

# Socialist Organiser

Oct  
10th

Assemble 12.30  
Blackpool promenade

March  
on the  
Tories!

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## BACK THE MINERS



## PAY BACK THE CASH!

### The movement must decide not Kinnock, says Eric Heffer

I was delighted that the miners got their resolution carried at the TUC Conference. What they were saying is absolutely right. Not only should we make certain that there is retrospective legislation to repay any money lost by trade unions; we should do the same thing for any councillors who are financially penalised for fighting on their own front against the Tory government. And all the legislation that creates that problem should be abolished.

The argument about the miners' resolution being a vote loser and an electoral liability is absolute rubbish.

The miners' dispute was very beneficial to the Labour Party because working people were mobilised to actually fight, and that must be a plus for the movement.

It's when you constantly retreat and then call on people to vote for you in an election that you lose support. You've already retreated, and they say - what's the point? I think what Arthur Scargill said on that is absolutely right - it's what I've been saying, anyway.

Neil Kinnock is out of order to say that the TUC resolution

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Labour must stand with the miners against the bosses' courts. Photo: John Harris.

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# Defend Tranent

A well-attended meeting in Loch Centre Hall in Tranent, East Lothian, last Tuesday evening, heard of the latest stages in the campaign against the suspension of the local Labour Party branch and the expulsion of chairperson George Thomson.

Invited speaker Ian McCalm stressed the need to step up the pressure on the executive of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party to secure the reversal of those disciplinary measures carried out by the right wing leadership of East Lothian Constituency Labour Party against the left wing Tranent branch.

George Thomson received enthusiastic applause for his call for a campaign throughout the labour movement to get the suspension and expulsion repealed. Support has already come from Stirling and Pollok CLPs. Tony Benn has lent his weight to the campaign and at Stirling CLP Michael Connarty spoke up in favour of

Tranent.

At the same time as the real Labour Party was meeting in the Loch Centre, a rump outfit put together by right wing agent Noel Fay was meeting in a hall elsewhere in the town. At that meeting a committee or right-wingers was elected with a supporter of Militant as chairperson. This will certainly not fool working people in Tranent, disgusted by years of right wing induced apathy and manipulation.

Labour Party branches now meeting after the summer break should immediately pass resolutions in support of the real Tranent Labour Party branch and call upon the Scottish Executive to reverse both suspension and expulsion. Copies should be sent to the Secretary, the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, 1 Lynedoch Place, Glasgow and to Tommy Kerr, Secretary, Tranent Labour Party, 92 John Crescent, Tranent, Lothian EH33 2HW.

# LCLGR prepares

The Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights has received a boost with the news that 14 Constituency Labour Parties have submitted resolutions or amendments to this year's party conference thereby making the first ever debate on lesbian and gay rights almost certain.

In addition, 54 CLPs and 45 MPs and MEPs have so far signed the LCLGR's 'call for a debate' campaign statement, along with a number of labour movement organisations and individuals.

Paul Canning, for the LCLGR, said "This debate will be seen by our members and the lesbian and gay communities as the outcome of many years hard slog to get the movement to prioritise the issue and over the last

year the campaign against Rugby Council and in support of the NUM."

"We're also pleased to see that there will be a first ever debate at the TUC on a resolution submitted by the probation officers and supported by NALGO, and that there will be some discussion on AIDS at party conference as Salisbury CLP has submitted an amendment on that subject to the many health resolutions.

"This will help us ensure that we are a presence in all areas of conference, alongside there being at least nine 'out' lesbian and gay delegates this year - far more than we've ever had."

Further information from Paul Canning on 01-326 1471.

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on the miners means nothing because he will decide himself on the Manifesto and what a future Labour government will do.

If Neil Kinnock wants to lead himself into the same sort of difficulties and troubles that Callaghan led himself into then that is precisely what will happen. He's going the right way about it.

Nobody, no individual, is above this Party and movement, and if the movement has decided on a course of action, then the leadership have got to be prepared to accept it.

If they don't then they're going to weaken the struggle and divide the movement.

# Time to remind Kinnock!

By Vladimir Derer

The TUC at Blackpool voted in support of a review of the cases of all jailed miners, the reinstatement of dismissed miners, and the reimbursement of monies confiscated through fines, sequestration and receivership. The immediate and widely publicised response of the Party leadership points once again to the urgent need for accountability of Labour's elected representatives.

According to The Times, Neil Kinnock "made clear he did not envisage that the demand which Mr Scargill will press at the Labour Party conference would be included in its present form in the Party Manifesto for the next General Election". The Times goes on to quote Neil Kinnock in a television interview as saying:

"I am going to be the Prime Minister. It will be on the basis of my design, and the view I take of the Manifesto that we fight the next election".

## Respect

"Few Labour leaders have been so explicit" comments The Times. Few indeed. Even Hugh Gaitskell had more respect for Conference decisions. When a unilateralist motion was carried in 1960 against his wishes he was satisfied with undertaking "to fight, fight and fight again" to reverse the decision. He did not attempt to overrule it by dictat.

In 1979 Jim Callaghan chose to throw out a draft Manifesto prepared over 2½ years by an NEC working party and to substitute for it a text all of his own. But Callaghan had sufficient understanding of the Labour Party constitution to know that it was not the Party Leader who has the final word on the Manifesto. Hence his threat to resign, should his draft be rejected by the NEC, something the NEC was unlikely to risk a few weeks before the General Election. Nevertheless the Party drew its own conclusions and the democratic reforms of 1979-81 were the result.

## Safeguard

Neil Kinnock clearly forgot the constitutional position. It is time the Party reminds him of it. If it does not do so, the reforms designed to safeguard the right of all Party members to have a say in policy determination through mandatory reselection will disappear. More importantly in the immediate future, it will give rise to new conflicts in the Party. For, if the Parliamentary leadership is permitted to defy Conference decisions this time, the Party in Parliament will once again feel free to do whatever it likes. We only need to look back to the Callaghan era to realise what this will mean, viz: a wholesale abandonment of a socialist industrial strategy alongside damaging internal Party strife.

This year's Party Conference has the opportunity to remind the Parliamentary leadership that it is not prepared to have the clock put back. Ever since mandatory reselection was introduced the parliamentary elitists and their supporters among the trade union leaders have been itching to do away, or at least to neutralise, the procedure which



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni

has established at least a modicum of accountability.

In 1982 and 1983, resolutions which sought a return to the old regime, albeit under the false colours of "one member one vote" were put to a vote and overwhelmingly defeated.

## Throw out

Last year Conference threw out an NEC sponsored amendment on this subject despite the Party leadership's support for it. This year there are six resolutions on the same issue, spear headed by that model defender of democracy and upholder of working class solidarity, the EETPU. There are 13 resolutions and amendments asking conference not to allow the re-opening of this issue *3/5 until after the next General Election.*

The present round of reselections is almost completed, but contrary to Casandra-like predictions it has had no dire consequences. So far only two MPs have been de-selected and one of them, it seems, because of his

support for working miners during the miners' strike. A vote against composite resolution this year would not mean that Conference has decided that the present procedure could not be improved in the future. In fact there already exists considerable scope within the present constitution for involving more Labour Party members in the process of re-selection.

For example a CLP could increase the representation of wards or trade union branches. It could do this by reducing the numbers of members necessary in order for a branch to have additional delegates, for example, from the present 25 or so to 10. This would not require a constitutional amendment but merely a change in the CLP's standing orders.

## Resistance

That those who today clamour for "One member one vote" have not pressed for this and other possibilities within the present rules speaks volumes for the type of change at which they are aiming. Their pro-

posal must also be seen in the context that most of the present "reformers" vociferously opposed the introduction of mandatory reselection and were satisfied to uphold the old system where there was a total absence of accountability.

## Retained

Whatever improvements are made to increase the franchise, that aspect of the present system whereby the monitoring body is also the selecting body must be retained. If these two functions are separated monitoring would lose all point. The selection conference would then be reduced to a five yearly public relations exercise by the sitting MP. The MP would cease to be accountable to the Party and Trade Union rank and file and policy determination will once again become the monopoly of a parliamentary elite.

In this situation the changes of getting Britain back on its feet, let alone of getting a Labour government which was determined to initiate a socialist transformation of society, would be extremely remote.

# Move this motion

This conference deplores the response of Neil Kinnock to the passing of the resolution moved by the NUM at the TUC Congress on Tuesday September 3.

His statement that he would prevent the policy commitments contained in that resolution appearing in the Labour Party Manifesto, even if they were also carried at this year's Labour Party Conference, can only damage the Party and the movement. Such claims for a veto have no constitutional basis and are repugnant to the overwhelming majority of Party members.

This conference repudiates Neil Kinnock's claim and calls on all Party representatives, including the Leader, to ensure that Labour's democratically agreed policies are loyally put before the electorate.

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Send to Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY; or phone 01-609 7459 or 354 3854.

# ATTEMPTED BLACKMAIL

I am absolutely delighted that the TUC carried the motion put by the NUM. However, the arm-twisting and manoeuvring that went into trying to defeat it is an absolute disgrace to the trade union movement.

The reaction of the Leader of the Labour Party in now seeking to prevent a similar motion being carried at the Labour Party conference is, I believe, a vain hope.

The passing of the motion at the TUC shows that the campaign in support of the miners over the year-long strike, and since then, has had an effect on union policies.

While many unions did not play the active role in support of the miners they should have done, they quite clearly

feel that the stealing of miners' money by the government and the criminalisation of so many miners by putting them in prison has to be fought against.

The only way we are going to ensure that the TUC motion has any practical effect is if it is now passed in similar terms by constituency Labour Parties and local unions, and put forward as policy with the demand that it be included in Labour's manifesto for the next election.

The behaviour of the AUEW and EETPU leaderships at the TUC was pretty disgraceful. Essentially they were trying to blackmail the TUC into a position of accepting state funding of union ballots as their price

for remaining in the TUC.

Nobody wants to see a split in the TUC. The power of our labour movement is that it is a unified force compared to other countries.

But the way that state funding of trade unions can gradually take over trade union policy is a serious issue.

I think this calls into question decisions taken some years ago concerning state funding of trade union education courses and now state funding of trade union ballots. A debate needs to be held around the whole of this key issue, while at the same time campaigning for AUEW members to vote to end their acceptance of Tory government money to finance their ballots.



AUEW leaders. Photo: John Harris

## Paul Whetton's Diary

### After the TUC

Our campaign against the breakaway union has had a very good reception in Notts. I was told at our branch meeting (we've finally managed to have a branch meeting), that there will be a ballot but the issue will not be whether to have a breakaway or not because that decision has already been taken. We are a separate entity, they say.

The ballot will simply be to change Notts area rules. So the hard work will start with the campaign to get everyone to stay with the national union.

There is still no date for this ballot. They are talking about the end of September or early October. Nor do we know the wording on the ballot paper. They're playing it pretty close to their chest.

I'm sure that Lynk's masterstroke was to produce that pop record! Even hardened people who scabbed throughout the strike are saying that it's becoming a circus, nothing but an ego trip for Roy Lynk.

We've not seen any of Lynk's posters out here but I understand that where they have been put up they have had slight amendments put on them by the lads.

Two things came out of last week's TUC. Firstly, we had the media trying to portray Scargill as falling flat on his face and that didn't happen. The other thing was the way the right wing media were proclaiming 'we don't want a split in the TUC, it's bad'. And all the arguments they put forward are arguments that should be addressed to Roy Lynk.

#### Good

People realised at the TUC that Scargill isn't finished and from that point of view it has been a good TUC for us.

The fact that the TUC did not split can only help us in our struggle against the Notts breakaway union, that and I hope the coming Labour Party conference.

I thought the NUM resolution that was passed by the TUC was actually quite weak. However, I am not at all surprised at Kinnock's response. But he may well find himself in difficulties when the Labour Party conference debates the issue of the sacked miners.

Kinnock has got to be told that if he intends to remain as leader of the Labour Party, then it must be clearly understood what his attitude is to conference decisions.

I notice that the courts are once again interfering in the affairs of our union - this time in Yorkshire. The rights and wrongs of the way that the Yorkshire area conducts its ballots is something to be decided within the union itself, not in the courts and the involvement of the courts in this case is to be utterly condemned.

The other court case, of course, involves the working miners' leader Foulstone, who is accused of burglary. It shows to my mind the kind of people that we are dealing with in the leadership of the scabs.

