

SOCIALIST

APPEAL

£1

Russian
Revolution
75th
Anniversary

*Why Do We
Celebrate The
Bolshevik Victory?
Part One*

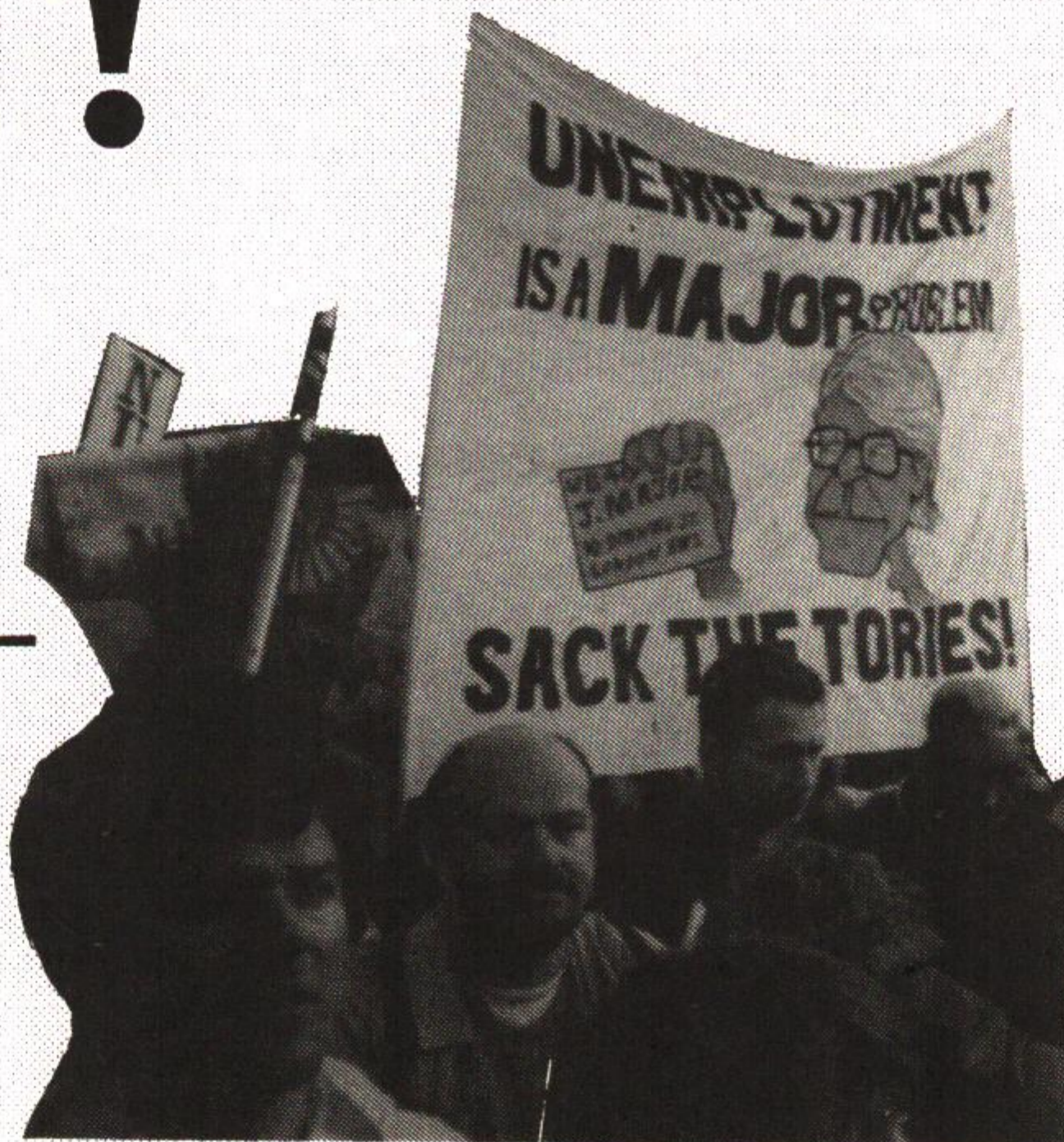
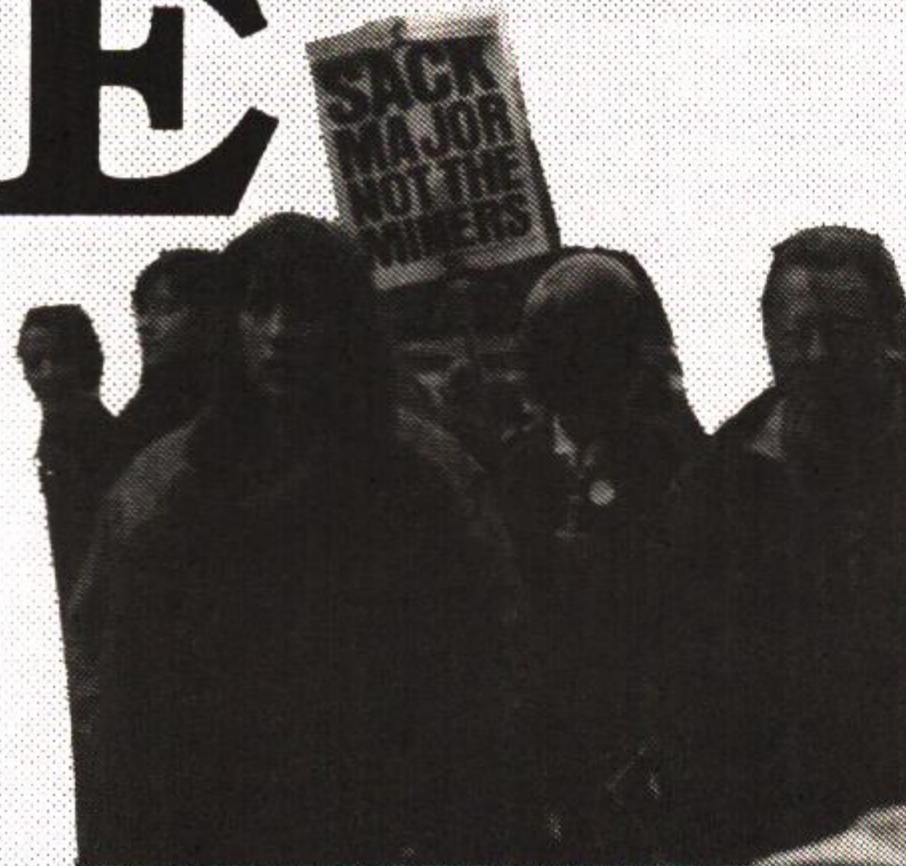
The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Issue No.7

November 1992

FORCE THE TORIES OUT!

For a
one day
general
strike!



Plus

Italian
General
Strike-
Eyewitness
Report

Sweden:
Workers
take to the
Streets

Brazilian
Trade
Unionist
Speaks Out

PIT
CLOSURES
Arguments
for Coal:
Tory Lies
Answered!
see pages 4-9

THE DEMISE OF MAJOR?

"My wife said she's never heard me singing in the bath until last week." Norman Lamont, 21 September, 1992.

In the words of the ancient Greeks, those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. Already an article has openly appeared in *The Times*, strenuously denied by Number 10, accusing Major of "cracking up," living on junk food and dyeing his hair. John Major is fighting for his political life. The cabinet is coming apart at the seams and the knives are out for the prime minister's tinted scalp.

This scenario is symptomatic of the growing crisis threatening to engulf the Tory government. The general election of six months ago now seems light years away, as one government crisis is overlapped by another. We are witnessing a fundamental change in the political landscape. As *Socialist Appeal* explained, it is a period of sharp turns and sudden changes.

In the past, the British ruling class assiduously hid its differences behind closed doors, fearful of provoking the intervention of the working class. Today, the Tory party and the cabinet are openly split from top to bottom.

Manufacturing Collapse

This directly reflects the impasse of British capitalism and the blind-alley the strategists of capital are in. In August, manufacturing employment collapsed by 51,000, the largest absolute fall since records began. With unemployment in reality over four million, male unemployment is rising at a higher rate than at any time since the 1930s. The recession has devastated the "prosperous" south-east which now has an unemployment rate, together with London, higher than Scotland or Wales!

Despite all the promises of recovery from Major and Lamont, hundreds of thousands are threatened with the dole before Christmas. An avalanche of lay-offs have been announced in Fords, Rolls Royce, construction, banking, the pits and across the board in retail and manufacturing industry. In London the Tories plan to axe 10 hospitals forcing nurses and health workers out of a job.

These attacks have nothing to do with the personal whims of the cabinet but everything to do with the economic crisis of British capitalism. The Tories are attempting to unload the crisis onto the backs of the working class. They are now discussing a public sector wage freeze and massive cuts in public spending, throwing thou-

sands onto the dole. British capitalism is the sick man of Europe. Over the last 30 years, manufacturing has fallen from 32% of the economy (GDP) to 18% - the fastest drop in any major economy.

The likely collapse of the world trade talks (GATT) has now opened up the prospect of global trade war. Ian Campbell, the director-general of the Institute of Exports, described the situation as "disastrous." Already the USA are threatening trade sanctions of \$1 billion against European business. Under conditions of continuing world recession, this could precipitate a world slump along the lines of 1929-33.

"The spectre of the fragile world economy sliding into a 1930s style slump was raised yesterday as the latest crisis in the troubled GATT talks threatened to usher in a new era of trade wars between rival protectionist blocs." (*The Guardian*, 23.10.92) At best there could be a sluggish boom on a world scale.

Political Crisis

The numerous U-turns forced upon Major are an indication of the desperate situation they are in. They are frantic attempts to save their skins. The survival of the government is at stake.

It is the worst political crisis that the Tories have faced since the threatened resignation of Thatcher in 1981. According to the latest Mori poll in the *European*, Major has become the most unpopular Prime Minister in history, with only 16% having confidence in him - less than Thatcher's low of 20% in March 1990. It could mark the beginning of the end for the Tories.

The mass swing of opinion against the Tories has been compared to a "national uprising," and has affected all sections. Reflecting these pres-

SOCIALIST APPEAL

PO BOX 2626

London N1 6DU

Telephone: 071-354-3164

EDITOR: ALAN WOODS

MANAGER: STEVE JONES

EDITORIAL: 021-455-9112

ures, even the Bishops have come out in opposition to the government. **The magnificent demonstrations called by the NUM and the TUC were the biggest since the 1970s, possibly ever. This represents a complete change in the situation, and the beginning of a revival of the organised labour movement.** As we predicted, this will begin a process of change in the labour movement organisations, firstly in the trade unions and then in the Labour Party.

Neither is this a uniquely British phenomenon. The whole of Europe is experiencing a sea-change, with strikes and demonstrations taking place from Sweden and Belgium to Italy and Greece.

However, the Tories will attempt to ride out this storm. But even if they succeed temporarily, new battles will unfold over the cuts, the council tax and wages. However, it is down to the Labour and trade union leaders to go further than simple words of protest. They must build upon the mood that exists in every factory and workplace. They should oppose Maastricht and force a general election.

The way Major and co have been forced to retreat already is a measure of their weakness. A mass national campaign, linked to the calling of a one-day general strike, can force the Tories out of office.

The Labour leaders must drop their disastrous policy of me-tooism. With Major's policy changes, he has succeeded in stealing the clothes of the Labour leaders. Any attempt to patch up capitalism will be a nightmare for working people. This was the lesson of the 1974-79 Labour government that prepared the way for Thatcher.

Only a bold socialist programme, taking into public ownership the commanding heights of the economy, the monopolies, the banks and insurance companies, under workers' control and management, can introduce a socialist plan of production. This will allow the colossal resources of £50 billion, which are squandered for millionaire's profits, to be used productively for the benefit of the mass of the population. Such a programme would inspire millions and discard the Tories to the dustbin of history.

We've Heard Enough!



MARCHING WITH THE MINERS NO JOB LOSSES, NO PIT CLOSURES!

300,000 workers and their families braved the lashing rain in London to march against the Tories and in solidarity with the miners on Sunday.

The TUC march was certainly the largest since the 1970s and every union and every region of the country was represented in the ranks of the marchers. Alongside the banners demanding an end to pit closures, were nurses' union banners demanding a halt to the threatened London hospital closures and workers from a variety of industries protesting about rising unemployment.

Deafening applause greeted the miners as they led the march off and similar applause greeted Arthur Scargill as he called for national action to stop the closures and bring down the government. He called for demonstrations and campaigns to be launched the length and breadth of the country. Now the call must go out for a 24-hour general strike to focus the growing discontent and anger at the Tories. A glimpse of the potential power of the working class mobilised in action has been gained. Now the Labour and trade union leaders should use that power to force the Tories out. We can finish them off!

Estimates varied about the numbers but no-one could be in any doubt - On Wednesday workers and their families, the length and breadth of the country, marched and struck in opposition to the Tories pit closure plans. As Heseltine squirmed in Parliament, hundreds of thousands took action. Not only did 150,000 miners and supporters march in London but thousands of workers at power stations in Selby, Sellafield, Ratcliffe-on-Soar, Drax and Killingholme downed tools to show their solidarity. Tory "moderates", like Winston Churchill, who had promised to back the miners, were booed and jeered following their overnight U-turn, exposing the real face of the "caring" Tories!

UCW general secretary Alan Tuffin threatened John Major with not receiving "any mail at Christmas" - an indication of the potential power the TUC and Labour leaders could mobilise if they were to call a 24-hour general strike in defence of the miners and jobs.

The Labour and trade union leaders have said this is only the beginning of the campaign. We must make sure they keep their word and that they build on the marvellous response of workers to the first national demonstration in support of the miners.

GENERAL STRIKE CALL

A call for a 24-hour general strike in protest at attacks on the pits, NHS and industry has been passed unanimously by the South East London UCW Postal Branch. The motion called on the union's executive to campaign for the TUC to call a one-day national strike and an on-going campaign of protests, meetings and demonstrations against the Tories' attacks.

Let us know what your union is doing? Phone 021-455-9112.

**THE FIGHT
FOR COAL**
More reports on
pages 4 - 9

NUPE

LEFT LANDSLIDE IN BIGGEST BRANCH.

Edinburgh No.1, Nupe's biggest branch with over 6,000 members, swung decisively to the left at last month's AGM.

The Left scored a landslide victory in the elections and *Socialist Appeal* supporter, George Lee, was elected Chair.

The right wing grip on the branch was weakened the previous year when the incumbent secretary was narrowly defeated. This year's AGM struck a blow for democracy when all the positions fell to left candidates. This strikes a blow against Nupe's right wing who have attacked activists in the union for years.

When the left won the secretary's position last year the branch was blackballed by Nupe's Scottish Division. Now we have won not only the chair, vice-chair, secretary and assistant secretary but also all six delegates to the Scottish Divisional Conference.

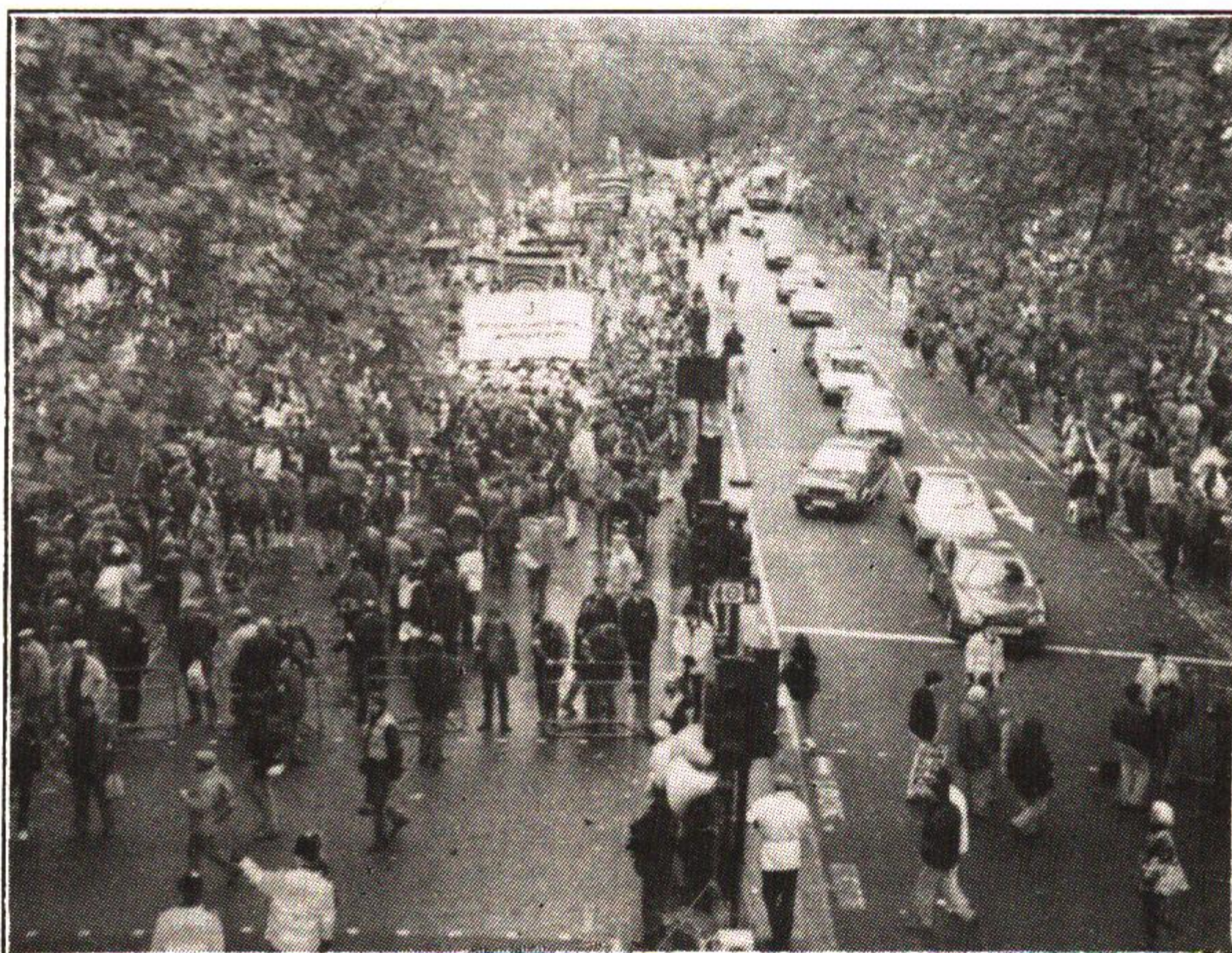
The newly elected chair, George Lee, was a victim of the witch-hunt himself, having been expelled from the branch in 1989.

Following his election, with 70% of the vote, the right wing full time area official disgracefully left the meeting without apologies and failing to give his area officers report.

Rumours were circulating that he was carpeted by his superiors for allowing the left to take the union's largest branch.

Consistent work over the years has yielded this victory for the left. Other activists fighting in the union should take heart from this result.

