERS'

The first full account and analysis of the miners' strike. 75p plus 22p postage from SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

12 MONTHS THAT SHOOK BRITAIN



THE STORY OF THE STRIKE

TONY BENN comments on the pamphlet: "This pamphlet is an important and interesting record of the strike seen from the point of view of Socialist Organiser. No-one who reads it can doubt that it underlines the enormous importance of that struggle, and the necessity for it to be continued in support of all those who are defending their living standards, their jobs, their services, their unions and their civil rights — and points the way to the new demands we must make for a socialist transformation of our society".

Against the ban on zionists!

SOCIALIST Organiser is opposed to the ban on Sunderland Polytechnic's Jewish Society.

No student union would ban Labour Clubs which are Zionist, nor would they refuse a platform to, say, Tony Benn or Ian Mikardo, who are Zionists.

The ban reduces down to one on Jewish societies. The only people up for being told they can have 'no platform' solely because of their support for Israel are Jews.

Of course Zionists — who quite possibly have no sympathy for Israeli policy — must be argued with. And the contradiction between supporting Israel and being a committed socialist or anti-racist must be pointed out. But most Jews who look to Israel are not racists — and

they should not be treated as such.

Sunderland's ban has become big news inside the student movement.

Attempts to reverse the ban have been hindered by the national activities of the NUS Executive and the Union of Jewish Students. They held a march in Sunderland a few days before a recall general meeting which only further polarised opinion in Sunderland.

Now at NUS conference there is a motion to suspend Sunderland Poly Student Union from NUS until they sort themselves out and reinstate the Jewish Society.

There are several issues raised by a proposed suspension, and the most important is whether or not it would work.

Giving NUS conference rights to suspend is a dangerous business. Obviously there are cases where student unions should be suspended — like, for instance, a union which banned blacks from holding positions, and where elementary democratic rights are denied. But suspension should be used very sparingly.

In this case a suspension would not lead to the Jewish Society being reinstated. Worse, it would cause a backlash, which would either lead to more suspensions in misplaced solidarity with Sunderland or to student unions refusing to pay their fees to NUS until Sunderland was reinstated.

The issue would become student union autonomy, not the ban on the Jewish Society.

A suspension would not defend the rights of Jewish students.

What is needed is a campaign to educate anti-racist students, including Jewish students, that while Israel is a racist state, supporters of Israel are not necessarily racist.

An emergency motion has been submitted from Durham University which calls on NUS to campaign inside student unions for the rights of Lesbian and Gay Societies, of autonomous and closed black and women's groups, and of Jewish Societies.

Whatever happens at conference it is important that every Labour Club and socialist group organises a debate on the Middle East at which the issues can be cleared up.

Magnificent miners

Wednesday March 21: Power unions (including GMBU) advise their members to cross miners' picket lines.

Thursday March 22: Steelworkers at Port Talbot, South Wales, refuse to respect miners' picket lines.

Monday March 26: After a week of picketing at the pits, the NCB claims 38 working 'normally'. The strike has reached a steady level.

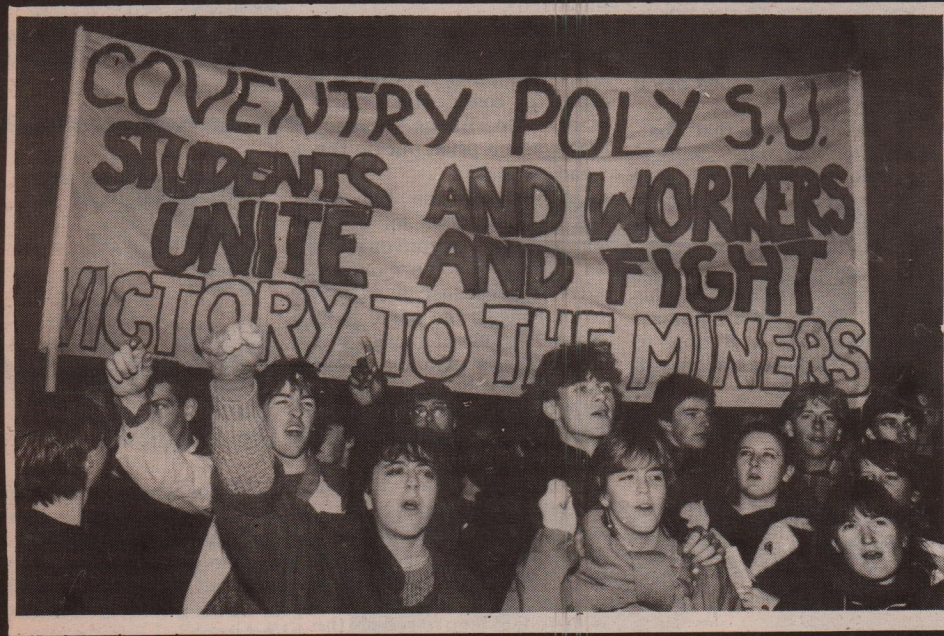
— Midlands leadership, following Lancashire and other areas, calls an area strike.

— Picketing spreads out more to power stations.

Tuesday March 27: Eight NUM executive right-wingers meet to plan pressure for a national ballot.

Wednesday March 28: NUPE members join NUM picket lines in South Wales.

Thursday March 29: Transport union leaders meet and recommend total blockade on all coal movement. (They had already agreed not to cross picket lines). ISTC



Students 1985

BLACKPOOL, March 26: National Union of Students conference is now in its second day. Already, Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN) has shown itself to be the major left opposition to the Kinnockite NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) leadership of NUS.

NOLS have equivocated over local government, and set up hardened hacks to argue against calling for mobilisations of students and council workers. They feign commitment to both the miners and sexual politics, but believe that Women Against Pit Closures and Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners should not be part of our sexual politics campaigning. They think that paper positions are better than supporting living movements.

They argued that anyone who opposes collaboration with official student unions in Eastern Europe and wants links with real unions and the working class is a 'cold warrior'.

SSIN moved to break links with the Stalinist state unions and will move to give financial and political support to Women Against Pit Closures.

Socialist ORGANISER

POLICE STATE TORIES

By Jim Denham

Students and miners

THE MINERS' strike had an enormous effect on the student movement.

Labour clubs and student unions took students to picket lines, to soup kitchens and out collecting.

The 'ultra vires' laws which stop student unions giving money to campaigns which are not in 'the direct interest of students' were broken. Most colleges decided to 'launder' the money by buying NUM educational packs or holding benefits, but the Polytechnic of North London made a direct cash payment. (Unfortunately, there was no national campaign to defend them, and PNL had the receiver sent in).

Many students were arrested. A single mother with two children from the London School of Economics was sentenced to 56 days in jail for allegedly throwing stones at police on a picket of their adopted pit, Ferrymoor Rydings.

But even inside the majority tendency in the National Union of Students — Labour Students — there were problems. At the start of the strike Neil Stewart, then president of NUS (and a member of the National Organisation of Labour Students, NOLS) sent out a circular telling students they were not welcome on picket lines.

The biggest battle between the Kinnockites and the Left (principally Socialist Students in NOLS, SSIN), with the SWP in tow, came at the Christmas NUS conference.

SSIN proposed a motion demanding a donation of £20,000 from the NUS surplus, urging student unions to go picketing, demanding that the Executive back any student union taken to court for making an ultra vires payment, and condemn-

By Jane Ashworth

ing all police violence.

This was lost, and instead a NOLS motion was carried which gave only £1,000, condemned all violence, and told student unions to do what the NUM asked.

That was always the Executive's position — do what the NUM asked. On the face of it,

VICTORIES IN NOLS

THE 'Democratic Left' held onto their control of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) at its recent conference.

But it was nevertheless a good conference for Socialist Students in NOLS (SSIN) — the left-wing opposition to the Kinnockite 'Democratic Left' and the Militant tendency.

Conference agreed with us when we said that the 'Democratic Left' were wrong to lead the NUS into refusing to back student unions taken to court for making possibly illegal payments to the miners. And our motion to delete the condemnation of the Polytechnic of North London for "giving the fascists the best platform they have had for years" was clearly passed.

Even though the 'Democratic Left' vote did break up on these issues, it generally held together. And the leading lights of the 'Democratic Left' traded on their old theme tunes to keep their caucus together.

There is not much debate at

it seems reasonable. What it really meant was that the Executive were not going to organise much at all nor shift themselves to get student unions to do thing that the NUM may not have thought of.

For example, student unions have lots of space. That should have been used for putting up flying pickets, as it was in 1972. Student unions have printing facilities, phones, etc., that should have been offered to the NUM.

NOLS conference any more, and when the 'Democratic Left' are forced to argue their arguments are either contradictory or slanderous.

The South Africa debate was worst. John Mann (chair) invited 'Militant' to sue him, and the DL used the fallacious argument that to disagree with the African National Congress on some policy issues is to be against the entire South African liberation movement.

So consequently Conference was never able to discuss the real issue — whether we should or should not support making links with the non-racial unions in South Africa organising black workers to fight apartheid.

Many delegates were ruled out from the conference on technicalities. As a result the 'Democratic Left' walked the elections, with Helen McHale the only SSIN supporter elected to the national committee of NOLS.

SSIN national organiser Dave Brennan was elected auditor.

In fact the whole conference

NUS were also slow to take up the Women Against Pit Closures campaign. In fact, if it were not the motions from SSIN supporters to NUS conference, Women Against Pit Closures would not have got a look in.

SSIN mandated the Executive to organise a speaking tour and let Women Against Pit Closures use NUS facilities both during and after the strike.

During the strike, student unions have twinned with pits and worked with local trade

union and Labour Party activists. These links will serve them well for the future.

The day the strike was called off — March 2 — was the last day of NOLS conference. A statement from the NOLS National Committee was successfully amended by SSIN supporters to include a call for all Labour Clubs to adopt a class war prisoner. That issue is the substance of the SSIN emergency motion to the NUS conference taking place this week, March 25-28.

was organised undemocratically. After last year's conference was closed down, the Labour Party national executive stepped in and imposed a set of standing orders which severely undermines delegates' power.

And they also ruled out most of the SSIN nominations for the national committee. As a protest, we wrote 're-open nominations' in the relevant slots on our ballot papers.

The Labour Party national executive banned visitors unless they had paid £20 in advance. About a dozen Militant supporters challenged this on the door, and the police were called to move them off.

This disgraceful abuse was challenged on the floor of the conference by NC member and SSIN supporter Tony Dale, who demanded that the police be kept out and asked who had called them in. The platform denied having called the police, and it is still unclear who did.

The week before conferen-

ce, the Labour Party national executive had rejected proposals to act against 'Further Education Labour Students', which has been set up by Militant. FE students cannot join NOLS unless they are on a full-time course — which rules out the thousands of students who are signing on.

SSIN proposed a constitutional amendment to allow all students to join NOLS. This was not prioritised, so Simon Pottinger from Durham University proposed five minutes off the guest speaker time to allow it to be taken.

Both Militant and the 'Democratic Left' voted against! SSIN is now convinced that both sides are gaining a lot from the FELS conflict and don't want to solve it.

SSIN is optimistic about the future for NOLS, and is asking all Labour Clubs and Socialist Societies to invite SSIN to speak or debate on the way forward for NOLS. We can be contacted on 01-603 9202; or write to 20A Upper Addison Gardens, London W14.

ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

joins this recommendation — but next day Bill Sirs goes back on it.

Tuesday April 3: Merseyrail workers strike when two drivers are sent home for refusing to move coal.

— Following the transport unions' decision, Notts area executive calls on Notts miners to respect picket lines.

Wednesday April 4: Norman Tebbit calls for privatisation of coal mines.

Thursday April 5: ISTC executive rejects any action in support of miners.

— Notts delegate conference votes for normal working.

Tuesday April 10: Two road haulage firms begin court action against South Wales NUM over Port Talbot picketing. This will culminate in August with the seizure of the South Wales NUM's funds.

Wednesday April 11: Power workers accept 5.2% wage settlement.

— NACODS votes 7638 to 6661 for strike over pit closures, but this is not their required two-thirds majority.

Thursday April 12: NUM executive meeting. Call for national ballot ruled out of order. Special delegate conference called with recommendation to lower required ballot majority for strike from 55 to 50%. 3,000 miners lobby the NEC meeting. After it, Notts president Ray Chadburn tells his members: "Get off your knees and support the strike".

Neil Kinnock calls for a national ballot.

Saturday April 14: 7000 march in Nottingham to demand 'Police out of the coal-fields'.

Sunday April 15: Two opinion polls published, showing 68% and 55% majorities for a strike.

Monday April 16: Notts rank and file strike committee formed.

— Railworkers in Notts begin to stop coal trains.

Thursday April 19: NUM special delegate conference calls for every area to join the strike; rejects a national ballot, by 69 votes to 55; reduces the ballot vote required for a national strike from 55% to 50%. Huge lobby of the conference by rank and file miners.

Friday April 20: Notts and Midlands area councils call for strike.

