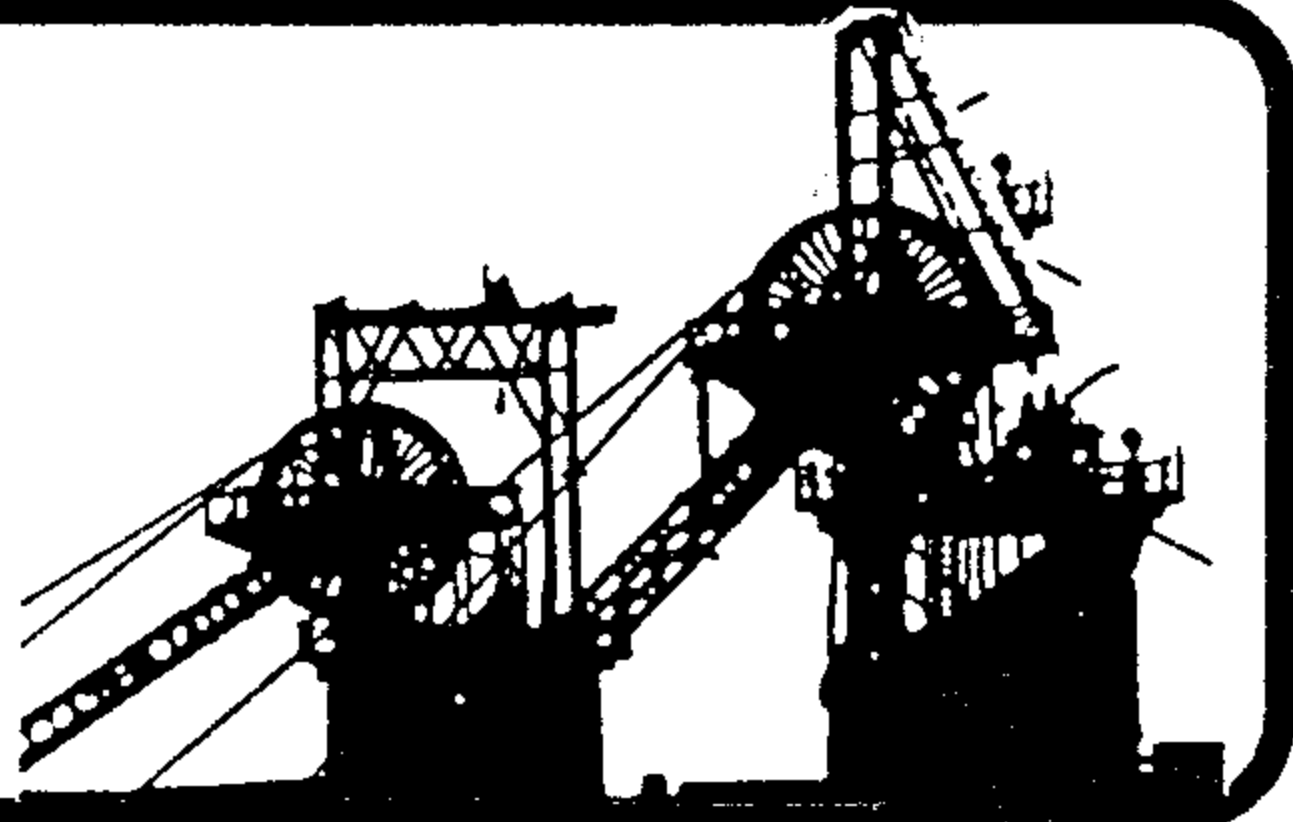


# socialist OUTLOOK

Miners  
v  
Major



Mobilise to finish off the  
Tories!

## Stop pit closures!

HUNDREDS of thousands of workers demonstrated on 21 October and again on Sunday 25 against pit closures.

It was a fantastic response to Heseltine's attack. But have no illusions; the Tories are determined to press ahead, despite all the opposition.

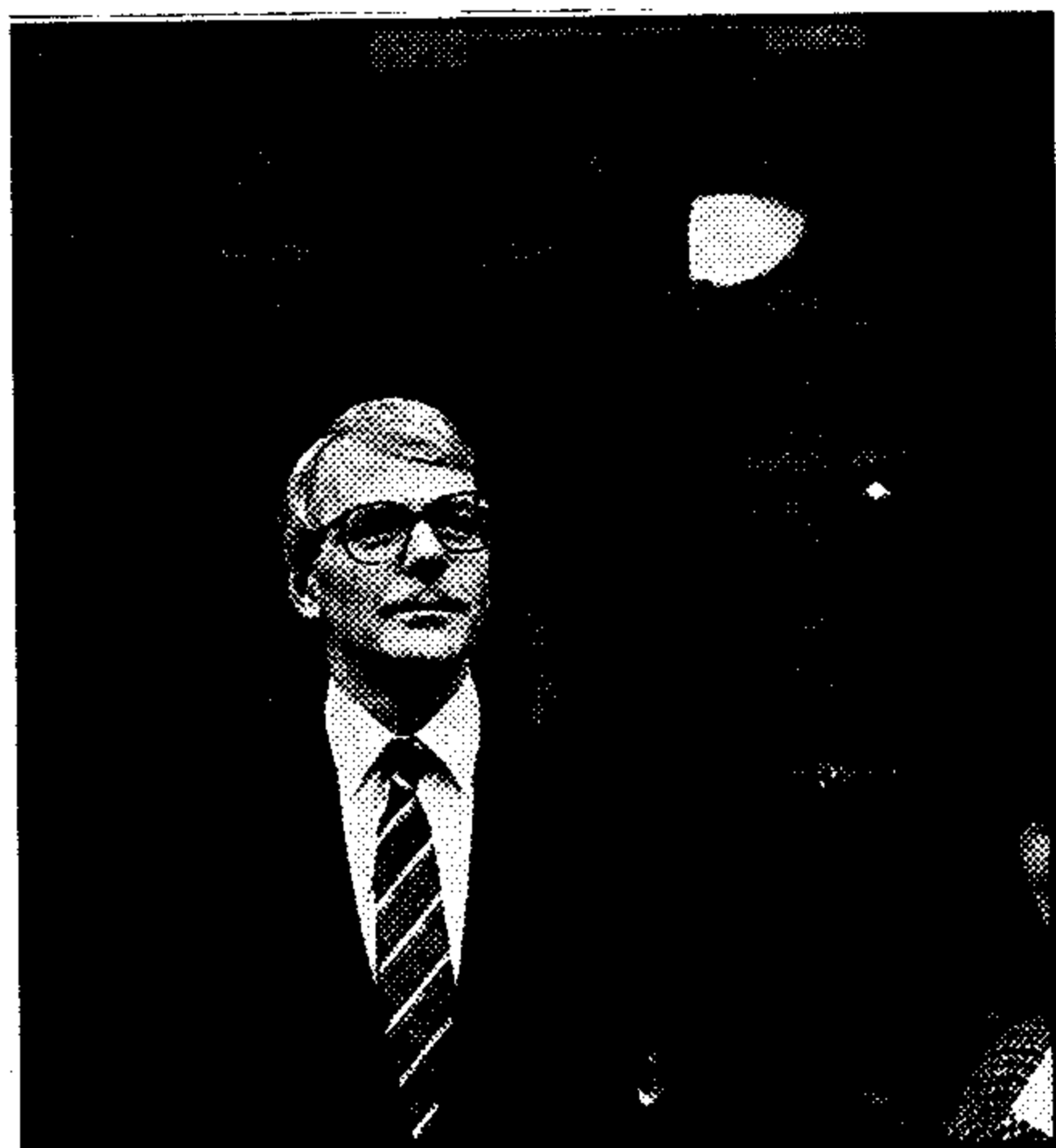
In order to win a majority in parliament, Heseltine agreed to a 'moratorium' on 21 pit closures and a Select Committee inquiry on energy policy.