# How the Tories plan a dictatorship

## Clive Bradley looks at 'Operation Brave Defender'.

Last week's New Statesman revealed that the government has three Bills prepared to rush through Parliament, one after the other, during a future serious 'international crisis' which would turn Britain into a military-police state.

The current war games the army is playing, Operation Brave Defender, simulates planned army operations in such a crisis.

Central to the 'emergency powers' legislation is a system of Ground Defence Areas (GDAs) which would extend military authority beyond peacetime boundaries in military bases. The total GDA system covers 'half the country'. Within a GDA the military have almost total authority.

GDAs are to be declared around 'key points': Operation Brave Defender is designed to test 200 'key points' this week. Duncan Campbell describes what is involved:

### Plain clothes

"...SAS troops and other attackers will wear plain clothes, and will...carry concealed (but unloaded) weapons, and mock explosives...Pretending to meet with subversive British groups, some of the SAS attackers will frequent restaurants, parks and pubs...But no one else will know that these games are going on. And the attackers and defenders don't know who is playing in the game".

Emergency Powers (No. 1) Bill sets up GDAs and gives the army control over them. 'Subversives' or protestors within GDAs can be detained without trial on order from the Home Secretary. Emergency Powers (No. 2) Bill extends the GDA laws to the entire country. The army will have powers to requisition food, petrol, etc. Strikes in major industries will be banned.

Emergency Powers (No. 3) Bill - designed for when nuclear war seems imminent - gives all power to Central Government. All elected bodies will be disbanded. People can be instructed to work in labour gangs. Laws will be enforced by ad hoc courts, and summary penalties (including death) imposed without right of appeal.



Photo: Camerawork

## Tony Benn ...

"Given what we now know about the attacks on civil liberties, the trades unions and local councils, and the growth of the power of the police and the security services, the news of the wartime laws which the government has in mind, taken together with the exercise 'Brave Defender', must make us wonder whether this is a test run for something very different.

It is an indication not of their fear of a Soviet attack but of their fear of mounting opposition to their policies in Britain and the possi-

bility that a Labour government might actually carry out its policies.

I think the first thing the labour movement should do is to explain publicly the interconnection between all these factors so people understand what it's really about. Obviously there will be questions in Parliament but that seems to be secondary to taking all this seriously and explaining to people exactly why this is happening. You don't dispose of this in a half day's debate on a motion of censure for not publishing it earlier."

## Jeremy Corbyn

The paranoia of the Ministry of Defence about the anti-nuclear movement appears to know no bounds. Last Saturday morning I addressed a very successful peace rally in Crawley town centre, organised by the town's trades council and peace council, and was approached by the local evening paper for an interview.

Before I could even mention Operation Brave Defender, they told me that the Ministry of Defence had issued a statement saying that Brave Defender was nothing to do with nuclear war.

It's rather like saying that the lack of rain is nothing to do with drought. Operation

Brave Defender is a softening up exercise for nuclear war and for military and police control of the civilian population. It is an example of the way that the presence of nuclear weapons is being used as a control mechanism on the rest of the population.

We have to oppose the emergency powers laws that the government are quite clearly preparing to bring in. If we don't we will fall into the same trap we did ten years ago when the Prevention of Terrorism Act was passed as an emergency measure and it is still here with all the permanence the government can give to it.

## JACK CADE'S



Arthur Scargill

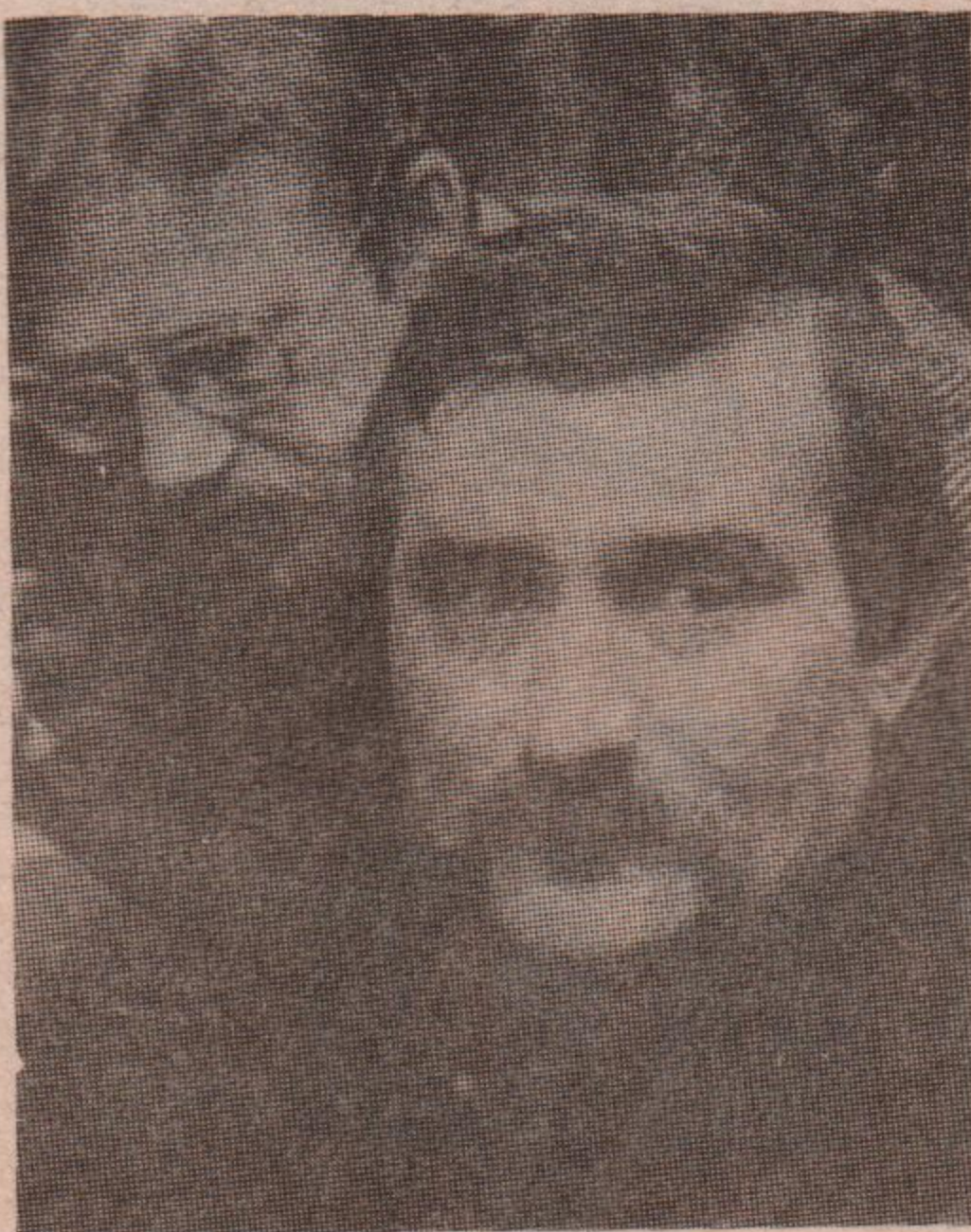
# Another apology needed

During the miners' strike, when scab Polish coal was pouring into Britain, Arthur Scargill said at a meeting in Sheffield that he "owed Lech Walesa an apology". Scargill of course had been particularly hostile to the Polish trade union movement Solidarnosc, before and after it was banned by the Stalinist police state. I doubt that Scargill ever sent that apology to Lech Walesa.

In fact Scargill seems to have learned nothing from the miners' bitter experience with his scabbing Polish "socialist" comrades. Scargill is now in Moscow setting up an international organisation of miners — which will include the fake miners' unions of countries like Russia.

The Polish miners in Silesia who denounced the sending of scab coal to Britain had the official Polish miners union imposed on them after Solidarnosc was outlawed by brute military force. Miners struck and some miners died resisting martial law in 1981.

The Polish miners won't be represented in Arthur's new miners' international by Solidarnosc, but by the official government fake unions which have nothing in common with



Lech Walesa

real trade unions.

The nearest equivalent in Britain to Arthur Scargill's East European and Russian partners in the new international is not the NUM but the scab union of Lynk and Prenderghast.

Except that the East European police state unions are not even scab unions. The exact equivalent in British would be if the government banned trade unions and locked up trade union militants, abolishing all the rights and liberties won in Britain over the last eight centuries, at the same time taking absolute control of the media and most other things in society

include the economy and then set up 'unions' staffed by state agents — "unions" not for defending the workers but to help management carry out its productivity targets, and report dissident workers and "trouble-makers" to the police, etc.

Not so long ago in the USSR the former head of the secret police became the head of the Russian "TUC". He just moved from one policing job to another.

The secretary of the new miners' international will be Alain Simon, general secretary of the French miners' union, the vice president will be Michael Strebny of the USSR miners' "union" and the president will be... Arthur Scargill.

A miners' international is an excellent idea — but it must be an international of real unions. This one won't be.

Militant miners got some idea of what a police state is like when Thatcher sent her militarised squads of police into the coalfields during the miners' strike. They should tell Arthur Scargill to stop hobnobbing with the anti-working class scab unions of the Stalinist police state.



Phil Maxwell's exhibition of photographs of Liverpool and the East End of London — Inner City — opened at the Merseyside Trade Union, Community and Unemployed Resource Centre on September 2. The exhibition will run until September 30. The Merseyside Resource Centre is the first venue for the exhibition outside London, following a successful tour in the capital which began at the National Museum of Labour History. Phil Maxwell lived in Toxteth and now lives in Spitalfields in London's East End. The exhibition is intended to be "a tribute to the people of Liverpool and the East End who will be hammered even further by Government rate-capping legislation, the abolition of the County Councils and attacks on local democracy." For further details of the exhibition and photographs for publication contact Phil Maxwell at 45 Pauline House, Hanbury Street, Whitechapel, London E1 5NX, tel 01-377 2141 or 01-219 3508 or Bill Dolce at the Merseyside Resource Centre, 051-709 3995.



Miners rounded up by security guards

## S.African miners' strike ends

# Not a serious setback

By Clive Bradley

THE strike by the South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) was called off last week (Tuesday 3 September) after two days. The decision to call off the strike was taken following repression by security forces — at least one worker was shot dead — and sackings by the employers.

The NUM clearly retreated. But it kept its organisation intact, and avoided a serious

defeat. The union national executive urged its members to return to work pending a ruling from the industrial court on the legal rights of striking workers. Several mining houses had begun to sack striking miners. The decision to go back followed an agreement from two companies — Gencor and Gold

Fields of South Africa — not to evict strikers from mines until the court ruling.

Mining security police used tear gas and rubber bullets to break up strike meetings and evict strikers from hostels.

There were problems with NUM's strategy. The different mining houses made separate offers to their own workers. Anglo-American, the largest, made an offer that came close to the NUM's main demand for a 22% increase; while Gencor, on the other extreme, refused to budge an inch.

What could have been an opportunity to exploit divisions in the ranks of the mining bosses was lost. Instead, the NUM is in effect divided. The NUM appears to have made no recommendation for acceptance or rejection of the various offers. So in the event, only a minority of the NUM — in the least organised mines — decided to strike. Miners in Anglo-American, for example, were then mobilised in solidarity in the event of retaliatory action by the bosses. Plausibly, a better strategy would have been for the NUM to insist upon a single offer with the Chamber of Mines to have rejected any offer that put them in isolation.

### Underestimated

General Secretary Ramaphosa has commented that the union had underestimated the mine bosses' degree of preparation for the strike.

Nevertheless, in no sense the NUM suffered a serious setback. In 1946, a big strike by the African Mineworkers' Union was brutally crushed by a racist state, and organisations of miners destroyed for over years. Neither the mining companies nor the state are in a position to inflict such a defeat on the miners now.

The independent union movement has been mobilised by the miners. Both the main union, FOSATU and CUSA, are prepared for action in support of the NUM; and a broad-based miners' strike support committee was set up to aid the strikers. The workers' movement within and outside South Africa needs to prepare now for the battles.

# UK top ten

Top 10 UK companies in South Africa by numbers employed	
Barclays	26,338
Standard Chartered Bank	21,716
Lonrho	10,482
BTR (including Dunlop)	7,690
Courtaulds	7,633
Unilever (including Brooke Bond)	7,317
British Electric Traction	7,200
General Electric Co.	6,854
Shell International	5,637
BOC Group	5,433

According to the UK-South Africa Trade Association, there are about 1,200 UK companies with investments in South Africa, worth about £5,000 million at current values. British indirect investments are estimated to be worth £6,000 million.