APRIL-JUNE: BATTLE FOR SOLIDARITY

Tuesday April 24: First sign of concessions from NCB. MacGregor suggests phasing closures over a longer period.

Wednesday April 25: Heavy picketing in

Magnificent miners

Notts as pits reopen after Easter break. Partial success. NUM says 12,000 Notts miners are on strike.

Wednesday April 25: Labour Party NEC votes to support strike and ask for a 50p per week levy from party members.

Sunday April 29: POEU treasurer David Norman suggests NUM members' phones are being tapped.

Late April: Abortive coal/rail/steel union agreement on limited coal supplies to Ravenscraig. Steel bosses say plant may shut without more coal, and steel union agrees.

British Steel threatens Scunthorpe workers with lay-offs from May 28 if more coal is not supplied. ISTC officials accept this threat and press Yorkshire NUM for more coal; Yorkshire NUM agrees.

Arthur Scargill, speaking in Cardiff on April 28, calls for no dispensations for steelworks. But South Wales NUM leaders — pressurised by the ISTC agree to continue supplies to Llanwern.

These agreements to supply supposedly limited quantities of coal and coke are abused by British Steel to maintain full production. They will last until May 23 for Scunthorpe and June 18 for Ravenscraig and Llanwern, while the NUM tries to persuade ISTC leaders to cooperate.

Tuesday May 1: Anti-strike demonstration by 7000 scabs at Notts area NUM HQ. But Notts strike leaders say that the numbers out in Notts are still growing.

Wednesday May 2: 10,000 pickets (police figures) at Harworth (Notts). Heavy picketing at Notts and Lincs collieries this week and next.

Thursday May 3: Didcot and Aberthaw power stations switched off temporarily.

Monday May 7: Arthur Scargill appeals to railworkers, due to start an overtime ban over pay on May 30: "If ever there was a time to join with this union, to come out on strike... now is the time".

Monday-Tuesday May 7-8: 1000 pickets at Ravenscraig. British Steel had started bringing in coal by road as from May 2, after railworkers stopped coal trains.

Thursday May 9: Day of action in Scotland — strikes in rail, local government, shipyards, some hospitals, Rolls Royce, and Clydebridge steelworks.

Friday May 11: Coal, rail and steel unions

Socialist ORGANISER

TUC: OFF YOUR KNEES!

MAC KILL'S THE COAL IND. GET THE COAL OUT!

Rail should unite with miners to beat Tories.

agree a generous 'compromise' deal for supplies to Ravenscraig. Almost immediately scab labour is used to unload coal at Hunterston. TGWU officials narrowly head off a dockers' strike. The arrangement to supply coal by rail will run until June 19.

Saturday May 12: 10,000 women march in Barnsley.

Monday, May 14: 40,000 miners march in Mansfield, Notts. 59 charged with riot. — Heavier picketing at power stations this week.

Tuesday May 15. Sun printworkers refuse to print a front page which would have Arthur Scargill holding his hand up and a headline presenting this as a Nazi salute: 'Mine Fuhrer'.

Wednesday-Thursday night, May 16-17: 160 police in riot gear terrorise Thorney Abbey Road, Blidworth, Notts — first of a long series of 'police riots' in pit villages.

Sunday May 20: Len Murray denounces Yorkshire/Humburside and Wales TUC plans for days of action.

Monday May 21: Yorkshire/Humburside day of action. Railworkers and some hospital workers strike.

Stop the Powell Bill!



Miner challenges right-winger

John Lockett is NUM branch president at Wolstanton, which was the most militant pit in North Staffordshire during the strike. He is also contesting the Labour parliamentary nomination for Stoke North constituency.

The sitting MP is John Forrester, a stone-age right-winger who openly opposed the miners' strike.

John Lockett spoke to Arthur Bough

I decided at the beginning of the strike, when Forrester wouldn't give us any support, that he had to be challenged. I hope to get the NUM's nomination — as far as I'm concerned my hat will be in the ring with everyone else, and it's then a matter of who the Left goes for.

I think the Left should be united on a candidate against Forrester, and I'll take my chances within that group.

• What policies and issues would you be most interested in pushing?

I think that's where people go wrong. I'm a socialist, and I'm interested in everything.

My job is to carry out Party policy. Socialism isn't a difficult thing, or a wild dream. I didn't get my socialism out of books, I learned it as an ordinary working man. If the Labour Party worked on the basis of the principles it was set up on, we could get socialism. The trouble is there are too many ambitious people who have moved away from those ideals.

• Do you think the Campaign Group of Left MPs should put up a challenger against Neil Kinnock for Party leader?

If the leader isn't doing his job — if he isn't carrying out Party policy — he's got no right to lead us. But if challenging Kinnock is just an exercise with no chance of changing the Party, it will just give the opposition the chance to attack us.

Benn has said he won't stand. If Benn got nominations to stand against Kinnock, he should stand, or else he will be guilty of the same thing as Kinnock — setting himself up as a prima donna, deciding what they want to do, not what the Party wants them to do.

• Do you think the next Labour government should restore all the money that has been taken from the NUM during the strike, and from the miners through fines and the deduction of £15 from Supplementary Benefit?

Oh yes. But not only to the NUM. To all the other unions who have had their assets taken away from them.

• What is the situation now that you are back at work?

The management are trying to smash the union, and force the scabs in areas like this to join up with the scabs in Notts and South Derbyshire.

Already they have reduced the bonuses. Those that have worked through the strike will pick up their lowest bonus yet this week. The aim is obviously to try to put pressure on to get the overtime ban lifted.

They have already come to us with a list of over a hundred men who they say want to work overtime. We told them that we'd have to get pickets out if they did. Unfortunately, the Branch has

THE MORAL backlash is in full fling.

The AIDS 'gay plague' scare, the Gillick ruling, Warnock's recommendations on surrogacy and embryo research, the threat to reduce time limits for abortion and the Powell Unborn Children (Protection) Bill all represent sinister and dangerous attacks on women's rights and self-defined sexuality.

They are also an opportunity for the Tories to sidestep the issues of unemployment and cuts, to ignore the economic depression, and to emphasise the so-called moral decline of society.

It was inevitable that Thatcher's 'Victorian values' rhetoric would be translated into action. The Warnock report and the government's forthcoming Bills on surrogacy and embryo research were to be the basis of this action, but Powell has jumped the gun with his attempt to ban all experimentation on embryos.

The Powell Bill still allows

agreed to allow men in to do safety work at the weekend, though.

The management are also attacking safety. They have effectively abolished the safety committee, and more or less reduced the inspections to three or four a year [from 7 or 8]. They've given me the worst job they could, and put me with a real right wing scab. Obviously they hope I'll refuse to work with him, and then that would give them an excuse to get rid of me.

But the elections for union positions show the loyalty there still is to the union. The days of small branch meetings are also gone.

Joe Wills, the secretary of Wolstanton, and president of the North Staffs district, has got the support of every pit in North Staffs (other than Florence, who vote this week) in his challenge against [right-winger] Joe McKie for President of the Midlands area.

There were 600 at the Hem Heath branch meeting last week, and they returned all the strikers to the branch committee. [Hem Heath also backed left-winger Jim Colgan against McKie for Midlands representative on the NUM national executive; and at Silverdale a scab was replaced as branch president by a striker].

This week John Connon is up for re-election as Hem Heath branch president against Terry Hackett from the Working Miners' Committee, and it looks as though Connon will walk it. At Florence a striker was re-elected as secretary against a candidate from the Working Miners' Committee.

• I understand that Arthur Scargill went to speak at Lea Hall (in South Staffs) last week, and got a really good reception even from the scabs.

Yes — and Morris, the branch secretary, who scabbed on the strike, didn't even have the nerve to turn up himself!

in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment, to be offered only with the permission of the Secretary of State. Two doctors must plead the case for a named woman and she must pay an application fee. Permission will be granted for four months and requires a further application for this to be extended by two months. (Successful IVF treatment nearly always takes longer than this, and the banning of embryo research means that the technique would never be improved).

All of these restrictions represent an invasion of privacy, violation of a woman's right to confidential treatment, superfluous bureaucracy, and a price put on the head of a child.

In addition, the Bill has grave implications for abortion and contraceptives such as the coil and the morning-after pill, because it awards to an embryo the same legal status as a human being. This will create a paradox in the law, and allow the anti-abortionists (who have been supporting Powell) to challenge the 1967 Abortion Act in the courts rather than in Parliament.

As well as attacking a woman's right to control her own body, the Bill will jeopardise important research which could help to reduce the incidence of congenital disease and infertility. The Bill bans the use of embryos for anything other than IVF treatment. This, in effect, means the criminalisation of most research into genetic disorders such as haemophilia, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy and Downs Syndrome, and research on male and female infertility, including studies on miscarriage and the male contraceptive.

The Bill means that anyone in possession of an embryo for use other than implantation in a state-approved woman would be committing a criminal offence.

Powell has pushed his Bill through the Committee stage very quickly, and if opponents of the Bill cannot talk it out of time at the Third Reading then it could be left to the House of Lords and, ironically, Dame Mary Warnock, to stop it becoming law.

The Parliamentary Labour Party has been appalling over the issue, with 42 Labour MPs opposing the Bill and 44 supporting it at the Second Reading. Only Jo Richardson and Clare Short raised the question of women's rights in the debate, and no-one has pinpointed the political motivation behind the whole moral backlash.

Time is running out in the campaign against the Powell Bill. Get your local Labour Party and trade union branch to pass resolutions condemning the Bill (the National Abortion Campaign, NAC,

has a model resolution). Petitions and letters to MPs can have an effect: the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign, WRRC, have a list of how MPs voted, and of MPs who stayed away but have supported abortion rights in the past.

A national demonstration is planned provisionally for Saturday April 27 — the Bill is likely to come up for its Third Reading on May 3.

Contact: NAC, 70 Great Queen St, London WC2B 5AX (01-405 4801).

WRRC, 52-54 Featherstone St, London EC1. (01-251 6332).

Support for amnesty

by Rob Johnston

OVER the weekend of March 16-17, the traditionally right-wing dominated East Midlands regional Labour Party came out for a total amnesty for striking miners sacked or imprisoned.

An emergency motion from Newark CLP was carried on a show of hands, and one from Nottingham AUEW district committee on a card vote by 367,000 to 142,000.

A resolution from Nottingham South CLP, declaring full support for the strike, urging striking miners to join the Labour Party, and condemning Labour Party members who had scabbed or supported scabbing, was moved by SO supporter Steve Battle-much. It stated: "Conference agrees that no miner who scabbed during this historic struggle should be supported for any elections or selections in the Party".

Seconding this resolution for the Yorkshire NUM, Frank Slater said "about scabs talking to the SDP conference. I'm not surprised. SDP — scabs, dregs, parasites..."

"If you want scabs to be representing you at branch level, then you shouldn't be in this Party. You should be in the SDP."

But the substance of the resolution was defeated. An amendment from Sherwood CLP to delete the two paragraphs attacking the scabs was carried by 317,000 to 154,000.

NUPE voted for this amendment — and, less surprisingly, the Notts NUM, after 'arch-democrat' Roy Lynk had refused the delegation (which included a number of striking miners) a chance to vote on the issue!

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Pink Ken before he went yellow. Photo: Andrew Moore.

GLC fiasco

Mick O'Sullivan (vice-chair, London Bridge, writing in a personal capacity) looks at the chain of events which led to the GLC adopting a Tory/right-wing Labour budget



IT HAD been plain for some months that the metropolitan authorities, including the Greater London Council (GLC), were likely to break Labour Party policy and submit to the Rates Act.

Financially, they were able to get through the year 1985-6 within the government limits, without redundancies and possibly even without cuts. Legally, unlike the lower tier authorities (such as London boroughs), they were explicitly bound to set a rate by a certain date.

Arithmetic

On the GLC the arithmetic was quite simple. With a Labour majority of four, it only needed five abstentions, or three voting with the Tories, to defeat a confrontation strategy. And in fact the centre-right has always had a substantial majority in the GLC Labour group, though the Left fronts for it.

The complexities of legal advice, and the persistence of ten GLC Labour councillors, led to a messier outcome than first foreseen — and forced through, probably for good, a realignment in GLC Labour politics.

Possibility

On Friday March 1 a possibility of the GLC being able to 'go illegal' and defy the Rates Act unexpectedly opened up. Everyone had assumed that the Tories, so as not to risk surcharge, would have to vote for a legal budget. A majority within the GLC Labour group for defying the Rates Act would have no chance (or risk) of being able to put that policy into practice, since some Labour right-wingers were bound to vote against such a Labour group-policy.

But the legal advice said that the Tory councillors might not be liable to surcharge if they presented a plausible budget and then abstained after that was defeated.

With the Tories abstaining, a majority of the Labour group taking a principled stand would be enough to 'go illegal'.

For all the faults of the group of councillors round John McDonnell, the simple fact is that they, and they alone, took this possibility seriously — put their money where Ken Livingstone's mouth had been, and consistently fought for a 'fix no rate' policy.