But the 90-day 'consultation' period over the 10 doomed pits is a fiasco. Miners are not being allowed to work. Confusion reigns on what the real figures for redundancy payments will be.

### Keep pits open

The labour movement needs a strategy which will keep ALL the threatened pits open, a strategy which will not let the Tories off the hook.

Instead, with the momentum still strong, the TUC has set out to divert the movement away from any confrontation with the government and the employers. As managers across the country draw up lists of redundancies the TUC is calling for a National Day of Recovery on December 9, on which the theme will



Now's the time to push him out!

be 'partnership' between unions and employers!

Despite the TUC, the feeling is strongly in support of a fight. The furore over pit closures has tapped a huge reservoir of resentment against the mounting cascade of redundancies and closures. Hospitals are faced with a wave of closures; tens of thousands of NHS jobs are at stake.

In addition millions face a public sector wage freeze. And soon huge cut-backs in social welfare spending will be announced.

But the Tories' crisis is our opportunity. To add to their economic woes, deep divisions over Europe threaten John Major.

Now the Tories are on the ropes, they must be given no escape route. Major and Heseltine can and must be dealt a fatal blow.

Instead of groveling to the employers, the TUC

must be forced to call for industrial action. December 9 could be made into a focus a day on which the miners and every other section of workers engaged in struggle take strike action.

The fight for action could begin now: millions of workers, especially those in the public sector, already have their own claims or grievances outstanding. They could all legitimately call action on December 9. It would amount to a de facto general strike.

But the TUC General Council, which is aiming to give the impression of action on pit closures by holding its meeting in Doncaster on November 25, must also be lobbied

and told to call a one-day general strike for that day.

The message must go out loud and clear to Norman Willis and his gang of bureaucrats: the labour movement does not want a 'partnership' with big business, but a fight for the removal of their Tory government.

*Socialist Outlook* says the following urgent steps must be taken:-

- Plans must be made to occupy any pits threatened with closure. If they get away with closing the first ten, it will be much more difficult to defend the 21 others. Mass support for industrial action must be built.

- A public sector alliance must be constructed. The Tories can be pushed back if miners, hospital workers, rail workers and Royal Mail workers

threatened with privatisation fight together.

- The TUC must call a one-day general strike to mobilise workers for class wide-action to drive out the Tories.

- Miners support groups must be built in every area. The response of the Labour and TUC leaders to the attack on the miners has been absolutely minimal. Reliance on bishops and Tory MPs will not work in the end. Only industrial action will defeat the Tory attacks.

Tube workers in London are balloting in early November for strike action to resist 5000 redundancies and personal contracts - which means in effect union de-recognition.

This is the example which must be followed.



PHOTO: Andrew Ward

## Scots miners take the high road for jobs

THE SCOTTISH TUC is organising a march of miners from Glasgow to London in opposition to pit closures.

Setting off on November 14, it will arrive in London on December 19, offering a rolling focus for the campaign to defend the collieries from the Tory axe.

TUC assistant general secretary David Lea told the *Morning Star* that the TUC might organise a rally for the marchers in Stafford on their December 9 National Day of Recovery.

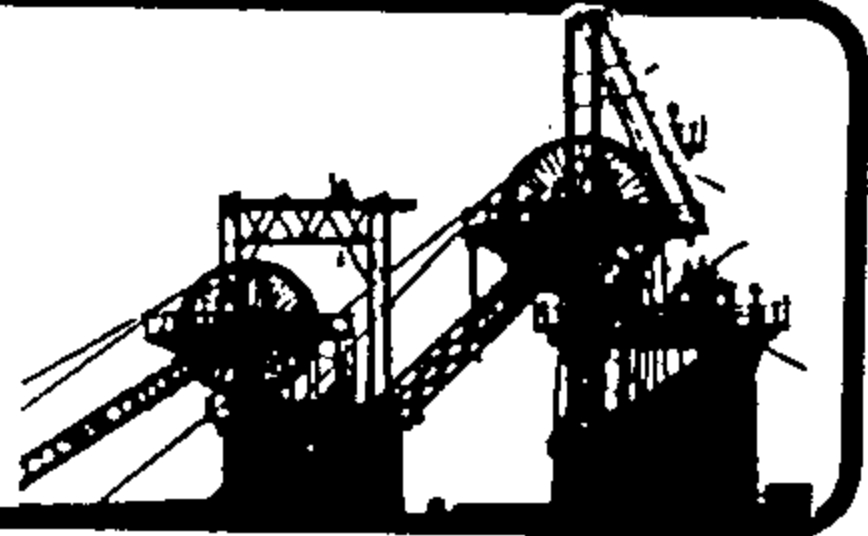
The march will reach

- Newcastle November 21,
- York November 28
- Sheffield December 3
- Nottingham December 6
- Birmingham Dec 11
- Oxford December 14
- Central London December 19

A major rally on December 20 - the Sunday before Xmas.



