

Socialist ORGANISER

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Liverpool BENN SAYS: DEFY THE LAW!

THE PIT strike is biting deep. The Coal Board says it isn't, but British Steel at Scunthorpe has had to cut production by half because coal isn't getting through.

The coal-fired Aberthaw power station in Wales is also short of coal because of effective picketing.

The rail unions NUR and ASLEF, members of the coal-rail-steel Triple Alliance, have asked their members not to cross miners' picket lines. NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp has pledged that the railworkers' support for the miners must be "totally effective".

In South Yorkshire, representatives from the NUR District Council have met with the rest of the Triple Alliance, and have since stopped coal getting into British Steel's Orgrave Coking Plant.

The plant has been picketed by miners from Treeton Bridge.

Coming into London a train driver stopped when he saw a miners' banner draped over a bridge. The train went on only after coal wagons were unhooked and left.

British Rail have so far not dared to send home union members who refuse to cross picket lines, despite earlier threats that they would.

The TGWU has promised to support members who won't deliver coal to stockpiles. Scottish NUM leader Mick McGahey has called for workers to "stop the importation and transportation of coal", and for the TUC to organise support.

Ravensraig steel workers have given £1000 to the Scottish miners, and the Clyde area of the steel union ISTC has called on general secretary Bill Sirs to come out in public support of the miners.

The executive of the Society of Civil and Public servants has promised to give organisational and financial support to the miners, remembering the "magnificent support received from NUM members in the day of protest for the staff of GCHQ".

The miners can win - if this solidarity is spread at rank and file level, and at the same time we demand that the leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party come out in active support and stand on the line with the miners.

Stop all coal!

SUPPORT THE MINERS!

STOP ALL COAL

Speaking in Liverpool on Monday March 26, Tony Benn said:

I have come tonight to give 100% support to the decisions of the Liverpool Labour group. I have done that because I believe you are right, and I would like to say very simply why, as somebody who does not live or work in Liverpool, I believe that to be the case.

First, Liverpool has suffered enough already. The Tory government say they have no money, but they have enough money to spend £12 billion on the Trident.

They export £12 billion a year of capital, profits made by the workers of this country, including the workers in Liverpool. They are ready to spend £17 billion a year on dole money to pay people to do nothing. £3 billion to be spent on the Falklands. And the oil revenue of £20 billion or more - every penny of it has been spent on paying for the cost of unemployment.

That is the first reason.

And I think that Liverpool has suffered more than most areas of the country from the deceit of the Liberals, who have gone round on the doorstep promising that every problem that is raised will be dealt with, and then going to the council chamber or the House of Commons and voting to see that the money to meet those needs is stopped.

Liverpool, which is a very creative and a very imaginative city, and a very famous city, has created a lot of wealth for other people - and that money has left that city and gone abroad and to people who do not live in the place. Liverpool is the graveyard of capitalism and, I believe, the birthplace of socialism in Britain.

Comrades, the second point is very simple and very important too. It is that Labour was elected in Liverpool to protect jobs and services, and it must keep faith with the people who put their confidence in the Labour council. That is absolutely essential.

In 1981 the people of Toxteth took to the streets. In 1984 the Labour council must stick to their guns. And that is the way in which it will be seen by people up and down the country.

I believe what you are doing is morally right. It cannot be right for anybody - for any councillor

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Free Sarah Tisdall!

WIDESPREAD anger has greeted the six months' sentence imposed on Sarah Tisdall for leaking government documents to the Guardian.

Neil Kinnock called it malevolent, "a mixture of malice and weakness that is characteristic of all bullies"

It is clear that Sarah Tisdall's case was chosen to be a show trial by the government.

The labour movement must protest against Sarah Tisdall's imprisonment. We must oppose the Official Secrets Act which is there to be used in cases like this. We must fight for a Freedom of Information Act, which is Labour Party policy.



Sarah Tisdall



Picketing Lea Hall power station in Staffordshire

JOHN HARRIS

Nicaragua at risk

Out through the back door!

India 300,000 dockers strike

By Colin Foster

300,000 Indian dockworkers returned to work on April 11 after a 26 day strike.

The Gandhi government, which runs the ports, initially declared the strike illegal and sent in the navy to move goods, but eventually negotiated a deal on the workers' wage demand.

According to the Financial Times (April 12), the final settlement cost Rs 390 million a year — which means that it was about the same level as the offer made by the government in late March. It was a rise of 18.5 per cent (Rs100, or £6.50, per month on average), as compared to the government's initial offer of 15 per cent and the workers' demand of 30%.

It was the biggest docks strike ever in India, and follows other major strikes in recent years. A two-year strike in the Bombay textile industry ended in defeat last year, and the longest strike ever in the jute industry of West Bengal ended on April 7.

After a six week strike, 25,000 jute workers won slightly smaller increases than the dockers — a minimum Rs 65 (£4.20) per month rise.

France Decline of the CP

The Paris daily Le Monde (April 3) carries some startling figures on the development of the Communist Party's support in France.

The CP's vote has fallen steadily in recent years, from about 20% of the total to 12 or 14%. In 1973, 33% of people questioned said that they had, on balance, a 'good opinion' of the CP. By February 1984 that score was down to 18%.

And those still voting for the CP seem to have become more sceptical about the party.

Only 35% of them have a good opinion of the USSR (62% in 1972). Only 36% have a positive opinion of Marxism.

40% want less state economic intervention. 45% want public spending cut. 51% support state and private schools (a big issue in France). 47% think that the more liberal attitudes of recent decades on sexual and family matters are a bad thing.

As with the Labour Party's base in Britain, CP voters seem to be getting increasingly disillusioned with the party's bureaucratic version of socialism — and for the present, turning to political apathy.

By Martin Thomas

THE risk of a big US-sponsored invasion of Nicaragua has risen considerably with the news that a counter-revolutionary provisional government may be set up inside the country.

Last Friday, the ARDE movement — led from Costa Rica by Sandinista renegade Eden Pastora, and businessman Alfonso Robelo — seized the town of San Juan del Norte in south-east Nicaragua.

The town had only 200 inhabitants before they were evacuated last year, and has no huge economic or strategic significance. But a toehold for a 'provisional government' is something that the counter-revolutionaries have been seeking for a long time.

ARDE claims that a provisional government will be set up in San Juan de Norte 'within 90 days'. The scenario then is for this 'provisional government' to appeal for 'assistance' — and the troops roll in.

ARDE has distanced itself from the more overtly right-wing FDN (based in Honduras), and officially claims to be independent from the US. But a detailed report in the Sunday Times on April 8 gave evidence that these claims are false.

The mining of Nicaragua's ports "was wholly a CIA operation", said an ARDE man. 'They only took along some of our people to legitimise it'...

'Rebel sources say that since late 1982 ARDE has been receiving CIA supplies through... Panama...'

'ARDE's chief fund-raiser,



Sandinista militia (above); old Somocista Guardsmen in Florida (below)



alfonso Robelo, denies knowingly receiving CIA money, although he admits that 'strange money comes in and I would not be surprised if some is from the CIA.'

'In Costa Rica, ARDE's operations are overseen by

CIA agents including, guerrilla sources say, a political officer and a military attache in the US embassy... The embassy officials are said to meet frequently with top ARDE leaders...

'About 100 ARDE men ...

have received special infantry and explosives training in El Salvador. The Salvadorean government, on behalf of the CIA, is said to regularly import arms and equipment, including five light aircraft, for ARDE...

No, Jackson is no better!

GARY HART is a slightly liberal Thatcherite, and enough is said about Walter Mondale by the fact that a lot of people see Hart as a radical alternative to him.

But isn't Jesse Jackson something different? Doesn't the fact that a black person can run for the presidential nomination, with some success, in the Democratic Party, show that radicals can do something in that Party?

Maybe the party of the Dixiecrat southern racists, the second pillar of US imperialism's political establishment, is not as bad as it has been made out to be.

Vicious

Not so. US capitalism can present itself in a black skin as well as a white one, and it doesn't become any less vicious.

Jackson's statements that he will fully support Hart or Mondale if they win the nomination confirm that. But more spectacular has been Jackson's own recent sally into anti-Semitism.

In an interview with a newspaper reporter he called Jews 'hymies', and New York 'hymietown'. Jackson then

apologised, but he was soon in trouble again.

Louis Farrakhan, a 'Black Muslim' supporter of Jackson, denounced the (black) reporter involved as a 'traitor' and praised Hitler as a 'great man'. Jackson was reduced to saying that he had no control over Farrakhan.

Anti-Semitism, sadly, is not new in US black politics. In

some areas it has the same sort of social basis as had anti-Semitism among the bitterly oppressed Polish people before World War 1: Jews own shops in black areas, and become scapegoats for the inhumanities of capitalism.

Now Jackson's statement has provided new fuel for powerful anti-black racist forces. There was already a

semi-fascist group called 'Jews against Jackson' harassing Jackson's campaign.

'Ethnic politics' within the framework of the Democratic Party is no way to liberation for US blacks. It can only lead them down the stinking blind alley of community-against-community recriminations and petty jostling for advantage.



Jackson with Mondale

VINOD Chauhan was deported last Friday (12th). Though Vinod had never attempted to go underground and hide, he was suddenly seized on Friday morning from his workplace by four people, including one uniformed police officer.

For the following two and a half hours, all enquiries as to Vinod's whereabouts, about who was responsible for his arrest, and about the possibility of seeing him were met with a stonewall of denial of any knowledge by the following bodies:

*Greater Manchester Police;

*Immigration Officers at Manchester Airport;

*Greater Manchester Police Aliens Registration Department;

*The Home Office Deportation Machinery Group;

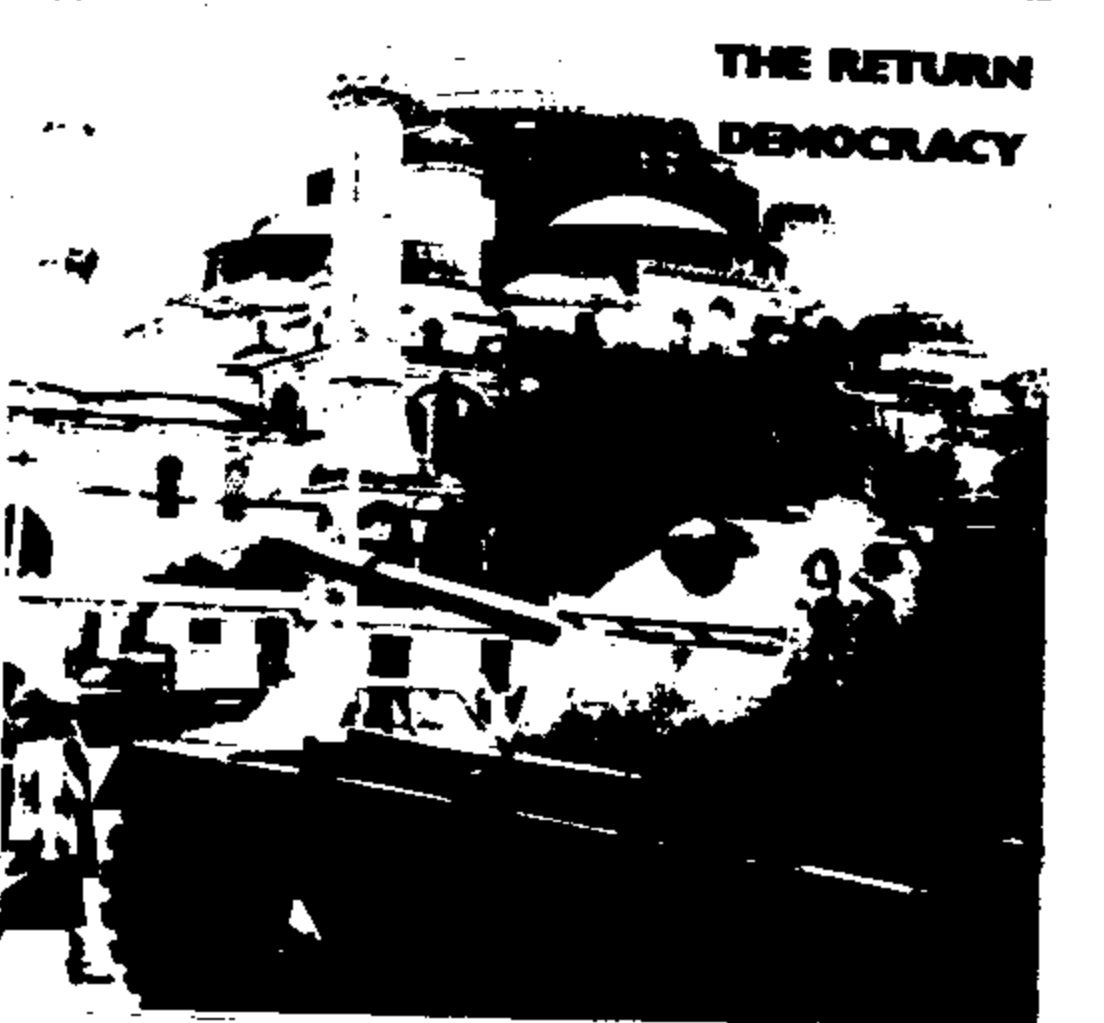
*The Greater Manchester Special Branch.

