

Striking Crawley bin workers face conspiracy charges

SIX striking bin workers were last week arrested and later charged under the 1875 Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act.

The men, from Crawley in Sussex, have been on strike for eight weeks in defence of wages and conditions following privatisation of the service.

If found guilty, they could be heavily fined and/or jailed for six months under the same Victorian act that sent striking building workers' leader Des Warren to jail in 1972.

The police arrested the six striking pickets outside the Langley Green depot on 2 April, shown in our picture right. The workers had decided to picket the depot on that day as a demonstration of solidarity with striking miners.

A representative of sacked Timex workers from Dundee was among those supporting the strikers.

Morale was further boosted when council workers sharing the depot with the contractors, AAH Environmental

Services, agreed not to cross the picket line — the first time they'd been asked to respect the picket.

Police then moved in, separating everyone from the six pickets allowed by law. The six tried to speak to scabs in the first two dustcarts, but without success.

They then stood in front of the next dustcart. At that, the police made their arrests.

It must be stressed that the bin workers' action was entirely peaceful.

The strike has shown that the bin workers are not alone. They struck along with miners, railworkers and London busworkers — the first sign of bigger eruptions to come.

We need to unite these struggles, and defend workers against the Tory state violence that will follow.

■ At a hearing on 5 April at Crawley magistrates' court the case was adjourned until 26 April.

Story: Robin Burnham
Photo: Simon Burgess



MOOD GROWS FOR UNITED ACTION

A POWERFUL feeling for united action against the government is growing throughout the working class.

'Let's join hands to defeat the Tories' is the message from all sections of the working class, whatever particular struggle they are involved in.

■ The solid strike of miners and railworkers and the third day of strike action by London busworkers on 2 April expresses this mood.

■ Many, like NALGO public sector workers in Leeds and Hounslow, west London, came out spontaneously on 2 April in support of the miners and railworkers — a clear breach of the law.

■ The interviews and reports in this week's Workers Press show that there is a growing mood that if the anti-union laws stand in the way of workers fighting together as a class, then the time has come to break these laws.

Intense

Tens of thousands stayed away from work on 2 April. To the dismay of the Tory press, there were no scenes of angry commuters battling their way to work, denouncing strikers or 'holding the country to ransom'.

Many professional people feel the intense crisis bearing down on them and have turned against the Tories.

Major is about to enter the Guinness Book of Records' as the most unpopular prime minister since 1945. After Baroness

BY THE EDITOR

Thatcher this is no small achievement!

The judiciary last week struck another blow at the government when it declared that it was legal for teachers to take action against the government's compulsory testing in schools. This is a clear sign of the divisions in the ruling class. (See editorial, page 2.)

The Tory press tell us daily that an 'economic recovery' is here. Reality says something else: mounting unemployment, systematic attacks on wages and working conditions and the destruction of welfare services.

What stands in the way of the unity that millions now feel in their bones is necessary to resist these attacks?

In three words: the labour leaders.

The TUC and Labour Party leaders are the ones intent on dividing the working class, separating one struggle from another.

The working class is for unity, its official leaders for division.

The TUC did nothing to bring other workers into struggle alongside those who struck on 2 April.

The truth is they did all they could to discourage workers from joining those tens of thousands on strike.

If such leaders are forced to take any action they will do so with one aim: to break up the fight and demoralise.

Weld

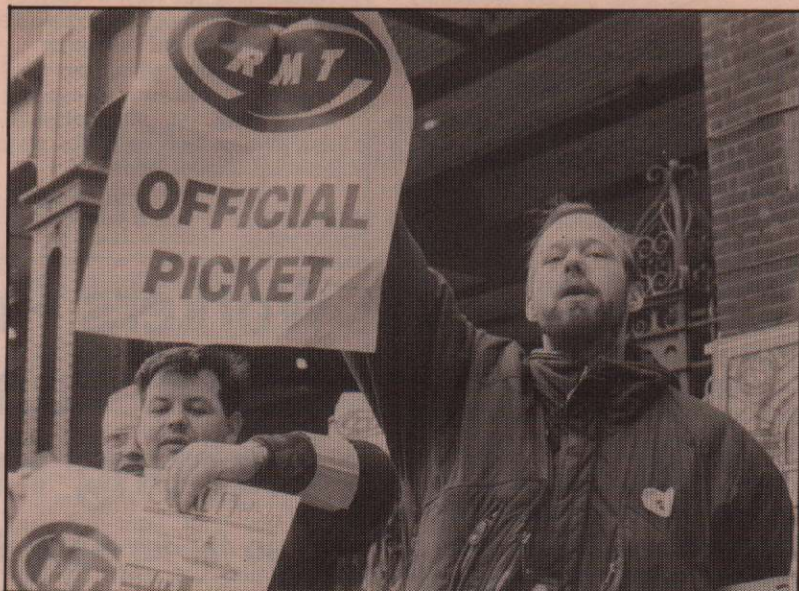
The working class can be united only if it organises for a fight against these leaders. Those most active in the struggle must weld together the whole movement against the Tory government.

In this Workers Press Lancashire miner Billy Pye suggests that the time has come to consider the formation of strike committees in every area which would unite all those on strike and those sympathetic to strike action (see page 3).

These sort of proposals point the way forward.

Unite all struggles against the Tories!

Build the movement to bring the government down!



Timex pickets battle the elements

FIVE HUNDRED workers and their supporters faced hail, snow and gale-force winds to picket the Dundee factory last Monday.

The scabs recruited to take over from the sacked workers did not turn up, despite a management claim that they would have

to work on what is an official Scottish holiday.

■ A mass picket is planned for Monday morning, 12 April. At 11.45am a demonstration, called by the Scottish TUC, will assemble at Harrison Road, near the Timex plant.

After 2 April — Unite the struggles!

The day of action by miners, railworkers — like these RMT pickets at London's Waterloo station — and London busworkers had a massive response, and meant thousands of people in Britain staying away from work. Interviews and reports of the strikes are on pages 3 to 6.

Photo: Marg Nicol

Easter break

THERE will be no issue of Workers Press next week.

We are taking a break to give staff a break. Our next issue will be out on 24 April.

A cultural crisis for capitalism

THE education crisis has steadily worsened since 1979 and defies every attempt by the Tories to resolve it.

A High Court judge has now ruled that teachers are under no statutory obligation to deliver the national curriculum. Furthermore Mr Justice Mantell horrified Wandsworth Tory council by saying the boycott of the government's Standard Attainment Tasks (SATs) tests by the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers was a legitimate trade dispute — since the administration and delivery of the tests involves a huge increase in workload for teachers.

The Secretary of State for Education, John Patten, has retorted by saying that he will if necessary change the law to force teachers to administer the tests. There is growing speculation about how long he will remain in the Cabinet.

Patten's future is not all that is at stake. The Tories are fundamentally split over education. Even right-wing Tories have openly criticised the national curriculum.

Five years after the 1988 Education Act, all the architects of the national curriculum have quit the scene and Patten is having to promise a fresh start. There is a crisis at the very heart of the ruling class.

Why did the judge drive a coach and horses through the anti-union laws? The opposition to the Tory educational reforms comes not just from the working class but from the middle class and even sections of the ruling class.

Almost 90 per cent of parents from the market town of Stroud in the Cotswolds withdrew their children from SATs. At least one London borough's education committee has voted not to make the setting and implementation of the English tests compulsory.

The 'Guardian' (5 April) described the situation as the greatest confrontation in education for a decade. It comes in the wake of massive cuts in the public services as the government wrestles with a growing need for loans to cover its spending.

* * * * *

THE only consistent strand in government education policy has been to increase the role of the market in education — to expose it more and more to the requirements of capitalism.

It is precisely because capital can no longer afford to provide even the basic means to sustain human life or develop a truly human culture that education and other public services are in a crisis.

Armies of young people have voted with their feet to reject the discipline of school institutions and face unemployment, criminalisation, destitution and homelessness. Instructions from above to instil discipline are like slaking thirst with salt water.

They will only serve to further alienate teachers and students. Teachers are already furious about their recent pay cut, and the threat of performance-related pay preceded by appraisal schemes hangs over their heads.

The resistance to the SATs, in particular, has been spearheaded by teachers and by an organised parental campaign. The leaders of the teachers' unions, foremost of which is the National Union of Teachers, have been completely paralysed by these developments.

They have limited the boycott action as much as they can. They have assisted in the introduction of the appraisal of teachers. Elements of performance-related pay have slipped in with the new pay cut.

Labour local authorities have carried out the cuts in education and other services. They have even disciplined teachers who have taken action against cuts and joined in the big miners' actions last October. They have even demanded that teachers take direct pay cuts.

This is the situation facing teachers at their union conferences this week. We think a discussion should begin about how to forge a real unity between teachers, parents and students around these struggles.

Letters

US support for position on Bosnia

I AM writing as an American sympathiser to express my support for your position on the Bosnian war and to request that you add my name to the list of signatories to the Workers International declaration on Bosnia.

As I said in a recent letter to one of your comrades, the declaration printed in Workers Press some weeks back seems to me the best position on this horrible conflict I have seen taken by any left group.

I look forward to reading more reports and analysis on the Bosnian war in the paper; meanwhile, your reporting on the miners' struggle and defence of public services are inspiring to us here in the USA.