Between 45 and 45% of all foreign investment in South Africa is British. The UK is the third largest source of imports, and third largest export market.

The list of companies with investments there includes Rowntree Mackintosh and Beechams — and where the company names are not well known, the products often are: Ever Ready Batteries (Hanson Trust), Watney's (Grand Metropolitan).

UKSATA comments: "British investment in South Africa is more profitable than most other areas of British overseas investment."

Source: Labour Research.

London Socialist Organiser  
Public Meeting  
**SOUTH AFRICA: BLACK WORKERS BREAK THE CHAINS**  
Speaker: Martin Thomas  
Monday September 16 at 8.00 p.m.  
Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Rd.

# Why a workers' party?

**Socialist Worker Review has attacked Socialist Organiser for proposing that the South African trades unions should organise an independent workers' party. Tom Rigby responds to Alex Callinicos.**

Socialist Worker Review has launched an attack on Socialist Organiser in response to our call for an independent workers' party in South Africa. Alex Callinicos writes:

"Any such quasi-syndicalist strategy fails to confront the fact that the mass of black trade unionists are likely to look towards either the ANC or the black consciousness movement for political leadership. African nationalism can only be challenged politically".

Apart from the basic absurdity of describing a call for the formation of a political party as 'syndicalist', Callinicos's article brings out more or less explicitly the bedrock of the SWP's politics.

For Socialist Worker the only way in which it is possible to challenge the leadership of the mass movement — whether the Labour Party in Britain, or South Africa's ANC — is to build an 'alternative' through low-level propaganda and one-by-one recruitment to a self-proclaimed 'revolutionary' party.

## Necessary

Well, a revolutionary party is necessary. In South Africa right now a working class revolution is possible according to the classic pattern of the permanent revolution — a revolution in which the working class combines with and leads the rural poor in a joint movement against reaction in the course of which the working class fights for workers' power. For this potential development to become a practical possibility, a revolutionary working class party, like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, is necessary. The tragedy is that it doesn't exist.

What exists in South Africa is a Stalinist party exerting a heavy influence on the ANC. The Stalinist party is opposed to the programme of immediate struggle for workers power in South Africa, talking instead of a revolution by stages and seeing the "present stage" as one in which the working class subordinates itself to middle class and other allies against apartheid.

Nothing is more urgent for the South African working class right now than to build a revolutionary working class party committed to fight for a working class revolution as the alternative to apartheid. But how can such a party emerge, how can the small number of already conscious Marxist revolutionaries built it? By way of recruiting ones and twos in debates with the ANC whose political leadership of the struggle is accepted "for now" — or by way of pointing out the necessary way forward for the existing mass workers' organisations, the trade unions, politically challenging the Stalinists and nationalists and building a revolutionary movement by way of that work? The implicit answer of Callinicos is that we advocate the former course. Nothing can be done with the workers' movement until the "political questions"



Photo: IDAF

are settled with the nationalist organisations like the ANC.

Anything other than what Socialist Worker calls "the primitive accumulation of cadres" is pointless and a diversion. The mass workers' movement must wait for the cadres to be "accumulated" before it can go on from trade unionism to politics.

This is where Socialist Worker misses the point. Socialist Organiser's call for the formation of a workers' party points to the vital next step in the development of the workers' movement in South Africa.

Only along that road can the existing workers' movement, with all its existing unevenness and contradictions, develop.

The level of struggle is such that the trade unions are being drawn into politics whether they like it or not. The question is — will they be sucked in behind the UDF and subordinated to its cross-class alliance or are the black workers to build their own independent political voice?

## Inspiring

Learn from the experience of history, comrade Callinicos! Look at the inspiring growth of the Workers' Party of Brazil out of the unions. Or learn from the books of the Marxist movement — for example, from the call raised by the Marxists in the USA that the new, vigorous industrial unions created in the 1930s in great industrial battles should go on immediately to form their own working class party. However limited such a party would be at the beginning by the political immaturity of the workers it would mark a giant step towards independent working class politics. The job of the Marxists was to help push the movement forward according to its own necessary class logic and dynamic.

## Engels

Or if Trotsky in the '30s doesn't impress you, remember

Frederick Engels back in the 1890s. When the Christian Socialist ILP of Keir Hardy got going in 1893 Engels argued that serious revolutionaries should abandon the sectarian Marxist party, the Social Democratic Federation and join the ILP. This was the real trade union-based workers' movement moving itself forward. The job of Marxists was to help them, to "go through the experiences" with them and thus help the mass working class movement develop towards independent revolutionary politics.

## Defeatist

Callinicos can see dimly what the problem is. He talks of a basic identification with the ANC from the mass of the workers being coupled with distrust of the ANC from a large section of the best militants. But the solution he puts forward is not an answer for the class and the movement as a whole. It is the answer of a sectarian running away from the mass working class movement.

Callinicos is passively accepting utterly defeatist conclusions that for the decisive next period the broad independent workers' movement will be dominated by the ANC.

He is accepting that 'politics' is the sphere of the middle class nationalists and the CP class collaborationist allies, while a non-political trade union movement is all the working class can aspire to.

All that is possible for revolutionary socialists to build a tiny cadre organisation. In saying this, Socialist Worker are actually running in parallel to the ANC/CP who have denounced people like Joe Foster, general secretary of FOSATU, the largest union federation, for questioning the idea that the CP is the party of the working class.

There is a parallel between Socialist Workers' politics for South Africa and its politics for Britain — right down to the way

their politics — unintentionally — parallel the Labour Party right wing here.

## Parallels

Socialist Worker says to the left in the Labour Party "go on, leave Labour, nothing can be done to remake the mass labour movement. We must start from scratch" and in doing this, Socialist Worker unwillingly parallels the arguments of the Labour Party right who say 'get out'.

On this hangs an interesting point. Supporters of Socialist Worker — indifferent alike to the recent lessons of Brazil and to the classic positions of the Marxist movement — have accused Socialist Organiser of trying to visit the sins of the British labour movement on the South African workers by way of advocating the creation of a

Labour Party there. But it is Socialist Worker who seek to transplant their own mini-scale "build-the-sect" schema into South Africa. And it is in South Africa — where nothing is more urgent than the immediate development of working class politics rooted in the mass trade union movement — that the irrelevance and futility of these politics becomes self-evident and blatant.

## Irrelevance

Think about this, comrades in Socialist Worker. It is not enough for Marxists simply to build up an organisation, recruiting one by one. Such a cadre organisation can be a wasteful irrelevance, a mere sect on the sidelines of history unless it arms itself with, and fights constantly for a revolutionary perspective for the whole mass working class movement — whether in Britain or South

Africa. The prime and irreplaceable job of revolutionaries is to gear up the mass movement for battle and in the course of the battles imposed on the mass movement win people to revolutionary politics not just in ones and twos but in hundreds and thousands.

## Leadership

In South Africa the situation cries out for a workers' party to take the leadership of the struggle of the oppressed blacks. It cries out for a line of march for the black working class as a whole.

A revolutionary organisation that cannot map out a line of march for the class as a whole — that can show no way of challenging the existing nationalist and Stalinist leadership — such an organisation is not revolutionary at all.

The third issue of Socialist Organiser magazine — which is devoted to South Africa — has been given a name of its own: "Workers' Liberty". Why Workers' Liberty? The name sums up our politics and spells out what distinguishes Socialist Organiser politically.

Liberty? Liberty from economic exploitation by capitalism, but also from state tyranny. The word has an archaic ring to it today. One reason for this is that the idea itself has either been downgraded or entirely excised by large sections of the socialist movement as an aspiration of socialists. The Marxism of Marx and Engels, Lenin and Trotsky stands for a working class revolution which will destroy the state and immediately abolish it in anything like the bureaucratic form it assumes in class society, and immediately replace it by a state of a new type, actively controlled and administered by the majority — not a state in the old sense but a semi-state that will then wither and die as society evolves towards socialism.

This is encapsulated for Workers' Liberty in a quote from Lenin on page 3 of the magazine:

"The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and employees, against whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels: 1) not only election, but also recall at any time; 2) pay not to exceed that of a worker; 3) immediate introduction of control and supervision by all, so that all may become 'bureaucrats' for a time, and that, therefore, nobody may be able to become a 'bureaucrat'."

There will be at least one more issue of Workers' Liberty in 1985 and we hope to bring it out every two months beginning in January 1986.

## Workers' Liberty

WORKERS' LIBERTY

Breaking the chains



Black workers and the struggle for liberation in South Africa

Workers' Liberty on South Africa. 75p plus p&p from: 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Martin Barclay looks at the history of the Welsh miners' union

# A MILITANT, SOCIALIST

THE South Wales coalfield's reputation of militancy was born in the period before World War 1. The old pattern of class collaboration organised through the Chapel and Liberal politics was being challenged. Strikers were beginning to turn to riot and to new ideas of industrial militancy, socialism and syndicalism.

The Unofficial Reform Committee emerged from the strikes of 1910-11 to produce the pamphlet 'The Miners' Next Step'.

It called for a reconstruction of the union — the South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF, known as 'the Fed') — as a broad-based Industrial Union involving all miners and quarrymen. The new union was to be centralised, with rank and file control over negotiations through the ballot.

The pamphlet contains a sweeping criticism of the conciliatory leadership of the SWMF, and calls for a politically conscious workforce striving for immediate concessions — a minimum wage and a seven hour day — but also for the gradual elimination of the capitalist by direct workers' control.

The Miners' Next Step became the

bible of a whole generation of militants.

Its authors included men like Noah Ablett and Noah Rees who had picked up Marxist and syndicalist ideas when financed by the union to go to Ruskin College, Oxford.

They weren't crude syndicalists, (i.e. people seeing a new society as being achieved exclusively through trade union action) but they did lay the main emphasis on industrial action, and they saw it as separate from political action. They also underestimated the ability of the state to intervene in strikes to break them or force conciliation on the strikers.

## Education

Through the Plebs League they set up education classes for miners to drive home their ideas.

Noah Ablett, A.J. Cook and Arthur Horner were three militants from that period who later became very prominent. All three 'had religion' in their youth and were known as 'boy preachers'. From a mixture of Christianity and vague socialism they evolved

towards Marxism.

Horner was called up in 1918 but he escaped to Dublin to join James Connolly's Citizen Army. He was arrested and imprisoned on his return — prison as well as chapel formed these militants.

Both Horner and Ablett opposed the First World War on the grounds that it was an imperialist war. Ablett played a large part in the anti-war activity organised by the Rhondda Socialist Society, which later became the South Wales Socialist Society (SWSS) and played a part in the negotiations to form a Communist Party in 1920. (Though Ablett himself never joined the CP).

In 1919, on a wave of industrial militancy, Ablett and Cook were elected miners' agents. Horner was elected checkweigher for the Maerdy Lodge while he was still in prison. Agitation by the Lodge plus a hunger strike by Horner got him released.

Militancy focused around demands to nationalise the mines and for a 30% wage claim. A national strike was headed off when the prime minister, Lloyd George, set up the Sankey

Commission on the mines. The commission came out for the miners' claim — but Lloyd George, having escaped the strike, ignored it.

Meanwhile agitation against British intervention against Soviet Russia led to the formation of the 'Hands Off Russia' Committee and Councils of Action against intervention. There was widespread sympathy for the first workers' state and admiration for Bolshevik politics.

Urged on by the Communist International (Comintern), various political groups formed the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920. Horner and Cook became founder members of the Party, though Cook left after only a year to rejoin the left-reformist Independent Labour Party.

## Rounded-out

The CP could, and for a period did, round out the semi-syndicalist ideas of militants like Horner into fully-formed revolutionary politics. For this progressive role of the CP, its international connections — its links with the experience of the revolutionary Marx-

ists of Russia, of Germany, and of other countries — were vital.

The tragedy was to be that the CP in the West developed too late to prevent the isolation of the Russian Revolution; the isolated revolution degenerated; and the Stalin faction, rising on the basis of that degeneration, turned the international Communist movement from an instrument of enlightenment to one of corruption.

## Labour

At the same time as the CP developed, the Labour Party also grew massively as the working class fed with wartime promises of 'a land fit for heroes', looked around for alternatives. In the 1922 election, South Wales went Labour for the first time at the expense of the Liberals. The CP made its presence felt through individual membership of the Labour Party (its major component group, the BSP, had been affiliated to the Labour Party and Communists were not definitely banned from Labour Party membership until 1925), but it made its greatest gains through the SWMF.

