

A Socialist ACTION

LOBBY THE TUC

Monday 2 September
8am onwards outside the Winter Gardens
Blackpool

Amnesty for all sacked and
imprisoned miners!

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TUC must back

THIS YEAR'S TUC congress faces decisive choices for the labour movement: whether to knuckle under to Tory laws against the unions, whether to move towards a catastrophic wage control agreement with the Labour Party, how to carry through the defence of the miners and the mining communities, how to smash the Notts NUM breakaway, how to re-establish trade unions at GCHQ, how to defeat the split-right wing in the AUEW and EEPTU.

But one immediate issue dominates all else. *How the TUC can back the railworkers.*

After confronting the miners, the Thatcher government is attempting to spread its attack to every section of the trade unions.

The unprecedented threat made on Saturday by British Rail's personnel director John Palette to meet any regional action by the NUR with a national lock out shows the determination of the government to carry out the same type of attack against the railworkers that it used against the miners. It is the Board's response to the guards' expected vote for industrial action against driver only operation.

The sacking of railworkers in Scotland, South Wales and Humberside for carrying out elementary trade union action reveals the same pattern of intimidation as the sackings and imprisonment of miners.

In both NUM and NUR disputes the tough brutal face of Thatcher's Britain, and the future of trade unionism in this country, is being more and more openly revealed.

It is this reality, not the dreams of cooperation with the government, of complying with the law, or of cooperating with employers in 'raising production' that should be pre-occupying the debates at the TUC.

According to one *Guardian* reporter who interviewed Norman Willis on Tuesday, the meeting of the TUC with Thatcher at the end of the miners' strike 'left some TUC leaders burning with desire to be part of the corporate state again'. As Arthur Scargill pointed out, the net effect of *that* intervention by the TUC was to get the NUM a worse offer than the one they received at the beginning of the dispute.

The TUC already has a shameful record with the railworkers. The general council's role in defeating ASLEF's strike in 1982 still burns in the memory. The same treatment was meted out to the NUM. The fight, starting at this congress, must be to turn that entire policy of the TUC around.

The left in the NUR are arguing for an all-out rail strike as the only way to roll back British Rail's attack. The TUC congress must give full unequivocal political and practical backing for the NUR. This means in particular:

- Immediate reinstatement of all sacked railworkers
- Follow the lead of the NUM. No transfer of goods normally carried by rail to any other form of transport
- A boycott by the other transport unions of all goods normally carried by rail
- No crossing NUR picket lines
- Full political and financial backing by the TUC and Labour Party to the railworkers
- Full backing by the TUC to the NUR against any legal attack on the union.



the railworkers

OVERTIME BANS, work-to-rules, non-cooperation, lightning strikes: Britain's railworkers are being forced to use every method at their disposal to resist Thatcher's attacks on their industry and jobs.

At the same time they're being joined in action by drivers in the their sister union ASLEF and the National Union of Mineworkers is backing them by refusing to let coal move by road.

Unity in action has grown day by day — from London to Glasgow and from Cardiff to Doncaster. Within the NUR more grades are coming into activity as the members of the workshop, and signals and telecommunications, grades see no option but to fight against the ferocious onslaught on their jobs. While the depots under attack are standing firm, the response is uneven and many have not taken action yet.

Here we take a brief look at some of those depots who are at the sharp end of the struggle today; the 400 guards at Kings Cross, Glasgow, South Wales and Immingham who have been suspended or sacked in the past few days.

Kings Cross: we're organising for a fight

Since the suspensions at Kings Cross mainline station in London started a week ago, the depot has been a hive of activity. We are getting organised for the coming industrial action as management continue to suspend guards who won't agree to work trains modified for Driver Only Operation (DOO).

Mainline and freight guards who don't work trains on the suburban lines are still working normally. Management's action was provocative. The modified trains are not needed to run the service — in fact they are only 5 out of 64 — but they want to start training drivers on them. Since the modifications have not been tested, they must have a guard on them.

All Kings Cross guards have received a letter telling them that the number of guards jobs will be cut from 198 to 90 — a reduction of well over 50 per cent. This cut will hit guards with less than 10 years service.

South Wales: we're all on overtime ban!

THE DISMISSAL notice hardened us up. Seven have gone back which has disappointed but not disheartened us.

The most noteworthy thing is that the miners womens support groups have contacted us offering support. The Neath and District group is visiting

our picket line this week; I believe they've already gone to the Severn tunnel.

Dave Jenkins,
Chair of guards LDC

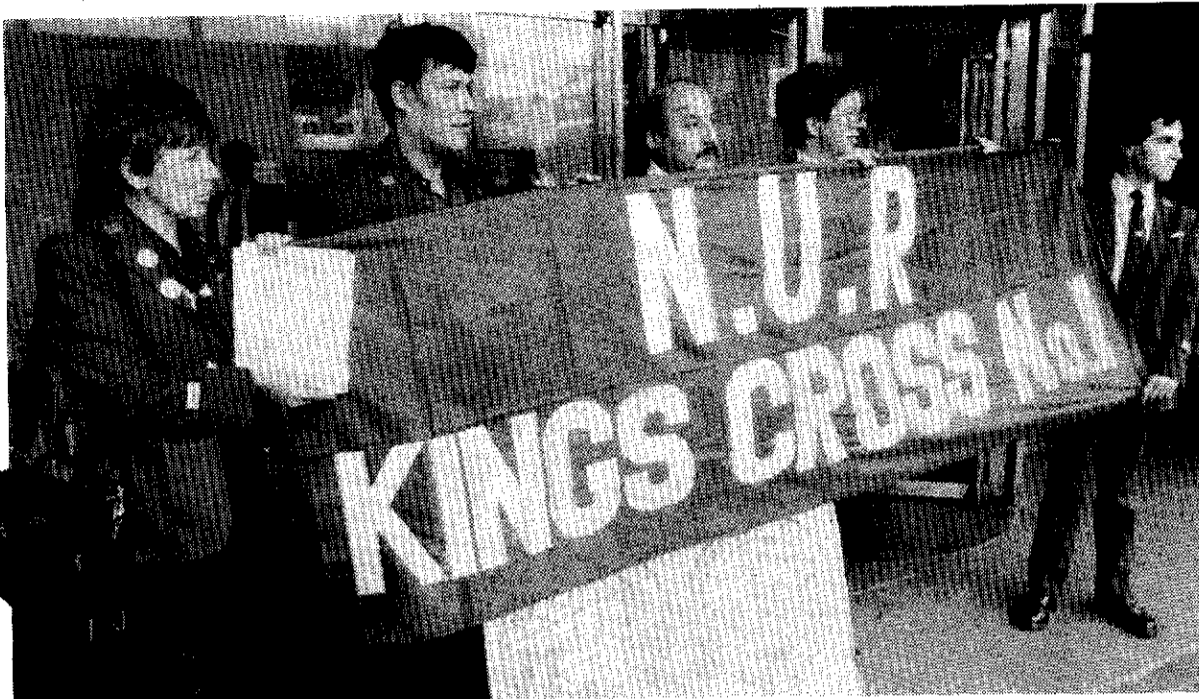
We've been talking to the all Wales women's support group, the central body which coordinates all the groups.

We met the NUM and

they've promised us all the support we need.

We've had the backing of the print unions this week when they refused to publish the British Rail adverts attempting to fill our jobs. Labour MP Roy Hughes, and MEP David Morris, have been on our picket line as well.

Virtually all the depots are on an overtime ban.



Suspended Kings Cross Guards lobby Rail House last Tuesday

The ballot trap

SUSPENDED guards at Kings Cross have worked hard for a 'yes' vote in the ballot. But if there is one thing that has been brought home, it's how right the miners were to deny the Tories the chance to meddle in their dispute via a ballot.

Ever since the NUR took the decision to comply with the Tory trade union legislation and hold three separate ballots in

the industry — of the guards, the workshops and the signalling and telegraph grade — the Board has had a field day.

Their heavy-handed tactics have ranged from individuals being sent home to mass sackings.

But the aim of all these

By Ray Varnes,
suspended Kings Cross guard

moves was to try to crack one of the depots marked for immediate driver only operation (DOO) prior to any ballot. The Board knew that if they forced a return to work on any depot taking action that this was bound to affect the result of the ballots.

In these circumstances, it was a good move by the union to bring the date of the ballot forward. It gave the Board less room to manoeuvre for the first ballot. But there are still two further ballots to come. Each ballot will be used by the Board as a referendum of workers to judge the action already underway in the industry.

No matter how carefully worded these ballots are, they won't save the union from injunctions flying in every direction. Even if the national executive complies with the Tory laws and decides to pay fines, sequestration is still on the cards once the Tories take off the gloves.

But to let the fear of sequestration stop actions to defend jobs and conditions would be crazy. We should remember that one of the strongest unions in Britain today, the NUM, still has no funds whatsoever.

In the final instance, it is how well organised the union is at every level, and how well educated and politically clear-sighted the membership has become through struggle, that will save the union — not its bank balance. If it was a question of finances alone, we would never be able to match the virtually unlimited resources at the Board's disposal!

Coalville: overwhelming support

There will be a big majority at Coalville in support of any action to defend jobs. We've been prepared by the action we took during the miners' strike, and some members who

By Roy Butlin,
chair Coalville LDC

weren't so hot on solidarity action last year are right behind the fight for their own jobs today.

We've had to start from scratch in putting the case for the defence of our jobs. Our depot is entirely freight. Most of the arguments put out by the union centre on the need to retain passenger guards.

But the case for maintaining guards on freight trains is just as strong, and it needs more publicity. Potential disasters can occur if there are serious derailments of freight trains which drivers on their own would find it hard to cope with. And on the freight side, there



Roy Butlin receiving a commemorative miners' lamp for the magnificent support from the Coalville railworkers during the strike

won't even be the help of other railway personnel travelling as passengers on the train.

But taking guards off freight trains will also

Glasgow: all-out action needed

The guards in the West of Scotland have been at the centre of the campaign by British Rail management to harass and intimidate the workforce, and to break union solidarity by provocative attacks. Guards at Glasgow Central were locked out after refusing the imposition of driver only operation (DOO). When they were sacked, the guards at Queens Street and on the North Clyde line signalled their voting intentions by staging a 24-hour stoppage last Tuesday.

Rail management went to extraordinary lengths to try to disrupt the ballot: first the sackings, then a massive campaign of propaganda and lies, with full-page ads in every local paper in the West of Scotland — capped on Thursday by the threat to slash Strathclyde's rail network by closing five lines if the guards take action. Solidarity from SOGAT workers has already scotched management's plans to advertise sacked guards jobs in the national dailies.

JOHN BARRIE secretary of the guards LDC (stewards' committee) at Glasgow Queens Street told Socialist Action of the mood of determination in the face of these attacks.

The threat to close the five lines is just another example of the intimidatory tactics BR have used. The intent is to disrupt our ability to conduct a proper ballot.

Management would still like to provoke some kind of unofficial action which would enable them to drag the union into the courts.

The issues at stake in this dispute are far greater than DOO. It is the very survival of our union.

Because of these high stakes we are getting a massive response in the ballot. The members in this area responded magnificently to the sackings, with spontaneous action. And we expect a substantial majority voting 'yes'.

The only danger will be if we follow the kind of 'guerilla tactics' some are proposing. The effect that would have on the guards in this depot would be to expose them to much more management intimidation. The union reps would face

disciplinary attacks, and our members wouldn't feel they were really fighting. Instead what we need is all-out strike.

There isn't a compromise we can get. The British Rail Board have no choice either. In order to do what they want with the industry, they need to smash the union. No compromise is on offer. We would urge all NUR members to maintain a high level of pressure on the executive to ensure all-out action. The TUC should be lobbied when it meets, to maximise support there, and a strong NUR lobby should make links with everyone else in struggle, especially the miners.

Here in Glasgow in the Labour Party we have to confront the disgraceful role of Strathclyde regional council who have taken management's side. Constituency parties and branches should send resolutions to the regional council to demand it gives unconditional support for the railworkers.

member of the train crew, usually the guard. If the guard disappears then the driver would have to ask for help from the nearest depot, causing serious disruption. On their own, drivers would be unable to carry out even the most basic checks. For instance, testing the brakes takes two people: someone on the engine and someone at the back of the train.

So BR says it needs to cut back thousands of jobs to get a more efficient system. But this just shows that inefficiency will result if the guard goes, because there will be enormous and costly delays.

The Midlands vote doesn't look promising, but the question will be whether or not the no-voters will go to work. BR is counting on a divided union. A hated scab service in the Midlands would be very useful to management. They've learned from the miners' strike. But so have we. And we know we can depend on the 'Dirty 30', Leicestershire's striking miners, for full support.