Then at 12.45 p.m. Assistant Chief Constable John Evans revealed that Vinod was being taken to Manchester Airport for a 1.20 p.m. shuttle flight to Heathrow. This information was deliberately withheld until it was too late to act upon it in order to be able to get to see Vinod.

During all this time, Vinod could not make contact with any members of the campaign. The whole operation had obviously been clinically and cynically planned to prevent such contact by the timing of the flights. The Revd. Paul Weller called the arrest "legalised abduction".

The campaign would wish to thank, on Vinod's behalf, all those who have struggled for Vinod's right to remain a part of his local community. We recognise, as Vinod did, that his struggle was a part of that of many other black people living under the shadow of racism in the law. We believe that Vinod's deportation, despite the massive support for him from the general public and the local authorities, indicates that the struggle against racist deportations has entered a new phase. We pledge our support and solidarity to all those who continue to struggle against the cancerous evil of racism which can uproot members of our community in such a brutal and inhuman way.

TURKEY INFORMATION BULLETIN



BM Box 5965, London.WC1N 3XX

Miners

7000 march in Notts

"Siege town" was how the local paper described it, and such language accurately described the city of Nottingham last Saturday.

The invaders from Yorkshire and Kent were welcomed by a significant number of Notts miners, carrying dozens of "Notts Miners Support the Strike" placards.

The atmosphere of the march, organised to welcome the 50 Kent miners who had walked the 200 miles from their coalfield, was jubilant and at times rowdy.

The 7,000 marchers, of whom about 4,000 came from Yorkshire, were looking for a vent for their anger, and in the absence of genuine scab miners, were content to denounce the entire population of Nottingham in no uncertain terms.

It was the first time many of the miners had been with their friends without being encircled by police, and few were prepared to let such an opportunity pass by. Some of the loudest chants were reserved for the police.

Without the security of huge numerical superiority, or snatch squads, many of the police could only smile nervously at chants of 'Maggie Thatcher's boot boys'.

There were some unpleasant scenes at the Market Square at the end of the march, caused naturally by "violent pickets" who tried to cause trouble by objecting to having a double decker bus

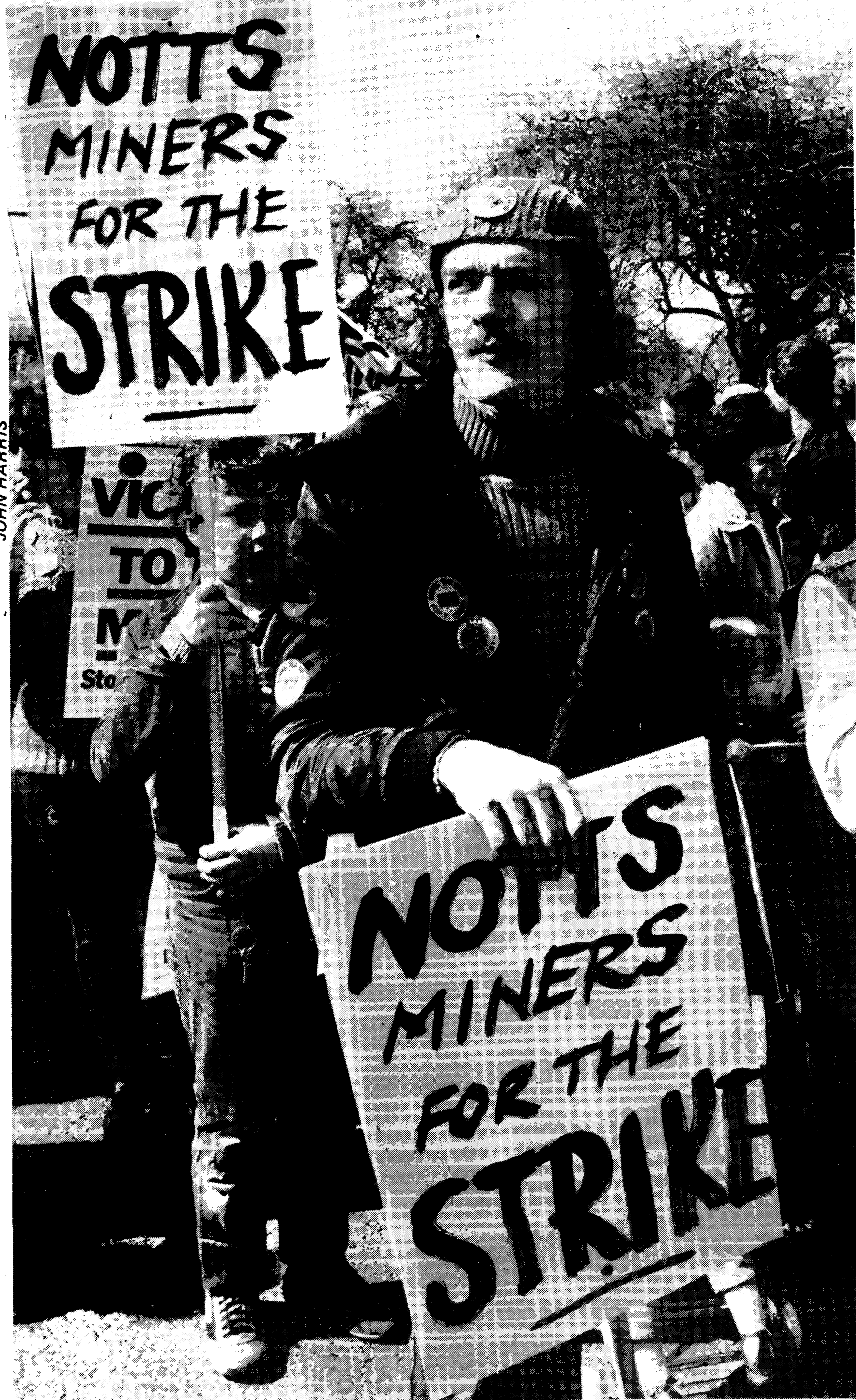
plough through their ranks.

The feelings of those in the Square were running high and many of the speakers sensed this. Normally placid councillors declared themselves ready to lie on a railway track to stop trains moving coal, and Kent miners told Notts miners to get off their knees and hold their banner with pride.

After an hour of such rhetoric the march moved off to the Albert Hall, a Methodist mission in Nottingham. The atmosphere here was quite electric and everyone wanted to join in from the floor. It was difficult to say if anyone was in control, but collective will expressed itself loudly to remove the press. Scuffles only broke out when individuals broke from this informal discipline and heckled speakers from other trade unions.

Arthur Scargill called for discipline and suddenly discipline was the order of the day. No-one interrupted as he later delivered a rousing and hard-hitting speech against Ian MacGregor and pit closures, encouraging Notts miners and other trades unionists to fight alongside the striking miners.

Judging by the feelings expressed by speakers from the NGA, FBU and TGWU and other examples of solidarity this week, it will not be long before his wishes are fulfilled.



JOHN HARRIS

"Be a wally, support your friendly government"

Dear Bud,

We are proud that you have resisted the attempts to bring you out on strike and although the Nottinghamshire NUM is a very small part of the National Union you have shown that by carrying on working you are more powerful than the rest of the Trade Union movement.

The Coal Board and this Conservative Government, assisted by the Police, have enabled all of you to carry on earning the magnificent wages which enables you to have the highest standard of living in Great Britain today.

This has been accomplished as a result of ignoring the advice of the Trade Unions who kid you on that they are able to protect you. There is now no need to be a member of a trade union in the Nottinghamshire coal fields with such a friendly government, police force and National Coal Board,

you are assured of further help from us if you vote to abolish your trades union.

Do not worry about the militants among you. It has been shown generous redundancy payments can split the NUM and buy the vote. Do not worry if your pit closes down, you can get National Assistance which will enable you to maintain your very high standard of living in order that you can have a long and comfortable retirement and your children will thank their brave fathers for standing out for what they believe in.

You will always be there to take them for walks in the glorious countryside around the ruins of your colliery and they can be assured that with our generous child allowances and National Assistance levels, free school meals and clothing allowances, etc., they will be well looked after.

You don't have to worry about providing for them; we are doing it all for you. Your future and their future is safe in our hands. We shall educate them to a level which will enable them to enjoy an even longer retirement. We will look after them from the cradle to the grave.

For those of you who are buying or have bought your houses you can maintain the value of your property, for with the injection of all this new redundancy money you will be able to sell your houses to each other.

Unfortunately we cannot foresee any influx of newcomers other than those of a very special kind who will be employed in the chain of nuclear power stations which may be placed down the glorious countryside of the Trent Valley.

Other than those, we don't see any reason for employment in your areas. You may pool your redundancy money to sink a private pit if you can get planning permission, but whatever you do, do not allow any trades unions, or you may find yourself in the same position as the NCB are in. You may have to pay them wages. Then you may have to pay redundancy money to stop the rot.

Remember to support your friendly caring Conservative government in the next general election. They promise a comfortable early retirement with general National Assistance to all.

Don't pay any attention to that bad man Mr Scargill. We are going to punish him. He is not going to be allowed into the House of Lords.

Be a Wally — support your friendly government.

Cheerio,
Tom, Dick and Harry

NUM Conference

Socialist Organiser meeting

'SPREAD THE STRIKE, STOP THE COAL'

Thursday April 19, 11am
Forrester's pub, Division St, Sheffield (5 minutes walk from City Hall).

Speakers (in personal capacity):

Paul Whetton, secretary
Bevercoates NUM, secretary,
Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee,

Rob Dawber, secretary
Sheffield & Chesterfield District Council, NUR,
Pat Lally, Socialist Organiser,
Oxford Trades Council Executive.

Ravenscraig: "The Triple Alliance must become solid"

DESPITE picketing from three groups of workers from Clydebridge, BL and the NUM, at Ravenscraig Steelworks at Motherwell, the convenor of the Joint Shop-Stewards Committee, Tommy Brennan, encourages the suppliers of coal to the works to ignore the pickets and continue to deliver.

Brennan has launched a personal crusade to save Ravenscraig from closure by trying to ensure that coal supplies continue to reach the plant even if delivered by scabs.

This is the most recent example of Brennan's attempt

prove to George Younger and Thatcher what a patriotic person he is.

He is supported by Bill Sims and the ISTC leadership in his refusal to support the miners and other striking steelworkers. This, despite the fact that if the miners are defeated, the future of Ravenscraig could quite quickly be reviewed and Brennan, along with many other steelworkers, would find himself out of a job.

The Triple Alliance in Scotland must become solid, for only through solidarity can the miners and steelworkers win.

"We are going to win"

AFTER Monday's meeting to form the Notts Rank and File Strike Committee, Socialist Organiser spoke to Roy Barsley, chair of the South Yorkshire NUM Panel:

"Experience of the meeting today was fantastic — so was the response to yesterday's demonstration. It was great considering that there were two other rallies at the same time.

We are going to win. There's no two ways about it.

Under the circumstances the rank and file couldn't have hoped for a better result from the meeting. At last we've got a leadership that won't sell the rank and file down the river.

The statement from Henry Richardson and Ray Chaddburn was fine, but should have been four weeks earlier.

Perhaps other workers will see the struggle of the miners as their struggle. If we go under, then the trade union movement goes under. We want their support, but we also want positive action, including strike action.

Eventually it's got to come to a general strike to get rid of Thatcher's monetarist policies. Now we've got rid of the Falklands factor we've got a good chance.

Trade unionists have got to get united. If we want to destroy capitalism, then the time to do it is now.

Neil Kinnock's response? I didn't know there was one. The reaction from the Labour Party was what I expected anyway. Many individual members have worked well. Socialist Organiser might find it difficult to accept but even Joe Ashton has been good in this dispute — and of course other MPs as well.

The message to other trade unionists is that the miners' strike is everybody's strike and needs to be won."

Support spreads in Hants

100 people packed into Basingstoke's Central Library to hear Larry Knight, NUM Branch Secretary from Snowdown colliery, Kent, talk about the miners' strike at a meeting called jointly by Basingstoke Trades Council and Labour Party.

Dennis Skinner, the Labour Party's invited guest speaker, had to cancel however, due to the debate on abolishing the GLC. The meeting raised nearly £70 and since then Trades Council officers and Socialist Organiser supporters have decided to propose that the labour movement in towns not affected by the strike adopt a pit.

Basingstoke Trades Council will be asking if the NUM will allow us to adopt Snowdown colliery.

Another support meeting was arranged in Southampton by their Trades Council and Labour Party, and a Hampshire committee of the South East Region TUC is organising a march through Southampton on May 5.

Back door attacks on women's rights

WOMEN are now facing an escalating attack on their independence. Mass unemployment is hitting women disproportionately and their right to claim benefit is continually under question. Women are being forced back into the home to care for the old, the very young and the disabled, for whom the state is increasingly unwilling to take responsibility.