## From lock out to general strike

South Wales suffered from the general dislocation of the British economy after the War, and as the biggest exporting coalfield it suffered doubly because of competition with cheaper European coal. In 1921 the miners were defeated in a national lockout. This meant a return of the mines to the private owners from wartime government control, and a return to the old district wage agreements.

South Wales wage rates, the highest in Britain before the lockout, became the lowest afterwards.

The SWMF conference passed a resolution calling for affiliation to the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU) set up by the Comintern. It was the only British union to do so (though the affiliation was conditional on a ballot of the workforce which was never carried out by the Executive).

As the workforce was cut in the slump after 1921, so the membership of 'the Fed' fell. The CP and the trade union lefts launched 'back to the union' campaigns and set up the 'Miners' Minority Movement' in 1924, with Nat Watkins from South Wales as its secretary.

Its immediate demands were for reform of the Fed along the lines of 'The Miners' Next Step'; affiliation to RILU; a weekly wage equivalent to the 1914 real wage; and a six hour shift.

The MMM, with its largest base in South Wales, became the largest section of the national Minority Movement (MM) formed in August 1924.

The CP was the main moving force, but it aimed to create a rank and file movement which could draw in a broader current of left-wingers in the unions.

The MMM scored its first major success soon after its formation when the post of General Secretary of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain (MFGB) became vacant. A meeting of the MMM in Cardiff nominated Cook for the post. (Ablett was the other possible choice, but by now he was an alcoholic, a fate which befell many trade union leaders). Cook was elected and the SWMF endorsed the full programme of the MMM.

The move to the left within the unions reached a peak in 1924. On a national level, support for the MMM had grown — by 1925 200 local groups had been set up and 16 lodges had affiliated. At the TUC in 1924 the MMM, via the SWMF, had introduced a scheme to amalgamate existing unions into industrial unions. Another

scheme to bolster the powers of the General Council of the TUC was passed.

Neither of these schemes had any definite proposals as to how to achieve their aim — which allowed the General Council to drop them later.

The left was making progress — but this progress was to prove shaky because the CP, under Stalin's influence, had come to believe that the TUC leadership could be trusted after the election of Cook, Alonzo Swales and other left-wingers on to the General Council and the departure of right-wingers like Jimmy Thomas into the Labour government.

In 1925 when a Tory government was forced to intervene when the coal-owners attempted to bring back an eight hour day in July. On 'Red Friday' — faced with a national strike — the government extended the subsidy the industry was receiving for another nine months.

This was victory — but it only provided a breathing space before the main struggle in 1926.

From January 1926 the MM prepared a plan of campaign for when the coal subsidy ran out in May. At a National Conference of Action in March — less than two months from the inevitable confrontation — the details were hammered out.

The main point was to extend the Triple Alliance (miners, rail, transport) and to call for the General Council to take over the leadership of the Alliance "on behalf of the whole working class movement". It also called for the formation of local Councils of Action and Workers Defence Corps as a separate initiative from the TUC.

If the General Council moved to the head of the Industrial Alliance, then the CP thought they would be able to subject them to rank and file control. If they failed, then the MM would step in and exercise control.

In fact the General Council did not start preparations until three days before the General Strike — and meantime the MM had failed to take an independent leading role. During the strike the MM leaders dispersed from London. With the CP leadership dispersed or arrested, the only national leadership was provided by the TUC.

Despite the feeble leadership the strike was strong. The more isolated mining villages in South Wales, like Maerdy or Bedlinog, were dominated by the Councils of Action and the strike was 100%.

In the larger commercial valley towns, like Pontypridd, the Councils were much weaker and the police were able to arrest the leading Communists in safety.

In Maerdy the police merely blocked off the roads leading to the village and left the strikers to their own devices. The Council of Action gradually took on the functions of a soviet (workers' council), but because of the isolation of Maerdy and places like it, the soviet virus failed to spread. The general strike didn't last long enough for anything but a very localised challenge to the state to emerge.

Tragically, because of the Stalinist influence, the lefts in the MM failed to present an alternative perspective. Cook, for example, had tremendous popular support, but he was politically indecisive and theoretically woolly, and the CP went along with him.

While the TUC lefts dithered, the right wingers offered tradition, experience and routine — and were of course backed up by bourgeois society.

The CP was very reluctant to criticise the General Council, let alone the lefts. It was very confused about the nature of the strike. Horner says in his autobiography ('Incorrigible Rebel') "We could have won if the General Strike had been seriously fought by the TUC General Council."

This shows not only faith in the ability of the TUC to win such a battle, but also that he saw the struggle as an industrial strike writ large. He would probably have agreed with the General Council when they said they weren't challenging the constitution!

After the General Strike the miners stayed out through the summer, only to be starved back in November. Horner put forward a policy of intensifying the strike. This was taken up by the SWMF and then the MFGB, but the miners couldn't do what they General Strike had failed to do and it only served to delay the end of the strike.

The defeat was driven home with a 14% reduction in wages, an eight hour day, an unofficial blacklist that was to keep militants out of a job until the Second World War, and the formation of a rival company union centred in Notts but with a base in one or two pits in South Wales.

The mining communities, weighed down by accumulated debts, were faced with pit closures and life on the dole.



Poverty gripped the mining villages in the 1920s

# ALIST TRADITION



Miners from Mountain Ash

## Stalinism in the coalfields

THE CP made rapid gains in 1926 — membership rose from 6,000 to nearly 11,000 by December. But then it fell to 5,500 by 1928.

They made gains because of the very obvious sell-out by the TUC. The CP criticised the General Council and even the lefts after the event — but still continued to promote the Anglo-Russian Committee, set up by the General Council and its Russian equivalent to promote international trade union unity.

To continue this pact when the General Council had quite openly sold it was criminal. Criticism was effectively emasculated at a time when the General Council should have been glaringly exposed.

Instead Stalin's supporters in the Comintern refused to pull out of the Committee, replacing revolutionary politics with diplomacy. In Russia, Trotsky and the Left Opposition had been arguing fiercely for a more independent policy by the British CP. But the dominant Stalin faction had no faith in a small revolutionary party — ever 'practical-minded', it preferred its alliance with the TUC bureaucrats, even at the expense of blurring the CP's politics. In the end the Russian Communist trade unionists were ignominiously booted out of the alliance by the TUC strike-saboteurs!

### Leadership

After 1926 the CP was to concentrate on the fight for the leadership of the union. The need for an independent political leadership became subordinated to the election of CPers. The

dwindling MMM became an electoral machine, tightly under CP control.

The MM finally collapsed with the introduction of ultra-left 'Third Period' policies after 1928. Stalin, disappointed in his efforts to win bourgeois and bureaucratic allies, now said that the Labour Party and the trade unions had become 'social fascist' organisations. Any united front with them was out of the question — the tiny CP would assume sole leadership of the revolutionary masses immediately!

### Blunder

The only result of this blunder was that the CP became even more isolated. In fact the MMM leaders recognised the threat to all their previous work and were reluctant to take up the new policy. Nevertheless, after the leadership was reshuffled the new line was adopted.

Horner was opposed to the policy of indiscriminate creation of separate 'revolutionary' unions and in 1931 he came out against attempts to continue a strike unofficially after it had been called off by the Executive. The doctrine of 'Hornerism' (i.e. reformism) was severely criticised in the party press and the Politbureau censured this 'deviancy' in 1929.

As mass unemployment spread, anyone who kept a job could be seen as a boss' stooge and a class traitor. Militants were easily victimised. The CP was becoming a party of the unemployed. It was only logical to turn from what they saw as the 'social fascist' trade unions to work among the unemployed.

As crisis turned to slump in the early '30s, the valleys were devastated. With unemployment came depopulation, the run-down of social services, overcrowded housing and declining standards of health.

The eastern half of the coalfield was hit worst, with unemployment averaging 44.5%. The western anthracite area was less severely hit with 28.6%. The towns on the northern edge of the coalfield — Merthyr, Dowlais, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale — became industrial deserts with unemployment running at 60-70%.

The CP responded, through the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM), with a series of Hunger Marches demanding restoration of the cuts in dole carried out by the National Government and the abolition of the Means Test.

Faced with new, stricter, regulations for the Means Test in 1934, the SWMF organised a conference on unemployment in January 1935. From this conference, 'united front' committees on unemployment were set up.

### Demonstrations

In February there were massive demonstrations against the new rules and whole communities came out on the streets — up to 100,000 in the Rhondda, 50,000 in Aberdare. They managed to postpone the new regulations, but not stop them.

After about 1935, Stalin's line changed. He called for "Popular Fronts" with bourgeois liberals. The British CP played down its politics and immersed itself in broad movements.

From 1936 the Spanish Civil War became the great issue. The CP insisted it was strictly an issue of 'democracy versus fascism' — which in Spain meant that they suppressed revolutionary workers and peasants going 'too far'.

### Aid

In South Wales, Will Paynter promoted 'non-political' 'Aid for Spain' committees which made door to door collections for food and money for Republican Spain.

Spain was a tremendously popular cause in the valleys. Solidarity with the Republicans was expressed through the lodge and combine committees and eventually endorsed by the SWMF, which set up 'Spanish Aid Committees' involving both Labour Party and CP supporters.

116 miners volunteered for the International Brigade, forming the largest single regional-occupational group in the British Battalion.

Will Paynter commented on the political differences in the Republican camp in Spain in a letter to Horner:

"There is a section who would promote disloyalty and disunity (i.e. the Anarchists and POUM, who wanted a socialist revolution) but they are substantially unimportant and futile... This section will be crushed...."

So they were: the Stalinists assassinated POUM leader Andres Nin and many others. But the CP was able to persuade most of its volunteers to go along with this. They saw themselves as anti-fascists first and revolutionaries second.

Meanwhile, the Fed was under pressure. By 1928 its membership was less than half the workforce, and the company union (SWMIU) was growing.

Established after the General Strike by William Gregory, the SWMIU was funded by the coalowners who deliberately engineered lockouts to allow it to gain a foothold in certain pits. The Fed realised that if it was to meet this challenge and get the men back into the union it would have to organise the unemployed.

In 1934 the union was reorganised — the districts were made more representative, the rank and file executive excluded the district agents, and unemployed miners were allowed up to 25% representation on lodge committees. As the Executive was more in touch with rank and file feeling, it became more militant and for a while the hopes of 'The Miners' Next Step' seemed realised.

Horner was drafted in from the anthracite area, where he had been elected agent, to deal with the company union in its strongest base — the Taff Merthyr pit.

### Build

Loudspeaker vans, leaflets and private conversations were used to build up the Federation membership to two-thirds of the workforce. Eventually the coalowner forced a strike and scab labour was brought in.

Women played the biggest part on the picket lines. First they abused and jeered at the scabs. After a while they let the scab procession pass in complete silence and carried wreaths — morally these were dead men.

The company union was eventually driven out by the 'stay-down' strikes. In October 1935, copying a Hungarian strike, 78 men in the Nine Mile Point colliery stayed down at the end of their shift.

At first the Fed ignored this new weapon, but the action sparked off a wave of pit occupations which completely defeated the SWMIU in some pits.

Following these events, in May 1936, Horner was elected president of the SWMF, the first Communist to hold the position. He eventually rebuilt the membership and negotiated agreements to exclude the SWMIU from the coalfield.

But the CP was moving right, and Horner was condemned as a poacher turned gamekeeper for accepting one agreement which recognised the Fed in return for a no-strike clause lasting five years. He felt this was 'scientifically applied class struggle' as it entailed no 'undue loss of expenditure or man-power'.

Paynter was more blunt: "Politics take second place to the trade union job, and if and when they conflict, as they did on occasion for Horner and myself, loyalty to the trade union and its decisions came first."

In the close-knit, single-industry communities the union provided an all-round service of advice and assistance. Local leaders provided social and political leadership — and acted as professional letter-writers. Along with this responsibility went 'respectability' and the climb upwards from 'village elder' to the local council and eventually Parliament.

Political differences? Of course these trade union worthies did wear different hats coloured various shades of pink. To resist the social pressures was a difficult job — and one which by 1936 the CP was no longer capable of doing.

And so Communists like Horner and Paynter found themselves in the same position as those respectable bureaucrats whom they had criticised in 'The Miners' Next Step'.

A generation of militants had been tamed. But the next generation can learn from the experience.