Livingstone, and those round him, actually tried to frustrate this 'fix no rate' policy, though in words they were committed to it. The fight over the budget has accelerated to lightning speed the transformation of Livingstone and his associates into a new outer-perimeter wall in Kinnock's attempt to build a no-struggle Labour Party.

An open breach developed at the London Labour Party regional conference on March 2 and 3. John McDonnell and Lambeth council leader Ted Knight criticised Livingstone for retreating from the 'fix no rate' position; Livingstone attacked Knight on the grounds that the boroughs (apart from Hackney) were carefully wording their 'fix no rate' resolutions for March 7 so that they left an escape-hatch and did not take the councils into illegality.

The crucial meeting of the

following week was the GLC Labour group on Monday March 4. As the debate progressed, it became more and more obvious to the observers — about 30 from different Constituency Labour Parties — that it might as well have been the Labour group of 10 years or 30 years ago. The struggle for accountability — for delegates rather than politicians — had washed over the GLC. The Constituency Labour Parties were marginal to what the councillors did.

Livingstone opened the budget debate. His speech effectively sunk the no-rate option, while formally supporting it.

He pointed out that the Tories might abstain, and that therefore a no-rate policy might actually go through. He also stressed legal advice that the chair of the GLC, Illyd Harrington, could not take a no-rate resolution, because to do so would make Harrington personally liable for an illegal act.

Despite all this, said Livingstone, he would still be supporting 'no rate'. John Carr and Valerie Wise made similar speeches.

This method of operation has already been described by John Carvel in his book about Livingstone, 'Citizen Ken'. Livingstone would put forward an 'outrageous' position, angling so that it would not get votes, and then turn to the gallery and play the hero by voting for it himself. "Sometimes", writes Carvel, "he did it so blatantly that in speaking to a motion he would say: 'I fully appreciate that

there may well be members here who cannot support the motion... He was more or less saying, for heaven's sake don't vote for this'".

The speech had the desired effect. Mike Ward moved an amendment deleting the 'no-rate' option. This was carried by 24 votes to 18, with Livingstone voting against.

So even before it got to the council, the Labour group policy was one of capitulation. The argument over who told whom what about which budget when cannot obscure the fact that this decision was taken for one reason, and one reason only — that there was a slim, but real, chance of an 'illegal' Labour group policy actually going through the council.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the Association of London Authorities (i.e. Labour borough councils) supported McDonnell. It sent a letter, written by Islington chief whip Alan Clinton, to the GLC Labour group: "If Ken Livingstone, or anyone else, claims to have been unaware of what the lower-tier authorities planned for 7 March or of the different position of those in the upper tier, then they are deluding themselves or others. Furthermore, they are causing unnecessary division at a time when we are launching a new vital stage in defence of local services and all the achievements of our movement".

The GLC met on Friday 8th. The day before, March 7, the boroughs had had mass demonstrations in defence of jobs and services — but the

press were able to ignore this, carrying instead stories of how the GLC Labour group was about to fall apart, based on attacks by Livingstone on John McDonnell.

There was an immediate anti-climax at the GLC. The meeting could if necessary go on over the weekend — the legal deadline for fixing a rate being 8pm Sunday.

McDonnell moved the budget, attacking Livingstone on the grounds that he was going to sell out. Livingstone then attacked McDonnell. This set the scene for the rest of the weekend. Anger mounted among those in the gallery.

By 1am Saturday morning the meeting had fought itself to a standstill. The Tories had proposed their budget, which was voted down. The Labour budget, with rate-fixing, was voted down by a combination of the Tories and the Labour Left. The 10 Left councillors were voting against everything in an attempt to carry the 'no-rate' programme.

On Saturday Greenwich Constituency Labour Party's AGM passed a resolution, with only one abstention, supporting McDonnell.

When the council reconvened on Sunday, the Labour group was plainly split into three sections. Livingstone asked the McDonnell group, and a right-wing group led by Ashley Bramall, to meet in different rooms, and Livingstone supporters then started running errands between the two groups. The national Labour Party machine also intervened.

By the end of the afternoon the Labour right wing, wary of the 8pm deadline, said that if there was no solution they would vote with the Tories to get a legal budget. In the end Barry Stead, a Labour right-winger, proposed a budget slightly below the main Labour budget (but still, it was said, with no cuts) and the Tories backed it. 15 of the 18 right-wing Labour councillors voted for this budget, while the 10 left-wingers were joined by the 20 other members of the Labour group in voting against.

Magnificent miners

Wednesday May 23: First NUM-NCB talks. Over in an hour.

Thursday May 24: NUR and ASLEF accept pay deal. On June 6 Paul Foot will publish documents in the Daily Mirror showing that British Rail had been instructed by the Tories to make concessions to avoid a second front.

Friday May 25: High Court injunction to stop Notts area NUM instructing members to strike. Towards the end of May, a 'Notts Working Miners' Committee' is established.

Tuesday May 29: Fierce battles between pickets and police at Orgreave coking plant, near Sheffield. An agreement over supplying coke to Scunthorpe — which is still operating well below capacity — has collapsed on May 23. Arthur Scargill appeared at the depot on May 27 and called for mass pickets.

Wednesday May 30: Arthur Scargill arrested at Orgreave.

Thursday May 31: Second NUM-NCB talks.

Friday June 1: Neil Kinnock condemns violence at Orgreave — by miners.

Early June: 'Battle of Orgreave' continues, with thousands of pickets and police.

Tuesday June 5: Arthur Scargill declares: "I think I owe Lech Walesa an apology". Scargill had previously denounced Solidarnosc as 'anti-socialist'.

— South Wales NUM president Emlyn Williams attacks Arthur Scargill's call for a squeeze on steelworks.

Thursday June 7: 12,000 miners lobby Parliament — aggressive arrests by police, and protest strike by railworkers at Charing Cross.

— Transport unions agree to boycott not only coal but also oil movements to power stations.

Saturday June 9: Shirebrook rail depot, Notts, agrees to follow this policy, after they are addressed by union leaders Ray Buckton and Jimmy Knapp.

— Third NUM-NCB talks.

Tuesday June 12: Day of action in Wales.

— South Wales NUM announces that it will continue to allow full coke supplies to Llanwern.

Wednesday June 13: Third set of NUM-NCB talks break down. Scargill sets out expanded demands for the strike, including a four day week. MacGregor threatens a ballot over the heads of the NUM.

Friday June 15: Joe Green killed on the picket line at Ferrybridge, Yorkshire.

Monday June 18: Coke runs from Orgreave suspended (but, as it turns out, only temporarily). Arthur Scargill injured on the picket line. ISTC having refused to make any compromise agreement with the miners, NUM plans a blockade of all coal and iron ore to steelworks. South Wales NUM supports this blockade.

JUNE-JULY: THE TORIES' COUNTER-OFFENSIVE FAILS

Friday June 21: MacGregor sends a letter to all miners urging a return to work.

Monday June 25: Railworkers stop iron ore deliveries to Llanwern steelworks.

— Tony Benn calls for other workers to strike immediately alongside the miners.

— NCB claims 829 returns to work.

Tuesday June 26: Labour MP Martin Flannery says that an "inexorable march towards a general strike is now under way".

Wednesday June 27: South East region TUC day of action — railworkers and others strike, 50,000 demonstrate.

Thursday June 28: Railworkers stop iron ore deliveries to Ravenscraig — but steelworks convenor Tommy Brennan says he will work with scab deliveries by road.

Friday June 29: British Steel begins running huge convoys of scab trucks with iron ore from Port Talbot to Llanwern. In July TGWU expels 14 drivers for taking part in this. South Wales NUM mounts pickets, but not comparable to Orgreave. Trucks keep Scunthorpe, Ravenscraig, and Llanwern supplied, through usually small picket lines.

Monday July 2: Steel unions officially refuse to cooperate with NUM. Walker and Brittan make speeches denouncing Scargill and NUM.

Thursday July 5: Fourth round of NUM-NCB talks begins.

Saturday July 7: 20,000 miners and supporters march in Birmingham.

Monday July 9: Dockers strike over the unloading of iron ore for BSC Scunthorpe at Immingham. Tories talk of using

Magnificent miners

troops.
 Wednesday-Thursday July 11-12: Highly confident NUM special conference endorses demands including a four day week, and passes a rule change for a new disciplinary procedure which can be used against scabs.
 Thursday July 12: NCB repudiates closed shop. Heavy scab-herding drive throughout July, including adverts in the press and visits to miners' homes. Little success for NCB.
 Friday July 13: North West TUC day of action. Rail workers, council workers,

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health workers strike: 20,000 march in Manchester.
 — According to NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp, only 10 coal trains per day are moving in Britain, out of a normal 356.
 Saturday July 14: New letter from MacGregor to miners.
 Sunday July 15: Durham miners' gala. The crowd of 15,000 miners streams away — silently — as Neil Kinnock speaks.
 Wednesday July 18: Fourth round of NUM-NCB talks breaks down. NCB concedes re-examination of the March 6 plan and of five individual closures, but insists on right to close pits which cannot be 'beneficially' developed.
 Thursday July 19: Dock strike collapses in Dover under threat of violence from drivers.
 — Thatcher denounces the miners as "the enemy within", comparing the strike to the Falklands war. Brittan and Lawson call Kinnock, "Scargill's poodle".
 Friday July 20: Dock strike collapses nationally.
 — Times editorial carries the headline, 'There is a war on'.
 — Road haulage firms gain writ against South Wales NUM over picketing.

JULY-SEPTEMBER: THE COURTS STEP IN — AND THE TUC DUCKS OUT

Monday July 30: High Court fines South Wales NUM £50,000 for contempt of court.
 Tuesday July 31: Nigel Lawson describes cost of strike as "a worthwhile investment".

Socialist Organiser Strike to defend our unions

TO HELL WITH THE COURTS!

"The Tories' class law does not frighten us. The occupation will continue. We will not be browbeaten with threats of prison or with courts." Lol Duffy

Wednesday August 1: Price Waterhouse appointed to seize South Wales NUM funds. South Wales area president Emlyn

How the GLC failed

John McDonnell, deputy leader of the GLC, spoke to Terry Connolly

THE CAMPAIGN against rate-capping goes back a long while. We've known it's been coming since June 1983, when the Conservatives included a commitment to introduce rate-capping in their election manifesto. Discussions about our tactics started in earnest eight months ago — with debate within the party at every level about whether the best strategy should be to fudge through, using a whole series of devices and creative accountancy so that authorities could protect as

many services as possible, while recognising that some would go to the wall; or to have a deficit budget; or to defy the government outright this year, linking the struggle right across the country.

The London Labour Party convened two conferences to discuss rate-capping and both came to the conclusion that we should stand and fight this year. We should defy the government, and the best tactic was not to set a rate.

We made a very specific agreement between all the local authorities involved in rate-capping that the struggle would develop in sequence over a very limited period of time. Edinburgh would stand firm on March

5; the GLC and ILEA would also refuse to set a rate on March 7; and the boroughs, who do not have a legal deadline for setting a rate like the GLC and ILEA, would pass a motion which would refuse to set a rate but which, we knew, would not bring them into legal jeopardy for three or four weeks.

Edinburgh, the London boroughs, and the local authorities outside London, have stood by that agreement. Only the GLC and ILEA have reneged.

The reason why, I think, is that although a large number of councillors campaigned for the no-rate strategy on GLC and ILEA, some of them did so on the basis that it could not be

delivered on the GLC — with a small Labour majority of four — though it probably could on ILEA.

At the end of the day we discovered that people had not prepared themselves psychologically for going over the brink.

Decisive

The decisive events came in the last fortnight. It was not a matter of the finances of the GLC being better than anyone thought. Certainly, the leader of the GLC, Ken Livingstone, had known the exact financial position of the GLC since October 1, when I sent him a note explaining what was likely to happen.

The thing that changed

matters is that we received a legal opinion which enabled the Tories to abstain, having voted for their own budget. That meant that we had a real opportunity of delivering the no-rate policy on the GLC.

Then panic set in. There was an attempt to break the mandate imposed by the party conference and the constituency Labour parties. Individual councillors began to prepare a route out.

We became the Nottingham area of the rate-capping struggle — we could protect our own jobs and services, while allowing the boroughs to be left more vulnerable.

The GLC trade unions had discussed the no-rate strategy and endorsed it, on

What's happening now

Some 20 local authorities are 'rate-capped' for the financial year 1985-6 — that is, the government has imposed an upper limit on their budgets, which in some cases implies severe cuts — and the metropolitan authorities and the GLC are due to be abolished from April 1986. Merseyside, South Yorkshire, and the Greater London Council face both rate-capping this year and abolition next year.

Last summer some of the leaders of the rate-capped authorities — notably, the London boroughs of Lambeth and Islington — came out with the idea that Labour councils should resist rate-capping by refusing to fix a rate. Many on the Left argued against this tactic, and said that a policy of setting a zero rate-rise and a deficit budget was more definite, but with the authority of the council leaders behind it the 'no-rate' option quickly became the policy of the Labour Party and of trade union bodies like the London council stewards' committee London Bridge. It was argued that it would commit all the councils involved to 'go illegal' simultaneously, presenting the Tories with the broadest possible united front and forcing them to make concessions by returning central government grant removed from the councils.