In this climate, it is not surprising that women's abortion rights are, yet again, coming under attack.

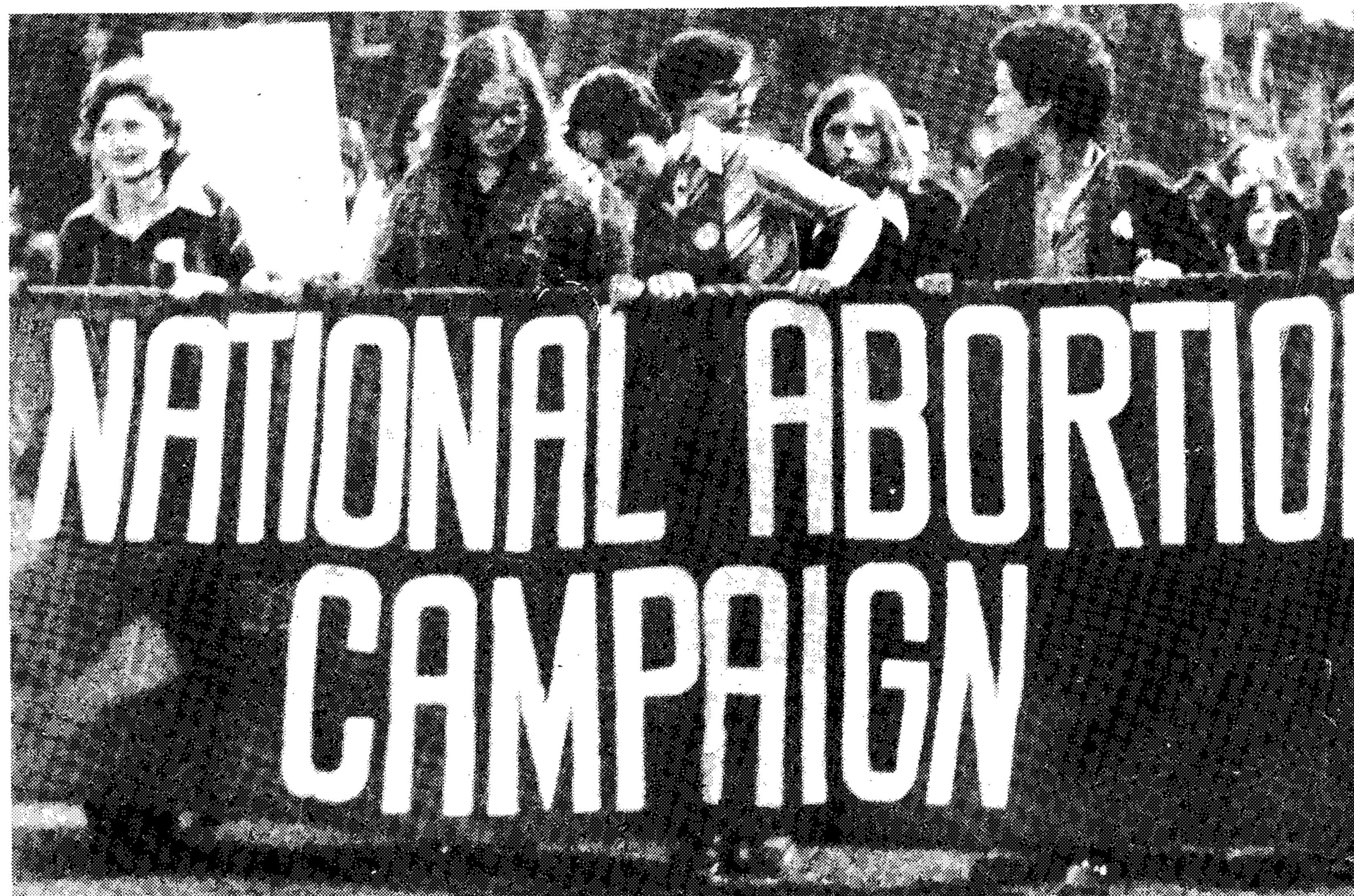
Following the recent report of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, a group of anti-abortion MPs tabled a motion urging the full implementation of the 1929 Infant Life (Preservation) Act and are actively lobbying in support of this attempt to further restrict the time limit within which abortions may be performed. (This applies only to England and Wales).

At the recent National Abortion Campaign conference on abortion rights and facilities it was decided that this new and continuing threat must be the subject of an intensive and vigorous campaign against restrictions on a woman's right to choose. At the same time, we must take account of the possibility of further legislative measures against abortion rights in the near future.

The present controversy surrounding time limits is simply a back door attempt to deprive women of the rights gained with the passing of the 1967 Abortion Act — an Act which anti-abortionists have failed to reverse through direct challenges.

Under the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 it is an offence to carry out an abortion on a foetus which is capable of being born alive — the legal term is viability. Those anti-abortion MPs now pressing for full implementation want all maternity hospitals, NHS abortion units and 'approved places' (those licensed to do abortions privately) to be circulated reminding them of the Act and explaining the implications of 'viability'.

The RCOG report is not specifically about time limits — it is an investigation into



the extent and causes of late abortions. The findings of the report are being manipulated and abused to suit the arguments of the anti-abortion lobby.

'Viability' has previously been defined as 28 weeks. It is now proposed that viability is nearer 24 weeks — an extremely restrictive definition based on potential advances in medical science. Anti-abortionists argue that at viability a woman has no right to choose to terminate her pregnancy.

To allow for margins of error and because of fear of prosecution, doctors tend to play safe in calculating pregnancy and the actual limit imposed could be lower than 24 weeks.

Desperate

The number of women seeking late abortions is small — in 1982 of the 162,797 terminations carried out in England and Wales only 102 were performed after the 24th week of pregnancy — less than 1%.

Women seeking late abortions are usually in desperate need. Their reasons include mistaken symptoms (e.g. mistaking pregnancy for the menopause), the fear and ignorance of young women (over 50% of women who have abortions after 19 weeks are

By Pauline Alden, National Abortion Campaign.

under 20) and delays in the results of tests for foetal abnormality. One important category of women seeking late abortions are those who have come up against the deficiencies in the provision and organisation of NHS facilities which cause avoidable delays.

The decision to have a late abortion is distressing. Stricter enforcement of time limits will further complicate and compound this distress and force more women into the private sector.

NAC's policy has always been that there should be no legal or medical restrictions on the availability of abortion. A woman's right to choose whether or not to continue a pregnancy is a principle that is not compatible with upper time limits, even if the foetus is viable.

The assumption underlying the right of the state to impose any limitation on abortion presupposes that women cannot make basic decisions for themselves, but must have 'morality' imposed upon them. This can only be justified by a particularly chauvinistic attitude towards women, or by anti-choice, anti-democratic arguments.

Enforcement of time limits legislation will not prevent the need for late abortions — women will be forced to seek illegal terminations or continue unwanted pregnancies.

The February 1984 NAC conference on abortion rights and facilities was the starting point for an intensive national campaign around the issue of time limits. This will be a positive stimulus to going on the offensive to fight for expansion of and improvements to abortion rights and facilities within the NHS. Campaigning will be around the following demands:

*Improved sex education for all young people — an end to restrictions on birth control

information on TV.

*Better contraception facilities, availability of early pregnancy testing, counselling and advice.

*Positive changes in the law for the provision of legal abortions for all who need them, in addition to full implementation of the 1967 Act.

*Changes in the kind of provision of abortion facilities available including accessible walk-in facilities and day-care clinics attached to hospitals.

*Wider publicity of all abortion and contraceptive facilities including advertising on television, radio and public transport.

*Access to sufficient and adequate facilities that will provide free, safe and legal abortions for all women who wish to exercise their right of choice.

*No medical personnel to be in positions where they can impose their views on women seeking advice or services — including racist doctors who pressurise black women into have abortions they may not want.

Needs

Only the above measures can reduce the number of women seeking late abortions — a change in the law will not change women's needs.

NAC is inviting other organisations concerned with women's rights to join with us in this campaign.

We are producing petitions, leaflets, a pamphlet, organising and supporting local campaigns. This does require a lot of resources and we need affiliations, donations and standing orders from individuals, constituency Labour Parties, Women's Sections, Trades Councils, trade union branches, student unions, women's groups and other pro-choice organisations.

NAC's special conference newsletter contains papers from the conference, lots more information, petitions. Send 30p and sae for a copy and details of membership to NAC, 47 Waldram Park Road, London SE23. (Phone: 01-993 2071).

Our time is overdue

By Russell Proffitt, secretary, Labour Party Black Sections Steering Group.

ONE of the oddest facts of life is that most white people become uneasy, in some cases positively terrified, as soon as they see or hear of two or more black people getting together to possibly discuss, or, worse still from their point of view, to plan ways of combatting racism. When we meet specifically to counter the racist consequences of working or existing within institutions over which white people have total control, then white paranoia often becomes hysterical.

To be honest, having always lived with racism and therefore accepted — however reluctantly — racist definitions of situations, even some black people find such events unacceptable. "How", they may ask, "can we possibly create racial change by working outside the context of a mixed race situation?"

In answer to this it needs, first of all, to be emphasised that some generations after the arrival of large numbers of black people in Britain, racism continues to remain a rife and rampant feature of everyday life.

Outrage

Such a reality is not only an outrage, but to many of us demands that action be taken to bring about change. And this, given the fact that black people are not at all sure that the established political framework has any relevance whatsoever to them, plus the reality of racism in the Labour Party and trade unions generally, explains why several of us are now working towards the creation of Black People's Sections in the Labour Party and in the trades unions, which would lead to direct black peoples' representation at every level, locally, regionally and nationally of the Labour Party and of trade unions.

The essential issue such developments are attempts to address is whether racism can be effectively countered if the only avenue offered as an alternative is the very racist institution, with its inbuilt racist majority, is a target in need of change. Seen in this way, surely Black People's Sections must be a welcome development and one which deserves the whole-hearted support of all who are seriously concerned to see the creation of genuine racial equality.

Minorities

Parallels exist of course — Women's Sections being a case in point. But it ought not to be forgotten, as history shows, that the most effective way in which change is ever brought about is through basing action on the solidarity and collective strength of organised and dedicated 'minorities', working purposefully towards specified objectives.

Added urgency in the present situation derives from the fact that black people are no longer prepared to accept that 'our time' is coming. To

many of us 'our time' is not only long overdue, but seems ever suppressed by circumstances, or often because of complicity.

The message coming from the black community is that black political activists must become more organised and more determined, in order that real changes be made. The efforts of black political activists at Brighton to get Composite 28 on 'Positive Discrimination' on the Order Paper was, therefore, not yet another case of bandwagon jumping by failed political mavericks — though in some cases it should be seen as such — but much more a case of black people recognising the fact of racism in political life and doing something about it.

Fringe

At Brighton, we also ran, possibly for the first time, a black activists-organised fringe meeting, well attended and at which several key issues were raised. These are now being followed up.

The Westminster North Black Section initiated meeting, held at Herbert Morrison House last September, led to the setting-up of a steering committee which was asked to consider how Black People's Sections could be created within the Labour Party.

That committee, which has met on several occasions, is now organising a national conference, which is to be held at Digbeth Hall, Birmingham, on Saturday 9 June, starting at 10.00 a.m. This meeting, which will be open to all black members of the Labour Party, will discuss and try to sort out the best way to proceed.

Clearly, as black people living in a racist, white dominated and majority populated society, we know that in the end many of the changes we desire must be discussed and brought about within a mixed race context.

Radical

In any event, as socialists, we too wish to see urgent and radical action taken to put an end to private schools, private health care, class privilege, exploitation at work, Thatcherism/Reaganism, the nuclear arms race, as well as positive action taken to create equality of opportunity for all. That, after all, is why we joined the labour movement in the first place and why we wish to see it grow from strength to strength.

What, however, we do recognise, and we hope white comrades also will, is the fact that black people's perceptions and understandings of situations often require considerations outside of the totally mixed race context on every occasion, particularly if these are not to be misunderstood or misdirected — as is often the case — before they are given a proper chance to see the light of day.

Arising from such a recognition therefore, we hope that support for the idea of Black People's Sections will follow.

We're not helped, at this embryonic stage, by negative noises about Black Sections from the Labour leadership — noises which preempt the work which starts today of the NEC working party we were promised six months ago.

Two pamphlets summing up the ideas of Socialist Organiser.

'Where We Stand' - 20p plus 16p postage. 'How to fight the Tories' - 10p plus 16p postage. Or the two together for 45p including postage. From Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8



NOLS conference

Labour students in chaos

WHILE the miners' strike is going on and Liverpool Council are organising to take on the Tories over rate-capping, an outsider might well expect the annual conference of Labour Students to work out how to win students to active support of these struggles.

But unfortunately the conference wasn't centred around the class struggle. Instead, the Labour Students conference was closed by John Dennis, the Labour Party's person responsible for NOLS, after an allegation of ballot-rigging.