Miners  
v  
Major



## Gas 'savings' are hot air

By Dave Osler

MICHAEL HESELTINE'S lying claims that gas can meet Britain's electricity needs more cheaply than coal are flatly contradicted by top bosses' outfits ranging from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the International Energy Authority and the *Financial Times*.

Official OECD/IEA figures prove conclusively that in price to end users in both electricity generation and industry, coal is up to 68 per cent less costly, even at current prices.

The table we reproduce doesn't show the proposed new electricity contract price for coal - £35.35 a tonne - which makes it easily the cheapest fuel on the Tories' so-called free market.

The FT's authoritative *International Coal Report*, a high-price subscription-only newsletter, says that the most expensive gas generation is 70 per cent more expensive than coal at the new contract price.

*Mining Journal* adds: 'Already, the surge of gas buying has pushed up gas prices by some 20 per cent.'

Yet the British government worked long and hard to over-

turn a legally-binding 1975 EC directive stating: 'Quantities of natural gas are limited. Natural gas should be converted into electricity only when it cannot be used for other purposes.'

There were excellent environmental reasons for such a proscription. Even in the most advanced gas-to-electricity power stations, only half the gas burnt results in usable energy.

The rest escapes into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. Where gas is used directly for heating or cooking, it is almost 100 per cent efficient.

It is true that gas-generated plants produce less carbon dioxide than existing coal-fired stations. But the difference is relatively small.

In fact, readily available 'clean burn' technology can make coal the better bet from the pollution point of view. But this would cost £2,000 million to install across the industry.

The UK's proven reserves of natural gas will run out in 10 years, according to British Petroleum's 1992 *Statistical Review of World Energy*. British Coal has exploitation rights for 45,000 million tonnes of recoverable reserves - enough to last 300 years.



PHOTO: Andrew Ward

Heseltine goes on about his £1,000 million aid package for ravaged mining communities. But that's just a one off. Nuclear Electric is given a £1,200 million subsidy every year.

With just 12,000 on its payroll, this comes out at £100,000 per worker annually. Sacked miners will get an average redundancy of just £37,000.

The assertion that pits are being subsidised by £100 million per month is based on the ludicrous assumption that they will be kept open while no output is sold.

Oil is both dirty and dangerous, as the Piper Alpha disaster proves. Again using BP yearbook statistics, proven UK oil reserves are sufficient for less than six years.

Yet according to journalist David Ross, who covers energy for a range of publications, John Major effectively handed the industry a £6,000 million subsidy as chancellor in 1990, by allowing it a 100 per cent allowance on Capital Gains Tax for the cost of cleaning up the North Sea.

The coal shut downs will also see an additional £2,000 million

on Britain's current account deficit, while at least 90,000 extra dole cheques will have to go out each fortnight while direct and indirect taxation is lost. 'The Madhouse' isn't in it.

But there is - inevitably - a nice little earner in all this for the Tories. The government wants to sell its remaining 40 per cent stake in PowerGen and National Power without the threat of organised miners able to suspend coal supplies. Estimated value to Mr Lamont - £2,200 million, straight in the chequer pocket.

## Coalfield women back on frontline

Socialist Outlook spoke to SIAN JAMES, chairperson of the South Wales Women's Support Groups in 1984-5

**What do you think were the most important experiences of women involved in the 1984 strike?**

It was important that we could come together and work together. For many of us it was the first opportunity to play an active role in our community without being told 'You're women, go away, be quiet'. The confidence to say that we were part of our community and that we had a right to say how our communities operated.

We also learnt how wide the struggle was. We had to look towards local support groups, to the Area NUM and to a wider group of supporters. That was an experience that many people have never had before. Lesbians and gays in London and black workers in Brent, NALGO, were prepared to support us. We went to Broadwater Farm and to Brixton. Suddenly we weren't alone.

**What brought the women together?**

In the beginning, it was really knowing that it was our communities under threat. Money and wages were never an issue. It was about the right to remain in our communities and right to jobs in our communities. It was not only our husbands or fathers or brothers, it was future generations.

**What conclusions were drawn by women at the end of the strike?**

The strike did not end the way we wanted. There wasn't a group within the coalfield that stayed more loyal to Scargill. Even now when I meet women, we say 'this is not the way we wanted it to end. We were prepared to see it through.'

**What have been the particular affects on women since 1984 and the pit closures?**

To a certain extent it has been economic, it has been losing contact with the communities that they lived in. However, many of the women are playing much more active roles in their community. They have taken on a job, or have had the confidence to do things outside the home. Being part of a mining community has been lost, people have been scattered to take up different jobs.

There was this assumption that as women from working class backgrounds, somehow we had ditched our traditional roles. It was felt that we should have been pushed back to supporting the man of the house at the end of the struggle. I think that was something coming from the unions locally.

**Do you think there is a difference in the attitude now of the area executive to the participation of**

**women in the present campaign?**

I think so. Because we've had the experience of 1984-5 and women have made contacts and maintained them. These groups, these unions, these workplaces that we've twinned with, know that women are there; know that women are capable, and are asking once again for women.