I'm sad that illusions in Bill Clinton (ably punctured in some of your recent issues) have caused a downturn in workers' struggles here. I'm sure it won't be long, however, before the failure of 'Clintonomics' has workers thinking differently.

Doug Buchholz
Philadelphia

Workers Press platitudes?

DOES the Workers Revolutionary Party support the 'Unite the Struggles' platform to be presented to the 24 April recall conference of the National Miners Support Network?

Workers Press's plitudinous editorial of 27 March ends with the advice to those attending this conference to 'insist on a thoroughly open and democratic discussion', but with no

mention of this platform.

Hopefully, the internal structures of the WRP are 'open' and 'democratic' enough for the editor of your paper to be aware that members of his party's central committee have already committed themselves to support this Communist Party-initiated platform.

Essentially, the 'Unite the Struggles' platform calls for:

1. The democratisation of the National Miners Support Network;

2. The broadening of the movement to include recallable reps from other sections of the working class in struggle; and

3. The organisation to build and support generalised strike action in the absence of a fighting lead from the TUC.

Hopefully, the WRP will give prominent support to the platform and your supporters will vote as a block for it at the 24 April conference.

Mark Fischer
Communist Party of Great Britain

■ *The editor comments:* If Mark Fischer is saying that WRP members on the 'Unite the Struggles' steering committee voted for the CPGB's 'left platform' he is wrong. Everybody present at the steering committee — including WRP and CPGB members — accepted a joint platform. This agreed on two points proposed by the CPGB — the question of uniting all struggles in the miners' support groups and of democracy in the national network. But it rejected the CPGBs position on strikes.

Everyone can compare what the steering committee passed (see page 3, as well as in the current 'Daily Worker', 27 March) with what the CPGB proposed. The CPGB proposal read:

'The official leadership of the workers' movement has proved

itself useless [sic!]. Our class needs a united workers' front that builds action — up to and including a general strike. If the TUC continues to refuse to organise this type of action then others must.'

The steering committee rejected this. Is the nature of the TUC determined by whether it does or doesn't call strike action? Did the nature of the TUC leadership change in 1926? Or in the 1970s when we had a series of one-day general strikes?

The question over the future of the miners' support groups is this: will they be able to become the forum and an organising centre for all workers and youth involved in struggle?

Or will they become lifeless adjuncts of the trade union bureaucracy where people are busy with stickers and meetings rallying people behind the TUC — and all discussion about the future of the working class is stopped on the basis of accepting uncritically whatever the NUM leadership has proposed?

The Manchester conference was held to fight for the former and — as the platform passed by the steering committee points out — that path is in continual opposition to the present TUC leaders, over every aspect of the struggle.

The path we must take is certainly regardless of whether the TUC calls a general strike — which if the movement continues to develop they almost certainly will — in order to betray it, as they did in 1926.

Next stage in bus strike

AS somebody who worked on London buses for over 14 years, can I make a few points about the present strikes over increased hours and the attack on

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wages and conditions.

What must be pointed out is the role played by the union leadership in collaborating with management's attacks on workers over this period.

For instance, in Stockport over the last two years management schedules have been imposed on drivers which mean among other things longer hours, shorter meal reliefs, a cut in unsocial-hours payments, Saturday and Sunday work.

This package was imposed with the assistance of the union's full-time officer, who the drivers that if they did agree to the proposals routes would go to another operator.

Roy Thomas reported weeks ago that London Bus Ltd management had turned down the union's offer of negotiations. But what if such negotiations begin? Will the union leaders agree to a compromise — in other words to a sell-out and accept part of the management proposals?

After a series of one-day strikes how can the busworkers' struggle proceed? I believe all-out strike by all garages, including drivers, conductors, engineering staff, would soon rather than later force management to talk. The agenda of such talks must be drawn up by the rank and file — with a final say on any decisions arrived at resting with the members.

To be effective this struggle would have to be joined with railworkers' and miners' fight. Bus workers must also turn the travelling public for allies.

Whatever the outcome of the present dispute, one thing is certain. Under capitalism there cannot be a cheap, reliable service, with decent wages and working conditions for busworkers.

Charlie W
West Lon

Send us your May Day messages

MAY DAY greetings from our friends and comrades throughout the world working-class movement will be prominently featured in our issue of Saturday 1 May.

We warmly invite you to add your greetings and those of your organisation to the growing list of those who publish their annual messages of international solidarity in Workers Press.

Since 1890 May Day has been the day when workers throughout the world unite in marches and rallies. It is the day when they demonstrate their strength and their international solidarity.

It is the day when they proclaim a common message celebrating the internationalism that is the only way forward to socialism.

On May Day 1993 we must find ways to reach out to each

other as never before. In all countries, in every continent, we are all in a common fight against capitalism in deep crisis. Let the good old slogan, 'Workers of All Lands, Unite', ring out this May Day as never before!

Placing a greeting in our columns is an excellent way of making your organisation known to the rapidly growing band of socialists and working-class activists throughout the world who read Workers Press.

Many of our readers are becoming our reporters. We receive on-the-spot news from Russia, eastern and western Europe, Ireland, the Middle East, southern Africa and around the world. Your payment for a May Day greeting will boost our funds and assist with postage, telephone and fax bills.

Display adverts in the Workers Press May Day issue are available in various sizes at the following rates: £10 for 5cm x 6.5cm; £30 for 10cm x 6.5cm; £30 for 15cm x 6.5cm; £50 for 15cm x 13cm

May Day greeting in Workers Press

Please include the following May Day message in your edition on 1 May (40 words maximum):

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(Secretary or contact name and address)

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Workers Press £3,000 Monthly Fighting Fund

In so far for April: £428.40

ALTHOUGH Workers Press will not be published next week we still need money to pay wages and our other overheads.

Do make sure that the money keeps coming in over the next fortnight. We simply must make our target every single month, as we must be able to cover our running costs.

Can you to make a special effort for the paper?

Geoff Pilling

Send donations to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

Coming soon

WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL: Launch of campaign for Bosnian refugees, by Campaign Against Fascism in Europe. Planning committee meeting at 7.30pm, Lambeth Trades Union Resource Centre, 12-14 Thornton St, London SW9. If going to attend let CAFE know on 071-252 5122.

FRIDAY 23 APRIL: Benefit for the miners at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Details to follow.

SATURDAY 24 APRIL: Delegate conference, called by National Miners' Support Network, Socialist Movement trade union committee, and 'Trade Union News'. 11am-5pm, Hallam university, Sheffield.

SATURDAY 24 APRIL: Benefit for Winston Silcott and M25 Three campaigns (9pm till late). Halkevi Centre, 92-100 Stoke Newington Road, London N16. Tickets: £5 waged/£3 unwaged.

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After 2 April — Unite all struggles!

Pits, rail and buses halted

and strike wave sweeps Europe

Tens of thousands of people stayed away from work in Britain as miners, railworkers and London busworkers struck together on 2 April. Their action coincided with strikes by millions of workers throughout Europe in protest against rising unemployment and attacks on wages and working conditions. Workers Press was out and about in Britain to report on the strikes and to listen to those taking part. Pages 3 to 6 provide this coverage, and analysis of the developing movement of workers' struggles.

IN BRITAIN only a handful of trains ran last Friday, bringing the rail network to a halt as 70,000 railworkers took part in what the RMT rail union's general secretary Jimmy Knapp described as a 'rock solid' strike.

The transport minister for London, Steven Norris, had in effect admitted defeat before the strike started by urging commuters in London not to attempt the journey to work.

The capital was largely deserted, with police reporting traffic at Sunday levels. And embarrassed official in Norris's department said: 'It's like a bank holiday out there. We did not expect so many people to stay at home.'

■ In Italy, some 13 million workers downed tools for four hours in a near-general strike that paralysed mail networks, ferry services, buses, and planes. Postal workers were amongst those who struck for the whole day.

Refusal

■ In eastern Germany, engineering and steelworkers were out on strike for the second day running in protest against the employers' refusal to pay promised wage increases of more than 20 per cent.

The 300,000 engineering

workers and 20,000 steelworkers in eastern Germany now earn 70 per cent or less of the wage rates for equivalent work in western Germany.

Action was concentrated on the Baltic coastal state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, where shipyard and other industrial workers walked out at midday.

Other two-hour walkouts took place in the eastern states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, Brandenburg and eastern Berlin.