**Graham Wilson, Edinburgh Nupe No.1,
(personal capacity)**



Miners and their supporters take to the streets demanding a halt to pit closures



**GOT A STORY FOR
SOCIALIST APPEAL?**

**RING OUR NEWSDESK
ON 021-455-9112.**

FIGHT FOR COAL....THE FIGHT FOR COAL....THE FIGHT

MINERS MUST NOT FIGHT ALONE

**By Nigel Pearce,
Branch Committee
Sharlston NUM**

We found Heseltine's statement amusing - On Sunday he couldn't find a market for coal but by Monday he had suddenly found a market for 21 pits!

But in reality nothing's changed. The Tories haven't stopped the closure programme just postponed it to try and head off the growing movement against them and their policies. Heseltine's gone part of the way, now he has to finish the U-turn and keep the pits open and the miners working.

But more than that we need to broaden the movement. People are fed up with hearing about redundancy after redundancy. The butchery of industry has to stop. This time it is a closure too far!

The miners have captured a mood in society and Labour should be combining the efforts of the miners and others, not just for the pits, but for all workers and their families. It is time to play like the government and not a time for a gentleman's agreement.

We should say we had enough of redundancies, closures and the recession. These closures could affect 100,000 jobs. Labour and the unions should launch a national campaign to defend the miners and fight for jobs. They should defend the planned energy policy and bring the energy industry back under national control.

If we go to a ballot what we would require is

ballots in the power industry and rail industry. The miners need to see they are not going to fight alone. The ballots should be held at the same time. With 43 million tonnes of stocks this time it is not a case of coal shortages but a case of stopping the coal from being moved.

On the back of a national campaign of meetings and demonstrations a 24-hour general strike should be called which could stop the closures and redundancies and finish off the Tories.

**FIGHT
AGAINST
"ECONOMICS
OF THE
MADHOUSE"**

**TYRONE O'SULLIVAN, Lodge Secretary Tower NUM and
PHIL WHITE, Lodge Chairman, spoke to Socialist Appeal:**

"The current attacks are happening because the NUM has always been a thorn in the side of the Tories. The miners have been the stalwarts of the working class. And, of course, the Tories never agreed with the nationalisation of the coal industry in the first place.

They have been planning reprivatization since 1975, after slimming down the industry first. They have not been able to privatise up to now because of a lot of resistance at local pit level but, they thought that in the middle of a deep recession, they could buy the miners off. They thought we had lost public sympathy. But they had a shock. The response has been enormous. In 1984/85 we were let down in particular by the TUC and Labour leaders but now, not only can we stop pit closures, but we can serve to regenerate the working class movement and give new confidence to workers to fight against these attacks. It is an opportunity that cannot be lost.

In order to destroy the NUM, the Tories have been prepared to doctor their economics. Obviously we should use the cheapest, most secure energy source - that is coal! Britain could be

self-sufficient in energy resources for years if it wasn't for this economic madness. The only coal cheaper than British coal is either subsidised by governments or cheap labour.

The issue 's now broadened. It 's not just to delay, or even stop pit closures - it's to stop the closures, stop new gas stations, control the imports, transfer the nuclear levy to coal. We won't accept anything short of total victory.

We need a strong campaign around the country of public meetings and demonstrations and if necessary we will take strike action. No defeat can be allowed.

Stopping closures is not a victory in itself - what about the power workers, railway workers and the four million unemployed? We need an energy policy, we need to keep miners working and we need to put the four million back to work.

Of course if we go on strike we can't be allowed to stand alone. We must have the full backing of the TUC and Labour leaders. With a strong national campaign we could score a great victory, bring down the Tories and bring to power a Labour government.

**Support Call for
National Day of Action
TUC MUST
NAME THE
DAY!**

The October 25th demonstration was the biggest national mobilisation of labour since the massive rallies against the Tories' Industrial Relations Bill in the 1970s.

Once again the colossal power of the organised labour movement was made clear to all. The trade union leaders raised their little finger and 250,000 people came out on to the streets. This was a marvellous beginning, but it would be fatal for the labour movement to rest on its laurels. The central objective of defending jobs, services and living standards cannot be achieved while this vicious Tory

government remains in office. Arthur Scargill, at the October 25 rally, called on the TUC to organise a NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION. Socialist Appeal fully supports this demand which should clearly be spelled out as a ONE DAY GENERAL STRIKE, COMINED WITH DEMONSTRATIONS, MASS MEETINGS AND RALLIES FROM LANDS END TO JOHN O'GROATS.

A 24-hour general strike, when coupled with mass mobilisations would completely transform the situation. It would enable the working class to gain an idea of the enormous power which is in its hands. The movement to bring down the government would acquire an unstoppable momentum. It is essential the aim of the movement be made clear: to get rid of this reactionary government, to force the calling of a general election and to fight for a Labour government pledged to carrying out genuine socialist policies.

The idea of relying on disaffected Tory MPS or Liberal leaders is foolish and counter-productive. It spreads the illusion that working people

can rely on capitalist politicians to defend their jobs and living standards. We warn against such illusions. When the chips are down these Tories and Liberal politicians will defend the interests of the class to which they belong. Don't forget Heseltine was the "progressive" Tory! The working class must rely only on its own strength to fight for its interests. We mustn't drop our guard for one instant.

A campaign must be waged in every union branch, shop stewards committee, miners lodge, trades council and Labour Party ward and GC to put pressure on the leadership to call a national day of struggle. The TUC and union national executives and the Labour Party should be bombarded with resolutions. Workers can't afford to wait 4 years for a general election. Action not words is needed to bring down the Major government and force the calling of a general election now!

**FOR A 24-HOUR
GENERAL STRIKE!
TUC, NAME THE DAY!**

The miners must not fight alone

By Alan Woods

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of the slaughter of the coal industry and the sacking of 30,000 miners shows the real face of the Tories and the capitalist system.

The "market" decides, they say. The "market" just decided the collapse of the pound, which will mean rising prices and falling living standards. That showed the anarchy of capitalist economics. The "market" has ruined manufacturing industry, and is throwing thousands of skilled workers out of work.

The "market" is depriving the youth of a future. The "market" is denying tens of thousands a roof over their head. Now the "market" is out to destroy a further 100,000 jobs, because the sacking of 30,000 miners will cause the loss of a further 70,000 jobs in dependent sectors.

There is an element of vindictive spite in the actions of the Tory government, extracting further revenge for the miners strike of '84-'85.

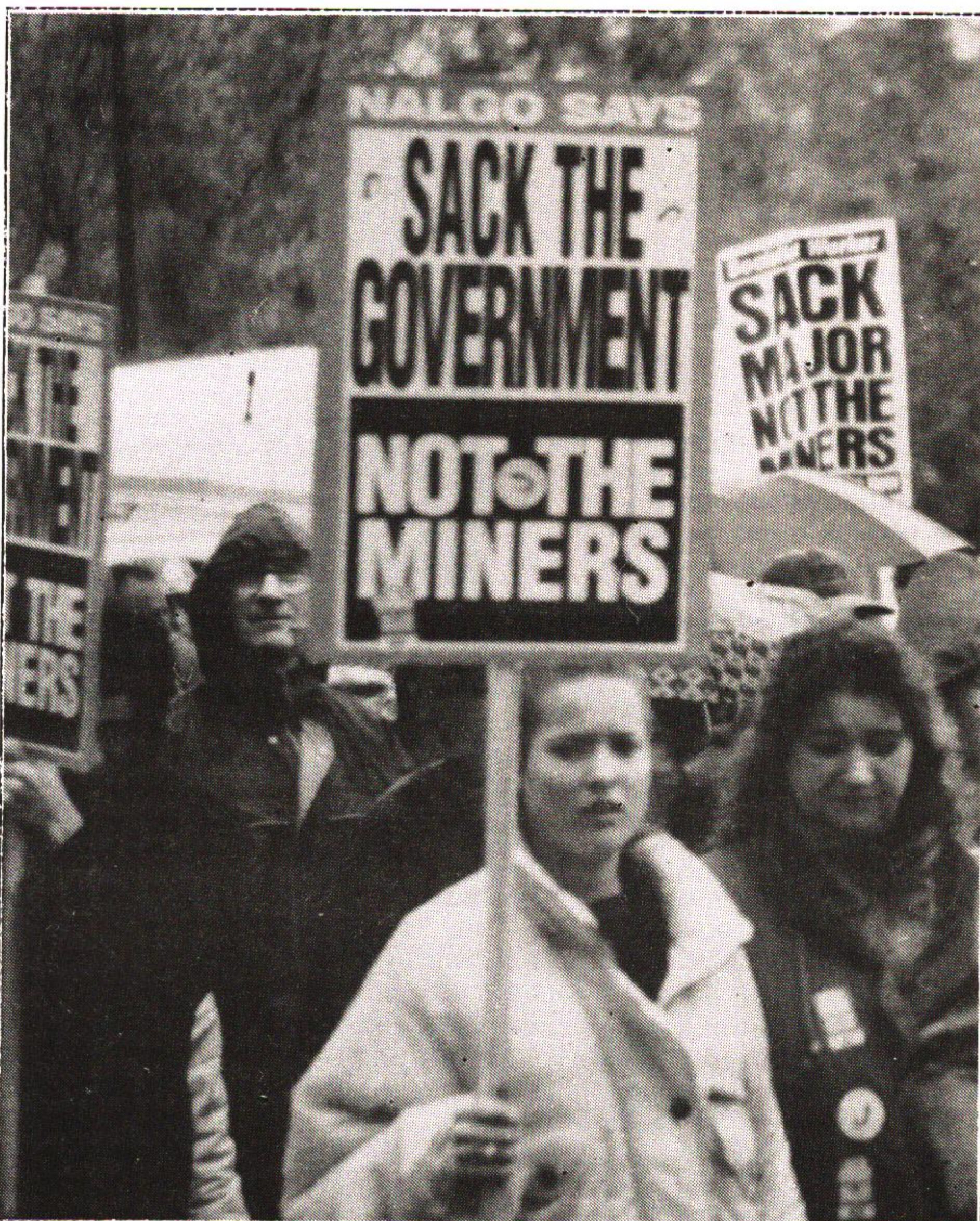
Productivity

Since the end of the strike, more than two-thirds of the workforce have been laid off, while total output has fallen by less than a fifth. The Coal Board has squeezed the last ounce of productivity from the labour of the miners.

At the present time, Britain's deep mines are the most efficient in Europe. Many have broken records of productivity. Yet Major and co are prepared to shut down the entire industry. According to professor Stephen Fothergill of Sheffield Hallam University: "The present trajectory on which the coal industry is set could lead to the closure of all Britain's remaining coal mines by the year 2000."

Coal is one of the few remaining natural resources of Britain. The German capitalists subsidise coal as an important reserve fuel. Now the Tories are prepared to destroy the entire mining industry, regardless of future consequences. Once the pits are closed, it will not be easy to re-open them. Vast reserves of coal will be abandoned, along with a lot of expensive machinery left to rot underground. It is modern-day Luddism on a vast scale.

Heseltine talks hypocritically about redundancy payments. This amounts to a maximum of two years' pay in the best cases - but no payout can make up for the loss of livelihood, permanent unemployment and the destruction



The miners march for jobs, October 25th

During the tumultuous events of October, *Socialist Appeal* produced leaflets and a special broadsheet highlighting the case for miners and a socialist strategy for coal. Here, we reproduce the main articles.

of whole communities.

Moreover, the £1 billion set aside for this purpose will mean further cuts in other areas - education, the NHS, social security.

On top of this we have the huge cost of unemployment benefits: paying 100,000 people to produce nothing will cost £2.5 billion over the next three years in benefits and lost taxes alone. And for what? So that the owners of National Power and PowerGen can enrich themselves at the public expense.

The "free market" in electricity has now meant the creation of these giant monopolies who can hold the entire country to ransom. Thus, the whole gigantic fraud of privatisation stands exposed. The "dash for gas" is a

result of a short-sighted greed for profit. It will mean a 30% price rise, which will hit domestic consumers especially hard. Moreover, Britain's limited reserves of North Sea gas will be rapidly depleted by the switch from coal.

This will mean greater dependence on imported gas, and thus higher prices, not only for electricity, but for gas as well. It will add at least £2 billion to Britain's balance of payments deficit.

But this is of no concern to National Power and PowerGen, who look after their own interests and to hell with all the rest! *This is the economics of the madhouse.* The social consequences of this are very clear - the inex-

orable movement towards four million unemployed, with a new wave of repossessions, homelessness, poverty, crime and despair.

The time has come for the labour movement to act. The NUM leadership has called for strike action and will ballot the membership if the government does not back down. The TUC and Labour leaders must come off the fence and openly express their support for the miners. The miners cannot win on their own. The whole strength of the movement must be mobilised to defeat the government.

Appeal

The NUM should make an appeal to the rank-and-file of the UDM, who have now realised the worth of Tory promises. The last strike was defeated by divisions amongst the miners. That must not happen again! The entire labour movement must understand the seriousness of the position. The attack on the miners is an attack on all workers. Already the jobs of 5,500 railway workers are threatened by the closure of the pits. Power-stations will be closed. And many workers in other industries, hanging by a thread, will see their livelihoods destroyed.

Norman Willis wringing his hands on television is just not good enough. Trade unionists and Labour Party members must demand action, not words, from the leadership! The TUC must give immediate backing to a campaign of national action, starting with the miners, railway workers, transport workers and power workers. Norman Willis constantly harps on about the anti-trade union laws, the "danger of sequestration" and so on. But history shows that no law is stronger than the might of organised labour, once it is mobilised in struggle. That was clearly shown by the dockers' fight against Heath's Industrial Relations Act.

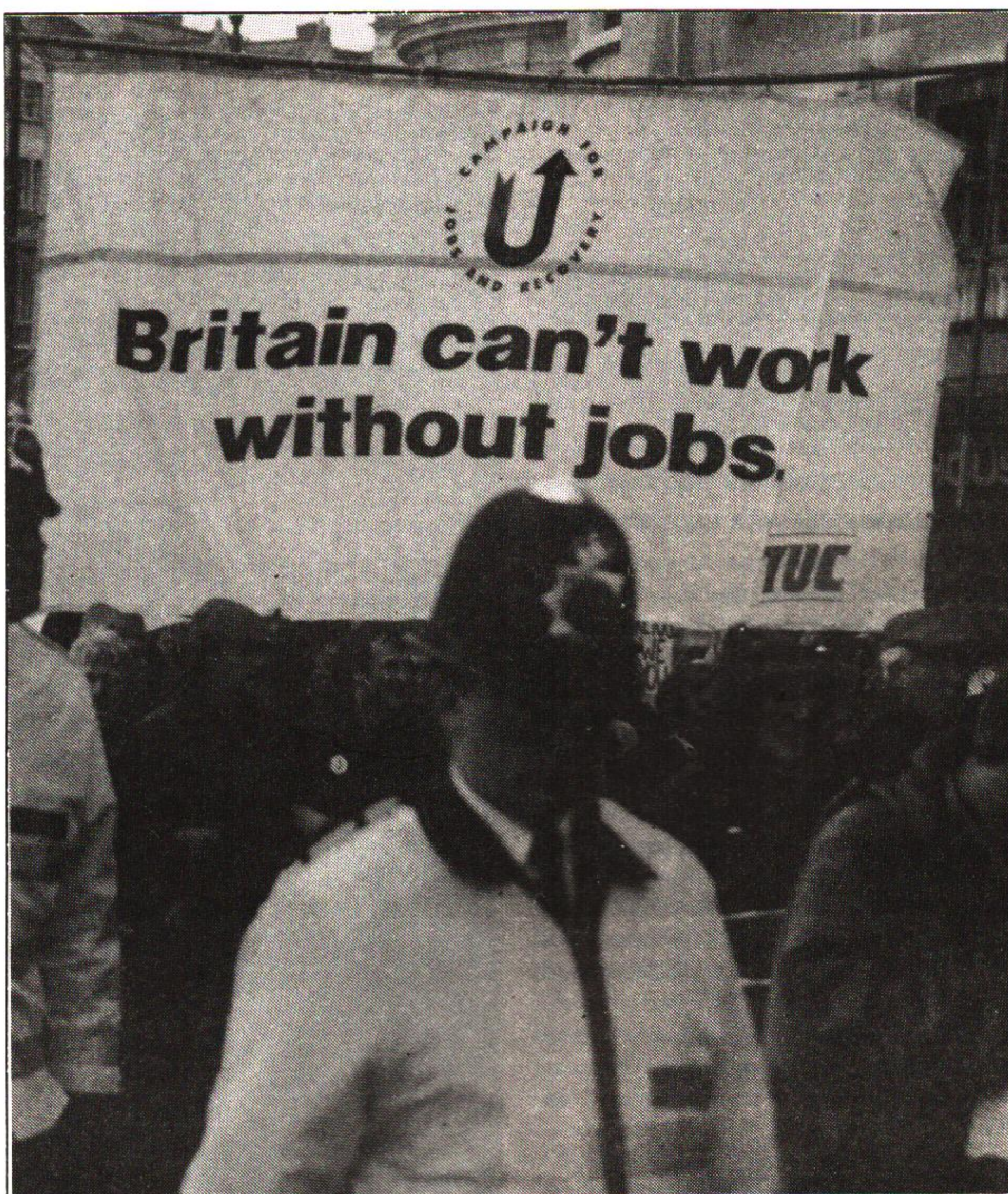
24 hour General Strike

We support the TUC's call for national demonstrations. But it does not go far enough.

As a first step the unions should organise a 24 hour General Strike, linked to a national campaign of mass meetings and demonstrations. In every area, the trades councils should organise action committees, involving union branches, shop stewards, local Labour Parties, LP Young Socialist branches, co-ops, tenants associations, in a concerted campaign.

There is no doubt the Labour leaders can hammer the Tories in parliamentary debate. But the real need is for a campaign of mass action to bring down this vicious government and hold a general election now!

It is time to say ENOUGH! Trade unionists and Labour Party members should be moving resolutions of support for the miners at every level calling for a campaign of action against pit closures and the decimation of manufacturing jobs.



The Miners' march, October 25th

Pits face death by a thousand cuts

By Ted Grant

"I understand the anguish of the families of those affected, but there is no economic alternative." Michael Heseltine (House of Commons, Monday October 19).

"Is a millionaire Cabinet minister who lives in a 400-acre country estate and owns a £1.5 million house in Belgravia, the right man to tell 30,000 miners they will be on the dole by Christmas?" Jon Craig (Political Editor, *Daily Express* Monday, October 9th).

THE Commons statement of Michael Heseltine, the supposedly "progressive" Tory minister, on the coal closures represented a slap in the face of the miners and the working class as a whole.

It is nothing more than a cynical manoeuvre to gain time and take the heat off the government.

The Tories were left reeling by the scale of the movement which has sprung up from Chesterfield to Cheltenham.

Even the venal Tory press has been compelled to turn tail and begin growling and snapping at the heels of Major and Heseltine, reflecting the growing discontent and frustration of even Tory voters.

The political editor of the Tory *Daily Express* wrote on Monday October 19th: *"Better a U-turn than a defeat. The alternative could be two more names added to the 30,000 due to lose their jobs: Michael Heseltine and John Major."*

The massive build-up of pressure has caused splits in the Tory party in parliament. Six months ago the Major government looked impregnable. Now they are on the rocks. One good push from the labour and

trade union movement would be enough to bring it down.