**How do you think we can help women get involved during the present struggle?**

In 1984-5, there were women who didn't have the ability or time to get involved. I had parents and in-laws who were prepared to look after the children and I had a supportive husband. I think we should have a creche at every meeting, march and demonstration. We should have the use of welfare halls and miners' institutes.

**Do you think the labour movement has been affected by the defeats of 1984-5?**

Since the strike, New Realism has won out in the Wales Labour Party. They say 'stay there and we will do it for you.' It was meant to make us modern, attractive; all the words the ad-men use. New Realism and Thatcher made socialism a dirty word.

But New Realism meant nothing on a picket line at Abernant and Mardy. What it did was cloud the issues and it sold us an illusion. It was a tacit

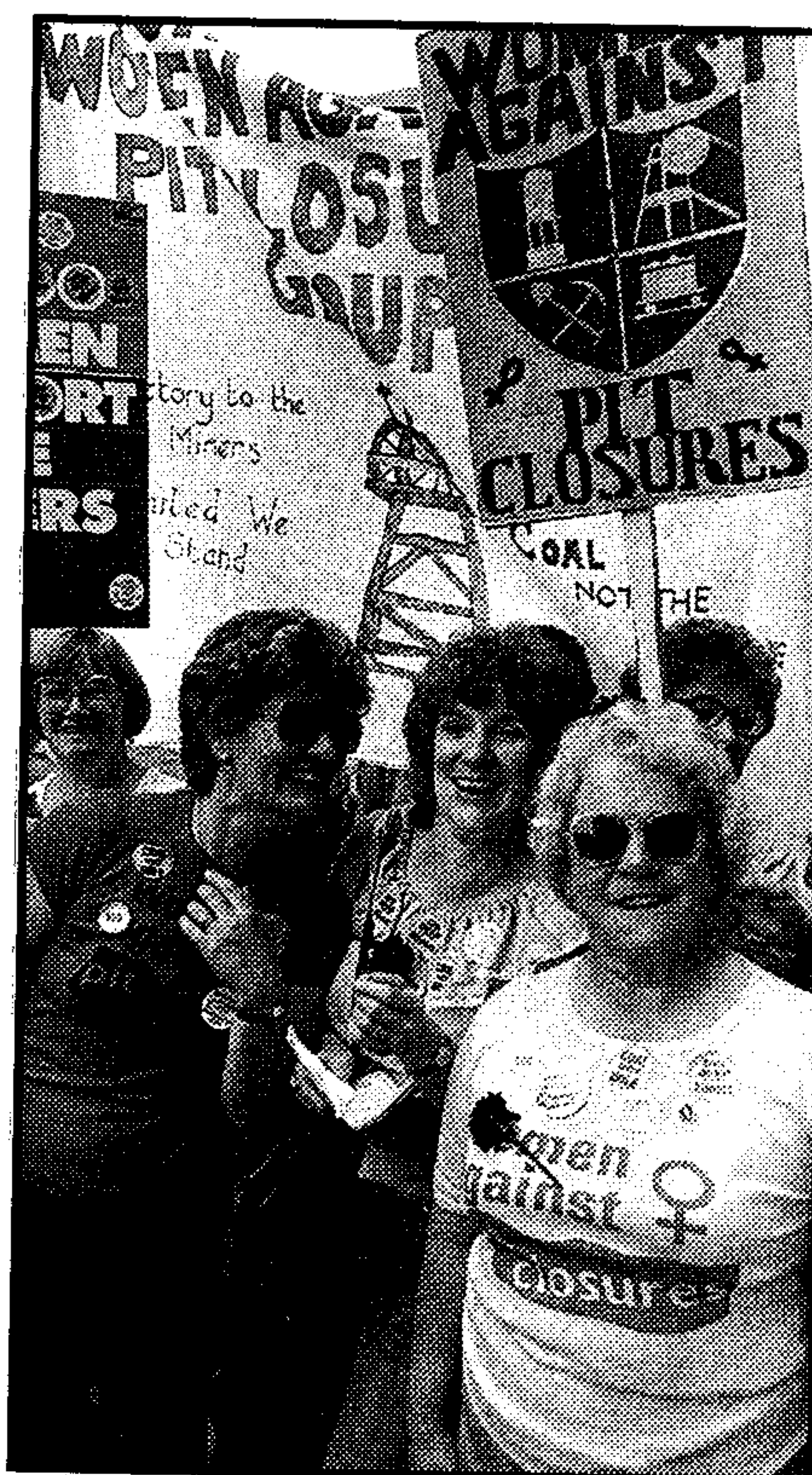
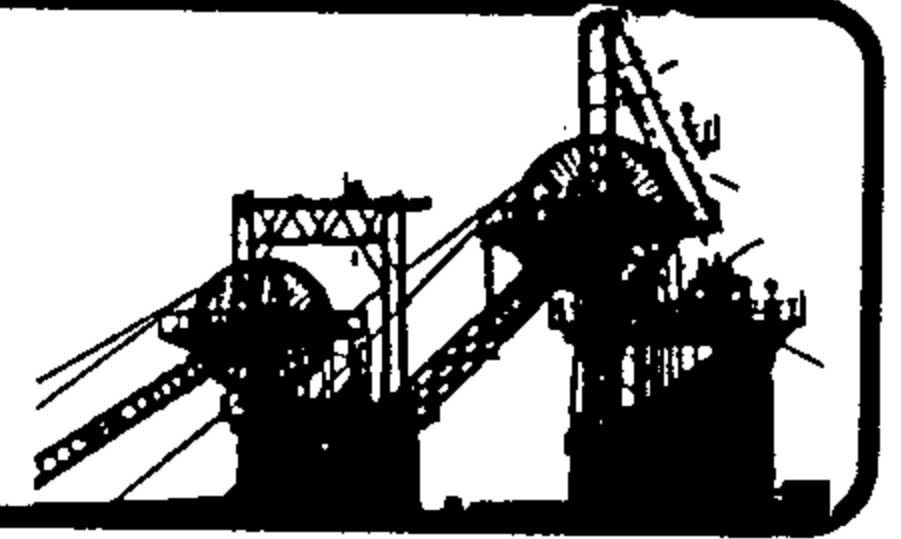


PHOTO: Graeme Cookson

approval of capitalism and the market, with the suggestion that we could control the market. There was no explanation of how that would be done.