In London, the 'no-rate' policy was endorsed at regional Labour Party conferences on January 19 and March 2-3.

No rate

In early February the London borough councils decided that their 'no-rate' declaration on March 7 would be in a form which is probably not unlawful. They would simply say that they could not make a rate yet. This option was not open to the GLC and the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA), which have a specific legal obligation to fix a rate by a given date. But the borough council leaders reckoned that they should go for it in order to keep the widest possible common front of councils for the maximum time.

The recent crisis began to blow on March 2. GLC leader Ken Livingstone said that he had just discovered that the boroughs were going for the less clear-cut form of the no-rate policy. He attacked the borough council leaders for copping out and leaving the GLC and ILEA alone in the front line. The borough council leaders replied that Livingstone was constructing a cop-out for himself.

On March 4 the GLC Labour group met. Ken Livingstone presented a financial scheme which would allow the GLC to make a legal rate but avoid cuts. He said this was new information and that John McDonnell (GLC chair of finance) had misled the GLC by insisting that a legal rate would mean big cuts. McDonnell replied that the scheme (the 'Reg Race budget') was not new, and moreover that it was unacceptable: it took the GLC out of the fight against rate-capping, it relied on government permission (to 'collapse' the council's capital fund), and it accepted defeat in advance on abolition (by 'collapsing' the capital fund, etc.)

The 'Reg Race budget' was adopted by a majority of the GLC Labour group, with Livingstone voting against.

On Thursday March 7 Merseyside and South Yorkshire set legal rates (as had been expected). The Inner London Education Authority (which includes GLC councillors for Inner London) also voted to set a legal rate. Ken Livingstone and ILEA leader Frances Morrell voted against the legal rate, but for an amendment which cleared the path to it by draining the building fund and balances created by underspending in 1984-5 to stop the legal rate causing cuts.

Eight London borough councils and five councils outside London (including Liverpool, which is not rate-capped) set no rate. Hackney, the most left-wing of the London borough councils, declared in so many words that it would not set a rate until the government backed down, and was promptly hit by a High Court writ.

The GLC then met on March 8-10. For a long time it was stalemated. The Tories proposed a budget based on a 27p rate, and were voted down by the Labour group. The majority of the Labour group proposed the 'Reg Race budget' (with a 36.5p rate) and were voted down by the Tories and ten Labour left-wingers, led by John McDonnell.

Party policy

The McDonnell group argued that they must stick by London Labour Party policy, which was for no-rate. Also, by obstinately voting against all attempts to set a rate, they could hope that the GLC would come out with no rate unless the nerve of either the Tories or the Labour right wing cracked.

In the event both cracked: the Tories moved upwards from their 27p rate until finally they voted for a 33.8p rate proposed by a Labour right-winger. The 33.8p rate budget is apparently similar in design to the 'Reg Race budget', and is claimed to involve no cuts.

On Friday March 15 Ken Livingstone, on television, called on the borough councils to drop their 'no-rate' position.

On Thursday March 21 the Tories announced that all GLC contracts worth more than £15,000 will be subject to veto by central government.

As we go to press, it looks as if Haringey and Lewisham will break ranks and set a legal rate. In Hackney, however, council workers are planning to occupy the council premises any time after April 1.



John Smith, IFL

Liverpool st

LIVERPOOL City Council Joint Stewards' Committee is — as some people never tire of saying — the forerunner of the local authority joint union organisations which are now developing all over the country. We have developed a surprising degree of unity between craft, manual, white collar and teaching unions, and have sustained that unity over a period of years.

But that unity is now in danger of cracking at the time when it is most needed, and we need to understand why.

The Joint Stewards' Committee was formed in 1979 by craft and manual workers' convenors. Its initial stated aim was to defend direct labour, and its slogan was "an injury to one is an injury to all".

The leaders of the JSC recognised the need to involve

Peter Cresswell, secretary of NALGO and of Liverpool Joint Shop Stewards' Committee on problems in Liverpool

white collar and teaching unions, and the prejudices of a lifetime were set aside with NALGO being asked to affiliate to the Committee...

NALGO — and later the NUT and NATFHE — agreed to affiliate, and thus the JSC became the broadest-based and most effective joint union organisation in any local authority.

But those old prejudices had not gone away completely, and there were some stewards who always wanted to insist that the JSC went at the pace of the fastest, i.e. the most militant sections. So

to fight

the basis that this was the only way they could protect not only their own jobs but also their brothers and sisters across the country.

But the Labour group meeting when the no-rate policy was defeated was influenced by a number of factors.

The presentation from Ken Livingstone to the Labour group was that circumstances had changed drastically since the party had made its decision. His argument was that the financial position of the GLC was much better than we had thought — that I, in particular, had misled the Labour group by not informing them.

In addition to that Ken put the argument that the

boroughs were not standing firm, although he had been fully informed and had put his name to the agreement with the boroughs.

The only circumstance which had drastically changed in reality was the opportunity which had opened up, with the legal opinion, of carrying the no-rate policy through the GLC.

Budget

It was then argued that the budget proposed by Ken Livingstone was not a rate-capped budget but a growth budget. In debate it was then discovered that it was not a growth budget. It had a range of cuts in it, increased borrowing, which would require government permission, tacit or formal;

in addition to that it would involve compliance with abolition — increasing staff vacancies as a result of abolition.

A number of the soft right and centre were finding any excuse to wriggle out of commitment to the party policy.

It was quite clear that Ken and Mike Ward and others had worked to undermine the no-rate position. They had developed a budget, with Reg Race, to sell to the soft right and centre.

It was supposed to save the GLC for a year, while leaving the boroughs out in the cold. In fact it has only bought off the rate-capping struggle for two weeks, because the government has

now moved against us to take direct control of expenditure at very specific levels.

The experience on rate-capping was an exact re-run of the fares issue. We found ourselves again with a balance of forces on the Labour group where the soft left and centre went with the right wing, and where the leader of the GLC initially supported the left and then went over to the right and centre with a view to continuing in office.

There are two lessons we need to learn. First, that our advances in accountability within the Labour Party have not been brought home. We certainly cannot control the Parliamentary Labour Party. We need to

reactivate the constituency Labour Parties to develop further mechanisms for accountability.

The second lesson is this. We went through a period when we attempted to take on the central state by using our positions within the local state. The positions are not the important thing. I don't think there is any way we can turn the local state against the central state just by using the positions that councillors hold. It can only be done by mass struggle.

The rate-capping campaign now will not be a fight within the council chambers. It's got to be a fight by the trade unions, taking industrial action with the support of the community.

Hackney: workers plan to occupy

Tommy Douras, a leading TGWU member in Hackney council, spoke to Mick O'Sullivan

Our position is clear. We, as the trade unions, put a demand on the council not to set a rate, in line with the other London boroughs and the policy of London Bridge [the London local authority stewards' committee].

One Labour councillor resigned because he said he didn't think he could carry through that stand. The defeated SDP candidate in the resulting by-election, Mourad Fleming, has now taken the council to court.

The writ instructs the council that, even though no doubt rents and rates will still be coming in, they cannot spend any money out of next year's budget until a legal rate has been set.

There's a council meeting on March 27, and they're going back to the High

Court on April 1.

There were nine Labour councillors who went against us on the first vote, and now there is a group of others who seem to be pushing the idea of a legal budget. But it would mean reducing wages, cutting overtime, reducing holidays, cutting services and jobs... So we've said: no way!

A lot of the councillors are standing firm, but it could be touch and go on the 27th. We'll need a massive lobby.

We're having a mass meeting of all council employees on the 27th to make our position quite clear.

All the trade unions in Hackney are willing to occupy or work in if it comes to that.

When we do occupy, we

won't be operating under the control of the council but under union control.

There will be a meeting every day for people who are involved in the dispute to give them information.

We know we won't be able to deliver a full service. We've met with the tenants' federations to draw up lists of the needy on the estates so that we can service them.

It won't be more than a basic, emergency service. But we think it's important, because we suspect that after April 1 the government will move fairly fast, so we have to occupy the premises from that date. It will be an occupation under trade union control.

What we understand will happen on April 1 is this. The council will go back to the High Court. They will then be given a period — 10

days, a week, 15 days maybe — by the court to comply with the court order. So the real crunch period — if the council stands out until April 1 — could be April 10 to 15.

It'll be a tactical decision for the Joint Trade Union Committee when we occupy — it could be any date from April 1.

There is a national local authority shop stewards' conference on March 30 in Liverpool. If our council has taken the right decision on March 27, then we'll be asking workers represented there to come out on all-out strike if commissioners are sent in to Hackney.

We'll be expecting the same sort of support from London Bridge, as well as delegations to give physical support to us on the spot.

Stewards need fighting unity

City Council Committee, reports

When NALGO — despite a good campaign — narrowly lost a ballot for a strike over threatened redundancies in 1980, some people wanted them expelled. And the same happened when the NUT did not support a one-day strike against the privatisation of the Cleaning Division in early 1983.

Fortunately unity was maintained, and NALGO and ATFHE's consistent support for the City Council's stand on the budget crisis helped to silence some of the critics. Both unions gave overwhelming support for the one-day

strikes over the budget in 1984 and on March 7 this year, and NALGO ran particularly effective publicity campaigns under the slogan, 'Our City — Our Fight'.

Most stewards realised that the JSC could only operate on the basis of a broad consensus in defence of jobs and services, and that unthinking adherence to all the policies of the District Labour Party could only result in the breakup of the Committee.

Labour

The problem is that since the Labour Party came to power in 1983 some GMBATU stewards (some, but not all, 'Militant' supporters) have seen any criticism of the City Council as being heresy. When disputes have been brought to the Committee by

affiliated unions we have been told we had to hear the 'other side' of the argument — i.e. the bosses' side of the argument!

This slavish behaviour reached its nadir when GMBATU stewards packed a meeting with a relatively uncontroversial agenda; unconstitutionally moved a resolution on the 'Sam Bond' affair (the appointment of a 'Militant' supporter as Principal Race Relations Adviser); and passed the resolution which withdrew support from NALGO's boycott of Bond on the grounds that NALGO members had not had the chance to vote on the issue (shades of Norman Tebbit!) A later — much bigger — meeting reversed that decision, but few lessons had been learned.

At the AGM in February

1985, a record number of GMBATU stewards (including so-called 'deputy stewards') turned up and threw out the committee chairperson Bill Jones (who had been nominated by 10 affiliates) in favour of 'Militant' supporter Ian Lowes (who had been nominated by one). There was no criticism offered at all of Bill Jones — he simply suffered from the handicap of not being in GMBATU (he is in TGWU) and merely being a Labour Party member (not a supporter of 'Militant').

This is not in itself a criticism of Ian Lowes, who appreciates more than most GMBATU stewards the need for unity, but the arrogant crowing of some of the stewards was too much for some unions, who have now unfortunately started to withdraw from the JSC.

UCATT/TGWU in Housing have already pulled out; NUPE may well follow; and the NUT decision is finely balanced.

It is, of course, wrong to withdraw, but this cannot be blamed on the fact that some of the unions are led by CP members. Those same CP members have been some of the best militants in the City Council for over a decade, and were instrumental in setting up the JSC in the first place.

It is vital that we learn the lessons of this episode: that we ensure that old divisions are not unnecessarily perpetuated through dogmatic pursuit of particular political programmes; and that we continue to preserve the broadest possible fighting unity in the face of the Tories' attacks on local government.

Magnificent miners

Williams calls for a general strike. Arthur Scargill demands 'physical support' from TUC. NUM leaders meet left trade union leaders and appeal for solidarity. But nothing happens, except some talk about organising a 'big bang' in the autumn.

Thursday August 2: Merseyside police committee censures its Chief Constable.

Tuesday August 7: Another MacGregor letter to miners.

Two Yorkshire miners, Bob Taylor and Ken Foulstone, take NUM to court, trying to force a national ballot. Case adjourned to end of September.

During August, NCB starts sacking strikers. 'Back to work' pressure continues: 'Silver Birch' ballyhoo.

Friday August 10: Third NUM recall conference.

Saturday August 11: 20,000 on women against pit closures demonstration.

Monday August 13: Neil Kinnock denounces the idea (being floated by Ron Todd and other trade unionists) of a 'big bang' of solidarity. "Importing ideas from the US or the Continent", he says!

— First scab in Yorkshire. A tiny number of scabs in Kent, South Wales, and the North-East, previously 100%, also go back in the next few days. Only ones and twos, though, until the end of the month. Scotland has 87 scabs (NCB figures) by August 14: the first breach was in mid-June.

Friday August 17: 'National Working Miners' Committee' (separate from 'Silver Birch' charade) set up with the help of Thatcherite businessman David Hart.

Friday August 24: Second docks strike, over use of unregistered labour to unload coal in Hunterston (for Ravenscraig steelworks).

