

workers power

25p/10p strikers

Paper of the Workers Power group

SMASH LEGAL CHAINS

THERE MUST BE an immediate reaction by the entire labour and trade union movement to any moves by the courts to enforce their fines against the NUM and Arthur Scargill. The courts, urged on by Thatcher's government, are showing their determination to try to cripple the NUM and intimidate its leadership. The trade union movement must show equal determination to resist these moves, defend the NUM and put the Tory judges to flight.

Having declared the NUM's strike "unofficial and unlawful" the judges were beside themselves with rage when the NUM and Arthur Scargill dared to disagree with their "impartial" judgement. It was for this "wilful disobedience", as they quaintly described it, that they declared the NUM and Scargill in contempt and imposed the £200,000 and £1,000 fines.

They are now proceeding to serve the same notice on every member of the Executive and national co-ordinating committee to make sure they are all liable for the same fines if they dare say the strike is official.

There is no doubt that the High Court has been given the go ahead by the Tories. At every point in this dispute the courts and the judges have been the transparent catspaws of the Tories strategy to defeat the strike.

When Kinnock spouts about preserving the "rule of law" he is calling on miners to obey the legal arm of the Tories. To obey laws designed to strangle the ability of trade unionists to defend themselves against the bosses. Laws which are designed in the interests of one class to suppress another.

The defence of the NUM against the vicious union-hating judiciary will be necessary whatever the outcome of negotiations on the immediate objects of the strike. The courts will not cancel their fines or release the imprisoned miners because of a settlement.

The Tories are determined to make their laws stick. There can be no peace until these fines and sentences are cancelled. Moreover, whilst these laws are on the statute book trade unionists can be fined and jailed at will. Even if the Tories were checked or defeated in pit closures they could score a major political victory over the whole working class if they force the NUM to pay the fines or if they get away with savage prison sentences on men and women fighting for their jobs and livelihoods. If the NUM duck this political issue it will do so at its own peril.

These laws are not all powerful and neither are the judges. When the NCB early on in the strike tested the water for sequestering the NUM's assets they backed off when thousands of miners created a human wall around their Barnsley HQ. The Tories feared the response

of the miners and other trade unionists to a bloody assault. Now after seven months of watching the trade union leaders vacillate and retreat on direct support for the miners they feel confident enough to take the leash off their judges again.

When the Tory Attorney General, Havers, was asked on the Radio whether he feared a general strike if Scargill was gaoled, he simply replied that despite all the things the TUC had said they would do to support Scargill in the blacking of coal nothing had happened.

It is precisely this cowardly inaction which has emboldened Thatcher and co in their use of the courts. The miners' response must be to step up the action, any sign of weakness will result in a whole wave of further attacks. That is why Durham area was wrong to agree under a court threat to "take steps" to prevent "intimidation" of a working miner.

What is needed is response the Justice Nicholls' fines is not appeasement but a clear commitment that any attempt to enforce them through sequestration or gaoing Scargill will be met with a full scale general strike.

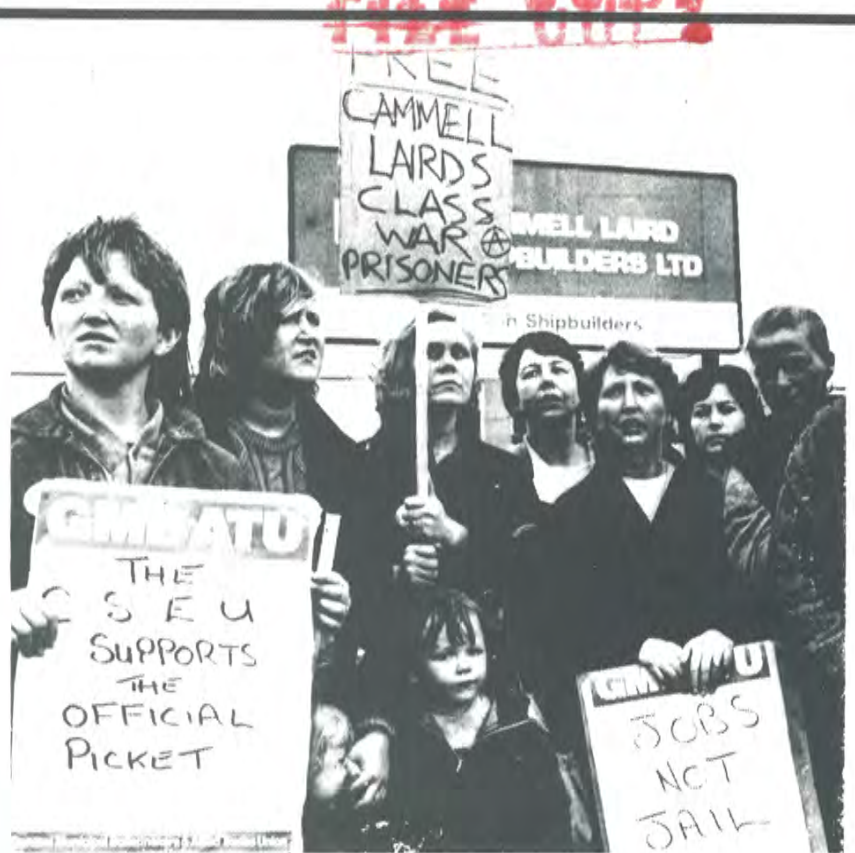
The miners leaders must immediately publicly demand that the TUC leaders turn their words into action. Their promises to stand by the miners must be fulfilled. We must demand an immediate emergency meeting of the general council to commit the TUC to general strike action the moment courts move against the NUM assets.

We must demand that leaders such as Buckton and Knapp of the Railway workers, Moss Evans of the Transport leaders and Dubbins of the printers, who claim to stand on the left of the TUC and actively support the miners, commit their unions to all out action whether or not the General council gives its support.

Rank and file militants know that the only way to make the TUC leaders stand firm behind the miners is by making it impossible for them to run away. When the 'Pentonville Dockers' were gaoled it was only the strike action of ten of thousands of rank and file trade unionists which force the TUC to call a general strike.

The miners must take the lead now in going out to every factory, dock, printwork and site to talk to and argue with the stewards and workers. Every support committee must be turned into an organising centre genuinely reflecting the organised workers in the areas. Where such committees are weak or non-existent the trades council must take the lead in calling emergency meetings - opening their doors to representatives of shop stewards committee's, tenants and

John Smith (IFL)



FREE THE 37!

BY WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 3rd thirty seven trade unionists had been locked up in Walton jail, Liverpool. Their 'crime' was to occupy a rig and a frigate in opposition to enforced redundancies at Cammell Laird shipyards, Birkenhead. In Thatcher's Britain fighting for the right to work can land you in jail.

The occupation lasted for 14 weeks. It began when Lairds made known their intention of getting rid of 800 workers. This came on top of a further 800 redundancies which had reduced the workforce to around 1,700 this year. In the 1940s the yard was Birkenhead's major employer with a workforce of 20,000. After the present round of redundancies it is likely that the yard will be run down and eventually closed altogether. The shipyards of Birkenhead, already amongst the longest in the country, will grow even more.

Faced with this prospect the stagers knew it was a fight to the finish. Their average age was 27. If they lost their jobs a redundancy payment would not last long. They would have found themselves unable to keep their families and with very little prospect of finding other work.

To defend their jobs they were prepared to defy the courts. As Billy Albertina, the occupation committee chairman put it, "Although we are facing prison, and that's going to be hard, it's a damn sight worse on the dole."

The Lairds management went to the courts over the summer to get a repossession order. When the workers refused to budge despite Manchester High Court's ruling that they should, the bosses were granted an enforcement order on September 13th. However the occupation remained solid - backed by a mass picket outside the plant - and on September 26th the one month jail sentences were ordered. After sealing off the rig and frigate the police moved in and, vastly outnumbering the strikers, seized the vessels and arrested the workers.

Throughout the struggle the courts backed the management to the hilt. Any worker actually resisting the bosses' onslaught on jobs is a hooligan or an anarchist. In his judgement sentencing the men the former Mosleyite fascist Justice Lawton was candid in expressing his class hatred of the strikers, "This is about as bad a bit of behaviour as I have come across in 50 years of administration of justice."

Amazing! Presumably in those 50 years this unelected dispenser of bosses' justice has had to deal with more than one murder or rape, robbery or arson case. Yet these crimes all pale into insignificance next to the 'crime'

committed by 37 strikers - defending their jobs.

The support for the strikers from the Merseyside labour movement and from within the shipbuilding industry has always been inadequate. That this remains so while they are in prison - not allowed to leave their cell for 23 hours of the day - is a scandal.

Within the yard itself the action by the men unfortunately sealed them off from the mass of the workforce. This left the field clear for an arch scab, Harry Evers, to organise an anti-strike movement. The union leadership in the plant did nothing to stop him, fearful themselves of backing the action.

The various mass pickets in support of the men were backed by striking miners from Lancashire and North Wales and section of the Birkenhead labour movement. But they never numbered than around 400. The men's union GMBATU, has officially backed the strike but has not organised any action amongst its membership, to either support the strike or, now, get the lads out of prison. There was no call for strike action last Friday which kept the numbers at a support demonstration down to 1,000. The Liverpool council workers called a one-day strike this week. This is too little, too late. As for Birkenhead's Labour MP Frank Field (the man who wants a coalition with the Alliance and others) he has consistently refused to support the action.

The jailing of strikers is the real crime at issue here. It is a crime against the working class. It is a warning to every other worker who occupies a factory, yard, pit or ship. Prison awaits. Every worker should condemn this outrageous act. Every worker should declare support for the 37. Every worker should take action now to free the 37. In the words of the Cammell Lairds Occupation Support Group, "In this, as in all our common struggles, we must strive to organise a general national strike now, before it's too late! Release the 37 Stand by the NUM Organise a General Strike!

* Organise a national strike in the shipbuilding industry now.

* Support the picket at Lairds every day. In particular miners' wives groups should mobilise support for the prisoners' wives pickets.

* Send letters of support to the prisoners at 1 Wing, Walton Prison, Hornby Rd, Liverpool.

The names of some of the prisoners are: Lol Duffy, Bill Albertina, John Dodey, Mick Mooney, Paul Little, Jimmy Albertina, Colin Airlie and 30 others.

community groups.

Such a campaign which shows the determination of our movement not to stand by while the NUM is financially crippled and its leaders threatened with goal will set the Tories back on their heels and make the judges discover some legal device to cover their retreat, as they did over Pentonville.

The Miners Union itself must take immediate steps to protect its financial ability to continue the struggle. It must learn the lesson of the South Wales expropriation. All the

NUM funds for the conducting of the strike should be dispersed to local branches and strike committees as well as all investments it is possible to liquidate at short notice. This is the only way to prevent the judges getting their filthy hands on the miners' funds and ensuring the money remains where it is needed to conduct the struggle.

The Tories have thrown down the gauntlet. The rank and file must force their leaders to fight and not run. For an All Out General Strike!

INSIDE: The Hong Kong Syndrome



Made in Foot's image

BEING GAY

DIVIDED COUNSELS

BEHIND THE ORCHESTRATED hysteria of the Tory conference sections of the ruling class have been voicing misgivings about the Government's strategy for defeating the NUM. There is a definite fear among some of them that Thatcher has staked too much on a victory she cannot achieve. There is a worry that she is only serving to harden the determination of the striking miners. Rumours are circulating about splits within the NCB. Top Bishops have been given prime media time to preach conciliation and compromise.

The Tories did not stumble into this dispute by accident. They have long had their sights set on winning a crushing victory over the NUM. As the strongest industrial union a defeated NUM would serve as a warning to all other trade unions. In the wake of such a defeat the Tories would be able to press on with their plans to create a low wage economy and tame house unions. That is what Nigel Lawson was getting at when he told the House of Commons that the miners' strike was a "sound investment" for the future and told the Tory Conference that: "The main cause of high unemployment in Britain today is the determination of monopolistic trade unions to insist on levels of pay that price men out of work altogether."

PRIVATISATION

The Tory cabinet would dearly like to smash the NUM and force it back to work on the terms of MacGregor's closure plans. The way would then be paved for them to move towards the privatisation of the big super-pits - at Selby, Belvoir and Margam in the medium term. Leading Tories are now openly speaking of the privatisation of the pits as the jewel in the crown of their overall strategy for privatisation. The Tory Cabinet also relishes the prospect of showing up the TUC as a paper tiger incapable of taking on the government or giving real backing to the miners. Hence the official rhetoric of the Government that it is prepared to sit out the coal strike until the bitter end.

The problem is that the cost of the dispute - in terms of cash and in terms of working class militancy - is beginning to hit sections of the boss class.

The Economist estimates that the public spending cost of the strike has now reached between £1,400 and £1,500 million. Industrial Production has been depressed by 3%. Power station stocks are running dangerously low. Whatever Patrick Walker may say to the Tory faithful, the prospect of power cuts looms unless the government and CEBG can get their hands on strikebound coal stocks and dramatically increase the rate of imported scab coal.

NO BREAKING OF RESOLVE

The militancy of the miners has also proved more than the bosses expected. The massed police scab-herding and picket busting, savage sentences and bail conditions have not served to break the resolve of the strikers. On the contrary they have served to help thousands of miners, and their families and other workers see which class 'law and order' protects and whose 'freedom' the press defends.