Showdown in rail

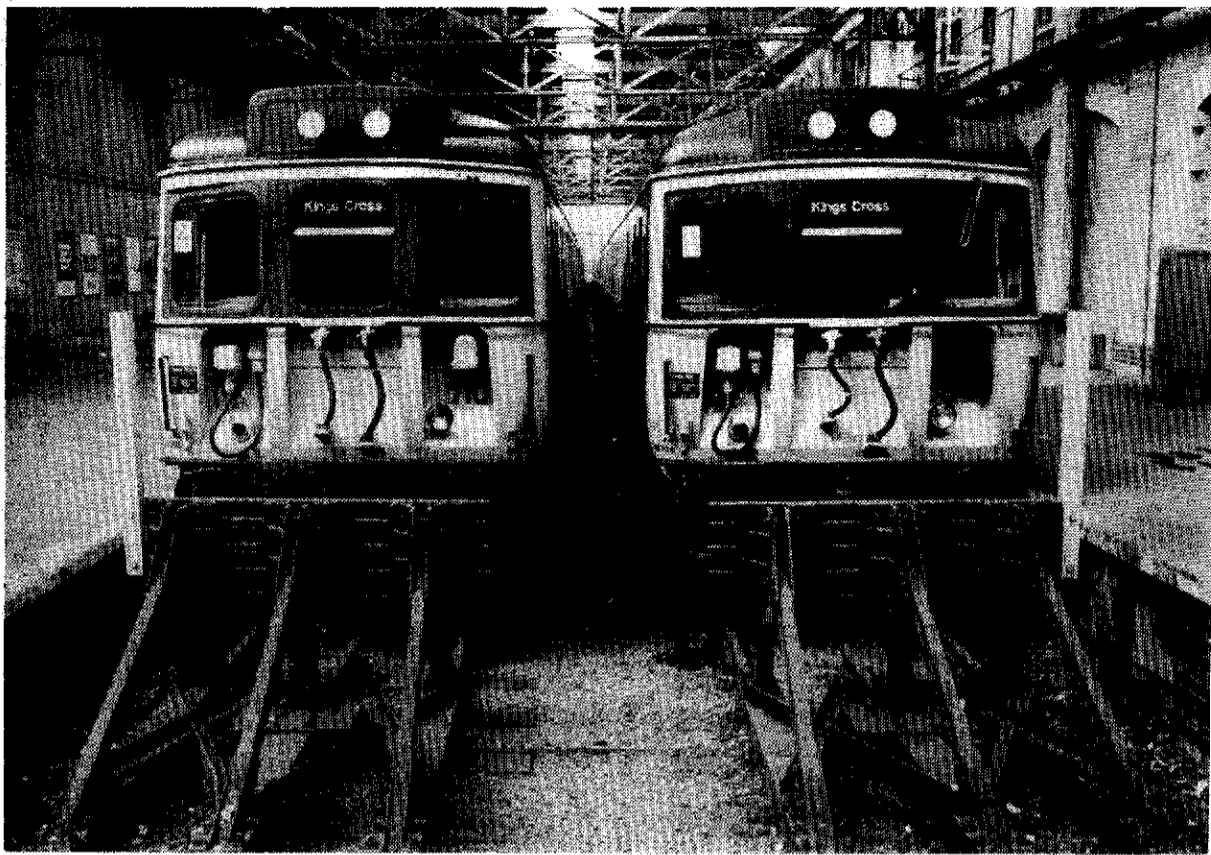


Photo: GIM COOKSON

It's a guards life!

THERE'S A clipping on my mess room wall. It reads 'overheard at a party: posh young woman saying to a friend, "Of course we need guards, who else is going to keep second class passengers out of our first class compartments?"'

Protecting passengers from such outrageous abuse is only a small part of a guard's job. The guard's prime responsibility, along with the driver, is to the train and on passenger trains to the passengers. In addition to the usual task of making sure passengers get on and off safely at stations the guard has often got commercial duties.

If a train is involved in an accident the guard is responsible for stopping the train, putting out any fire, moving passengers to a safe place, uncoupling burning vehicles so that the rest of the train can be drawn away and protecting other running lines by

placing track circuit operating clips on the rails and detonator caps in some areas.

In case of injury to the

By Toni Gorton,
NUR guard

driver their tasks fall on the guard. In the case of an accident to driver-only trains the driver, if uninjured, is to look for a 'responsible person' to perform the guard's duties. But how many 'responsible people' out there know how to neutralise the third rail, uncouple a train, or put down detonators? And what happens when the driver is injured — which

is often the case?

In 1984 there were almost 1000 incidents of derailments, trains running into obstacles and collisions between trains. For example late in the year there was a serious collision between a freight train and a passenger train near Wembley. A passenger was praised for his quick thinking for leaping out and 'protecting' the accident site.

Ironically the person who performed the guard's duty was Richard Hope, editor of the *Railway Gazette*, one of the main 'experts' used by management to convince the public that guards are a useless hangover from the past.

A fairly 'typical' member of the public of the type everyone will be able to rely on, on their journey!

How the railworkers can win

After the miners Thatcher is taking on the railworkers. But contrary to what she expected the railworkers are fighting back. That is the pattern that has developed over the last three weeks.

Railworkers face two burning questions: will Thatcher carry out the threat to close the railways faced with the growing actions and can they win in the face of the threat of a national lockout?

There can be no doubt that Thatcher will have few qualms about shutting down the rail system and locking out the workforce. But generally she would prefer to keep the services running where she can — by trying to buy off or persuade less militant areas that their interests lie with her, the Rail Board, and the 'rationalisation' of the industry.

However the situation develops it must be understood that the Tory government is prepared to go all the way against the railworkers — just as it was against the miners. The government means to restructure British industry no matter what the cost in human suffering. Thatcher's promise, through the British Rail Board, that no jobs will be lost through driver only operation in rail is an enormous lie. The 1981 rail plan called for 45,000 jobs to go by 1990. In the past five years almost 14,000 workshop staff have gone.

What is developing in rail is not a fight about a couple of thousand guards but a fight for the future of the entire industry — just as it was with the miners. None of the gains so far won by railworkers — such as the guaranteed working week — are safe. Thatcher means to try and grab these away in the process of the fight.

The very nature of the Rail Board's attack demands a national response and poses a challenge for the entire trade union movement.

All out industrial action is the only reply that railworkers can possibly make effective. Further, the National Union of Railwaymen must call for unity in action against the Tory government.

The TUC meeting in congress and the Labour Party conference must be brought into the fight to save jobs to defend the NUR.

The miners were not defeated because they lacked the will to struggle, because they lacked a strategy to win, or they lacked a leadership that would stand and fight, but because the TUC and Labour Party leaders refused to mobilise the labour movement behind them. *Never again!*

The lessons must be drawn from the miners strike for the current fight. Railworkers are a powerful force. Because of their industrial and strategic weight they can quickly bring serious disruption to most of the economy, affecting all the major commercial and industrial centres.

In the London area some three quarters of a million people travel daily to work by train. During the 1982 drivers' strike, buses were being turned away over 20 miles from the centre of London. This makes an appeal to NUR members on London Transport to take action as well a key demand.

On the freight side, the Central Electricity Generating Board has been caught short, badly understocked with coal. These facts were dealt with the Tory government and help explain the desperate intervention of the British Rail Board to

influence the ballots being taken.

Railworkers can win. There is a will to win — already proven by thousands involved in the current actions. They need a leadership that will stand and fight, one that will mobilise the entire membership for struggle, that will deepen the links with ASLEF at all levels and reach out to other unions and the Labour Party for support. It won't be easy but the attacks can be pushed back. Regional action, grade by grade action is useful primarily as steps taken towards national industrial action. As the NUR nationally says, 'Its the only language that management understands'.

The scabs in the industry must not become a barrier. A vital aspect today in the fight to protect the rail industry, unions and jobs is working towards a massive yes vote in the ballots yet to be taken.

The entire trade union movement must back the railworkers.

WHAT TO DO

- Plan a tour of sacked railworkers to local workplaces, union branches, Labour Party meetings. Take regular collections to make sure railworkers have a living income during the dispute.

- Get your Labour Party to contact the NUR and the traindrivers union, ASLEF, to hold a joint public meeting. Invite local labour movement leaders to share the platform — including Labour MPs and Councillors. Give the pride of place to the miners and the Women Against Pit Closures movement alongside railworkers!

- Commit your union branch or GC to full and active support for the railworkers, and to insist the TUC and the NEC pledge the full backing of the movement as a whole.

- Involve women's groups who see the need for a guard on every

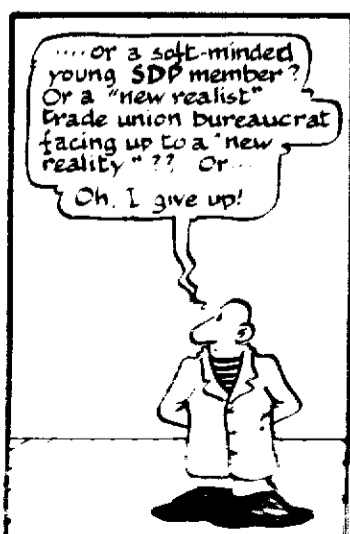
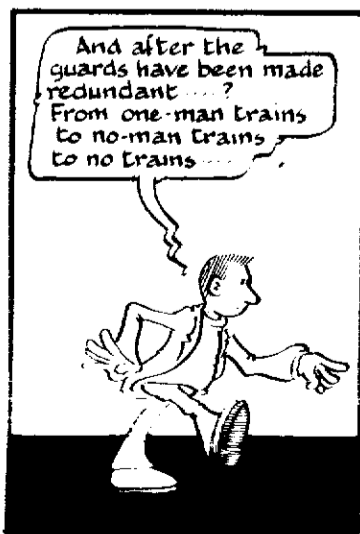
train. Contact the Women Against Pit Closures with a view to involving railworkers families.

- In light of the large numbers of black and Asian workers in the industry, enlist the support of these communities in any local solidarity actions.

- Organise solidarity actions to coincide with local action taken by railworkers — from workplace collections and delegations on the picket-line to industrial action as the dispute develops. Make sure MPs and councillors make press statements on the dispute, and join any picket-lines.

- Join with Socialist Action supporters in your area to get out the railworkers' case and to actively organise to force the BR Board to retreat. Help railworkers learn from the miners' strike by selling the pamphlet *Railworkers and Miners* and *In Defence of the NUM*.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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Photo: MARK SALMON

Scargill — and how the Notts area poster campaign against the national union portrays him



Photo: THE MINER

Notts president Ray Chadburn addresses Bolsover miners at the beginning of the Keeps Notts National campaign

Keep Notts national: Campaign gathers strength

MORE THAN 600 mineworkers and their supporters packed the main hall of Hucknall leisure centre in Notts last Saturday. They came to hear Arthur Scargill address the latest in series of meetings aimed at rallying support for the national union. Other speakers included Notts president Ray Chadburn and Anne Lilburn, president of Women Against Pit Closures. MICK ARCHER reports.

THE meeting was a major blow to breakaway leader Roy Lynk. Rattled by the mounting campaign in support of the NUM Lynk has taken extraordinary steps to stop the NUM's message getting across. In a letter to all branch secretaries, dated 6 August, he has instructed branch officials and committee members not to cooperate in any way with arranging meetings for Scargill.

Even where general meetings vote to arrange a discussion Lynk states they have no right 'to force decisions on branch officials and committee members that are not in line with the Nottingham area policy.'

As Arthur Scargill explained it was this instruction which led to him being locked out at Blidworth miners welfare two weeks before. Such action should concern everyone in the hall he argued because, 'when someone issue a dictat that members in this area can't go into their own welfare to listen to an argument then its the best description I can give of why they should stay with the democratic NUM.'

The Lynk campaign is clearly in trouble. It's attempt to stifle democratic debate, and its hounding of Notts officials Ray Chadburn and Henry Richardson, is a parody of the accusations they make against the NUM. The breakaway's attempt to focus on the issue of Scargill ignores the doubts of many miners that it can defend their wages and conditions as the national NUM has done.

The effect is predictable. Non-strikers were among those who snapped up leaflets for the meetings outside Hucknall and Linby pits and many of them turned out for the meeting.

In a detailed rebuttal of the arguments made by the splitters Scargill hammered these points home. He had come to Hucknall he explained 'to argue the case, not for the views of Arthur Scargill, nor the views of Ray Chadburn, but to argue the case for those who built this union, who created a national organisation.'

Listing the gains of the union won in past struggles Scargill also spelt out the key issue confronting trade unionists today: the existence of four and a half million unemployed and the threat of further closures and redundancies confronting the mining and other industries.

Applause

Loud applause interrupted Scargill's speech when he said 'I'll tell you what Scargillism is. It means fighting to save the jobs of those that are at work and ensuring their sons and daughters have a job to go to when they leave school. What's wrong with that for a policy I ask you?'

Highlighting the danger of pit closures in Notts itself Scargill also spelt out the sort of measures he thought the NUM should be fighting for in the future. These included an immediate end to overtime but where miners would earn on a daily basis the same money they would have got if they had continued to work it.

This he claimed would create 25,000 jobs for unemployed youth presently kicking their heels on the dole. He called for a rate protection scheme guaranteeing miners full pay when off work through illness or injury and four day working week with no loss of pay as part of a new technology

agreement. 'Without the unity of the union none of those possibilities can become a reality,' Scargill argued.