— NCB rejects attempts by Labour frontbencher Stan Orme to restart talks.

Tuesday August 28: Medlock Bibby becomes an instant media star when he tries to organise a scabbing movement on Tilbury docks.

Thursday August 30: NUM meets TUC for the first time.

AUGUST-NOVEMBER: THE STATE DEPLOYS ITS IRON FIST

From late August: a few scabs start in South Yorkshire. Huge numbers of police descend not only on the picket lines but also on the pit villages.

Nationally, picketing increases — but at miners' own pits, while the NCB, the police and media throw huge resources into getting a tiny trickle back to work.

Monday September 3: TUC congress opens. Strong support for miners from the conference floor. But furniture workers' resolution for a one-day general strike, and miners' amendment for "industrial action involving all trade unions" against anti-union laws, have been withdrawn under pressure from TUC leaders. The resolution adopted calls for unions "to make the dispute more effective by (a) not moving coal or coke, or oil substituted for coal or coke, across NUM picket lines, or using such material taken across NUM official picket lines; (b) not using oil which is substituted for coal. The NUM acknowledges that the practical implementation of these points will need detailed discussion with the General Council, and agreement with unions that would be directly concerned".

The TUC will do nothing to implement this resolution.

Sunday September 9 to Friday 14th: Fifth round of NUM-NCB talks.

Monday September 10: Rail union 'non-cooperation' due to start over workshop closures — but it is called off at the 11th hour after some promises of promises from British Rail.

Tuesday September 11: Leon Brittan calls for life sentences for 'violent' pickets.

Wednesday September 12: NACODS decides to ballot again.

Monday September 17: Power unions say they cannot decide about carrying out TUC resolution.

Tuesday September 18: Dock strike ends, with a very bad deal.

Wednesday September 19: Thatcher says, "It doesn't matter how long this strike goes on, we can't do anything other than close uneconomic pits". Similar line from CBI leader Terence Beckett.

Friday September 21: NUM meets steel unions again. Sirs still refuses support.

Magnificent miners

— Bishop of Durham calls for MacGregor to be sacked.

Monday September 24: Part of the Tories' Trade Union Act 1984 comes into force, making strikes unlawful without a prior secret ballot carried out according to strict conditions.

Friday September 28: High Court rules that the whole strike is 'unlawful', in Foulstone-Taylor case.

— NACODS votes 82.5% for strike action over pit closures and over pay being stopped for deputies who refuse to cross picket lines.

Saturday September 29. *Sun* printworkers stop the presses to prevent a front page calling striking miners 'scum of the earth'.

Sunday September 30: Opinion poll shows 63% of miners backing strike and 57% against a ballot.

Monday October 1: Labour Party conference opens. Scargill is the hero of the conference. Against platform advice, conference calls for withdrawal of police from industrial disputes, condemns police violence, and "fully supports trade

Socialist **Defend**
Organiser **Lairds!**



This is class war, Kinnock:
OFF THE FENCE!

Labour must back the miners

unions drawn into confrontation with the police". But Neil Kinnock piously deplors "all violence, without fear or favour" (October 2).

— NUM leaders are served with a court order, as they sit in Labour Party conference, declaring that they are in 'contempt of court' by calling the strike official. They defy it. TGWU blocks moves for Labour Party conference formally to declare its solidarity with the NUM on this issue.

Wednesday October 3: Police Federation leader Leslie Curtis says that police might not serve a future Labour government.

Sunday October 7: Archbishop of Canterbury criticises government's handling of dispute.

Wednesday October 10: High Court fines NUM £200,000, and Arthur Scargill personally £1,000, for contempt of court.

Thursday October 11 to Monday 15th: Sixth round of NUM-NCB talks, with assistance of ACAS.

Tuesday October 16: NACODS decides to strike from October 25.

Wednesday October 24: NACODS strike called off with a miserable compromise: NCB will not stop pay of deputies who refuse to cross NUM picket lines, and will agree to third-party involvement in reviewing pits to be closed.

Thursday October 25: High Court decides to seize NUM funds.

Late October: Police violence in Yorkshire pit villages stepped up still further.

Sunday October 28: Furore over fund-raising visit to Libya by NUM official Roger Windsor. Yet many British businesses, and the NCB itself, have links with Libya!

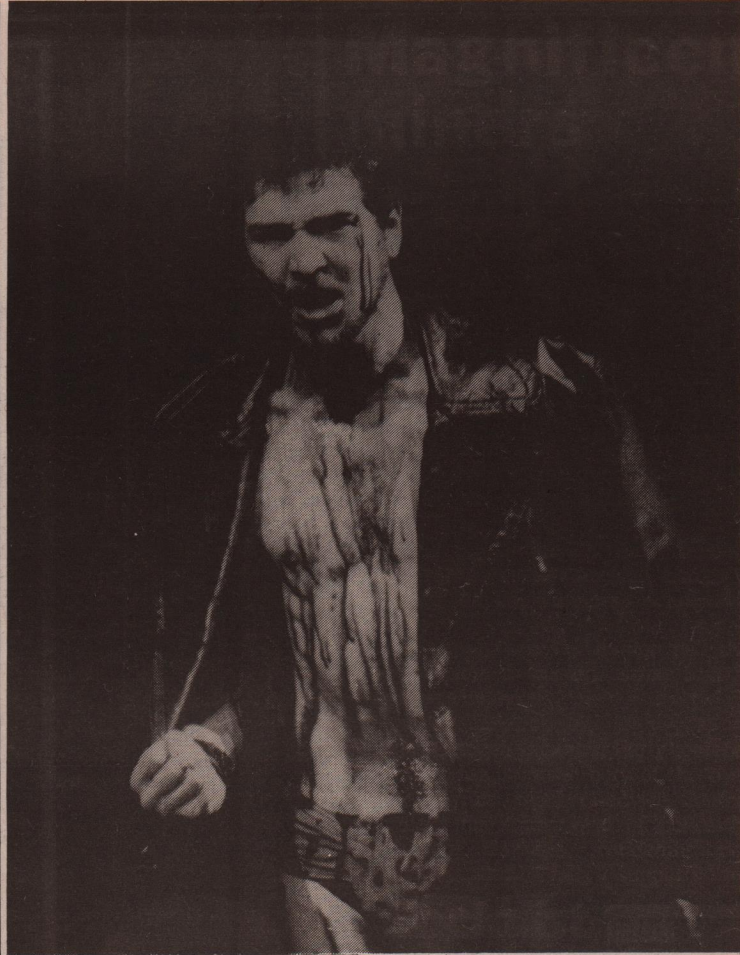
Monday October 29: Michael Eaton, appointed as NCB front-man just eight days earlier, is suspended.

Tuesday October 30: TUC chair Jack Eccles says that the TUC should pressurise the NUM to accept the NACODS formula. Norman Willis dissociates from him. But the TUC still does nothing.

Wednesday October 31: Seventh NUM-NCB talks break down.

— NCB director of information Geoffrey Kirk sacked.

Thursday November 1: Austin Rover and



The National Theatre production of *Coriolanus*. Left: Ian McKellan (*Coriolanus*) and Wendy Morgan (*Virgilia*); right: Grey Hicks (*Aufidius*)

Coriolanus and class war

Shakespeare's 'Coriolanus' is usually portrayed as a haughty hero, contemptuous of the masses but brave. Paula Watson reviews a different interpretation at the National Theatre.

PROBABLY the most revolutionary play now running in London is the National Theatre's production of *Coriolanus*. It is certainly the one containing the starkest truths and most relevant lessons for all who like to think of themselves as Socialists.

Why? *Coriolanus* has always been an interesting play for the politically committed since it deals with class war in a hierarchical society. But usually the issues are presented in a 'balanced' way.

The hero's vitriolic class hatred of the proletariat is offset by the unscrupulous manoeuvring of the two tribunes, who manipulate, for their own ends, the people they are supposed to be representing. *Coriolanus* is represented as the 'right' and the tribunes as the 'left' and both are rejected in favour of the middle way of consensus.

Revolutionary

The current production presents a different and far more revolutionary interpretation. I do not think the director, Peter Hall, intended the play to come out this way, but he has used three ingredients which, possibly without his realising it, have produced something quite different from the usual plea for balance and moderation.

The first of these is the brilliantly subversive playing of the title role by Ian McKellan. *Coriolanus* is usually presented as a brilliant war leader, whose arrogance and contempt for all outside his own class is redeemed by courage and honesty.

In a recent notable interpretation of the role by Alan Howard for the Royal Shakespeare Company, he showed a man who, for all his shortcomings, was yet true to his own code, unattractive as that code might be, and to his own concept of honour, refusing to compromise even to save his life.

McKellan will have none of

this. His *Coriolanus* is a posturing fake, a man in love with his own image of himself. His first appearance wearing a dazzling white suit, with a sword slung arrogantly over his shoulder sets the tone for the whole performance. Even his much-vaunted courage is shown as the gratuitous heroics of an essentially immature man.

His inability to flatter the people when soliciting their votes arises not from revulsion against hypocrisy but from an invincible sense of his own superiority and that of the class he represents. For him the need to submit to any form of democratic election is in itself degrading. The ruling class should rule.

Symptom

Such a conviction of inherent superiority is seen as the symptom of an immaturity which is itself the product of the philosophy of militarism inculcated into him by his mother, Volumnia. Irene Worth conveys both the obscene absurdity of Volumnia's sentiments, together with her belief in their rightness.

Even *Coriolanus*'s final choice of death before dishonour is treated in McKellan's performance as just another gesture by a posturing adolescent. Hence his insane rage in reply to the taunts of 'boy' from Aufidius. He can face death, but not the truth.

The second element making up this interesting reading of the play is the treatment of the crowd. The people of Rome have an important part to play and are usually seen as cowardly, inconsistent and easily manipulated. This works all right when the crowd is played by actors, and the audience, sitting safely in their seats, can feel complacently smug and superior. At other performances I have even heard delighted laughter at the confusion and distress caused by the news of *Coriolanus*'s return at the head of the Volscian army.

But this time the crowd is

played by a part of the audience, those members of the public who bought the seats actually on the stage. This alters our view.

Suddenly these confused, often frightened people are no longer a foolish Roman mob, they are people just like us — they are us.

They are confused because they have been reared on a diet of lies. The aristocratic ruling class consistently deceives them, hiding their contempt behind smooth old world courtesy. The only difference between *Coriolanus* and the rest of his class is that he cannot hide his hatred; the others both can and do.

Their objections to his violent outbursts are not to his sentiments, which they share, but to the inexpediency of letting those sentiments be known. But at the Olivier their contempt, and *Coriolanus*'s denunciations, are falling not on a bunch of actors, but on us, the audience.

And as we watch these people milling awkwardly about on the unfamiliar stage, we understand the panic at the approach of their old enemy at the head of the Volscian army. They should have been armed and trained to defend themselves. The tribunes failed to do this.

The treatment of these two characters makes up the third element socialising the play. If Hall had wanted to attack the left, he should have presented them as Lenin and Trotsky, or Scargill and Benn. Instead they are presented as a couple of scheming, social-democratic careerists. One is a pipe-smoking Harold Wilson figure, the other a compromising Clive Jenkins.

Hate

They hate *Coriolanus*, not because he is an embryonic fascist, but because he represents a threat to their own position. They do not wish to overthrow the existing order, simply to secure their own comfortable place within it.

Having persuaded the people to call for *Coriolanus*'s death, they back down at the crucial moment and acquiesce in his banishment. Rid of *Coriolanus* they do nothing to per-

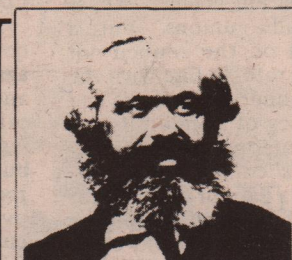
suaide the people of the need to overthrow the existing order. They reach an accommodation with the patricians, leaving the status quo unchanged.

Their failure is the failure of social democracy, not of revolu-

tionary socialism.

For Socialists the message is clear — destroy our enemies before they destroy us.

• *Coriolanus* will be performed at 7.15pm on March 29 and 30.



Songs of liberty and rebellion



BERTOLD BRECHT was a critical Stalinist, much of whose work was meant as propaganda for socialism. This extract from 'St Joan of the Stockyards', a play set in the Chicago slaughterhouses, is not too far from being a description of what has happened to the jailed and sacked miners in the British coalfield today.

First Man: Who are those people?

Second Man: Not one of them

Cared only for himself

They ran without rest

To get bread for strangers.

First Man: Why without bread?

Second Man: The unjust man may cross the street in the open

But the just man hides.

First Man: What's being done to them?

Second Man: Although they work for low wages and are useful

to many men,

Not one of them lives the years of his life

Eats his bread, dies contented

And is honourably buried, but

They end before their time

Struck down and trampled on and heaped with shame.

First Man: Why don't we ever hear about them?

Second Man: If you read in the papers that certain criminals

have been

Shot or thrown into prison, they are the ones.

First Man: Will it always be like that?

Second Man: No.