New realism is attempting to make us become them. The new realists and their supporters in magazines like *Marxism Today* said that Scargill was the downfall of the labour movement.

The miners stood for justice and fairness and our basic rights. They were right in 1984 and they are right now.



# 'We need a general strike - or at least a day of action'

*Socialist Outlook* spoke to **TYRONE O'SULLIVAN**, secretary of Tower Lodge NUM and member of the South Wales Area Executive.

**The scale of the opposition to the pit closure announcement has been remarkable. How do you think this has affected the mood amongst the miners?**

It came as a shock to me, and to everyone in the industry. The immediate response of the public and other trade unions, in particular the two big demonstrations in London, has lifted our spirits, especially in the 21 pits originally named to close. In the ten pits that are still listed for immediate closure the miners are still wary of the response and may feel that it has come too late. Eight of those ten pits have stopped producing coal and many people in them have felt a need for action within three weeks and not in three months.

**What is needed to raise the confidence of the miners in these pits in order to fight back?**

At Taff Merthyr, for example, the men are not convinced that they can save the pit; only that it's worth the fight, even in adverse conditions. What are needed are major resolutions into the TUC calling for industrial action if these pits close, there should be a general strike or at least a day of action before Christmas.

**There was a report in the *Financial Times* last week about a further seven pits to close in June 1993, including your own pit at Tower. What is your response to that?**

Well, I don't respond. The battle for our future will have been won or lost well before next June. I don't know anyone in Britain who has a sure future further than next June, whatever job they've got.

**How do you think the NUM has conducted the campaign since the closure announcement?**

I think the NUM have approached the campaign correctly, by going into the field and seeking out a response from other people. As this response builds up I think you will see the NUM asking for more demands and forcing the issue of a

day of action, either before Christmas or in early January before the review. But none of this can come quick enough for the ten pits now on the closure list.

**You support Scargill's call for a day of action if there is no response from the government?**

I think people need to see the support that exists for us, not just by turning out on a Sunday in London, which was excellent, but actually coming out of work and giving a day up. We are fighting to stop the rise of unemployment in Britain today and force a reversal on the government, if not more than that.

**The leader of the UDM, Roy Lynk, has been completely discredited by these developments. What do you think the approach should be to the UDM and its structures?**

It's simple. If any of the UDM wish to rejoin the NUM then they should do so and abide by the rule book of the NUM.

**What do you think about the TUC tactic of maintaining a broad front and having the CBI, Liberals and church-people on their platforms?**

If the TUC organise meetings, they can pick the platform. As long as miners don't give control of the dispute to the TUC, I don't think it can do any harm. At present they are running a campaign alongside us, and that will only change when they call their membership to action. This will only come about through the unions, from the bottom up, pushing for that action.

I don't think the NUM can do it on their own. It's people like the railwaymen, who will be affected, and the workers at the 16 power stations that will close, that need to take resolutions to their unions and then into the TUC. Saying, look we're going out with the miners and we're expecting you people to support us.

I don't think going around the streets shouting for a general strike is going to do it. We need to address this in every meeting we hold, but it's not a rallying call that can be immediately carried out. I do think that it may eventually come to that and that we're a lot nearer to it than we were in 1972, in 1974 or in 1984-5. I think the country is ready for it, provided the work is done at the grassroots level. The essential alliance is