But he also stressed that this meant supporting all those fighting to defend jobs — even where it involved unions who had failed to give the miners the support they deserved. In the case of rail it was even more obvious. Drawing the parallel between the attack on the coal and rail industries he said British

Rail 'want to get rid of thousands of guards. It's a first step in their campaign to close down huge sections of the rail network. Both they and the Tories are wanting to see a cut-back of major proportions.'

'Then we will see the juggernaut trundling through our villages filled with coal rather than on a nationalised railway industry. The NUR are involved in a battle for jobs and they are involved in a battle to save their in-

dustry.

'I hope that every single miner in every single coalfield in Britain will agree with me when I say that when the NUR comes and asks this union for assistance we'll give them the same unswerving devoted assistance they gave us during the national strike.'

The meeting was an obvious boost for all those campaigning against the split in Notts. As Scargill finished by explaining, 'this union was not built

by Arthur Scargills. It was built on the blood, the sweat, the time, and the tears of miners in the 1920s and before who saw the only way of defending their rights as being the creation of one national union. In their memory I ask you to stand up and be counted not only to say that you will stay with the NUM but to go out fighting for your union.'

The message wasn't lost on his audience. That's what has to be done in the remaining weeks.

Penrhiwceiber fights closure

THE MEMBERSHIP of Penrhiwceiber lodge NUM have voted overwhelmingly, by two to one, to fight to save their colliery. Even after 12 months of bitter strike action and in the face of financial inducements from management in the form of redundancy pay, they are still people prepared to stand and fight.

The possibility of immediate strike action is very slim. An energetic public campaign is what's needed to save the pit. And first we've got to get out the facts about the present conditions at Penrhiwceiber colliery.

By Nigel Bevan, Penrhiwceiber Lodge Committee (personal capacity)

Hearing that the pit is to close, people assume the coal there is exhausted or geologically unsafe to mine. If this was the case then the NUM would also be for closure.

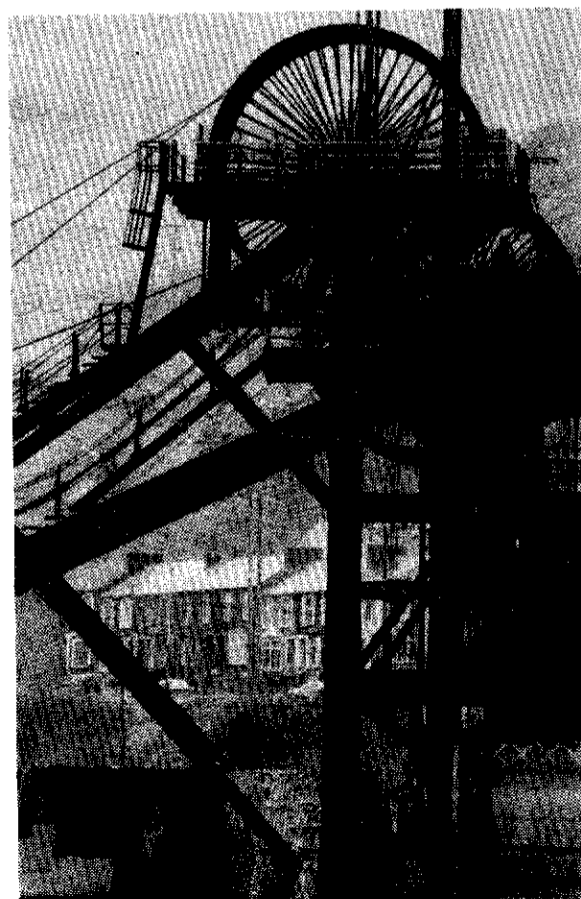
The truth is that there are at least 30 years of seams that can easily be mined. The conditions of these seams, in the Coal Board's own words, are 'good' and 'very good'. So it is clearly a political decision, not an economic one, that has decided the future of Penrhiwceiber. The South Wales NUM is in full support of the lodge committee's decision to

fight. The case will now go to national for their consideration.

We will go into review procedure with an extremely good argument for the retention of the colliery. But without outside support this will fall on the deaf ears of Coal Board management.

To bring to bear the pressure we need, we have to organise all the strength that was there in the strike. That means support from Women Against Pit Closures, the support committees and so on. Once these forces are organised the campaign can take off, with leafletting, petitions, meetings and demonstrations. Everything we can use in fact as a lever against Hobart House.

That campaign is only just getting off the ground. We have to concentrate fire first on the Cynon Valley. Once the valley organises, we can take the campaign to the rest of the labour movement — in Britain and across Europe.



Penrhiwceiber threatened with closure

Photo: GM COOKSON

Defend the Mansfield 55!

FIFTY-FIVE men who were arrested on 14 May last year at the Mansfield rally in support of the NUM are currently in court facing charges of affray.

They are appearing in Nottingham Crown Court where the case has now been going on for 11 weeks. Seven have been acquitted, but the remaining 48 are awaiting a verdict.

Notts Women Against Pit Closures are appealing for support for the Mansfield 55. People are encouraged to attend the public gallery during the sessions to show their support.

● Notts Crown Court sessions are held at Shire Hall, High Pavement, Nottingham. Phone 0602 501234 (David or Brian) or 258487 (Pam) for details of the days when the hearing is taking place.

Demo for Hancock and Shankland

WHEN BEDWAS councillor Ray Davies appeared in Cardiff court recently, he used the opportunity to publicise the call for a national demonstration in support of Russell Shankland and Dean Hancock.

The two Rhymney miners were jailed at the end of May after being convicted of the murder of scab taxi driver David Wilkie.

Ray had refused to pay a £10 fine after being found guilty of obstruction while out collecting money last December for a Christmas party for miners' children. His constant refusal to pay the fine means he's likely to spend a day or two in jail himself.

Hancock and Shankland are appealing their sentence, and this will be heard in London on 21-22 October. Upper Rhymney Support Group, together with Newport, Oxford and Bristol miners' support groups, are calling for a national turnout in support of the two.

● The march will leave Brixton, South London at 8.30am for the High Court on the day of their appeal. Further details from 0222 886695.

A New Socialist Action pamphlet, price 50p (plus 20p p&p). Bulk order rates available on request. Write to: NUM pamphlet, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

THE DETERMINATION of women from the mining communities to consolidate their movement was marked by the first conference of Women Against Pit Closures as a permanent, national organisation in Sheffield on Saturday 17 August. That consolidation, in and of itself, is a significant achievement which will benefit the women's movement and the labour movement alike.

Despite the fact that many groups have shrunk in size since the end of the strike, the 700-plus women who gathered together that weekend gave testimony to the continued militant struggle of the women's support groups. CAROL TURNER reports from Sheffield.

How do we organise...

'THIS movement that was born in 1984 has begun to inspire the world. I honestly believe that even in Britain there is not yet an appreciation of the phenomena that the establishment of the women's support groups has meant, not only to the National Union of Mineworkers but also to the national and international trade union movement.'

That was how Arthur Scargill described the movement of women from the mining communities, when he addressed the first national conference of Women Against Pit Closures in Sheffield the weekend before last.

This was no mere hyperbole. The first thing to be grasped about the decision to establish Women Against Pit Closures as a permanent national organisation is that it represents a consolidation of a new — and fundamental — aspect of working class politics.

More powerful movements of working class women can be seen in places such as Nicaragua. But up till now they have remained confined to those countries whose struggle for socialism is at a far higher pitch than in the developed capitalist world.

Inspiration

The Women Against Pit Closures movement in Britain is indeed an inspiration to all those across the world fighting for their liberation and their national independence. And it is no accident either that delegates and visitors in Sheffield on that historic Saturday gave such a warm welcome to Tanya Abramsce of the South African Congress of Trade Unions, when she called for support for the struggle of black people against the hated apartheid regime, and in particular for the South African National Union of Mineworkers. The women felt themselves part of a common international struggle.

The 700-plus women who assembled in the heartland of the NUM were in fighting mood. The day began with, and was dominated by, a demand for 'the right to vote'.

'The women want a strong organisation,' said Kay Sutcliffe from Kent, endorsing the call for a decision-making conference. 'But they can see that they will only have that if they feel part of this organisation. And the only way they'll feel part of it is

if they can vote themselves.'

For the last 18 months, the self-organisation of women in the support groups has added impetus to the struggle against pit closures. Indeed without the women the strike couldn't have gone on for as long as it did.

It wasn't just a matter of the material support that women organised for strikers and their families, important though that was. Collectively they played a leading political role as emissaries of the fight to preserve the mining communities against the attacks of the ruling class. And they couldn't have played the role they did without organising autonomously in the women's support groups.

Struggle

Although the struggle was a common one for men and women, within that women faced particular problems as women, both during the strike itself and from the threatened decimation of their communities. By organising together they were better able to confront and begin to solve those problems.

The result? The struggle as a whole was richer. Women understood that, the NUM and its allies understood that — even the Coal Board and the Tory Party understood that.

The magnificent achievement of the Women Against Pit Closures movement was, in fact, the best argument we've seen in years against those — of both the right and left — who claim that the independent organisa-

tion of women is divisive of the working class. On the contrary, it is the ruling class who lay the conditions for, and who benefit from, the real divisions that exists between men and women in today's society. Women are not only best placed to understand those problems, because they experience them first-hand. But they are also in the best position to know how to begin to overcome them.

Tribute

That's what happened in the miners' strike — to the benefit of the working class as a whole. And that's what Arthur Scargill understood when he paid tribute to this movement that 'has begun to inspire the world'. It is for that reason that women at the first national conference of WAPC fought as they did for their right to vote.

What was at stake was no mere one-off right to put up their hands at a



Delegates and visitors to Women Against Pit Closures conference filled the lower tier of Sheffield's City Hall

conference: it was the very future of the movement.

The WAPC movement will not live or die according to what happened in Sheffield that weekend before last. But its future will be decided, in large measure, by whether or not it continues to be a self-governing organisation of women from the mining communities, whose way of organising and of fighting is determined collectively by the women as a whole.

That's why women were angry in Sheffield City Hall. And that's why the structures and the aims of the campaign will be the subject of much discussion in the local groups in the weeks and months to come.

...and what do we fight for?

THE Women Against Pit Closures conference showed, in the words of one visitor from Lancashire, 'a genuine desire for a fighting partnership'. A partnership with the National Union of Mineworkers in the continued fight against pit closures.

And it was for that reason that the overwhelming mood of conference was to continue the fight for associate status. When Michael McGahey promised associate membership in the Scottish area, the cheers raised the roof. Only one woman during the whole day spoke against: she was hotly denounced afterwards for not representing the views of her group!

The continued determination to fight against pit closures was reflected in the centrality of the amnesty campaign and the defence of the unity of the national union. 'What's all this about "justice"?' asked Liz French from Kent, waving one of the conference leaflets in her hand.

'It's not "justice" we want — it's total amnesty for every sacked and jailed

miner.' Support for the families of victimised miners is still the central campaign for most groups.

The women of Notts, at the sharp end of the attack from Roy Lynk's breakaway, are leading the fight to keep Notts national. It was not an accident that two of the best contributions of the day both came from Notts.

Applause

The end of Helen Arthur's speech was drowned by applause when she called for support for the railworkers. 'In a week or two's time,' she said, 'we might have a national rail strike. Those people are looking to you. And it's going to make a difference to them; a difference to whether they're prepared to take on the Rail Board and the government in the same way the miners did.'

Gwen McLeod, who is chair of Notts WAPC, began the afternoon session by supporting the 'right to vote' demand. 'They've made a mistake,' she said of the national

committee, 'and the platform should note it: don't get away from your grass roots.'

Appealing for unity, after a morning disrupted by barracking led by a number of left groups attending the conference, she said: 'Think of Notts. Without unity we'll get nothing, and we've got to keep Notts national. We can't be responsible for the men in our area — but we are responsible for an historic movement of women that can go forward.'

Strong feelings were expressed against scabs' wives being allowed to join WAPC. But the issue still remains to be thoroughly discussed.

Take the woman who went to Rislely jail for three weeks, for example, for breaking her bail conditions and returning to the picket line when her own husband tried to return to work. Does she, by her own actions, merit membership of the WAPC movement? The answer of course should be a resounding 'yes'.

The draft proposals for the aims and structure of the new national WAPC organisation are still to be finalised. In the light of the demand for a decision-making conference, the undertaking of the chair — that a conference of area representatives will be convened to vote on all proposals — is unlikely to satisfy the dominant feeling within the groups for pit-based or group-based representation.

One thing that wasn't controversial though was the basis on which the movement itself continue to exist. The 75-25 per cent formula for representation between the mining communities and other women's support groups was unanimously favoured. So too was a clear understanding that WAPC's main aim, as the name suggests, remains the fight alongside their men in the NUM to protect their jobs and communities against the continued attacks from the Tory government.

Betty Heathfield: 'A unique organisation'

AT THE end of the day, Betty Heathfield spelled out the importance of the Sheffield conference. 'I want to remind each and every one of you,' she said, 'that we are part of a unique organisation.'