The realisation of the precarious stance of his government has forced Major to tuck and manoeuvre. However, the "concessions" offered by Heseltine are totally unacceptable. What do they amount to?

● *Instead of 31 pits, "only" ten will be closed?*

Yes, only 10,000 FOR NOW. The aim of these weasle words is to sow divisions among the miners by naming the ten pits to be closed. By these means they hope to gain time. If they can get away with this, they will close the rest later. It will be death by a thousand cuts.

● *A "moratorium" on further closures until January?*

This is a pernicious manoeuvre to close the pits once the movement dies down. We must ignore it and step up the movement, broadening its aims to throw out this vicious government.

● *No compulsory redundancies, but only "voluntary redundancies?"*

The government will take advantage of the situation to undermine the movement by attempting to lure away older miners with offers of redundancy pay. The whole move is a trick to split and demoralise the workforce, and then carry out the original plan. It is vital that we stand firm in the face of these manoeuvres. The crisis of the Tory government has been caused by fear of the mass movement and nothing else.

The TUC and Labour leaders must organise a national campaign of mobilisations to bring the government down. The idea that we can solve our problems by a united front with so-called Tory "moderates" is a dangerous illusion. Let us not forget that Heseltine, too, was considered a Tory "moderate." We cannot put an ounce of trust in any Tory leader or their Liberal counterparts either. It is not the nice words of Tory MPs, bishops and retired colonels which have upset John Major's appercart but the fear of mass action by the organised working class.

● *No closures without consultation?*

This is yet another trick. It means the Tories will go through the motions of "consultation" in order to put the workers off their guard. Naturally the review procedure will be stacked against the miners who will be picked off pit by pit.

The Labour leaders have asked for an "independent review." What does this mean? The only body which we could trust to safeguard the future of the mining industry would be an elected committee of miners, railway workers, power workers, linked to the unions and the Labour Party. Such elected bodies could

be relied upon to defend the industry. A Royal Commission, composed of retired admirals, lords, judges and so on cannot. It is a class issue and must be put forward in class terms. **WORKERS MUST RELY ONLY ON THEIR OWN FORCES TO WIN.**

There is no force on earth that can stop the organised labour movement once it begins to move. Not a wheel turns, not a light bulb shines without the permission of the working class. The power workers alone could bring Britain to a halt. Alongside the railway and transport workers, whose jobs are also threatened, they constitute an invincible force.

But ALL workers must understand that their livelihood, and that of their families, are at stake here. **TODAY THE MINERS, TOMORROW YOU!**

Drastic problems demand drastic remedies. In order to stop the headlong slide to economic catastrophe, the TUC and Labour Party must organise a national campaign to bring the government down.

They must work out a genuine socialist plan of production to get Britain back to work. They must start by renationalising all the privatised industries, with gas and electricity top of the list.

- NO RETREAT ON COAL!

- DOWN WITH THE TORY GOVERNMENT!

- LABOUR TO POWER ON A SOCIALIST PROGRAMME!

The miners' march, October 25th



The case for coal

By Michael Roberts

THE President of the Board of Trade and Industry, Michael Heseltine, says that the economic case for shutting down Britain's coal pits, destroying a major energy resource and putting up to 100,000 people out of work at the depth of a major economic slump, is "unanswerable."

How does he reach this ludicrous conclusion?

First, he says, that gas is cheaper than coal to produce for our energy needs. But this flies in the face of all the evidence provided by independent economists.

For example, Gordon McKinnon of Sussex University's Science Policy Institute estimates that power from the latest nuclear plant, Sizewell, will cost 6p per kilowatt hour and 7-8p from the older reactors.

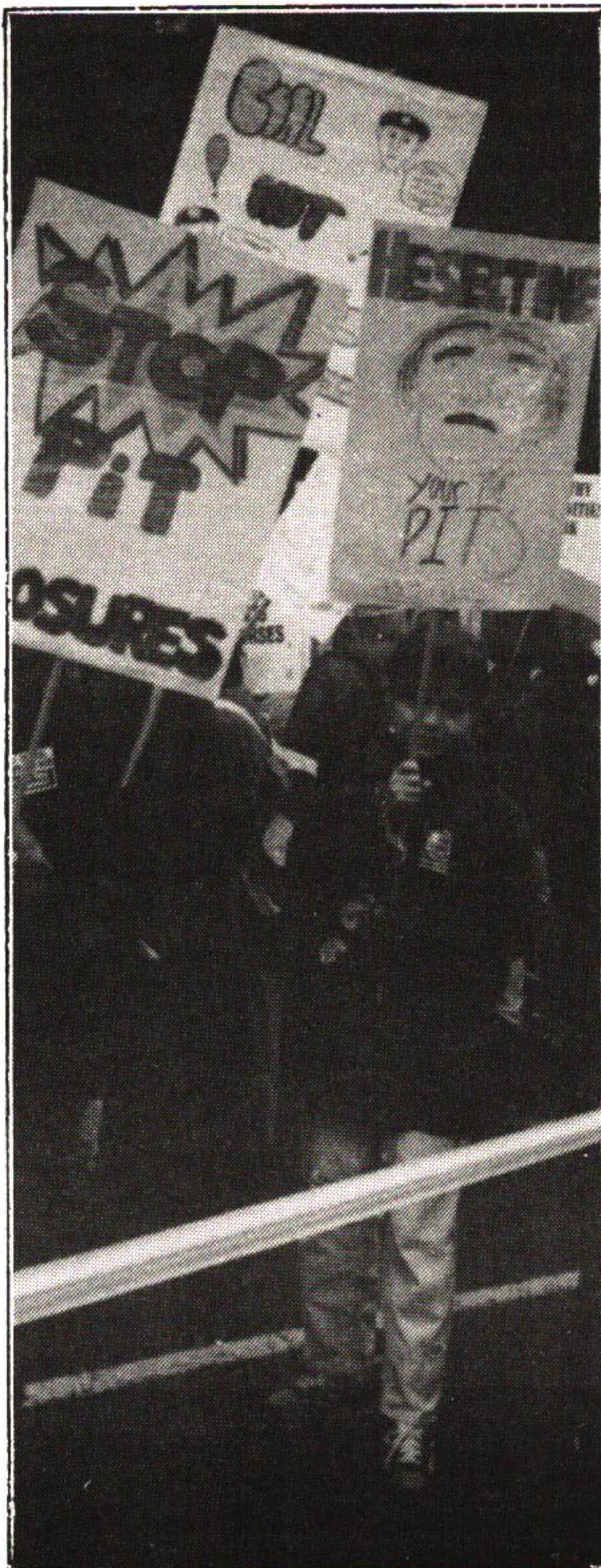
Current coal-fired stations produce energy at 1.9-2.6p per Kwh, while the planned new gasfired stations will make energy at 3.5-4p per Kwh. The *International Coal Report* finds that the new gas turbine plants will produce energy at between 2.45 and 3.2p per Kwh. Nigel Lucas, Professor of Energy Policy at Imperial College, London says that gas power is probably 50% more expensive than coal. Even NorWeb, one of the new electricity distribution companies privatised by the government, now admits that coal is a cheaper source of power.

The evidence is overwhelming - and yet Heseltine continues with his refrain: *well if the power generating companies have opted for gas, they would not have done so unless it was the cheapest source of power.*

But the reason the privatised power generators and the new distribution companies have opted for gas is not to do with price. It is because of the privatisation of British Gas and electricity. Now the mighty private monopoly, British Gas, is holding the electricity generating companies to ransom. The electricity companies can only buy their gas from BG, so they have been forced into 15-year contracts for supply which forces them to build power stations to use the gas rather than the coal.

The distribution companies, fearful of being at the mercy of the generating monopolies, have also been forced to build gas stations.

So the market has been rigged against coal, even though it is cheaper, in the "dash for gas." And remember, the government has given the distribution companies the right to pass on these higher costs in the price of electricity to the consumer. We will pay for this more expensive electricity.



The Miners' march, October 25th

Heseltine also justifies the closing down of the pits in order to allow the electricity companies to diversify. What a cruel joke!

The ending of the domestic coal industry with over 300 years of reserves and its replacement with gas which is expected to run out within 20 years is hardly proper diversification.

When the gas runs out and we have to import coal, that will add another £1 billion to energy costs, says Johnathon Winterton of Bradford University. What is really happening is that the electricity companies and the government are happy to make the consumer pay for more expensive power in their homes and factories if it means that they are no longer dependent on British miners.

And then there is the environmental argument presented by Heseltine that nuclear power and gas are more environmentally friendly. Is he really serious?

Nuclear power could not be more dangerous

to the health of a community, if a reactor should go wrong. And what about the cases of increased cancer and other illnesses for those living near reactors and the near impossible task of disposing of nuclear waste and decommissioning old reactors? Coal could easily be made more acceptable, if research into clean, de-sulphurised coal burning stations was stepped up instead of being cut back altogether.

Michael Heseltine says nothing, however, about the cost to society and Britain as a whole of closing down the pits. It has been estimated that the loss of 30,000 miners jobs and another 70,000 jobs in areas which depend on coal mining will cost the tax payer £1.2bn - says Andrew Glyn of Oxford University.

In addition, the loss to the balance of payments if Britain has to buy its gas from Norway, its coal from Australia, the US and South Africa (where they use child labour in the pits) and its nuclear power from France, is estimated to be around £1-1.5bn each year, at a time when the UK economy is already running a deficit of £8bn on its trade with the rest of the world.

But Michael Heseltine keeps returning to what he thinks is the decisive argument: *what are we to do with 25m tonnes of coal at the pitheads that nobody will buy?*

What he refuses to recognise is that the reason this coal is piling up is because of the way that privatisation has made it impossible for British Coal to sell its coal, despite having the most productive, low-cost pits in Europe and despite the miners working so hard that productivity has risen 12% a year since the 1984-5 strike.

Privatisation means that electricity companies will buy gas whatever the price; and that nuclear power gets 18% of the British market whatever the price. That leaves British Coal trying to sell its coal in world markets against South African slave labour.

Is there an alternative? Yes. First, the government own 40% of the shares of the electricity companies. It could use that voting power on behalf of the taxpayer and the coal industry to insist that the generating companies stop their deals with British Gas and instead buy coal. Second, the government could match the subsidy paid to nuclear power with one for coal. After all, the government has given no money to the coal industry since 1985, except money to sack miners! Michael Edwards, former marketing director of British Coal, estimates that if the coal industry received the same subsidy as nuclear power, it could supply coal to the generating companies for free, deliver it free, give the generators £10 a tonne and still make a profit!

Alternatively, British Coal could sell all the stockpiles at the pitheads into the world market and undercut South African slave coal.

But what is really needed is a proper plan

Don't be conned by Heseltine's 'help' pledge

By Maureen Wade
(Stockland Green Labour Party,
personal capacity)

WHILE Heseltine makes soothing noises about resources being poured into areas hit by pit closures, his cabinet colleagues are currently drawing up plans to clamp down on public sector spending.

The treasury is looking at plans for next year's budget to slash public spending, to help pay for the estimated £3 billion Lamont blew in one afternoon, when he tried to prop up the pound on Black Wednesday.

The Tories say £165 million will be earmarked for communities faced with pit closures. But this is a miserly sum when compared to the mammoth sums the Tories plan to cut.

The Training and Enterprise Council - which would be the main vehicle to retrain redun-

The case for coal (continued)

for energy using all the resources and skills available in the coal, gas and oil industry, along with the development of new forms of environmentally safe energy sources. That means public control of the energy industry which can only be achieved by bringing back into public ownership the power generating companies, British Gas and the distribution companies. The so-called regulators that the government has set up have completely failed to stop this mess in energy supply that privatisation has created.

We need a plan worked out for Britain's energy requirements for the decades ahead, with a clearly agreed share of energy supply between the various sources, and then democratic control of the energy industries by the workers in the industry through their unions, the government and the community. Then we can produce cheap energy that meets the needs of the British people and its industries, and uses the resources of the economy efficiently without the distortions of the rapacious drive for quick profits that this govern-



The miners march for jobs

dant miners in Heseltine's fantasy world - is facing cuts of £100 million.

Meanwhile, the *Sunday Times* (18/10/92) reports that there will also be "deep cuts" in the Social Security budget. Any sums found for the miners will be slashed from elsewhere.

But it should also be remembered that Heseltine has made great promises before about communities being regenerated with government help.

He was "Minister for the inner cities" following the 1981 riots. Despite a few superficial projects, are not Toxteth, Brixton, Moss Side etc.. still areas of mass unemployment, deprivation and chronic housing problems.

The Urban Programme scheme - the government mechanism to help local authorities develop the inner cities - is being cut back.

Presently it is being hinted to local authorities that they should expect a cut back of 10% or more next year. Other traditional grants to city councils were scrapped at the end of the 1980s and replaced by City Challenge, where - incredibly - hard hit inner city areas have to **compete** for government help!

Miners should take heed of the fate of Coventry in the West Midlands, the worst hit area in the country in the current recession. Between 1990 and 1992, the city and surrounding north Warwickshire area suffered 13,389 redundancies, nearly all skilled jobs. This onslaught included the closure of Coventry colliery last year, with 1600 miners jobs lost and a knock on effect throughout the local community.

What was the government's response? They turned down Coventry's City Challenge bid this year, which would have meant another £37 million help for the beleaguered city.

Now they are "reviewing" whether the area should retain "Assisted Area Status," which meant the area was eligible for grants from government departments and the European Commission that had been used to protect thousands of existing jobs and create many new ones.

No-one should be conned. The Tories' highly publicised "regeneration" schemes are little more than short-term, paltry sops designed to appease public opinion rather than offer any long term alternative to the loss of major sections of our industry. And what the Tories give you with one hand, you can be sure they will take away with the other.



LABOUR CAMPAIGN SCORES OPT- OUT VICTORY

Paul Gerard, Bury CLP.

Anti opt-out campaigners have defeated proposals for the opting-out of Irlam and Cadishead Community High School. The result of the ballot was 285 in favour and 409 against. As reported in the September issue of Socialist Appeal, the local Labour Party set up a campaign group, Community and Local Action to Save our Schools (CLASS), to fight the opt out.

The result shows that where the Labour Party campaigns it can win support and opting out can be defeated.

Party activists made sure they knew all the arguments and organised a number of meetings and leaflets to show how the Tories' plans for education mean an attack on, not only the children and parents but the teaching profession too.

What is now evident is that because of the current attempts to slash public spending the sort of bribes which have been offered in the past to get schools to vote to opt-out will now no longer be available.

Wherever opt-outs are proposed the local Labour Party should follow our example and actively campaign against it. That way we really can save our schools.

SOUTHAMPTON BACKS MINERS

Tyrone O'Sullivan and Phil White, Lodge secretary and Chairman at Tower NUM recently attended Southampton Trades Council. The Trades Council backed their call for a TUC co-ordinated national day of action in support of the miners' fight and the NHS and for jobs. They told delegates that if the pit review procedure did not stop the closures then Tower NUM would be out on strike on January 28th.

The trades Council are also taking part in organising a demonstration in support of the miners and Tower NUM will be sending a delegation to the march and rally on November 14.

Defend the Miners
March and Rally
Assemble 12 Noon,
East Park,
(opposite cenotaph)
Southampton
Rally 1pm
Hoglands Park.

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

Against the Asylum Bill

Saturday November 21

12 Noon, Hyde Park

Fight This Racist Bill!
Refugees Demand
Justice!

Organised by Refugee Ad-Hoc
Committee for Asylum Rights

For more information, phone 071-738-6408

YOUR HEALTH, THEIR WEALTH

1500 construction workers have been killed on sites in the past ten years - an average of three per week.

In the same period 40,000 have died from occupational diseases. The Health and Safety Executive state that 90% of all site deaths and injuries are avoidable with 70% caused by employer's negligence.

Profit hungry employers use the fear of unemployment to force workers to carry out their job under unsafe conditions. Even when employers are taken to court they get away with paltry fines. The trade union movement must take up the issue and stop employers getting away with murder. In response to the latest figures the Construction Safety Campaign has called a National Lobby of Parliament later this month.

Lobby of Parliament and Rally

Wednesday November 25, 1992
Assemble 1pm, St Stephen's Gate
Houses of Parliament.

FORDS: Action to defend jobs!

By a
shop steward,
Fords Dagenham.

In an interview on a recent news programme, a spokesman for Ford UK said that the government should introduce a programme of extensive public investment in roads, construction and manufacturing. The stunned interviewer thought this was surprisingly radical, but the truth is that Ford only has its own interests at heart. The rapid decline in manufacturing has resulted in a crisis in the car industry in which Ford has been badly affected.

The optimistic European expansion programme that Ford planned for the 1990s has run into serious trouble. They planned to increase overall capacity by 10% by the mid 1990s with a 13-16% increase at Genk, Valencia, Halewood and Cologne by 1993.

In a recent document Ford say that they have "half an assembly plant too much capacity in Britain and the increasing prospect of further excess capacity on the continent."

Nowhere is the crisis so acutely felt than at Dagenham, which is Europe's oldest car factory and the largest in the UK, employing 9000 workers. If Ford do close a factory then it is likely to be this one, due to the lack of investment and the gradual run down of the plant.

Under-investment

This history of under-investment goes back a long way. In 1984 the foundry was closed down, and in 1988 the planned introduction of new presses was cancelled.

In 1989, the *Financial Times* said that "the unsatisfactory level of Dagenham productivity is to be directly addressed by reducing it to production of a single model, the Fiesta. For Dagenham, the move must be seen as a final public warning."

Despite lower British wages it takes 52.2 hours of labour to produce a Fiesta in Dagenham, compared to 29.2 hours in Cologne and 33.3 hours in Valencia. This clearly shows the scale of under-investment at Dagenham, but its productivity has increased by 11.7% in 1990 and 10.8% in 1991.

However, the main method used to achieve this has been to squeeze more from the workforce with worsening conditions. The

workers have had to suffer continual threats and intimidation from management. They are told to concentrate on "quality" and to "work harder" coupled with vague warnings about Dagenham's future. They must stick to grievance procedures and "avoid" returning to the days of "frequent unconstitutional action."

Contracted Out

Many services at Ford have been contracted out, such as janitorial services, laundry and maintenance. By doing this Ford does not have to employ these workers at its agreed rate of £6 an hour. In stead the contractors have been paying their workers as little as £3.25 an hour. Many of these contractors exploit immigrant labour by paying appalling wages while turning a blind eye to their "illegal" status in the country. In a recent raid at Dagenham, police arrested 20 "illegal immigrants" at once.

Speeding up production lines, combined with

they stopped work.

The management tried to discipline the shop steward for causing the stoppage!

There has been some introduction of new machinery, but the workers know that this can easily be moved if the plant is shut down. Lack of investment in the infrastructure shows the true state of affairs, with poorly maintained roofs leaking onto the brand new robots below. No amount of "time and motion studies" will save Dagenham from decline and possible closure.

Ironically it is Ford's most profitable plant due to the minimal interest costs from the relatively low investment compared to the company's newer green field sites.

Redundancies

The recent announcement of 1500 redundancies and a 3-day week at Dagenham has angered many workers. The first they heard of



Ford workers march with the miners - now action is needed to defend motor industry jobs.

harsh discipline has been the second method of improving productivity. Workers are now frequently disciplined for going to the toilet for 5 minutes, or being late. One worker who had been through several disciplinary procedures was promptly sacked after being four minutes late back from lunch.