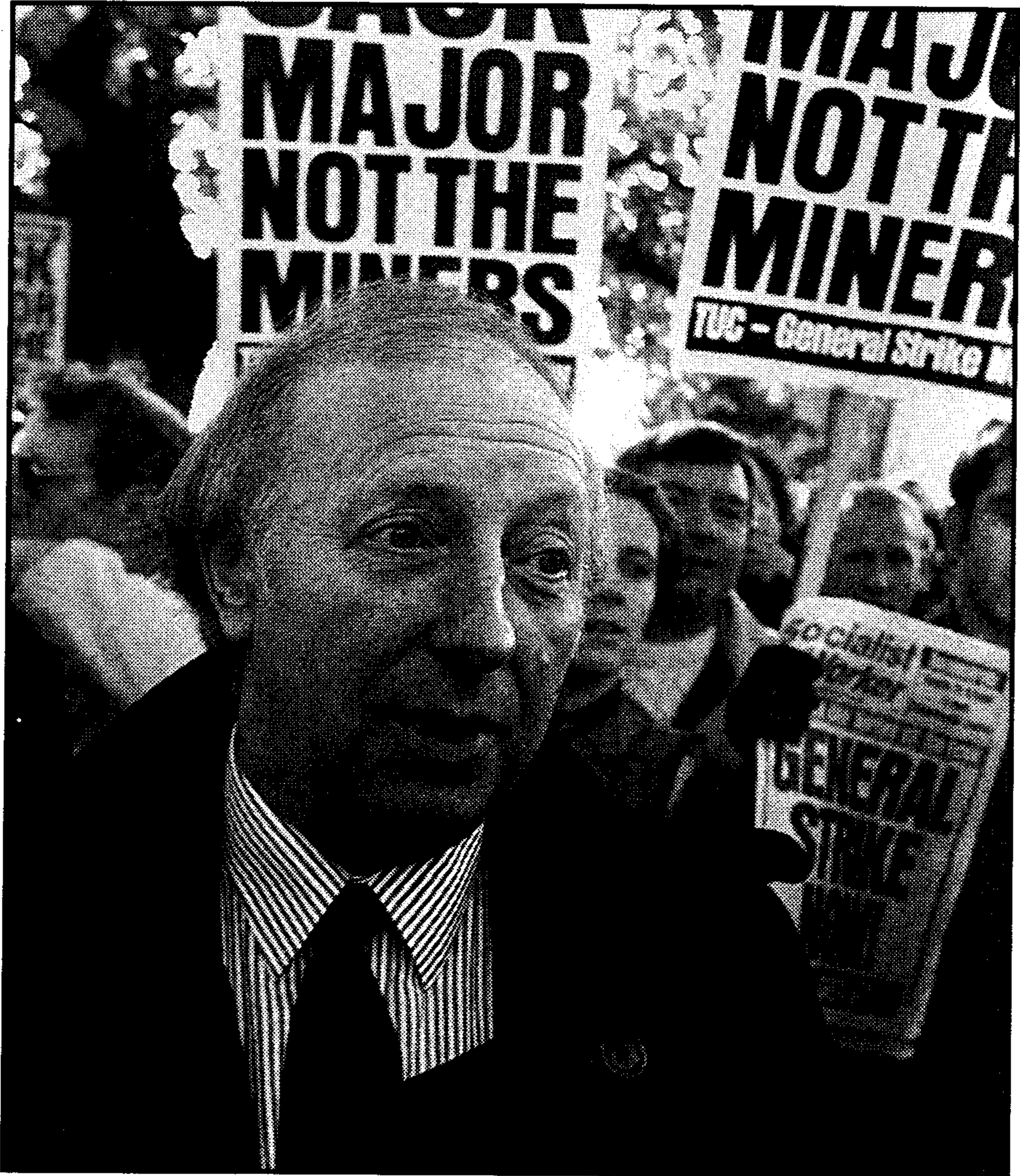


PHOTO: Andrew Wliard

**A hero in the country - Scargill vindicated**

with the railworkers and the power workers. If we can get them calling for industrial action on the TUC, then we're halfway there.

**Its clear that a whole series of workers, particularly the public sector, are now under direct threat.**

Yes. I've noticed in the last week that the Tories are not backing off on job losses. In fact they are putting more and more into the pool, as if they are saying that this is the big one. Defeat the miners this time and we can do what we like for the next five years. If we haven't built the bridges by January, then the miners and all of the other unions are going to be in trouble.

**What is your opinion of the Wales TUC 'Campaign for Jobs and Recovery', which they launched in response to recent events?**

They have made the issue so broad that I don't think people will respond. Their leaflets don't even mention the miners.

**What is your approach to linking up with activists in other unions?**

I really can't go chasing after them, they have to get in touch with me. There is no better time for people to take action. Arthur Scargill is a hero in the country today, even the word socialist is acceptable again.

**Women from the mining communities played a key role in the 84-5 strike but most of the structures they established at the time have since folded. How do you think women will get involved in this struggle?**

The only way they can get back in is to re-establish support groups. Some people are arguing in the NUM that you don't need support groups at the present

time. But it's only by having support groups that people can register their support. If you want people to become active you should set up miners support groups and women against pit closures groups. Only when people are part of an organisation can they be of any benefit. We need support groups, and not only for the miners.

**Peter Hain, now Labour MP for Neath, said he was proud to be a secondary picket during the recent one day strike by the CPSA against the privatisation of the DVLA in Swansea. This is obviously not the attitude of the Labour Party leadership. How can we use the new situation to popularise these ideas in the Labour Party?**

I think the Labour Party has moved a long way in the past week, just by saying it's going to vote against Maastricht. There is now room in the party for people to speak out where they didn't have a platform before. If we can get to work on people like Peter Hain and the rest of the so-called 'soft-left', then we could carry through the whole of the Labour Party. I have said previously that Labour should vote against Maastricht and that they should be socialists. They let us down last time, they must do something about it this time.

**What is your response to the appointment of Peter Walker, formerly Secretary of State for Wales, to oversee the relief funds for areas affected by closures?**

Only this: money is not the answer. All that Peter Walker did in Wales was cosmetic exercises. He never created a job of any merit in South Wales. What we need in South Wales and in Britain is for the mines to say working, not low paid jobs to replace them when the mines have closed.