No wonder then that some bishops are worried about a hardening of attitudes in the coalfields. They are voicing the fears of the 'wet' or liberal wing of the bosses that the strike is 'alienating' workers from the hallowed institutions of the British ruling class - Parliament, the judges, the police and the church. The bishops fear that their Christian message of class collaboration, obedience and humility before the ruling class will fall on deaf ears amongst a new generation of class conscious fighters. They, and their backers in the ruling class are eager to prevent this happening out of concern for the safety of future profits rather than any religious respect for past prophets.

The ruling class waverers know that the Thatcher government is braced to step up the conflict by sequestrating the NUM's funds, prosecuting its President and moving strike bound coal stocks in convoys. To move that coal means a further intensification of the policing operation or even the use of troops to load the stocks. That is the next step for those who have still got their sights set on inflicting a humiliating defeat on the NUM.

Not all of the ruling class is prepared for a

further intensification in a winner takes all showdown with the NUM. Some - within the NCB for example - believe that it would be better to settle now, save the financial and political costs of further rounds of conflict and leave the NUM too exhausted to resist later attacks. *The Economist* describes this view in the following terms, "at the heart of the Coal Board's uncertainty lies the question of whether the future structure of the coal industry should be settled now, or after the miners return to work. Those who favour fudge believe that the struggle for management of the Coal Board can be better fought after the strike, when the union is exhausted."

This grouping would be prepared to make a concession on the closure review procedure. Such a concession would amount to a withdrawal of the 5 pit closures in order to refer those closures back to area negotiation and a declaration of willingness to 'listen to' third party local advisory committees on closure decisions. The NCB has put such proposals on the table before although all the signs to date are that the Thatcher government has vetoed concluding a deal on those terms.

NUM OBSTACLE

For the ruling class hardliners such a deal would leave the NUM intact as a major obstacle to their plans. It would not involve the triumphant assertion of management rights against the union. They are opposed to a fudge that would create a third party agency with powers of any sort over management decisions. As Tebbit said pointedly before he took his night time tumble Michael Edwards would not have chalked up his successes at Leyland if he had to prove the case for every closure to an outside body.

The 'hards' also fear that the NUM would, in fact, have been re-invigorated with an influx of young militant miners into the ranks of the NUM's activists. Arthur Scargill would not have been given the public humiliation that the bosses dream of.

Hence the tendency for them to push on for total victory over their enemy within.

The wets reason differently. They argue that the NUM has now been sufficiently exhausted and its membership suffered so much hardship that it would be incapable of resisting management's plans after a return to work. They want to leave as many disputed issues as possible unsettled so that they can tighten the managerial grip pit by pit and area by area after the strike. They reason that it will be far easier to press on against a divided and weaker NUM than to go all out for one final knock out blow.

ENGINEERING DEFEAT

There is no fundamental difference of objective in the ruling class camp. They all want to engineer defeat for the NUM but differ over pace and manner. Divisions in their ranks are purely over tactics. At the moment Thatcher and MacGregor representatives of the 'hardliners' par excellence, are dominating the show. The wets are being forced to voice their fears through prelates. However should the Tories fear for their own stability they will reach for a compromise so as to live to fight another day and choose the ground for their next attack on the NUM.

That the ruling class is divided and sectioned fearful of the consequences of a confrontation that could spread to other sections of workers this winter is testimony to the strength of the miners' resistance. But it too can have its own fatal attraction. The *Morning Star* drools with delight at every bishop who criticises Thatcher and every NCB executive who differs with MacGregor. So do the Labour leaders. Let the divisions in their ranks remind us that the miners can win total victory. Let it remind us that the ruling class 'wets' are not the workers' friends, but their enemies in a slightly difference guise. By stepping up our action we can further weaken and divide the bosses and ensure total victory for the miners. ■

TUC fails to deliver

IT IS NOW over one month since the TUC committed itself to active support for the NUM. *The Miner* hailed the great day. "The miners' strike now has official TUC backing. That is a fact." It waxed lyrical about how "...the unions who make up the TUC are walking tall and gearing up to the job in hand, defending and advancing the interests of millions." (September 1984)

The bitter truth however is that the TUC resolutions have yet to make any real difference to the amount of solidarity backing the NUM has received. In fact Willis, Basnett and Buckton have used the TUC's declaration of support as a means of stepping up the pressure on the NUM executive to settle. They have taken every measure possible to avoid the TUC being drawn into active struggle alongside the miners.

The Right Wing leaders have shown no such reluctance to turn their conference speeches into action. The traitorous EETPU leaders have already sent out ballot papers to all their members urging them to reject TUC policy. The ballot paper is accompanied by a plea from Fred Franks for electricians to back the executive and "not be used to further the political objectives of some miners' leaders." They are campaigning hard to actively stab the miners in the back when the crunch comes in the power stations.

The EETPU union leaders must be penalised for this unabashed scabbing. A union which organises scabbing, which holds fringe meetings at the CBI conference promoting no-strike deals is a yellow union. It has no place in the TUC. The TUC must expel the EETPU from its ranks, and invite all electricians loyal to the labour movement to join TUC-affiliated unions appropriate to their industries. Many militants in EETPU would be glad of such a release. They are prevented from taking this course of action because TUC unions are covered by the Bridlington Agreement which forbids such transfers. Expulsion would immediately solve this problem leaving the EETPU leaders to deal with the bosses they love to serve.

The TUC resolution called for solidarity action from power and transport workers. If delivered it would hit the bosses hard and draw the entire organised labour force into head on conflict with the Tories and their anti-union laws. But its architects are terrified of such a showdown. Once the resolution was passed the TUC chiefs immediately set up their own talks with MacGregor in search of a settlement. They have invested all their hopes in their resolution being enough in itself to force a little compromise from the bosses.

The TUC leaders have done nothing to actively organise their rank and file for struggle. TGWU card holders are still shifting coal. It took until the very end of September for the nine electricity supply union leaderships to meet and, predictably, fail to agree to deliver the support the miners

needed. Afterwards Basnett, Duffy and Evans maintained that: "The absence of a complete consensus will not, however, deflect our unions from seeking action by our members in line with the General Council Statement endorsed at the TUC Congress." But what are these gentlemen doing to bring their troops into battle alongside the miners?

At the Labour Party conference the NUM President was threatened with jail for refusing to accept that a judge could decide whether the strike was official or not. Once again the miners' friends on the TUC ran for cover. Ron Todd may huff and puff about how "The NUM is not fighting a strike on behalf of miners. It is waging a battle on behalf of the whole labour and trade union movement of this country." Yet Todd, together with Moss Evans, made sure that the "whole labour and trade union movement" failed to stand with the NUM in that crucial hour.

Even the emergency resolution of support to the Labour Party conference, which carried a slight risk of placing other trade unions and the Labour Party in defiance of the high court was withdrawn. Basnett and Duffy - whose members are so crucial in the power stations - claimed they had no mandate to vote for such a motion!

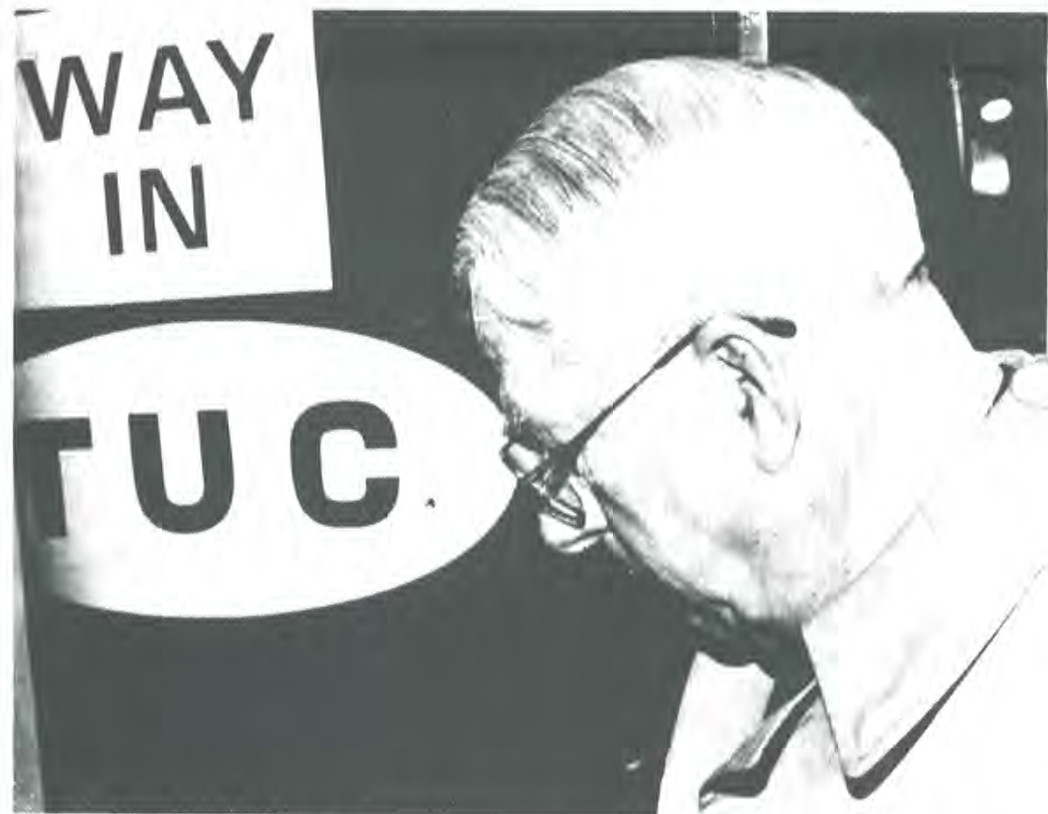
Solidarity with the miners cannot be left in the hands of these men.

Arthur Scargill told the 27th September NUM executive that "promises made by the TUC Congress are coming through in an increasingly fruitful way." Such reports are dangerously misleading. They must not be used to lull the NUM rank and file into a mood of false confidence and complacency. Basnett and Co are more worried about getting talking to the Tories again and would ditch the miners if they could. With the NUM's funds under threat of sequestration Basnett's TUC Economic Committee voted to get their snouts back in the trough with the CBI by starting to attend the NEDC again!

Solidarity with the miners can still be won. *The Sun* printers showed that with their magnificent action in blacking out Murdoch's filthy rag. Shop stewards representing the Yorkshire power stations have pledged backing and convened meetings in power stations. But winning that action cannot be left to the TUC leaders or deals between them and the NUM executive.

Rank and file workers will have to win the fight for the blacking of all coal and of all oil for the power stations. Rank and file miners will have to get out to every group of workers and urge that action. There is too much at stake to leave matters in the hands of Willis, Basnett and Buckton. The miners have been badly let down by the Trade Union leadership on several occasions in this dispute. It must not be allowed to happen again. Militants must organise to force their leaders to lead and resist their leaders' betrayals. □

THIRD PARTY



CLOSED IN HOTEL ROOMS throughout the length and breadth of the country the NACODS leaders, the Labour Party leadership and the TUC have been furiously trying to cook up a deal to rob the miners of an outright victory over MacGregor. They hope the supposed "neutrality" of ACAS will work their way to persuade the miners' leaders to settle on terms less than those the NUM is capable of dictating to the NCB and the Tories. Perhaps more surprisingly, and definitely more alarming, the NUM executive has been prepared to play the game the ACAS way.

Sampey and McNestry of NACODS set out to use their thumping 82% strike ballot to increase their bargaining clout to force a settlement on the NUM as well as the NCB. They had the power to paralyse the NCB. They had the power to strike a blow against the NUM by hatching a rotten deal with MacGregor. With TUC Chief Willis and Labour energy man Orme whispering in their ears and scripting statements they set out to play the role they had sought, but failed, to play at earlier stages in the dispute. In concert with the TUC they set out to persuade ACAS to try to settle the dispute with a formula for "neutral" third party arbitration in all disputes over pit closures.

ACAS is a classic trade union official's pipe dream. NACODS President Sampey sung its praises: "We feel that with the professionalism and experience of ACAS, we can resolve the situation

between the board and the unions. That is how we feel. Lets all get together, down there at ACAS." True, ACAS represents a lot of experience and professionalism. But at what? Its chief is none other than Pat Lowry who was sidekick to Michael Edwards when he butchered jobs and weakened the unions at British Leyland in partnership with none other than Ian MacGregor. The Trade Union leaders reach for it as a way of avoiding all out struggle in which they or the bosses stand to lose. The bosses look to it if they themselves cannot stem the tide of trade union resistance. Then they offer it as a lifeline for the Trade Union leaders to get out of a struggle by hoodwinking their members that they've reached the best possible settlement at the hands of "neutral" arbitrators.

ACAS's game in the miners' dispute is to settle the strike on less than the demands of the NUM. They are out to weaken the NUM's resistance and conciliate the NCB.

The NACODS formula for settling the dispute is designed to create mini-ACAS bodies at every level of conflict between the NCB and the NUM. They suggest that a third party arbitration body be established to adjudicate between the workers and management whenever a pit closure cannot be jointly agreed. For the TUC and the Labour Party too, this is the way out of a long hard strike

THE LEADERSHIP CLIQUE around Deng Xiaoping are committed to a policy of modernising the Chinese economy by freeing market forces at home and increasing the importation of capital, technology and raw materials.