# Compromise for co-existence

Avraham Shomroni, UK representative of MAPAM, an Israeli Socialist Zionist party, replies to Tony Greenstein's article in a recent issue of Socialist Organiser.

The discussion in Socialist Organiser has shown a welcome and helpful realisation that the problem of the Palestinians and Israel can be solved only by an awareness of the rights and needs of both contenders. Indeed, only if British socialists maintain an even-handed attitude can they play a constructive role in helping the sides to come together.

It is all the more sad therefore to see in your pages also the oft-rehearsed outpourings of Tony Greenstein calling for the destruction of Israel with the complete denial of Jewish national rights (Socialist Organiser, 7 August).

None are as blind as those who will not see, but for the genuinely-concerned, some points are worth restating.

In complete contradiction to what Tony Greenstein writes, MAPAM's position in regard to the Palestinian question has its roots in the long-held view that the historic Land of Israel is the common homeland of two peoples — the Jewish people returning and the Palestinian Arabs living there.

### Cooperation

As socialists, in the '30s the hope was cherished that there might be cooperation with the Arab working class over the heads of their feudal rulers, but of course national solidarity always prevailed. Today, MAPAM fully recognises the rights of the Palestinians to political, national sovereignty and in the wake of a peace agreement with Jordan and the Palestinians, the Palestinians themselves should decide whether they want an independent state, federation with Jordan, a theocracy, monarchy

or what-have-you.

For Tony Greenstein to advocate a concrete solution on their behalf smacks of arrogance.

National liberation movements are, by definition, concerned about solving the problems of their own peoples in a given historical context. As the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, the Zionist movement is concerned with the Jewish problem, and Israel was not chosen arbitrarily by spinning a globe and blindly sticking in a pin.

### Antagonism

Similarly, the national liberation movement of the Palestinians is not, primarily, worried about the needs of the Eskimos, Red Indians or Corsicans. This implies neither indifference nor opposition and has nothing whatsoever to do with racism.

The antagonism of the Jews and Palestinians is rooted in the fact that for close on a century they have been competing for the same plot of land with both sides having been oppressor and oppressed. On this it is worth quoting the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, who said that when two just causes meet there are two possible outcomes — tragedy or compromise.

In order to lessen the great tension which has accumulated, we need to separate; not 'it's all mine', not one *instead* of the other, but two peoples living *side by side*. As the dynamic of national conflict has brought increasing violence and hate, so we may hope that a dynamic of peace will slowly but surely engender co-operation and a feeling of security for all.

One of the proposals glibly propounded is that of a 'democratic secular Palestine' where Jews would also 'enjoy all the same religious, cultural and



Crowd in Tel-Aviv on November 29, 1947 celebrating the United Nations decision on a partition plan.

individual rights as others'. Is the experience of South Lebanon, where the PLO ruled for years over Shi'ites and others, to serve as an example? Where in the Arab world might we see such an example?

In fact this is a code which hides more than it reveals. Other codes like 'free trade' sound good because anything 'free' sounds attractive. In the case of the democratic secular state, the talk is of Christians, Muslims and Jews; the context makes it clear that here the Jews are considered, like the others, only a religious, not a secular,

group.

In other words, it is a cover for another national Arab state instead of the only national Jewish state in the world.

In utterly absurd contradiction of the situation, Tony Greenstein writes that 'the Israeli working class has been unable to create its own trade unions, still less a Party'. Similarly, to call the Histadruth 'the largest employers' federation' is completely ridiculous, it being nothing of the kind.

The Socialist-Zionist movement, as part of the broadly-based Zionist movement, has made great gains in giving the whole movement a socially positive content. New forms of social organisation have been evolved, with great measures of equality, self-management, welfare, mutual solidarity and direct democracy.

### Independence

The kibbutzim have been strong, leading elements of the Israeli working class and the great economic enterprises created are the inalienable property of the organised working class and both a guarantee of the independence of the working class as well as a model sought by others the world over.

There is, of course, no totalitarian ideological consensus in the Israeli labour movement but a very vigorous (sometimes biter) interplay of policies, which is an expression of the innate democracy of Israel.

Much still remains to be struggled for, and the imperfections are many, but looking at the great British labour movement, who can say of it that all has already been won? There is still much to be learned from the lessons of the nationalisation of industry and the NHS, and the experience of the Histadruth-enterprise with its bank and its great workers' sick-fund, which supplies up-to-date health service for the vast majority of Israel's Jewish and Arab population, may also serve British Labour to advance to a socialist society.

## Letter

# Black unions and the ANC

I would like to take up Bob Fine on two historical points in his article on Nelson Mandela in a recent issue.

When you mention that Mandela and others voted for the expulsion of the Communist Party from the African National Congress you forget to give the reasons. The South African CP supported the Afrikaner Nationalists, not only during the Hitler-Stalin Pact period, but also again in the immediate prelude to Dr Malan's accession to power.

Though by the time that Mandela voted for the expulsion, the CP and the ANC were, as you say, both supporting the Smuts government's war efforts, the ANC did so with considerably less enthusiasm and without making the same wholesale compromises. It is easy to understand that the ANC would have been bitter at Stalinist policy in the immediately preceding period.

You also don't mention that many members of the South African CP resigned from the party over the issue. Indeed it has been claimed that a majority of members did. The ANC expulsions were in a sense part of a split in the SACP.

There were several accounts of this written in the '50s. Off-hand the only person I can recall as being one of the Communists who resigned and then sided with the ANC is Fr. Michael Scott, who later founded the Africa Bureau (the same Fr. Michael Scott who was a co-sponsor of the Committee of 100).

I am fairly certain that all the then black members of the SACP were among those who left.

When you talk about the divorce between the early ANC

and trade unionism you seem to forget three points:

There were trade unions founded in the '20s, and though the founders were members of the ANC, they were not leading members.

There was an attempt, in which the ANC was an active sponsor, to unite the unions, the ANC and other organisations in an African Convention. The fact that it broke down was by no means exclusively the fault of the ANC.

Right up until the war, indeed in the mines until this day, the majority of black workers were/hired on a six months contract system. In the '20s this system was run with chiefs sending a son or sub-chief and a party of tribesman, under contract, to the employer.

The temporary nature of contract employment would militate against trade unionism and the fact that such gangs were led by representatives of tribal chiefs would mean that only if socialists were prepared to take the class struggle into the tribe themselves and in so doing break down the only organs of black power there were, was a class based trade unionism possible.

I have never heard of any socialists in the '20s who were prepared to present such a direct challenge to tribalism. After the '20s the tribes were under assault from the white establishment and quiescent tribal chiefs were being appointed (which is why trade unionism started then) and why the ANC had links to the old tribal structure, then began, albeit as a side issue, to approve of and sponsor trade unions.

Fraternally,  
LAURENS OTTER

## With the Palestinians Against Arab chauvinism

At a national Editorial Board meeting on Sunday September 8, Socialist Organiser decided to change its long-standing assessment of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine and to adopt new proposals for solving that conflict. A motion advocating two states for Jew and Arabs in Palestine was carried against one calling for a single democratic state.

For many years the majority of Socialist Organiser supporters have subscribed to a version of the democratic secular state position — that the answer to the Arab-Jewish conflict is a single democratic state in which all are equal citizens.

Following a long and wide-ranging debate — it began six years ago — Socialist Organiser has decided that the secular democratic state is an unattainable fantasy. The creation of such a state by amalgamation of the two bitterly warring peoples as equal citizens in a common territory is inconceivable.

Although the democratic secular state appears to offer reconciliation between the two peoples and therefore to point towards working class unity, in fact it does

not and cannot do that. In reality it denies the national rights of the Jews.

The socialist revolution itself is much nearer than the merging of the national identities of the Jewish and Arab Palestinians in a common secular state. At best it is a consoling fantasy. At worst it is a propaganda weapon of Arab nationalists, the logic of whose position is the conquest and driving out of the Jews.

### Reality

In reality there is a stark choice in Palestine. In broad terms only two solutions are possible. Either drive out (or massacre) the Jews, thus restoring the land to the Palestinian Arabs, or divide the disputed territory. This being so, the choice for socialists must be advocacy of compromise and division or redivision of the disputed territory. Despite the immense practical difficulties no other democratic or socialist solution is conceivable. Rejection of Zionist expansion and condemnation of the Israeli treatment of the Arabs inside pre-1967 Israel and on the West Bank is common

ground on the left; so should be rejection of the programme of Arab nationalism and revanchism in all its variants, including the democratic secular state, which is understood by its Arab nationalist advocates as a Palestinian Arab state with no more than religious rights for Jews on a confessional basis.

Socialist Organiser continues to support the oppressed and displaced Palestinians in their struggle for justice — but we do it from our own class standpoint and programme, not by way of endorsing Arab nationalism and revanchism wrapped up in consoling fantasies. We support those Israelis who are fighting against the expansionism and chauvinism of the Israeli state, and for withdrawal from the West Bank.

But we insist that it is no part of a democratic or socialist programme for Palestine to call for or support the destruction of the Israeli Jewish nation — and this is what is implied in the slogan for the secular democratic state and is in fact its only real political content.

The discussion will continue in Socialist Organiser.



# Fighting for free trade unions

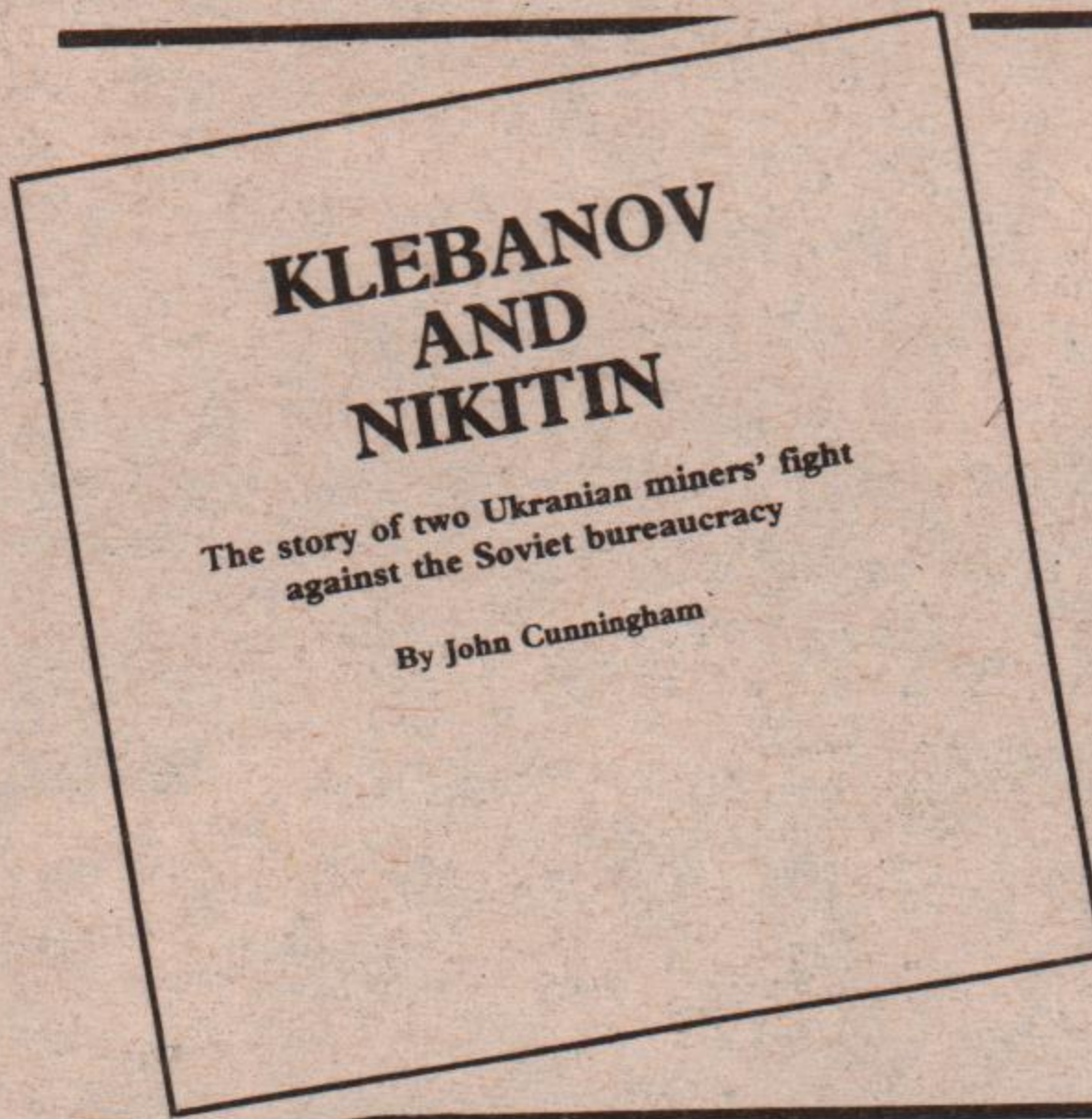
A footnote to John Cunningham's pamphlet "Klebanov and Nikitin — the story of two Ukrainian Miners' fight against the Soviet bureaucracy" explains that, though written in 1983, "publication was deliberately held back until the miners' strike finished, so that the criticisms...of certain NUM leaders could not be used as an attack upon the NUM during the course of the dispute".