(Brecht, *St Joan of the Stockyards*, Sc.II)

Israel's bitter reality

What is your attitude to the state of Israel?

I believe in the state of Israel because of what happened to the Jews in the Second World War. All of us who were young people in the days of the rise of fascism and Hitlerism saw what happened to the Jews in Europe, and so at the end of the war the various countries wouldn't take the Jewish refugees in, and the idea that the Jews should have a state of their own was accepted.

I still believe that, because I am not against Israel as such, but what the Israeli government have been doing. I'm against the expansion, their attitude to the Palestinians. I am for a Palestinian state.

The Jewish people in Israel, more than anybody else, should understand, conclusively, the position of people without their own state who have been forced into a diaspora all over the world.

But unfortunately, having got a state of their own, it can be turned into a very clearly Jewish state, rather than a state of Israel which could have had as equal citizens the Arab and Palestinian people, as certain people, like Buber, wanted. Over the years the position in Israel has grown from bad to worse.

• Would you support the establishment of a democratic, secular state in Palestine?

I don't think it's on at the moment. What is realistic is that the people who are Palestinians have a right to their state.

Israel has been an expansionist state under the previous government, and if the Labour Party in Israel doesn't fundamentally change their position, there isn't very much difference between them and previous governments.

• You say it's not realistic to talk of a democratic, secular state, but many people will say that, like South Africa, it's not possible to solve a problem of apartheid by creating a bantustan.

It's quite different. The overwhelming majority of people in South Africa are Black, but in the old Israeli borders the overwhelming majority are Jewish.

The important thing is to say the Palestinians must have a right to organise a state of their own based on the West Bank, and the Israelis have to withdraw their forces from all those areas, settlements and so on.

If you can get that, you have two states existing side by side, then you have the basis for some sort of federated position in the Middle East.

But at the moment I don't think that is on. Of course you're going to have inside Israel all the reactionary forces who are never going to agree to an integrated state.

• Many would agree that the West Bank and Gaza have been annexed already de facto — if not legally, in order to exclude Palestinians there from the right to vote, etc. If the integration of the West Bank and Gaza continues into the Israeli economy, we have to demand civil and political rights for the Palestinians who live there now.

I went to Israel immediately after the Six Day War, and they then said that they were going to use the occupation of the West Bank as a bargaining point. I said then, only six days after the war, that the longer you occupy, voices will develop increasingly in your country which will say: Why should we give it up? Why don't we move the Palestinians out? It's logical.

I think there were people in Israel who genuinely believed it could be used as a bargaining

Eric Heffer MP used to support Israel. Now he does not. He explained why in this interview.



Top: Eric Heffer. Above: Lebanese victim of Israeli shelling

position, and they became an increasing minority. The reactionary forces in Israel have increased over the years, racism increased...

• Do you think that it was an advance that the Labour Party adopted the solution of a secular, democratic state as a long-term solution?

I would hope in the end that one would get that.

But the Labour Party could never, until the last few years, accept even the idea of a Palestinian state, or talk about the right to self-determination. We've moved tremendously because of the Middle East Committee I chaired.

Incidentally, it doesn't exist now. With the new set-up last year all these committees were abandoned. I don't know whether you think that it is significant, but I do.

It means that instead of getting people who really understand these matters at these committees, it's now going to be half from the NEC and half from the Shadow Cabinet and then they will call in experts from time to time. That depends who the experts are... The old committee... had one or two Zionists on it, it was made up of people from all different walks of life — real experts who came together to discuss every conceivable angle of the Middle East, and then you got out of that a very serious policy. You're not going to get that now.

I've been arguing in the Party and NEC that these com-

mittees in the international sphere should be resuscitated, so if we wanted to bring your organisation onto the committee, then you'd be brought on.

• In 1982 Conference passed policy on the Middle East, a reversal of sixty years' support for Zionism, including support for the PLO. This, however, is something the NEC refuses to acknowledge. It has not even allowed the PLO observer status at Party Conference. Do you agree with the NEC?

Diluted

No I don't. I was chair of the Middle East Committee, and the NEC document was based upon the report that came from them. Now the secretary of the committee was Liz Nash, and Liz and I drafted the document which was put to the committee, and it was carried and presented to the NEC. At the NEC it was diluted, changed by Gwynneth Dunwoody and others carrying a majority against us. So we had that carried by Conference.

What those people who say you shouldn't recognise the PLO are doing, is basing their attitude on that.

But equally there were also two resolutions carried which said the opposite, but as you are aware, certain people on the NEC, up till now a majority, base their position on the document rather than on the resolutions carried.

As far as I'm concerned, while I wouldn't go all the way

with the resolution on one or two points, my sympathy is 99.9% with them, as against the others.

I think it was wrong that the PLO were not invited, but unfortunately it slipped through the International Committee and it was too late. That was very wrong.

• You left the Labour Friends of Israel two years ago.

There was a time when the left in the Party was more supportive of Israel than the right. That has probably changed now, with the Frank Chapples and Michael Cocks being the supporters [of Israel], and the Left moving to support the PLO and Palestinian state. What were the factors involved behind this decision to leave?

The government of Israel was pursuing policies of extending the various settlements on the West Bank. There began a movement towards the occupation of the Lebanon and expansionist policy, the fact that inside Israel there is increasing intolerance. Listening to speeches being made by some of the Israeli leaders, who were extremely belligerent, fascist in attitude, I wasn't prepared to give any support whatsoever to that sort of policy.

As long as I remained active in the Labour Friends of Israel, in effect, I was helping to screen what the reality was, and I wasn't prepared to do that.

• Do you see the Labour Friends of Israel as an apologist

for what Begin was doing?

Oh always. There were some who were critical, especially Ian Mikardo. But I didn't want to belong to an organisation that in any way was helping to be an apologist, like the old CP was for Stalinism.

Whatever I might have said in the old days to support the right of Israel to exist, I don't mean a racist or expansionist state. I'm not prepared to justify anything to do with the invasion of Lebanon or with the establishment of the various settlements on the West Bank and also the general attitude towards the Palestinians.

• Mapai, the main Labour Zionist party, present themselves as the socialist face of Zionism whereas we have always argued that they and Likud are just two sides of the same coin.

Do you not think that with the new cabinet, not least with the inner cabinet where you have Peres and Rabin sitting with Sharon and Shamir, that there is no difference between the two?

It is ridiculous, an absurd situation. How can they actually sit down with people who don't pretend that they have any sort of real socialist base? I don't understand. I don't see Mapai as being based on socialism at all.

Interview with Eric Heffer reprinted from the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine Newsletter (January 1985: 10p from 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, London N16).

Magnificent miners

Jaguar workers strike over pay.
Friday November 2: NCB offers 'bona fide' bribe to miners who return to work.
Monday November 5: Fourth NUM conference. Decides to organise five strikers' rallies, round the country. N. Kinnock is invited, but refuses to speak at these rallies.

NOVEMBER-JANUARY: THE LEGAL ASSAULT ON THE UNIONS WIDENS

Tuesday November 6: High Court writ against car unions for supporting Austin Rover strike without a ballot. All except the TGWU will make their peace with the court.

Early November: NCB claims a breakthrough with scabbing in North Derbyshire. Scab-herding offensive reaches new pitch.

During November also, sequestrators write to unions telling them that money to miners may be unlawful. Most unions stop the money.

But the pound starts falling sharply against the dollar again.

Tuesday November 13: At NUM rally in Aberafan, a symbolic noose is lowered in front of TUC general secretary Norman Willis.

Monday November 19: NCB claims 22 miners returning to work.

Two pits which come under the Yorkshire NUM but are geographically in Notts — Manton and Shireoaks — have suffered major back-to-work moves.

Tuesday November 20: Austin Rover Company plants, abandoned by their union leaders, vote to return to work. The Austin Rover strike collapses.

— North Wales area NUM leadership withdraws from the strike.

Monday November 26: High Court fines TGWU £200,000, to be paid by December 10. Back-to-work drive slows down drastically.

Wednesday November 28: Six accounts publish report criticising NCB's agreement for pit closures.

Friday November 30: Kinnock speaks in support of miners at Stoke-on-Trent.

— Taxi driver David Wilkie is killed when concrete blocks are thrown at his taxi as he drives one pit's single scab miner to work, escorted by two police cars and a motorcycle.

— Tory lawyer Herbert Brewer is appointed 'receiver' of the NUM's funds. He declares, 'I am the NUM'.

Sunday December 2: 1500 delegates of Mineworkers' Defence Committee conference in London.

Socialist Organiser Murray gets his reward

LORD SCAB



Monday December 3: Fifth NUM conference. Repeats call on the TUC for industrial action.

Monday December 3 to Friday 7th: TGWU executive meets — decides not to go fine but calls no industrial action. Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Ken Livingstone, Jim Slater, call for general strike.

Friday December 7: NCB industrial relations director Ned Smith announces that he will resign as from February.

Saturday December 8: Women's demonstration in Cardiff.

Sunday December 9: Notts NUM branches start to discuss rule changes implying breakaway from the national union. These rule changes are endorsed by the area council on December 20. On the same day the Area Council also dissociates itself from the 'National Working

Magnificent miners

Miners' Committee', discredited by its Tory connections.

December: NUM leaders follow up the five rallies with a speaking tour in pit villages.

Tuesday December 11: High Court decides not to seize TGWU's whole funds, but to collect £200,000 through 'Queen's Remembrancer'.

Friday December 14: TUC meets Walker to push a compromise — a 'revised Plan for Coal'. No change from Walker.

Sunday December 29: Walker claims: "There will be no power cuts in 1985". There are substantial power cuts in the City and East London on January 7: CEBG says they are not due to the strike.

Monday December 31: Len Murray becomes a Lord.

Early January: Renewed 'back to work' drive, but strikers stay solid.

Thursday January 3. Neil Kinnock finally gets to a picket line (at Celynen South) — in a chauffeur-driven car.

Monday January 7: NCB claims 1203 returns to work — much fewer than in its November campaign.

Thursday January 10: NUM executive begins proceedings to expel Notts area. — Shipowner gets injunction against seafarers' coal boycott. NUS refuses to obey.

Saturday January 12: North Derbyshire NUM area council calls for a general strike.

JANUARY-MARCH: THATCHER GOES FOR THE KILL

Tuesday January 15: Pound at \$1.11. Government reintroduces MLR (Bank Rate) in an effort to stem sterling crisis.

Thursday January 17: Rail unions call partial one-day strike against victimisations of railworkers boycotting coal. British Rail follows up by threatening to sue rail unions for damages.

— Didcot power station workers, under pressure from management, vote to abandon coal boycott.

— 15 Labour MPs demonstrate in Parlia-

ment, demanding a debate on the miners' strike. Neil Kinnock condemns them.

Monday January 21: Serious back-to-work move at Kiveton Park, South Yorkshire. NCB claims 1847 returns to work nationally.

— Pickets arrested at Orgreave on serious charges begin to come up for trial.

— Meeting between Heathfield (NUM) and Smith (NCB) apparently lays basis for new talks.

Thursday January 24: Thatcher insists — no talks unless NUM first agrees to economic pit closures. NACODS starts talking about possible industrial action to safeguard its deal.

Wednesday January 30: After another attempt by NUM to get talks, NCB repeats the message — no talks unless the NUM first surrenders.

Saturday February 2: South Wales area NUM delegate conference demands recall TUC congress.

Monday February 4: NCB claims 2318 returns to work.

Ned Smith, just retired as NCB director of industrial relations, publicly attacks NCB intransigence.

Wednesday February 6: Speaking on radio, South Wales area NUM research officer

ISRAEL IS a racist state, and Israeli atrocities such as its savage reprisals against Arab men, women and children in Lebanon are crimes against humanity.

Should anti-racists therefore treat Zionists — or all those who support the right of the Israeli state to exist — as racists? Sunderland Polytechnic's ban on the Union of Jewish Students has placed this issue at the centre of student politics. The issue goes way beyond student politics.

For almost all Jews — apart from revolutionary socialists and some religious zealots — are Zionists (at least in a broad sense), and therefore what is at issue here is whether or not socialists, and anti-racists, should politically persecute Jews.

The Sunderland student union ban was not the work of an unrepresentative minority. Over 1000 students attended its General Meeting last month which endorsed the ban on the Union of Jewish Students on the grounds that the UJS is racist because it is avowedly Zionist.

Nor is the majority attitude at Sunderland untypical of the Left.

Lenin and Trotsky never dreamed of 'banning Zionists' — though such a ban would have been a much less drastic matter in their day, when only an ideological minority of Jews were Zionists. They opposed Zionism politically; but, for example, the Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) movement continued to publish its paper in the USSR until 1927, the year the Left Opposition was outlawed.

Yet many today who consider themselves Leninists or Trotskyists support a ban on Zionists.

The intention of the Sunderland Poly students is to show the sharpest possible intolerance and hostility towards what they consider to be racism — and that is good.

What they have done, however, looks more like racism than the anti-racism they intend. They have targeted a community which for something like 1500 years has been the victim of Europe's ingrained, tradi-

tional Christian anti-Jewish racism. The greatest racist crime in recorded history was done not by Jews but against Jews.