They began with introducing a free market in the countryside. Agriculture had suffered considerably from the bureaucratic diktats of the Fifties and Sixties. The peasants, who had supposedly rushed to divest themselves of such 'bourgeois' trappings as cooking pots in their eagerness to form communes in the late Fifties had been allowed to cultivate their own plots of land ever since the famine of the early Sixties. However, to a large extent they were restricted in what they could grow and the price they could get for it. Whole counties could be instructed to grow the same crop, and nothing else.

It was not surprising, then, that agricultural production went up rapidly as soon as the peasants were allowed to adopt the 'responsibility system'. By this was meant that they were responsible for making as much money out of their land as they could. Peasants reverted to growing what was best for their land, or commanded the highest prices in the markets. Rural incomes were reported to have trebled, even quadrupled, as a result.

The Western Press gave full rein to its own prejudices and happily pointed to Deng as the man who could put China back on the road to prosperity.

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

However it is not difficult to see where Deng's policies will actually lead. Quadrupled incomes for farmers mean quadrupled bills for the city-dwellers. The industrial working class will be forced to increase productivity massively if an increasing proportion of the value they produce is to go to the peasantry. Equally, there has never yet been a newly enriched peasant who did not seek to strengthen his wealth by extending his lands. Differentiation is sure to develop in the countryside. If some peasants prosper and broaden their holding then more must lose their land completely. The concentration of capital on the one hand must always lead to the creation of a proletariat on the other. Deng's policy is strengthening the hand of the future landlords in the inevitable class war against the future proletariat.

The application of Deng's policies to industry will be still more dangerous for China's workers. Decentralisation of production planning will inevi-

CHINA'S CAPITALIST ROAD

tably engender competition between plants or regions. Effectiveness in that competition will be measured in terms of increases in productivity. Quite apart from the decrease in working conditions, pay and living standards that this will bring for the workers this can also form an entry point for foreign capital to get its hands back on China. At plant level the pressure will be on to import 'labour saving' technology in order to compete successfully. That will require foreign currency which can only be obtained by foreign trade, foreign trade requires selling cheaper than international competitors such as the sweat shops of the Philippines or South Korea.

UNEQUAL RELATIONS

At every turn, Deng's policies will bring China into unequal relations with international capital. To overcome the inefficiency of obsolete blast furnaces, China has to import very high grade iron ore from Australia. In the last year such imports have risen from 2.9 million tonnes to 4.5 million and the costs from A\$121 million to A\$177 million. Now in order to guarantee future supplies China is planning to invest in a joint mining venture - in Australia.

The relaxation in the state monopoly of foreign trade, which protected China's economy from capitalist competition, in order to remove bureaucratic obstacles to foreign trade has already begun to undermine the Chinese currency, the Renminbi. Previously all goods destined for foreign markets were bought by the state for an exchange rate of Rmb 2 to the US dollar. This entirely notional exchange rate had no effect on the price the central corporation got on the world market. Since relaxation the Rmb has been forced to respond to the actual relationship of currencies and its exchange rate has dropped to RMB 2.4 to the US dollar. This has the effect of cheapening imports to China and making foreign capital investment more lucrative.

The question of undermining the Chinese currency is also raised by the projected Super Highway to link Hong Kong with Canton via Shengzhen 'Enterprise Zone'. The first 48 km stretch of the



240km road is at an advanced planning stage, it is a central requirement for the modernisation of the Province of Guangdong and an increase in exports via Hong Kong from the Enterprise Zone. The Hong Kong-Japanese Consortium which will build it are now in a very strong negotiating position and are insisting that the tolls, by which they will be paid for the road, must be paid in Hong Kong dollars. This will have the effect of a tax on Chinese exports, adding still further to the pressure to cut wages for those producing the goods. The examples can be multiplied. Wherever free exchange between the world market and the Chinese economy is allowed, and such exchanges are increasing all the time, the pressure on China to toe the international capitalist line, allow unemployment, dismantle the gains that have been made since 1949, increases.

Yet this process of increasing contacts, increasing adaptation to market forces cannot go on for-

ever without forcing a qualitative break in the Chinese social system. Deng and company undoubtedly lead towards capitalism rather than socialism - but they are not capitalists. They are bureaucrats who, distrustful of the masses, are encouraging the capitalist, home grown or foreign, to take over bits of the Chinese economy. Those capitalists will not need the state protection of the bureaucrats for ever. Indeed the state will become their enemy and so will the bureaucrats who run it. Ultimately, Deng's policies are paving the way for a renewal of the civil wars which wracked China for the first half of the century. In those civil wars revolutionary workers will need to forge their own leadership in the form of a Trotskyist Party which, while it may defend the present state forms against counter revolution, will set as its goal the overthrow of the bureaucracy and the creation of a revolutionary Soviet China. ■

ARBITRATION - a rotten compromise

which they have no stomach to get themselves involved in.

NACODS leaders have no interest in challenging the NCB's right to manage the coal industry as they see fit. At the first round of talks with MacGregor NACODS Secretary McNestry started by slavishly declaring "We would always accept that the NCB have a right to manage our industry."

However they recognise, quite rightly in fact that the old reviews procedure for closures has collapsed and want to create another one as quickly as possible.

There are very good reasons why at long last this strike has sounded the death knell for the closure procedure. Until now the management would make a closure recommendation which would then be discussed at area joint NCB-NUM level. In the overwhelming majority of cases the NUM went along with the closure plans, however reluctantly, until the late 70s. Should failure to agree be recorded at area level the national NUM had recourse to appeal to the NCB or to take on the NCB management's right to dictate closures.

The 1981 struggle, the fight to save Lewis Merthyr, Snowdown, Polmaise and Monktonhall signalled that the procedure was beginning to break up because miners were beginning to resist management plans after years of successful NCB rundown. That Lewis Merthyr, Polmaise and Monktonhall closed was because the NUM did not deliver sufficient punch to stop the NCB. Now the miners have it in their power to stop the NCB butchering 20 pits and far more besides. And at the very heart of the dispute is the question of whether the NUM will recognise the NCB's "right to manage" as it was consciously and cold bloodedly asserted in MacGregor's attempt to close Corntonwood.

NO FIGHT

There should be no mistake about it. Coal is no longer worked at Lewis Merthyr or Polmaise not because there was no panel of "impartial arbitrators" who could have weighed the respective cases of the threatened workers and profit seeking management on the scales of some imaginary neutral justice. Those working class communities have been ravaged because the union did not fight to beat the bosses. That is the lesson of this year's heroic struggle. And it is one that McNestry and Sampey, and the entire weight of Trade Union officialdom they have played the Trojan Horse for, are desperately scared of. That is why they have wheeled out the proposal for third party arbitration to blunt the edge of the miners' fighting response.

1984 has shown all too dramatically that there is no significant middle ground between the interests of workers to defend their jobs and livelihoods and the interests of management set on administering

the Coal Board in the interests of profit for the capitalist class.

A proposal to refer closures to a "Third Party" will undermine the ability of the NUM to prepare and organise to thwart management's closure campaign. Such a body would either set a "respectable" seal of approval on closure plans or, should they offer any objection to a closure, cut against the mobilisation of the only force that could stop the NCB - the resistance of the NUM organised independently to wage war on behalf of mineworkers.

It is the NUM leaders preparedness to accept this scheme that must set off alarm bells in the minds of the best militant miners. Throughout the dispute Mick MacGahey in Scotland, Emlyn Williams and Kim Howells in South Wales, have played down effective picketing in their areas so as to win the support of their local communities. They have made honeymoon deals with their "local" "community" steel managers and police chiefs to that end. No wonder they can be lured by the siren of third party arbitration. Much of his life Peter Heathfield has helped invent vacuous "workers' control" schemes that were intended to gradually encroach on the frontiers of management's managerial rights.

MILITANTS BEWARE

It is no wonder then that Heathfield has talked of the merits of arbitration, has declared the NACODS proposal a workable alternative to the present review procedure and commented "I think on the form of words being knocked about over this weekend there is the possibility of ending this dispute." But those militants used to believing that Arthur will keep the backsliders in line should beware that Scargill has also welcomed the proposal as "a basis towards a negotiated settlement."

MacGregor however has not lost sight of what this dispute is about from the NCB's point of view. He is out to assert management's right to manage against the NUM and does not intend to give one inch on the question. "I will never, never compromise on the board's right to manage" he declared after one of the ACAS sessions. The NCB management want to come out of this strike having broken the ability of the NUM to challenge their authority.

They have said they will listen to local advisory committees but insist that the final decision on closures must rest with them. Pat Lowry will not challenge that on behalf of the miners.

The NUM have it in their power to challenge the NCB's right to manage on behalf of the profiteers and bankers and at the expense of the workers. They can do so by organising at every level in the union to assert workers' control - a workers' veto over every management decision that runs con-

The agreement reached between Beijing and London on the future of Hong Kong is a major setback to the interests of China and a long term threat to her future. On the face of it the British did not have a strong negotiating position. Even according to their own laws the greater part of the territory had to return to Chinese Sovereignty in 1997. There was never any real chance of hanging on to Hong Kong island itself just because it was the subject of an unlimited treaty signed after the Opium wars.

Nonetheless, it was China that made concessions. Hong Kong will remain in British hands until 1997. After that it will remain essentially as it is now except that Beijing will decide who is the Governor who will, in future, be called the Chief Executive.

Britain won these concessions by using the only card she did hold - the threat to destabilise Hong Kong and, thereby, destroy a central pillar of the future plans of the current Beijing leadership.

Hong Kong is an important physical factor in those plans. As a major port and manufacturing centre it is a line of communication through which flow much of China's foreign trade. More importantly however, it is a measure of Beijing's intentions towards capitalism at home and imperialism abroad. Any hint that Hong Kong capitalists were being set up to share the fate of those in Shanghai in the early fifties and credit facilities, research investment and materials shipments from all around the capitalist world could have been turned off.

Contrary to the interests of the miners. The unions historic struggle is really about nothing less than that. Rank and file militants must organise within and across the coalfields to insist that there is no other outcome to the dispute except the NCB's plans being completely defeated. We need a rank and file miners' movement to stop an executive cave-in.

The miners have fought long and hard. There must be no return to work without

- + An end to the closure programme - no to any deals which want to discuss such closure plans on an area basis once again
- + A clear commitment from the NUM that it will veto every closure plan of the NCB except on grounds of proven exhaustion of resources
- + A pay deal that ends the need to work overtime, scraps the productivity deal and cuts the working week
- + The scrapping of all charges against the miners and the quashing of all jail sentences and fines
- + As a condition of a return to work the NCB must guarantee that every striking miner will be guaranteed his old job back. There must be no victimisation of the militants. This is particularly important for the fighting minority of the Midlands who have held the line for the NUM against enormous odds. This guarantee must be wrung from the NCB before any return to work is authorised.

The secret talks with ACAS and the NCB have served to undermine the rank and file's ability to dictate the outcome of the dispute. A deal for third party arbitration would undermine the ability of the NUM to fight the bosses in the future. Militants must organise now to force the talks out into the open and ensure that any settlement is put to mass meetings of striking miners for ratification or rejection. ■

by Dave Hughes

The Hong Kong deal

Both sides in the negotiations were well aware of the real balance of forces. The Chinese Army could take Hong Kong away from Britain in less than twenty four hours but the impact on Britain would be relatively slight. The removal of Western credits and trade could damage China for decades. When all the smiles and toasts are done with the reality of the agreement will remain. Hong Kong is to remain as a base for the operations of finance capital in China and this will corrode the already shaky central pillars of the degenerate workers' state of China.

Britain's finance capitalists have revealed their attitude to the regime that nationalised much of 'their' assets in China. Recently Beijing raised the possibility of selling government bonds on Western markets in order to raise foreign currency. Interest was to be paid at a real 8.7%. London, the biggest market for such deals immediately made it clear that no such issue would be handled until China had 'settled' the question of bonds issued by the Imperial and Nationalist governments of China, debts that were repudiated after the 1949 revolution. The value of those bonds, the 'debt' that London wants repaid before more can be borrowed is US\$83.1 million - at 1939 prices!

MAIN POINTS OF THE AGREEMENT

Britain remains responsible for administration until 1997.

In 1997, Hong Kong will become a Special Administration Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China.

The SAR will be completely autonomous except in matters of foreign relations and defence policy.

The present (capitalist) laws, police force and judiciary system will remain.

The Chief Executive will be appointed by Beijing, after, 'elections or consultation'.

The SAR will form a separate customs entity, it will have a free market in all goods and financial services.

The SAR will not contribute to the mainland taxation system.

The SAR will retain the right to conclude its own economic agreements with foreign countries.

The Hong Kong dollar will remain the legal, and convertible currency.

The agreement itself will remain in force for fifty years.

LABOUR'S LIBERALISM

THE FORMATION OF the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) in February 1900 was an important step forward for the British working class. Yet in no sense whatsoever was the LRC socialist. The groups which came together to form the LRC the trade unions, the Independent Labour Party, the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation, were agreed only on the need for independent labour representation in Parliament.

This first step raised a whole series of questions about the nature of the LRC's activities. What sort of organisation was needed at local level to fight elections? Was this organisation to be limited to electioneering? What was to be the LRC's policies on a multitude of political questions? What goal did it have which distinguished it from the Liberal Party? Were LRC candidates to be non-socialist or were the affiliated organisations free to put up some socialist and some non-socialist LRC candidates? In short what was to be the LRC's programme, tactics and organisation?