During one week the general manager stood closely behind the shoulders of workers on one production line as they worked. By the end of the week the workers felt so intimidated that

these redundancies was when they left work to be confronted by TV crews and reporters asking them what they thought of the situation.

The actual number of redundancies will be more than 2000 at Dagenham alone, if voluntary redundancies are taken into account.

If the unions accept the compulsory redundancies without a fight then it would be the thin end of the wedge, allowing Ford to run Dagenham into the ground, extracting every last penny of profit before closing it down



poorer conditions for the workforce with unions being excluded or being made compliant through "single union" agreements.

The Ford National Joint Negotiating Committee, representing management and all the unions, will meet again next month to discuss the situation.

The unions representing Ford workers (AEEU, TGWU, GMB, FTAT and MSF) have been subject to divide and rule tactics. Even within the confines of one site, such as Dagenham, one plant is played off against the other with the new management methods being introduced first into the plants with the weakest or most compliant union organisation.

Union Activists

There is little contact between union activists at the individual plants, let alone throughout the country or Europe. The "Coventry Conference" a forum for all Ford shop stewards nationally was closed down in 1984 by the union leaders. A vital link for all Ford workers has been lost.

The mood in the workforce is angry and defiant. The main reasons that strike action has not been considered so far is the lack of leadership from the trade unions and the depth of the recession.

They have put up with bad management and worsening conditions because the only apparent alternative was the dole. The situation is now different because of the humiliation of the government over the pit closure programme, increasing confidence in the labour movement.

The workers have the power to stop Ford in its tracks. A strike at the Croydon plant alone, which produces components for all Ford cars, has the power to stop production throughout Europe.

Even a short strike could be very effective and the trade union leaders should now be organising action to improve our conditions and to stop the redundancies and ensure the future of the Dagenham plant.

completely. Workers fear that this will happen when the new model Fiesta is introduced.

Ford have offered an alternative to redundancies in the form of a wages freeze and a cut in lay-off pay (paid when production lines are idle). This would save an estimated £20 million.

New Plant

Yet Ford have just announced the building of a new engine plant in Spain at a cost of about £500 million. Workers will justifiably question the future of the engine plant at Dagenham.

If Ford have this kind of money to invest, then why the compulsory redundancies?

It seems that Ford is pursuing a method of building new sites which will certainly have better technology but will also have

HARD TIMES

ENTER MR GREEDY

Happy Families, the old card game from Waddingtons, has been updated for the Christmas market. Out goes Mr Bun the Baker and in comes Mr Greed, depicted by Robert Maxwell himself. Wonder if this would have happened if Captain Bob's bid to buy Waddingtons had succeeded.

TOUGH AT THE TOP

Robert Stempel, chief executive of General Motors has been forced to resign. Since 1990 GM's North America car operations have lost more than \$16 billion. Stempel has been widely blamed for INSUFFICIENT "aggressive measures to cut costs." This, after he announced last December, plans to slash 75,000 jobs and close one in six GM plants by 1995.

Wall Street welcomed Stempel's removal with a rise in the GM share price.

Whose Benefit?

The Tories, in a sickening attempt to cut public spending and divert attention away from their splits over Europe and the chaos they have brought to the economy have launched an attack on benefit claimants.

They intend to introduce tighter checks and controls on those claiming benefit. Currently £500 million is allegedly lost in benefit "frauds."

What about the £6 BILLION lost annually in corporate tax evasion? What sort of new campaign will the Tories launch to cut down on that?

None, apparently. They do not feel it is necessary, which is probably why they turned down the Inland Revenue's request for extra tax inspectors.

What is more sickening is that in 1991 there were 8,100 convictions for benefit fraud compared to just 14 for tax evasion.

The Tories certainly know how to look after their friends!

WHO'S KIDDING WHO?

"It is grotesque to portray me as some sort of blue-eyed optimist."

Norman Lamont, December 1991.

The same man who has been seeing "green shoots" ever since!

Got an item you think should be included in our regular Hard Times column? Send it to us at Hard Times, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU.

What's happening in your industry or your union? Tell us!

Send your stories to Socialist Appeal, PO BOX 2626 London.

SELLING SOCIALIST APPEAL

HAVE YOU GOT THE GIFT?

Undoubtedly, by the time you read this the Christmas advertising will be well under way. Employers will be entering into the spirit of things by handing out redundancy notices left, right and centre and the Government will be telling fairy stories about the recession coming to an end.

With all this in mind how about trying an alternative to the usual yuletide gifts - a gift subscription to Socialist Appeal. Take advantage while you can of the special offer rate of £12 for 12 issues. Simply state that this is a gift subscription and we will send out their first issue in plenty of time for xmas together with a festive card stating who the gift is from.

Foreign rates are £16 (Europe) and £20 (rest of the world).

Well Red Books also have plenty of books which would make great presents - write for details or look at the booklist printed in issue No.6.

Don't forget that all back issues are available from us (subject to availability) at a cost of £1.30 per copy - order 4 journals or more and we will forget about the postage charge. For example, a complete set of back issues (nos 1 to 7) will only cost you £7!

Why not become a Socialist Appeal seller? We rely on the efforts of ordinary workers to spread the sales of our journal. You can sell at the workplace, at union or Labour Party meetings or simply to your friends. Write to us at the usual address (see page 2) or ring our offices in Birmingham or London if you would be interested in taking a bulk order to sell. Give us an Xmas present by helping to build Socialist Appeal.

BUILD OUR PRESS FUND ★

We have had an excellent response to the production of our special broadsheet in support of the miners and the fight for jobs.

Excellent sales have been reported. And with the increased sales has come a welcome increase in money raised for our Press Fund.

Every pound and every penny is vital to help us build the resources necessary to enable us to produce regular broadsheets, expand the journal and undertake the important work of producing extra leaflets, pamphlets and bulletins explaining the crisis in the coalfields, the continuing war in Bosnia and the collapse of the capitalists' European dream.

Every area should consider setting up stalls in town or city centres to build the campaign against pit closures or plan door to door sales using petitions, the journal and our special broadsheet - and don't forget your Press Fund tins.

Thanks this month to: Ian Illot, London £8, Martin Kelly, Birmingham £20, Marxist Education School collections £550, and to all those who gave donations towards the building of Marxist ideas in the labour movement on the miners demo.

GET OUR MINER'S SPECIAL ▼

A Socialist Appeal to Workers

For just £12 you can receive a year's supply of *Socialist Appeal*, the Marxist monthly for the labour movement. It will be delivered to your home every month post-free.

Socialist Appeal aims to explain events in society and the labour movement from a Marxist viewpoint.

Marxism is not dead, as the establishment circles, both West and East would like to claim. On the contrary, it is living in the struggles of working people worldwide and in the ideas of socialists and trade unionists everywhere. Marxism predicted the fall of Stalinism well before the pundits of the West. And Marxism still provides the best explanation of modern class society and the most effective guide to action in changing it.

Each month *Socialist Appeal* will analyse the trends in modern capitalist society, comment on

recent events in the class struggle, and provide the latest news from the labour movement, from correspondents in Britain and internationally - people who are not just commentators but are personally participating in the struggle for socialism.

Socialist Appeal is written by members of the Labour Party and trade unionists at all levels in the movement.

Socialist Appeal is the essential journal for the activist in the labour movement - you cannot afford to be without it.

Fill out the subscription form now and send it to Socialist Appeal, POBox 2626, London N1 6DU, and we will despatch your first issue immediately.

Please send me 12 issues of *Socialist Appeal* to my home, post free. I enclose a cheque/PO for £12, made payable to *Socialist Appeal*.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Return to Socialist Appeal,
PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU.



A limited number of copies of our special broadsheet, produced for the October 25 miners' demonstration in London are still available. If you missed out on your copy, don't worry! Simply send two first class stamps to us at the address on page 2 and we will despatch your copy immediately. For bulk orders please phone us on 071-354-3164 for prices.

Italian General Strike

WORKERS FIGHT "MARKET" CUTS

On 13 September, after weeks of speculation, the lira was devalued by 7 per cent against the Deutschmark. Two days later the Bank of Italy was forced to bring the lira out of the ERM.

Immediately, the Amato government proposed the toughest economic measures for 15 years. Within 24 hours dozens of factories had come out on strike, forcing union leaders to drop their appeals for "moderation" and place themselves at the head of the strike movement.

Over ten days, there were general strikes in nine regions and more than a million workers demonstrated all over Italy. After years of apparent social peace the economic crisis has laid bare all the weaknesses of the Italian economy, forcing the ruling class to avoid further delay and go on the offensive.

The workers in turn have reacted massively to the attacks, and the social conflict has spilled out into the open.

Roots of the Conflict

The roots of this conflict are to be found in the crisis affecting the Italian economy. Italian industry in the last two years has shown all its weaknesses.

The big groupings (Fiat, Olivetti, Pirelli etc.) have seen their share of the market falling for two years; the trade deficit reached 16,000 billion lira in 1991 and is expected to exceed 20,000 billion in 1992 (a thousand billion lira is roughly half a billion pounds). In industry there are plans to cut 2-300,000 jobs. During 1992, the financial crisis has been added to the industrial. **The uncontrolled growth of the public debt has left the government and the Bank of Italy with their backs to the wall.**

The attempts to prop up the lira and cover this debt pushed interest rates to astronomical levels and the Bank of Italy used up billions of lira of its reserves in an unsuccessful attempt to defend the exchange rate. But each increase in interest rates made it even more difficult to come out of the industrial crisis by creating big

problems, mainly for small and medium-sized enterprises. In this situation the bosses have lashed out against the "selfishness of the Germans", but without encouraging the Bundesbank to budge one millimetre. So, for the bosses, the solution has to be found inside the economy.

The capitalists' programme can be summed up in two points: cuts in social spending and reduction of real wages, dismantling a large part of the conquests left from the struggles of the 1970s.

The Italian labour movement has arrived at this struggle in very difficult conditions. 1991 saw the lowest level of strikes since the war. The split of the Italian Communist Party in 1991 increased the mistrust and division among activists. The recession makes workers afraid to struggle because they see their jobs in danger. The struggles against redundancies (Olivetti, Autobianchi, Maserati, Pirelli) have been left isolated by trade union leaders and therefore doomed to defeat. Their union leaders have moved more and more to the right, while the idea of breaking away from the union confederation has been growing among



Workers on the streets of Milan

a layer of disillusioned activists. For the first time there is open discussion of the possibility of a split in the unions among the engineering and chemical workers, i.e. the most militant and unionized categories.

The Confindustria (employers' federation) has evaluated the situation and knows it can count on the full collaboration of the union leaders. In recent years the ground has been prepared with anti-strike laws and with law No.223 which makes sackings easier.

On 10 December an agreement was signed between the Confindustria and the unions which prepared the abolition of wage indexation. In exchange, the leaders of the three federations, CGIL, CISL and UIL, accepted the promise of negotiations in June (i.e. after the general election) to define a new automatic mecha-

nism to defend wages from inflation.

In June negotiations resumed and dragged on for two months until, on 31 July, as factories were closing for the summer holidays, the government and the Confindustria issued an ultimatum. The unions were divided. The CISL and the UIL, in alliance with the right wing of the CGIL led by Del Turco (socialist), threatened to sign separately. Faced with this, and the threat by the government to resign, Trentin (general secretary of the CGIL and a PDS member) signed too and resigned immediately afterwards, stating that it was against the positions decided by the CGIL but there had been no alternative.

Lira Under Attack

The government and the union leaders tried to cover up the agreement by saying that it was never possible to defend the lira and lower interest rates. Unrealistic targets were set for inflation (3.5% in 1993, 2.5% in 1994).

In reality the lira had already been under attack since May-June, following the Danish referendum. Devaluation was already in the air, but first wage indexation had to be abolished!

When the factories reopened in September the workers' anger was evident, but so was

their disorientation. A first sign of the movement that was developing was the demonstration of 100,000 in Rome on 12 September, organized by **Rifondazione Comunista (PRC)**. The slogans called for a general strike, but no clear way ahead was offered. Many spoke of leaving the CGIL as the only

way to carry on the fight.

In the days that followed there was a rapid acceleration of events. On the 12th the national council of the CGIL reinstated Trentin and rejected (by 163 votes to 27) the left's proposal to hold a binding consultation among all the workers on the July agreement. On the 13th the lira was devalued and on the 15th it was brought out of the ERM.

On the 17th the government issued its decrees. The total saving was estimated at 93,000 billion lira. The main points were freezing of contracts in public employment, the cancellation of this year's indexed increases in pensions, the abolition of retirement after 15 years' work (this existed only in some sectors of public employment), general increase of retirement age to 65, abolition of national health assistance for families with a gross

income greater than 40 million lira per annum (about £19,000), and an increase in income tax. There is also talk of a wealth tax on companies (0.75%).

On 18-21 September unofficial strikes broke out in several northern towns, particularly in and around Milan. The strikes were organized by shop stewards and, at times, by local structures of the unions. There were road and rail blocks. Workers went to union headquarters demanding a general strike. Under this pressure the CGIL-CISL-UIL leaders called 4 hour general strikes in 9 regions, spaced over a week.

On the 19 September Occhetto made a speech at Reggio Emilia (at the national festival of the PDS), heard by about 100,000 people. Occhetto directly attacked the decrees but did not talk of a general strike. He declared that the PDS was ready to enter a "government of change" which would "put the country back on its feet."

Union Leaders Unprepared

The movement caught the union leaders completely unprepared. Trentin, who on 17 September had stressed on television the "responsibility" of the workers in not coming onto the streets when the measures were announced, had to hurriedly eat his words. The unions had to give some kind of lead to the struggle.

The response of the workers was massive. On the 22nd, 100,000 workers marched in Florence; the next day it was the turn of the regions of Emilia-Romagna and Lombardia: 80,000 in Bologna (200,000 in the whole of Emilia), 40,000 in Erescia, 150,000 in Milan. In Erescia workers threw rotten eggs at the headquarters of the Lombard League. **In Florence, Trentin had to face a rain of eggs and tomatoes and also steel bolts; these came from a layer of activists already determined to clash head-on with the union and even to leave it. The majority of the demonstrators did not take part in these actions but neither did they intervene to defend the General Secretary of the CGIL.**

The same scenes were repeated in Milan, where Veronese, secretary of the UIL, had to break off his speech after four minutes because of heckling and a rain of missiles. The bourgeois press and L'Unità (organ of the PDS) began a hysterical press campaign denouncing "autonomi" (semi-lumpen youth on the fringes of many demonstrations) and "red leaguists" (associating these workers with the Northern League) accusing those who had thrown objects of opening the road to terrorism.

On 24 September 80,000 demonstrated in Turin. There were more confrontations when the police charged the demonstration. 50-60,000 demonstrated in Naples and on 25

September, 200,000 demonstrated in Rome. On 2 October there was a national strike of public employees and a regional general strike in Lazio. Police several times charged the demonstration of 100,000 in Rome.

September Explosion

It is estimated that during the week over a million workers took part in the demonstrations. The September explosion is a crushing refutation of all the propaganda put forward over the years by the "leaders" of the labour movement. The workers are prepared to struggle; in spite of the confusion sown by the union leaders many talk of "doing what the Germans did and bring everything to a standstill until these people give in."

More important still, the movement has reawakened a layer of politically inactive and unorganized workers; among school students too there is a greater awareness and in several cities they have been taking part in the demonstrations.

What is totally absent is the leadership. Right from the first day the union leaders did everything they could to lead the movement into a blind alley. After the 2 October rallies all the conditions were there to launch a general strike of at least 24 hours aimed at bringing down Amato. If the union leaders had grasped the opportunity, organizing meetings in every factory, explaining the content and the causes of the government's measures and proposing a real alternative programme to Amato's, they would have had all the support, not only from workers but also from the middle class. But none of this was to be seen.

After 2 October the Secretaries of CGIL, CISL and UIL devoted all their energy to begging for a few concessions from the government; their "alternative" proposal was just a poor copy of the Amato plan. Not a word about wage indexation or redundancies; there was talk of a forced loan to the government and a wealth tax. Obviously Amato and the Confindustria laughed in the face of the secretaries and limited themselves to minimal cosmetic changes.

So on October 5, when the leading bodies of CGIL, CISL and UIL met again, they scandalously called the general strike for October 13 to last only four hours and excluding public employees, with demands that were little different from the Amato plan. Nothing was done to guarantee participation - no meetings, no campaign.

Formally there has been an opposition in the CGIL for more than a year, "Essere Sindacato," led by Bertinotti (PDS) and supported by the leaders of the PRC. But just at the decisive moment this group is showing itself incapable of providing an outlet for the anger of the rank and file. Bertinotti acquired a considerable



Movements of the workers can cut across the growth of regionalism as preached by the Lombardy League.

following through his opposition to the July agreement, but has been incapable of translating this into concrete action.

It is not enough just to criticise Trentin, as Bertinotti has done, calling for a real general strike. In a struggle like the present one, leading the movement does not mean just providing an analysis of events or putting forward slogans - it means translating this into a practical programme for the workers and activists.

Essere Sindacato is strong enough to do this but has not moved. Bertinotti did not call the first national meeting of his supporters until October 3, hopelessly late, and without any concrete aims. Thus Essere Sindacato too is leaving the activists leaderless.

In these circumstances, the only road for the workers is to build from below an alternative leadership to the bankrupt policies of the union leaders, to discuss a programme of struggle starting from the factory meetings and elect real workers' representatives to co-ordinate the struggle locally and nationally.

This would be in the tradition of the Factory Councils of 1969 and 1984 and would be the only way of avoiding leading the movement into a blind alley.

Unfortunately, an initiative of this kind has yet to be seen. The heckling and throwing of bolts at the leaders is not just an indication of the workers' anger; they also show the impotence of a layer of activists which hasn't found a channel in which to organise. In these conditions a certain decline in the movement was seen in the four-hour general strike. The leadership has temporarily succeeded in heading off a new uncontrollable explosion.

Everywhere participation in the demonstrations was lower than in the preceding strikes. Many towns did not even hold demonstrations, including Rome, where the only march on the day was organised by the school students. In Milan around 70,000 people demonstrated but the mood was already different from that of September - there had been a

decline in confidence and many took part as a "last stand."

The way in which the union leaders have sabotaged the struggle has increased the workers' anger and frustration. Many workers on the demonstration of the 13th were asking what the point was of a strike organised in such a way and posed the question of taking the struggle onto the political plane, bringing down the government and going for new elections. This is in fact the only real possibility now - generalise the struggle, organise a real general strike and lay the basis for a government of the workers' parties.

Unfortunately, the PDS is a thousand miles away from such a perspective. The right wing of the party is waiting impatiently for the movement to blow over and is critical of even the weak opposition put forward by the PDS in parliament. Their only perspective is to go as soon as possible into a government

coalition and Occhetto (PDS general secretary) too is being dragged along this road.

All the propaganda of the PDS in the last two months has been for a "government of change" (i.e. including the PDS) which could call for sacrifices with greater authority than the current coalition.