'I'm not saying women haven't struggled before on behalf of jobs; I'm not saying women haven't struggled before on behalf of women's issues — the trade union movement and the women's movement have been doing that for years. What we are new in doing is forming ourselves into an organisation...

'We have to start somewhere, and we're starting here today. We've had a song throughout our struggle: 'We are women, we are strong'. Get up and sing it — and then make it mean something!'

After conference

SINCE THE Sheffield conference, women's support groups have already begun to discuss the future of their new national organisation. One of those is the Rotherham Miners' Support Group, which met last week. STEPHANIE GREGORY told Socialist Action how the Rotherham women felt about the first national conference of Women Against Pit Closures.

OUR view is very positive after the conference. It was good to see such a large number of women there, and that so many groups are still active six months after the strike. Women Against Pit Closures is now an established organisation with an important future.

Despite the problems of organisation and com-

munication, that made the day more of a rally than a conference, we found the afternoon session a useful debate. The main issue for us is the fight for amnesty for the sacked lads.

We are also planning to get down to Notts and help out the women there in the fight against the breakaway. And we've already been in contact

with the local ASLEF to offer any support that we can give the railworkers in their fight — through the network of contacts and experience we've built up over the last 18 months.

We're looking now to the next conference, which must take positive decisions on the future of the organisation. We'll be contacting the 17 pits in South Yorkshire to strengthen area coordination and help any groups that have wound up to get restarted.

We want every pit represented at the next conference, with delegates who are miners wives or related to NUM members.



The only vote of the day: delegates overturn the chair's agenda

THIS YEAR'S TUC congress will be dominated by the rail strikes, by the aftermath of the miners' strike, by the continuing fight in the coalfields, by the TUC's attitude to the law, by the general council's move to the right and by the threat of a split with the AUEW and EETPU.

But behind all this lies a more fundamental development: the long-term drive of Thatcher and the employers to split the labour movement itself. All the particular struggles fall into place within that overall framework.

JOHN ROSS looks beyond some of the immediate issues at the basic goals of the Thatcher government's attack on the trade union movement.

When Thatcher came to office in 1979 she brought with her the most sophisticated and worked out anti-union policy of any British government this century.

Contrary to some forms of alarmism on the left, for example by *Marxism Today*, the goal of Thatcher was not to open up the way for essentially eliminating the trade union movement. No British government today has the relation of forces to achieve that. Instead Thatcher's goal was radically to change the nature of the trade union movement — a goal completely interlinked with the drive to reorganise the British economy and British politics.

At the economic level, Margaret Thatcher has sought to bring about not only a shift of income away from labour and toward capital, but also a dramatic redistribution of income within the working class itself.

Popular myths aside, the period of Thatcherism has not seen an unrelieved assault on the working class with a simple universal increase in hardship. On the contrary the period since 1979 has been one of major prosperity for significant sections of workers, made possible by the North Sea Oil revenues.

This is seen, for example in the video and home computer booms and the continuing affluence in the South and South East.

Using more precise measures, average real take-home pay increased by more than 10 per cent between 1979 and 1985. But this average is deeply misleading. The chief effect of the period since 1979, and the policies pursued by Thatcher, has been to increase virtually every differential within the working class.

A skilled manual worker earning £199 a week before tax in March 1985 had gained a four per cent increase in real income under the Tories. This is in addition to far more obvious and spectacular increases: 10 per cent for a middle manager earning £18,000; 22 per cent for a senior manager earning £26,000 a year; and 35 per cent for a company director earning £54,000 a year.

In contrast all those at the bottom end of the income scale have been savaged. The real wages of semi-skilled workers earning £146 a week before tax have fallen by three per cent under the Tories, and the income of the unemployed by 18 per cent. Two million people have been pushed out of jobs altogether — the greatest plunge into poverty of any section of the population.

Between 1978-79 and 1981-82 alone the bottom 20 per cent of the population suffered an average real loss in income of £82 a year. The after-tax share of income going to the poorest half of the population fell from 27 to 25 per cent in the same period. Since 1979 the proportion of male manual workers classified as low paid has doubled from 10 per cent to 20 per cent even on official criteria. Among women it has risen from 65 to 80 per cent.

For some sections of the working class the situation is far worse. Blacks are twice as likely to be unemployed as whites. The wages of an average black male worker are £20 lower than those of white. And the only reason the differential is not so high for women is that all women's wages are so much lower than men's. Women's wages are still less than three-quarters those of men's, and the differential is increasing. Nearly two-thirds of full-time workers, and 90 per cent of part timers, classified as low paid are women.

One of the most concerted of all the Thatcher government drives has been

Thatcher's plan to split the unions

to decrease youth wages. Differentials with 'adult' workers have increased sharply.

These divisions are not just increasing between industries, but within specific industries as well. The most famous example is the impact of the incentive scheme in the mining industry where miners in the productive Nottingham coal field have been able to secure far higher pay than those in the 'peripheral' coalfields. This was one of the key factors underlying the divisions of the NUM during the strike.

The trend of development is clear. Thatcher has sharply increased the income of high management, the salary component of the capitalists' income, and substantial sections of the 'middle' class. But she has also increased the wages of important layers of skilled and other highly-paid workers.

These moves by Thatcher though aren't just about wages and differentials. They are part of an attempt to restructure the entire labour market along Japanese and American lines.

One of the great advantage that US and Japanese capitalisms have compared to their rivals, including Britain, is greater control by employers over the labour market. Japan was once famous in Britain for the 'job-for-life' contracts given to workers. The impression was that this applied to the entire working class. What is not so generally realised is that it applied to a small section of Japanese workers. This protected privileged position for a minority was accompanied by much bigger more

systematised into the US labour system through 'two-tier' contracts. Existing workers receive higher wage rates, health protection, employment protection and so on; new workers however are employed at a lower rate, have fewer or no 'fringe benefits', have little or no security of employment etc. In short a division is created even between employees in the same factory or job, with some enjoying relatively far more privileges than others.

While Thatcher's plans have not progressed to anything like the level of the Japanese or US organisation of the labour market, nevertheless the direction in which British capitalism is trying to go is perfectly clear. Restructuring the working class into relatively secure higher-paid layers and into far more marginal and insecure sections lies behind much of recent Tory government thinking and policy. A report in the *Financial Times* of 21 August is worth quoting at length. It gives a clear description of the process involved.

'Companies are reorganising their workers in novel ways to increase the flexibility of their labour force, according to a report commissioned by the Employment Department, to be published soon. The report ... shows how companies are moving towards what it calls a "dual labour market" — a core of a secure workers separated from a periphery of workers on temporary contracts, working part-time or employed by subcontractors.

The study is based on extensive interviews with managers in 31 companies, half in manufacturing and half in services, including construction.

- 'A West Midlands mechanical engineering company has encouraged many of its skilled workers to set up independently as pipe-fitters, joiners, painters and so on, and tender for their old work.

- 'An electronics company in South Wales employs about 230 supplementals on three-month and 10-month contracts to act as a buffer protecting its 900 permanent employees. The supplementals have less attractive sick pay, holiday pay and pension arrangements, and are given permanent jobs only when someone leaves the permanent core.

- 'A large insurance company based in the north-west has increased its part-time workers by a quarter in four years and has begun to recruit clerical staff on three-month contracts. "You can call it our pre-cautionary demand for labour," a manager said, "and it helps us to select suitable people to transfer to permanent status."

- 'A British-based multinational in the food, drink and tobacco sector is also searching for functions to contract out, mainly as a way of hiving off its industrial relations problems to a contract workforce. As a sweetener for its unions, the company is encouraging its remaining workforce to compete with outside contractors for work traditionally done by outsiders ...

'The study shaped some of the main conclusions of a paper submitted to the National Economic Development Council in March by Mr Tom King, employment secretary. Companies "had not been unduly constrained in their initiatives by UK protective legislation," it says ... Companies are

opaque) distinction between employment and unemployment".'

This economic policy, although it can never be carried through in its perfected form, has clear implications for the underlying Tory attitude towards the unions. It involves a policy not of attempting to eliminate the trade unions — the relation of forces does not exist for that — but of confining them to these more privileged and secure groups of workers, then doing deals with the more right wing trade unions that will exist among these sections.

This was spelt out in two of the most important documents the Tory Party drew up in opposition: the draft proposals on the anti-union laws, and the infamous Ridley report which pre-announced the confrontation with the miners. The two complemented each other.

In several respects, the draft trade union proposals were a word-for-word copy of the policies adopted by the right wing in the AUEW and EETPU



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Terry Duffy, helping the Tories

casual workforce, with far less rights in employment than in a country such as Britain.

In the United States, until recently, such a clear division of employment did not exist. However the US achieved roughly the same effect by having far greater fluctuations in employment during booms and slumps than in Western Europe and by the systematic racism in employment, and every other field, against blacks.

Of late such divisions have been



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

however more concerned about protective legislation that stops them offering peripheral workers poorer non-pay benefits, such as holidays, sick pay and pensions.

'In the longer term, the report suggests, these developments could have serious implications for policies on training, since few companies offer their peripheral workers much training; and for social security arrangements, since they are blurring "the (already

— two of the key unions the Tories have targeted. Their core was the introduction of compulsory postal ballots coupled with restrictions on secondary action, such as picketing and so on. Thatcher calculated on, and is now getting, relatively direct collaboration from the leadership of these two big craft-originated unions on certain issues of trade union policy.

The second aspect, outlined in the Ridley Report, was that there is a real

economic basis for collaboration with the right wing of these unions. Electricity supply — the key to defeating the miners' strike — in particular was singled out as an industry in which long-term security of employment and high wages could be guaranteed. Confrontation in this sector, Ridly noted, was therefore both avoidable and *should* be avoided.

As regards other higher paid groups of workers, the Tories believed they could gain support by rejecting income policy and wage controls. A revolt against wage controls among higher paid and skilled sections of the working class had already started under the last Labour government with the Leyland toolroom workers' strike. In 1979 the shift to the Tories, among skilled workers, 13 per cent, was higher than any other section of the population.

That same process that saw an electoral swing to Thatcher among better-paid and skilled sections of the working class, concentrated in areas such as

strikes in 'essential services' such as health and local government, and through a systematic attempt to weaken or destroy unions such as NUPE.

Privatisation policy dovetailed into this approach. In *these* areas there was an authentic drive by the Tories to literally destroy trade union organisation.

Finally such a policy had a tremendous impact at the political level, in terms of the unity and structure of the labour movement. At the peak of its electoral popularity (for example in 1945-50 or 1964-66) the Labour Party's support was based on a bloc of high paid and low paid sections of the working class. The unity of the TUC itself — with its membership stretching from ultra-skilled high-paid white-collar workers down to low-paid black and women workers — was based on its ability to deliver something for everybody.

So the move of the Tories to increase differentials within the working class also meant an attempt to shatter the unity of the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

At the electoral level this process started with a big swing of skilled worker votes away from Labour, to the Tories, in 1979. In the Labour Party itself, it was carried through by the split of Owen and Jenkins to form the SDP in 1981. The SDP subsequently captured a substantial part of Labour's 'middle class' and skilled workers vote in areas such as the South and the South East in 1983. The culmination of such a move in the trade unions themselves would be a split in the TUC. In these circumstances, the major rows created by the AUEW and EETPU defying congress decisions on postal ballots are just a taste of things to come.

Indeed the final outcome of the present processes, and of Tory and SDP-Liberal policy, is easy to see. It would be to split the trade union movement into two separate federations. One, based on the EETPU-AUEW bloc coupled with white-collar and other unions, would essentially be based on the higher-paid more-secure sections of the working class. Such a federation would be far more 'apolitical' — that is right wing — than the present TUC, favouring co-operation between Labour and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

The second federation would be based on the unskilled and general unions, more left wing and linked to Labour. The Tories would seek to cooperate with the former and smash the latter. The aim at every level would be to split the labour movement.

Such a division of the trade unions would of course be a catastrophe for the labour movement. There wouldn't be 10 millions members — the present membership of the TUC — divided into two federations. Millions of workers would leave the unions altogether. Such a split would be a means to achieve, or would accompany, a qualitative defeat of the working class. This is the scale of the attack the Tories have in mind.

There should be no alarmism, or belief that such events will move rapidly. The fact that the ruling class and the Tory Party have this project in mind, and their ability to translate it successfully into practice, are quite different things. But neither must there be any underestimation of the scale of the assault against the trade union movement — or the scope of what is to come over the next 10 years.

The left in Britain, including the left represented by *Marxism Today*, have consistently underestimated the radicalism of Thatcher. The goal of the Tory party and British capital, to concentrate resources and income within relatively privileged sections of the working class, and to mount a ferocious assault on the rest, has tremendous implications for the future and structure of the British trade union movement.

The labour movement is not confronted with a Tory Party tinkering at the edges. Nor are the present trade union attacks a series of random proposals. Such issues as ballots are only the beginning of the process.

What is at stake over the next decade is an attempt to change the entire nature of the trade union movement — and to *qualitatively* weaken it. The left in the labour movement must raise its sights to the full scope of what is taking place. Only then will it be able to develop a coherent strategy for dealing with that situation.