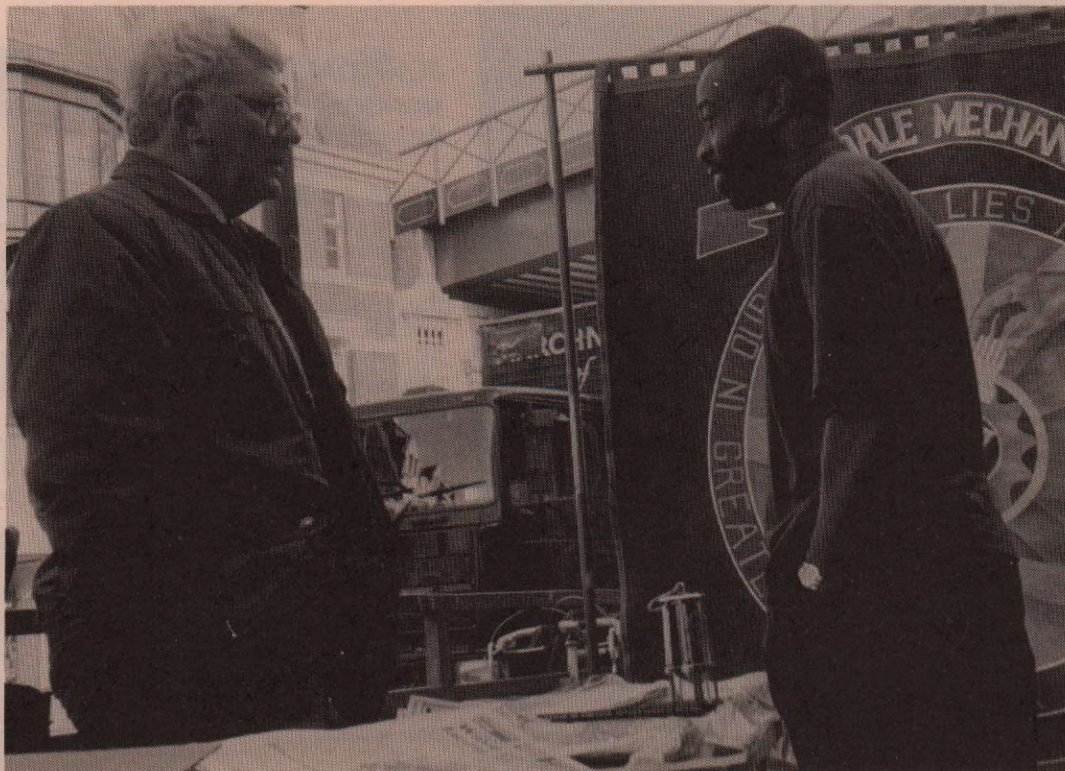
Launched

The metalworkers' union, IG Metall, said that more than 90,000 workers had taken part in the wave of warning strikes that launched the protest campaign.

■ French baggage handlers at Orly airport, Paris, caused two-hour delays for passengers on Air France and associated airlines

■ Refuse workers returned to work after a four-day strike in Madrid that left 16,000 tonnes of rubbish rotting in the streets of the Spanish capital.

The strikers returned to work after an improved wage offer. Refuse collectors in Seville later walked out over their own pay claim.



Ray Price, a North East miner and secretary of Murton colliery band, spoke to passersby in Brixton, south London, on 2 April: the miners are seeking the widest support Photo: Marg Nocol

Youth fighting back

On the evening of last Friday's strikes young people from youth groups in Wigan and Leigh held a 'Fight Back' social, as part of their campaign against the Labour council's decision to sack many of the youth workers in the area. Two of those who had organised the event with several live bands spoke to Workers Press

SEAN FOY from Leigh Youth Co-op:

This is Fight Back's first event. We want to use the money raised here to hold a meeting for the youth to organise their campaign against the cuts.

The Labour council treats us as brain dead, it says we can't do anything. Tonight shows this isn't the case. We put it all together ourselves.

We've got a miner speaking here tonight because our campaign is coming together with theirs, and with all the rest of the working class. We are all being pushed so much that it is

only a matter of time before the people rise up against the government.

With maybe 10 million people dependent on benefits, we've had enough. The miners have had enough and so have the youth.

And this isn't just in Britain. This is happening all over the world.

Now I've grown up in a Labour environment. We all know what the Tories are like, but Labour are just their puppets. They're supposed to be a working-class party but they haven't done anything for the working class.

Now it's up to us. The miners, the other workers, they have got to come out and stay out. I don't have a lot of time for unions.

A lot of them are corrupt.

'Today must be built on'

BILLY PYE, Lancashire NUM national executive member, spoke to Workers Press about the significance of the actions on 2 April:

For the last six months we've been waiting for the beginning. Today has got to be seen as that beginning. No more and no less.

Some people will suggest that today was the end, the culmination of the campaign. I think today has to be built on.

The next time [the NUM] calls for action I think that rather than suggesting people take solidarity action we should be demanding it. Demanding that they take solidarity action with the miners and in support of themselves, their own issues.

In the run-up to today we've been talking to shop stewards and obviously the main concern is the anti-union laws. But when we leaflet the members in factories and power stations we get a very positive response. People are more and more asking when are they going to have a ballot to stand up and fight and join in. We now have to start think-

When I had a job I was in USDAW [the shop workers' union] and they did nothing. I applied to be a union rep. and the union advised me that I would lose my job if I did. All the unions are interested in is getting the money off the members.

The government are afraid of the youth because they speak their mind. So if we can raise the money to hold conferences to organise ourselves, to educate ourselves, then we will be able to get what we want.

CLAIRE JONES, another organiser of the Fight Back event:

We held this social because of what the Labour council and the Tory government are doing to us. They are cutting all our youth services. But we get a boost when we see the miners and the railway workers taking action as well.

After this we want to hold a conference to unite the youth so we can speak to the council as one, rather than being picked on bit by bit. We've got to be allowed to get our act together.

Young people have got to be allowed to have their say. We are the generation of tomorrow.

'We'll win if we stick together'

Workers Press interviewed some of the participants on the 2 April march held through Liverpool, which was 2,000-strong and called by the TUC

LINDA WOOD, from the 24-hour Seacombe community picket outside the Spillers factory in Birkenhead:

We've been on strike outside Spillers since 4 December. Ten cleaners lost their jobs and they've brought one chap in to replace us.

We've had lots of support from the community and the miners and that's why we are here today supporting the miners. We'll win if we stick together.

Our spirits are high. All the ten women who were sacked are still as determined as when we started. We are not going to give in. It's not just because it's our jobs. It's for the local community as well.

This is ten jobs that have disappeared from the local community. From here we want to see this grow until we get the Conservatives out.

'We're not going to let this pit shut'

JOYCE MOLYNEAUX from the women's camp at Parkside pit:

I'm glad about this strike today. It shows that people are starting to think about other things than themselves.

We're determined that Parkside is going to reopen but I know that will take a lot more fight.

Today is a start. In future there has to be more people involved. We're on the pit camp to show the men there that they've got backing.

I was one of the founder members of Women Against Pit Closures in 1984. My husband worked at Bold colliery. That's shut. We're not going to let this one go.

The trouble is there is no leadership coming from the union leaders. They should be as active as we are. They're not doing anything, or when they do do something it's always too late.

Sheffield conference call to unite the struggles

A CALL for the democratisation and broadening of the National Miners' Support Network has been issued in preparation for the network's next conference, to be held in Sheffield on 24 April.

There was widespread anger at the last conference on 9 January. Many who attended felt that the agenda had been deliberately arranged to limit the discussion at the conference.

As a result, the North West Miners' Support Network called a conference in Manchester on 27 February on the basis of inviting the widest range of groups and organisations to take part in the movement that erupted alongside the miners last October.

This conference elected a steering committee to take the work forward on the theme 'Unite All the Struggles'.

The Sheffield conference has been recalled for 24 April. The steering committee elected at Manchester has issued, in preparation, the following statement:

THE miners do not stand alone. Their fight against the massacre of the coal industry and the destruction of their jobs has mobilised millions. The Tories are on the rack. They have no fighting unity. They would be unable to contain the fight of the working class if it were unleashed.

Our immediate objectives are:

1. To democratise the National Miners' Support Network.

To facilitate the unified fight of our class, the network must be composed of elected, recallable delegates from bottom to top.

A national steering committee must be elected at the proposed 24 April 'Solidarity with the Miners' recall conference to guide the work of the network in the spirit of all agreed resolutions.

2. To transform the national network.

Many local miners' support groups have already started to

constitute themselves as general support committees, responding to calls from all workers and communities in struggle. This must be built on. The movement must involve other sections of the working class as they go into battle.

3. To build and support generalised strike action.

At a time when all sections of the working class are under attack, the movement requires the TUC to take a lead in calling united strike action.

However, the official leadership is once again trying to isolate the miners from other workers in struggle.

In this context, the national network must work in co-operation with all trades unionists and community groups in preparing the ground for concerted workers' action to halt the bosses' offensive.

The steering committee welcomes maximum participation its work. Its next meeting will be held in Wigan on Saturday 18 April. Details from Tony Taylor on 0695 424451.

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After 2 April — Unite all struggles!



Leicestershire miners strike

BY PAUL HENDERSON

MEMBERS of the National Union of Mineworkers at Asfordby pit in Leicestershire struck on 2 April and picketed their pit, shown above.

Asfordby is known as a 'super-pit' and is one of the most modern in the country.

Of its 700 miners, a minority of 116 are in the NUM. The rest are members of the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM). On the day of the NUM strike, the UDM decided to hold a ballot to decide if they were going to strike in the future.

NUM branch delegate Joe White said: 'I hope they realise what they are doing and vote the way they should do.'

'If ever there was a time when we should all be together, this is it.'

Surely they can see it's everybody's fight.'

NUM branch secretary Peter Smith pointed out that just because railway workers had chosen 2 April as their day to strike did not mean that there was a plot.