No Alternative Offered

But not even the leaders of the PRC have proposed an alternative. The PRC has correctly called for the abolition of the July agreement and a general strike, but goes no further. In three weeks struggle the initiatives coming from the PRC leaders have been zero. They have given no perspective to their activists. In Milan, for example, the only meeting at city level of the PRC was held on October 7 - the subject: the 25th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara!

In spite of the leadership, the movement has reawakened the PDS and PRC rank

and file. Everywhere there was a spirit of unity between the activists of the two parties. One notable example has been at the Fiat Mirafiori factory in Turin, where two workers elected to parliament (one for the PDS, the other for the PRC) have begun a campaign against the July agreement with joint factory gate meetings at every change of shift.

The general strike of October 13 marks a turning point in this struggle. From here the movement can go ahead towards a new general strike which will force Amato to resign.

In these days there have been attempts by some shop stewards to organise at rank and file level. On October 20 in Milan there will be a national meeting of shop stewards called by various shop stewards' committees. If this meeting is able to produce a programme and an appeal to continue the fight which can reach the workers we could see a new and bigger wave of struggle.

But whatever the outcome of this movement its lessons will not be lost. In three weeks millions of workers have passed through a political school of great importance. They have directly experienced the impotence of the reformist leaders, including the "left-wing" variety; they have had a demonstration of the potential strength of the working class after years of lull.

On the basis of this experience the best activists will begin to build the leadership of the labour movement for the 1990s.

CLAUDIO BELLOTTI
 Editorial Board
Falce Martello

WORKERS WON'T PAY FOR SWEDISH CRISIS!

During the collapse of the European Monetary System (EMS) in September, the "market", mainly consisting of 20 or so large Swedish multinationals, put all their financial weight into an all out war against the Swedish currency - the Swedish krona (Skr). Their purpose was to achieve either a devaluation or social cuts - "the reduction of the structural budget." Either way they would be the winners.

The bourgeois minority coalition government and the national bank (Riksbanken) was determined to "defend" the Skr "at all costs," even allowing the "marginal rate" - the interest rate commercial banks borrow money from the Riksbanken at - to rise to 75 - 500% for weeks.

Borrowing Rates Soar

The "marginal rate" sooner or later reflects itself in the high street financial institutions. When the situation was at its worst in September, Handelsbanken, one of Sweden's major banks, happily announced that anyone could borrow money from them - no problem - except that the loans were given for a humble interest rate of 550%! Ordinary people saw the loans they had taken before the crisis for their apartment or house soar from a rate of 12-15% to 27% in the space of one week.

In order to save the terribly overvalued Skr, the government launched an "austerity programme" on September 20. It consists of cuts and more cuts in a bid to reduce the budget deficit.

The programme includes the abolition of sick pay for workers on the first day of absence, only 75% sick pay on days two and three and just 90% on days four to eight. In addition the government is lowering pensions, raising the pension age from

65 to 66 years, raising taxes and cutting subsidies to housebuilders, leading to higher rents. All this is on top of cuts of 18.5 billion Skr (£1.9 billion) in the public sector, mainly affecting the councils.

Ingvar Carlsson, chair of the Social Democratic Workers Party (SAP) rushed to add his name to the programme in order to show his "willingness to save the country", "to help bring down the rates," and so on. This served to confuse workers and caused a lull in the workers resistance to this programme.

New Cuts Programme

However, only days later the outflow of money from Sweden started again. It was the second wave of the companies' war to push the government to act more firmly on their demands, and to push the SAP leaders to support the government.

Ten days after the programme was launched another one had to be set in motion. Workers holidays were slashed from 27 days to 25, VAT on food rocketed from 18% to 21% and company taxes were lowered by 5%.

And again, the SAP leaders were "willing to save the country from economic chaos."

The main reason for this mad drive to make the Skr a "hard currency" is the hope that it would speed the Swedish integration into the European Community, by showing that Sweden is a "reliable partner," that sticks to fixed exchange rates no matter what.

The Swedish LO (TUC) had called for October 6 to be "a day of struggle" and "a day for justice." That call went out before the summer and was aimed as a protest against the right wing government. Now it came just at the time of the SAP

leaders' backing up of the government's economic policies.

The first programme lowered the morale of the workers but the second programme had the opposite effect. The "day for justice" became a protest against both the class collaboration policies of the SAP leaders and against the government.

In around 200 towns, 200,000 workers took to the streets. In Stockholm 40,000, in Gothenburg 20,000, in Malmo 7,000 and in Umea, 3,000 participated in meetings and demonstrations.

The main target of the speeches of the LO leaders was the austerity programme, unemployment and the "market." The chair of the LO described the "market" as a "maniac with an axe chasing us around." Even if some strong speeches were made, most LO leaders tried to soften the criticism of the SAP leaders' collaboration with the government's economic policies.

One of the banners at the Stockholm demonstration read: "Marx! Wake Up! The capitalists have gone mad!" Well it was maybe too much to ask of the old man, but the Swedish Marxists were awake and our leaflets and publications went down well with the workers on the demonstrations.

Patrik Olofsson, Stockholm

After Guyanese Elections..

Government in Office, But Not in Power!

**By a Guyanese
Worker in Exile**

The result of the general elections in Guyana marks a decisive turning point in the postwar history of the country. After 28 years of corrupt, racist misrule, the People's National Congress (PNC) have been defeated by the People's Progressive Party (PPP) led by "self-reformed Stalinist" Chedi Jagan.

The PNC regime kept itself in power since 1964 by fraudulently rigging elections. The Guyana Defence Force was used to collect all the ballot boxes at election time and store them at the army headquarters, where they were exchanged for boxes prepared by officials of the former ruling party long in advance of the date of the elections.

Change Welcomed

This election was different. The PNC was forced to accede to the wishes of its foreign masters and allow a "free" poll, thus bringing into office its main opponent, the PPP. Even then there was a last minute attempt to rig the elections in the full view of former US president Jimmy Carter and an international team of observers. In the end the discredited dictatorship reluctantly accepted the results.

Most Guyanese and workers all over the world welcomed the change of government. The greatest fear now is, that while the incoming party has won at the polls, real power, that is state power, remains effectively in the hands of the former rulers. The army, police force, the paramilitary forces and the private security guards are creatures of the outgoing dictatorship. Although Guyana has no tradition of direct military rule, like most of Africa and Latin America, it cannot be ruled out that the army and the other paramilitary forces will intervene if and when its former PNC paymaster wishes them to do so. After all, it was a force that was designed not primarily for defence against external attacks on the Guyanese nation, but as an instrument to defend the PNC during its two decades of repression and maladministration.

Some have argued that with the end of the cold war, the western imperialist powers will

not tolerate totalitarian governments in the ex-colonial world. But let us not forget the way they allowed democratic rights in Haiti to be snuffed out after less than a year and left its populist president, Father Jean-Bertrand Aristide, to life in exile. And Cuba is still blockaded by the US, despite the collapse of Stalinism. Any country in the world that departs from the capitalist path of development will be faced first with economic strangulation and, if it survives, will be faced with enormous pressures from reactionary forces nationally and internationally.

PPP Dilemma

The new People's Progressive Party administration is on the horns of a dilemma. It has taken office from a dictatorship that has left the

socialist programme in favour of further opening up Guyana to private investment and market forces. This policy cannot be squared with the party's stated commitment to maintaining the rain forests and improving the lot of the people through government intervention. These contradictions will quickly come to the fore. The PPP will immediately be faced with a stark choice: either become a tool of the foreign investors, giving them favourable terms and minimal restrictions on their ability to exploit cheap Guyanese labour and the country's natural resources; or mobilise the enthusiasm of the workers and poor farmers in a determined effort to remove the remains of colonial domination and utilise the tremendous resources of Guyana to the benefit of its own workers and poor farmers and those in the region as a whole.

Racial Division

But worst of all is the sharp racial division that exists in the country largely due to the politics of the two major political parties, the People's Progressive Party and the People's National Congress.

Guyana has six races including 55% descended from the Indian sub-continent, 40% of African descent, the original Amerindians, plus some Portuguese and Chinese.



economy in a total mess. Every section of life in the country has been ruined or is in a state of rapid decline. Once in control of more than 80% of the country's assets, the former ruling clique resold most of it in recent years, at giveaway prices, to foreign companies and local entrepreneurs.

Today, the Guyana dollar is worth about \$(G) 250 to \$1 (US). Its real value decreases as the world economy plunges deeper into recession. The country's official foreign debt now totals \$2bn US.

The PPP has dropped most of its traditional

The voting pattern at the last election was entirely along racial lines. The PPP got 53% of the votes and the outgoing PNC, 41%. Two other parties, the Working People's Alliance, the party associated with Walter Rodney, got 1.6% of the votes and 1 seat and the United Force, an urban right wing party got 1 seat in the new House of Parliament.

With such a slim majority, the PPP faces another real threat -one of its own making. Instead of joining together with other left-wing parties in a joint platform that could have cut across the racial divide, the PPP sought to gain

all the power for itself. They put up a Civic List composed of right wing and reactionary individuals representing only themselves to show a facade of racial composition and to reassure the US ruling class that it had truly given up its "communist" past.

Some of these characters are now in Parliament on the PPP benches and could easily "cross the floor" and join with the PNC to form a coalition government within the lifetime of this parliament, along with the other two smaller parties. That would, in effect, result in the PNC becoming a "consitutional" dictatorship.

State Power

Guyanese have won a fundamental right - the freedom to freely elect a government of their choice. But that, in and of itself, will not solve the growing economic and social problems the country faces. State power is the key to stability and essential for the implementation of a revolutionary programme to fundamentally transform the entire face of the country.

The example of Chile graphically illustrates that the ruling elite will not permit deep-going changes without a fight. And Guyana is no different.

The PPP and its leader missed the opportunity to build genuine working class and racial unity in the years of opposition. It geared itself for parliamentary struggles relying on its racial majority rather than engaging in class struggles which would have equipped it with the ability to contend for state power many years before. In this process they would have earned the respect and authority of every section of the Guyanese workers and peasants.

Ordinary Guyanese men and women are not openly hostile to each other. They live quite peacefully side by side. Racial conflicts are created directly or indirectly by the two major parties whose members and supporters are from one or other racial grouping.

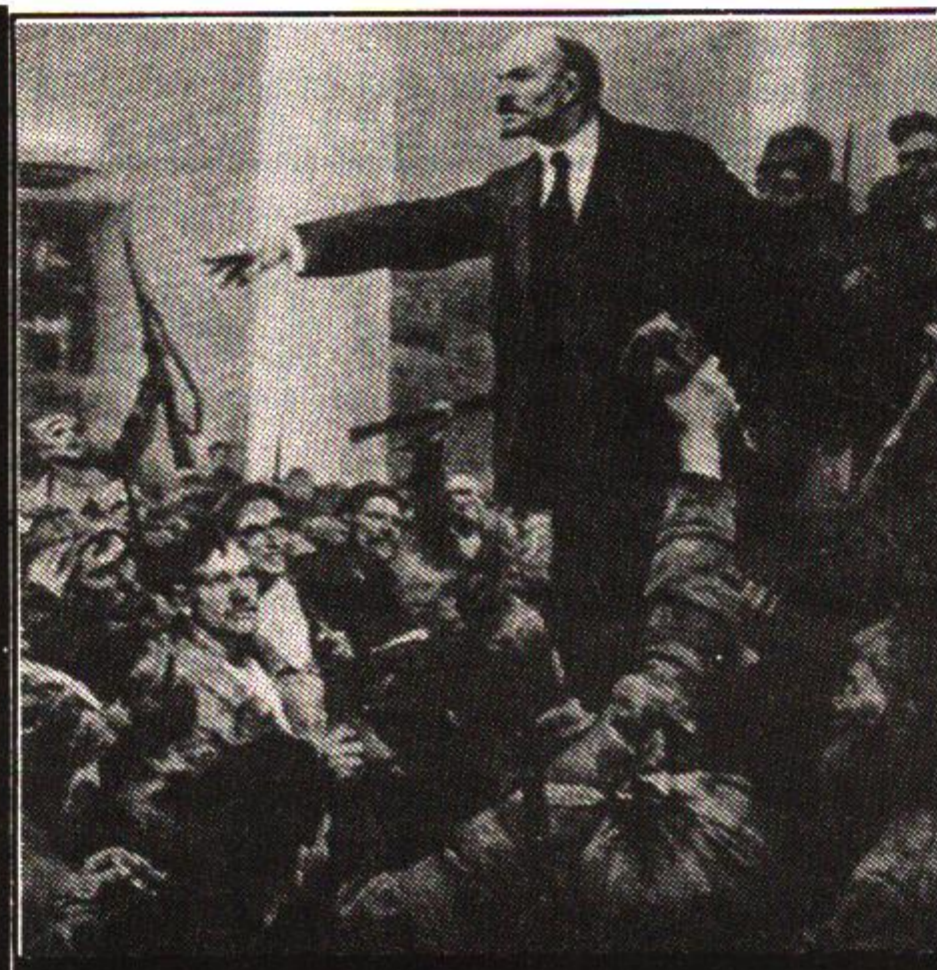
Despite token efforts, neither of these parties have seriously attempted to bridge the racial gap in the last three decades. And it is highly unlikely that they will do so in the foreseeable future.

New Movements

The outcome of the recent elections has set the stage for a rapid realignment of class forces on a more profound basis.

The new era contains many dangers but at the same time it will see the emergence of a fresh breed of class fighters dedicated to restoring and invigorating the noble traditions of the Guyanese working people. Already, new movements have come to the fore and are giving a lead.

The painful battles ahead have only one hope - a victory for the ideas of genuine socialism in Guyana and the whole Caribbean and Latin American region.



Russian Revolution 75th Anniversary

In the first of a two-part series on the history and significance of the Russian Revolution, Alan Woods examines the process of revolution, the events leading up to the February Revolution, the role of the Provisional Government and the part played by Lenin and Trotsky in the revolutionary movement.

By Alan Woods, Editor, *Socialist Appeal*.

THE MEANING OF OCTOBER

“The October revolution laid the foundation of a new culture, taking everybody into consideration, and for that very reason immediately acquiring international significance. Even supposing for a moment that owing to unfavourable circumstances and hostile blows the Soviet regime should be temporarily overthrown, the inexpungable imprint of the October revolution would nevertheless remain upon the whole future development of mankind.”

Trotsky - The History of
the Russian Revolution

75 years ago this month, an event took place which altered the entire course of human history. For the first time -if we exclude the brief but glorious episode of the Paris Commune - the working people took power into their own hands and began the gigantic task of the socialist re-construction of society.

Now, on the eve of this great anniversary, the masses of the former Soviet Union are faced with the spectre of capitalist counter-revolution. Amidst the most appalling scenes of economic and social chaos, all the dark forces which had been swept aside by the revolutionary flood-tide, are creeping back. Private property, speculation, the Orthodox church, racism, nationalism, pogroms, prostitution, unemployment and inequality - like a swarm of grotesque and poisonous insects from under a stone.

And this is hailed as a "new dawn" by the Western media. People capable of identifying such monstrosities with "progress" are capable of stopping at nothing. No lies are too great for them, no distortion too vile. And the avalanche of lies has already begun.

In order to justify the capitalist system, it is necessary to blacken the name of socialism, and especially of scientific socialism, as expressed in the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. Above all, it is necessary to show that revolution is a bad thing, that it represents a horrible deviation from the "norms" of peaceful social evolution, which inevitably ends in disaster.

Not long ago, we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the French revolution. Despite the fact that this was a bourgeois revolution, despite the fact that it occurred two centuries ago, nevertheless, the ruling class in France and elsewhere could not refrain from denigrating the memory of 1789-93. **Even such a distant historical event was an uncomfortable reminder to the rich and powerful of what happens when a given socio-economic system reaches its limits.** They even propose to change the terrible words of the "Marseillaise."

Yet revolutions happen, and not by accident. **A revolution becomes inevitable when a particular form of society enters into conflict with the development of the productive forces, which form the basis of all human progress.**

One of the greatest books of the twentieth century is Leon Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*. This monumental study of the event of 1917 has never been equalled. It is an outstanding example of the use of the method of historical materialism to elucidate the processes at work in society. The events leading up to October are not merely recounted, but explained in a way which has a validity and an application far more extensive than the Russian Revolution itself.

In an effort to discredit the October Revolu-



Lenin and Trotsky - leaders of the first successful workers' revolution

tion, the ruling class, through the agency of its hired hacks in the Universities, has assiduously cultivated the myth that the Bolshevik Revolution was only a "coup d'etat" pulled off by Lenin and a handful of conspirators.

Intervention of Masses

In reality, as Trotsky explains, the essence of a revolution is the direct intervention of the masses in the life of society and politics. In "normal" periods, the majority of people are content to leave the running of society in the hands of the "experts" - the parliamentarians, councillors, lawyers, journalists, trade union officials, university professors, and the rest of them.

Over a period, which may be a protracted period of years or even decades, society may acquire the appearance of a certain "equilibrium." This is particularly true in a prolonged period of capitalist economic upswing, like that which lasted for nearly four decades after the end of World War Two.

In such periods, the ideas of Marxism are not readily accepted or understood, because they appear to fly in the face of "the facts." On the contrary, the illusions of the reformists Labour leaders of a slow, gradual, evolutionary change - "today better than yesterday, and tomorrow better than today" - achieve a widespread audience.

Discontent

However, beneath the apparently calm surface, powerful currents are building up. There is a gradual accumulation of discontent and frustration in the masses, and an increasing malaise among the middle layers of society. This is particularly felt by the intellectuals and

students, who are a sensitive barometer reflecting the changing moods of society.

In a marvelously graphic phrase, Trotsky refers to the "*molecular process of revolution*", which goes on in uninterrupted fashion in the minds of the workers. However, since this process is a gradual one which does not affect the general political physiognomy of society, it goes unnoticed by everyone - except the Marxists.

In just the same way, the ground appears to be solid and firm under our feet ("as steady as a rock," as the saying goes). But geology teaches that rocks are by no means steady, and that the ground is constantly shifting beneath our feet. The continents are on the march, and in a state of perpetual "warfare," one colliding with another. Since geological change is not measured by years or even centuries, but aeons, the continental shifts remain unnoticed except for specialists. But fault-lines build up, subject to unimaginable pressures, which eventually erupt in earthquakes.

Wars and Revolutions

Similar fault-lines exist in the best-ordered societies. The sudden eruption of wars and revolutions obey approximately the same laws as earthquakes, and are just as inevitable. **The moment inevitably arrives when the mass of people decide that "things can't go on like this any longer." The break occurs when the majority move to take their lives and destiny into their own hands. This, and nothing else, is the inner meaning of a revolution.**

For the well-fed academic, a revolution is an aberration, a "freak," a deviation from the norm. Society temporarily goes "mad," until eventually "order" is restored. For such a psy-

chology, the most satisfactory mental image of a revolution is that of a blind herd which has suddenly panicked, or, better still, a conspiracy hatched by demagogues.

In reality, the psychological changes which occur with extreme abruptness in any revolution, are not accidental, but are rooted in the whole previous period.

Reformist Politics

The human mind, in general, is not revolutionary, but conservative. As long as conditions are generally acceptable, people tend to accept the existing state of affairs within society. Consciousness tends to lag far behind the changes which occur in the objective world of the economy and society.