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURE



Arthur Scargill: commentators at the time tried to say the suffragettes fought in vain

Uniting to win

THATCHER'S policies represent part of a strategy to weaken the power of the labour movement by increasing divisions within it. Her aim is to unite the best paid and most secure sections of the working class with capital.

The alternative social alliance for the labour movement, the only one by which it can maintain its fighting strength, is that of a struggle for the unity of the whole working class with the exploited and oppressed *against* capital.

The organisation which expresses that alliance perhaps better than any other is Women Against Pit Closures. It showed in practice that unity between the exploited and oppressed — between the organised labour movement and those groups in society, such as black people and women, who suffer the severest oppression — was the way forward for the whole of the working class.

The leadership of the NUM is exceptional in the labour movement precisely because it *has* sought to reach out and create the social alliances that are necessary to win against the Tory government and the ruling class. ARTHUR SCARGILL'S speech at the recent WAPC conference is an index of how far down that path the national leadership of the NUM has gone.

This movement that was born in 1984 has begun to inspire the world. I honestly believe that even in Britain there is not yet an appreciation of the phenomena that the establishment of the women's support groups has meant, not only to the National Union of Mineworkers but also to the national and international trade union movement. All over the world men and women stand in awe of what you've done, and more important, of what you continue to do.

I'm sick and tired of hearing certain academics and certain intellectuals analyse the outcome of the miners' strike. I'm fed up to the back-teeth of listening to those prophets of doom talk about the miners being defeated.

In 1984-5 Ian McGregor and Thatcher said they would close 25 pits. As we meet at your first annual conference not one of those pits has been closed. You are responsible for that achievement.

People talk about setbacks, I ask them to look at the positive advance: the establishment of this conference of the women's movement — not to walk behind us but to walk with us hand in hand.

I too, along with Michael and Peter, sincerely hope that every area of the National Union of Mineworkers accept associate membership for the women in the various support groups. What right have members of our union to deny, or even raise a voice of protest against affiliation when women are affiliated to the Labour Party and are affiliated to other unions?

For those who talk about setbacks, for those who sometimes appear, as Peter said, saddened and down-hearted, let me draw certain lessons from history.

I was looking at the film the other night about the suffragette movement. I heard the commentary and it could almost have been a re-run of the

kind of propaganda machine established by Thatcher. When the commentator of the day talked about the futility of the women's movement, he said people were incredibly sick of hearing about the right to vote.

It showed you, he said, women in a forlorn campaign chaining themselves to railings to establish the right to vote. And it talked about them being defeated.

As you sit here today is there any person in Britain would regard the problems and the difficulties that the suffragettes faced as defeats? They were points in the march forward to establish the franchise.

If people believe it's setback and defeat in the miners' strike, they don't understand the nature of history. Did the peace movement fail in the 1950s because they didn't immediately succeed in stopping the development of nuclear weapons? I believe the peace movement's presence has been the greatest single influence for world peace.

I remember one of the worthies of the trade union movement talking about the development of the women's support groups. And he said, with typical male chauvinism: 'where's it going to stop? They're going to get involved in other things, you know, beside the pit closure programme.'

I mean, where's it going to end? The next thing they're going to do — and I hope from the bottom of my heart that you are — will be to express from this conference total support for the African people fighting against apartheid.

I hope those leaders of the labour movement who were arguing that the leaders of the NUM should condemn alleged violence by *our* members, recognise that Nelson Mandela has been in jail for 25 years because he would not condemn *his* people for fighting for freedom. And I'll not condemn miners fighting for theirs.

Peter Heathfield said that the admission by MacGregor (in a recent *Financial Times* interview, that the strike had weakened the NCB) spelled out quite a lot of the Board's thinking. But you don't need to go to the *FT* to see it written in glossy terms. All you have to do is to look at the annual report of the National Coal Board, at their annual accounts — MacGregor writes that the miners' strike was a setback to the National Coal Board's policy and plans for the industry.

If there's a lesson for this conference, it's that if we want to maintain our pits and jobs then what we did in '84-85 I believe we're inevitably going to have to do again. We were fighting, each and every one of us, against government policy — and we were and we are involved in a class war.

I'll tell you why we're still on the front pages of every national newspaper; I'll tell you why the Coal Board, the government, big business, and the media are supporting breakaways in Notts; because they realise that the only way they can hope to win is to try and divide the National Union of Mineworkers and its supporters.

These super-democrats in Notts, Mr Lynk and Mr Prendergast, they talk about election of officials. You heard BBC and ITV give them loads of airtime about Scargill having to

Heathfield, McGahey and Scargill stand on this question: where we've always stood. If our conference decides there should be periodic elections, we are where we've always stood: in favour of it. Why don't Lynk and Prendergast stand for election?

The lessons of this dispute were seen at the Orgreave trial — when innocent young men were put on trial on frame-ups, when they were taken into court because police lied and forged documents. Some of the scenes down there could almost be laughable, had it not been so serious, with many of our sons and many of our people in the community facing the prospect of life imprisonment.

The same kind of stitch up took place in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and all over the place. They cooked — deliberately — the information put into that courtroom in an attempt not only to put into jail and to find guilty miners, but also the women who appeared on those picket lines during the course of the strike. For the first time in the history of the British labour and trade union movement, women took their rightful place defending not the jobs of their men, but defending *their* job, *their* pit and *their* community.

Notts area leadership have now said that Michael McGahey, Peter Heathfield, and Arthur Scargill have been banned from going into Nottinghamshire to speak. Twelve branches of the Notts area have invited us by majorities ranging from 70 to 95 per cent. And on instruction from the area leadership in Notts they've been told to cancel the meetings.

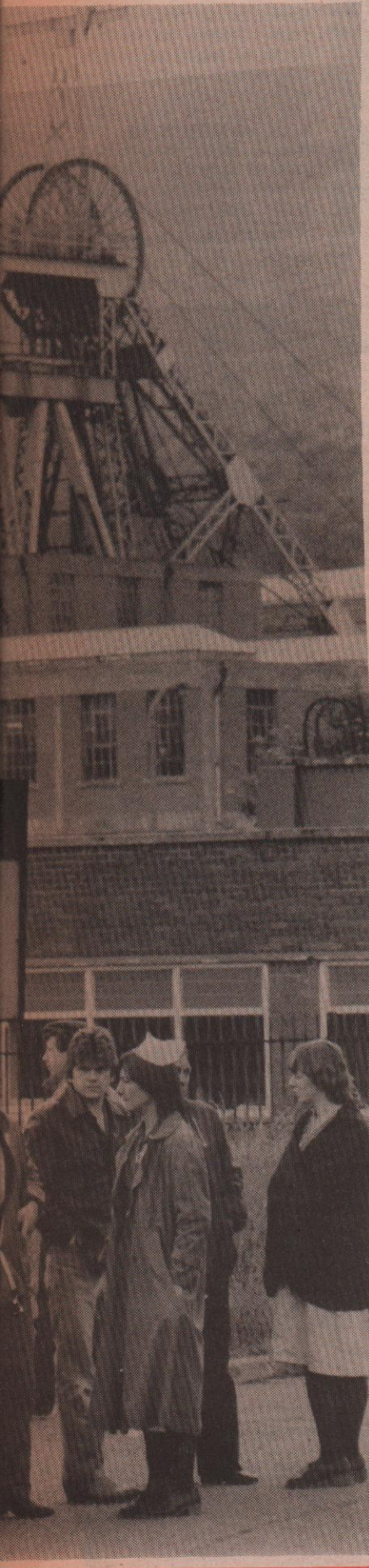
The first one was tomorrow morning at Blidworth — they cancelled Scargill speaking at Blidworth. Well I've got news for them: I'm going to Blidworth.

I'd like to conclude my contribution to this magnificent conference not by trying to impose my views or to introduce my philosophy or that of the national leadership, but as someone who has been at the forefront in this historic class war, I'd like to remind each and every delegate and visitor here today that they've got an obligation far wider than any small divisions that may exist between you; to cement those divisions, to come together in unity, to lift up your eyes, to look further afield than the present situation, to recognise the part you have to play in the ongoing fight to save this industry, to understand the role you have in fighting to maintain the National Health Service, the education system and the social services — to take into account the wider political role that you yourselves have created.

Above all else to say to yourselves that we have to win not only our fight against pit closures and job losses. We do not only have to have a united conference, but we have to create the conditions that we will need in the next general election to ensure the election of a Labour government pledged to real socialist policies.

I can give you a thousand reasons why we should follow that course of action. I'll restrict myself to two. You owe it to the memory of two of our lads who died fighting for those principles: Davy Jones and Joe Green.

Go from this conference united. Together we will win.



South East England, was reflected inside the trade union movement, in moves to closer links with the policies of unions such as the EETPU and AUEW.

As for the low paid and unskilled, Thatcher had an answer for them as well. No economic concessions could be given. On the contrary they were to bear the main brunt of the Tory attacks. They were to be deprived of the right to fight back, through a ban on

IRELAND UNFREE

British delegation to Belfast

THE BIG Republican demonstration in Belfast on Sunday 11 August included 116 people from Britain among its ranks. At the rally which followed, Geraldine Egan from Birmingham Trades Council said: 'A growing groundswell of people in England are objecting to what is happening here. We too are struggling for our freedom...and we like you have our chains to break.'

'That fight for us starts here, and it starts with getting the troops out of Ireland,' she said. Like other speakers here words were drowned out for most of the crowd by a British helicopter hovering low over the rally.

The delegation included Pat Reynolds of the Irish in Britain Representation Group, Ray Davies from the Rhymney Valley Miners' Support Group, Pam Oldfield from the Notts Women Against Pit Closures, and Lloyd Hayes, a former soldier who was twice stationed in the Six Counties, as well as members of the Newham Monitoring Project, and Socialist Action supporters. In all there were 500 international visitors put up in the homes of nationalists in Belfast that weekend.

On Saturday night we attended a social, with the first song dedicated to the British miners. The last was a chorus of 'Here we go'. As international delegations were introduced, the audience gave its warmest welcome to the Basque contingent. NORAI was welcomed too.

When we arrived in Belfast on Friday morning bus drivers refused to travel the Falls Road — so we had to walk its half mile. Three armoured jeeps drove by, returning to take the film from someone who had taken a picture of them. While the RUC spoke to us, the British army fanned out in surrounding streets. Sinn Fein explained that this was what 'normalisation' has meant: the unionist police do the talking, but they go nowhere without an army escort.

The previous night bonfires had been lit throughout the nationalist areas to begin the commemoration of internment. In Andersonstown, an RUC jeep arrived at one of them around 1.20 in the morning. They fired two flares to illuminate the area then shot one man in the head with a plastic bullet. BBC headlines next day reported 'Andersonstown man seriously ill after street violence'!

On Saturday morning our delegation was taken on a tour of army forts. The largest, Fort Jericho, is visible from most of Belfast — some high-rise flats were knocked down to give it a commanding position.

The rest of the delegation weekend included videos and workshops, including the banned BBC programme *Edge of the Union*.

● East London Socialist Action is preparing a slide show based on the delegation, showing the march as well as life in the nationalist areas. For bookings, write to: PO Box 36, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8.



Demonstration outside Armagh jail

Economy and War in Nicaragua



Demonstration in Managua against US war threats

TREVOR EVANS is an economist currently working with the Institute of Economic and Social Research in Nicaragua. Socialist Action interviewed him about the present economic situation in Nicaragua — and the impact of the US war against the country.

The interview is in two parts. This week's deals with the impact of the initial economic policies pursued by the Sandinistas. The next issue looks at the economic consequences of the war.

Can you remind us about the general economic structure of Nicaragua before the revolution?

The driving force of the economy was agricultural production for export — in particular cotton — which meant evicting poor peasants who had been producing basic food crops. There was an attempt at industrialisation in the 1960s and early 1970s through the Central American common market, but this led to increased Nicaraguan dependence.

Nicaragua was very dependent on the import of raw materials. Whereas industry generated exports worth around \$80 million, it required imports of raw materials in the order of \$160 million.

Seventy per cent of material production was agricultural products or agro industrial processing of agricultural products. But despite this there was a lot of hunger in Nicaragua before the revolution — a lot of food that was consumed had to be imported.

In 1979, after the revolution, the Sandinistas faced an economy that even by Latin American standards was very underdeveloped as a result of the 45 years of the Somoza dictatorship. On top of that Nicaragua experienced eighteen months of the war of liberation.

What was the economic strategy of the Sandinistas when they gained political power in 1979?

The FSLN's overriding

priority was to meet the needs of the popular sector, the social groups who had supported the revolution. This meant the peasantry, the agrarian working class, the urban working class and the very large urban marginal sector.

The government wanted to avoid the sort of collapse in production that had occurred in places like Mozambique after its liberation and so they pursued the policy of a mixed economy. This has three components — the state sector, the small producer sector, and the capitalist sector.