'No, the railworkers realise that it's their jobs as well. Unless they act now, they will lose thousands of jobs over the next few years,' he said.

Torn

'Repeal of the acts affecting pits means that contracts will be torn up, and the railways are facing the same sort of situation. When they privatise, all they want is that you do a job, and if you fall by the wayside they couldn't care less.'

'So it's not just jobs, it's conditions as well.'

Coal pensions raid

THE GOVERNMENT is preparing a raid, Maxwell-style, on the £30 billion pension funds of the coal industry, the railways, and the Post Office to pay for massive redundancies in the run-up to the privatisation of these industries.

The Tories are forcing British Coal into using £470 million from its staff pension fund's surplus to finance the run-down of the industry.

The four unions concerned — the British Association of Colliery Management (BACM), the NACODS pit deputies' union, the GMB salaried group, and the National Union of Mineworkers/COSA staff section — are planning to challenge the legality of the decision.

British Coal has been assured by the Department of Trade and Industry that the department will meet all BC's court costs incurred if such a challenge takes place.

The issue arises because of the £1 billion surplus in the staff pension fund, of which BC is entitled to a £470 million rebate. BC wants to use the cash to offset payments into a staff scheme designed to make redundancy and early retirement pay-

ments to staff who lost their jobs before April 1992.

Bob Chappell, of BACM, a trustee of the pension fund, said: 'If BC can break one set of rules then they can break others — that's what Robert Maxwell did.'

'It is outrageous — they are not allowed to take money out of the scheme and this is clearly stated in the rules to protect the pension funds. There's no doubt the DTI are behind this. They are obviously desperate to save money.'

Another representative of BACM said: 'The government is determined to get its pound of flesh out of the nationalised pension funds.'

British Coal's plans only came to light last week when they refused to repay £98 million to the pension fund due for workers who had taken early retirement at 50 in the year ending 31 March 1992.

Under the government's general plans, the £6.5 billion British Coal staff pension fund and the £6.5 billion mineworkers' pension fund would be swallowed up, with British Rail's £8 billion fund and a similar amount held by the Post Office going the same way.

Leeds NALGO

'bre

JOHN DAVIES reports from Leeds on the strike on 2 April of workers in the National and Local Government Officers' Association (NALGO)

MOST libraries in Leeds were closed on 2 April, and other council services were hit, as NALGO workers struck in solidarity with the miners and railworkers.

Their brave decision was taken at a meeting earlier in the week and vindicated by the widespread support shown by members for the action.

There were a number of reasons for the branch's action said Dave Roberts, Leeds NALGO branch secretary, speaking at a lunchtime rally:

'Our members are sick to death of low wages. They're also sick of job losses. When our members' jobs are cut it doesn't just mean fewer jobs. It means that remaining workers are being asked to cover.'

'This means services deteriorate. But many of our members are out today in support of the miners.'

Roberts added that they had failed to get national support for the action.

Anger

'Where is [TUC leader] Norman Willis today? Where is the leader of our union? Repudiating the action of his members, no doubt. Many of our members have been waiting for six months to give vent to their anger,' he said.

'This government has attacked all workers at the same time, something Mrs Thatcher was never stupid enough to do.'

'We have broken the law today. What is desperately needed now is

co-ordination. We have seen excellent work done by RMT [railworkers' union] and the miners. We should be calling from this meeting for our leaders to make a stand so we can put 6 million or 10 million on the streets and let's get rid of this government.'

RMT national executive member Derek England spoke about the natural affinities between rail workers, power workers and



Jean Gittins

miners: 'If the miners' jobs go, so will ours.'

He spoke of the disturbing circumstances surrounding a recent incident involving two girls, who 'ran onto the platform at Morley station, expecting protection from a child molester. But there was no staff there.'

Bus privatisation will hit pensioners and disabled

Workers Press reporters spoke on 2 April to London busworkers who joined the day of action

DISABLED, Bill Ashton stood on the picket line at Stockwell garage, south London, on 2 April. A medically retired building worker, he was a staunch member of his union, UCATT:

I am standing here because the proposed privatisation of the bus services is being done for profit.

I have no doubt that they will start putting charges on our free bus passes, and then the cost will go up like the prescription charges have done over the years.

In fact our passes are not free. They are paid for by the borough councils. This bus-pass system helps to keep substantial numbers of buses running, especially during the daytime.

Pensioners and disabled people will be unable to use the buses as much — in fact substantially less. This will mean a reduction in services for all people and the loss of jobs in all sectors of the industry — maintenance, engineering, etc.

I am totally against people losing their jobs and I am totally against people losing their bus services. There will be chaos on the roads with the increase in cars. Pollution will increase.

I have sympathy with the miners and the rail workers because they have come out on the same issue as the bus workers — changes in their jobs and

privatisation. I am glad that they are striking on these principles.

'JOE STREET', a driver at Stockwell garage:

This is the first time I have been on strike in my life. I was off sick on the last two strike days.

This wasn't how I planned my life. I got out of being a bus driver years ago when I joined with some others and became a company secretary of a firm down in Croydon. But the company went bust and I ended up coming back to the buses.

Fell

It was the downturn in the property market that sunk us. It wasn't a big company, but at one time there was money to be made in buying and selling property. Money was borrowed from one part of the company to make the investments. But the bottom fell out of the market and we were landed with mortgage repayments which couldn't be met.

BRIXTON garage, south London, was out solid on 2 April. Keith Carter, the garage rep., explained the situation:

The new schedules were brought in at every south London garage a week ago, and that means extra hours of work. You

Bob Cryer, Labour MP for Bradford South, said that he was at the rally to celebrate the fact that this government had pushed the trade union movement too far and it had now started to fight back.

'If these knaves in government privatise the railways then we in the Labour movement should have a clear commitment to re-nationalise them,' he declared.

Powerful

Jean Gittins, a member of Women Against Pit Closures since 1984-85, said she had had two sons and a husband in the industry. Now she had nobody. She ended a powerful and moving speech with one of her fine poems.

The banner of the Leeds Pensioners' Group was one of many carried on the march held in the city. Terry Harrison, NUM branch secretary at Kellingley, welcomed the pensioners, saying that the recent addition of VAT to fuel bills was vicious. 'We should be giving away our coal stocks to these people,' he said.

After setting out the economic arguments against pit closures, Harrison declared that the campaign for pits is not just about miners or railworkers who are threatened by the closures, 'It's about local government jobs, schools and everyone else'.

'Last October Heseltine was

can't print how people feel!

Ninety per cent are against all these new proposals, which include cutting wages and making us work another four to five hours a week.

To explain what it means, we used to make the hour's journey to and from Sloane Square three times — now it's four times. They have done it by cutting some of the breaks. We're doing extra mileage, which is more tiring; even management has been forced to admit that it is a fairly stressful job. By the end of the day you've had enough.

We can't do overtime any more because the hours are too long. We can only make up our money by working on our rest day.

One day is not enough to strike. We should be out a lot longer. Let's hit the government where it hurts. It would be a good idea to come out on Saturdays and hit big business — Selfridges and Harrods, the big shops.

Public support has been great. The postman doesn't deliver the letters here any more. He just waves and walks past. We stopped the milkman coming in and the Thames Water man wouldn't cross our picket line.

I am worried about the pensioners' free passes. We are getting rumours that some local councils are charging pensioners. In any case there is no doubt that charges for pensioners' passes will go up with privatisation.

After 2 April — Unite all struggles!

GO workers 'break the law'

Nurses join rally in Newcastle

forced to back down. Not because of the eloquence of our arguments. He backed down because we got hundreds of thousands of people on the streets. Thank you for your support. Together we can win.'

Workers Press spoke to Jean Gittins of Women Against Pit Closures:
'It's more than about our jobs.

It's about the right of human beings to be here, to live.

'I don't want to live at the expense of someone else, at the expense of the lives of miners in other countries. They want to make us think it's like that, but it's not.

'We've more in common with workers in other countries than we have with those who rule this country. It's not just about keep-

ing pits open. 'It's about having a decent life.

'Breathing coal dust all your life isn't that wonderful. If it's not good enough for canaries and horses, it's not good enough for men.

'Work itself isn't what makes a worker. Nowadays, if you lose your job or just don't have work, then it's as if you don't have an identity.'

MINERS in the North East struck solidly on 2 April as part of the national strike. Only around 80 miners, spread across four shifts, crossed picket lines, although management tried to blow this action up out of all proportion.

A rally at the Grey's Monument in Newcastle heard speakers from all sections of workers involved in struggle.