Only in the last resort, when there is no alternative, do the majority opt for a decisive break with the existing order. Long before this, they will try by every means to adapt, to compromise, to seek the imagined "line of least resistance." That is the secret of the appeal of reformist politics, especially in a period of capitalist upswing, but not exclusively.



The ill-fated 1905 march to the Winter Palace by St Petersburg workers

The October Revolution was the product of the entire preceding period. Before finally opting for the Bolsheviks, the Russian workers and peasants had already passed through the experience of two revolutions (1905 and February 1917) and two wars (1904-5 and 1914-17).

Tsarist Russia, which was numbered as one of the principal imperialist states with a powerful army, was nevertheless an economically backward capitalist power. By the law of combined and uneven development, large-scale industry was established in a handful of centres (mainly Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Western region, Urals and Donbass) as a result of Western investment. However, the vast majority of the population were peasants, sunk in conditions of almost medieval backwardness. In many respects, the social composition of Russian tsarism was similar to that of many Third World countries today.

Despite its numerical smallness, the Russian working class set its stamp on events very early on. In the stormy strike wave of the 1890's, it announced its existence to the world. From that moment, the "labour question" was to occupy a central position in Russian politics.

The stormy growth of industry in the early years of this century led to a rapid growth of the working class. Unlike Britain, where capitalism experienced a slow, gradual, organic growth for 200 years, the development of capitalism in Russia was telescoped into a couple of decades.

As a result, Russian industry did not have to pass through the phase of handicrafts, small cottage industry, through manufacture to large-scale enterprises. Huge factories were established with the most modern techniques imported from Britain, Germany and the USA. Along with the most modern technology imported from the West, came the most modern and advanced ideas of socialism.

From the 1890's onwards, Marxism succeeded in displacing the old terrorist and utopian socialist trend of Narodism as the dominant tendency in the workers' movement.

Narodniks

The more sophisticated critics of Bolshevism try to draw a distinction between

civilised "Western" Marxism, and crude, barbarous Leninism, a product, allegedly, of Russian backwardness.

As a matter of fact, there is little or nothing of a specifically Russian character about the ideas of Lenin, who spent all his life tirelessly combating the Narodniks for their "Russian road to

socialism."

Both Lenin and Trotsky dedicated their lives to the defence of socialist internationalism. Their ideas can no more be considered "Russian" than Marx's ideas be portrayed as "German." Lenin and Trotsky developed and expanded Marxism, but defended the fundamental ideas and principles worked out by Marx and Engels from 1848 on.

The first great test for the Russian Marxists came in 1905.

The deep social crisis was brought to a head by the Russo-Japanese war, which ended in a military disaster for tsarism. On the ninth of January 1905, the working people of St. Petersburg assembled, with their families, for a peaceful demonstration on the square of the Winter palace. Their aim was to present a petition to the tsar - the "little father."

The bulk of these workers, most of whom had only recently come from the villages, were not only religious, but monarchists. The Marxists (or Social Democrats, as they were then called) had very small forces, and were split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. When they tried to distribute leaflets denouncing the monarchy, in several places the workers tore up the leaflets and even beat them up.

Armed Insurrection

Yet within nine months the same workers had organised a revolutionary general strike and a soviet, and by the end of the year, the workers of Moscow had risen in armed insurrection.

In all the urban centres the Social Democrats became transformed into the decisive force. The 1905 revolution was defeated in the main because the movement in the countryside only got underway after the workers in the towns had suffered a defeat.

For a number of years (1907-11), Russia was plunged into the dark night of reaction. Yet by 1911-12, there was a new beginning, characterised by a massive strike wave (partly reflecting an upturn in the economy), which, beginning with economic demands, rapidly took on a political character.

During this period the Bolsheviks gained a decisive majority in the organised working class. They broke with the opportunist Menshevik wing in 1912 and set up the Bolshevik Party.

It should be remembered, however, that the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had been tendencies in the existing traditional mass party of the workers - the RSDLP (Russian Social Democratic Labour Party), and even after 1912, the Bolsheviks still called themselves the RSDLP (B).

On the eve of the First World War, Russia stood once more on the brink of revolution. It is possible that the Bolsheviks could have come to power then, but the situation was cut across by the outbreak of hostilities in August

1914. During the war, the Bolshevik party was decimated by arrests and exile. The youth, which was the party's main avenue of recruitment, was conscripted into the army, where the worker element was scattered in a sea of backward peasant soldiers.

In exile, Lenin was in contact with maybe a couple of dozen collaborators. In 1915, at the Conference of socialist internationalists in Zimmerwald, Lenin joked that you could put all the internationalists in the world into two stage-coaches.

At a meeting of Swiss young socialists in January 1917, Lenin said that he probably would not live to see the socialist revolution. Within a few weeks, the tsar had been overthrown, and by the end of the year, Lenin was at the head of the first workers' government in the world.

How to explain such a dramatic turn of events? Vulgar historians explain revolution as the product of extreme misery. That is one-sided and false. If that were true, as Trotsky explains, the masses in a country like India would always be in revolt. The victory of reaction in the period of 1907-11 was facilitated by the economic crisis which, coming after a political defeat, temporarily stunned and disoriented the workers. As Trotsky predicted, it took an economic revival (1911-12) to allow the movement to recover.

Booms and Slumps

In reality, neither booms nor slumps in and of themselves cause revolutions. But it is the rapid successions of boom and slump, the interruption of the "normal" pattern of existence, which provokes general uncertainty and instability, and causes people to question the existing state of things. Even more profound are the shocks caused by wars, which turn the world upside down, uproot millions and compel men and women to shed their illusions and finally stand face to face with reality.

The February revolution was a concrete expression of the fact that the old regime had reached an impasse. As in 1904-5, the sledgehammer of military defeat served to expose the inner rottenness of tsarism.

But to expose something is not to cause it. The crisis on international finance markets and the run on the pound recently exposed the chronic weakness of the British economy. But the decay of British capitalism has taken place gradually over a period of decades, disguised by the general upswing of the world economy. This was explained by the Marxists decades ago. The difference now is that, under the relentless pressure of world capitalist crisis, the mass of the British people are beginning to wake up to the fact.

Beginning even during the war, the strike movement in Petrograd assumed sweeping proportions at the start of 1917. The mood of

discontent emanating from the industrial centres found an echo in the ranks of the army, suffering from defeat and exhaustion. The crisis of the regime anticipated the movement of the masses.

Corruption and Scandal

Every revolution begins, not at the bottom, but at the top. Its first manifestation is a series of crises and splits in the ruling class, which feels itself to be in a blind alley, and unable to continue to rule in the old way.

Trotsky expresses it in the following sense: *"A revolution breaks out when all the antagonisms of a society have reached their highest tension. But this makes the situation unbearable even for the classes of the old society - that is, those who are doomed to break up."*

The smell of corruption and scandal always hangs around a regime which has outlived itself. The present-day epidemic of political and financial scandals in Britain, Japan, the USA, Italy, are no more an accident than the Rasputin regime at the court of "Nicholas the Bloody," or the "Pompadour factor" of the Ancient Regime in France.

Despite all its armed might, its police, its Cossacks, its secret police, tsarism fell at the first serious challenge, like a rotten apple in a puff of wind. The army collapsed like a pack of cards, once the workers confronted it with a manifest determination to change society.

The working-class as a whole learns from experience - especially the experience of great

events. The experience of 1905, despite the defeat, had left an indelible impression which immediately re-emerged in February with the creation of the Soviets - elected committees of workers and soldiers - which were at the same time organs of struggle and, potentially, organs of a new power.

As has happened many times in history, in the February Revolution, the workers had the power in their hands, but did not recognise the fact. With correct leadership, the working class could have immediately carried out the socialist revolution. But under the leadership of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, the February revolution ended in the abortion of "dual power."

Effect of War

Revolution means the explosive entry onto the political stage of millions of men and women with no previous experience of politics, in search of a solution to their most pressing problems.

Inevitably, in the first instance, the masses seek the line of least resistance, the easiest solutions, the well-known political figures, the familiar political parties.

In the case of Russia, the war itself had a fundamental effect on the balance of class forces. Here, the "masses" represented, first and foremost, the peasantry, which had been the backbone of the tsarist army. Up to 1914, the Bolsheviks had the leadership of four-fifths of the organised working class. But that situation was altered by the war.

In the February revolution, the entire balance



Women marchers on Nevsky Prospekt in Petrograd make an appeal to soldiers to join the revolution

of class forces was changed by the explosive emergence on the scene of the mass of politically untutored workers, who tended to back the Mensheviks. The decisive element in the equation was the army, and here the peasants had a crushing preponderance. The peasant soldiers, recently awakened to political life, looked, not to the Bolsheviks, but to the "moderate" Socialist leaders the Mensheviks and especially the Social Revolutionaries.

The workers, after the experience of 1905,



Lenin

were fearful of a rupture with the peasants in uniform, and, for the time being, were prepared to wait. The combined weight of the peasantry and the politically inexperienced mass of workers swung behind the Mensheviks and the SRs, reducing the Bolsheviks to a small minority in the first stages of the revolution.

Mensheviks

The masses placed their trust in the reformist labour leaders. And the latter, as always, placed their trust in the "liberal" wing of the bourgeoisie, which in turn, was desperately striving to defend the monarchy and put an end to the revolution. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the reactionary generals were preparing a counter-coup.

Not for the first or last time, the workers had fought and conquered, only to be cheated of the fruits of victory by their leadership. The SR and Menshevik leaders were obsessed by a single idea: to hand back the power as quickly as possible to the bankers and capitalists.

The Provisional Government which emerged from the February Revolution was a government of landlords and capitalists calling themselves "democrats." The right-wing Labour ("Trudovik") leader Kerensky entered the government as Minister of Justice. The war minister was the big Moscow industrialist, Guchkov. The "liberal" Milyukov became Foreign Minister.

The worker activists were deeply distrustful of the government. But among the mass of society there was a wave of euphoria. The

masses had illusions in their leaders, and regarded Kerensky as their spokesman in the government.

The prevailing atmosphere of revolutionary democratic intoxication even affected some of the Bolshevik leaders in Petrograd. Lenin was still in exile in Switzerland. The main leaders in Petrograd were Kamenev and Stalin, who succumbed to the pressure for "unity." Instinctively, the Petrograd Bolsheviks came out against the Provisional Government, which they correctly characterised as a counter-revolutionary government. However, Kamenev and Stalin steered the party into a close alliance with the SRs and Mensheviks, and even proposed re-unification with the latter.

From the exile in Switzerland, Lenin watched the situation with alarm. His first telegrams to Petrograd were utterly intransigent in tone and content: *"Our tactic: absolute lack of confidence; no support to the new government; suspect Kerensky especially; arming of the proletariat the sole guarantee; immediate elections to the Petrograd town council; no rapprochement with other parties."*

Lenin's Return

After Lenin's return in April, the Bolshevik Party entered into a crisis. This is a law in a revolutionary situation, when the pressure of alien class forces bears heavily upon the party and its leadership: the pressure for "left unity," the fear of isolation, and the rest.

The tension between Lenin and the majority of the leaders was so great that, immediately after his return, Lenin was compelled to publish his *April Theses* in *Pravda* over his own

signature.

At the April Conference, where fierce struggle occurred, Lenin warned that, rather than accept the position of Kamenev and Stalin, he would prefer to be alone *"like Karl Liebknecht, one against 110"* (referring to Liebknecht's courageous anti-war stand in the parliamentary faction of the German SPD).

Lenin explained that the revolution had not achieved its central objectives: that it was necessary to overthrow the provisional government; that the workers must take power, allied with the mass of poor peasants. Only by these means could the war be ended, the land be given to the peasants and the conditions established for a transition to a socialist regime.

In essence, these ideas were identical to the perspectives brilliantly worked out by Trotsky in 1904-5, and known to history as the "permanent revolution."

Lenin's ideas won the day. However, the Bolsheviks remained a minority in the Soviets, and the Soviet leaders - the SRs and Mensheviks - were backing the Provisional Government.

And here we see the flexible tactics of Lenin, far removed from ultra-left adventurism. **Under the slogan: "Patiently Explain," he urged the Bolsheviks to face to the Soviet workers to put demands on the reformist leaders, to demand action instead of words, to publish the secret treaties, to end the war, to break with the bourgeoisie and take power into their own hands. If they would do these things, Lenin repeated many times, then the struggle for power would be reduced to the peaceful struggle for a majority in the Soviets.**



Aksenov's depiction of Lenin's speech delivered on his return from exile at the Finland Station in Petrograd

Taking Power

However, the Mensheviks and SR leaders had no intention of breaking with the bourgeois Provisional Government. In reality, they were terrified of taking power, and were more afraid of the workers and peasants than the counter-revolutionary general staff.

The truth was that the Provisional Government was an empty shell. There were only two real powers in the land, and one or the other had to be overthrown.

On the one hand, the Soviets of workers and peasants' deputies; on the other, the remnants of the old state apparatus, grouped around the monarchy and the general staff, which, under the protective shadow of the Provisional Government, was preparing for a showdown with the Soviets.

Explosive Growth

One of the main features of a revolutionary situation is the suddenness with which the mood of the masses can change. The workers learn quickly on the basis of events.

Thus a revolutionary tendency can experience explosive growth, passing from a tiny minority to a decisive force, on one condition; that it combines flexible tactics with implacable firmness on all political questions.

At the beginning, Lenin was derided by his opponents as a hopeless "sectarian," who was doomed to impotence by keeping out of the "left unity." However, the tide soon began to flow strongly in the direction of Bolshevism.

In a revolution, Trotsky wrote, "*the more extreme always supersedes the less.*" The workers come to understand the correctness of the ideas of the revolutionary tendency from their own experience, especially the experience of great events.

These are absolutely necessary in order that the workers convince themselves of the need for a radical transformation of society. The different stages in the growth of consciousness of the class are reflected by the rise and fall of successive political parties, trends, programmes and individuals.

The failure of the bourgeois Provisional Government to solve a single one of the basic problems of society provoked a sharp reaction in the main working class centres, especially Petrograd, where the militant proletariat was combined with the revolutionary sailors (who, unlike the infantry, were usually drawn from the factory proletariat, especially the skilled workers).

The constant increase in prices, the cut in the bread ration, caused a ferment of discontent. Above all the continuation of the war raised the temperature to boiling point.

The workers reacted by a series of mass demonstrations starting in April, which indi-



Government troops open fire on demonstrators in April

cated an ever-increasing shift to the left in the mood of the workers. In a parallel move, the forces of reaction attempted to mobilise on the streets, leading to a series of clashes.

Demonstration

The Bolsheviks called a demonstration in April, to put pressure on the reformist leaders, and test the mood of the capital.

Resolutions from the factories and workers' districts flooded in to the Soviet Executive, demanding a break with the bourgeoisie. Workers came to the local committees asking how to transfer their names from the Mensheviks to the Bolsheviks.

By the beginning of May, the Bolsheviks already had at least one third of the workers in Petrograd.

"Every mass action," wrote Trotsky, "*regardless of its immediate aim, is a warning addressed to the leadership. This warning is at first mild in character, but becomes more and more resolute. By July it has become a threat. In October we have the final act.*"

NEXT ISSUE:

Alan Woods analyses the events from April to the storming of the Winter Palace and draws out the lessons for the workers' movement today.

LEON TROTSKY - HISTORY OF THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

Available from Well Red Books

priced £19.95

Plus many other titles covering Russian and European history and politics. Write now for details:

PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU.

For a 24-Hour General Strike: GENERAL ELECTION NOW!

The crisis surrounding the Tory government's attempt to carry through a massive pit closure programme, and the enormous upsurge of support for the miners, has posed the questions again: **HOW CAN THE TORIES BE DEFEATED? HOW CAN THEY BE REMOVED FROM OFFICE?**

To even pose such questions after only six months since the general election shows the political earthquake that has shaken British society. The continuing recession - the longest since the Great Depression - has meant record bankruptcies, rising unemployment, record housing repossessions, and chronic insecurity. The Tory promises of economic recovery have shown to be false as Major desperately stumbles from one expedient to another.

Not only the working class support the miners solidly in their fight, but also big sections of the middle class. Tory MPs have been inundated with sack fulls of letters attacking the government. It was this "uprising" that forced the Tories to make a partial tactical retreat - to gain time, and hopefully allow the movement to subside.

Demonstrations

The NUM demonstration (150,000 strong) on Wednesday 21st October, and the TUC demonstration (300,000 strong) on Sunday 25th October, both illustrated the colossal organised strength of the labour movement. The week-day NUM lobby of Parliament was a testimony to the tens of thousands of workers who took time off work to back the miners.

The TUC demonstration was the biggest since the marches against Heath's Industrial Relations Act of the early 1970's.

The TUC was under enormous pressure to do something. The switch-boards of many unions including those of Congress House, were jammed with calls demanding action and pledging support to the miners. The TUC simply placed a few adverts in the newspapers and got a massive turnout. It simply raised its little finger and a movement bigger than the poll tax demonstration, and far more working class in composition, was mobilised.

Banners from every trade union, shop stewards committee and labour organisation, including many Labour Parties, showed the breadth of the movement. **IT SHOWED CLEARLY THE POTENTIAL POWER**



The TUC Demonstration

OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT, DESPITE THE LACK OF EFFORT BY THE TUC.

The Tory government, despite all the recent bluff, is clearly on the ropes. If the Labour and trade union leaders were prepared to mobilise the full strength of organised labour, Major's government could easily be forced from office.

The idea of an all-out general strike has been raised, mainly by the ultra-left groups that infest the fringes of the movement. All these sects always raise the demand of a general strike at the drop of a hat, without understanding the implications or consequences of such a demand. For them, caught up in their infantile radicalism, it sounds truly "revolutionary". They have no idea how to take the movement forward at each stage. They are phantom "generals" busy directing phantom "armies". Fortunately they will never lead a real workers movement.

Marxist Demands

Marxists believe it is wrong and dangerous to play about with slogans in a light-minded fashion. Every demand should correspond with the concrete situation and attempt to express a real way forward for the struggle. The sects, in the words of Trotsky, always mix up the first month of pregnancy with the ninth, with disastrous consequences.

The last time a general strike was called by the TUC was in 1926. This was in response to the attacks of the Baldwin government on the miners.

Unfortunately the TUC leadership blundered

into the strike without any preparations or intentions of carrying through the strike to an end. As soon as the strike was declared on the 3rd May, the TUC right-wing unfortunately followed by the lefts on the General Council immediately sought ways of ending it. The leadership were terrified of what they had unleashed. Millions of workers responded to the call of the TUC. Council of Actions were formed in every area, based on the trades councils and local Labour Party executive committees.

1926 General Strike

As the general strike was growing, the TUC called it off after nine days. This betrayal was a massive defeat and opened up an employers offensive against the working class. The miners themselves were starved back to work after 9 months, being forced to accept wage cuts and poorer conditions.

Instead of toying with the slogan of a general strike, it would be more profitable to study the history of the British labour movement. The General Strike in 1926, as in all general strikes, poses the question of who controls the power in society. Everything is brought to a standstill. Nothing moves without the consent of the working class. The government and state are paralysed. The power of the ruling class is directly challenged. Who is to win? And who is to be defeated? The general strike boils down to this.