Within the small producer sector the FSLN had a very active policy of creating cooperatives. This programme combined with agrarian reform and access to credit facilities had a big impact on the small producers. The land reform particularly affected the very large farms (latifundia). These used to account for over 40 per cent of all agricultural land but now less than 20 per cent.

Within the capitalist sector the non-Somocista bourgeoisie who continued to produce can keep their property. The state has quite a lot of influence over what they produce through their control over the allocation of credit and foreign exchange (dollars), and this ensures that they produce the types of products that the government considers the most important.

If workers or peasants claimed to a tribunal that the capitalists were not producing, and that claim was upheld, then that capitalist would be expropriated — as would any leaving the country.

The share of the strictly capitalist sector in output has therefore fallen from one third in 1980 to just under one quarter in 1983. This fall is also due to the dynamic accumulation in the state sector.

The state sector is organised in the area of people's property based on the state farms and the factories that were taken over from Somoza and his close allies. They have councils where workers are represented, but because of the economic constraints that act on the economy there is limited room within which these councils can determine what happens within a state enterprise. What they produce is pre-determined so they mainly have influence over working conditions.

What are the material constraints within which the revolution is now operating?

The first is the legacy of underdevelopment which was inherited from Somoza. Nicaragua is an economy which depends on the export of four major agricultural products. It has to use the dollars earned from them to import virtually everything else the economy needs. So Nicaragua is a very dependent country.

Secondly the economy has been very badly affected by the world recession. The price of all agricultural exports has fallen very sharply in the world market since 1980. This meant that by 1983 the same volume of exports from Nicaragua could only buy two thirds the volume of exports of 1980.

The other direct economic problem is the shortage of labour. Partly this has been due to a general migration into the capital — workers from rural areas attracted by higher living standards in the city. These people leave agricultural production and engage in the informal commercial sector — selling goods in the free

market.

Another cause of the labour shortage is the land reform. The poorest peasants who were driven by debt bondage and hunger to provide wage labour for the harvests before the revolution now have their own land and can produce themselves.

So how would you evaluate the economic policies of the FSLN?

In the first years of the revolution the economy did extraordinarily well. While the rest of Central America suffered a 16 per cent fall in Gross National Product between 1980 and 1983 per capita income in Nicaragua increased by 10 per cent.

In comparison with the experience of other radical regimes the FSLN have managed to maintain production in the capitalist sector at reasonable levels. However most of the investment has been in the state sector. A number of the cooperative are also

making quite strong financial surpluses.

This development — combined with the provision of collective goods like health care, education, subsidies on basic foods, and the big expansion of basic food production which has led to self-sufficiency in some basic products — has meant that resources have been directed particularly to the poorest sectors of society.

In terms of laying foundations for the future the very strong investment programme has laid a basis for an independent path of development.

There are lessons for other countries. What has been very important are the new forms of organisation that have been evolved. The state has very few resources so that it has been forced to evolve forms of social regulation that don't depend on a large state sector. So while one quarter of production is in capitalist hands the state does not have to run an even larger state sector — although there is strong social supervision of this capitalist sector.

The six basic foods are distributed via a territorial network using small private shops. So this distribution system doesn't have to be run by the state but is closely supervised by the neighbourhood committees — so that it is subject to popular and social regulation.

Nicaragua has reduced its economic dependence by shifting trade away from the US and towards Europe, Latin America and the Soviet bloc.

You've talked about the policy of a mixed economy in Nicaragua. In what way does that differ from the way it is talked about by sections of the Labour Party in Britain?

The most important difference is that in Nicaragua the capitalist sector has lost political power, and this means that the policies of the government and the state are directed in the interests of the popular sector. While the capitalists still continue to control important parts of the economy they do so very firmly under the hegemony of a government dominated by the interests of the workers and peasants.

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Telephone 01-359 8082

South Africa

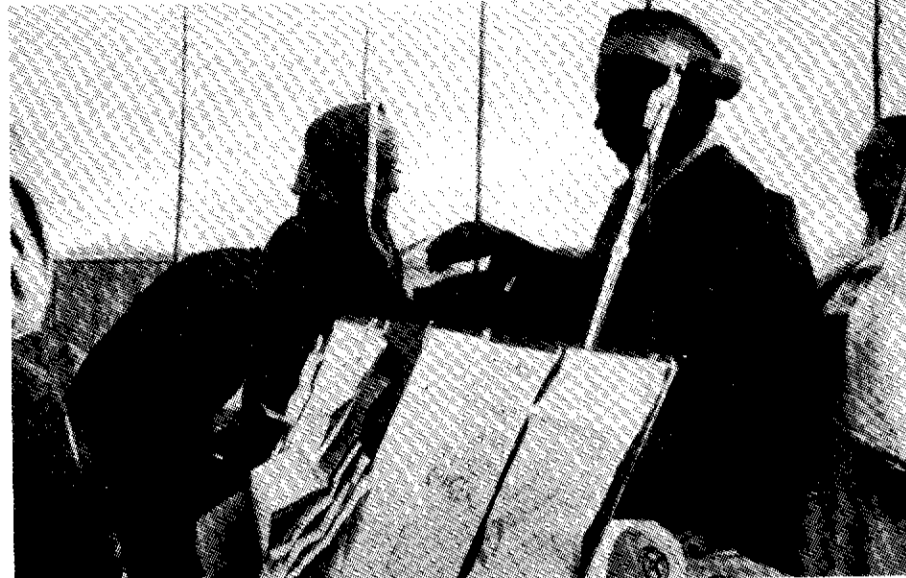
'Freedom Charter'

A CENTRAL political point of reference in the struggle in South Africa, and the debates over strategy in that country, is the *Freedom Charter* adopted at a 'Congress of the People' held in Klip-town, near Johannesburg, on 25-26 June 1955. The Congress was convened by the African National Congress (ANC), together with the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation, and the Congress of Democrats (an organisation of whites supporting the liberation movement).

The congress was attended by 2,888 delegates from throughout South Africa. The Charter was adopted by the four sponsoring organisations as their policy and became the manifesto of their struggle for freedom.

A year later, 156 leaders of these organisations were arrested and charged with treason. They were acquitted after a trial lasting more than four years. In the wake of the massacre of scores of black protesters in Sharpsville, the ANC was banned in 1960. Its principle leader at the time, Nelson Mandela, was imprisoned for life in 1964.

We are printing the Charter, so that readers of Socialist Action can study it.



ANC leaders Chief Luthuli and Yusuf Dadoo were banned from attending the Kliptown meeting which adopted the People's Charter. Dadoo's mother receives the Isitwalande ('hero') award on his behalf.

We, the people of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know:

- that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people;
- that our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of govern-

the democratic changes set out here have been won.

The people shall govern! Every man and woman shall have the right to vote for and to stand as a candidate for all bodies which make laws;

All people shall be entitled to take part in the administration of the country;

The rights of the people shall be the same,

against insults to their race and national pride;

The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime.

The people shall share in the country's wealth!

All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.

The people shall share in the country's wealth!

The national wealth of our

shall be ended, and all the land redivided amongst those who work it, to banish famine and land hunger;

The state shall help the peasants with implements, seed, tractors and dams to save the soil and assist the tillers;

Freedom of movement shall be guaranteed to all who work on the land;

All shall have the right to occupy land wherever

army shall be open to all on an equal basis and shall be the helpers and protectors of the people

All laws which discriminate on grounds of race, colour or belief shall be repealed.

All shall enjoy equal human rights!

The law shall guarantee to all their rights to speak, to organise, to meet together, to punish, to preach, to worship and to educate their children;

The privacy of the house from police raids shall be protected by law;

All shall be free to travel from countryside to town, from province to province and from South Africa abroad;

Pass Laws, permits, and all other laws restricting these freedoms shall be abolished.

There shall be work and security!

All who work shall be free to form unions, to elect their officers and to make wage agreements with their employers;

The state shall recognise the right and duty of all to work, and to draw full unemployment benefits;

Men and women of all races shall receive equal pay for equal work;

There shall be a forty-hour working week, a national minimum wage, paid annual leave, and sick leave for all workers, and maternity leave on full pay for all working mothers;

Miners, domestic workers, farm workers and civil servants shall have the same rights as all others who work;

Child labour, compound labour, the tot system and contract labour shall be abolished.

The doors of learning and of culture shall be opened!

The government shall discover, develop and encourage national talent for the enhancement of our cultural life;

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands;

The aim of education shall be to teach the youth

to love their culture, to honour human brotherhood, liberty and peace;

Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children;

Higher education and technical training shall be opened to all by means of state allowances and scholarships awarded on the basis of merit;

Adult illiteracy shall be ended by a mass state education plan;

Teachers shall have all the rights of other citizens;

The colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished.

There shall be houses, security and comfort!

All people shall have the rights to live where they choose, to be decently housed, and to bring up their families in comfort and security;

Unused housing space shall be made available to the people;

Rent and prices shall be lowered, food plentiful and no one shall go hungry;

A preventative health scheme shall be run by the state;

Free medical care and hospitalisation shall be provided for all, with special care for mothers and young children;

Slums shall be demolished, and new suburbs built where all have transport, roads, lighting, playing fields,

creches and social centres;

The aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state;

Rest, leisure and recreation shall be the right of all;

Fenced locations and ghettos shall be abolished, and laws which break up families shall be repealed;

South Africa shall be a fully independent state, which respects the rights and sovereignty of nations.

There shall be peace and friendship!

South Africa shall strive to maintain world peace and the settlement of all international disputes by negotiation — not war;

Peace and friendship amongst all our people shall be secured by upholding the equal rights, opportunities and status of all;

The people of the protectorates — Basutoland, Bechuanaland and Swaziland — shall be free to decide for themselves their own future;

The rights of all the peoples of Africa to independence and self-government shall be recognised, and shall be the basis of closed cooperation;

Let all who love their people and their country now say, as we say here:

"These freedoms we will fight for, side by side, throughout our lives, until we have won our liberty!"

Divide and rule

THE PRESS in Britain, and in particular in the United States, is attempting to portray the struggle in South Africa as 'increasingly black against black'. Press publicity has particularly been given to Inkatha — the organisation of chief Buthelesi. **DICK CARTER** looks at the role of Inkatha and the other attempts to divide the black population being made by the white racists.

FACED with the black upsurge against the apartheid regime the South African racists are trying to resort to a tried and tested tactic: divide and rule. They have utilised for this purpose the exclusively Zulu puppet organisation Inkatha of chief Gatsha Buthelesi.

Inkatha is a notoriously tribalist organisation and was used by the South African state during the Soweto uprising of 1976. At that time members of Inkatha attacked non-Zulu schools.

As the black struggle in South Africa has deepened, and the United Democratic Front has grown in size and importance, Inkatha's hostility to the UDF has increased — with physical attacks being increasingly carried out against members of the UDF by Inkatha.

During the black uprising in Durban earlier this month 18 UDF supporters were killed. Many more had their homes burnt by Inkatha and by the police.

Many UDF activists from the Luanda township took refuge in nearby Phoenix, a settlement set up by Mahatma Gandhi. The settlement itself was attacked a few days later and much of it was burnt. The fire brigade and police refused to come to the help of the African and Asian militants at the settlement.

Instead, according to eye-witness reports, the police toured the Indian township of Phoenix with loudhailers telling people

that Africans had attacked Phoenix settlement because it was a symbol of South African Asians — and that the Africans were preparing to invade the Indian township and kill Asians.

The police organised a posse of Indians who headed off to the settlement. They would have attacked the remaining African UDF activists had not the true situation been explained by Indian UDF members.

The Group Areas Act in South Africa serves to strengthen the states hand in exploiting divisions. The white centre of Durban, like all South African cities, is surrounded by Indian and 'coloured' townships. The African townships lie in a band around these. The white area lies in the centre — the nerve pulse of the city. It is this which provides another base for attempts to divide and rule.

There should be no confusion. What is involved in South Africa is not 'black against black violence' — as the press claims. It is the white racists attempting to utilise divisions and puppet organisations to maintain their own rule.

Needless to say we heard nothing of 'black against black violence' in the press in 1976 when black members of the police were gunning down black schoolchildren in Soweto!



ment founded on injustice and inequality;

- that our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities;

- that only a democratic state, based on the will of all the people, can secure to all their birthright without distinction of colour, race, sex or belief;

And therefore we, the people of South Africa, black and white together — equals, countrymen and brothers — adopt this Freedom Charter. And we pledge ourselves to strive together, sparing neither strength nor courage, until

regardless of race, colour or sex;

All the bodies of minority rule, advisory boards, councils and authorities shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government.

All national groups shall have equal rights!

There shall be equal status in the bodies of state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races;

All people shall have equal right to use their own languages, and to develop their own folk culture and customs;

All national groups shall be protected by law

country, the heritage of all South Africans, shall be restored to the people;

The mineral wealth beneath the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole;

All other industry and trade shall be controlled to assist the well-being of the people;

All people shall have equal rights to trade where they choose, to manufacture and to enter all trades, crafts and professions.

The land shall be shared among those who work it!

Restrictions of land ownership on a racial basis

they choose;

People shall not be robbed of their cattle, and forced labour and farm prisons shall be abolished.