Banners

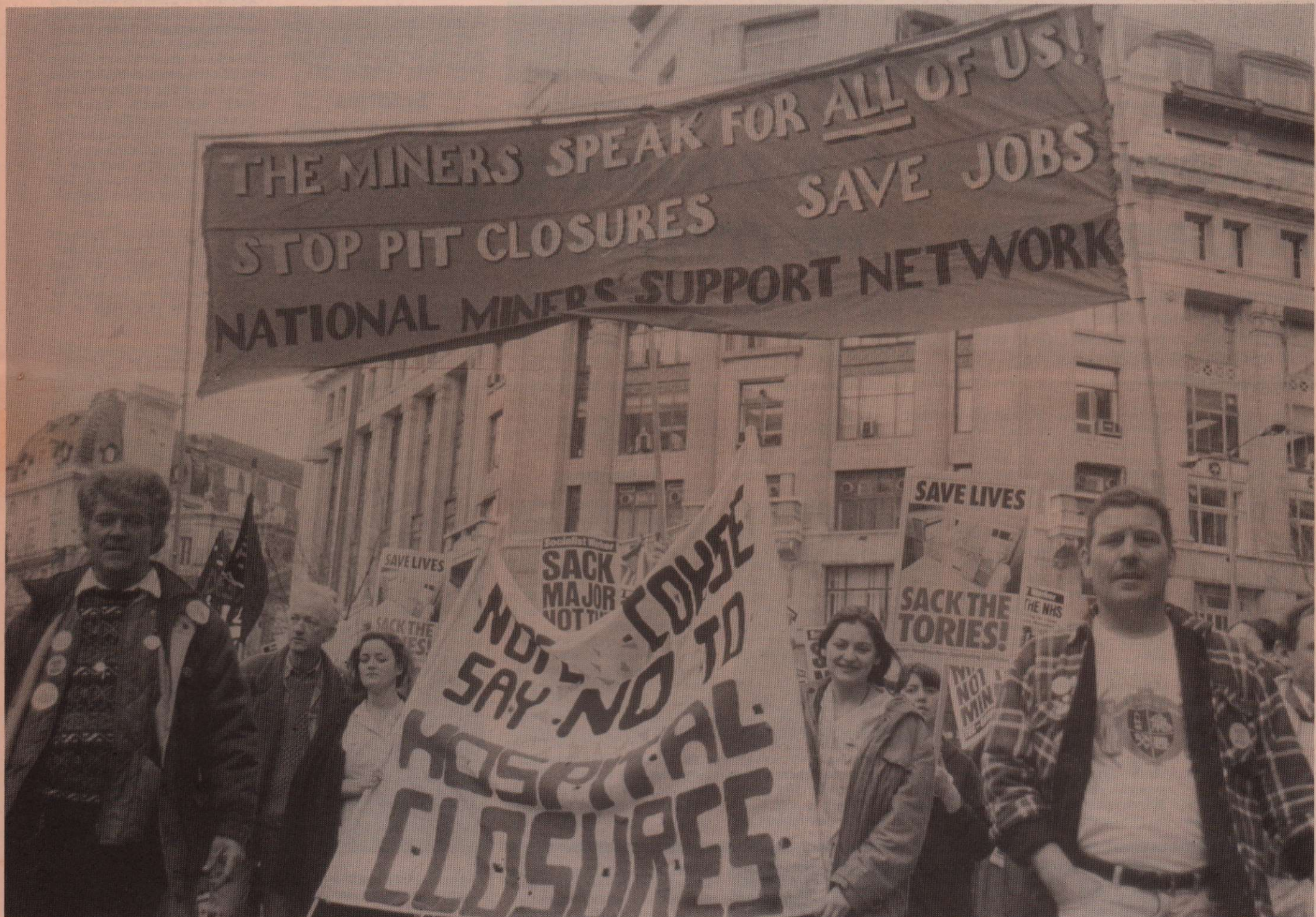
Miners and their banners were prominent, along with firefighters, the public services, as well as the unemployed centres in the region.

Nurses from Queen Victoria hospital, Newcastle, walked out to join the rally.

A big response came from the crowd to all those speakers who attacked the Trades Union Congress and stressed that 2 April was only a beginning for what was needed — the united action of the whole working class against the government.

At a lunchtime rally in Bromley, Kent, there was an enthusiastic response to the call for an intensified campaign to save all the threatened pits.

A 4,000-strong march and rally in Barnsley heard NUM president Arthur Scargill say: 'We've achieved the objective we wanted — to focus attention on the disgraceful behaviour of this government in closing down the coal mines.'



Miners lead London marchers

NURSES from closure-threatened University College Hospital (seen with their banner above), joined a 700-strong demonstration in London on 2 April in support of the miners, railworkers and London busworkers.

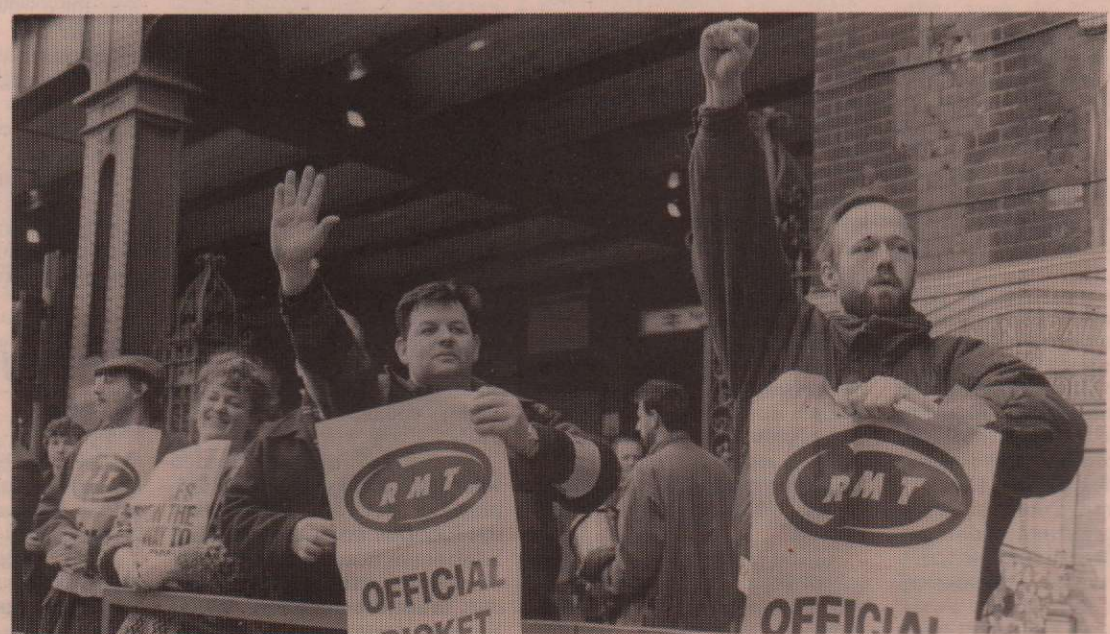
The march was led by miners from Littleton colliery, Staffordshire. Building workers were represented on the march and a bright new banner from the Joint Sites Committee was prominent.

Several London branches of the NALGO public sector union took part, as did representatives of Camden trades council.

There was a picket of Waterloo station (seen right), part of action by RMT railworkers which brought the rail network to a standstill.

Some 300 NALGO members in Hounslow, west London, walked out in protest against the cuts and marched on the town hall. Branch president Ken Emerson said: 'Our members are cheated off with the recession and the job cuts and wanted to show support for the miners.'

Photos: Marg Nicol



After 2 April — Unite all struggles!



A nurse from University College Hospital addressed the London march on 2 April. As did miners' MP Dennis Skinner Photo: M. Nicol

Dockers' event a rousing success for the miners

Sacked London dockers held a benefit for the Women Against Pit Closures' (WAPC) Rufford camp, Nottinghamshire, at their social club in the East End on 3 April. DOT GIBSON was among those who had a good night out

THE dockers' evening last Saturday for the women's camp was a rousing success. Everybody enjoyed themselves — and well over £500 was raised!

Colin Coughlin, chair of the Tilbury Docks Disputes Committee, said the benefit was a sign of the times. 'In the past we raised funds from donations given out of dockers' wages. But things have changed.'

All the leading trades unionists were sacked at the end of the 1989 strike and the union was derecognised at Tilbury.

Unite

'But that doesn't mean we can't raise money,' said Coughlin. 'Tonight is an example of how we can unite in solidarity and find the means to raise the resources for our fight.'

The WAPC group has a core membership of 20 with a large

periphery. They ensure that there is always a member in the caravan outside the pit; they speak at meetings all over the country and work closely with the National Union of Mineworkers. The group meets every Wednesday.

Chair of Rufford WAPC Ida Kelly's two brothers were miners — one had died in his 50s of lung disease. Although her husband had retired by the 1984-85 strike, he was 100 per cent with the strikers and threw himself wholeheartedly into the fight.

'I am sure that the movement will snowball,' said Ida. 'I feel very angry with the TUC. They are not even doing now what they should have done a long time ago.'

Ida had spoken to Norman Willis, Trades Union Congress general secretary, at the 29 March London march and lobby of parliament against pit clo-

tures, organised by the TUC. 'He told me that people didn't want to strike. I asked him who he had been talking to.'

'He didn't reply. Maybe it was scabby Lynk and scabby Greatrex [leaders of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, UDM],' said Ida.

Ida thought it wrong that the TUC should receive so much money from trades unionists and yet fail to unite them in the fight.

'When I look for Norman Willis and his friends, I look for a fence, because I am sure that they will be sitting on it,' she said.

She explained that it had been very hard in the coalfields since 1985, and especially in areas like Nottingham, where the UDM had recruited non-strikers in opposition to the NUM.

Heroes

'There is a high price to pay in a fight. Families have been split up,' she said. 'There are plenty of examples where father will not talk to son and where man will not talk to wife.'