The conference was very tightly balanced. Clause Four, now in an alliance called Democratic Left, did not have an overall majority over the combined forces of Militant, Socialist Students in NOLS and the handful of independent votes. There was the possibility of either a split National Committee being elected or an alternative slate winning all the positions. Such a slate was agreed between Militant and Socialist Students in NOLS, not because we agree with Militant but because it is politically necessary to take control of NOLS out of the hands of the Democratic Left. Our candidates were Bryn Griffiths from Labour Briefing, for vice-chair, and Socialist Organiser supporter Clive Bradley for publicity officer.

250 ballot forms were issued against delegates' cards. The highest counted vote in conference was never more than 239.

Democratic Left won three of the officers positions. Socialist Students in NOLS won vice-chair and publicity officer and Militant won NUS officer.

Balance

In other words, the independents who, as it turned out, held the balance, wouldn't vote for Militant all the time but those who they thought were the best candidates, regardless of which slate they were on.

After that round of elections a delegate from Militant stood up waving a ballot form. He said that as he'd been given two then the discrepancy between votes counted in conference and ballot forms issued (11) could be explained by the Democratic Left giving their supporters more forms than they were entitled to.

Through most of the conference Militant delegates had behaved appallingly, jeering the Democratic Left and generally rabble-rousing. At this allegation of ballot-rigging they took to their feet and the chair closed the session because it was un-

By Jane Ashworth

controllable. Democratic Left supporters walked out and some delegates tried to stop them leaving. The behaviour of Militant supporters, whatever the rights and wrongs of the chair's ruling, was well outside the traditions and tolerance of the labour movement. A delegate later tried to justify their behaviour with an analogy to stopping scabs crossing picket lines!

Socialist Students in NOLS supporters stayed in the conference to discuss tactics for the morning and beyond. Militant said they wanted an NEC inquiry. At no time did we see the spare ballot-paper — we didn't know if Militant were telling the truth. But we were certainly prepared to listen to their allegations, because we are against rigging and because we know from similar past experiences that it is certainly with the Democratic Left's political repertoire to fix conferences.

But we wanted proof, we wanted to know that the offending ballot paper (which was the only tangible evidence, the rest being hearsay) actually did exist and was a valid paper.

Ultimatum

In the morning when conference restarted, John Dennis issued an ultimatum: move to the next round of elections or that's it. And he demanded a decision by 10.00 a.m. He said that Jim Mortimer, the General Secretary of the party had told him to do that. He demanded a roll-call vote (where names are read out and delegates say 'for' or 'against') on his procedure. He said that there would be an NEC inquiry into the whole of conference conduct.

Socialist Students in NOLS supporters proposed an amendment that we take a roll-call to check the number of delegates present against identification and demand some evidence that people who had left were present the day before. This would show if there had in fact been 250 delegates there to cast the 250 votes.

Militant seemed to be against a roll-call and wanted a debate about the evidence.

Outrageous

From then on things deteriorated. A Militant supporter wanted and pushed for the right to make a point of order. The chair repeatedly told him to shut up and then, outrageously, expelled him from the conference floor.

Although the chair does have that right, it was simply an act of provocation.

Militant demanded a roll-call against the chair's ruling. Then John Dennis stepped in and closed the conference.

Socialist Students in NOLS supporters stayed behind with Militant supporters to discuss what to do next. But before we went along with them we again demanded to see the evidence. We saw the ballot form but it was not valid. It did not bear the necessary number or official signature. Had it been cast it would have been a spoilt paper.

This being the basis of Militant's allegations to date we left the hall. As SSIN supporter Simon Pottinger from Durham explained, we were not saying that it proved the election was fair but it certainly was not evidence to the contrary and Militant had hung their entire case around that form. Another clause in the statement Militant put to the meeting denied categorically that there had been any violence the night before which we could not possibly accept.

Invalid

So now, NOLS conference was invalid. Constitutionally a conference must elect all the National Committee, not just half, and pass the accounts, which we didn't. The old, Democratic Left-controlled NC still stands and policy decisions fall — which is very lucky for the Democratic Left as policy in support of Liverpool City Council and against rate rises and cuts was passed.

Socialist Students in NOLS believe that the best way to proceed, unless the inquiry upholds the charges of ballot rigging, is to reconvene the conference on the basis of the old delegates and finish conference business. Should the inquiry show the election to



have been rigged, then obviously conference will have to be recalled. If the inquiry shows that conference was rigged before it started (phony delegates, etc) then the whole of conference procedure, should be started again with the election of new delegates.

That said, we feel that John Dennis's behaviour in

closing the conference was outrageously bureaucratic. He should resign or be removed from his position as Labour Party Student Organiser.

One last point. Drawing up the electoral pact with Militant meant that supporters of Socialist Students in NOLS would vote for Militant where we were not standing.

We had 34 delegates prepared to vote for Socialist Students in NOLS — we asked them all to vote for Militant. Some didn't. In most elections two or three didn't. But in every election Militant lost by six or more. Contrary to allegations, Socialist Students in NOLS supporters didn't rat on Militant.

LPYS conference

FOR people in the LPYS Easter weekend means one thing — Annual Conference.

Supporters of the paper Class Fighter, (which sponsors SO) will be there.

We will be arguing for the YS to take a vigorous campaigning stance on issues like the Youth Training Scheme and nuclear disarmament.

Class Fighter will be backing an emergency resolution from Peckham YS on the subject of nuclear disarmament. The resolution calls on

the LPYS to build the national CND demonstration against Reagan on June 9.

On YTS, Class Fighter will be pushing the issue of compulsion (the Tories plan to force youth onto the schemes). We have already had some success on this front getting the Yorkshire Region of the LPYS to back the campaign against compulsion.

Class Fighter will also be supporting the resolutions that call for a YS young women's conference. The reason is we feel that the YS needs to be made far more habitable for women and also far more serious about fighting women's oppression. So a young women's conference is seen as the first step on the way to doing that.

Over the last few years the issue of lesbian and gay oppression has gained more prominence in the YS partly through the activity of Class Fighter supporters but mainly through the efforts of Lesbian and Gay YS, who have taken up the issue in a bold and imaginative way.

This year there should be a debate on the question and Class Fighter will be arguing for the YS to do far more about it.

In the other debates — which will cover a whole series of issues from Ireland to the alternative economic strategy — Class Fighter will be putting forward our own distinctive revolutionary socialist ideas. That is an important task, given the dominance within the LPYS of supporters of the Militant newspaper and their rather muddled, confused and sectarian ideas.



Backdoor expulsions

ON February 27 a special general meeting of Yardley CLP excluded four people from membership. Two of them were existing Labour Party members transferring, two were new applicants. They have since appealed to the NEC against their exclusion.

Meanwhile, the two transfers have been told that they are not now members of the Party: they have been expelled by the back-door.

This exclusion of Labour Party members when they try to transfer sets a disturbing precedent for excluding unwanted people, or delaying their acceptance. This case has been dragging on for nearly a year now. It is a good illustration of the localised witch-hunts that are still going on behind the facade of unity under the "dream ticket".

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SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Victory to the

"THESE are the times that try men's souls", was how a famous pamphlet by Tom Paine, written during the American war of independence, began.

The eighteenth-century American colonists had their backs to the wall. Some despaired of success against the might of Britain and gave way to moods of defeatism. Others changed sides or turned traitor.

These are the times when the political soul of everybody in the British labour movement is being probed and tested — especially of those who claim to be on the Left. Anybody in the labour movement who is no good in the miners' strike will never be good for anything.

The titanic battle between the miners and the Tory government is moving into its sixth week. Nobody but a political child or a political idiot can now argue that this is not a stand-up political fight between the Tories and the entire labour movement.

Arthur Scargill told the truth last Saturday in Nottingham when he said: "Stop merely saying you support us. Come out and join us. We are facing the organised might of the state machine. There is a police state in Nottinghamshire".

The seafarers' leader Jim Slater — no political firebrand he — went so far as to paint this bleak picture of what is at stake:

"If the miners lose their strike, it would be the last strike we would fight for decades to come".

Maybe this is exaggerated. But nobody should be complacent about it. Nobody in the labour movement has the right to be complacent about it.



The Tories believe that if they can beat the miners they will have broken the back of militant trade unionism for a generation to come. That is why "... Mrs Margaret Thatcher is willing to spend any amount of money to ensure that the Government is not again defeated by the miners' union" (as the Times put it, April 18).

That is why they have provoked this strike. That is why they have set up a special 'War Cabinet' to deal with the miners' strike.



That is why they are prepared to hit the miners with everything they need to hit

them with to beat them into submission. That is why some employers are already going to court under the anti-union laws — they could bankrupt the NUM.

That is why the Tories will declare a state of emergency and use the army if that is the only way to break the miners' resistance to the decimation of their industry and the destruction of their communities.

The miners are their target right now, but if the miners go down no section of the working class will be safe. The gains of decades of working class activity will go down before Thatcher's juggernaut like farmland walls before a tank.

Industrial protective practices, the health service, the safeguards of local democracy — all will be flung in one heap to the bottom of Mrs Thatcher's dustbin.

The battle now being fought by the miners is a battle of the whole labour movement. The tragedy is that it is not a battle being fought by the whole labour movement. The miners'

fight alone.

The transport workers' solidarity with the miners has been magnificent. But it is the least we can do. And it is not enough.

The whole movement must take action *together with* the miners. This situation demands a general strike.

Only a general strike can stop the Tories. The alternative is to let the miners get mauled in a strike that could stretch into next winter.

It is not impossible that the miners could lose such a strike. For against the miners and the labour movement stands a solidly united ruling class.

Despite differences such as those between Heath and Thatcher in the Tory party, on this issue they are all bonded together with the grim



purpose of defeating the working class. David Owen made the Alliance's position plain: "I am voting for the police", he said in the Parliamentary debate on the strike.

Two times in the last 12 years the ruling class have been beaten by the miners. Now they are determined

to win whatever the cost.

From Thatcher, to the CBI, to the Cabal of Chief Constables coordinating with military precision the physical war against the miners, to the brain-washed young coppers bussed into Nottinghamshire, they are one reactionary phalanx concentrated on defeating the labour movement.

And waiting in the wings stands the army, which they will call in if they need it to break the miners.

And on our side? Individual trade union leaders have given limited support to the miners, but the TUC weasels and wriggles. Legless Len Murray is like a confused, nervous sheep shuffling from foot to foot outside the slaughterhouse door while its peers are being dealt with inside.

The day of action over GCHQ was no more than a small militant spasm. We need concerted, coordinated action, not mere spasms.

We need a general strike in support of the miners.

Perhaps the single most disgusting thing in the labour movement now is Neil Kinnock, its political leader. He still calls himself a man of the Left. Yet he has not had the guts or the principle or even the decency to come down squarely on the side of the miners in what is indisputably a political strike provoked by the Tories for their own political ends.

He has joined the baying dogs of the Tory media and the baying Tories in the House of Commons to condemn "violent" picketing. He thinks the best way to prepare for a Labour victory in the next election is to rat on the miners' strike now.

In fact, of course, the depression and demoralisation that will follow a defeat on the scale of that the whole movement will suffer if the miners go down will be bound to have bad effects on the movement's electoral prospects too.

The miners' strike has probed Neil Kinnock's soul and uncovered nothing but a faulty pocket calculating machine.

The Labour Left has been in retreat for two years. Kinnock's election confused and divided it. As well as the bandwagon-jumpers and those former Lefts who had been softened up by a little bit of local government 'power', large numbers of honest leftists decided to wait and see, to give Kinnock a chance.

Some of them felt they should not 'rock the boat'.

Now they have their answer. After the election defeat in 1979 we set out to change the labour movement so that "never again" would there have to be a miserable Labour government like the Callaghan-Wilson administrations. We set out to remake and renovate the movement.

Kinnock's behaviour in the great test of the miners' strike shows the extent of our failure so far. For what is to be expected of a future Labour prime minister who behaves like this in a decisive class-struggle battle where the immediate fate of the whole lab-

our movement is at stake?

We can expect from Kinnock what we got from Wilson and Callaghan — or worse.

The fight must be resumed in the Labour Party right now. Labour Party members should insist that Kinnock stops weaseling and stands on the line with the miners.

Many local Labour Parties are already organising fund-raising, solidarity meetings, help with accommodation and transport, even door-to-door collections for the miners.



JOHN HARRIS



e miners!

Others should follow.

We must collect money for the miners, back up their picket lines, and denounce everyone in the movement who is not fully with the miners as a traitor.

For Tony Benn was right, and spoke for the militant rank and file of both the unions and the Labour Party, when he said last Saturday in Nottingham:

"We will not accept the destruction of whole mining communities and the workers

in those industries who supply the equipment that the mining industry needs.

"We cannot accept the Government with its rotten dictatorial policies designed to crush working people, in the interests of the class that paid for their election. If we stick together, we cannot be defeated.

"We will not accept pit closures as dictated by MacGregor and Mrs Thatcher. We will not allow them to destroy the trade union movement,

which is stronger than they are — and they know it".