All shall be equal before the law!

No one shall be imprisoned, deported or restricted without a fair trial;

No one shall be condemned by the order of any government official;

The courts shall be representative of all the people;

Imprisonment shall be only for serious crimes against the people, and shall aim at re-education, not vengeance;

The police force and

Come to Greenham — 8 September

SEPTEMBER 5 marks the fourth anniversary of the women's peace camp at USAF Greenham Common in Newbury, Berkshire. To celebrate this event women are preparing for a mass trespass when they intend to 'replace the base' by covering the fence with blankets on 8 September.

The blankets, embroidered with life-affirming symbols on one side and eyes looking in at the camp on the other, will be exchanged at the end of the action among peace activists from different groups and countries. Women from the Pacific Islands will be in attendance at the Green Gate.

The time of this event coincides with Operation Brave Defender from 2-13 September. Involving 65,000 troops, this will be the largest Home Defence exercise mounted in Britain since World War II.

By Valerie Coultas

British and US troops will be involved in the exercise, along with the Home Service, the Territorial Army and the Reservists — at a cost of £3 million.

Telecom workers want action on pay

At a meeting of 500 NCU (previously POEU) members in Central Hall Westminster last Thursday the mood of Telecoms workers was clearly for a 'yes' vote in the ballot for industrial action on pay.



The union's claim is for 12 per cent while British Telecom management's offer is for either 6.75 per cent with strings or 7 per cent with even more strings, one of which is £21 a week wage cut for

certain grades! While the broad left led executive is calling for a yes vote in the ballot they are being deliberately coy as to what is meant by their call for 'industrial action'. But speaker after speaker from floor was clear that it had to mean national strike action.

The membership if not the leadership of the NCU have learnt the lessons of the selective industrial action strategy that spelt disaster in the fight against privatisation.

By Marcella FitzGerald, London North Central Internal NCU

Although NUR guards at Kings Cross were not allowed to address the meeting the question of the NUR's dispute came up time and again and the solidarity of telecoms workers with the rail guards was clearly shown in the response to the collection.

The result of the pay ballot is expected in mid-September.

This expensive *Boys Own* masquerade in fact has nothing to do with protecting the civilian population from the so-called red peril. The threat of war in the world today does not come from the Soviet Union but from the aggressive foreign policy of the US and western imperialism. They have upped the stakes in the nuclear arms race.

Home Defence is not however designed to deal with an external, but an internal threat. Set up in 1972, Home Defence aims to control the civilian population in the event of a nuclear war.

Home Defence forces will actually be used to control the public, panicking when supplies run out and fleeing from obvious target areas or organising resistance. The so-called 'dead bodies' the Brave Defender troops will be practising on are those of people alive today.

Alert

None of the 200 key points to be defended in the exercise Brave Defender however include nuclear targets. It is a political manoeuvre by the Tory government and the military establishment to counter the growth of the peace movement. They hope to shift public attention away from the nuclear threat towards an imaginary conventional war threat by the Russians.

The Greenham women's peace movement aims to alert the public to the fact that Brave Defender is not what the government want us to believe, by focussing public attention on the 32 American cruise missiles stationed at Greenham — the 501st unit of the United States Airforce tactical missile unit.

'These are the weapons that make Britain a prime focus for a nuclear attack. They are no form of defence at all', explains

Helen John, one of the women involved in building the action at the camp. 'The best form of defence is go give up all our nuclear weapons.'

'The real brave defenders are women who are fighting governments throughout the world demanding they stop participating in the arms race. The people taking part in this exercise far from being brave defenders are grave offenders.'

The police, the army and the courts have no concern for protecting the rights of ordinary people. Their attempts to suppress the four-year long Greenham protest is just one proof of this.

Harassment

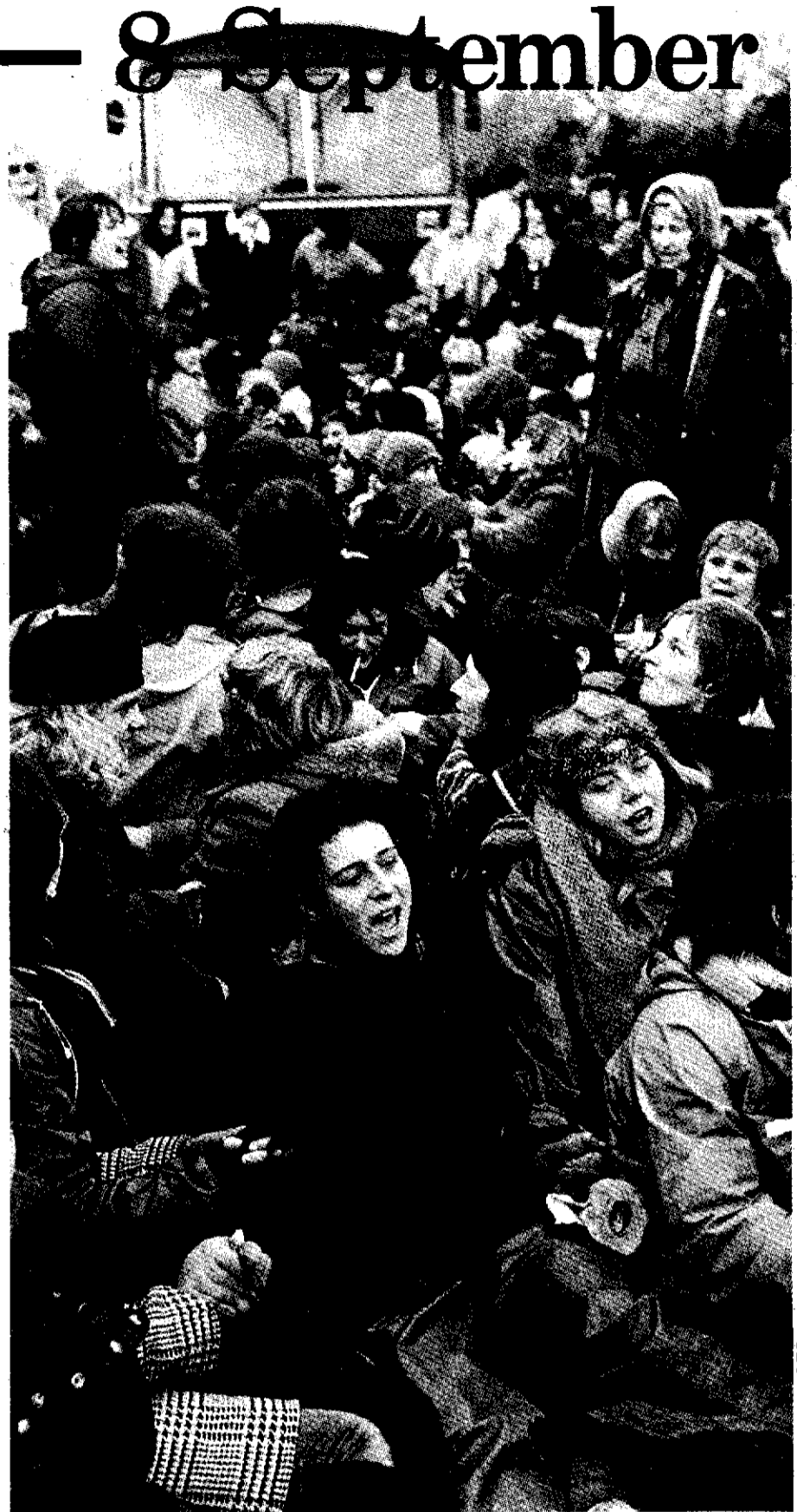
The harassment of the women at the camp is now almost unbearable. Everyday the women face the threat of eviction and the confiscation of their possessions.

Newbury District Council has won a High Court ruling changing the status of the common to private land. Rage (Ratepayers Against the Greenham Encampment) continues its unsavoury actions stimulating violence against the women.

Women peace campaigners and members of the camp are being given harsh sentences. Anne Francis was given a one year prison sentence for causing £250 worth of damage to the fence. After an appeal this was reduced to six months, but this is still totally unrelated to the alleged crime.

Show your opposition to the Tory government's 'defence' plans. Come down to Greenham for the Phoenix Weekend of 7 and 8 September to 'Replace the Base'.

● For coaches phone the London Greenham office on 01-608 0244, or ring London Region CND on 01-388 1628.



September 1982: Greenham women blockade camp

Photo: ED BARBER

SPUC on the attack in Ireland

ONE WOULD be forgiven for thinking that if there is anywhere in the world where the attentions of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) were not needed it is the Republic of Ireland. Not only was an amendment of the Constitution passed in 1983 making abortion unconstitutional, but despite some recent cosmetic changes, contraception is almost impossible to get, especially outside the larger cities and towns, or for the unmarried.

There is little or no contraception or other sex education available in the schools, which according to anti-abortionist theory should ensure no teenage pregnancy.

Contraception

Despite this, there has been an increase in illegitimate births from 2.7 per cent of all births in 1971 to 6.8 per cent in 1983, and the number of babies born less than nine months after marriage has doubled between 1962 and 1983.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that in 1983 3,700 women (10 a day) giving addresses in Ireland had abortions in Britain. The true figure is undoubtedly higher.

Leonora Lloyd, NAC

It was SPUC, the Irish group of which was formed following a visit from British adherents, who were largely behind the constitutional amendment campaign. During that campaign, opponents claimed that the amendment, if passed, would

lead to a situation where women's lives would be in danger, and where women could be prevented from travelling to Britain for abortions.

So far, at least one woman has died because of being refused treatment that might have harmed the foetus. Now SPUC is turning its attention to the counselling services.

Since 1983, anti-abortionists have picketed family planning clinics and the two Dublin centres where women can get help and advice before seeking an abortion in Britain. Now SPUC has applied for an injunction in the High Court to outlaw such counselling, citing the eighth amendment.

Injunction

The organisations named in the injunction are the Dublin Well-Woman Centre, which ad-

vises women on many aspects of health — not just pregnancy and abortion referral — and Open Line Counselling, a small organisation which exists solely to help women with problem pregnancies.

The injunction would make it impossible to give non-directive counselling, referral or information, claiming that access to this information is undermining 'public morality'!

Ad Hoc

An ad-hoc group has been set up to defend the two organisations against this fresh attack, led by the Union of Students in Ireland. Their demands are:

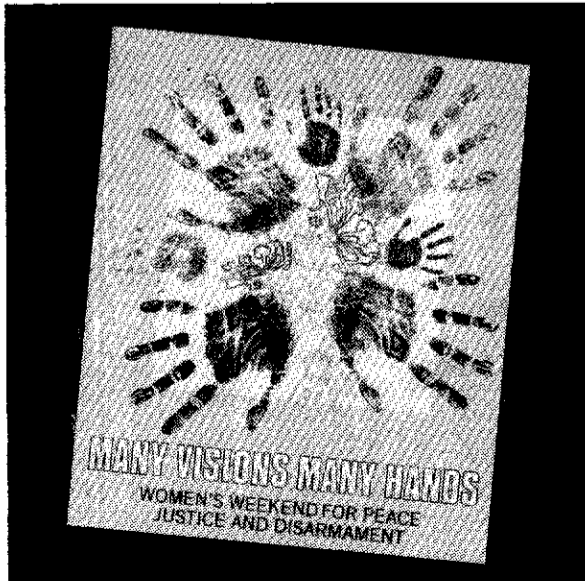
1. The right of Irish women to agencies which provide non-directive pregnancy counselling, independent of church and state;

2. The right of agencies and individuals to provide information to women with unplanned pregnancies on all options including abortion;

3. The right to refer women to jurisdiction where abortion is legal while these services are unavailable in Ireland.

The ad-hoc group is planning a conference-public meeting in mid-September to discuss the case, which goes to court towards the end of September. In Britain, the National Abortion Campaign will be doing what it can to publicise and support the campaign.

● How to help: donations and messages of support should be sent to: Open Line Counselling, 3 Belvedere Place, Dublin 1; Account No 24578008, Allied Irish Banks, 20/22 College Green, Dublin 2. (The cheapest way to transfer money is to take cash to a branch here.)



13/14/15 September 1985

Manchester Town Hall

Registration fee £5 waged £2 unwaged

Further details ring 061 236 1588

News

Black section demands apartheid sanctions

WHEN THE Labour Party black section national committee recently issued a statement on South Africa, the storm raised by the criticism of Kinnock's record meant that the proposals made for labour movement action against the Botha regime have been all but lost. If Neil Kinnock pursued just a few of these demands as strenuously as he has opposed black sections, then black and white activists alike would have that much less to criticise in his behaviour. We reprint below the black section statement.

SOUTH Africa's racist, neo-fascist apartheid regime must be starved of the oxygen of economic, social and diplomatic contact. The Labour Party black sections national committee fully supports the call for complete and inviolable economic sanctions and disinvestment aimed at bringing the racists in Pretoria to their knees.

But we believe that freedom for the enslaved black majority in Azania will not be brought about solely by sanctions. Those fighting to break the chains of bondage through the black trades unions and armed liberation struggle must be supplied with financial and material aid.