During the 1926 General Strike, Trotsky explained the situation as follows: **"A general strike is the sharpest form of the class strug-**

gle. It is only one step from the general strike to armed insurrection. This is precisely why the general strike, more than any other form of class struggle, requires clear, distinct, resolute and therefore revolutionary leadership."

Trotsky goes on, "In the current strike of the British proletariat there is not a ghost of such a leadership, and it is not to be expected that it can be conjured up out of the ground. The General Council of the TUC set out with the ridiculous statement that the present General Strike did not represent a political struggle and did not in any event constitute an assault upon the state power of the bankers, industrialists and landowners, or upon the sanctity of British parliamentarism. This most loyal and submissive declaration of war does not, however, appear the least bit convincing to the government, which feels the real instruments of rule slipping out of its hands under the effect of the strike. State power is not an "idea" but a material apparatus. When the apparatus of government and suppression is paralysed the state power itself is thereby paralysed. In modern society no-one can hold power without controlling the railways, shipping, posts, telegraphs, power stations, coal and so on." (6th May, 1926).

TUC Today

The TUC ran a mile when it was faced with the question of power. So what of today's TUC led by Norman Willis? Would it really fair any better? The fact that it invited representatives of the CBI to speak on its platforms indicates it would not. In a *Times* article dealing with the government's Civil Contingencies Unit and protecting essential supplies in the event of a strike, a Whitehall source stated, "If you face most of the present trade union leaders with faeces in the street - in other words with revolution - they would wet themselves." (1.2.83)

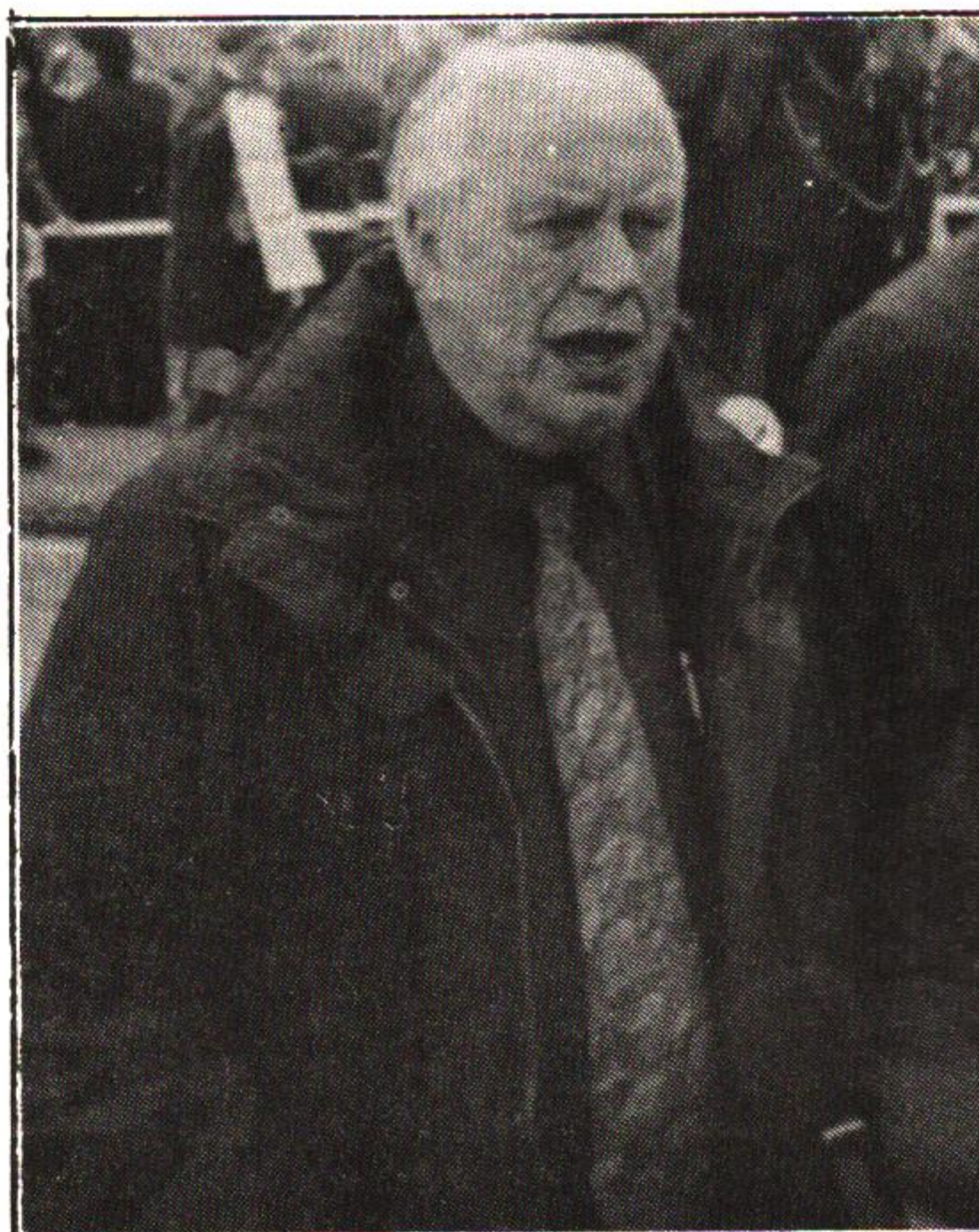
A general strike under present conditions, under the present leadership, would be a mighty defeat for the working class. It would end as in 1926, despite all the romantic pipe-dreams of the sects.

This fact however does not mean that if the TUC was forced to call a general strike that workers should just stand aside and accept defeat. On the contrary, the task would be to extend and deepen the strike and drawing on the lesson of 1926, patiently explain the measures needed for a successful strike.

However, today, the best way to take the movement forward in support of the miners is to build upon Scargill's call for a national day of action. This call must be taken up in every trade union branch, shop stewards committee, Labour Party branch and GMC. This should be linked to a 24 hour general strike with a national campaign of rallies, demonstrations, and

meetings in every town and city. The action of 8 million trade unions and their families would draw behind them the unorganised layers in a mighty display of strength.

Already there has emerged a generalised feeling amongst wide layers that isolated action against the Tories is futile. Instead of different sections of workers taking on the government, there should be united action to link up all the various disputes. In London in particular there is a golden opportunity to link up the different disputes and struggles, from hospital workers, local authority workers to postal workers and transport workers. Why waste all this energy



TUC leader Norman Willis - What chances a successful general strike under the current TUC leadership?

in separate disputes when it could be brought together with dramatic results. "United we stand, divided we fall" is the old trade union motto. This has never been more relevant than today.

Given the impact of the 30,000 mining redundancies in the power stations and transport, the idea of a new tripple alliance of transport workers, power workers and miners should be revived as part of this struggle.

Union Leaders

Is the 24 hour general strike realistic? Absolutely. Far from being pie in the sky, the TUC in 1972 was forced to call for such action. Of course the trade union leaders never dreamed of such an outcome. In fact a few months earlier the idea of a general strike was dismissed by TUC general secretary Vic Feather saying, "Such things happen in Italy and France, but not in Britain".

However, with the arrest of five dockers by the Tory government, the TUC was forced to

call a 24 hour strike. This belated act resulted from the growing pressure from below and the developing unofficial action that was taking place.

The present massive support for the miners must be channelled into direct pressure on the TUC General Council to name the day for a 24 hour general strike.

Protest Strike

A 24 hour protest strike would shake Britain to its foundations: not a wheel would turn, not a thing would move. The working class would feel the colossal power in their hands. It would build up tremendous confidence throughout the class. It would provoke a government crisis. It could be the launching pad to drive the Tories out.

The 24 hour strike should have as its main aim: **AN IMMEDIATE GENERAL ELECTION, LINKED WITH A CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOUR GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO SOCIALIST POLICIES.**

It immediately raises the political question of what a Labour government should do. The attempts in the past to patch up capitalism (1945-51, 1964-70, 1974-79) all ended in defeat for the movement and the reelection of the Tories. **THIS MUST NEVER BE ALLOWED TO HAPPEN AGAIN.**

It is vital that the election of a Labour government be linked to a campaign within the labour movement for socialist policies to answer the crisis. Such a programme must be based upon Clause 4 of Labour's constitution: **to take over the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies under democratic workers control and management.**

The Labour Party is the mass party of the British working class. It is time ordinary trade unionists joined and reclaimed their party for genuine socialism. There is no point in remaining outside on the side-lines.

Only the actions of the workers organised in their trade unions, shop stewards committees, and Labour parties, can force the Tories out of office, and then commit a Labour Government to act in our interests.

By
Rob Sewell

Socialist Appeal received the following poem, from Robin Parker, a Labour Party member in Rochdale:

THE BALLAD OF ROY LYNK

Every morning at the mine you could see him arrive,
Stood 5'6", weighed 245,
Kinda arrogant looking from his head to his toes,
With a big fat arse and a big brown nose,
Roy Lynk

In '84 when Thatcher struck,
He said, "come on lads, we can make a fast buck,
If Nottingham's open and Yorkshire's closed,"
Said the little fat man with the big brown nose,
Roy Lynk

When the miners were defeated in '85,
It was the UDM helped Thatcher survive,
So Maggie said, "Roy, you've been good to me,
Here's a pat on the back and the OBE,"
For Roy Lynk

Now the worm has turned, as Tory worms do,
And they shafted the bastard in '92,
So he went on a protest to save his pride,
But a thousand feet down there's nowhere to hide,
For Roy Lynk

They should seal and close that valuable pit,
And place a marble stone in front of it,
These few words written on that slab,
"At the bottom of this mine lies a big fat scab,
Roy Lynk"



YOUR LETTERS.....

GET UP, GET OUT, GET ORGANISED!

Dear Comrades,

A *Socialist Appeal* supporter in Whitley Bay had an eventful day recently. After getting up she went down to get the post. Opening a letter from the Labour Party, some petition forms fell out. She picked the forms up and decided to go out and collect some signatures in support of the miners. Whitley Lodge shopping centre is right in the middle of the Tory end of Tynemouth Constituency - light years away from Meadow Well estate in North Shields. The local Tory MP, Neville Trotter (known locally as Evil Rotter) relies on areas like this for his votes.

First stop the post office. A bit apprehensively she approaches two women, they sign. The two men behind the counter sign. The butcher signs and takes a copy of *Socialist Appeal*. A few minutes later she is faced with a queue of shoppers who support the miners and want to sign the petition. Two other people take copies of *Socialist Appeal* and when the petitions are full she returns home. The crisis in the coal industry, on top of the ERM fiasco, have brought the contradictions of British capitalism to the surface. The middle class Tory voters around here are uncertain and worried about the economy. Issues like the pit closure programme have shaken their faith in the Tories. The labour movement must step up the fight against this government. The fact that Scargill, the former hate figure of the British press was shown carrying flowers, surrounded by smiling police officers on the front page of the *Daily Mirror* is some indication of the pressures building up within society. It is also a blow to the Labour Party's right wing leadership's argument that the party had to move to the right to win over the middle class voters. What is required now is a clear strategy to win the mines battle.

Terry McPartlan, North Tyneside Nalgo, personal capacity.

WE HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN

The miners have not forgotten what happened to them in the 1984/85 strike. They have not forgotten how the Tories used the media owners to manipulate the facts during the course of their year long struggle. It was a joy to see the miners from Cannock Chase, who marched on the special Euro-Summit in Birmingham, quizzing journalists from around the world about who they worked for and whether they were union members before agreeing to do interviews.

It was even more of a joy to hear how many rank and file journalists from around the world finished their interviews and then told the miners they were right behind them.

The struggle to keep the pits open and save jobs has attracted international support. The leaders of the TUC and Labour Party should not waste the opportunity. They must launch a campaign of meetings, rallies and demonstrations the length and breadth of the country and, as a first step, build for a 24-hour general strike.

Jeremy Dear, NUJ NEC member.

FOR OR AGAINST A REFERENDUM?

Dear Comrades,

The continuing currency crisis and Britain's withdrawal from the ERM has provoked intensive debate about the Maastricht agreement.

The deep scepticism and suspicion of the Tories' motives in pressing ahead with Maastricht was shown in a recent opinion poll where 47% were against the treaty, 23% in favour and 30% didn't know. There is, however, confusion among workers about the real nature of the Maastricht agreement, particularly as the Labour leaders have been supporting the Tories and Liberal Democrats, or at least their views on the Treaty. An article in *Socialist Appeal* explaining the implications of Maastricht would be very useful in view of the fact that, if ever implemented, (which seems unlikely at the moment) it would lead to further attacks on the living standards of workers throughout Europe.

Also there are demands from some sections of the movement, notably some Labour "lefts", for a referendum. Unfortunately, while echoing a mood within society, they base themselves on a narrow nationalist position, with arguments about the "sovereignty" of parliament, similar to that put forward by Thatcher and Tebbit.

What should the attitude of Marxists be towards a referendum? Should this demand be supported and the campaign used to put forward arguments against a bosses treaty and for a Socialist United States of Europe? A discussion in the pages of *Socialist Appeal* would be welcome.

Alan Crear, Oldham.

BRAZILIAN TRADE UNIONIST SPEAKS TO SOCIALIST APPEAL

MASS MOVEMENT CAN OFFER WAY OUT OF POVERTY TRAP

With the background of a £63 billion dollar foreign debt, with half the country suffering from malnutrition, with 350,000 children dying from preventable diseases each year, a growing crisis of unemployment and the impeachment of pro-market President Collor on corruption charges, Brazilian trade unionist, Paulo Demeter spoke to Jeremy Dear about the problems facing workers and the prospects for the future of Brazil.

For a long time in the West, Brazil has been held up as a model of development. I asked Paulo about the real economic situation for workers there.

"It is important for people to understand that Brazil is not a poor country. It is rich in natural resources - especially land and minerals, but it is one of the most unequal societies. Only Sierra Leone and Honduras are worse in terms of inequality than Brazil. The richest 1% controls 20% of the total income. The richest 10% controls 50% of the income. The poorest 50% receive only about 18% of the income.

Brazil is not like Somalia. It is the ninth or tenth richest country in the world. During the years 1945 to 1980 there were high rates of economic growth but these were not transformed into development, by which I mean better health, higher living standards for all and so on.

The Brazilian economy is very dependent on external markets and finance. It was during the period of the military dictatorship that the pillars of this form of development and dependency became entrenched. The result was growing poverty, growing inequality, a falling quality of life and an increased squandering of resources. The majority of society became marginalised. Diseases like typhoid, cholera and diarrhoea appeared because people could not afford to have basic sanitation. These diseases came not because there is no penicillin or medicine but because of poverty.

The economic disaster led to external debt. The external debt means we were net exporters of capital to the City of London and Wall

Street! We paid them (Western countries) much more than we received in aid or investment. It was a free market model which means that in effect the poor countries are supporting the rich and the speculators.

Paulo and I talked about the environment and the role of the trade union movement in taking up environmental issues. I asked him about reports of widespread environmental damage in Brazil.

"The pattern of development which is being imposed from outside is very environmentally damaging - but you cannot divorce environmental questions from poverty. Landless workers are forced to use the resources of the rainforests.

But the greatest environmental damage has been caused by the big companies. Take for example the CARAJAS PROJECT for extracting iron ore. It is financed abroad and its production goes abroad. At the same time



Brazilian workers march for land reform

an area is cleared to build hydro-electric power stations - for the business not for power for the people.

We can't have the kind of development which went on in Europe. Now, a small number of nations, about 15% of the world's population consume 80% of the raw materials and energy.

Our societies need to discuss an alternative model. We have begun this discussion at a grassroots level. But it is not fashionable to talk about the environment in trade unions. The environment is not only about giving refuge to a whale but it is about people and poverty.

We have to discuss northern countries' consumption and private transport and fight for

a global reduction in the working week so all can play a bigger part in society.

We discussed the growth of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) or Workers Party and the prospects for change in Brazil. The PT came within 5% of winning the Presidential election and holds power on 36 councils. I asked about the key tasks facing the PT at present.

The PT is now 11 years old. It was developed from those in exile, those who had become disillusioned with the Moscow or Albanian controlled Communist Parties, progressive Christians, the youth, from those who during the military dictatorship did not join political parties because they were afraid and, importantly, from the new trade unions who previously had not been linked to any political party, and were not part of the "yellow" (company) unions. It brings together experienced cadres and young people.

They have come together to form a mass party, created with the genuine participation of urban and rural workers. It is not a rigid

orthodox Marxist party, it contains many points of view. Because of the sacrifices of earlier years, we have "free elections." However, we must understand that you cannot divorce democracy from economics which means we are not really a democracy because people are not free economically.

In 1989 Brazil had its presidential election. In the first

round the PT came second. In the run-off there was a very large increase in the number of votes we received. We gave a belief in change and the idea that it is possible for workers to change society. The PT must seek to build a really democratic society where the majority take the destiny of the country into their own hands. But in Brazil this can be a long process because people who are starving worry more about how to get the next meal. Economic problems make political education hard because they give a feeling of helplessness.

We can't impose solutions. People must come to discover their own solutions. But when they come to understand why they are starving, who or what are the causes then they will

find solutions and fight for the transformation of society into a socialist one. The rich will never give away their privileges. It is up to the exploited to build the tools necessary to achieve a more equal share.

Collor's government and its IMF-backed programme led to a worse economic crisis in Brazil. The workers had made a lot of sacrifice for nothing. As a result of popular pressure, and a middle class rebellion, he was taken from office (Collor was impeached earlier this year). It was the first time a civilian president had been taken out by a civilian movement in Latin America. It does not mean the end of capitalist government but it is an important point in the minds of people that they can get rid of the president.

I asked Paulo about the lessons of the elected Chilean Socialist government under Allende which had been bloodily overthrown in the '70s. I asked him whether he feared the same could happen in Brazil.

It is a risk. But if we have the full support of the workers and people they will find it very difficult. We are not like Grenada or other small countries. But the support is necessary. Chile has valuable lessons. The rich will not give up their privileges.

We discussed the role multinational companies played in Brazil and the myth that they are "helping" developing countries. I asked what the experience had been in Brazil and about the countries colossal foreign debt.

Foreign investment is one of the ways which jobs are created but it all forms part of the capitalist model. If you don't have a job at all you will make weapons or whatever and create jobs which people will do because they are interested in eating.

The multinationals have to be constrained. They have control. They dictate the prices. Only five companies control the price of cocoa because they control the processing, production and so on. It is a monopoly.

The CUT (trade union federation) have an opinion that talks of non-payment of the debt. In the UK, the trade unions must look to why the EEC and the banks were so keen to make loans to Brazil and other countries. We must ask what was the destiny of this money.

For example, the Nuclear Project. The money never reached Brazil. Instead it went to Germany to buy unsafe equipment.

The multinationals buy cheap and sell overpriced. By creative accounting they steal money from us. They set unfair terms of trade. In the early 1980s one ton of cocoa cost £2000, now it costs £400-500. The 1970s was the time when most debt came because of cheap money and petrodollars. When we had to repay, interest rates had gone up to 20%. Even John Major wouldn't borrow at that price.