The miners' strike is the battle that will shape the labour movement for a long time to come.

We are strong enough to beat them. That's why we must fight in the labour movement for a general strike. Immediately — whatever the leaders do — the rank and file must make the day of action called by the Scottish TUC into a one-day general strike throughout Britain.



INTERVIEW WITH PAUL WHETTON

Secretary, Bevercoates NUM Branch and Secretary, Notts Miners Rank and File Strike Committee.

FOR A LONG time, a lot of our lads who have been out on strike have felt isolated, especially because they knew that other areas regarded the whole of Nottinghamshire as a scab county.

It's been a pleasant lift for the Kent miners, who walked across the border expecting to get kicked from pillar to post, to find that there are Notts miners out on strike. And the Notts miners themselves have got a boost from finding out that they were not just small, isolated groups.

In actual fact there are many thousands of miners out on strike in the Nottinghamshire coalfield — somewhere between 7000 and 10,000.

They are the younger element, on the whole.

At first, when we put the overtime ban on, we had our worries about the younger miners who hadn't been through '72 and '74. If anyone was going to let us down, it was the younger element.

In actual fact the opposite has been true. The younger element have come through magnificently. They understand the situation, and they understand the political motives behind it.

What's also been a big help is that the wives understand and are prepared to back their husbands and to show their own support.

There's certainly coal being produced in Nottingham. Because the pits are highly mechanised, it isn't difficult for them to produce coal even with a number of miners on strike.

But a substantial number of young faceworkers are on strike. There is no way that the Coal Board can be truthful in claiming that the pits in Nottinghamshire are working normally.

When the pickets first came into Nottinghamshire, there was an immediate response from some men. Those men went out on picket lines, and attracted a few more.

But they hadn't been able to get together. So in every branch in the Nottinghamshire coalfield you had a small hard core, varying in numbers, who felt that they were on their own.

Then we managed to get representatives together from

the various branches. The first meeting was just a meeting of Ollerton and Bevercoates and perhaps two or three other branches. Then the word got round, and at the second meeting, last Monday, we had between 400 and 500 men, representing 17 branches.

Whether the area decision today, not to back the alteration in the ballot percentage needed for a strike, is going to react them adversely, I don't know. I hope that if we can get the lads together this coming Thursday, get them up to Sheffield [for the NUM conference], and again identify with one another, that will keep them strong.

The prime objective of the committee we have set up is to organise the picketing in Notts — to get the Notts coalfield to identify itself with the National Union of Mineworkers and to bring this coalfield to a standstill.

The second objective is to raise finance to achieve that, with petrol for the pickets and hardship money for the single lads who have been out on strike for five weeks and haven't received a penny from anywhere.

I think the area vote against changing the ballot percentage for a strike has exposed a myth. Certain elements in the Notts coalfield have been bandying the word democracy about until it is nearly ragged. The decision shows that the opposition to a strike in Notts has got absolutely nothing to do with democracy.

Nobody can argue that 50 per cent plus one isn't a democratic decision. Every other single decision that we take — decisions at branch meetings, elections, or whatever — is done on a majority of 50 per cent plus one. The strike decision is the only one where we are required to go above 50 per cent plus one.

This proves to me that what a lot of the men in Notts are interested in is not democracy, but smashing the strike, smashing the overtime ban, and, in fact, smashing the union.

Henry Richardson's [the Notts area general secretary's] statement last Friday that it was time that we stopped scabbing and stood on our feet, gave a hell of a lift to a lot of men.

So did Saturday's demonstration. I think it was a

damn good public relations exercise, not exclusively for the Notts miners, but for the large numbers of Kent, Yorkshire and other people, to see a large contingent of Notts miners who are in support of the strike.

We've had support from other trade unionists, too. We've had lorry drivers who will roll up to a picket line and say they won't cross.

But the thing that has upset me — and we've got no way of checking on it — is the large amount of bus-drivers that are still continuing to go through and deliver men to the pit. And still, a large number of trains are running, though I don't know how many are running on schedule and how many railworkers are working under some form of threat.

The support from the wives has been important, too. In '72 and '74 the wives certainly gave support, but it wasn't as open and as well organised.

Again, it's the younger wives that are actually organising, getting out onto the streets with posters and banners. At the demonstration in Mansfield there were contingents of Kent wives, South Wales wives, Scottish and Yorkshire wives.

I'm very proud of this union. I've been in it for something like 30 years.

I'm a miner at Bevercoates colliery, and I'm the branch secretary, and I owe a certain amount of allegiance to the men who elected me. I'll see that I do my job to the best of my ability.

But owe my first allegiance to the National Union of Mineworkers. The National Union of Mineworkers is in dispute, and therefore I am in dispute. That's an overriding factor in my attitude towards the issues.

The only way I see us coming together and becoming once more a national union is that we've got to all come out, we've got to win the dispute, and then we've got to go back united.

If anyone believes that having this ballot is going to settle the battle, then they are living in cloud-cuckoo land. The only thing that the ballot is going to do is finish us back at square one, with some men still going to work and some men not.

The ballot is going to be counter-productive.

Is Thatcher a Bonaparte?



**North
and
South**

By Bruce Robinson

Labour campaign

OVER 70 people attended the Labour Committee on Ireland AGM in London on April 14. Although the LCI has seen an increase in local and national activity recently, this was unfortunately not reflected in the numbers attending, and the AGM was generally low-key.

There were two main points of controversy in the AGM.

Manchester LCI proposed that "journal of the LCI" should be added to the mast-head of the magazine 'Labour and Ireland'.

They felt that there was an inadequate LCI presence in 'Labour and Ireland'.

Those opposing the motion claimed that the issue was whether 'Labour and Ireland' should be a broad magazine and involved people who do not agree with the LCI. Martin Collins, editor of 'Labour and Ireland', said: "We don't want to lose support of editorial advisers such as Ken Livingstone and Desmond Greaves who may not wish to be identified with the LCI".

The supporters of the resolution did not oppose involving such people, but felt that the magazine should be controlled by and reflect the LCI. The Manchester resolution was defeated by 32 votes to 31.

The second controversial issue was the attitude the LCI should have to civilian bombings. Following an article in 'Labour and Ireland' which criticised civilian attacks, after the Harrods bombing, some Workers Power supporters in the LCI put forward a resolution supporting the Republicans' right to pursue the struggle "by any means they see fit".

This effectively ruled out the LCI or its members making any criticism of actions and methods with the framework of support for the Republican cause. As one supporter of the resolution put it: "it's not our business".

The resolution was defeated by a large majority.

John McIlroy from Dublin Trades Council spoke to the AGM about the situation in the Republic. He saw good chances for Sinn Féin to make gains in the North and South, and outlined policies for trade union activity between Britain and Ireland.

The AGM made little change to the overall direction of the LCI.



John McIlroy looks at the nature of the Tory regime.

WHAT exactly is the nature of the Thatcher government? How do we analyse the enemy we are facing?

There appears to be general agreement that we are dealing with the most right wing government since the war. But Thatcher's economic policies, her anti-union legislation, her attempt to ban trade unionism at GCHQ, her attack on civil liberties, her determination to destroy local government, her successful invocation of nationalism during the Falklands - these have led some to argue that the Thatcher government is a government of a new, specific type, a break from past Conservative governments.

That strange, sectarian paper, the "Newline" crystallises a vague feeling of some of the left when it refers to "Thatcher's Bonapartist dictatorship". It talks of "the shift in rule in Britain to Bonapartist dictatorship" and names "the Bonapartists themselves - Thatcher, MacGregor, the national police chiefs, the judges and the army." To sum up: "Thatcher rests upon the state violence of the police and armed forces."

This is given a fascist tinge, "It is not for nothing that MacGregor worked in Germany in the 1930s."

Bonapartist

When these people talk of Bonapartist dictatorship they are referring to Marx's writings on France, describing the regime of Louis Napoleon (1848-70).

Marx argued that "only under the second Bonaparte does the state seem to have made itself completely independent."

Napoleon III's ascendancy as a military dictator was the only way to maintain capitalist power after years of intense class struggle: "the extra-parliamentary mass of the bourgeoisie... by its servility towards the President, by its vilification of parliament, by its brutal maltreatment of its own press, invited Bonaparte to suppress and annihilate its speaking and writing sections, its politicians and its literati, its platform and its press, in order that it might then be able to pursue its private affairs with full confidence in the protection of a strong and unrestricted government. It declared unequivocally that it longed to get rid of its own political rule in order to get rid of the troubles and dangers of ruling... all classes equally impotent and mute fall on their knees before the rifle butt."

It should be obvious that this is not a useful analysis of the Tory government in 1984. The bosses are not under the rifle butt deprived of power. Thatcher is not like Napoleon III, resting only on military strength, controlling the state independently of workers and capitalists.

This is simply the last of a long line of WRP infatuations with military coups intended to whip up impressionable youth, unfortunate enough to come into contact with them into a frenzy of hyper-activity on the basis that revolution is just around the corner, if Thatcher does not front a military dictatorship.

Semi-fascist

The police have stopped miners picketing in Nottinghamshire. The military have not gone into the Yorkshire pit villages burning and looting, to force the miners there back to work at the point of a bayonet.

The NGA had its funds sequestered until it paid the court fines. And at the behest of Eddie Shah, not Thatcher, at that. It has not been permanently outlawed.

Despite the size of her majority, despite the increasing power of state and capitalist bodies outside Parliament, despite her dominance both there and amongst the Tories, Thatcher can dispense with neither Party nor Parliament, whatever may happen in the future she is not wearing a uniform yet.

If this analysis is nonsensical in its patent crudity, there are others who are willing to give it more sophisticated forms. Writing in "The Politics of Thatcher" a collection of articles from Marxism Today, Stuart Hall argues that the Thatcher government represents "a move towards 'authoritarian populism', an exceptional form of the capitalist state which unlike classical fascism has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place and which at the same time has been able to construct round itself an active popular consent."

Bayonet

From the same stable, Eric Hobsbawm feels that over the Falklands, Thatcherism represented, "I hesitate, but only just, to say a semi-Fascist direction".

Nicos Poulantzas has used the term "exceptional state" to describe forms of the capitalist state unlike bourgeois democracy such as fascism or military dictatorship. Once again the same idea is being floated that something important has happened. Whilst maintaining the appearance of Parliamentary democracy, Thatcher is ruling independently of it, relying on the military and the courts. Whilst this chimes again with popular anti-Thatcher feeling, it is a wildly wrong analysis.



Napoleon III Bonaparte - Marx's model for 'Bonapartism'

Thatcher's attacks on the unions, her monetarism, her yoking of the Tory themes of nation, family, duty and authority with the liberal values of self-interest and individualism does, as Stuart Hall correctly points out, represent a break from the post-war consensus. (There was a false hiccup from Heath in 1970-72).

That consensus was based on incorporation of the union leaders and the ability of successive governments to grant reforms. That is what Thatcher has broken from, not from Parliamentary democracy.

The change has been produced by the developing crisis and the inability to conjure up concessions.

The strong state is emerging. Things are tightening up. Two law lecturers writing in The Guardian about the policing of the

miners' dispute, commented that this operation must be seen as more characteristic of an albeit efficient and developed police state than of one founded upon the rule of law." (April 2).

The following day that very liberal organ felt that "... with every day that passes in this dispute, evidence is accumulating of police activity that should be considered quite outrageous in a democratic society." We need to watch it.

Nonetheless, there have been, believe it or not, tougher right wing bourgeois democratic governments than this one. Thatcher has not relied on even the same degree of coercion as that kindly old man Stanley Baldwin (provoking a general strike, rounding up communists, using troops, banning trade unionism right across the civil service, etc) and he had not broken from bourgeois democracy.

Thatcher is not directly reliant on the army or on fascist storm troopers. Not as yet anyway. If things deteriorate, who knows what may happen.

Today she relies still on the integrative, debilitating power of precisely bourgeois democracy and bourgeois ideology on the working class, particularly 'free' trade unionism and particularly the union leaders.

It is still the hold of ruling class ideas and one Len Murray and his cohorts, not the Generals and Britain's nuclear deterrent who can be relied on to pull Thatcher's chestnuts out of the fire. The role of Murray and his chums isn't what it was in the 1970s.

But then it wasn't what it was in the 1970s in the 1920s or 1930s either, was it?

For all their recent casting out into the external darkness, compared to Bevin and Citrine 1926-40, Murray and Basnett are almost totally enmeshed in the capitalist state.

It's still in the broad sense 'consent', not bayonets that keeps Thatcher in No. 10.

And if we believe that Thatcherism is a new phenomenon with at least the whiff of jackboots, and not simply an extreme right wing example of bourgeois democracy, this can infect our political prescriptions.

Faced with this new force, superior to all classes, Hall and Hobsbawm end up telling us we need "A broad, anti-Thatcherite alliance, or to put it more honestly, a popular front". In its way, that would be just as disastrous for the working class as the revolutionary response the WRP sees as sweeping Gerry Healy into Downing Street.