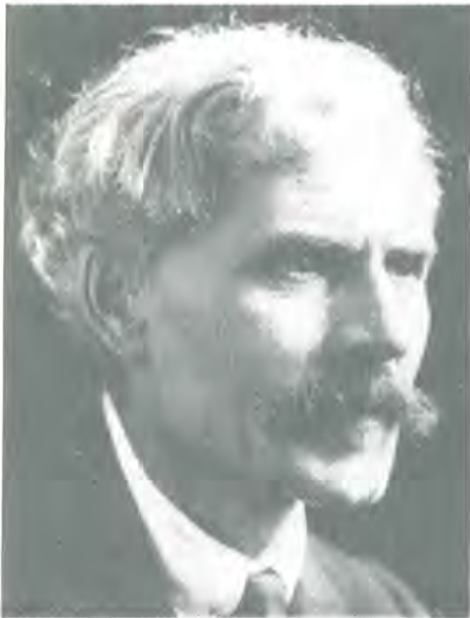
The Independent Labour Party led by Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald gave answers in line with their thoroughly reformist notion of "socialism". For them socialism was a series of reforms in the interests of the working class: the introduction of unemployment benefit, the eight hour day, free secondary schooling etc.

All of these were important measures to meet the crying needs of working class people. None of them however struck at the roots of the power, economic and political, of the British capitalist class. Indeed, given the latter's world-wide dominance, both bosses parties, the Liberals and the Tories, from time to time offered to include watered down versions of these reforms in their programmes. They did so to attract the votes of the skilled and semi-skilled male workers who now had the vote. They also aimed to impede the formation of a Marxist socialist party on the continental model which might lead the working class to an assault on capitalism.

FABIANISM

Both Tories and Liberals, in the 1890s developed "social reforming" wings. The Fabian Society intellectuals fell for this in a big way. Their strategy for socialism was to "permeate" both parties with reformist, state interventionist ideas. Thus at precisely the point when the LRC was formed they were ardently wooing a group of the leaders of the Liberal Party: the so-called Liberal Imperialists - to form a new party based on "National Efficiency".

Whilst Haldane and MacDonald were building up the LRC the Webbs had little time for the new organisation which they saw as a bunch of agitators and dreamers playing with class envy. They preferred experienced politicians. The Webbs alternative to the LRC was...a dining club! Named the Co-Efficients Club its purpose was to discuss "The Aims, Policy and Methods of Imperial Efficiency at Home and Abroad." Luminaries included Sir Edward Grey, later Liberal foreign minister and overtures were made to Joseph Chamberlain and the "social-imperialist" Tories.



Ramsay MacDonald

Hardie and MacDonald's idea of socialism was fundamentally the same as that of the Webbs, but their methods differed. Hardie retained throughout his life an emotional hatred of the rich and what they did to working people and their families. He deeply distrusted the Liberal and Tory manufacturers. He had an instinctive relationship to ordinary workers that the snobbish Webbs and the social climber MacDonald lacked completely. But his semi-religious soft heartedness and soft-headedness made him a natural opportunist. He blithely sacrificed fundamental working class interests for temporary, particularly parliamentary, advantages. Thus when the LRC was founded he wrote to John Morley, the leading Liberal opponent of the Boer War offering him the leadership of the LRC.

Herein lay his fundamental difference with the Webbs. Their sympathies lay with the Imperialist wing of the Liberals (and the Tories). Hardie was drawn, by the Boer War towards the pacifist wing of Liberalism. Yet capitulation to, or collusion with either threatened "Labour Independence" with an early demise.

Hardie and MacDonald unlike the Webbs, sincerely wanted independent Labour Representation. They saw that MPs, even working class and trade union

ones, who were tied to the Liberal Party repeatedly sold out to the latter. The problem was that their gradualist view of piecemeal social reforms somehow piling up till Britain was socialist had immediate tactical and organisational consequences. If practical reforms in the here and now were all that mattered then these could be achieved by a pressure group of Labour MPs. A "socialist government" was not really practical or even necessary. Socialist propaganda, preaching socialism was a task for the ILP anyway. Since many radical Liberals, like Lloyd George, also advocated similar reforms why not form an alliance with them and get their help to elect a few more Labour members of Parliament. Too much talk about socialism and any identification of this with class war and class struggle might scare them off.

MORAL SOCIALISM

Ramsay MacDonald was the most consistent in following through this line, both in the practical opportunism of his deals with the Liberals and his attempt to keep the LRC and then the Labour Party "socialistic but not socialist". He also popularised and theorised this line in a series of tracts and books. His hostility to the actual existing class struggle and his attack on Marxism as its theoretical and programmatic expression was lifelong. He wrote: "The best expression of class war is Trade Unionism. It concerns itself with no opposition except that between capital and Labour no union of interests except the interests of wage earning, no field of activity wider than the factory. It leads nowhere because it has no ideal goal; its only results can be the bondage of one side or the other".

Against this MacDonald posed the "ideals of moral citizenship" and "conscience" as the real motive force for social change.

Thus according to MacDonald the working class is faced not with the task of winning political power, nor is this power essential to building socialism. Socialism is with us now and just has to be helped to completion: "When we think systematically of the scattered fragments of reform promised by the political parties, we see that they are but the foreshadowing of Socialism; when the tendencies begun by scores of experiments - factory laws, public health laws, municipalisation - are followed out, joined together and systematised, Socialism is the result. And the political movement which is to express and ultimately satisfy, this need for the organic unity of Society, must be a movement of the whole of society and not one of its sections - the working class." (All quotes from *Socialism and Society*, 1905).

The very need for independent Labour representation was seen by MacDonald as an unfortunate necessity caused by the hard-heartedness and class bias of the Liberals. They had rejected people like himself and labour in general in contradiction to their own ideals. Thus labour had to organise to press its claims. But as soon as the ruling classes realised the force and potential danger to themselves of this workers' movement, their attitude to the Ramsay MacDonald at its head changed. And when the disdain and snobbery towards him ceased, or rather was carefully hidden, Ramsay was mightily impressed.

LIBERAL PRESSURE

The LRC faced another obstacle in the grossly undemocratic constitution and electoral system. Even after the 1884 electoral reforms only 28% of all adults had the vote. Women were without the vote altogether but 44% of males over 21 were also disenfranchised. The spread of constituencies was grossly unfair to the industrial cities. It cost a large sum of money to fight an election and MPs received no salary. Millions upon millions of the most exploited and oppressed working class people had no vote. The LRC, the unions and the socialist parties had two alternatives. They could rouse the working classes to struggle for democratic rights, utilising their trade union organisation. Or they could seek to win a few constituencies by striking sweetheart deals with the Liberals. The latter would give their votes in certain agreed constituencies to the Labour candidate and in return the unions would use their influence to back Liberals in all the rest.

The union leaders and the opportunist ILP chose the latter alternative. For this reason the great trade union movements of the pre-war period and the great Suffragette movement took place entirely aside from the political party of the working class. The price of the electoral deals with the Liberals was a constant pressure against socialist LRC and Labour candidates since Liberals would be unlikely to vote for them. Moreover the deal tied workers to the Liberals in all but a handful of constituencies.

The new party started life inauspiciously. No sooner had the LRC been formed than it had to fight the 1900 "Khaki Election" held at the height of the Boer War jingoistic hysteria. The LRC won only two seats, Keir Hardie at Merthyr and Richard Bell at Derby. On entering the Commons, Bell rapidly rejoined the Liberals leaving Hardie as the sole Labour representative. If the trade union leaders and the ILP had prevailed Labour might



Victor Grayson: too socialist by half

have collapsed into Liberalism almost in its infancy. But the class struggle itself took a hand. The vicious anti-working class judges we all know so well gave the LRC a new lease of life.

The railwaymen's union was, in the Taff Vale Case (1901) made liable for damages to the employer's business resulting from the actions of their members. Their funds were opened up to judicial plunder. Led by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants unions previously hostile to the LRC flocked to join it. Whereas at formation there were only some 250,000 trade unionists affiliated to the LRC, by 1903 this had risen to nearly 1 million. In the words of the Labour historian GDH Cole "The Taff Vale Case created the Labour Party."

Paradoxically though, this influx of trade unionists threatened to exacerbate the internal weaknesses of the LRC. The LRC was not a centralised organisation with a well defined policy, it was no more than the sum of its affiliated societies. The characteristic local organ of the LRC

THE LABOUR LEFT were well-pleased with the 1984 Conference. Ernie Roberts MP said it was "The most class conscious conference I've ever been at." Certainly, the first day of the conference with its near unanimous backing for the NUM saw the left take the initiative again after last year's drubbing by the right-wing.

This shift in the left's fortunes was due to the radicalisation of the Party's base during the miners' strike. Yet despite forcing Kinnock and Hattersley to sit tight-lipped and glum throughout the Monday, the left around Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner displayed all their fatal flaws which once more allowed Kinnock, despite his treacherous record over the strike, to use the rest of conference to reassert his hold on the Party.

Kinnock went to Blackpool having failed to persuade the NUM leadership to withdraw or tone down their resolution attacking 'organised state violence' against pickets. Right-wingers on the NEC pressured Kinnock to vote against the resolution at the NEC and conference.

But this would have entailed an open breach with the NUM, perhaps a majority of the affiliated unions and the near unanimously supportive Constituency Labour Parties. Kinnock would have faced a humiliating defeat. He and Hattersley decided to ride out the storm in silence.

Against their wishes, conference also passed a resolution which aimed to commit a Labour government not to use police in industrial disputes. Later in the week they had to sit on their hands whilst conference pledged support to any councils, "forced to break the law as a result of the Tory government policies."

Most concrete of Kinnock's defeats was his failure to deliver the union vote he promised the right in the PLP, thus securing "one person, one vote" in the re-selection of MPs. This constitutional amendment was narrowly lost 3½ million to 3 million as the union bureaucracy on the left and centre refused to sacrifice part of their unions' traditional hold in the Party to Kinnock's image building. They feared that the "Evans proposal" would deprive them of any effective voice in the selection of an MP.

RADICALISATION

Many rightly wanted to avoid a return to the situation where once selected MPs could thumb their nose to the unions as well as their constituents. The fact of the matter was that Kinnock was forced to swallow these defeats because the seven-month miners' strike has significantly radicalised the constituency parties and the base of the trade unions. It is the miners who have stalled the right-wing's advance.

Yet it is also true that the Bennite left failed to make significant advance itself on previous conferences. The resolutions on defence, and local councils were only restatements of existing positions. No constitutional democratic reforms were achieved and resolutions on black sections and troops out of Ireland were heavily defeated.

The real weakness of the left around Benn and

was the trades council. Individual membership was only possible through membership of an affiliated body such as the ILP. In effect the LRC was a group of loosely related and competing bodies. An added problem was that the trade union leaders wished to promote electoral candidates which represented their own sectional interests, rather than the interests of Labour as a whole. Necessarily this threatened to wreck the whole basis of the LRC. Moreover the trade union leaders, in most instances Liberal Party members, found even the milk and water "socialism" of the ILP unpalatable and wished to reduce to a minimum its influence within the LRC.

They need hardly have worried. The ILP leaders repeatedly boycotted their own "socialism" when it came to elections. The ILP's willingness to do this to its programme in the pursuit of parliamentary office showed the accuracy of Lenin's characterisation of the ILP as "the opportunists of the so-called Independent (of Socialism) but dependent on the Liberal) Labour Party". In effect

Left lets Kinnock off the hook

Skinner - one shared fully by Arthur Scargill and the NUM delegation - was the failure to call Kinnock fully to account for his and the PLP's lack of support for the miners. The Labour Party conference is the only place where the rank and file members and the affiliated unions can exert real pressure on the parliamentary leaders. Once this week of unpleasantness is over the PLP can go on blithely taking its own line on the strike. This has been one of neutral arbiters - defending the nation's interests. Condemning "all violence" and intransigence on both sides.

Yet it was obvious before the conference that the lefts would not challenge Kinnock's disgusting record. The reason - unity! In the name of unity they left Kinnock and Hattersley free to carry on as before. On the eve of Blackpool, Tony Benn said, "Nothing would give greater pleasure to the government than if they thought we were falling out among ourselves as to how individuals have handled the matter."

But Kinnock is not just an individual who has done less than he should. He is the leader of the Labour Party. He has not been on a miners' demonstration, he has not been near a picket line. And as Dai Davies of the South Wales NUM said, avoiding 'Parliamentary language', "The view Neil Kinnock puts over is that of the Tory Press and police." (Labour Briefing October 84)

If this is what Neil Kinnock does when he is the leader of the Opposition what would he do as Prime Minister.

Not one of Benn's "Trotskyist supporters" have criticised his softness or silence on Kinnock's record. Indeed not one of the Militant or Socialist Organiser supporters who spoke at Brighton, directly named and indicted Kinnock for his record. Unity tied their tongues too. Not the unity of action behind the miners. The unity needed to puff up Neil Kinnock as an electorally marketable commodity to the bosses' press. In fact these two types of unity are incompatible. The right were not tongue tied. Hammond spoke out for the Tories and David Basnett of the GMBATU did Kinnock's job for him delivering a personal rebuke

YEARS

Part two of a
History of the Labour Party

by Jon Lewis and Dave Stacking

this meant that the LRC itself was virtually indistinguishable from the Liberal Party in its policies. Electorally this class collaborationism paid certain dividends. With the great Liberal landslide of 1906, the newly named Labour Party took 5.9% of the vote and 29 seats.