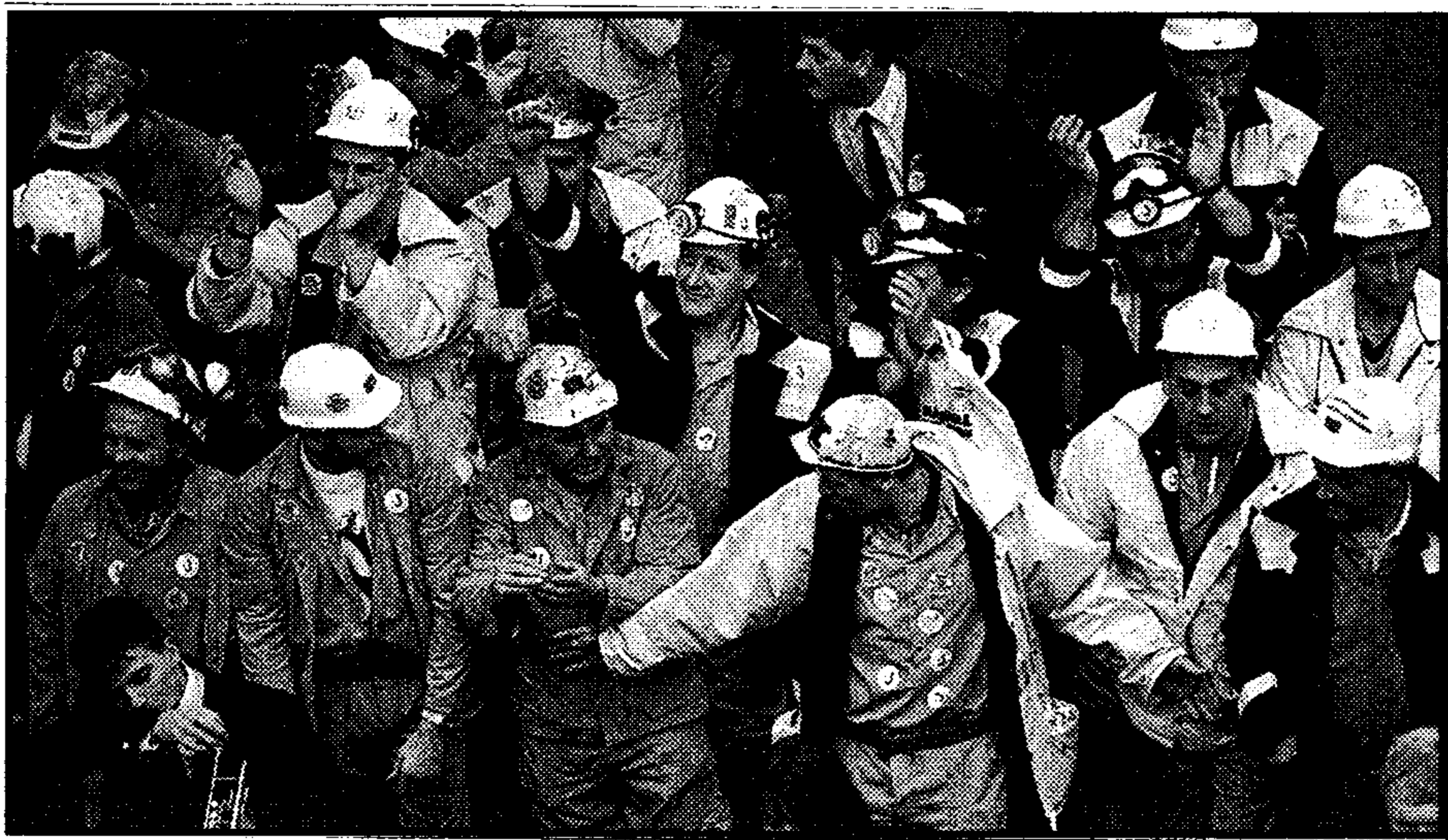
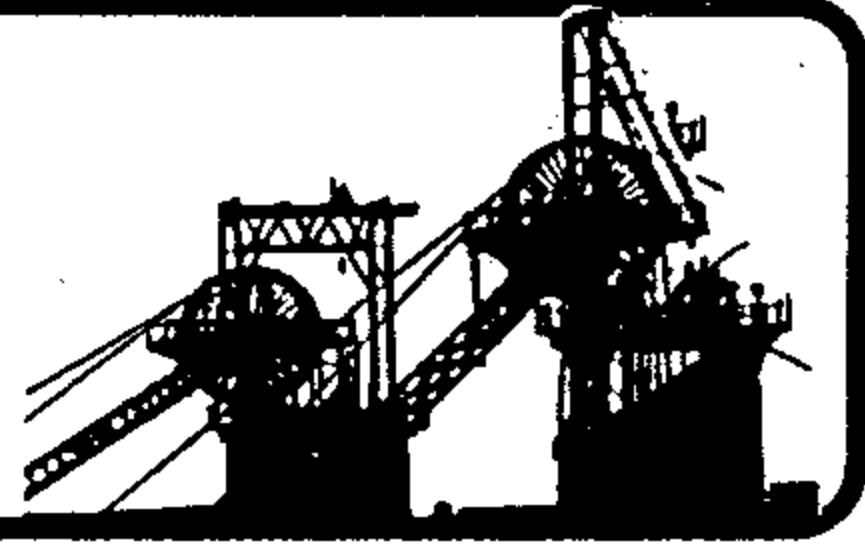


PHOTO: Andrew Wliard

**Action needed for the ten pits on the list**

**Miners  
v  
Major**



United Kingdom  
15. FUEL PRICES TO END USERS\*

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
British Pounds / ton									
Electricity Generation									
Steam Coal	52.61	53.02	56.66	57.23	54.19	58.41	56.73	53.86	53.76
Heavy Fuel Oil	88.02	110.27	121.44	57.20	53.27	38.86	44.50	38.76	-
Natural Gas	77.87	78.02	92.19	82.26	66.48	55.18	60.15	-	-
Industry									
Steam Coal	55.17	55.31	56.73	55.24	52.86	47.97	48.68	49.71	48.82
Heavy Fuel Oil	90.48	109.29	109.99	27.73	63.69	46.40	49.68	54.01	49.54
Natural Gas	74.20	80.45	88.44	78.87	72.98	71.63	67.99	69.39	71.43

# Queue of buyers for 'unprofitable' collieries

By Dave Osler

PRIVATE SECTOR coal bosses obviously don't believe the Tory hype that British Coal is 'unprofitable'. They openly boast they can't wait to snap up the world's fourth largest mining concern at 'off the back of a lorry' prices.

Chrispian Hotson, chief executive of Britain's largest private coal producer Ryan Group, spelt it out straight in an interview with *UK Coal Review* magazine last May.

The UK is the only country in Europe with a long-term competitive coal industry. Production may decline in transition, but by 1996 it will rise.

This increased output will not necessarily be sold to the UK power stations because of the distortion of their privatisation, but sold into Europe.

*'If the industry establishes itself on a world price basis then by definition this coal can be sold into Europe. By this stage the UK would be the envy of her European partners.'*

Ryan is scheduled to produce 6.35 million tonnes of coal in the UK in 1992, and has limited operations in the USA, Belgium and Poland.

Earlier this year it took a £50 million venture capital injection and fixed up a £65 million loan facility. It is now virtually certain to bid for some of British Coal's opencasting operations

and possibly Betws deep mine in south Wales.

Using industry sources, *Socialist Outlook* has compiled a list of companies that are likely to want in on the great coal carve-up. At least one concern - Budge Mining - was specially formed earlier this year in the hope of getting its snout in the Tory trough.

## Brothers

Last February, Richard Budge bought the mining operations of the family's A.F. Budge construction giant from his brother Tony for either £102 million or £106.5 million (reports vary) of largely borrowed money.