Cunningham's pamphlet is an indictment of both the anti-working class nature of the Soviet regime and also of the British trade union bureaucracy's willingness to turn a blind eye towards it.

## Controlling

As the pamphlet explains, there are no genuine trade unions in the Soviet Union or in the USSR's Eastern European satellites, save the underground Solidarnosc in Poland. The so-called trade unions are merely an extension of the state apparatus: "The Soviet trade unions play the role of a Ministry of Labour. Their primary functions are organising labour resources, increasing productivity, and controlling the workforce".

Elementary norms of democracy and accountability are absent from these "trade unions". Insofar as elections



Stan Crooke reviews "Klebanov and Nikitin — the story of two Ukrainian miners' fight against the Soviet bureaucracy" written and published by John Cunningham.

occur at all, they are an empty ritual with the results a foregone conclusion: the top posts in the "unions" are occupied by appointees of the regime. The nature of Soviet "trade unions" was neatly expressed in the early 1980s by the transference of Shelpin from his post as head of the political police, the KGB, to the big boss of the Soviet "trade unions".

## Prison

The "unions" are a political and industrial prison camp for the workers trapped in them. The story of Klebanov and Nikitin outlined in John Cunningham's pamphlet is the story of their attempts to break out of that prison camp, and the

penalty they were made to pay by the regime for doing so.

## Agitation

In the 1950s Klebanov worked in the Makeyevka mine, near Donetsk in the Ukraine, where he led agitation for better working conditions and against management malpractices. In 1964 he was sacked and briefly held in the Kashchenko Psychiatric Hospital, where he was diagnosed as having a "paranoid development of the personality".

There is a long history in the Soviet Union of dissidents being branded as "insane" or "mentally unbalance" by the authorities. Just as the British state attempts to deny the political

nature of the Republican struggle in Ireland by labelling the Republican prisoners common criminals rather than political prisoners, so too the Soviet Union attempts to discredit its opponents by labelling them insane.

## Arrested

After three years of unemployment and then a brief spell of work again at the Makeyevka mine, Klebanov was arrested again in 1968 after a series of protests at the mine about working conditions there.

From then until 1973 Klebanov was moved around a succession of prisons and psychiatric institutions.

Released in 1973, Klebanov once again began to petition the authorities in Moscow for his job back. Klebanov's struggle against his own victimisation brought him into contact with others who had suffered the same fate. From 1977 onwards they began to try to act collectively.

In 1977 they produced two "Open Letters to International Opinion" and the following year an "Appeal to the International Labour Organisation and the Trade Unions in the West", signed by members of the newly formed "Free Trade Union Association of Working People in the Soviet Union" (FTUA).

The FTUA was to be based on rank and file control over officials and be open to manual and non-manual workers whose rights had been flouted by the regime. The KGB stamped on it straight away, and once again arrested and imprisoned Klebanov in a psychiatric hospital, forcibly administering large doses of behaviour-modification drugs. His whereabouts are now unknown.

Nikitin's story is one of terrible persecution for the crime of organising workers to defend themselves. A foreman at the Butouka mine in Donetsk in the sixties, he likewise led protests against bad working conditions and management malpractices. He was sacked in 1970.

In early 1972 he was arrested and locked up in Dnepropetrovsk Psychiatric Hospital and then, until 1976, the Donetsk Regional Hospital. After a brief spell 'out' he was re-arrested by the KGB and returned to Dnepropetrovsk. Released, then re-arrested again, he too was treated with heavy doses of drugs. In the Donetsk Ordinary Psychiatric Hospital early in 1984, Vasilievich Nikitin died.

Though never a member of the FTUA, Nikitin was certainly supportive of its goals. As he wrote in a letter of 1980 to the British TUC: "...we seek aid and assistance from the trade union associations of Great Britain for an action group working to organise free trade unions in the USSR". But it was precious little "aid and assistance" that the British labour movement gave Nikitin and his comrades.

Trade unionists suffering repression in Western capitalist countries have generally been able to successfully appeal for at least some degree of support from their brothers and sisters in other trade union organisations. But, as the pamphlet complains and documents,



Russian dissident Podrabinek, who had been involved in exposing the imprisonment of Klebanov, taken from his flat in 1977 by the KGB.

attempts to win support for the struggle of Klebanov and Nikitin from leading British trade unionists generally fell on deaf ears.

This was particularly the case with leaders of the NUM, who could legitimately have been expected to be to the fore in opposing repression of miners in other countries. But the key leaders of Britain's miners think that what exists in the Soviet Union is socialism. They support the regime there, not those workers fighting for basic trade union rights against it.

## Response

In response to a letter from John Cunningham, Arthur Scargill replied: "I only wish that the people who constantly inundate this office with letters about the above two people (Klebanov and Nikitin) do not appear to show any concern or very little about the tragedy in El Salvador and Nicaragua where more people are dying in a day than have been killed in the Soviet Union in the last ten years".

Though Arthur Scargill has been critical of the official Soviet version of the events surrounding Klebanov and Nikitin, Scargill's attitude has been tempered by his sympathetic attitude to the Soviet regime. The pamphlet quotes from a speech he made in the Soviet Union in 1983, in which Arthur Scargill declared that he was "not prepared to be a party to attacks on the Soviet Union, which had established a socialist system and wants to improve the quality of life of its people."

But NUM right-wingers who are often keen to whip up some Cold War propaganda were equally indifferent to the fate of Klebanov and Nikitin. Joe Gormley, the then NUM President, washed his hands of the affair after a brief meeting with the President of the Soviet Coalminers' "Union". He declared: "As a trade union we

have exhausted all channels of influence".

Gormley was backed up by Lancashire NUM leader Syd Vincet.

The overall picture presented by John Cunningham's pamphlet is a frightening one of vicious repression of basic trade union rights in the Soviet Union, and of indifference towards this by left and right alike in the British trade union movement.

The pamphlet has appeared at a time when Arthur Scargill is pressing ahead with his plans to form an international federation of miners' unions, basically consisting of the NUM and Eastern European fake miners' police state "unions" — including the Polish miners' "union" which — unlike Solidarnosc — did not challenge increased Polish coal exports to Britain during the miners' strike.

## Inspiration

John Cunningham's timely pamphlet should be an inspiration to all trade unionists to step up support for the struggle for trade union rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Socialist miners who read it will see why they should take up a fight in the NUM to prevent their union being dragged into an alliance with those Eastern European anti-working class organisations which falsely masquerade as trade unions, but which scab on their members every day of the week just as the Polish police state "unions" scabbed on the British miners' during their heroic year-long strike.

As John Cunningham writes in the conclusion to his pamphlet: "Klebanov and Nikitin made their stand and despite all the trials, tribulations and torture they suffered at the hands of the KGB, MVD and the quack "psychiatrists" of the Soviet mental prisons, they carried on. Their courage and devotion to their ideals should be an inspiration to workers the world over."



Polish workers in the Lenin Shipyard, Gdansk, 1981. The board behind them carries the name (painted out) of the official unions.

# Auschwitz remembered

Michelle Carlisle reviews 'A Painful Reminder', shown on TV last Sunday.

Auschwitz was the concentration camp where four million people were murdered to achieve Hitler's "Final Solution" of the "Jewish Problem". Today the name of Auschwitz symbolises all the horror and inhumanity of the Nazis.

In 1945, immediately following the liberation of the concentration camps, the British government commissioned a film crew to record the scarcely believable horrors which the Nazis had inflicted on the inmates of the camp. Last Sunday, Granada TV's "A Painful Reminder" showed extensive footage of this 1945 propaganda film, originally intended for German audiences.

## Dignitaries

Film shots of local scenery and of local German dignitaries from the surrounding towns watching as SS soldiers buried the thousands they had killed served two purposes; they proved that the Holocaust had happened and that it had happened with the knowledge of many German people. The Germans who were filmed fainting at the sight of the mass graves were often the same people who had used the slave labour that the camps had provided.

The film was stamped as war propaganda by its failure adequately to distinguish between Germans and Nazis. After all, Hitler's atrocities at Auschwitz and similar camps were only possible after he'd smashed the German labour movement — whose militants were the first victims in the first Nazi concentration camps after 1933.

The film showed the faces of the dead. Desperate, pained faces on emaciated bodies that were piled dozens high in deep and wide graves, marked only with the number of occupants. The German people were

to be made aware of what had been carried out in its name by the Hitler government.

However, while the film showed the visual reality of the camps, the narrative was a subtle attempt to rewrite the Holocaust, completely underplaying the anti-semitic nature of the Nazi ideology.

The film individualised the experience of the Holocaust victims by emphasising the similarities in the experience of individual Jews, Lutherans, Catholics, rather than exposing what was special and unique about it — the systematic attempt to exterminate the Jewish people in its entirety.

## Ignored

The film also ignored or played down the role that Britain played during the war with regard to the Jews. Many Jews in Britain had been interned as aliens, others were refused entry. Jewish requests that Auschwitz be bombed by the allies were turned down on flimsy excuses, whilst factories in the surrounding areas were being bombed (the film did point this out).

The government often dismissed reports about the extent of the genocide against the Jews as 'exaggerated' — members of the Foreign Office refused to help Jews to escape from Europe on the grounds that "One notable tendency in Jewish reports is to exaggerate the numbers of deportations and deaths".

Post-war propaganda in Britain focused not on Auschwitz, the scene of the largest scale extermination of the Jews, but on Belsen, in a deliberate attempt to play down that particular aspect of Nazi ideology. In post-war Germany, Britain wanted to get the German people working to build a vibrant capitalist economy, and it was feared that a film focusing on the evils of the Nazis would hinder this process. The projected film was shelved and remained unshown for 40 years.



Ugh!

# PUMPING LEAD

Will Adams reviews 'Rambo' now on general release.

Socialist Organiser readers who thought Red Dawn worryingly soft on "the Commies" will enjoy Ronald Reagan's favourite movie. Others will think it sick and puerile.

In London last week a woman was had up in court for ripping down a poster for "Rambo" which she found "offensive, violent and intimidating". So don't snicker too loudly at the sight of Mr Stallone stripped to the waist, muscles bulging, or they may have you up for breach of the peace.

Rambo follows the adventures of a highly-decorated Vietnam veteran John Rambo, who is released from a chain gang and sent back to Vietnam. His mission is to get to a Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp and take photos to be used by the Army to show families of soldiers still classified as "missing in action" that they are not being held captive by the Vietnamese.

Of course Rambo finds that Americans are being held and sets about rescuing them.

## Tough

The US consul is fearful of the consequences a disclosure of the prisoners' existence will have so it tries to prevent him succeeding. But Reagan's hero is made of tough stuff and he is clearly in his element fighting the battle single-handed.

When he is first told of the mission, Rambo asks, "this time, do we get to win?" and therein lies the ideological and political point to the film. The problem with the Vietnam war was not that the Vietnamese won, but rather that the USA lost. Rambo offers a consoling explanation for this — betrayal wrapped up in a wish-fulfilling murderous fantasy.

The film argues that the US lost because the state bureaucracy — meaning government controls — stifled the indomitable frontier spirit of men like Rambo and that this spirit, given free rein, could have put paid to the Vietnamese and their Russian backers — no problem.

Apart from the reactionary politics, as an adventure movie

it's pretty mediocre. There's never any real doubt that Rambo will pull through and apart from a reasonably good helicopter chase towards the end, the excessive amount of killing is simply a cover for a lack of invention.

The film utterly lacks any sense of its own ridiculousness. None of James Bond's wry smiles for Rambo, it's all in deadly earnest. In fact Stallone, who spent the years of the Vietnam war not in Vietnam but as a gym instructor at a posh girls'

school in Switzerland — manages the whole movie with hardly a change of expression.