'But the striking miners are

the heroes of the working class. Yesterday not one piece of coal left Rufford pit.'

Ida said that in her view it was wrong for miners to be expected to work 12-hour shifts.

'I went down the mine to the coal face,' she said, 'and the working miner gave me a cup of tea from his flask in a mug covered with coal dust.'

Inhuman

'I am very fussy about cleanliness, but it was the best cup of tea I have ever had. It is inhuman for men to be forced to work down there in those conditions for an hour let alone 12 hours. They should get £100 in their pocket before they even go down the shaft.'

'We talk about all these things when people come to visit us in the pit camp,' said Ida, 'and we also tell them about the brutality of the police. There are so many examples — I could go on for ever.'

'They even came down to the picket line on 2 April with a video camera trying to intimidate the miners. But it's snowballing because it isn't only miners now. It's everybody!'

Pretending Militant Labour were the only people fighting the poll tax or the cuts, their leaflet gave no idea what policies they would fight for.

Marxist intervention in elections should try to unite local struggles, and use the campaign to raise political consciousness around a socialist programme.

Failing on both counts, Militant Labour's campaign in Lambeth augurs ill for its attempt to put itself forward as an 'alternative' party.

Missing title

ADVERTISED to speak at 'Socialist Worker's' May Day rally, is one Megnad Desai. Shouldn't that be Lord Desai?

The London School of Economics professor was ennobled two years ago. Come on chaps, give the man his title!

Charlie Pottins

Support group rallies behind tug workers

BY A WELSH CORRESPONDENT

CARDIFF Miners' Support Group led a 'solidarity lobby' at the entrance to Cardiff docks on 2 April in support of a strike by local tugboat workers.

A delegation of local government workers from Cardiff county branch of the NALGO union marched out of their offices behind their banner to join the lobby.

The strike started over the sacking of 16 tugboat workers — one-third of the workforce — and the introduction of a new contract cutting wages by 33 per cent and increasing hours by 50 per cent, the strikers' representative Mike Campbell said.

Scuffles

When the union refused to agree the contract, redundancy notices were issued.

Scuffles on the picket line reflected the great bitterness against scabs, whose work, the strikers allege, is a danger to health and safety.

Claiming illegal picketing, the employers have obtained an injunction against the strikers, whose union, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), has told them that they

will withdraw support if they do not act within the law.

The solidarity lobby was decided at the regular meeting of the miners' support group, where Timex workers from Dundee and the striking Cardiff tugboat workers spoke about the experiences of their disputes.

Joined

The group has become a forum for all local struggles. On 1 April leading trades unionists joined the miners and Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) to address a well-attended public meeting organised by the group.

Speakers were: Tyrone O'Sullivan from Tower Lodge NUM; Ann Jones of WAPC; Ken Thomas of the railway union, RMT; Mike Smith, Wales regional secretary of the Fire Brigades Union; Mike Campbell of the TGWU; and Cath Jones, executive committee member of Cardiff trades council and member of the miners' support group.

■ Cardiff Miners' Support Group will lead another solidarity lobby on 13 April — this time outside Cory's offices in Newport. This will be followed by another rally in Cardiff on 17 April.



Clara Buckley campaigning for support on Brixton high street, south London, on Saturday 27 March Photo: Marg Nicol

'I want justice for my son'

CLARA BUCKLEY, whose son Orville Blackwood died as a result of injections given to him in Broadmoor prison hospital in August 1991, is determined to continue her fight for justice.

She made this clear to Workers Press, after a hearing at Bracknell magistrates' court last week had reaffirmed the earlier court judgement that her son's death was accidental.

Determined

The five-day Bracknell hearing resulted from a determined fight to have that first judgement overturned. Clara was successful in winning a judicial review of the case, which decided that justice had not been seen to be done and that there

must be a second inquest.

Despite her disappointment at the result of this second hearing, Clara says the fight goes on. 'I am not going to give up. I want justice for my son. The facts must be known,' she said.

Clara does not see her son's case as an individual issue. She points out that over the last eight years three young men have died in Broadmoor as a result of the injection of drugs by medical staff.

She is pleased the case gave wider publicity to these disturbing incidents and says that people should not settle for what the authorities are doing.

■ To take part in this fight, please contact: The Orville Blackwood Community Campaign, Talma Road, London SW2. (Phone 071-924 0913.)

Standing for what?

AT THE Crisis in London campaign's first annual general meeting last year, in opposing a motion supporting Labour, I argued that with it expelling leftwingers, breaking union agreements, and carrying out Tory cuts workers and socialists in some places might decide to challenge official Labour candidates.

At the recent Crisis in London public meeting in Lambeth, a comrade from 'Militant' urged us to back Steve Nally, standing as 'Militant Labour' in Bishops ward, against a Labour rightwinger called Swindles. Nobody expressed any horror about standing against Labour!

It was pointed out that Crisis in London could not endorse a particular candidate without further discussion, and supporters still in the Labour Party might be put in a difficult position if we did. 'However, if the

Inside left

comrade would give details of where to turn up for canvassing, etc. . . .

With Labour leading the witch-hunt against Lambeth council workers and alleged corruption, Bishops has followed Angell ward temporarily into Liberal hands. But leftwingers shouldn't feel discouraged from standing. That said, 'Militant Labour's' by-election campaign left much to be desired.

'Vote against the cuts and rent rises,' said Steve Nally's leaflet. 'Lambeth Labour council has just voted through major cuts in local services. As if, after 14 years of Tory government, things aren't bad enough.'

Citing increased rents and school meal costs, and cuts in school repairs and nurseries, it went on: 'We didn't vote for Labour so they could do the

Tory's [sic] dirty work. . . . Lambeth needs good local services' — as if people needed telling! Militant Labour had helped campaign to defend child-care facilities, it said. 'That's the difference with MILITANT Labour councillors. They don't just talk they act.'

THE two-page leaflet didn't acknowledge past Lambeth battles, nor mention the Labour Party's expulsion of left-wing councillors, and instructions to Labour councils to carry out the Tories' dirty work.

It seemed all you needed were good local councillors prepared to 'act'. Not unlike what the Liberals might put out. The back page, attacking the Liberals' record on the poll tax, left out Liberal-controlled Tower Hamlets' record on racialism and housing.

Cold climate faces Swedish workers

BY PETER JEFFRIES

NEW laws that came into operation on 1 April mean that Swedish workers will no longer be paid for the first day of any sick leave they take.

They will also lose part of any employment injury benefits to which they are entitled.

Unemployment in this social-democratic dreamland is set to rise to 7 per cent, the highest rate since the 1930s. The country has a public sector deficit of 172 billion kronor (more than \$1 billion) and the country's conservative government is hell-bent on cutting costs.

The government hopes to save some 6 billion kronor by the cuts in sickness and injury benefits.

Legal changes introduced at the end of last year mean that the onus is now on the worker to prove that an injury or illness originated at work.

Stronger

Until then, the law's presumption was for the occupational origin of certain injuries 'unless considerably stronger reasons speak against it'. The law now states that an injury should be regarded as occupational in origin only 'if predominant reasons speak in favour of it'.

Some 50 per cent of injuries or diseases are now omitted under the new definition, leaving many workers without industrial injury benefits. Those left off the list include repetitive strain injuries, which will hit women particularly hard.

Last September the govern-



Sweden's most important export produce is making losses... and the recession is deepening

ment and the social-democratic opposition reached agreement about a package of measures designed to make workers pay for the mounting crisis. But this was not sufficient to stop the krona's devaluation and the sharp price increases, and therefore real wage cuts, that this involved.

Because of growing pressure from the unions' rank and file, the union bureaucracy could not go along with a second government crisis package that meant big job cuts, increased VAT on food, and the loss of two days' statutory holidays.

The reduction of holidays will hit the worst-paid workers hardest, because they rarely have more generous holiday provisions under collective agreements.

The Swedish economy is in the midst of a deepening recession. Output is predicted to fall by a further 1.5 per cent this year

and unemployment is still rising. The purchasing power of wages is expected to drop by 3.5 per cent in the coming year as inflation grows and the increased VAT on food takes its toll.

The government is now discussing budget proposals which involve deep public expenditure cuts.

Pleas

The union leaders have replied with pleas for more government spending on infrastructure projects to create more jobs, a quite unrealistic proposal given the worsening position of Swedish state finances.

As part of its crisis package the government set out to make changes in Sweden's industrial relations system. In particular the employers want to destroy the centralised bargaining system.

The moves were only shelved

for the time being after a wave of anti-government protests. The bosses want to negotiate factory by factory over wages and conditions, part of their attempt to split the workers.

Meanwhile the employers' federation, the SAF, has offered a zero pay 'rise' for the coming year. Taking their lead from Thatcher, the conservative government is also giving the trade union leaders the cold shoulder. The unions were not consulted over changes in sick entitlement, a break with all postwar precedents.

The unions have been thrown off several official bodies, including those dealing with health and safety issues.

These developments will no doubt interest many workers in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, for whom Sweden was held up as the sort of model 'market economy' which would ensure prosperity for all.

The Tories' one achievement

WE WERE talking, a waggish friend and I, about the fiasco of this year's Grand National. Hugely disappointed, my friend remarked: 'I'm beginning to believe you when you tell me we're in a deep crisis.'