The Labour Party had one real success in the new parliament, the Trades Disputes Act of 1906. The Liberals tried a much weaker bill reversing in part the Taff Vale Judgement. The unions stood their ground demanding full legal immunity of unions from civil prosecution during an industrial dispute. The Liberals caved in and thus the fundamental basis for trade union rights was established until Thatcher's anti-union laws abolished them. After this the Labour Party tamely followed in the wake of Liberals own reforms. These were at first substantial. Measures like the introduction of non-contributory old-age pensions took the wind out of Labour's sails. Their own perspectives did not go beyond those of the social Liberals.

For the Liberals the purpose of the reforms was quite clear. As Churchill told the *Daily Mail* in 1909: "With a 'stake in the country' in the form of insurance against evil days the workers will pay no attention to the vague promises of revolutionary socialism." The Labour Party neither warned the working class of the reasons for the Liberal reforms nor pressed on to more radical demands. On the contrary, the Labour Party served as a tame adjunct to the Liberal administration, voting with it on all major policy issues. With the Osborne Case of 1909 (which ruled that it was illegal for unions to use their funds to support and maintain Labour MPs) the Parliamentary Labour Party was drawn to an even greater degree of dependence on the Liberal Party. The threat of no salaries was enough to make sure that the PLP did nothing to antagonise its Liberal masters.

Closely related to the opportunism of the Labour Party's tactics was its undemocratic constitution particularly on the issue of the MP's accountability to the Party as a whole.

As early as the 1907 Congress issues which are still central today erupted. A resolution attempted attempted to put the parliamentary party under the

discipline and control of the conference. Hardie and Arthur Henderson rejected this totally. Conference decisions were "opinions only". The method and time for implementing them, in fact whether to implement them, was the task of the MPs alone. The constitutional attempt at democratic control of the House of Commons heroes was lost by 642,000 to 252,000. Worse on the issue of whether the PLP should go all out for the total enfranchisement of women or support a restricted suffrage Liberal bill, Hardie was defeated. Hardie rushed to the rostrum to declare, "if the motion they had carried was intended to limit the action of the Party in the House of Commons, he should have seriously to consider whether he could remain a Member of the Parliamentary Party." (Keir Hardie KO Morgan) Conference caved in. Thus from the outset the MPs faced down democracy within the Party setting a precedent that has never been decisively reversed.

Although the two elections in 1910 saw the Labour Party increase its seats to 42, it was at the expense of further strengthening explicit Liberal ideas inside the Labour Party. The increase in seats was mainly due to the transfer of the miners' MPs who had previously sat as Lib-Labs and who continued to think and act as Lib-Labs.

SECTARIANISM

While the leaders of the ILP and Labour Party were increasingly to be found in the pockets of the Liberal Party, socialism was making more headway amongst the working class. Symptomatic of this was the success of Victor Grayson at the Colne Valley by-election in 1907. Grayson who was refused the backing of his party the ILP, as too socialist, fought the seat as an independent socialist and won a resounding victory over a Liberal and a Tariff reformer.

Both the SDF and ILP underwent significant spurts of growth. The SDF claimed 86 new branches in the years 1905-6. The growth of socialism manifested itself in other ways too. Working class students at Ruskin College, Oxford, dissatisfied

with the bourgeois economics taught there, wanted to be taught Marxism instead. This led to an open break with the authorities, and the students left to form the Plebs League in 1909. Marxist educational efforts were also being made by the Socialist Labour Party, an offshoot from the SDF which had left the latter party because of its indifference to trade union struggle.

Unfortunately, when it came to the Labour Party, the SLP, despite its willingness to be involved in industrial action, proved to be as sectarian as the SDF itself. Consequently the two major marxist organisations in Britain were unable to give a direction to the socialist upsurge in the first decade of the Twentieth Century. The SDF opposed the affiliation of the Labour Party to the International Socialist Bureau in 1908 because the Labour Party did not recognise the principle of class war. Lenin himself recognised that the Labour Party was not a "Socialist Labour Party" but to disqualify the Labour Party from the International would put the rank and file of the Labour Party outside the influence of the International. Lenin held that affiliation "would compel hundreds of

thousands of English workers, who undoubtedly respect the decisions of the International, but who have not yet quite become socialists, once again to think over the question as to why they are regarded as having taken only the first step, and to think over what should be the next step along this road."

This tactic was quite beyond the reach of the SDF. Despite the growth of socialist and indeed Marxist ideas on a wide scale the great upsurge of working class militancy in the years 1909-14 did not lead to the creation of a mass revolutionary party.

LABOUR ROADBLOCK

The Labour Party and its leaders condemned and polemicised against the syndicalist trade union fighters like Tom Mann who were in the forefront of the mass strikes, from a purely parliamentary and reformist perspective. The SDF, at least as a party, stood aside. Philip Snowden the ILP opportunist and H.M. Hyndman the "orthodox Marxist" both condemned the industrial militancy as a diversion from "politics". Arthur Henderson of the PLP put forward a motion in the Commons which proposed that strikes were to be declared illegal unless 30 days advance notice was given.

Yet it was because of the very class collaborationist policies of the Labour Party and the trade union leaders that the Great Unrest took the form it did. Politics, construed by the militants as parliamentary politics, were rejected but no alternative political strategy was fully developed. Above all the "Great Unrest" was an explosion of militancy at the rank and file level. Many workers were becoming clearer about whose interests the Labour Party really upheld. Signalling this disenchantment, prominent trade union militant Ben Tillett had written a pamphlet entitled *Is the Parliamentary Labour Party a Failure?*

Labour's attitude to the strikes of 1906-14 was a prelude to an even greater betrayal of the working class. In 1914, along with most other parties of the Second International, the party dutifully placed itself at the service of the warmongers. In place of international solidarity came shameful chauvinism. Labour gave its blessing to the worst slaughter the world had hitherto witnessed - slaughter in the pursuit of profit. In the next article in the series we will deal with the role of Labour in the First World War. □



Tom Mann and Keir Hardie



Right and left - false unity

to Scargill over miners' resistance to police violence.

The problem the lefts face is that they never fight to win. In the 1979 to 1981 period they had their enemy on the ground. The defection of the Gang of Four, the opinion poll hysteria and the threats of bigger defections from the PLP scared them out of their wits. It scared them out of pushing decisively for the leadership. Foot and now Kinnock are a product of their cowardice. Both were fake left fronts for the continued behind the scenes control by the old Healey gang. At one conference (1982) Kinnock was jeered at as Judas, for not voting for Benn for deputy leader. At the next he was cheered as the only saviour who could put Labour back into Number Ten.

The 'honeymoon' period of Kinnock's relation with the rank and file activists was put under severe strain as soon as the miners' strike erupted. The breach between them has opened steadily with each attack on 'NUM violence' or each time he has echoed NCB calls for a national ballot. And yet despite all this the left around Benn refused to speak the truth at the conference.

LEFT'S WEAKNESS

Precisely because of that Kinnock and Hattersley regained the initiative after Monday's reverses. In his leadership speech on Tuesday Kinnock again "condemned the violence of the stone-throwers and battering-ram carriers." With the NUM leadership in his sights Kinnock berated, "We cannot scorn legality because it does not suit us at present."

In the aftermath of the conference vote to prevent the use of police in industrial disputes, he was confident enough of his position to arrogantly proclaim that it would never see the light of day as a Manifesto commitment and that he will press on with the reselection issue. Finally, the lefts fortune was undermined by their inability to shift the composition of the NEC in their favour. The elections returned a comfortable 17:12 majority for Kinnock and his supporters.

The characteristic weakness of left reformists is that, despite their differences with and criticisms of the right in the Party, they are always ready in the name of 'unity' to remain a loyal and utterly ineffective opposition. Thousands of striking miners have perceived a difference between Kinnock and Hattersley on one side and Skinner and Benn on the other. Skinner, for example, appeared on over 100 platforms for the NUM so far in this strike. He has spoken up for the NUM in Parliament. But he has not sought to condemn the Shadow cabinet and the PLP's whole handling of the dispute and to replace that policy with his own.

Skinner and Benn ought to have been pressed into challenging Kinnock and Hattersley for leadership in the conference. Even now, Benn and the left's electoral platform for the Shadow cabinet elections should be on the basis of an exposure of Kinnock's record during the strike, and a complete change of PLP activity, bringing it into line with conference's verbal support.

Why do the Labour lefts always back off at the crucial moment. Basically because they share the same fundamental superstition as Neil Kinnock - Parliament and legality. OK Benn believes Parliament should be a lot more democratic than it is and he believes it may be right to disobey the law as a moral protest but he does not see any alternative to electing Labour Governments and keeping within the path of strict legality. If he were Leader he would be under the same pressures as Kinnock and would ultimately respond in the same way. The Tories know this weakness well and love to cruelly exploit it at any decisive point in the class struggle.

The Tory cabinet on the eve of conference sanctioned William Whitelaw to ask Kinnock and Kaufmann to answer "one simple question - are they prepared to stand up for parliamentary democracy, and to condemn the violence, intimidation and thuggery which threaten it?"

Desperate to restore the Labour Party as a trustworthy holder of government office in the eyes of the City, CBI and Fleet Street, Kinnock dutifully answered "Yes!" As he lectured the delegates,

"socialism without the ballot box would never secure the understanding of the British people.... democracy as the first premise of Labour Party's socialism, was a matter of principle and not of convenience"

Thus says Kinnock we must tailor and subordinate all working class struggles to the winning of elections and the rule of law. This absolute fidelity is not reciprocated by the class enemy.

Police Federation Chief Leslie Curtis, disgruntled at the attacks on the police from conference delegates, said what many of his business friends think and what all of his 120,000 members are encouraged to believe, namely, the police may well refuse to serve under a democratically elected Labour government if it sought to curb police powers! How forthright!

If this is how the police respond to a bit of criticism what would they do if faced with a Labour government which set out to take the millionaires' companies, banks and media away from them! What would the Army chiefs do? What protection would democracy and legality be then? The answer of course is none whatsoever. If Benn believes they would be naive. Healey and Kinnock are not. They just have no intention whatsoever of challenging the fundamental interests of the bosses. Socialism? Clause Four? Devices to win active support from the more militant sections of the labour movement, that's all.

Curtis' comments are not one man's prejudice. They reflect the reality of social and political power under capitalism. The boss class neither fears nor worships Parliament. Why should it? Through its control of wealth and fashioning of the system over years it can heavily influence the composition of Parliament. Geographical constituencies which mix social classes together, which under-represent the urban centres, give an advantage to the wealthy suburban and rural areas.

Three rich Tories control 70% of the newspapers which daily extoll the virtues of Thatcher. Eight out of nine dailies in 1983 told us to vote Tory. Thatcher herself has purged the BBC over the last 5 years. Once in office with no accountability, governments are free to break promises for the next 5 years.

PARLIAMENTARIANISM

Yet even this isn't the main case against the road to socialism as lying through Westminster. Ever since the 19th Century when more and more workers began to receive the vote, the bourgeoisie have constructed a constitution which takes real political power out of the hands of Parliament and into those of the Cabinet, the Civil Service, the police and, of course, the judiciary. It is the Prime Ministers' powers in these areas that allows Thatcher to lie endlessly about the *Belgrano* sinking, or to banish trade unions from GCHQ.

Of course, should Parliament prove troublesome to the bourgeoisie then its real emptiness can be demonstrated by depriving it of even its present limited powers. The army swears its oath of allegiance to the Queen not to Parliament. The

unelected House of Lords can delay or derail Common's legislation. The Queen can dissolve Parliament at will and through the Privy Council issue "orders in council" that have the force of law.

All this can be done in the name of the law. To preach subservience to it now throws striking miners onto the mercy of unelected Tory judges. It is to urge surrender to Thatcher and MacGregor. Kinnock's 'first premise' of socialism thus means in fact the impossibility of socialism. Or rather it means socialism by kind permission of the bosses. Socialism by appointment to her Majesty the Queen. What sort of socialism that is we have seen often enough.

To Whitelaw's arrogant questioning and Kinnock's pleading we can should answer "No, we know Parliament to be a powerless talking shop, a disguise for your class' economic and military rule!" The supposed need to win power through Parliament is being used by Kinnock to cripple the miners' resistance to Thatcher. Yet during the seven month strike it has been independent working class self-organisation that have proved resilient.

WORKERS POWER

In the first place, the strike committees and welfare organisations built around the pits and in the mining communities. In the second place, in the hundreds of support committees that have drawn in other trade unionists and activists to supportive action. It is they not Parliament that have been able to counter media and government lies; it is they which have organised resistance to police occupation and harassment.

Many of these mining areas, Yorkshire, for example, have Labour in power in their local Parliament, the councils. They have proven powerless or unwilling to resist. The miners and their allies in the Labour movement have demonstrated that self-organisation in the workplace and community is far more resilient, responsive and democratic than anything on offer from Labour Parliaments.

These organisations, generalised throughout the whole working class and magnified in strength in a hundred fold, can be the revolutionary working class alternative to their Parliament.

But to do this means to win a majority of the most active fighters - in the NUM and in the other unions - to precisely this course. To do this means breaking from the crippling, paralyzing worship of Parliament and legality. This is what Benn and the left will not do. This is what those who uncritically support Benn and tail his 'movement' in the Labour Party will not do either. But the task must be done if the courage and self sacrifice of the miners and other sections of the working class is to find a political expression worthy of them. Only when this happens will the road to power be a solid one millions can tread. Until then Kinnock's promise of power will be a castle in the air. The miners should not trade an inch of ground of the present battlefield for it. ■

by Keith Hassell

WHO MADE NEIL KINNOCK?