We must also look to the historical background. Where did the gold and silver which financed the industrial revolution come from? If we have to pay back this debt they must pay back for the crimes of the past. Now they want us to pay a licence fee for medicines but they don't pay a licence fee for potatoes, tomatoes, corn and so on, which came from Latin America.

The multinationals come to get round the

environment laws in Europe. Because of laws it is more expensive in Europe. We are used as a dump.

I ended my discussion with Paulo by asking him if he was confident for the future.

I am confident the change will come. I can't say when. You can't have a stable world with a system where four-fifths are starving and only one-fifth are in "comfortable" conditions. If things don't change they will have to build a "Berlin Wall" round the EEC to stop people getting in to search for food.

Sometimes I feel that I am a bit of a pessimist but more and more people are now joining this fight so I am confident that the change will come about.

500 YEARS OF RESISTANCE

WORKERS IN A SINGLE STRUGGLE

South London 500 Years of Resistance Group held its second public event on October 17th - which consisted of a photo exhibition, videos and a discussion on current events in Peru and Brazil.

Following the showing of *Workers in a Single Struggle*, a film made by the workers' committee of Mercedes Benz in Sao Bernado, **Bene Whitehouse**, a member of the **Brazil Network**, gave a report on the building of trade union links internationally. Meetings of Brazilian and British workers (at shop steward level) in GM Vauxhall, Ford, Michelin and Cadburys, had been arranged through Brazil Network and a trade union group called, Transnational Information Exchange. A Chico Mendes Fund has been set up to build solidarity links with Brazilian trade unions. In particular they are assisting the Rio Maria Agricultural Workers Union, The National Rubber Tappers Council - Para Region, and the Cocoa and Confectionary Workers Union - Vila Velha.

Claudio Chapana spoke on behalf of the **Peru Solidarity Association**. The history of Peru was one of colonialism and domination. Independence was gained in 1821, but the indigenous peoples had not benefited. The mass of the people had been marginalised from the nation's wealth. The land question had not been solved; there has been a struggle between landowners and workers; even after the land reforms of the previous military government, a struggle developed between the large co-operatives and the smaller ones. The small urban guerilla groups (MIR, Hugo Blanco) had failed to take power and this led to greater repression. The continent has oscillated between civil and military governments due to the economic crisis which grips the region.

The Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) of Peru, has developed as part of this historical crisis. They are supported by a section of impoverished rural youth, who are trying to better their conditions. There has been no real democracy on the land. However, the Sendero Luminoso base themselves on the bankrupt tactic of guerillaism and impose their own leadership. They attack not only the state forces, but also small community and workers' organisations. In the civil war 20,000 have died and 2-3,000 have disappeared.

Kevin Fernandes spoke as the co-ordinator of the South London group. The problems of Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean, and the "colonial" world generally, were no cause for celebrations, he said.

"Even in the US, the world's richest nation, American blacks face poverty and discrimination. We saw once more, in May in Los Angeles, US blacks and Latinos put their issues onto the world stage. It was necessary to uncover the lies and distortions, and to write a real history of the last 500 years, to use history as a guide to action. We cannot turn the clock back, but it is necessary to recognise the crimes of the past, of colonialism and genocide, which continue today in different forms. We need to do this if we are to build a movement of all the oppressed against their rotten conditions," he said.

The South London group is to continue the campaign into next year around the issues of colonialism, racism, capitalist exploitation and the "new world order."

The South London group has also recently participated in a meeting with Southwark and Lambeth Trades Councils and will continue its international solidarity work. The group is planning to provide speakers to a number of trade union meetings.

Aerolineas Argentinas Privatisation

DOWN TO EARTH WITH A BUMP

The much-heralded privatisation of the Argentine national airline, Aerolineas Argentinas, has been a disaster.

Just two years after the sale of the airline, the government has been forced to buy back 28% of the shares, bringing its total to 43%. But the unions have dubbed the whole episode a "historic scandal," claiming the government have simply bought into the massive \$800 million debt the private owners ran up.



SRI LANKA

Workers Defeat Government Bans

Sri Lankan government measures outlawing trade union activity in the country's Free Trade Zones have been defeated by workers and the unions.

Under President Premadasa's emergency decrees, strikes in transport, posts and telecommunications, public utilities, government departments, local authorities and the island's extensive tea plantations would have been banned.

One clothing manufacturer sacked its entire workforce under the regulations for taking part in a strike for union recognition.

But Premadasa has been forced to scrap the decrees following a campaign launched by the trade unions.

Since privatisation, the unions claim there have been massive dismissals, a rapid deterioration in working conditions, a fall in real wages, wage agreements broken, breaches of flight and duty time limitations and minimum rest periods, compulsory flexibility arrangements all leading to a reduced service quality.

When the idea of privatisation was first floated the six unions affected were split over whether to oppose the plans.

Now, all six have issued a joint statement condemning the sale as "detrimental to the users and workers, who are, after all, those who end up paying the price of such plundering."

The company, which was profitable at the time of privatisation, now has debts totalling \$800 million and losses believed to be around \$11 million a month. Seven aircraft have been mortgaged to raise capital.

The unions want the government to renationalise the airline but they are wholly opposed to "nationalising the private debt," and want agreements from the government that there will be no further asset stripping, redundancies or deterioration in working conditions.

★ IN BRIEF

● Remember just a few months ago when the world's leaders met in Rio to declare the environment was safe in their hands?

But wait, what's this? Surely not a ship carrying a cargo of 1.7 tonnes of plutonium, enough to make 120 nuclear bombs.

Described as a "floating Chernobyl" the ship, far from being shunned by the environmentally-friendly world leaders, has Japanese government troops escorting it on its journey, protected by surveillance from US military satellites and under the cover of a security plan worked out by the Japanese government and the Pentagon.

Who's green now?

● We all suspected George Bush was mad but now it's official!

Trailing Clinton in the polls, the US president decided he needed some help. Who has he turned to? John Major, of course!

Most people when they need help would avoid a man who has presided over 600 job losses a day, whose party is split down the middle, who has led his country into the longest recession since the 30s, who has been forced to devalue his currency and withdraw from agreements made only months earlier, butchered his country's industry etc,

As Union Faces Attack, Nigerian Dockers Demand...

ESCALATE THE ACTION!

Seven workers have died from starvation and lack of medical care as Nigeria's long-running docks dispute looks set to escalate.

Nigerian dockworkers are threatening a massive escalation of the dispute if the Babangida government continues its refusal to implement the terms of a settlement worked out in February.

In October 1991, 2,000 registered dockworkers in Lagos were forcibly evicted from the ports by gangs of hired thugs sparking massive international protests. Since then the government have been intent on smashing the power of the Dockworkers' Union of Nigeria through the use of scab labour.

Now the regime have taken over the running of the union and are planning a rigged conference, excluding representatives of the 2,000 sacked workers, to remove the union leadership and end the dispute. Already union leaders have faced visits from state security agents in a bid to force a change of policy on the union. Now the union is calling on the International Transport Workers' Federation to step up their campaign for reinstatement by organising industrial action in international ports against Nigerian ships and cargoes.

**GOT A STORY FOR SOCIALIST APPEAL?
PHONE OUR EDITORIAL DESK ON 021-455-9112.**

BOOK OF THE MONTH

NOVEMBER

A.J. COOK by Paul Davies

“Cook was a mountain torrent, a man governed almost wholly by emotion. He was an agitator on the grand scale; the propagandist incarnate containing within himself all the passionate sense of injustice that had bitten deep into the hearts of the miners for generations.”

So concludes Francis Williams, one of the contemporaries of Arthur Cook, the man who led the miners during the bitter struggles of the 1920s, culminating in the general strike, the lockout, the betrayal of the miners and the splitting of the union.

Cook's first social influences came from the strong religious upbringing he received at the hands of his mother but, soon after starting work as a miner, he drew the conclusion: “as a popular movement the Religious Revival was an abnormal and aberrant manifestation of the spirit of the Welsh people, and that this powerful current of feeling, flowing as strong as a tide produced astonishingly little change in the fundamental economic and industrial facts of the miner's life. It did, indeed, divert the attention of the miners from these facts. And that I was beginning to see, was wrong.”

From this point on Cook became more and more interested in the growing trade union movement and its political counterpart. A spate of strikes in the South Wales coalfields in 1908 and the failure of the leadership of the South Wales Miners Federation to co-ordinate any action to support the striking miners (indeed many SWMF leaders condemned them for striking) began Cook's rise to the leadership of first the SWMF and later, the Miners Federation of Great Britain.

In the intervening years Cook proves himself a great orator and no-one can doubt his fighting spirit and refusal to compromise. His right wing opponents recognised his abilities early on and he was constantly under attack from them and their supporters for his opposition to any measures which would harm the miners.

Cook had his share of successes - but also his share of defeats. He was “more a man of the heart than the mind.” He was very much a syndicalist believing that the adoption of an aggressive policy towards the coal owners would eventually lead to workers' control.

Despite describing himself as a “follower of Lenin,” Cook's lack of a clear political and industrial perspective became more evident as he reached the top of the MFGB and the defeats of 1921 and the TUC sell-out during the course of the 1926 general strike had a devastating effect on Cook.

But despite his faults, he had many great qualities. He was a prime force in establishing the miners union as a major power and, under his leadership the South Wales miners won important reforms in the early 1900s.

Paul Davies, the author, has undertaken the first really serious study of Cook's life influences and the momentous events in which he played such a major part.

The book should not only appeal to miners but to all labour and trade union movement activists. It reflects the ebbs and flows of the trade union battles which culminated in the general strike, it portrays vividly the battles between the ideas of the right and left within the miners union and most importantly it gives an excellent insight into the life and politics of one of the most important figures in the British trade union movement.

Reviewed by John Davidson

A.J. Cook by Paul Davies - Published by Manchester University Press - Price £1.00 (Normally £7.95)

OUT NOW!

WHAT IS MARXISM?
by Woods and Sewell

Compilation of three pamphlets originally published as the South Wales Bulletin of Marxist Studies

Price £1.00

ESSENTIAL BOOKS

WELL RED BOOKS.

- Writings on Britain Vol 2 (Leon Trotsky).....£4.95
- Covers the 1920s, including the general strike and the classic "Where is Britain Going?"*
- Volumes 1 & 3 also.....£4.95
- Lives of the Left - A.J.Cook£1.00 (Normally 7.95)
- Lives of the Left - Big Bill Haywood, US trade union leader.....£2.00 (Normally £7.95)
- Never the Same Again. by Jean Stead.....£4.50
- Women and the miner's strike (Normally £5.95)*

NEW IN STOCK.

- The Debt Boomerang - Susan George.....£4.50
- From the author of "How the other half dies"*
- A People's History of England - A.L.Morton....£8.99
- Excellent summary from feudalism to 1914*
- Sexism and Science - Evelyn Reed.....£8.95
- From the author of "Woman's Evolution" (also available @ £12.95)*
- Karl Marx and Frederick Engels - David Riazanov.....£3.95
- One of the best brief introductions to their lives and ideas at a bargain price (normally £7.95)*
- Lives of the Left - Karl Kautsky.....£2.00
- (Normally £7.95)

JUST REPUBLISHED

- What is Marxism - Woods and Sewell.....£1.00
- Compilation of three pamphlets covering the Marxist approach to Philosophy, History and Economics.*

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Why not buy books for Christmas? We can get all bestsellers, but please order with payment by 14th November.

Send your orders, with payment, to Well Red Books,
PO BOX 2626, London N1 6DU.
Please add 10% for post and packing (minimum 50p)

Spanish Workers Fight Job Losses

Ramon Mendiluce

The 750 steelworkers from Northern Bilbao and Asturias ended their 250 mile, 18 day "march of iron" on October 27th in Madrid. They were greeted by 35,000 demonstrators protesting about the Felipe Gonzalez PSOE (socialist party) government's plans to close steel mills and axe almost 10,000 jobs (40% of the workforce) and cut production by 20%, with the consequent loss of 40,000 jobs in related industries.

Ironically, the demonstration took place on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the electoral victory of the PSOE in 1982, when over 10 million workers and youth voted for them in the hope that a "change" would improve their working and living conditions. The late 80s boom, stronger in Spain than in most European countries, created the illusion that Spanish capitalism had overcome its historical weakness. This has come suddenly to an end, with the Spanish economy heading for a serious recession.

The Spanish bourgeoisie has moved to an open policy of attacks on the working class. The Felipe government has proposed for 1993 what they themselves call "the most restrictive budget in 20

years, i.e. cuts in the meagre welfare sector while the banks are given billions to pay for their loans to cover an increasing budget deficit. The government forecasts 500,000 more job losses next year on top of the current 16.5% unemployment. The unions believe up to a million more will be made redundant. The future of key industries like coal mining, shipyards, machine tools and textile is under threat by these plans.

On May 28th there was a four-hour general strike. The workers protests are setting the scene for a new epoch in the class struggle, with a new general strike implicit in the situation. The unrest among the youth is also growing with the uncertainty about the future. The Sindicato de Estudiantes (the Marxist-led fighting students union) can play a vital role in linking the workers and youth's struggle.

The beginnings of a division in the leadership of both the socialist UGT and communist CCOO unions are taking place, with a layer opposing the moderate approach that somehow wants to make the workers pay for the crisis. Under these circumstances, conditions are going to be favourable

for the Marxists, organised around the paper, *El Militante*. Through their intervention in the movement, it will be possible to strengthen their positions, defending a socialist alternative, and linking it to the struggle to recover the mass working class organisations for the revolutionary aims for which they were first formed.



Spanish steelworkers on the march.

SOCIALIST APPEAL MARXIST SCHOOLS SUCCESS.

Over 100 hundred people attended the two Marxist Education Schools organised by *Socialist Appeal* supporters. Over £550 was raised for our Press Fund and according to the feedback we have received people were so impressed they are asking for more to be arranged.

The thanks of *Socialist Appeal's* Editorial Board must go to all those who helped in the organisation and helped make both weekends a great success.

NEWCASTLE

The two courses at the Newcastle school covered an *Introduction to Marxism*, which served to show the relevance of Marxist ideas to the labour movement today and the daily life of the workers, and the *Trade Unions in Struggle*, a particularly timely course given the crisis in the coal industry, which covered the role of a Marxist shop steward, the unions under the Tories and prospects for the '90s.

The highlight of the weekend was Ted Grant's speech on Saturday, covering cur-

rent developments in Britain and perspectives for the future.

Ted pointed out that *Socialist Appeal* had explained, immediately after the election, that the Tories' election victory would be a hollow one, and that they would face economic crisis and trade union struggles. He drew parallels to the period of the early 1920s and urged those present to read Trotsky's *Where is Britain Going*, a "thoroughly modern document."

It was no surprise that the trade unions had been a topic chosen for discussion at the school.

The course had been organised four months ago in anticipation of current events - an illustration of the value of Marxist theory.

A professional creche, excellent cheap catering and an extensive bookstall provided by Well Red Books all contributed to a very productive weekend.

And congratulations to Tracy from Yorkshire who won first prize in the raffle, a £20 voucher for Well Red Books.

Socialist Appeal supporters in the area were delighted with the response and intend to organise another school in the spring. Watch this space.

Terry McPartlan

LONDON

Not even the closure of half of London's rail network due to bomb threats could deter the turnout at London's Marxist Education School.

With the furore over Maastricht and the impasse at the GATT talks dominating the morning's news coverage it was no wonder so many wanted to hear an explanation of the current crisis from *Socialist Appeal's* economics correspondent Michael Roberts. The course on Marxist economics not only explained the theory, but showed how Marx's analysis is as relevant today as when it was written, in explaining the workings, and crises, in the capitalist system in Britain and internationally.

And the school was not restricted to speeches from the platform but provoked lively discussions around the role of the state, Marxist philosophy and the trade union struggle, especially with the proposed public sector cuts and the crisis in the coalfields.

Add to that a good, cheap menu, a drop of Portugese beer, and two excellent rallies and you have the makings of a fine weekend.

SOCIALIST

APPEAL

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Tories' NHS Reforms Threaten 20,000 Jobs

STOP THE HOSPITAL CLOSURES!



Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley has welcomed the Tomlinson Report into London's health service, whose recommendations could mean up to 20,000 job losses.

The report, compiled over the past year, recommends the closure of St Bartholomew's Hospital, the Middlesex, Charing Cross, Queen Charlotte's, The Royal Ear, Nose and Throat and the Hospital for Tropical Diseases.

Also proposed is the merger of St Thomas' and Guy's Hospitals onto a single site.

The Tories claim there are too many hospital beds, yet there are 150,000 people on waiting lists in the capital. Beds are closing from underfunding, not underuse.

Nupe have carried out a survey amongst 1,000 nurses. Over half of them stated that staffing levels were inadequate, and that staff shortages were primarily due to "underfunding or other financial problems."

The nurses described a "climate of despair and frustration in the health service." Half of those surveyed had considered leaving the NHS during the past twelve months.

The government's market system in the NHS is bringing crisis after crisis. "Long waiting lists, poor primary and community care health services and an inadequate ambulance service are all products of persistent and long-standing underfunding," said Chris Humphreys, Nupe's London Officer. The Tories worship of the market comes before our health. Again, there will be several months

"The Tomlinson Report recommends our merger with the Brompton (a neighbouring Heart and Chest Hospital) moving to the site of Charing Cross Hospital, which he is recommending for closure.

It's complete madness. All three hospitals have recently had redevelopments running into tens of millions of pounds. All three have distinct identities and international reputations. To destroy all this in an accounting exercise makes no sense at all. These actions seem to have more to do with the property value of a large slice of the Fulham Road and through merger no doubt management will try to undermine existing negotiating procedures and drive down wages and conditions."

A worker at the Royal Marsden Hospital, London.

of "consultation" as the government does not officially comment on the report until the new year, but the labour movement should be building a campaign now and preparing to take action to force the Tories to retreat and halt the butchery of London's health service.

INSIDE

CRISIS IN THE COALFIELDS SIX PAGES OF NEWS AND ANALYSIS

NALGO

FIGHT THE CUTS! BUILD FOR ACTION

There was a much better response than many expected for the two days of national strike action by Nalگو members in Polytechnics (now universities). Health service unions have been demonstrating against cuts. The Local Government branches in the front line of government attacks, particularly Hackney and Islington, have issued calls to link up the different campaigns against the cuts.

Nalگو's National Day of Action on November 4th was a good start. But the attacks on the health service, local government and education are now being stepped up. A clear strategy to fight the cuts must be implemented. A one-day strike should be organised immediately across London linking up all the sectors under attack or in dispute. Support must be built with other unions in the spending cuts firing line. With the ballot for the merger of Nalگو, Nupe and Cohse imminent there should already be closer rank and file links - building these must be a priority.

Since Black Wednesday when the Tories incompetence was fully exposed there has been a change of mood among many workers. There is now a belief we can fight back - and win! There have been few better opportunities to defeat the Tories plans.

But a national lead must be given. Nalگو must link up the disputes. Support could be mobilised for a London-wide strike of local government, health and new universities workers. That could be a step towards organising national strike action. We are at the forefront of the attacks and should be at the forefront of the fight to get rid of this Tory government and defend jobs and services.

Dave Conway, Metropolitan District Nalگو