Well, I don't mind friends — or enemies, for that matter — having a snigger at my expense. But anyone who seriously doubts that the crisis, in all its aspects, is deepening by the day has only to look at the newspapers.

Consider for instance John Major, whose popularity has reportedly plunged to the lowest rating recorded for any British prime minister since the year 1945. Four out of five people are now dissatisfied with him.

Instead of doing the decent thing — falling on his sword, for preference — he has come up with a ploy that, for sheer chutzpa, takes the breath away.

Or it would take the breath away were it not so totally characteristic of this crooked bunch of image-massagers, spin-doctors, damage-limitationists, and fiddlers of the jobless figures who call themselves a government, and for whom presentation is all.

Through his press secretary, Major has ordered the information chiefs in more than 30 government departments each to tell him their department's three biggest achievements since the general election.

Replies on his desk, please, by Good Friday, which was the first anniversary of the prime minister's accession to office.

Achievements? Did the man say *achievements*? Like this year's Grand National, it's enough to make a horse laugh. Does any Yorkshire reader of my age or thereabouts remember the little book that was once circulated in Bradford, entitled: 'What the Council Has Done for Bradford'? It consisted entirely of blank pages.

Whitehall's information chiefs — shouldn't they rightly be called disinformation chiefs? — are going to have their work cut out to do any better than that. That Major expects them to, shows how out of touch with reality he is, and how profound is the crisis his government now finds itself in.

Well, let's be fair. Major's tawdry government has got one positive achievement to its credit: it has helped to unite and mobilise the working class behind the miners, the railway workers, and the London bus workers, and has aroused throughout the land a mood of anger and militancy such as we have not seen for years.

Patten's gobbledygook

A FEW weeks ago, commenting on education minister John Patten's insistence on pupils' speaking 'correct' English, even in the playground, this column drew attention to the wretched example he and his colleagues set in their own speech and writing.

Since then several correspondents have kindly sent me proof that the vain and pompous Patten — who came a cropper in the High Court last week and whose arrogance now seems to have ranged pretty well the entire teaching profession, and a great many parents, against him — has indeed a shockingly limited grasp of his own language.

A risible example is his spelling of the word 'sincerely', which he spells without the second 'e'. No, I'm not joking: I've seen a photocopy of a letter, signed in his own slovenly handwriting: 'Yours sincerely'.

PERSONAL COLUMN

Last Sunday's 'Observer' provided a further example, which may not be from Patten's own pen but must have been read and approved by him before it went out to teachers.

It is an extract from the Department for Education's instructions on the national curriculum English tests. The abbreviations, for those who would like to try and make some sense of it, are to be interpreted as follows: AT means Attainment Target; NC, National Curriculum; PC, Profile Component; TA, Teacher Assessment. Now take a deep breath:

'For PC3 (writing) first examine the constituent AT levels, based on the NC test levels and the TA level in the case of AT4/5. If the TA in AT4/5 (presentation) is at level 7 and the NC test level for AT3 (writing) is at level 8, then the PC level is the AT3 NC test level. If the TA in AT4/5 is not at level 7, but is higher than level 4, then the PC level is worked out as follows: AT3 NC test level x 8 plus AT4 TA level x 2, divided by 10.'

Poets' corner

IT'S hardly possible to open a paper or a journal these days without coming across yet another discussion of Philip Larkin and his squalid habits and still more squalid views.

Frankly, I for one have had enough sordid Larkiniana to last me for the rest of the century.

Masquerading as reviews of a recent biography, these omnipresent articles are tailored to the taste of our times by concentrating largely on the late poet's sexual habits: his view that sexual intercourse was like having someone else blow your nose for you; his avowed preference for masturbation as cheaper and less time-consuming; his collection of pornography; and so on *ad nauseam*.

Larkin's vile and vilely expressed racist views, the cracks he regularly exchanged with his crony Kingsley Amis about 'niggers' and 'wogs', are less titillating and therefore less commented on.

None of this should affect our view of his poetry, which it would be puerile to ostracise. He wasn't the first sad soul, and won't be the last, to turn his suffering and his inner demons into verse; and that verse deserves to be judged on its own merits.

So does the work of another contemporary poet, the publicity-conscious exhibitionist Fiona Pitt-Kethley, whose gimmick, if that is the right word, is to turn her tedious sexual encounters into tedious verse.

Sometimes she turns them into equally tedious prose. The other week she had a poem in the 'London Review of Books' and an article, published more or less simultaneously in the 'Guardian', recycling the same dreary material.

Verse or prose, people's accounts of their sex lives are, like their accounts of their dreams, of strictly limited interest. Even Casanova, who had some degree of literary talent, palls after a while.

Pitt-Kethley, who has markedly less talent than Casanova, is turning into a bore. As Clement Attlee said of Harold Laski, a period of silence from her would be appreciated.

Peter Fryer

Watch out

Pretenders

THE BBC1 soap 'EastEnders' has been broadcast for nearly ten years.

Like its ITV counterpart, 'Coronation Street', it is billed as a portrayal of working-class life. Unlike the ludicrous and shortly to be terminated 'Eldorado', 'EastEnders' has a foot in the recognisable world.

It has dealt with almost every human feeling and activity. Past and current themes include murder, rape, racism, homelessness, alcohol abuse, HIV and AIDS, marital infidelity and homosexuality.

Audiences for these two soaps approach 20 million for each of their showings per week — five in total.

Right from its first episode, 'EastEnders' has enjoyed very good direction and some excellent acting. 'Dirty Den' was a brilliant creation and portrayal: the charming rogue who falls short of psychopathy.

At the moment, Grant, Phil and Sharon, joint owners of the Queen Victoria pub in Albert Square, are engaged in a well-staged love triangle. Grant is a psychopath who holds an illusory attraction for Sharon, while his twin brother Phil appears to offer her a more solid love.

For my money, 'EastEnders' knocks 'Coronation Street' into a cocked hat. Of course it has nothing to do with the reality of life for working-class people in Britain.

And here lies the secret of its success: everyone's problem and every difficult situation can be changed for the better providing the individual concerned can find his or her way through the maze of life.

The community around Albert Square is a set of individuals clawing their path to

survival or success. A glamorised re-creation of a working-class community where the word community is a misnomer. A truly immoral saga where humanity's instinct of collectivism is perpetually denied; an oil-strike life.

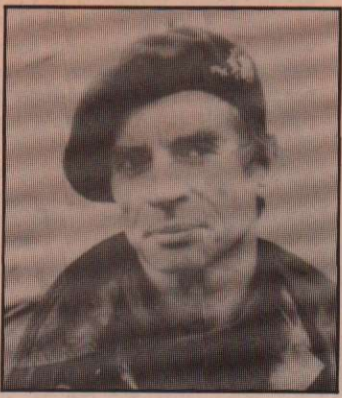
Arthur Fowler makes his living from gardening, having been made redundant; Peter Beale lives high on the hog from his market stall, and his son runs a thriving catering business; Michelle is studying to become middle-class and takes in lodgers to pay the mortgage; and Dot Cotton, installed as a laundress, turns out hot gossip and smooth sheets.

Where are the workers in all this petty-bourgeois endeavour? According to some theorists the working class has disappeared. If life is really like 'EastEnders', they're right.

It is no accident that there is now an outpouring of soap on the telly. While the real drudgery of unemployment, or its ever-present threat, may dominate people's lives, the bright spark of opportunity glows in the corner of the living-room.

None of the 'EastEnders' characters went on the mass demonstrations against pit closures last October. But hundreds of thousands of viewers did. The ideological ingenuity of 'EastEnders' and its like will not be enough to derail a working class bent on socialism.

Adrian Blakelock



'Nureyev' (left) acclaims a legend (Channel 4, 11 April), and '2001: A Space Odyssey' (Channel 4, 13 April)



In sight

Sunday 11 April 'Nureyev'. Originally shown on 'The South Bank Show', Melvyn Bragg interview with the great dancer about his life, from poverty in the Urals to acclaim in the West (3.20pm, Channel 4). **EVERYMAN: 'Bosnia's Last Testament'.** Ed Vulliamy, who first broke the story of the Serb detention camps, returns to Travnik and asks whether the Bosnian way of life is about to be wiped from the face of the earth by Serb aggression (10.30pm, BBC1). **AFRICA ON AFRICA: 'Mbira Music'.** From traditional rituals of music to songs from the liberation war, a repeat showing of the documentary exploring the role of music in

Zimbabwe's history (12.50am, Channel 4).

Monday 12 April 'Acoustic Routes'. Documentary on the life of the legendary Bert Jansch, who influenced a generation of guitarists. Includes rare footage of Brownie McGhee (5pm, BBC2). **ROCK STEADY SPECIAL: 'k d lang'.** An 'in concert' performance (7.25pm, Channel 4). **ARENA: 'Edgar Reitz — Return to Heimat'.** About the making of the sequel to the epic series which has just had its second run on BBC2 (8.30pm, BBC2). **STATES OF AMERICA.** First of three debates from the US, once considered the great 'melting pot' (11.55pm, Channel 4).