Budge produced 3.6 million tonnes of coal in 1990/91, acting as an opencasting contractor on around nine British Coal sites.

Richard's timing was no coincidence. *Construction News* quoted a spokesperson as saying Budge Mining was 'well-placed to take advantage of any liberalisation in the coal industry which may occur in the next few years'. Budge has now offered to buy 'a substantial number' of the 31 pits set for closure.

These are only the little boys. There will be interest from



Heseltine's madhouse economics don't fool bosses

several key multinationals too.

Shell is said to be keeping a close eye on the situation. But it already has a strong position in international coal trading and selling gas, and may feel these activities are incompatible with coal production.

RTZ has extensive minerals mining operations worldwide, but is taken up with plans to move into Siberia as the former Soviet Union opens itself up to capitalism.

## Division two

UK construction company Costain is a division two player among world coal producer, but has been badly hit by the deep slump in its core industry.

British Petroleum does have coal interests, but is seemingly desperate to divest to meet some of its £8,000 million debts.

This leaves Hanson Trust, into mining in a big way through two subsidiaries, South Africa's Consolidated Goldfields and world number five coalmining operation Peabody of the US, which is only slightly smaller than British Coal.

Labour MP Glenda Jackson - a member of the Commons committee which considered the coal privatisation bill -

starred in Hanson TV adverts in her previous career as an actress. Nice work if you can get it.

## Asset stripping

Hanson specialises in buying companies cheap, keeping the best bits and selling off the rest for more than it paid for the package in the first place.

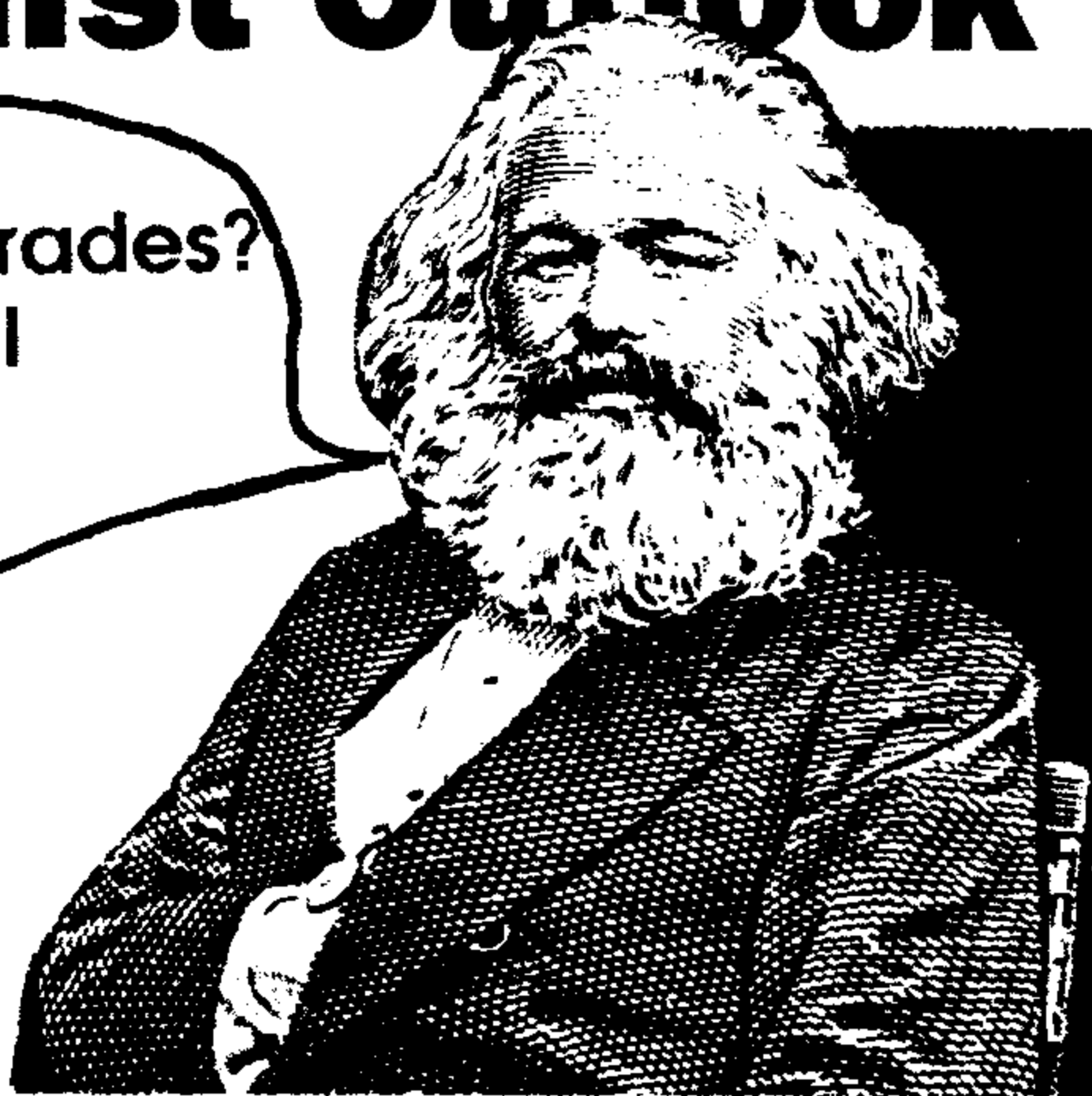
Among those after the crumbs could be Coalite producers Anglo United. Anglo held talks with the Department of Energy before it was abolished with a view to buying British Coal in its entirety, but now says it will be too small to bother with.

Anglo will nevertheless be extremely interested in two British Coal subsidiaries, smokeless fuel producer Coal Products and distribution network National Fuel Distributors. A bid for NFD would be a case for the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The other option is a management buy out. But as depression turns to slump, merchant banks are not so slap happy as in the heady days of the late eighties. Speculation persists that British Coal's existing bosses will use massive coal pension fund surpluses to mount a bid.

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