"The Making of Neil Kinnock" by Robert Harris, reporter for BBC's Newsnight, sets out to explain in the author's words the "spectacular rise" of Neil Kinnock. MP for a safe Welsh constituency at the age of 28 years, youngest ever leader of the Labour Party at 41, Kinnock's career is certainly worth examination, particularly for those who set their sights on transforming the Labour Party into an instrument for achieving socialism.

Harris documents Kinnock's impeccable credentials as a Labour Party militant. From a solidly Labour mining family - a childhood worshiper of Nye Bevan his local MP he went on through his years at university and as a WEA lecturer to become a prominent left-wing constituency activist. An opponent of the Wilson government's anti-union plans, an anti-apartheid and CND campaigner he actually considered leaving the Labour Party in 1968. Unlike many of his generation however he was not tempted to join any revolutionary group. He claims to have toyed with working towards a new "democratic socialist party" based on the trade unions. Thus the most that the youthful Kinnock contemplated was building a duplicate of the party of Wilson, Michael Stewart and Denis Healey but minus the record of stabbing the seamstress in the back, backing US in Vietnam and trying to force through "In Place of Strife" to shackle the unions. However the phase of youthful hot-headedness soon passed, in favour of a driving ambition to get into parliament. Neil struck lucky. In January 1969 Harold Finch MP for Bedwely announced that he would not be standing at the next election. After a fast and furious campaign, against the NUM's nominee for the seat Kinnock narrowly won it. In 1970 he found himself in the House of Commons. His biography records an early disappointment with the mother of Parliaments, a feeling that he could be doing more useful work elsewhere. Moreover during the next few years he became a vociferous defender of the mass struggles against the Tories that erupted.

Thus in 1972 he defended the NUM mass pickets in a way that contrasted sharply with today's denunciations of violence. In 1972 he faced the baying Tories calling for condemnations of violence with the words, "What would be the instinct of any red-blooded man in this house, having put his family to all that inconvenience and near-misery, if he saw someone riding rough-shod over his picket line. I know what my reaction would be. In fact I should be worried if it were not the case" (p 69). But Kinnock's left reputation was made during the Wilson/Callaghan government of 1974-79. Like all the left Kinnock hailed the 1974 legislative programme as a "blueprint for democratic socialism". Yet he was soon to find himself in vocal opposition, as Callaghan scuttled the 'left' manifesto and proceeded to introduce enormous cuts in social services and harsh wage controls. A fall in the value of the pound sterling from \$2.20 to \$2.02 produced near panic in the government. The Labour Cabinet were terrified that they were losing the "confidence" of the City. They proceeded to agree to cuts in public expenditure totalling £3,600 million.

Thirty seven Labour MPs including Kinnock abstained resulting in the defeat of the motion. Later in the year a further fall in sterling led to an appeal to the International Monetary Fund and agreement on their insistence on tax increases and a further £2,500 million cut. By the following spring Kinnock was one of the government's most trenchant back bench critics. "They treat the City of London as if it were some kind of winnable Tory marginal constituency..." he declared on a debate on public expenditure.

The left vote against the cuts was however a demonstration. They never threatened the existence of the government by holding out and refusing to vote for cuts in any way or even to give a vote of confidence over the cuts. Whereas the right of the PLP has frequently blackmailed Labour governments in this manner the left are always terrified of the fall of the government. They never dreamed of saying to the Right "On your head be it. If you put the government's existence on the line over a package of variously anti-working class measures then you are the ones opening the gates to the Tories. We will expose you before the working class and fight to get you out of your positions of leadership, out of your constituency." Instead they obeyed the PLP's discipline under protest. Even when this conflicted with Labour conference and even TUC decisions.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Yet Kinnock's actions in this were considerably better than Tony Benn's. Benn through all this stayed in the cabinet tied by "collective responsibility" to support every measure of the government. A fact made much of by Kinnock in future clashes with the "Bennite left". Kinnock in contrast refused offers to become a junior minister and rapidly gained support in the left of the Party. By 1978 he was elected onto the NEC along with Dennis Skinner. In the "Winter of Discontent" of 1979 Kinnock declared to his local party the reasons for his opposition in the following terms, "Such is the position now that we have a government totally operating Tory policies. We have a Prime Minister advocating that people cross picket lines". Neil Kinnock reminded delegates that the only reason "we've come so far, that children stay on at school after the age of 9, is because we've had picket lines..." (Harris p117)

The defeat of Labour in the 1979 election and the victory of Margaret Thatcher marked a turning



point in Kinnock's career. Whilst Tony Benn moved to distance himself from the 74-79 government and its record, Kinnock accepted a post in the Shadow cabinet as Education spokesman. For Callaghan, under heavy attack from both the Trade Unions and the Party for his government's record and for leading the Labour Party to disaster at the polls, Kinnock was an important asset - trusted by unions and CLPs alike.

A founder member of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy before the 1979 conference, Kinnock's NEC vote was crucial in getting a decision on Party control of the Manifesto deferred for a year. *Tribune* was later to see Kinnock's changing stance as a result of following "that path well worn by ambitious Labour politicians", flirting with the left to reach the leadership and then kicking them in the teeth. In exasperation they commented, "Kinnock's record defied rational analysis." (*Tribune* 2.9.83)

SHAPE EVENTS

A well worn path it may be but it does not defy "rational analysis". Kinnock was certainly ambitious and was determined to gain a position where he could shape events - "But it was no good winging on about that unless I was prepared to try and influence affairs." (Kinnock to Harris p125) It was clear enough that Neil thought he was just the man to shape affairs and influence things. It was not at all clear what cause this influence would be at the service of or in which direction he would change things. In the worst Labour tradition he was a whole lot clearer on what means must exclusively be used to win political change, parliamentary and legal peaceful protest. Kinnock might occasionally make reference to the gains made by industrial action, in the dim and distant past or its justification in Chile and South Africa, but today in Britain "the ballot box is the only way to change governments". If that is indeed the case then the influence that really counts is to be found in the PLP, the Shadow cabinet and the post of Labour's leader. Kinnock set out to win that influence for himself. Of course to get there "compromises" were necessary. So his causes and slogans of yesterday were shrugged off like so much unwanted baggage. By February 1980 he was zealously defending the freedom of future Labour ministers from unrealistic commitments like the restoration of all education cuts made by the Tories.

Following Benn's decision to stand against Dennis Healey for the deputy leadership, Kinnock launched a furious attack on him. He denounced Benn's promises to introduce three major pieces of legislation within the first month of office which would "extend common ownership", "create a 1000 peers" to abolish the House of Lords and withdraw from the EEC "in a matter of weeks". Kinnock declared he was "offering a fantasy that insults adult intelligence". He described Benn's deputy leadership manifesto commitment to "restore full employment during the lifetime of the next Labour government" as having a "reckless simplicity".

From the point of view of a future member of a 'normal' Labour government these promises and others were certainly "reckless". But then normal Labour governments have invariably turned on the working class in office. Indeed in a situation of mass unemployment and economic crisis most of these promises could only be fulfilled if a government had the enthusiastic support of and relied on a mobilised working class, on mass workers' organisations capable of challenging the power of bosses and bankers who would fight viciously to strangle any attempt to alleviate the suffering of the working class at their expense.

But this meant the road of the forbidden "extra parliamentary" action, so for Kinnock the unemployed would just have to wait - wait till the next election, wait till Labour gets the economy right and provide the jobs. From the point of view of British reformism with its fetishising of legality, of parliamentary electioneering, municipal reforms and unpolitical trade unionism Benn's proposals are dangerous. Dangerous because they threaten to destabilise the political status quo within the working class movement, and the collaboration between that movement and the ruling class. Although Benn's programme does not go beyond a reformist perspective it does do so in a situation where Britain's bosses cannot contemplate such concessions. Kinnock and Co know well that the British ruling class would soon trample on their own democracy and legality as soon as their vital interests were challenged. Kinnock's response, "Don't challenge it!"

REFORMISM'S DILEMMA

The problem as Benn sees it, is that this means no serious or attractive programme of reforms, no perspective of social transformation can be offered. Thus Labour (and parliamentary democracy itself) might lose out to revolutionary forces. Kinnock and Benn represent the dilemma of British reformism - its twin poles.

Kinnock has a particular hatred for Arthur Scargill because to him he represents the threat of the class struggle bursting the barriers between trade union and political struggle. His recent attacks are not new.

When Scargill attacked those openly criticising Tony Benn and therefore tacitly supporting Healey as sabotaging "the principles of socialism", Kinnock denounced him for "strutting demagoguery". And in a clash on television after Benn's defeat, he declared, "If anybody lost him that deputy leadership election yesterday it was you by the attitudes you expose them. We're not having them in the Labour Party mate. We want to beat the Tories." (Harris p164)

Shortly after Kinnock put his words into action voting at a crucial NEC to withhold endorsement from Bermondsey candidate Peter Tatchell on the basis for his support for "extra parliamentary" action, and for the setting up of a fresh inquiry into Militant which was to lead to the expulsion of 5 of its leaders. Kinnock had already voted to keep

Tariq Ali out of the Labour Party because of his claimed Marxist views. In the midst of a carefully orchestrated gay-baiting campaign by the yellow press and media against Tatchell, Kinnock made it clear where he stood. He told the *Sunday Times* that he considered himself "on the balls wing of the Party", while the *Express* quoted him as saying that although he was against witch hunts he did not mistake "bloody witches for fairies".

Kinnock and his supporters' abstention in the Deputy leadership election between Benn and Healey, provoked enormous hostility from the 'left' of the Party. At the 1981 conference *Tribune* meeting he was reviled as a traitor and greeted with shouts of "Judas". There was even a challenge from the left in his own constituency when he faced the reselection process. Yet within two years Neil Kinnock was able to triumph in the Labour leadership election, receiving an overwhelming 71.3% of the votes in the electoral system fought for by the left. How was it given all the "major victories" claimed by the Bennite left and their centrist hangers on around *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser*, *Labour Briefing* etc, in the 1978-81 period, that a traditional Foot type figure could once again triumph in the Party? And not only triumph but render the left in the Party more helpless and quiescent than it has been for years?

Robert Harris is unable to find the reasons for this dramatic reversal in Kinnock's fortune. Yet they are not hard to find. Benn's secret deal for instance, struck with the Labour Party leadership at Bishops Cleeve does not receive a mention. And yet in reality Neil Kinnock was "made" by the actions of the Bennite left. When Callaghan decided to resign, after the 1980 Blackpool conference voted to elect the Party leader but before the electoral machinery was in place, he was seeking to pre-empt this election and allow the Parliamentary Labour Party to determine the leadership.

The "left" in fact allowed this to happen. Foot the extinct volcano of the Tribune left who had been a stalwart defender of Callaghan's leadership was allowed to be the candidate of the "left". Benn not only refused to stand in the PLP election but refused to stand against Foot at the 1981 special conference even when Foot challenged him to do so. "I supported Foot as leader, and therefore there was no question of standing against him" (Benn quoted in Harris p152)

The sixty-seven year old Foot was clearly a caretaker, patron to the up and coming Neil Kinnock. The pair worked hand in hand to preserve unity with the right by bashing the "hard", and not so hard, left. After Benn lost the deputy leadership to Dennis Healey in 1981 by a hair's breadth, he declared to his supporters "This is only the beginning not in any sense the end of our campaign". But it was the end. A few short months later, in the face of disastrous by-election results, the truce of Bishop's Cleeve was made. Both Foot and Healey's leadership were unchallenged at the 1982 Party conference. The left was in full retreat before a confident right. The "register" designed to facilitate a purge of Militant and other "entrant" groups was passed overwhelmingly. The right was strengthened in the NEC trade union section and despite being a target for removal by the "hard" left, Kinnock retained his position on the NEC.

DEMANDS FOR UNITY

The demands for unity in the face of the upcoming election had done their work. The unmitigated disaster of the 1983 General Election where Labour's vote fell to its lowest ever only made the lefts position worse. Benn and with him the Bennite left kept to their promise of not rocking the boat. When Kinnock emerged as a front runner for the leadership, with Benn out of Parliament, the Bennites decided not to challenge him. The Bennites ran Meacher against Hattersley for deputy. Kinnock's supporters in the Transport and General Workers' Union - Evans and Kitson - made sure that Hattersley won the support of the conference delegation despite Meacher's endorsement by the Executive. While Kinnock made clear his preference for right-winger Hattersley by "unguardedly" declaring to the press in an interview that he thought Meacher was "as weak as hell" (Harris p233) Heffer's challenge for the leadership attracted only the hardest of hard left support.

Harris' book ends with the victory of the "dream ticket". Now it is only "hard left" which remain like sleep-walkers who refuse to be woken up to the reality of the last years of struggle in the Labour Party. Kinnock denounces the NUM on the picket lines and sees his role as one of damage limitation with regard to Labour's electoral prospects. Instead of leading the Party in mobilising the whole movement to provide the fullest financial and industrial support for the NUM he offers Stan Orme as a mediator. His attacks on violence and on Arthur Scargill personally contribute to weakening the NUM's support as a critical moment in the fight against the full force of the state. Yet Benn and Co remain silent about this treachery. By failing to fight to finish, to win a Labour leadership answerable and accountable to the membership Benn and Co have installed a new Callaghan. In 1979 and 1980 they launched their crusade around the "never again" sentiment with regard to the last government. Now they are willing to settle for Kinnock. Like Frankenstein's creation this monster has turned on his creators. He hasn't finished the damage he can do yet! ■

by Stuart King

Lesbians and gays support the miners

MINERS HAVE RECEIVED and welcomed support for their strike from "Lesbians and Gays support the miners" (LGSM). By building support for the miners gay activists have been able to take the argument about gay oppression into the NUM.