## Racist

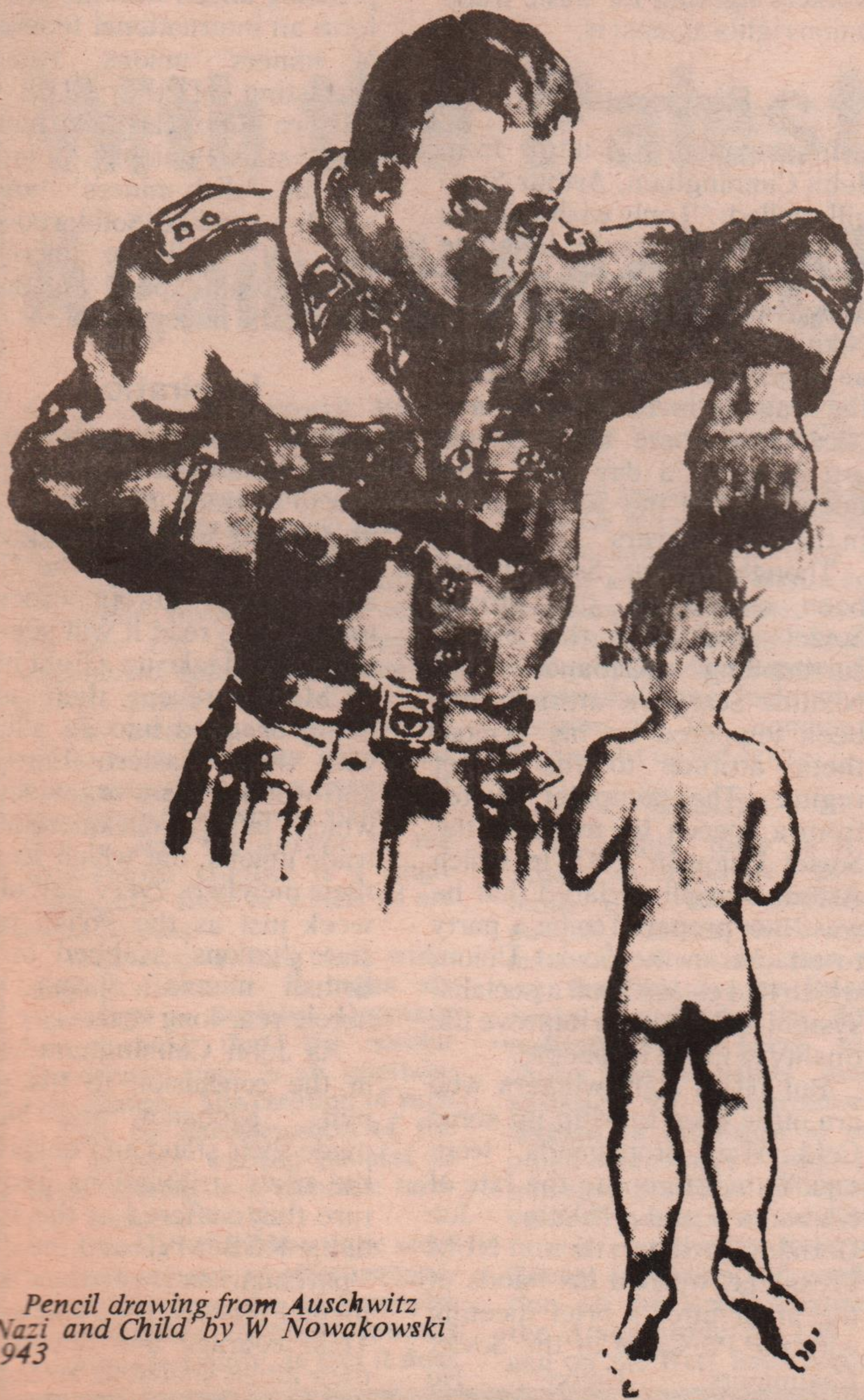
The characterisations are crudely racist. Vietnamese soldiers are all cruel and unfeeling but ultimately cowardly. Russians are equally cruel but display greater refinement (they do, after all, have the advantage over the Vietnamese of being white).

There is the obligatory sen-

sible Vietnamese collaborator and equally obligatory resourceful woman economically combined in the same character.

Even so, after she has extracted from Rambo a promise that he'll take her to America with him and a chaste kiss, she falls victim to an enemy bullet and let's the boys get on with the real action.

Save your money until someone makes a lampoon version of this dull propaganda piece. It can't be worse, and it might be funny.



Pencil drawing from Auschwitz 'Nazi and Child' by W Nowakowski 1943



## Songs of liberty and rebellion



A REBEL SONG  
By James Connolly

Come workers, sing a rebel song,  
A song of love and hate;  
Of love unto the lowly,  
And of hatred to the great,  
The great who trod our fathers down,  
Who steal our children's bread,  
Whose hands of greed are stretched to rob  
The living and the dead.

Chorus:

Then sing our rebel song  
As we proudly sweep along  
To end the age-old 'tyranny  
That makes for human tears,  
Our march is nearer done  
With each setting of the sun,  
And the tyrant's might is passing  
With the passing of the years.

We sing no more of wailing,  
And no songs of sighs or tears,  
High are our hopes and stout our hearts,  
And banished all our fears.

Our flag is raised above us,  
So that all the world may see,  
'Tis Labour's faith and Labour's arm  
Alone can Labour free.

Chorus:

Out of the depths of misery,  
We march with hearts aflame,  
With wrath against the rulers false,  
Who wreck our manhood's name.  
The serf who licks the tyrant's rod,  
May bend forgiving knee;  
The slave who breaks his slav'ry's chain,  
A wrathful man must be.

Chorus:

Our army marches onward,  
With its face towards the dawn,  
In trust secure in that one thing,  
The slave may lean upon.  
Who might within the arm of him,  
Whom knowing freedom's worth,  
Strikes hard to banish tyranny,  
From off the face of earth.

Chorus:

# Why the no vote?

By Rob Dawber, NUR District Council secretary (in personal capacity).

with DOO. As Jimmy Knapp has said, British Rail is using the sacked and suspended railworkers as hostages against the union. But Knapp himself has shown indecent haste in meeting BR to negotiate a compromise on DOO. There has been an attempt to present the union as now in an impasse — caught between a policy of total opposition to DOO and a body of guards who won't fight. Thus we are meant to conclude: drop the policy.

The NUR conference is being told to do precisely that. The real picture, however, is not at all so bad. Railwayworkers can be persuaded to fight. The vote was lost by only 455 votes.

Railworkers have suffered years of relentless management propaganda for DOO, reaching a peak in the early part of this year. This propaganda went

unchallenged by the union until a few weeks before the ballot.

The result had been apathy from guards who feared for their jobs but saw little lead given by the union. Weighell had fought his own executive to bring in DOO on the Bedford-St. Pancras line and Knapp has made no secret of his opinion that total opposition to DOO is wrong.

An intense propaganda campaign and intimidation was conducted on the Eastern Region whose general manager called all sectional council representatives together for his annual talk in arch and informed them that he would impose DOO on 76 trains on the Eastern Region by the autumn, "no matter what the union thought".

Knapp is right that BR intimidation played a part in the ballot result — and the one meeting held in the Eastern Region with Knapp present was insufficient to counter the pressure.

The heroes of this fight so far are the railworkers at Margam and Llanelli who, despite sack-

ings, stood solid for five weeks against DOO. When they decided to give in two members of the executive were able to get the decisions overturned before they were made effective. As one of the guards said, it was the first time they had seen "the union", and it made them feel they were not on their own.

Nonetheless, we lost it by however narrow a result and the special general meeting on September 12 has to make the most of a bad situation. The recommendation from the executive, however, doesn't allow it to do that. It simply calls "that this executive committee recommends, following the result of the guards' ballot, that our national executive is instructed to enter into negotiations with the BRB on Driver Only Operation — passenger and freight — within the Machinery of Negotiation".

But BR want a surrender, as a letter from the Director of Personnel to the NUR states. British Rail require "an undertaking that the NUR are prepared to discuss and negotiate freely on future productivity proposals made by the Board."

The SGM cannot simply go along with this. The first priority is to get the sacked guards reinstated to their former grade and post. If they remain sacked the theat hangs over every other railworker fighting to keep jobs and conditions.

No negotiations should take place on any issue until this reinstatement.

Many branches have made this call, including strike action by other grades to achieve it.

The SGM should go further. It should set a date for reinstatement, and set in motion a campaign leading up to that date.

Second, any negotiations on DOO after this reinstatement should seek to ensure that all the union's fears on safety are met; that no further destaffing takes place; that no jobs are lost; that average earnings, not just basic, are protected and that the savings should be used to cut hours.

Third, it should be made clear that only DOO is up for negotiation, nothing else.

# AUEW: vote Tocher!



John Tocher

BALLOTING is now underway for the election of President of the AUEW. The choice facing rank and file engineers is simple: do you want the union to continue down the road that Terry Duffy has taken it over the last nine years; or do you want a change?

The two right wing candidates, Jerry Russell and Bill Jordan, stand four-square in the Duffy tradition. Russell, a current executive council member, has supported Duffy on every major issue — accepting government money for ballots, introducing 'no strike' deals (as at Nissan on Tyne-and-Wear), deliberately allowing the relatively democratic internal structures of the union to fall into disuse, going along with employers' arguments about the need for profitability in both national and local negotiations... the list is endless.

Bill Jordan, presently Midlands Divisional Organiser is, if anything, even more right wing.

He is vice-chair of the "Mainstream" organisation where he rubs shoulders with the likes of Roy Lynk and Eric Hammond.

Not surprisingly he favours a bureaucratic amalgamation with the EETPU, forming a new right wing monolith within, and possibly even outside of in the longer term, the TUC.

John Tocher, the Broad

Left candidate, and presently a Divisional Organiser in Manchester, presents a clear alternative to these two Duffyites.

In a recent interview he described the present leadership thus:

"They are very tough with other trade unions, they are very tough with their own members, but if they meet an angry employer, you can't see them for dust!"

Tocher has denounced 'no strike' deals, argued against acceptance of government money or any other form of compliance with the anti-union laws, and called for a real fight to improve pay rates which he describes as "disgusting".

Of course, simply electing Tocher will not be enough. The last Broad Left president Hugh Scanlon, was one of the architects of the social contract, and betrayed almost every promise he made to the rank and file.

## Opportunity

But electing Tocher will at least halt the AUEW's slide into company unionism. It will give rank and file militants the opportunity to revive the democratic structures of the union and to extend democracy by making all officials accountable to the membership through annual election.

As Tocher himself says, "Involvement of the membership is the key, irrespective of the outcome of the election. In the event of a change of leadership, there is not a magic wand. We'd be misleading the membership if we said 'Vote for Tocher, then you can forget about things and you'll end up with decent wages, there won't be victimisations' and so on.

"That change in leadership though would facilitate the involvement of the membership. That is the key to the success of the union. You'll never get anywhere without campaigning and involving the membership."