Israel exploits that fact, and uses the Nazi holocaust of six million Jews for self-justification and moral blackmail. But the holocaust does not thereby become something we can forget about or regard as an event of ancient history.

One of the tragedies of Israel, conceived as a refuge against anti-semitism, is that its activities now combine with the effect in the West of the increased power and wealth of the Arab states to generate anti-semitism dressed up in the garb of anti-Zionism.

Today the rump National Front has turned 'left' and denounces 'finance capitalism', which it says is 'Jewish capitalism'. They are poking around in the old vomit of the Nazis, who tried to appeal to workers by scapegoating the Jews for the crimes of capitalism. The new NF even denounces Israel and Zionism for their ill-treatment of the Palestinians.

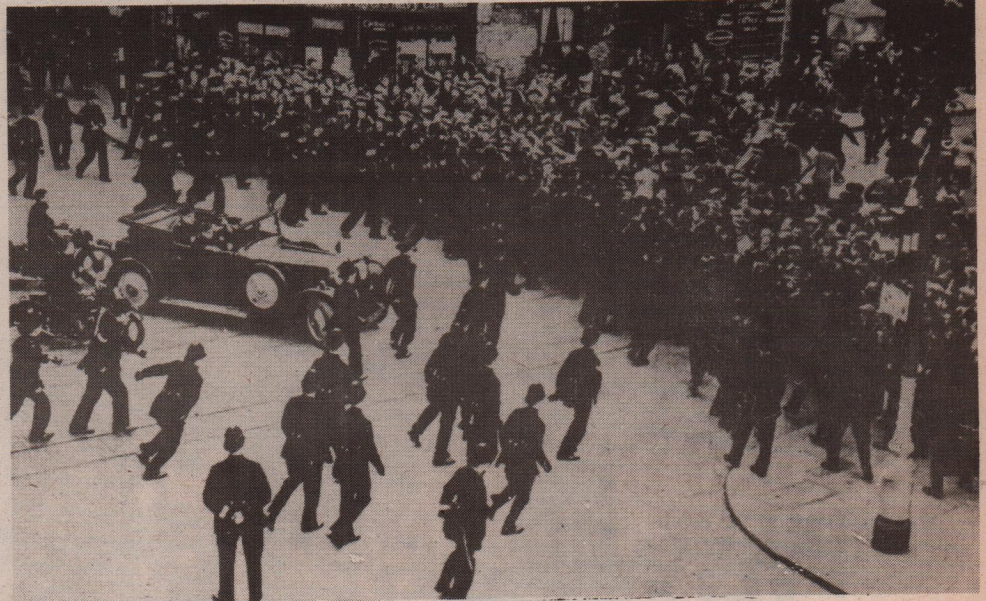
Intentions

The drive, motives and intentions of even the most confused left-wing anti-Zionist are of course radically different. Yet today justified hostility to Israel has pushed much of the revolutionary left to the edge of a new anti-semitism, and some so-called leftists ('Newline') over the edge.

It is not that they are supporters of Hitlerite racial mumbo-jumbo, or anything like that. But whatever the good intentions, there is no way that a ban like that at Sunderland Poly can avoid being anti-semitic.

Zionism is part of the identity that modern history — centrally, Hitler's massacres, and the callous attitude of the big powers to those massacres and their survivors — has stamped on Jews. To differentiate between banning Zionists and banning Jews is no more than a thin fiction when the vast majority of Jews today identify with Israel and are supporters —

Why banning is anti-



Cable Street 1936. Jewish community and labour movement fought the fascists

active or passive, callous or guilty, blinkered and happy or deeply troubled supporters — of the existing Jewish state. This is part of their identity as Jews, not easily detachable. The ban on Zionists is akin to the old proselytising Christian anti-semitism which wanted to convert the Jews, rather than, like Hitler and the racists, to kill them, but was bitterly hostile to those who refused to change and be converted.

Jewish identification with Israel has its roots and motives not in anti-Arab racism, nor even in a thought-out commitment to displace the Palestinian Arabs, but in the Jews' experience of racist persecution, culminating in the Nazi slaughter.

It was only during and after the Third Reich's 'Final Solution', the terrible paroxysm of anti-semitism that slaughtered six million Jews, that Zionism gained general acceptance in the European and US Jewish communities. Before then the Zionist project to colonise Palestine had been a minority creed among Jews.

The identification with the Zionist colony, and later with the Israeli state, was identification with a Jewish state that seemed to offer a guarantee that the age-old persecution of the Jews would now cease.

Far from being conscious racists, most Jewish Zionists in Britain are not even conscious of the racist basis of the state of Israel.

They are not motivated by

race-hatred, but by a wrong and misguided response to anti-Jewish racism.

Of course Zionist Jews are responsible for themselves. Those who support the state of Israel are supporters of a racist state even if they refuse to acknowledge the less acceptable facts about Israel's origins and its mode of operation over the past 40 years.

As Zionists they are our political and ideological opponents.

That is quite a long way, however, from being the same as the National Front or other groups formed around fascist programmes and fuelled by race hatred.

The attempt to treat Zion-

Rail

Next in line?

NOW THAT the miners' strike is over, British Rail management will be trying to do all that they hoped to do last April during the pay negotiations — bring in drastic productivity measures, including Driver Only Operation (which means doing away with guards and 'second men').

This is how BR aim to achieve the 30% cut in costs in the freight sector which they say they need to break even.

Last year BR demanded agreement on these same productivity items before they would even begin to talk about the unions' pay claim. They backed off under instructions from the government, who told them not to risk opening up a second front during the miners' strike.

In this year's pay negotiations, BR say there is no money to meet the union

claim (which is identical to last year's, with a minimum of £100), and they want the 30% cut in costs for the freight sector agreed by March 26!

The NUR at least is committed to fighting productivity deals in general, and Driver Only Operation in particular, by decision of the latest and previous Annual General Meetings. There is good organisation among the guards themselves to ensure that the NUR sticks by this policy.

But it is clear that the rail unions are next on the government's hit list. The Tories may well force the NUR and ASLEF into strike action, hoping for a victory.

But first they will want the coal trains running smoothly.

Since we know what is coming, we do not want to help the government weaken our bargaining position before we start.

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There will be 10 panels including the following:

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Socialist
Organiser

Support the miners

Answer
Scargill's
call!

By Tony Benn

LOBBY THE TUC JANUARY 23

INSIDE

zionists semitic

The ban on the Jewish student society at Sunderland Polytechnic, which has now become a major issue within the National Union of Students (see report page 3), has implications way beyond student politics. John O'Mahony unravels the issues.

ist Jews as if they were racists is both unjust and itself inevitably productive of racist attitudes, albeit wrapped up in good intentions.

Listen to the usefully crass 'Newline' editorialising in support of the Sunderland decision. Benevolently they conclude:

"We reject the spurious premise that all Jews are and must be Zionists, or that anti-Zionism is anti-semitism. Sunderland Poly students are right to take a stand. We would support the formation of a Jewish Society which anti-Zionist Jews would be eligible to join. But a Zionist society is not acceptable."

Repeat: "We would support the formation of a Jewish Society which anti-Zionist Jews would be eligible to join". 'Newline' of course goes in for childish pretences and denies that most Jews are Zionists. But its 'benevolence' shows how closely the attitudes of sections of the Left now parallel traditional anti-semitism — in this case, the Christian anti-semitism that wanted to convert the Jews.

One of the blocks to rational discussion of this question on the Left today is that things are rarely spelled out. Even many who would not

— for tactical or better reasons — ban Jewish student societies, share the notion that Zionists should — more or less — be treated as racists. Translated, that means that most Jews — those who cannot be persuaded to stop believing that Israel, or some version of Israel, has a right to exist — should be persecuted.

Some people define away the problem by pretending that anti-semitism must be defined as Hitlerism or bigoted Christianity (and therefore cannot include them).

As if there haven't been many anti-semitisms in history! Hitler's anti-semitism was very different from the Catholic anti-semitism to be found in old Austro-Hungary or Poland; different again was the anti-semitism in Poland in the '50s and '60s in which hatred of a Jewish Stalinist terrorist like party boss Beirut blended with the older Catholic strain. It was a section of a Stalinist bureaucracy, not an old ruling class, which offered its Jewish Bèiruts (like Rothschilds in pre-war Europe) as scapegoats to deflect popular hatred.

Jews — rich and poor alike — have been the universal scapegoat. The basic culture

of Christian society for two millennia has been saturated with the Bible's myth about who killed Christ.

If hypocrisy is a tribute paid by vice to virtue, mental dishonesty here is a device to keep the left from facing up to the implications of its attitudes. But the implications are there, under the surface. And sometimes they show through — as in the ravings of Newline about the 'Zionist world conspiracy' or the crude drawings of 'Zionists' in the style of traditional anti-semitic caricatures of Jews published in the early Labour Herald. That these people are tolerated on the Left as part of the anti-Zionist common front tells its own story.

We should try to be logical — because that is the only way to be honest.

Abhorrent

In face of the crimes of the Israeli state, perhaps we should say that the old anti-semites had something after all? That is an abhorrent idea for almost everybody on the Left. Yet it is the right way to pose the question, because it honestly sums up what is implicit in the attitude that 'all Zionists are racists'.

After all, if the ban on the Jewish student society at Sunderland Poly is right, then we should not stop there. Other Jewish societies should be banned. Jewish community organisations like the Board of Deputies should be outlawed. Mainstream Jewish newspapers should be proscribed. And then what about the synagogues? Centres in each area of organised Zionist support for Israel? Why should they be allowed freely to meet like that?

If it is right to ban a Jewish student society, then it makes no sense to tolerate synagogues (unless they adhere to those small Jewish religious sects who reject the state of Israel).

It is, of course, this horrible logic that keeps sections of the Left from recognising the implications of their position. They also do not recognise the antecedents.

The truth — and many on

the Left naturally find it unpalatable — is that anti-semitism of various sorts has more than once found a home in the organisations of the working class and of the Left.

In the late 19th century many anti-semites identified Jews with money-grubbing capitalism, though most Jews were terribly poor. Areas of the labour movement became tainted with the sort of 'well-intentioned' anti-semitism which Marxists denounced as 'the socialism of idiots'. Even the Austrian Marxists, faced with a powerful Catholic anti-semitism ostentatiously declared themselves 'neither anti-semitic nor philo-semitic'.

For many decades — and still to this day — anti-semitism has been rampant in the USSR and in most of the East European Stalinist states. For example, in 1968-9 there was a thoroughgoing anti-semitic purge in Poland.

In the later '40s and early '50s, a virulent anti-semitism, thinly disguised as anti-Zionism, was poured out by the propaganda machine of the Stalinist governments and by the western CPs.

On the eve of his death in 1953, Stalin was about to stage an anti-semitic show trial (of the 'Jewish doctors in the Kremlin'). Most likely this would have been the start of Stalin's version of Hitler's 'final solution' — mass deportation and slaughter for the surviving Jews of the USSR and Eastern Europe.

Today, overwhelming revulsion at the crimes of the Israeli state and sympathy with the Palestinian Arabs provide the emotional drive for the sort of 'anti-Zionism' which has anti-semitic implications.

Some of the most fervent and confused left-wing 'anti-Zionists' or 'socialist bloc'-ists, seeing the world not in terms of class struggle but of 'progressive' and reactionary national blocs, and of a division of the world into 'imperialism' and 'anti-imperialism'. In one way or another, they think

in terms of national conflicts, national confrontations, national causes and national — not class — solutions. They see progressive and reactionary peoples, 'good' and 'bad' nations. It is a small step from all this to the idea of good and bad peoples.

Memories of fascist anti-semitism stop such ideas from developing clearly, so the logic of such 'Third-Worldism' remains just under the surface.

Another root of 'left-wing' anti-semitism is the fact that many of the vociferous 'anti-Zionists' do not accept that the Palestinian Jews have any rights in Palestine. To put it at its weakest, it is usually not at all clear what positive alternative much of the Left is advocating when it denounces Israel and the crimes of its governments. All too often the implication — certainly the logical and emotional implication — is 'Zionists out of the Middle East' (with the escape clause that this is nothing against Jews, because anti-Zionist Jews can remain). Many left-wing anti-Zionists operate not on class politics but on Palestinian or pan-Arab nationalism.

SO believes that the solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict is the creation of a secular democratic state for Palestinian Jews and Arabs, with guaranteed rights for the Jewish nation in Palestine. (A small minority of SO supporters think that the only practicable solution is some rearrangement in two states, Jewish and Arab). The idea of the democratic secular state is widely accepted. But that part of it which says that the Jewish nation, too, has rights, is often downplayed. SO accepts it and means it.

We should denounce the crimes of the Israeli state. We should defend the Palestinian victims of that state and champion their rights. But we must do so as working class socialists, not as Third Worldists or vicarious Arab chauvinists. We must not, mumbling about our fine anti-racist intentions, fall ourselves into a variant of the oldest racism in history.