The LGSM has staged collections on the Gay Pride march this year and around gay pubs and clubs. In the process it has raised £1,500. The group has twinned itself with the miners of Dulais in South Wales. One activist described the response in an interview with *Socialist Organiser*: "The community in Dulais valley where we've been sending most of the money, have invited us to stay with them....Now the people in Dulais have said they want to keep in touch after the strike is over." (No.199, 4.10.84)

The NUM itself has responded positively. It sent a speaker to address a Labour Campaign for Gay Rights meeting. National Office itself sent a letter to the LGSM declaring: "We support civil liberties and the struggle of Lesbians and Gay people. We welcome the links forged in South Wales and other areas. Our struggle is yours. Victory to the miners."

This is a marked improvement in the NUM from the days (1970s) when it refused to even acknowledge the receipt of a questionnaire from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality, let alone answer it.

Now LGSM groups are spreading. Mike Jackson in the *Socialist Organiser* interview reported that groups are being set up in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Leeds. This should be welcomed and further encouraged by the NUM.

The gay activists are not demanding fully fledged support from the NUM before giving it to the miners. They rightly recognise that this would put things on an altogether wrong footing. By supporting the miners, however, they are able to strike effectively at the anti-gay prejudices that do exist.

The NUM itself can take things a stage further. At its own national conference it should adopt a policy resolution fully supporting gay rights. It should implement an extensive education programme for all union members combatting prejudice and explaining the case for gay rights. Moreover it must give help to any gay miners who choose to organise within the NUM to put their case across inside the union.

Such steps would mark tremendous progress. They would give a boost to all gay workers and encourage similar developments in other unions. They would mark a new stage in the struggle for gay rights. □

Rugby Council bars gays

LAST MONTH RUGBY Council placed itself at the head of Britain's very own Moral Majority campaign. By withdrawing the words "sexual orientation" from the categories of persons exempt from employment discrimination, it decided to bar Lesbians and gay men from its employment.

The resolution was put forward by "independent" councillor Keith Judge and backed by the Tory group. The debate provided the bigots with a field day. The Tory Council leader Gordon Collett explained: "The country is going down-hill far enough in this permissive society. We've decided to call a halt. We've said we've had enough of it and we're not prepared to give them the chance of a job."

Not to be outdone Judge warned that: "By including these words (sexual orientation-Ed) we shall give the people of Rugby the idea that their council positively welcomes all queers and perverts."



Were it not for the serious effect of the decision on gay council workers or job applicants it would be difficult not to laugh at the prudishness of the remark. But this is unfortunately not just the pig ignorance of a backwoods Tory. It is doubtless another example of Thatcher's "Victorian Values". It fits well alongside the others - unemployment, scabbing, poor law health and social service provision.

The truth is that Rugby's decision is one in a long line of decisions to victimise gays because of

IN THE MIDST of the battle of Orgreave Arthur Scargill called time-out for a rally. He got the attention of the crowd with a joke. A policeman had asked him if he wanted to go to the toilet. "With your reputation at the gay club", replied Arthur, "not likely!". Most of those present shared in the laughter.

That Arthur should seek to rile a policeman by suggesting he is gay - ie, suggest that he is "not a real man" shouldn't surprise us. Many perhaps most workers, make such jokes regularly. There is an old (and bad) tradition in the Labour movement of gay-baiting the upper classes. Remember the sneers and jokes aimed at Edward Heath. But to equate gays with the bosses and their hired thugs is a stupid and cruel smear.

The fact is that being made fun of is the mild end of the oppression they suffer. Being regularly harassed, entrapped and beaten up by the police is the sharp end. They have been faced for years with the police violence that so many miners have come to know at first hand over the last eight months.

Why are gay people the butt of jokes and worse? For the simple reason that their love and sexual desire is directed at people of their same sex. This preference costs gays dear. For centuries it caused gays to be regarded with outright horror. While amongst many this sense of horror still exists, the most typical attitude is now one of embarrassed condescension. The most common response amongst ordinary people is "Well, after all, they can't help it, they're sick." This attitude is enshrined in the highly restrictive 1967 Sexual Offences Act. This Act which decriminalised male homosexual relations in private between consenting males over 21 still bolsters irrational and dangerous prejudices despite its apparent display of tolerance.

The belief that gayness equals sickness is widespread. The World Health Organisation has legitimised this view by listing homosexuality as disease number 302.0. Yet there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that this judgement has any basis in scientific fact. The failure to find any specific physical or hormonal factors determining sexual preference has not, however, daunted anti-gay doctors. Theories that homosexuality is a psychological illness or condition have been mobilised to justify prejudice.

However this view also has no scientific credibility. Prior to the liberal Wolfenden report on homosexuality in the 1950s a British doctor did a survey on 100 male homosexuals. The results, published in the *British Medical Journal* reported: "In our series, both practicing and non practicing homosexuals were, on the whole, successful and valuable members of society, quite unlike the popular conception of such persons as vicious, criminal, effete or depressed." (Quoted in *Prejudice and Pride*, ed. Bruce Galloway, p.179.)

The same book lists the evidence of an American doctor who "...matched small groups of homosexuals and heterosexuals (of the same age, education and intelligence) gave both groups standard personality tests, and asked two clinical psychologists to identify the homosexual in each pair. The judges were unable to do so and Hooker (the doctor) tentatively concluded that homosexuality



John Sturrock (Report)

our sexuality. Our job qualifications, our experience, our abilities are discarded by the sanctioning bigots who employ us. All that counts is that we are gay. In one local TV interview it was suggested that the decision was taken in view of the fact that homosexuality had caused the decline and fall of the Roman Empire! It is so obvious - we're not just responsible for corrupting youth and spreading depravity but for bringing down history's great civilisations.

Rugby's decision must be fought. Immediately the public sector unions directly involved - NALGO and NUPE - should activate their policies of support for gay rights and opposition to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The council unions should campaign now for strike action to reverse the council's position. The Labour Party, despite refusing yet again to discuss gay rights at conference, should pledge support for the campaign and in Rugby should refuse to co-operate with the bigots on council committees.

Such a struggle could play an important role in activating a labour movement wide campaign not only against Rugby, but against all employers who discriminate against gays. □

NOT SICK BUT PROUD

as a clinical entity does not exist and that its forms are as varied as those of heterosexuality." (p.179)

It is a very strange sickness that has no symptoms, no common physical or psychological causes and no incapacitating effects. The only "sickness" involved is a sexual preference for people of your own sex. There's the rub, as they say. It is this very fact, this deviation from what is "normal", that helps sustain the view of gayness as an illness. This view is, in fact, essential to capitalist society. That society, founded on the exploitation of workers by millionaire bosses, needs and has created a "normality" based on the sanctity of the family. The family, reproducing and sustaining workers for capitalism and condemning women to domestic slavery, is essential to capitalism's continued functioning. Without workers there would be no profits for the bosses. Without "housewives", male workers could not go to work every morning with their ability to work restored. Therefore capitalism encourages a division of labour at the level of human personality. Women are to be "naturally" soft-hearted, caring and emotional. Men should be strong, thick-skinned and combative.

The family, the school, the media all socialise babies children and adults into these roles. "Masculine" women (tomboys) and "feminine" boys (cissies etc) are mocked and these characteristics strongly discouraged. Thus the "natural" personalities of the sexes turn out to be just what the bosses ordered.

The connection between the family and the oppression of gays is therefore straightforward. Gay sex is not directly aimed at procreation and the continuation of the family. Open and undisguised homosexuality accepted to be as "normal" as any other sexual orientation would directly challenge the pattern of family life required by capitalism. Capitalism can therefore tolerate homosexuality only as a covered up and derided disease.

TOLERANCE EXPOSED

Whenever gay people organise openly to fight for democratic rights the limits of capitalism's tolerance are quickly exposed. Indeed they were exposed then the British government justified its refusal to extend the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland. In a hearing at the European Commission for Human Rights Her Majesty's government left all spurious "medical" pretenses to one side and candidly declared: "...the law is designed to uphold the moral standards of the Northern community. These standards tend to protect the family as a fundamental social unit and the threat to the position of that unit comes more from homosexual than from heterosexual relationships." (Our emphasis).

There in a nutshell, is why gay men and lesbians are oppressed. Their existence is seen by our rulers and their hired headfixers as a threat. Yet this threat is not to ordinary people going about their daily business, but to a sacred capitalist institution.

Many people do see gays, however, as a threat. A common objection to gays is they are alright "so long as they don't come near, or interfere with me." Think, for a moment what this implies. It suggests that gays are like lepers. It hurls them into a ghetto and says, I can never have anything to do with you, I cannot even be your friend for fear you might "interfere" with me. It suggests that gays either all have a voracious sexual appetite or that they have some power to seduce unsuspecting victims. In its strongest form it suggests that gays are corrupters of people, especially of children. This view of gays is dangerous nonsense.

For a start it is a fact, given that an estimated 1 in 5 people in Britain are gay, that you will have worked with, met and possibly been good friends with a gay man or lesbian. If the person had not already declared that they were gay (ie, come out) then it is a sure bet that you would not think twice about befriending them. Moreover, given that most gays do not speak like Larry Grayson or dress like Danny La Rue, it is unlikely that the question of gayness would enter your mind. And in those cases where a gay person has come out how often have you been "interfered" with? Of course prejudice might lead you to deny yourself physical contact with a gay man or lesbian that you would not think twice about indulging in with a heterosexual. However the courts and prisons are hardly overflowing with homosexual rapists. True the number of men arrested for "gross indecency" with another man in a public place (usually a toilet) had quadrupled since 1967. However this is due to a massive police campaign of entrapment. The "other man" in these cases is usually a plain clothes police officer deliberately pretending to go along with the action until the unfortunate gay has done enough to be nicked. This is the reality. Gays are not "interferers" any more than heterosexuals are. In fact given the dangers it involves it is far less likely. Most people are capable of politely refusing sexual advances of the opposite sex. It is just as easy, in the rare cases where it does occur, to refuse those of the same sex. Nowhere has it been proved that the sexual appetite of gay people is greater or lesser than that of heterosexuals. The tragedy for many gays is that brutal oppression leads them to suppress their sexual appetites altogether.

The charge that gays are a threat to children and can defile and corrupt them is still widely propagated by the media and widely believed. It



is the commonest cause for the sacking of gay teachers and gay youth and social workers. The case of Jim Saunders who worked at a youth camp in Scotland illustrates this. After he was sacked his bosses explained: "The reason is that information was received that you indulge in homosexuality. At a camp accommodating large numbers of school children and teenagers it is totally unsuitable to employ a person with such tendencies."

Jim Saunders, despite never having been charged with an offense, was declared guilty by his bosses and subsequently by the courts, of being a threat to young people.

The assumption behind this argument is that all gays must have designs on all young people. Their plan is to "seduce" young people into their "army of perverts". The society that hatches myths like these is sick, not its victims. The fact that instances of sexual activity between adults and children/young people are, in the overwhelming majority of recorded cases, of a heterosexual nature, is conveniently ignored. Jim Saunders, Judith Williams, Susan Shell, John Warburton and many other gay workers have been sacked not because of anything they have done but because of what fevered imaginations of their bigotted employers suggest, without proof, they might do.

The argument that gays "seduce" people into homosexuality is equally invalid. A pioneering study by two German doctors in the 70s analysed the cases of some 800 gay men and concluded: "...there is no such thing as seduction into homosexuality". (Quoted in *Gays and the Law*, Paul Crane, p.69). The belief that children are corrupted into gayness is topsy-turvy. The rigid exclusively heterosexual sexual stereotypes of our society exposed in the media, in schools, through the church and "learned" opinion actually force children into heterosexuality. They are denied the right to understand their sexual preferences let alone freely express them. The result can mean misery, even suicide for victims of this oppression. We must be absolutely clear - being gay is not the problem, being oppressed is.

VICTIMS IN SOCIETY

Gays are victims in our society. They are by law denied the right to express mutual affection in public. Lesbians are, generally, denied the right to stay with their children - even in cases where the father is known to be violent! Gay men are harassed by the police, lesbians are imprisoned on spurious "indecent assault" laws (Lesbianism itself is not formally recognised as existing by the law). Between '77 and '80 a record kept by Campaign for Homosexual Equality listed 250 physical attacks, often by fascists and encouraged by the police, on men and women simply because they were gay. The report showed that 15% of these attacks resulted in either death or permanent disablement of the victims. Since 1980 such attacks have increased. All of this presents a sorry picture but there is no need to be defeatist. Oppression can be fought.

Tied up as it is with capitalism, gay oppression can only end with the destruction of that system. But this is no recipe for passivity. Two tasks face militants and socialists now. First, we must combat anti-gay prejudice in the labour movement. Our enemy is capitalism. Any divisions in our ranks strengthen that enemy and weaken us. Anti-gay prejudice divides us. Secondly, we must win the Labour movement to a campaign to fight for democratic rights for gays in the here and now. The legal restrictions, police harassment and so on must be combatted.