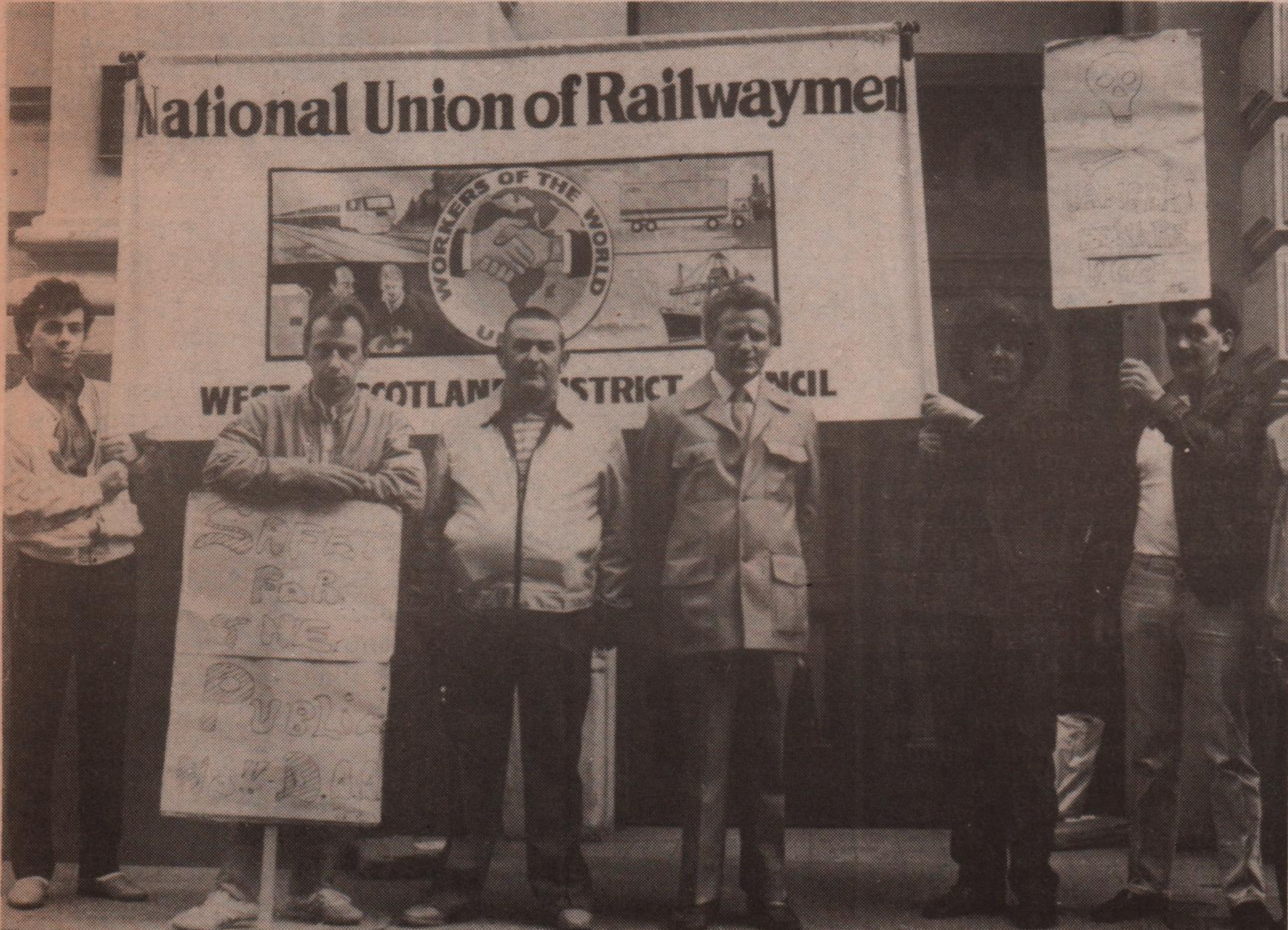
THE result of the guards' ballot on Driver Only Operation (DOO) is a serious blow to railworkers. In an 84% turnout, guards voted 4815 to 4360 not to take industrial action.

Why did the vote go against industrial action?

NUR general secretary, Jimmy Knapp, says that guards were intimidated by the fact of four million people on the dole and softened up with the promise that there would be no compulsory redundancy for guards.

And no doubt the defeat of the miners' strike played a part in discouraging guards from starting another full-scale fight.

Strengthened by the guards' vote, BR is now blackmailing the NUR. BR has let it be known that 139 men sacked at Glasgow Central, the 44 at Margam, the 38 at Llanelli, and the 32 at Immingham will remain sacked, and the 55 at Kings Cross suspended, until the NUR recall conference agrees to comply



Guards' day of action against DOO. Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL

# Miners' strike still solid

By Susan Carlyle

The slate miners' strike in the North Wales Blaenau Ffestiniog area is still strong after four weeks.

54 members of the TGWU in three mines are on strike, including miners in the largest slate mine in the world, which is advertised as a tourist attraction.

Visitors are now greeted with a picket line and usually respond sympathetically.

The private mine owners have tried to introduce new bonus schemes and in Ffestiniog Slate Quarry breaking their own contract to do so — with no negotiation. It meant a £28.40 loss in the weekly wage. The three mines are run by one family clan consisting of two brothers, a son-in-law and a daughter in a very Victorian set-up.

As Ceri Thomas, shop steward, says, "the men could not accept that. There was a work-to-rule, but they were getting nowhere. After two weeks holiday period, the men came back and the boss sent them home. The other two mines came out in sympathy."

As with the coal mining com-

munities, these jobs are the last in an industry which has died all over North Wales, but production has been steadily increasing. The demand for slates for roofing survives and the Gloddfa Ganol strikers that I spoke to described conditions underground where tunnels

stretch for over 40 miles.

The local alternative industrial opportunities are practically nil if these mines close.

A local German-based plastics factory provides some jobs, but mainly employs women, and is funded by the Welsh Enterprise Board. The slate miners represent the last traditional jobs of a

once huge industry.

Money and support is needed. The TGWU will be declaring the dispute official.

Messages of support and donations to: Mr Ceri Thomas, Baltic House, Rhiw, Blaenau Ffestiniog, Gwynedd, North Wales, or phone 0766 830480 for further information.

# Lay-offs at Longbridge

300 workers at Austin Rover's Longbridge plant have been told that they have in effect worked themselves out of a job.

The company wants a ten percent cut in Metro production, a week's lay-off after the September holiday, 300 "voluntary" redundancies and a further 300 workers to be "redeployed" at Longbridge.

The week's lay-off will affect workers at both Longbridge and Cowley. It will be paid, but workers will lose bonus payments.

Austin Rover management blame the August registration sales rush for the overproduc-

tion. But even as they announced the cut-backs, there was a dispute in the CAB 1 area of Longbridge, caused by the tracks being run too fast!

This January the company took on 400 new starters at Longbridge. Workers there now believe that the company are moving towards reintroducing the casual labour system that operated in the 1950s.

The response of the Longbridge Works Committee, endorsed by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, has been the following:

\*To negotiate the minimum number of voluntary redundan-

cies.

\*To insist that the company honours its agreements regarding paid lay-offs.

\*To demand a review of the use of contract labour.

\*To reaffirm the existing policy on overtime (i.e. no overtime without a specific dispensation from the Works Committee).

The Works Committee's response is a good one as far as it goes, but it needs to be strengthened by implementing a complete, indefinite overtime ban with no dispensations, and by pushing for worksharing with no loss of pay.

## Letter

# Macho and sexist

Will our socialist future be exclusively debated by, fought for and won by, and inhabited by gorilla-like macho-men, wielding spanners and waving mallet-sized fists? I think and hope not, and I'm sure you do too, so why on earth was the four day conference 'Debating Socialism' illustrated on its leaflet with a silhouette of such ape-men?

Please think a little harder

next time — maybe even ask the opinions of one or two female comrades before you produce such sexist imagery.

You will never know how many women may have liked the look of the conference programme, but thought the logo indicative of the kind of politics they were really in for, and decided not to bother.

A. DRIVER  
Islington

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# Socialist Organiser

Liverpool and Lambeth

## Revenge against the councils

# HANDSWORTH IN FLAMES

As we go to press there are reports of continuing confrontations between youth and police in Britain's inner cities. Jim Denham reports on Monday's events in Handsworth.

The Handsworth riot which cost four lives on Monday night, appears to have been sparked by a trivial incident.

An eyewitness, Howard Reid, described what happened:

"This particular incident was sparked off when police gave an individual a ticket for parking on a double yellow line.

"They then proceeded to assault that individual and to handcuff him and throw him in the back of a police car.

"A young black lady was passing and she was subjected to physical violence. She was punched in the face and thrown to the floor by one of those police officers.

"Outraged citizens intervened to try to show the officers their actions were inflammatory."

Later on, a group of youths armed with bricks and petrol bombs, attacked firemen attending a blaze at a disused cinema.

But the precise details of the incident that set off Monday's riots are not very important.

More significant is Handsworth's high level of unemployment (over 40% according to official figures), it's appalling housing conditions and the general atmosphere of poverty and decay that pervades the area.

Even a local vicar com-



Community policing in Handsworth

Photo: John Harris

mented: "People who live here and have no option of living here are under amazing pressure. They see the signs of wealth around them and it is significant that targets of damage tonight have been property and commercial business."

Local people have been expecting a riot in Handsworth this summer. The area erupted during the 1981 inner city riots and little has changed since then, except that the employment prospects for young blacks have deteriorated further.

According to Handsworth's careers office, only eight out of 350 West Indian school leavers have found employment since September 1984.

Anita Richards, who drove local MP Clare Short round the riot area on Monday night witnessed the looting:

"In Lozells Road and Soho Road there was fairly extensive looting. It was mainly video shops and jewellers, while some small Asian shops were actually surrounded by West Indians protecting them from looters.

"The police had all their riot gear on, but on the whole they weren't getting very involved. They barricaded off Lozells Road and stood around outside Thornhill Rd. police station."

Socialists cannot support and certainly should not attempt to glorify many aspects of the riot: the attacks on firemen, Asian shop-keepers, and innocent passers-by were indefensible. But we must lay the blame squarely at the feet of the government.

### Anger

Working class youth as a whole face a bleak future. For black youth the situation is nothing short of desperate. Our task is to channel that anger and frustration into a campaign against the Tories, against unemployment and against the whole rotten capitalist system.

The riot was an understandable, and almost inevitable reaction to the sickness and decay of British society.

But only revolutionary politics will provide a way forward.

Liverpool and Lambeth councils were the last to give in and set a rate last spring — and now Mrs Thatcher wants revenge. Labour councillors in Liverpool and Lambeth have been served with surcharge orders by the district auditors. 49 Labour councillors have had a demand for £106,103 made against them and in Lambeth 32 councillors are surcharged £126,947.

They have the right to appeal all the way to the House of Lords but if they lose they face bankruptcy and disqualification from public office for five years.

As Lambeth leader Ted Knight said, it is an outrage to democracy that elected representatives can be treated like this.

"It is wrong that an un-elected person like a district auditor can put 32 elected members out of office. Lambeth and Liverpool have been put in the unhappy position of having to go to court to prove their innocence, which is the reverse of the law of being innocent until proved guilty".

### Pledged

The Labour Party has pledged funds to pay the councillors' legal costs. More importantly, the chair of Labour's local government committee, David Blunkett — leader of Sheffield council which backed down from confrontation with the Tories in time to avoid surcharge risks — has promised that the next Labour government will remit any penalties suffered by Lambeth and Liverpool councils.

Is this pledge binding on Neil Kinnock? Kinnock has been going around boasting that he will not tolerate any talk of a future Labour government restoring the money the Tories have stolen from the miners. Does he have a different attitude to the surcharged councillors? It would be well to find out what Kinnock says before believing Blunkett's pledge.

The councillors are going to concentrate on their legal appeal. Now the ball is at the feet of the local government workers, many of whom have pledged themselves to strike if councillors are surcharged for trying to defend local services. As we go to press meetings are taking place to decide what to do. We will have a full report next week.



Join the Labour Party.  
Write to: The Labour Party, 150 Walworth Road, London SE17 1JT.  
Subscription is £8 per year, £2 unwaged, 50p OAPs.

## NUR: Vote yes in the signals ballot!

HOT on the heels of the guards' ballot, the NEC has now arranged a ballot of all 10,000 signal and telecom (S&T) staff to seek authority to reimpose the non-cooperation policy suspended last December when BR agreed to defer their proposals on Faulting and Maintenance.

These proposals are straight out of the Serpell Report. BR intends creating Faulting teams separate from the Maintenance teams. The Maintenance schedules are to be drastically reduced — the Serpell Report said BR spends too much on

signalling safety — from four-weekly cycles to twelve-weekly cycles, and in the case of point machines to 48-week cycles.

The intention is that signalling will then break down more often rather than be maintained to prevent it breaking down. This work then becomes that of the Faulting teams. Management claim that only 485 posts will disappear though union surveys show it to be two or three times that.

Incidentally, while BR are telling guards and drivers that

DOO is safe over certain distances in certain kinds of train they are not saying that policy is to make train working less safe by reducing signalling maintenance.

However the whole situation smells of a sell out. No campaign has been organised for the ballot and no meetings set up. To my knowledge only four leaflets explaining the issue have gone to each branch. My branch has 130 S&T members! A 'no' vote of course would then let the NEC S&T members off the hook.

BR however are taking the

issue very seriously. A personal letter has gone to every S&T member — "your employment will be threatened by industrial action" and "change is inevitable and necessary if to secure our future and industrial action cannot change the Board's policy".

We must vote 'yes' for action. This particular issue is only one more in the list of BR's proposals for making the railways ripe for privatisation, and in this case cutting safety to produce profits.