Neil Kinnock says he endorses the suspension of diplomatic ties, a ban on

the export of oil, weapons and capital, and the exclusion of coal and uranium imports from the Botha regime. But he is not prepared to fight for these minimal measures as opposition leader. They are yet another carrot to induce black people to vote him into Number 10 on a promise he may or may not keep.

We call on Neil Kinnock to show the statesmanship so lamentably lacking in his squalid campaign against black activists in his party struggling for an organised voice in the labour movement. When he was quoted in the press recently using the terms 'repellent' and 'bankrupt', it was not South Africa's apartheid white minority government he was referring to, but Labour Party



members freely organised in black sections.

More than 60 people have been killed since Botha, gripped by fear of the inevitable revolution, imposed the 'state of emergency' — scores more black people have died since the recent uprisings began. How many more must be slaughtered under a tyranny unrivalled since

Nazi Germany before Kinnock uses strong adjectives and action against South Africa's continuing crimes?

We call on Neil Kinnock to urgently convene a meeting of labour movement leaders — black and white — to formulate a campaign aimed at:

1. Immediate disinvestment by unions and Labour local authorities;
2. A national Labour Party fund to provide aid for Azania's freedom fighters;
3. A concerted programme of pressure in parliament aimed at securing sanctions and stopping the British government from vetoing such measures on the United Nations Security

'BLACK PEOPLE support the miners, our struggle continues'. That was the message from the Black Delegation as the 1985 Notting Hill carnival got under way last weekend.

The Black Delegation, which organised cash support and delegations to picket lines from the black community throughout the strike, returned to the carnival to raise money for sacked and imprisoned miners and publicise the amnesty campaign. Police repression unleashed against the NUM during last year's strike brought a ready response from the black community who have long suffered severe harassment from police and courts.

More than 50 black and white miners from three coalfields participated on stalls, a Black Delegation float and in street collection over the weekend. Over £2000 was raised from the street collection and donations from local traders, 25 per cent of which is being donated to black miners in South Africa.

4. A national publicity campaign spearheaded by the trades union and Labour Party press aimed at securing support and cash;
5. An immediate end to the sale of South African goods by Co-op stores or use by Labour-controlled local authorities;
6. An officially-backed refusal by trade unionists at ports to handle South

African goods or goods destined for South Africa; 7. Unconditional release of political prisoners.

Black sections intend to stand and fight for black liberation inside and outside Britain. Like our brothers and sisters in Azania, we will not be beaten by bankrupt opposition to our legitimate demand for black rights now!

Kent Mines not Missiles festival

THE SECOND Mines not Missiles festival held in Aylesham, Kent over the bank holiday weekend attracted over a thousand people. This was down on the attendance at last year's event which coincided with the middle of the miners' strike, but the festival provided a welcome focus to re-establish some of the links that were made in the strike.

The Saturday rally gave an indication of the political situation in the mining communities. Tilmanstone pit is threatened with closure and at Betteshanger miners walked out over the erosion of safety standards in the pit. Six members of Betteshanger lodge are in jail. Terry Harrison, a Bet-

teshanger miner summed up the situation like this:

'We strained the loyalty of our members to the utmost. Twelve months on strike is no joke to a working class family. Coming out of that strike did come disillusion. It's not easy to accept the kind of things that have happened to us.

'Our lads have had to eat crow with this management since they went back but one thing they'll not accept is a management that will be dictatorial about working and safety conditions in the pit'.

The lessons of the miners' strike were very much to the fore in the rally and the international links that miners in Kent had made before, during and after the strike. International visitors were present from Holland and Luxembourg and speakers were taken from the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign, the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign and Anti-Apartheid.

A speaker from Dover CND drew out the links between the struggle against the missiles and the miners. 'We're all fighting Thatcher and Thatcherism' she said. 'When I was at Greenham before the strike the NUM sent us messages of support. When I was on a picket outside Canterbury jail protesting about the imprisonment of miners there were lots of Greenham women in attendance.'

By Valerie Coultas

She also pointed out that CND was experiencing the same kind of erosion of civil liberties as the miners had experienced. 'At Molesworth at Easter we saw the police adopting the new style tactics they first used in Ireland and then at Orgreave'.

Perhaps the strongest feeling that came out of the festival in Kent was support for the coming

fight of the railway workers. Ray Varnes, a suspended guard from Kings Cross, pointed out that some railworkers had been aware that the miners' struggle 'was a prelude to attacks on the entire working class and that it wouldn't be long before they were coming for us. Unfortunately the majority of railworkers couldn't see that when they had the opportunity to join the strike last July.'

But the Tories offensive was now hitting them and railworkers were beginning to wake up. 'If you'd have asked Kings Cross guards eight weeks ago if they could have stood up to management they would have said no.'

Now 100 guards had stood firm and strike committees were being established. 'Railworkers are discovering they have all sorts of skills they didn't think they had. The miners will know all about this...'

Pledges of support had already been given to Kings Cross guards from Nottingham and the Kent coalfield pledged its solidarity.

The festival continued for three days showing the play *In the National Interest* about the strike at Betteshanger in 1941 to large audiences and attracting many young people to the bands and sports events. Mines not Missiles is going to become an annual event in Kent and it is a useful way of taking the issues raised by CND into the labour movement. The strong commitment of the local CND group to the event was, unfortunately, not backed up by National CND.



Greenpeace: the French connection

FRANCOIS Mitterrand has been at pains to deny any French government involvement in the widely-publicised bombing of the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* in New Zealand.

Describing the act as 'criminal terrorism', he demanded that those responsible should be punished. But with the announcement that three French army officers are involved in the incident it looks as if Mitterrand will have to ensure some people high up in his own secret service are punished if he is going to turn words into deeds.

French army lieutenant Christine Cabon, who has now been arrested in connection with the bombing, introduced herself as geologist Frederique Bonlieu to Greenpeace supporters just one month before *Rainbow Warrior* was attacked. She was accepted as a Greenpeace member and was allowed to attend internal meetings. She sent letters to Paris which she claimed were for a magazine. The letters are now believed to have been sent to the French secret service.

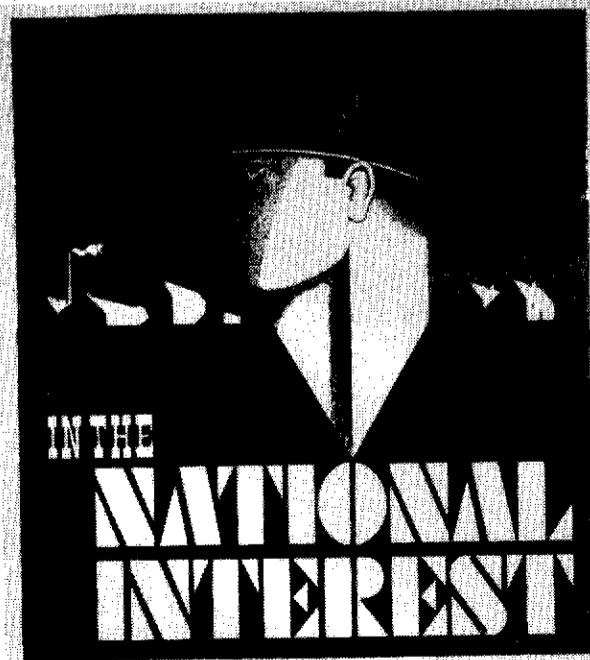
By Maureen Lansbury

Two other French army officers are now under

suspicion for the attack. These are captain Dominique Prieur, otherwise known as Sophie Turenge and Alan Turenge — who is based at the French secret services underwater combat school in Corsica. They were both arrested soon after the explosion on a charge of murder.

Three NCOs from the same underwater training school are now also being sought on international arrest warrants in connection with the sinking of the ship.

The whole episode is becoming a major political development in France. It shows just how determined the French government is to push through its nuclear testing programme in the Pacific.



Sat 14 Aug: Snowdown Colliery (Aylesham New Club) 8pm

Wed 18 Aug - Sat 31 Aug: PLEASANCE THEATRE (Venue 23) 10.30pm EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE '85

Also at Penitence Hall and Euston Glen Collieries

PROCEEDS TO THE SACKED & IMPRISONED MINERS FUND

A Socialist ACTION

WHEN THE TUC congress meets next week one discussion will be on sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime. The connections between the British and South African governments were reinforced last year by the visit of premier Botha. Thatcher's government continues to oppose any practical measures against the apartheid state.

It is now up to British trade unionists to decide on a practical programme for the total economic isolation of South Africa in support of the black struggle there.

In her speech to the recent Women Against Pit Closures conference, TANYA ABRAMSCE drew the connections between the struggle of the British miners and black people in South Africa fighting for their freedom.

BLACK South African women and have taken inspiration from the militancy of British working class women, before, during and after your strike. SACTU urges you to extend this strength, this unity, this militancy to support the fighting peoples of South Africa against the brutal oppressive South African apartheid regime.

The profits of the coal we mine in South Africa go into the same coffers as the profits from the coal that you mine here in Britain. As workers we refuse to compete with each other. We understand clearly that the bosses are motivated by greed. As long as there is a trade and investment relationship between Britain and South Africa the bosses will always go to South Africa where coal can be produced cheaper.

Coal and other minerals are produced more cheaply in South Africa because workers are paid subsistence wages and are forced to work under hazardous working conditions. All workers face the continuous threat of retrenchment and sacking in South Africa today.

Unemployed workers are classified in South Africa as 'superfluous labour appendages' and are forcibly removed to the Bantustans. Unemployed, unskilled and homeless, their movements are controlled by a pernicious caste-law system, and their labour is exploited by a migrant-labour system.

The British government continues to play an invidious role in this oppression. The visit of

Botha to Britain last year during your strike was to reinforce and to exchange ideas with the Tory government, including methods to suppress workers and their trade unions. Maggie Thatcher was looking for methods to import and control your strike.

Solidarity

It is this blatant alliance of exploiters and oppressors which highlights the need for solidarity between South African workers

Black South African women are particularly affected by the exploitation of black workers in South Africa. Over four million

women are living in the Bantustans against their will. Their husbands, brothers and fathers are forced to migrate to the mines in the towns to earn a living which is just enough money for food and imposed taxes.

Apart from toiling for long hours in the barren and sterile Bantustans, these women suffer untold stress imposed on them by the state which stops them from even seeing their menfolk in the towns. Women have continually defied these forced separations by coming to the towns in their droves and setting up 'squat camps'. They have bravely faced continued harassment by the state.

We, the people of South Africa, refuse to be oppressed. We reject being discriminated against as black people. We reject being oppressed as women. We reject being exploited as workers.

The rejection of this oppression by our fighting people has rendered South Africa ungovernable. The Botha regime has reacted with naked brutality by imposing the so-called State of Emergency.

The regime is up against the wall. No amount of petty reforms or crumbs from the master's table will divert our path.



TUC must boycott South Africa



South African mineworkers

THE SOUTH African NUM has rejected the Chamber of Mines revised pay offer. This means that a national strike is threatened from Sunday.

The NUM had originally demanded an across-the-board wage increase of 22 per cent. The giant Anglo-American Corporation, which employs over 80 per cent of NUM members, raised its original offer to between 17 and 22 per cent but the General Mining Corporation (Gencor), largely Afrikaaner-controlled, refused to budge.

Last Thursday after five hours of talks NUM leaders undertook to call off the strike but to consult their members who obviously took a different view.

The mineowners and the international money market are clearly worried about the effects of a coal and gold strike in South Africa.

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Anti-racist strike in Islington

FOUR HUNDRED and fifty Islington council workers have been on strike since 5 August to demonstrate that they will not allow racists to work with the public. The strike has been made official by the local government union NALGO. On the 14th of August all NALGO members in Islington took solidarity strike action.

The strike is over the decision of Islington's Labour-controlled council to employ a supervisor found to be in breach of the council's equal employment opportunities policy in a job where she deals directly with the public.

Over two years there has been consistent racial harassment and abuse of black workers in one of the council's housing sections,

which has resulted in some black workers leaving their jobs. They have been subject to racial abuse, excluded from social events, and experienced such things as ashtrays emptied over their desks.

After many union protests, three workers were found to be in breach of the equal opportunities policy. Section supervisor Vi Howell was found to have racially harassed an

administrative assistant and accordingly was advised to attend a 'racism awareness' course.

Subsequently the council reassigned Ms Howell to a post in a neighbourhood office which involved working with the public. NALGO members decided they would only be prepared to work with her if she made a verbal statement that her previous actions had been discriminatory and that she was prepared to adhere to the equal opportunity policy. This she refused to do.

NALGO members in her office voted unanimously not to allow

the office to open. When they were threatened with disciplinary measures over this action, 450 out of the 465 NALGO workers in the neighbourhood social services and housing advisory offices struck.

They have demanded that the disciplinary threat be removed, and that none of the three found to be racist be moved to areas dealing with the public.

• Messages of support, donations, and requests for speakers to: NALGO Office, 135 Upper Street, London N1, or phone 01-226 8230.