To achieve these goals will be an uphill struggle at first. The working class is imbued with prejudices picked up from the home, church, the school. Yet unlike our rulers who sometimes conceal their prejudices in hypocritical phrases, the working class has no objective stake in the oppression of gays - quite the reverse.

The task of fighting these prejudices needs to be begun. The formation of gay groups in the unions is a good start. In the post office (GAYPO), amongst teachers and on the railways such groups have been formed and are doing good work. The Labour Campaign for Gay Rights is continuing its battle to win the Labour Party's support and combat the attacks on gays whom Neil Kinnock calls "fairies".

These developments are positive. They show that changes in the Labour movement's attitudes are possible. More must be done. We must all strive to ensure that gays, as gays and as workers, take their rightful place in the labour movement. And that movement should set as its goal not only the destruction of gay oppression but of the social system that perpetuates that oppression - capitalism. by Mark Hoskisson

IRISH WAR HITS TORIES

THE BOMB WHICH killed four and narrowly missed Margaret Thatcher and most of the prominent members of her cabinet has been the subject of a wave of apoplectic condemnation in the media. The wave of outrage has involved the whole political spectrum from the Tories themselves to the Communist Party daily.

We do not condemn it. Why not? Because the Provisional IRA who claimed responsibility are engaged in a war to expel British imperialism from Ireland. But, screech the bosses' press and the bosses' men within the labour movement, they are terrorists, murderers, common criminals, psychopaths! Not so. Let us leave aside the brazen hypocrisy of the woman who cold bloodedly engineered the Falklands war and who let 10 Irish hunger strikers die rather than grant them elementary rights in her concentration camps in Northern Ireland.

EXCLUDED

Thatcher and Kinnock both call the IRA thugs and criminals. Both claim that they themselves are democrats and peaceful politicians. In fact the 'democratic road' and the ballot box are not open to the so called minority in Northern Ireland.

At the moment Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Republicans can stand for elections. They have indeed won the great majority of the working class nationalist vote in the North. But they cannot win Irish unity and independence at the ballot box. Why?

In 1921 Ireland was carved up so that the Catholic, nationalist inhabitants of 6 counties of the 9 county province of Ulster were in a permanent but large minority. For fifty years the nationalist population was excluded from government and terrorised by armed



Protestant police and paramilitary volunteers - the B Specials. Yet the nationalist inhabitants of Ireland - those who wish complete state independence from Britain - were in 1921 and are today an overwhelming majority in Ireland as a whole. Both the Tory and Labour Parties are intransigent that there can be no unification of Ireland "except by the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland", i.e. the Protestants.

Thus the armed struggle in the North is a product not of mindless 'evil bastards' as the Sun would have us believe but flows inevitably

from the denial by British imperialism of the Irish people's democratic right to self-determination and unity. Its guerrilla, so-called terrorist, methods flow from the immense superiority in weaponry and numbers of the British army.

As revolutionary socialists we do criticise the tactics and strategy of the Republicans. But our criticisms flow from a desire to see the Irish national struggle triumph. When Danny Morrison, a spokesperson for Sinn Fein, says, "If that bomb had killed the British Cabinet.....there would have been a rethink within British political circles and it probably would have led to a British withdrawal in a much shorter period," we believe he is sadly mistaken. The ruling class has other teams of politicians willing to prosecute the war against the Irish people. To the labour movement's shame, one of these leads the British Labour Party.

OPPRESSION

Our criticism of the IRA is not that their tactics are immoral or illegitimate. No one except a consistent and total pacifist can condemn violence as such. Labour and Tory governments alike have used systematic, horrific and repeated violence against not only the IRA freedom fighters but also the civilian population that supports them.

We recognise that to counsel legal parliamentarianism to this population is to advise them to submit to oppression indefinitely. We simply believe that guerrilla armed struggle - even allied to electioneering and abstention from taking up the seats gained - cannot win. We believe that only the mobilisation of the working class North and South, as soon as possible, and the support of the British working class can free Ireland from imperialist domination. Such a fight would necessitate absolutely subordinating military struggle to mass class action but it would not be a peaceful or legal one.

For this reason we argue that the British working class movement must come out against the British troops' occupation of the North. We must fight for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal.

BRITISH WORKERS

We are not frightened of being dubbed traitors. No interests of the British working class are being defended in Northern Ireland. Miners in the present strike have seen many of the links between the British bosses "police state" here and in Ireland. When Thatcher and MacGregor try to link IRA "violence" with the "violence" of the miners, and Arthur Scargill as a "non-democrat" with Sinn Fein they are trying to criminalise and isolate the miners. Their attitude to the picket line and the nationalist resistance is identical. Their state should have a monopoly on violence. Police thuggery and army massacres like Bloody Sunday 1972 are called enforcing "law and order". To resist it either with sticks and stones or with weapons vastly inferior to those of the state is to be guilty of "criminal violence". Many militant miners have seen through such clap trap.

The sooner the whole labour movement shakes off its slavish "respect" for the bosses' laws and order the sooner will it be free of the Tories and the whole rotten capitalist system. As Marx said, "a nation which oppresses another forges its own chains." These chains have been felt in the pit villages of Nottingham and Yorkshire. They were forged in Ireland. It is in the direct interests of British workers to help close down their six county training ground for military dictatorship - the sooner the better. ■

WORKERS IN ACTION



CPSA DISPUTE

Shift working computer operators at the DHSS computer centres in Newcastle and Washington, Tyne & Wear are in dispute with management over threatened reductions in shift allowance.

The Newcastle and Washington staff, members of the Broad Left led CPSA, were offered new shift rosters and into the bargain a pay cut of between £33.00 and £41.00 per month. Newcastle took the initiative and have been out on strike since May 15th.

The computer centres prepare the pensions and child benefits of 12 million people. But the action has had minimal effect. Management made concerted efforts to get work done by hand. So far they have recruited an extra 4,500 staff to manually do the work of the computer operators and encouraged DHSS staff to work overtime to update all benefits by November 26th.

In all the government has sanctioned the spending to date of between £30 and £40 million in prosecuting a dispute which would save only £700,000 per annum in Newcastle.

In the face of government intransigence the response of the Broad left CPSA executive has been treacherous. Not only have they failed to take action against scabbing, despite pressure from Newcastle for support. They also took several months in deciding to ask shift workers in Reading and Livingstone Computer centres if they were willing to take action. These workers process all the UB giro of Britain's army of unemployed. They too face new roster proposals at the end of 1984. But when they voted for all out strike from October 15th

the Broad left executive backtracked. Militant supporters found themselves imprisoned by their Broad left allies. CP and Labour 'lefts' voted with the right wing to prevent the threatened escalation. Instead they will now be 'consulting' selected social security and unemployment offices again about strike action. The stage is set for them to repeat the Reading/Livingstone consultation fiasco while Newcastle remains isolated. In the words of the obnoxious Alistair Graham, "Our commitment to the dispute is as strong as ever."

While Graham and the Executive prepare the ground for a sell out, the government continues to spend large sums to break the strike. If the Tories win this one against a powerful and determined section of the union they will be in a position to impose their job cutting plans in local DHSS and Department of Employment offices and indeed throughout the civil service. In the face of this attack the Union's rank and file needs to act now. Livingstone and Reading have already set up strike committees. They should put them to good use and strike immediately. They should link up with Poplar and Westminster DHSS workers already striking over the use of casuals and overtime.

In Poplar 90 staff are striking in retaliation for management allowing no work overtime. Pickets are also out at Leytonstone DHSS office Saturday and Sunday mornings. It was after pickets walkouts that overtime was withdrawn. Plaistow DHSS proving that action achieves more than moral appeals in circulars. ■

KEWALS DEFEAT

After 22 weeks the strike by 15 workers at the Handsworth textile factory collapsed. The Birmingham Trades Council Executive Committee minutes of 24th September include the comment "that the Labour Party and Trades Council were being held responsible for the failure of the dispute as insufficient support had been obtained from the labour movement".

More support should have been provided. Nevertheless it was from these two sources that the great bulk of support was organised. Mass pickets composed of Staffordshire and Warwickshire miners were organised through the Trades Council Miners Support Group. Leaflets were provided by the Trades Council Resource Centre. Other help came from local Labour Party members.

This was an extremely important strike. It was in essence a strike for union recognition, an attempt by the TGWU to organise against a sweat-shop. As such it gained the support of other low-paid workers who work in factories that have already been unionised. This has been the secret of success in unionising the sweat-shops in the backstreets of the recession wracked West Midlands. This rolling unionisation process will have been fundamentally weakened by what has happened at Kewals.

It won't be the bureaucrats of the T&G who will bear the cost. Yet it was precisely these bureaucrats who weakened the strike from the beginning. They did so by initially refusing strike pay. This decision was over-

thrown following a concerted campaign by the strikers.

The T&G officials made no attempt to involve and organise the strikers. Religious and cultural habits preclude the Indian women from attending the T&G branch which continued to meet in a pub. Yet the branch failed to move its venue to accommodate the needs of the women, who constituted a majority of the strikers.

The T&G officials, notably Don Higgs, did not like the idea of the Kewals strikers enlisting the support of 'outsiders'. In the event the T&G district officials raised only £44 to fund the strike whilst the 'outside' support raised well over £1,000.

However the fatal blow dealt to the strike was that delivered by the full-time officials and their legal advisor. T&G workers at S&D, Raindis and Supreme Quiltings wrote to the T&G district office after meetings demanding support for solidarity strike action that they would take on behalf of the Kewals strikers. A letter arrived back from the T&G legal department say "no solidarity strikes, it's no longer legal!"

The other T&G workers lacked the leadership necessary to defy the laws and bring forward their own claims against their own management a management which operates its own anti-union combine.

The lessons of Kewals must be learnt. The will to win at Kewals was there. Other workers were prepared to back the Kewals strikers. It was the T&G officials who ran away from a fight. □

For a national cars strike!

Car workers in all the major companies are preparing to do battle with their employers. Vauxhall workers have already walked out in protest at a management offer of 6% which includes £2 consolidated from bonus and 1% conditional on productivity agreements.

Jaguar workers have rejected an offer which amounts to less than 7% new money a year in a two year package offered by management who chalked up a £41.1 million profit total in the first 6 months of this year. Fords workers have put in for 14% and Austin Rover for £22 per week.

The employers are hoping to play each group of workers off against each other - between companies as well as

within them. They want to beat one group of workers and set the pace for all the others. That is why the Vauxhall workers must not be left to stand alone. Jaguar workers will learn this to their peril if they continue to delay taking any action until the deadline for a new deal expires in November.

All car workers must bring forward their claims and take action to fight for them now. Combine organisation must be strengthened with a shop stewards conference in every company. Car worker unity must be co-ordinated now with a national car workers shop stewards conference which can hold the officials to account and force them to give a lead on behalf of all car workers. ■

Wives' conference 'totally inadequate'

LAST SATURDAY THE National Coordinating Committee of the Miners' Wives Support Groups met in Sheffield. First on the agenda was a discussion of the forthcoming 'national' wives conference to be held in Chesterfield on November 9th - 11th.

The minutes stated that, "several delegates at the meeting reported that members of their groups were dissatisfied with the present arrangements allowing only a small number of delegates. It was suggested that more women should be involved." Despite that position put by women from the groups, the conference is to go ahead as planned with a grand total of 39 miners' wives, plus 4 unelected ex-officio members. These are the women who apparently took the original decision to hold such a small, unrepresentative conference.

Workers Power talked to some wives in Yorkshire about the planned conference. Lynne, from Hatfield, explained, "Miners' wives support groups have been set up in every coalfield in the country and 39 delegates don't exactly represent all the women involved." Margaret from Thurcroft agreed, "The conference should have delegates from every wives' support group so that we can take the decisions back to our own villages." Pat, a miners' wife from Dinnington said, "It's totally inadequate the way they've organised it. Supposing I was one of two South Yorkshire delegates how can I speak for 17 pits? It's impossible - I don't know their circumstances."

The Hatfield Group had sent a resolution to the coordinating meeting. Lynne explained what it included, "We said that the conference should be open to a delegate from every group and observers should be allowed. We wanted resolutions from the groups to be circulated for discussion before the conference, on topics such as the strike and solidarity work, welfare, the structure of the national organisation and the relationship to the NUM, plus other issues miners' wives could get involved in." The fact that nothing came of that resolution didn't surprise the Hatfield women, but they have agreed that, "we should get down to Chesterfield and lobby the conference to make our feelings known."

Workers Power has always argued that there should be a real national conference of miners' wives in order to link up activities, develop the organisation and discuss the way forward. Unfortunately the conference planned is far from providing that link up.

It has been planned by self-appointed leaders who are keeping the numbers small, presumably so that they can try and influence the few delegates who do go with their own ideas, which may well not coincide with what women working hard in local groups would want. The National organisation is important however, and we should not give up the plans for holding a real national meeting. We agreed with Margaret who said, "A proper national miners' wives conference is important because even if the miners get back to work, if there's ever another dispute we need to support we can get set up that much quicker." Lynne added, "There are now a few women at top and we are at the bottom. It seems odd because we were active well in advance over the closure of Lewis Merthyr. We got together quickly this time because we were prepared. If the conference was properly organised we could get together and fight this one to victory and be in and fighting around other struggles for victory." □

APPEAL

CHURCH WARSOP WOMEN'S ACTION GROUP - desperately require donations of food and monies in our effort to feed our families and sustain our struggle. Donations to DG Daniels 98 St Lawrence Ave Bolsover Chesterfield S44 6HT

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