Mussolini

A false picture of defeat

Martin Thomas reviews 'Silkwood', which opened last week at the Odeon, Leicester Square. KAREN Silkwood was a sort of Sarah Tisdall of the nuclear power industry. Only the state got Sarah Tisdall after she blew their secrets, and the Kerr-McGee Corporation got Karen Silkwood before she blew theirs. And Karen Silkwood didn't get six months. She got killed. Perhaps she was murdered.

Karen was a worker at Kerr-McGee's plant in Cimarron, Oklahoma, who was killed in a car crash in 1974 on her way to meet a union official and a newspaper reporter. She had said she had evidence that the company was doctoring test x-ray negatives of its fuel rods.

There is no proof: no documents were found in Karen's car, and maybe the crash was just an accident, or suicide. But many suspect that Kerr-McGee engineered Karen's death, and the film goes as far as libel law will permit it, as it shows lights closing up on her just before the crash.

The way the film tells the story, the strip of steel in Karen Silkwood that makes her stand up against Kerr-McGee is not so much a "moral imperative" (though she uses that phrase, picking it up from a union official), as gut militancy.

Assertive, awkward, feckless, moody, brittle, lonely, she is first drawn into the issue when an older woman, Thelma, gets contaminated with plutonium at work. Thelma is dragged off, weeping and screaming, to be forcibly hosed down and scrubbed, then plied with empty reassurances by the plant doctor.

After getting contaminated and suffering the same treatment herself, Karen becomes active in the union.

But the film also tells the story another way.

The union appears in the film only through a few officials and committee people — and a few large meetings. Most of Karen's fellow-workers — including her boyfriend Drew, and Dolly who shares their house with them — jeer at her, shy away from her or shun her when she becomes active in the union.

This way of looking at it, Karen ends up as very isolated, half-defeated even before the car crash kills her, driven on only by conscience and not by immediate solidarity with others.

Maybe both ways of telling

ABC MOTION PICTURES



Karen Silkwood (Meryl Streep) finds that the corporation is faking test films (inset).

the story are true. But the film messes it up a bit, I think, by making its axis the relations between Karen, Drew and Dolly (despite the fact that there was no real 'Dolly').

Drew and Dolly end up bereaved — and worse, Drew

having tried to pressure Karen into dropping union activity, Dolly having perhaps betrayed her to the management.

Defeat all round — for, apart from Karen, Drew and Dolly, no-one else in the film is much more than a walk-on

part.

But the very fact that the film was made shows that it wasn't quite like that. After her death Karen beat Kerr-McGee.

Buzz Hirsch and Larry Cano, who put the film

together, started working on it soon after they read about Karen's death in the press. Shouldn't they — and Karen's family, who brought a lawsuit against Kerr-McGee, and many others — be part of the story too?

Down in the files

FRANZ Kafka wrote a classic short story about a bloke who wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a dung beetle. In the bowels of M. House, in an area known as the "Files", there are about two hundred dung beetles scurrying about looking either for promotion or a good scive.

The Files is an office that is as big as a football pitch. Bits of paper representing money are filed away in alphabetical order. The "dung beetles" have to sort through these files to remove these bits of paper for repayment and have to file away other bits of paper.

Next to the rows of filing cabinets are rows of desks. The desks are arranged in what are termed "Sections". There are eight sections in the files and each section is divided into three sub-sections.

Each sub-section consists of two rows of Clerical Assistants. A Clerical Officer is positioned at the head of each sub-section. The Executive Officers have their own desks situated several yards away from their section so that they can spy on the Clerical Assistants and Clerical Officers more effectively.

The hierarchical structure of the civil service in general is such that some civil servants think they are far superior to other civil servants. It used to be much worse than it is now. This can be illustrated by the example of the seating arrangements down the files about ten years ago. At that time Clerical Assistants used to sit on wooden stools, the Clerical Officers on chairs without arms and the Executive Officers on chairs with arms. Things have improved since those days. Everyone sits on the same kind of chair.

There is a saying that "the Englishman's home is his castle" (something to do with privacy). The Higher Executive Officer's home is a small room or "box" in a corner of the files.

All the Clerical Assistants, because of the nature of the work, are under thirty, many of them having only just left school or a Youth Training Scheme. It is thought that management deliberately place older, reactionary Clerical Officers down the files to discipline and influence the young Clerical Assistants. Generally, the Clerical Officers are either middle-aged or about due for retirement. Although there are about two dozen Clerical Officers who are under thirty.

To really get on in the civil service you have to concentrate all your attention on behaving like a mindless shit.

If you want promotion, you have to be impressive. What you actually do and what you are is irrelevant. It's what you are seen to do or appear to do and what you seem to be that really counts. (I have been told that I don't look industrious).

You have to be seen working hard even when there's no work. Clerical Assistants are encouraged and expected to compete with each other. You are supposed to be concerned about whether or not you've produced much more work than you are supposed to.

The Executive Officers also compete with each other but they do so in a much less strenuous manner. They put pressure on Clerical Officers to make Clerical Assistants work harder. The Executive Officer whose section has produced the most work, wins.

GEORDIE ORWELL

Malcolm X set to music

By Les Hearn

MALCOLM X to disco music? It sounds awful, but it actually works.

"Malcolm X — No Sell Out" consists of fragments of his speeches, skilfully woven into an electronic funk backing.

These fragments, alternately spoken and shouted, give a hint of the power of Malcolm X's message to the black people of America.

To the oppressed, he says "the only thing power respects is power."

To the constitutionalists, he shouts "Much of what I say might sound like it's stirring up trouble, but it's the truth."

To the rulers, he argues, "you can't say you're not going to have an explosion, and you leave the condition".

He points out "I've got a plate in front of me, but nothing is on it. Because all of us are sitting at the same table, are all of us diners? I'm not a diner until you let me dine."

He roars "I'm not the kind of person who'd come here to say what you like."

He softly says "I was sitting in a house last night that was bombed — my own."

Finally, greeting an audience with "Brothers, sisters, friends . . . and I see a few enemies", the music crashes to an end, echoing the gunfire that killed Malcolm X.

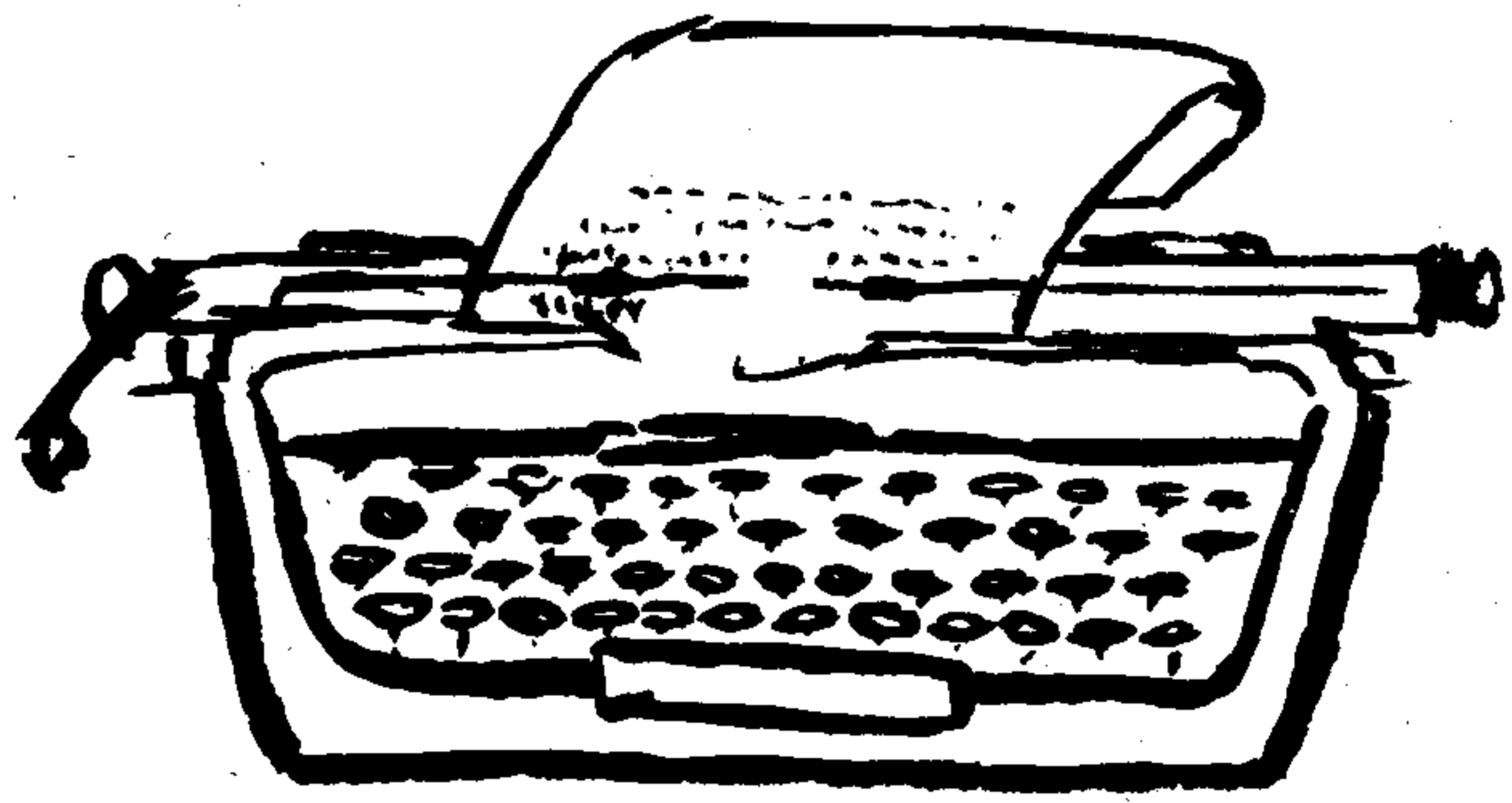
No doubt Malcolm X said a lot of much more straightforward things in his speeches but never before have his words reached millions of young people listening to Radio 1. For surprisingly, some of the more thoughtful DJs have taken to playing this record several times a week.

And perhaps a few of those young people will try and find out what else Malcolm X said.



Malcolm X, a revolutionary black leader in the US, who was shot dead in 1965.

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.

Luxemburg and Russia's revolution

TOM Rigby's review of 'The Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg' misunderstands Norman Geras's argument on one important point.

Geras points out that Luxemburg's position on the coming Russian Revolution was almost identical to Lenin's, i.e. that it would be a bourgeois revolution led by the working class and peasantry. It is true that Luxemburg approached Trotsky's theory in one respect. In 1905 she wrote:

"Russia is stepping on to the revolutionary world-stage as the politically most backward country... Precisely and only for this reason, contrary to all generally held views, the Russian revolution will have a more pronounced proletarian class-character than any previous revolution".

Yet she still thought "the immediate objectives of the present uprising in Russia do not go beyond the limits of a bourgeois democratic constitution".

So, in a sense, she did come close to stepping out of the straightjacket of the two-stages view of the Russian Revolution. But far from Geras "downplaying the importance, originality and daring of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution" as Tom says, he rushes to defend the originality of that theory.

... so many people have assimilated her perspective to Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. But if she agreed with Trotsky on the question of the *motive forces* of the Russian Revolution and in that sense described it as proletarian, her own analysis fell short of encour-



Rosa Luxemburg

aging the kind of telescoping of bourgeois-democratic and socialist objectives which was central to his perspective." (Italics in original).

ALAN JOHNSON



Neil Kinnock at the Durham miners' gala. But where is he now that the miners need support?

Soft on Kinnock?

WHAT on earth was going on in SO 173? On the back page we had an article entitled "Stand on the line Kinnock", which said absolutely correctly, "Many of Labour's leaders like Eric Heffer, Tony Benn and scores of MPs have supported Liverpool Council and the miners. Kinnock hasn't. You know why? He thinks they are both vote losers." The article goes on to outline the scabbing role Kinnock has been playing in trying to get a national ballot.

Yet in the Editorial we read "Neil Kinnock has made sympathetic speeches generally supporting the miners." Which of these two versions are you asking us to believe? When, where and what were these speeches by old stab-in-the-back Kinnock, supporting the miners? The only statements he has made about the strike have been to condemn violent picketing. He has as the media pointed out last week, gone out of his way to refuse to comment, and was even opposed to a full debate in Parliament on the strike, because it would have forced him to make a statement.

Shortly before this amazing statement we have another statement which I found equally amazing. It says, "We must bring down this Tory government. Labour under Kinnock cannot be relied upon to implement the working class policies we need. Nevertheless, the Labour Party is the only immediate conceivable alternative to the Tories. We must fight for a Labour government."

What absolute nonsense!

Yes, at the present time a realistic assessment in *electoral* terms is that Labour is the only alternative to the Tories, but if the working class were to "bring this Tory government down" that would represent a substantial qualitative change from the situation that exists now. To bring down the government would require a mobilisation of the working class of general strike proportions. As Socialist Organiser has argued in the past, a general strike poses the question not of which party will govern, but which class will rule society. Such a situation would create a qualitative transformation of the class struggle, and workers' consciousness to the extent that what seems a realistic alternative to the Tories *now* becomes irrelevant.