Magnificent miners

work without an agreement.
— Military police and 1500 Royal Engineers evict Molesworth peace camp.
Thursday February 7: NUM and NACODS make joint appeal for new negotiations. NCB insists again — no talks unless NUM first accepts 'economic' pit closures.
Saturday February 9: Second Mineworkers' Defence Committee conference. Calls for recall TUC congress and general strike, but a poor attendance.
Monday February 11: Day of action in Yorkshire/Humberside and London. Patchy: regional TUCs have done little to mobilise.

Socialist Organiser

Willis crawls to Thatcher



**NO SELL-OUT!
BACK SCARGILL**



From the Economist

— High Court bans mass pickets at five South Wales pits.
Tuesday February 12: Similar 'no more than six pickets' ruling for eleven Yorkshire pits. In both South Wales and Yorkshire, the union accepts the injunctions officially but some mass pickets continue.
Wednesday February 13: South Wales area calls for NUM recall conference.
Monday February 18: Another injunction to stop boycott by seafarers on coaling ships from the North-East. NUS leadership complies: rank and file stick out until February 27.
Tuesday February 19: TUC crawls to Downing Street and acts as messenger boy to NUM for Tories' demand for surrender.
Thursday February 21: NUM recall conference votes to fight on.
Sunday February 24: Vicious police attack on 80,000-strong solidarity demonstration in London.
Monday February 25: NCB claims 3307 returns to work.
Tuesday February 26: British Rail admits still only 40 coal trains out of 350 running each day.
Sunday March 2: NUM recall conference (the eighth during the strike) votes 98-91 to return to work without an agreement.
Tuesday March 4: Majority of miners return. A substantial number in Kent, Scotland and Yorkshire remain out for some days more.
Wednesday March 6: Scotland votes to go back.
Saturday March 9: Kent votes to go back.
Tuesday March 12: Polmaise colliery — out since February 20 1984 — votes to return. The strike is over.

CPSA

Retreat on ballot

ON Monday March 25 the national executive of the main civil service union, CPSA, voted to abandon 'show of hands' voting at workplace meetings on a one-day strike on April 1, and instead to hold a ballot in line with the Tory Trade Union Act over action on April 15.

The Treasury had announced that it would seek a High Court injunction to declare the one-day strike unlawful.

It seems that the ballot

vote will probably be at workplace meetings rather than by post, and an energetic campaign should get a 'yes' vote for action. However, the executive decision breaches CPSA conference policy of non-compliance with the Tory anti-union laws.

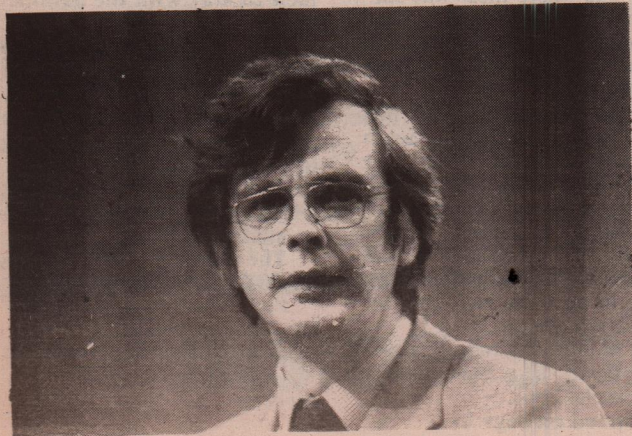
CPSA's right-wing general secretary Alistair Graham moved the proposal to comply, and was supported by most of the leading figures of the 'Broad Left '84' group

(Labour soft-left and Communist Party). The ('Militant'-dominated) Broad Left NEC members voted to continue the union's defiance of the law. The NEC vote went 11 to 10.

Unfortunately the civil service unions' pay campaign has also suffered other setbacks.

The government has offered £4 per week flat-rate increase for lower-paid grades (£3 for 16 and 17 year olds), with 4% for higher grades. The union leaderships rejected this offer, and drew up plans for a campaign starting with a one-day strike on April 1, the settlement date, and following with selective action during April and then a membership ballot on all-out strike action from early May.

The other unions apart from CPSA went for secret ballots from the start (though in various forms): two have voted to accept the government offer, CSU by a large majority and IRSF by a margin of only 160 votes. SCPS voted for the one-day strike.



Miners

Continued from back page

Scabbing on a small scale has, however, become 'respectable': at Kiverton Park 12 on the morning shift, and 20 on the afternoon shift, broke the 24 hour strike.

The NCB seems to have a softer line for the areas that voted on March 2 to go back. In South Wales, more than 80% of sacked miners have been reinstated; in North Derbyshire, 65%; in the North-East, 52%.

This could widen divisions within the NUM. In North Derbyshire, reports the well-informed Financial Times, "the NUM has quietly sanctioned safety and maintenance overtime" after getting some reinstatements.

The strike's defeat has clearly accentuated conservative, bureaucratic tendencies in the area leaderships. George Bolton, chair of the Communist Party and vice-president of the hard-hit Scottish area NUM, has called for the overtime ban to be dropped to win reinstatements. In South Wales, the area executive recommended calling the action off when workers at the Phurnacite plant in the Cynon valley struck over five men sacked on the say-so of super-scab Paul Watson and picketed out the three neighbouring pits.

The 54% ballot vote against the 50p levy for the sacked miners arose mainly from demoralisation and a backlash after the strike. But the role of

the area leaderships must also be a part of it.

The amnesty campaign will continue. Collections for those sacked are already underway in the pits. In Scotland, there is a Lothian Victimised Miners' Association. On Sunday March 17, over 40 miners and their supporters met at Hatfield miners' welfare to organise a campaign on the amnesty, and will lobby the NUM national executive meeting on Thursday 28th.

In Notts, the main attacks have been coming from the scab leaders of the area union.

They refused to have anything to do with the national ballot for the amnesty levy. And they are now trying to openly victimise strikers in the area. Strikers cannot take part in union elections, so the scab leaders claim, until they have paid off their 'arrears' in union subs over the last year.

Strikers point out that this means fining them for being on strike!

But the demand for action against the scab leaders is now coming not just from Notts strikers. At the recent Yorkshire Area Council meeting, three branches submitted resolutions calling for a special national delegate conference to be immediately convened and to proceed with the expulsion of the Notts area. The resolutions were passed unanimously.

Socialist Organiser 5p

THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER!

By Paul Whetton



No victimisations!
Reinstate sacked miners!
No pit closures! Drop all charges!
Free the class war prisoners!

Terror in Lebanon

ISRAEL's half-hearted withdrawal from Lebanon has been transformed into a savage war against the Lebanese people.

Violence has reached a scale unparalleled since the end of the war following Israel's June 1982

invasion. On March 11 the Israeli army killed 34 Lebanese in a 'reprisal' raid. On March 21, amidst another wave of raid on Lebanese villages, two US-employed journalists were slaughtered.

The Israeli army drives around the Lebanese countryside randomly firing machine guns. Their intention is to terrorise the population and thereby destroy support for the Muslim militias.

The Lebanese government, meanwhile, is in crisis. A revolt by President Amin Gemayel's own Maronite supporters — on a pro-Israeli basis — seriously threatened Gemayel's position. The right-wing Christians, led by Samir Geagea, were protesting at the government's pro-Syrian policies.

Lebanon is in a state of utter, violent chaos. Various Muslim militias — ranging from extreme to less-extreme Islamic fundamentalists — contest the streets with the weak Lebanese army. Areas evacuated by the Israelis have seen renewed blood-letting. Observers have compared it to the beginning of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. That phase of the conflict finished with 40,000 dead.

In fact the situation is even worse than 1975. Then, the Lebanese National Movement, allied with sections of the dispossessed Palestinians, had a programme to secularise the state and win rights for the oppressed Muslims. Now the Muslim community is rallied not behind a democratic programme but behind sectarianism.

Israel bears a major responsibility for the Lebanese tragedy. Imperialist powers have made it worse. And the sectarian leaders of the various communities have stirred their own poison into the devil's brew.

The actions of the Israeli army prove vividly that they are not 'keeping the peace'. Lebanese people today live in terror of an occupying army determined to wipe out all opposition in order to guarantee the stability of Israel's northern border and of any Quisling overlord installed once withdrawal is completed.

Our class duty

Paul Whetton speaking at the East Midlands Labour Party conference (report, page 4).

WE ARE the working class, fighting for working class ideals, and that should be our guiding principle. And in that working class fight we've had casualties.

10,000 of our comrades have been arrested and criminalised. Fingerprinted, photographed and on the record — and that will follow them to the grave. 700 have been sacked and 170 are now languishing in prison.

Those people showed class commitment. You in this hall have an obligation to show that same class commitment.

If I might borrow a phrase from our black comrades, 'Self defence is no offence'. Those men are in prison and sacked for fighting for their jobs, their communities and the future of their industry. We have a duty to show our class commitment by saying that every sacked miner gets his job back and every one gets pulled out of nick.



Monktonhall marches back. Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL.

The coalfields after the strike

People may say it's unrealistic — we've got men in jail for murder. Well, that taxi driver knew what he was doing. He accepted his blood money for busing scabs.

To lose life at any time is a tragedy. But nobody needs to lecture miners about death. We've carried our comrades out of the pit time and time again. We know what it's all about.

There's been an amnesty declared for the murderers of Davy Jones and Joe Green, and I don't see why, if they've had an amnesty, we can't have one for our lads.

The least we can do is return that class commitment shown on the picket lines and say that we will not forget them. We'll get them their jobs back because — whatever happens, and don't be under any illusions — this fight goes on.

IT'S STILL very difficult to assess the situation.

In the Notts coalfield we are 'on probation'. They're keeping the strikers out of the way, away from the production areas, in old workings and so on.

They're denying us rest days and being as miserable as they can towards us.

The workforce who have been scabbing seem to be more embarrassed with us than anything else.

The mood among those who were on strike is difficult to describe. They still have to walk tall, but it's difficult when it's one to 20 or 30 scabs.

They feel abandoned, like

Paul Whetton

casualties in a war. Obviously there are good reasons for what the other areas decided, but that's the fact.

Nationally, management are trying to assert their authority and trying to prove that they are top dogs. It's going to get worse before it gets better.

We've got to get a national amnesty campaign off the ground, because we owe it to the lads sacked. We can't just

abandon them.

I've involved in a campaign being launched for the class war prisoners. The prisoners can't be forgotten. Some of them are having quite a hard time from the warders, and, as I understand it, from some of the other prisoners.

We have to utilise all the expertise that we've gained to make sure that the time they spend in jail is as little uncomfortable as possible, and that we maintain the

pressure to try to get them released.

We want to try to draw together all the various prisoners' campaigns.

We also want to make sure that the expertise we gain is available for any other section of the working class that comes under attack.

In Notts, regular meetings are still being held by the picket managers and by the strike committee. There are still outstanding problems for the strikers: hassle from management, men who have been sacked, etc.

It's quite frightening what some of the leading scabs, like Liptrot, are up to. I can well understand the argu-

ments being put forward for maintaining the National Union of Mineworkers, but I'm afraid that they've gone beyond that now. There is no way that we can possibly avoid expulsion.

It may well be that that is what the scabs want, and we would be reluctant to deliver it into their hands — but I'm afraid that the situation has gone far beyond any possible rehabilitation.

The attitude of rank and file scabs is that they don't believe a decisive break is going to happen. Until it does happen, then there will be very little movement. But I'm sure that the vast majority of the men want to remain with the national union and will not go with Llynk.

I think we need to step up the campaign to expel Notts and at the same time recruit men to stay with the national union.

The leading scabs have removed union rights from the strikers because we're in arrears with union dues. This prevents us from participating in branch elections or voting. And in effect they have levied a fine against people for going on strike.

The money isn't what's important, it's the principle.

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

Resisting the NCB offensive

By John Bloxam

men from the pits. In Scotland (which has suffered 25% of all sackings so far), the area management has gone particularly for committee members.

Pit managers have also tried to impose new shift systems; severely reducing union facilities; in some pits, refused to recognise the NUM; and attacked health and safety conditions. In some pits, miners have been threatened with instant dismissal for shouting 'scab'.

At Kiveton Park in South Yorkshire, nine have been

sacked, including a number who had started scabbing. Management has withdrawn union rights over efficiency and safety visits underground.

Because the overtime ban means essential maintenance is done in normal working hours, the shifts who would previously be paid while this maintenance was done are just being sent home.

A wave of small strikes has responded to this bosses' offensive. Some have been successful — particularly in forcing the management to negotiate with the NUM. In

those pits where there was substantial scabbing, strikes have included the overwhelming majority of those who had been crossing picket lines.

In the week when most pits went back, Manton in South Yorkshire was on strike over NUM negotiating rights and victimisations. Management conceded negotiating rights, and branch officials who had been sacked then urged those on strike to go back and fight for them inside the pit.

On Monday March 25, Kiveton Park struck for 24 hours over one such lock-out.

Continued on page 11



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