Tuesday 13 April ASSIGNMENT: 'Italy on Trial'. When Judge Antonio de Prieto undertook Operation Clean Hands, it wasn't the mafioso that began to fill the jails but prominent businessmen, civil servants and politicians (7.45pm, BBC2).

Friday 16 April PUBLIC EYE: 'Profits from Punishment'. Reveals worrying new facts about the US company chosen to run Britain's first private prison (8pm, BBC2). JJ

Selected films

BLOCKHEADS (1938). Ex-Private Oliver Hardy learns that his former comrade, Stan Laurel, is still guarding the post, 21 years after the end of World War I (Saturday, 8.55am, BBC2). **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968).**

Stanley Kubrick's milestone science fiction epic with the controversial ending (Tuesday, 10pm, Channel 4). **THEY LIVE BY NIGHT (1949).** Farley Granger and Cathy O'Donnell are the fugitive young lovers in Nicholas Ray's memorable directorial debut (Thursday, 12.05am, BBC2).

UN shown as tool of ethnic cleansing

THE United Nation's decision to remove up to 15,000 people from the besieged Bosnian town of Srebrenica exposes to the world that it is now an instrument in 'ethnic cleansing'.

The so-called 'peacekeeping organisation' is acting in line with this policy, for which the Serbian regime has been rightly condemned.

Jose-Maria Mendiluce, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, half admitted as much when he said that the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs were 'trying to use us as an instrument of ethnic cleansing'. They are doing more than try.

Two UN convoys have already moved out 5,000 Muslims. At least 13 people died in the desperate scramble for places on the lorries.

For more than a year the imperialist powers, while wringing their hands and calling for 'peace', have allowed and encouraged the Serbian Stalinist-fascist regime to wage a systematic war aimed at wiping out the Muslims of Bosnia.

An estimated 150,000 Bosnians have been killed or reported missing, while hundreds of thousands of others have been driven out of their homes and taken refuge in other parts of the former Yugoslavia or abroad.

BY PETER JEFFRIES

Morillon declared after the United Nations flag was raised in the town.

A grateful town council renamed the main street in his honour, hoping that his presence would save from slaughter Muslims who had fled there for safety from the Serbian forces.

Last week Morillon was back in Sarajevo, leaving the people of Srebrenica to their fate.

More than 60,000 people in the town are living in hunger and squalor, under constant siege for almost a year from Serbian forces who are 'starving and shelling' the town — the last Muslim outpost in eastern Bosnia.

As Morillon fled, multiple

rocket launchers, armoured vehicles, and helicopters were attacking from some three or four miles to the south of the town.

Croatian leaders followed quickly behind this latest stage of Serbia's 'ethnic cleansing' when they demanded Muslim capitulation in the areas given to Croatia in the carve-up of Bosnia proposed by the Vance-Owen plan, which is UN-sponsored.

Submit

The Bosnian Croat military command issued an ultimatum to the Muslims, stating that if the Muslims did not submit to Croatian rule by 15 April in a large swath of south-west Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Croats would take matters into their own hands.



'Rescued' Bosnian Muslim women and children from Srebrenica arriving in Tuzla

French Socialist Party crumbles

BY FRED POTTER

FOLLOWING its humiliating defeat in the recent general election, when it lost over 200 parliamentary seats and saw its vote fall below 20 per cent, the French 'Socialist' Party is falling to pieces.

Bitter recriminations, insults and threats of physical violence were freely exchanged between leaders during a 12-hour debate at last weekend's executive committee meeting, which several eyewitnesses described as 'a nightmare'.

Former prime minister Michel Rocard — who lost his seat in the general election but

still has ambitions to be the 'left's' candidate in the 1995 presidential election — seized control of the executive.

On a close vote, he and his supporters effectively dissolved the post of first secretary which President Francois Mitterrand's henchman Laurent Fabius has held for 18 months.

Putsch

They did so in what one of Fabius's supporters, former interior minister Paul Quilès, called 'a carefully prepared putsch unworthy of a presidential candidate'. Fabius, widely blamed for the general election rout, called it 'a put-up job' and stalked out of the meeting with-

out shaking Rocard's hand.

Another former prime minister, Pierre Mauroy, who led the party from 1988 to 1992, turned against Rocard during the meeting. And about half the executive committee boycotted a provisional management committee, headed by Rocard, which has the job of preparing a special party congress in July.

They said they refused to work with Rocard, and some asked Jacques Delors, European Commission president, to come back from Brussels and restore party unity.

Since last Sunday party leaders have been tearing each other apart in press, radio and TV interviews.

Some said they would leave

the party in disgust. Even before the meeting began, Lionel Jospin, first secretary from 1981 to 1988 and a former education minister, resigned, saying he was retiring from politics.

Former defence minister Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who leads the party's left wing, resigned from the party, condemning what he called 'a petty palace revolt'.

Worst

Francois Hollande, who runs Delors's political fan club in France, said Rocard had behaved like a machine politician of the worst kind, and called on him to resign from his new post.

Rocard has promised to give

the party a new lease of life with a 'big bang' that will open the way to an alliance with green communists, and centrists in the 1995 presidential election campaign.

Chevènement blames the Socialist Party's election débâcle on its leaders' betrayal of socialist principles and its sell-out to 'free-market ideology'.

This is true as far as it goes. But the party shares in the general crisis of social-democracy all over Europe, including Britain.

In France, as in Italy and Spain, the social-democratic parties have gained nothing from the collapse of Stalinism. In fact they have been severely weakened.

Tragic

The US administration now makes noises about arming the Bosnians. This has nothing to do with any sympathy for the tragic situation which the Bosnian people have been plunged into.

It is concerned only with the preservation of US diplomatic and military interests in the region, against the threat of the European capitalist powers.

The recent visit to the town by General Philippe Morillon, Commander of UN forces in Bosnia, can now be seen for what it was — a piece of callous deception.

'Here I am and here I stay,'

Russian miners battle for jobs and wages

BY SIMON PIRANI

THE workers' movement in Russia has not taken either side in the conflict between President Yeltsin and the parliamentary leaders, as far as can be seen from media reports.

Leaders of the Independent Miners Union, formed after the strikes of 1989 which re-awakened the workers' movement,

have always been vociferous supporters of Yeltsin.

But in the mines themselves, a struggle continues over wages, conditions and job security — often in conflict with

ministers appointed by Yeltsin himself.

The most recent, bitter phase of this battle was fought out last month at the Vorkuta mine in northern Siberia.

The Independent Miners Union leader at the pit, Ivan Gouridov, was jailed on 12 February, and released six days later after a sit-down protest strike spread to 12 other mines.

Gouridov was arrested at the instigation of a new pit manager, who had been appointed by the petrol and energy minister, Yuri Chafranik, without consulting the workforce.

Jailing

The jailing followed a trip to Moscow by a miners' delegation which lobbied Chafranik to demand pay negotiations for 1993, government investment, and permission for capitalist companies to make hard-currency investment to modernise the coalfield.

'More than 500 stayed at the bottom of a shaft for five days and six nights, relying for subsistence on their families and their union,' reported the French newspaper 'Liberation'. 'On the Wednesday morning,

229 miners began a hunger strike, addressing an ultimatum to the judicial authorities. . . .

'The following Monday, the light and ventilation of the pits were cut. . . .

'The pretext given by the management was that electrical supplies had been cut by a violent snowstorm which had been raging for days in this area where temperatures often sink below -40 centigrade.

'Then came an accumulation of methane gas, and six miners were hospitalised after returning to the surface.

'Twelve other pits in the Vorkuta region stopped work in solidarity.

'After the first victory against the management and those who the miners call "Moscow chinovniki" (bureaucrats), it is likely that the mobilisation will be renewed on pay demands.'

Gouridov was released on a million roubles' bail. The miners proclaimed him the 'people's manager' of the Vorkuta coal basin.

This struggle — and not the union leaders' statements in support of Yeltsin — deserves the support of the workers' movement internationally.

New Trotskyist paper in Russia

TROTSKYISTS in Voronezh have published a newspaper calling for the building of the working-class movement against all sections of the bureaucracy.

The four-page paper, published in 11,000 copies and distributed in commercial newsstands across the huge industrial city in southern Russia, is entitled 'Kresty 348'.

Kresty was a prison in which revolutionaries were often kept by the 'democratic' government of Alexander Kerensky, to which so many pro-capitalist 'democrats' of today look back fondly.

Greetings

Greetings to 'Kresty 348'! Workers Press wishes it every success against 'democratic' and 'conservative' bureaucrats alike!

The first issue of 'Kresty 348' carries a statement by the Socialist Workers Union, the Russian organisation which is part of the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International.

It also includes an explanation of the basic principles of the Workers International, new items from across the world and an article warning of the growth of anti-Semitic and fascist movements in Russia.

Work

The next ten issues can be obtained on subscription from 'Kresty 348', PO Box 348, Voronezh, Russia. International mailing costs would be covered by £3, but comrades are asked to bear in mind that a little foreign currency will go a long way for our comrades' work in the former USSR.

The 'International', journal of the Workers International, has just published its third issue in Russian. It includes the draft resolution for the second congress of the Workers International, discussion articles on the nature of the former Soviet state, and archive material by Leon Trotsky.

It is available for £2 plus 50p postage from the Workers International, PO Box 735, London SW8 1YB.

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