In effect what the Editorial calls for is "A general strike to kick out the Tories" — a slogan which Socialist Organiser has always correctly argued against on the basis that such a slogan limits the goal of a general strike to effecting merely a change of government, or at the other extreme is a synonym for insurrection. What is worse about the formulation in the editorial is that it specifically sets out in advance to limit the goal of the general strike quite explicitly to merely gaining a change of government.

Yes the editorial goes on to talk about fighting to commit such a Labour government to anti-capitalist policies, but in the past we have also argued against this "Labour to power with a socialist programme" approach, recognising that the Labour Party is a bosses' party, and as long as it operates through a bourgeois Parliament there is no effective way of forcing such a government to carry out such policies, especially as the election of a Labour government would demobilise the working class. Instead we have in the past argued that under such circumstances workers should fight for a "workers' government" based not on the institutions of the bourgeois state, but on the working class, and directly accountable to the working class.

To talk about the need to continue the battle in the Party for democracy, accountability and socialist policies under conditions of a general strike posed to kick out the Tories is unbelievable.

The main focus during such a general strike would be organising councils of action, workers' councils, etc., to organise distribution, workers' defence, etc., not turning up to Labour Party meetings to put forward constitutional amendments for annual conference.

It would put the labour movement in a whole new ball game where democracy, and accountability would have to be seen in terms of direct democracy and accountability in these new institutions of workers' democracy, not in terms of the type of checks, balances and safeguards which have been fought for in the Labour Party over the last few years to try to impose some control of Labour MPs working through bourgeois institutions.

In short I found the politics of SO 173 extremely confusing. It was arguing positions which we have strongly opposed in the past, and was as has been pointed out earlier, also contradictory over Kinnock. That political organisations should change their positions is not unusual or wrong, but some explanation as to why the position has changed about face is something the readers of SO ought reasonably to expect.

Yours comradely,
ARTHUR BOUGH

Editor's note: Neil Kinnock has made generally supportive noises about the miners. But as the Editorial in SO 173 said, that is not enough:

"Right now the miners' strike is putting the new Labour Party leadership to the test. Neil Kinnock has made sympathetic speeches generally supporting the miners. At the same time he has talked as if the miners are to blame for picket line violence and not the police. The labour movement must demand of Neil Kinnock that he stands on the

line four-square with the miners without wesseling and without talking out of both sides of his politician's mouth. Right now the miners' strike is the measure of every grouping and every individual in the labour movement. Neil Kinnock will not be forgiven if he doesn't unequivocally take sides with the miners."

The General Strike to Kick the Tories Out slogan is not in the Editorial. But we brought down the Heath government in 1974 without a general strike. It is possible again to make the country ungovernable, as in 1974.

The general strike scenario Arthur outlines and within it the possible development of working class action far beyond the boundaries and channels of routine politics — that's the best scenario, and we work for it. But there are others and we have to relate to them too. Right now, the labour movement is in an early stage of rousing itself from the depression of the last four years. The idea of taking on the Tories is very important in this process. Arthur Bough is simply mistaken that the only logical development of this idea is a general strike to kick out the Tories and what happened in 1974 is proof of it.

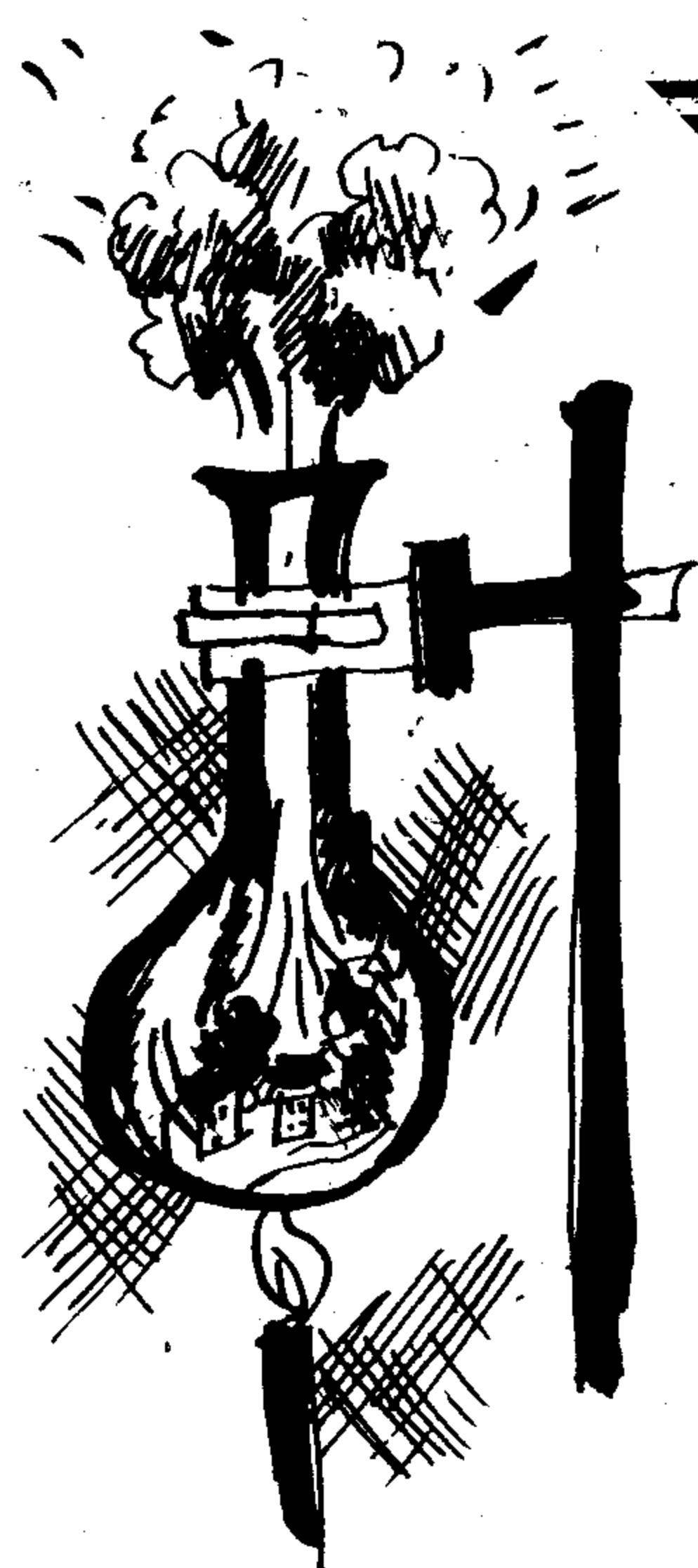
Not clear on LCI

I was disturbed to read "The State of Irish Solidarity" by Tony Twine in SO 169. Having attended the meeting, I found Tony's report both inaccurate and misleading. However I would like to concentrate on his references to the intervention made by members of the Labour Committee on Ireland at the meeting.

Including Tony, there were four members of the LCI at the meeting. Tony referred to the three others as supporters of Socialist Action, despite the fact that he knows I am not a supporter of Socialist Action or any other Trotskyist paper or faction.

He also was careful to distance himself from the LCI, despite being a founder member of the local group. Is this part of a deliberate attempt to portray the LCI as a front for Socialist Action? It seems that SO's position on Ireland and the LCI is deliberately ambiguous. I would appreciate a clarification.

PAUL WOZNY,
Southampton LCI



SCIENCE

More on DP

By Les Hearn

A year after the hearings on Depo-Provera (DP), the government has finally released the panel's report, and Health Minister Kenneth Clarke has granted a long-term license for this contraceptive, albeit with certain restrictions.

DP is a long-acting injectable contraceptive. One injection lasts three months, so it is much easier to use than the contraceptive pill, which must be taken daily without fail to be effective.

However, many women experienced unacceptable side-effects, such as increased bleeding, which could not be counteracted for up to three months or more.

It also came to light that many women were being given DP in conditions where they could not possibly give their informed consent to the treatment, including without their knowledge.

A campaign against DP on these and other grounds led last year to the Minister over-ruling the Committee on the Safety of Medicines and suspending DP's license.

Upjohn Ltd, manufacturers of DP, requested a public hearing to put their case for a license to a panel of experts who have just now published their findings.

The Co-ordinating Group on Depo-Provera (CGDP) immediately issued a press release commenting on the panel's report. The panel recognised the severity of some side-effects. It recognised the difficulty of obtaining informed consent and it also recognised the unsatisfactory nature of much of the research into DP's long-term effects.

Despite this, the panel concluded long-term use would be all right for women who found other methods unsuitable and who were capable of understanding and accepting the risks of DP.

In turn, Upjohn have accepted the need for research into the long-term effects of DP and will produce an information leaflet for doctors to give to patients.

CGDP points out the inadequacy of the steps for informing potential users of DP. The leaflet may not be in a language spoken by the patient. The doctor may not even give the leaflet out or may have too little time to discuss the drug with the patient. CGDP says that the decision to grant a long-term license is contradictory, when research into long-term effects of DP has not been done.

Only recently has evidence come up about a link between progesterone and cancer and yet DP is made of progesterone.

Finally, the panel acknowledges that DP is passed on to babies in breast milk, but recommends only that DP not be used for six weeks after birth.

CGDP does not wish to ban DP but they are very worried about the implications of a long-term license in Britain. This will be presented to Third World governments as a Child World health for DP, resulting in a threat to women's health throughout the world.

CGDP can be contacted through the Women's Health Information Centre (WHIC), 12 Ufton Road, London N1 (01 254 9094).

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I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/ I want more information.

Name

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Send to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.



Socialist ORGANISER

Organise for May 1!

Jim Denham reports on the miners' strike

NO-ONE now doubts that the miners' strike will soon be rock solid nationwide - ballot or no ballot.

MacGregor, the Tories and their Fleet Street poodles have had the gloating smirks wiped off their faces. The Sunday Times

MORI poll showed a clear 68% of miners in favour of striking. ITV's Weekend World poll showed a similar result.

Even Weekend World presenter Brian Walden was talking about this strike in terms of "class against class". It all goes to show that the pessimists, the faint-hearts and the ballot maniacs within the labour movement were very out of touch with the rank and file of the NUM.

Tactic

The tactic of the rolling strike without a national ballot has been vindicated. Whether or not the special delegate conference now decides to call a ballot - an entirely tactical matter - is unlikely to make any great difference to the situation.

Those within the labour movement (from Neil Kinnock down) who use the question of the ballot as a pretext for withholding full support to the NUM must be called to order: ballot or no ballot there can be no doubt whatsoever that the majority of miners are behind the strike.

It is the job of every self-respecting socialist, worthy of the name, to get behind the miners and do their bit in building support. There can be no room for complacency.

Cabinet

MacGregor has made it clear that he is prepared to dig in for a long fight and Thatcher and her "war cabinet" are clearly behind him all the way - which is why the call from Terry Duffy and others for the government to "intervene" is so ridiculous, not to say treacherous.

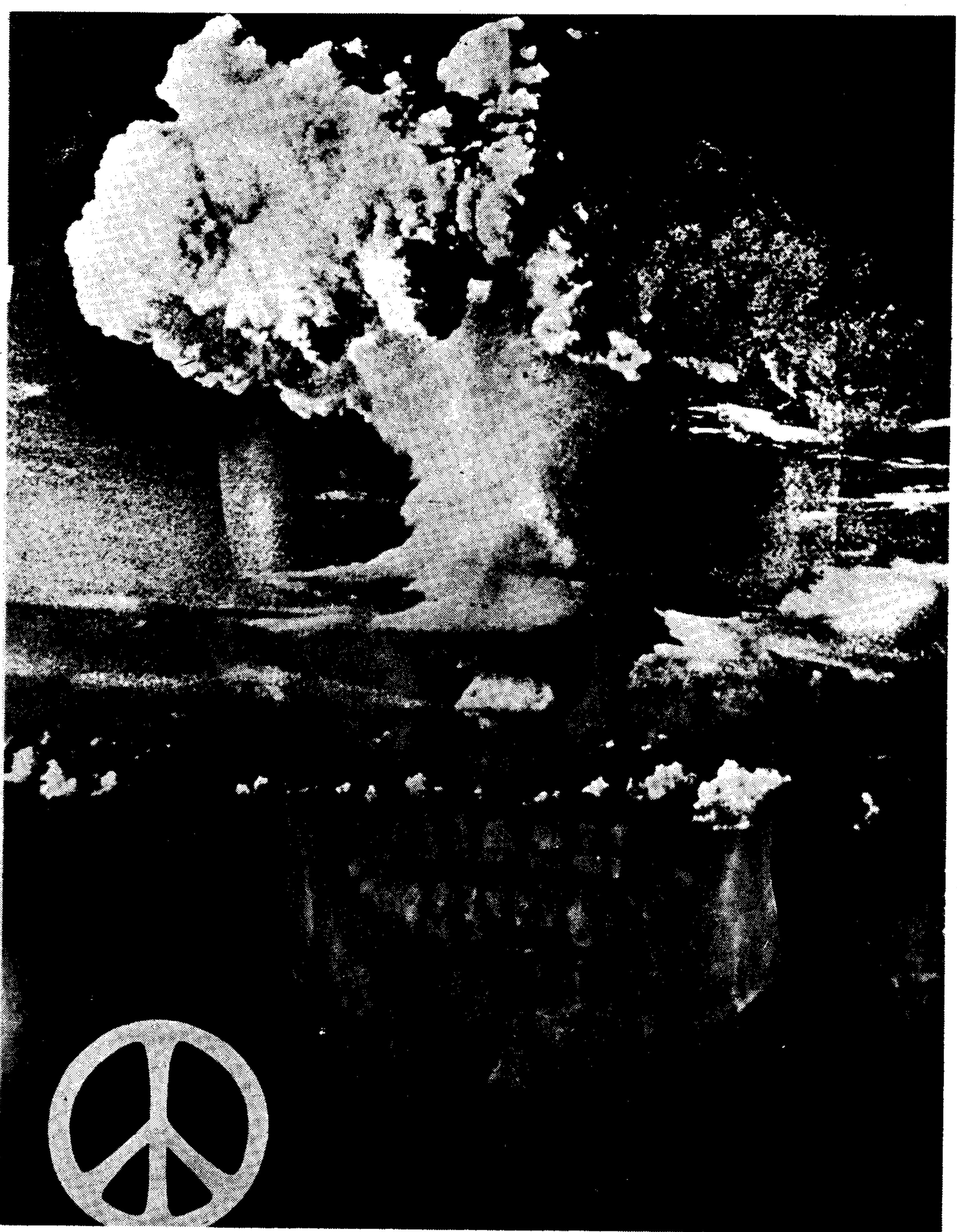
The striking miners must continue the picketing of working pits and set up the picketing of power stations, railway depots, and wharves. But even more important now is solidarity action from other workers. The NUR and ASLEF members who have been sent home for refusing to move coal, are a magnificent example for every worker. The seafarers of Denmark and Norway are boycotting coal movements, so there is no excuse for any worker in this country to touch coal.

Extend

The Scottish TUC call for a day of action in solidarity with the miners points to the way to win. It is up to rank and file trade unionists to extend the Scottish day of action (likely to be May 1) to the whole of the country.

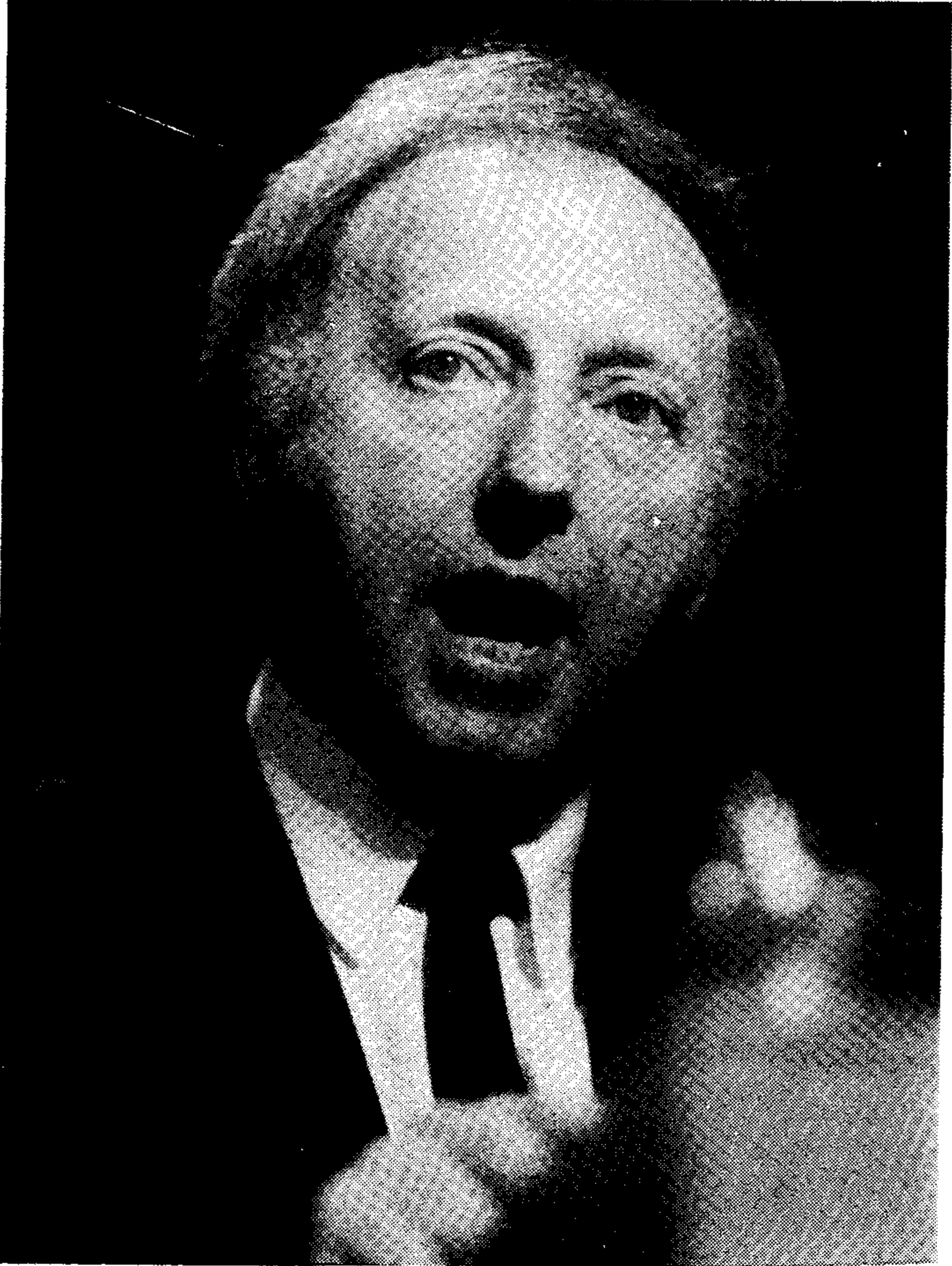
Rank and file support committees must take the message into every workplace: don't touch coal, all out with the miners on the day of action and prepare for an all-out general strike.

That kind of solidarity can defeat MacGregor and Thatcher no matter how many police they draft into the coalfields.



No Cruise, no NATO!

CND is organising activities across Britain on Easter weekend.

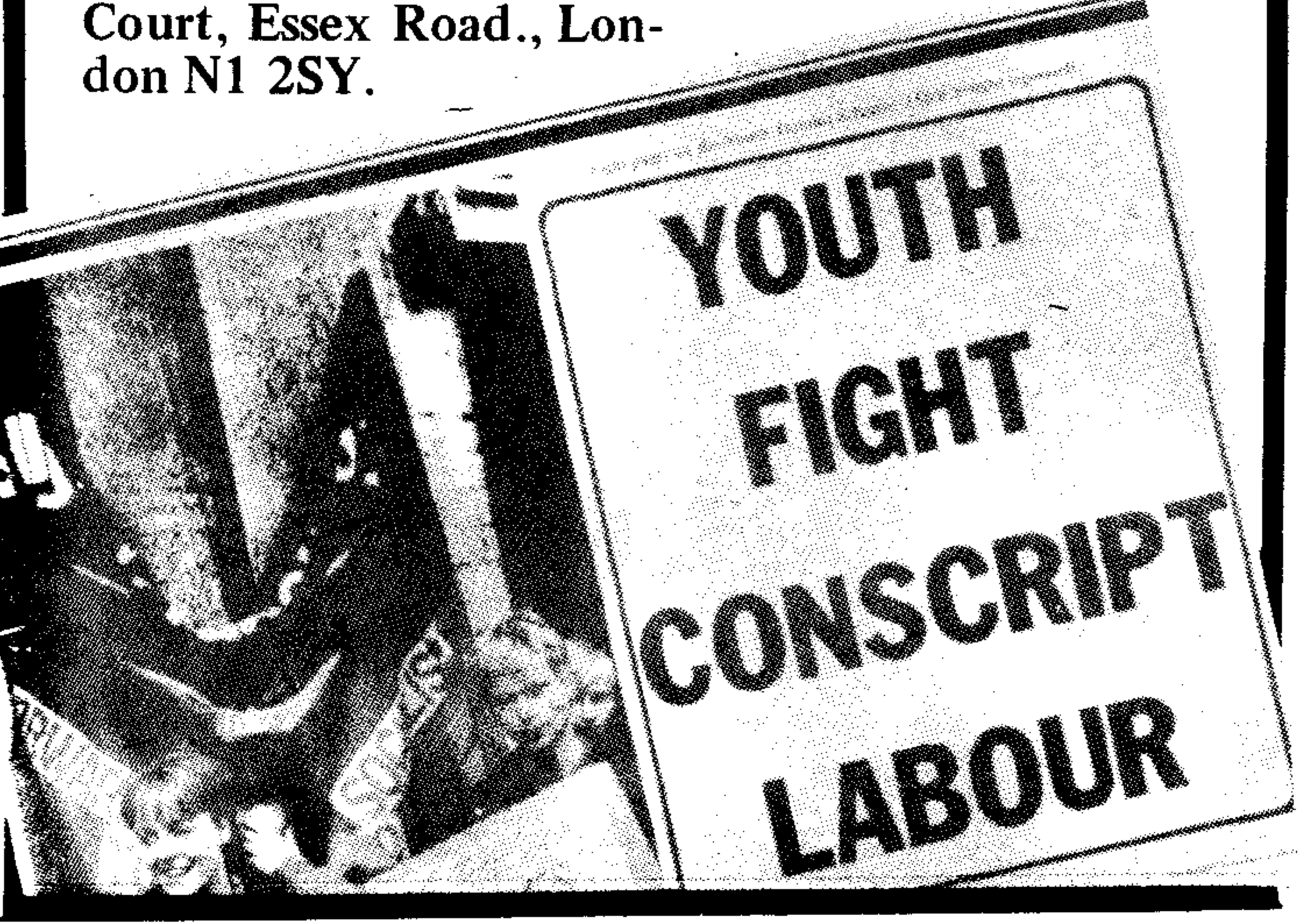


"As far as I am concerned they can stuff their injunctions"

Arthur Scargill

YTS Action special

Costs 10p: available from Class Fighter, 214 Sickert Court, Essex Road., London N1 2SY.



Free Bettaney!

MICHAEL Bettaney tried the British state and found it guilty. Now the State has hit back, sentencing him to 23 years in jail, in solitary confinement, for attempts to pass information to the USSR which did not even succeed.

After his conviction, M15 official Bettaney declared: "Those members of the Establishment who will condemn me as a traitor to our country speak falsely. Our country is not their monopoly; it is an embodiment of the rights, interests and aspirations of the broad mass of our people, without whose labour by hand and by brain the nation could not continue to exist..."

"In pursuing its domestic policy, the government relies on the aid of a Security Service which cynically manipulates the definition of subversion and thus abuses the provisions of its charter so as to investigate and interfere in the activities of legitimate political parties, the trade union movement and other progressive organisations, whose only crime is that they seek to protect and extend the hard-won rights of working people and to strive for peace."

His attempts to pass information to the USSR were motivated by the desire to prevent world war, he hoped to paralyse the war build-up of the US and the UK.

He is right about M15. The treatment of Sarah Tisdall is the latest proof that the secret core of Britain's state operates to keep matters secret from and to spy on the British people much more than any foreign power.



Michael Bettaney seems to identify the cause of peace and socialism with the USSR, and that is a great mistake. But the British state has no right to take revenge on him.

Bettaney turned against the British state as a result of his inside knowledge of its operations.

According to the Guardian, "In his eight years in the service he became a Marxist intellectual."

"Soon after his initial vetting and training, he went to Northern Ireland where he spent nearly three years at the sharp end of the British role, seeing the province from a point of view which is inaccessible to most people, unfogged by ignorance and unvarnished by the media..."

"Quietly and without indis-

cretion he became more left wing and more sceptical about British policy and the security service..."

Now the state machine has turned on Bettaney in a vicious spirit of revenge. His trial was held in secret, with jurors vetted by the M15 and the Special Branch, and he has been given a very vindictive sentence.

Free Michael Bettaney!

FUND

MORE donations this week - but less in total.

Thanks to Tower Hamlets councillors, Arthur Downes £3 (buying the paper at £1), Sue Carlyle £2 (extra sales), Les Hearn £5, for snaffling an item from Islington jumble ahead of the sale. Bev Wood, who added 50p to the price of a 'Broad Lefts' pamphlet, Alex Simpson £1; and Steve Battlemuch, who sent £3 for extra paper sales and added a £7 donation.

That's £21.50, making £329.50 for April.

Send donations to 214 Sickert Court, London N1.