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MINERS' FAMILIES SPEAK OUT 'Get my husband out of jail!'

Val Kestle's husband Ian got two and a half years for burning scab buses during the miners' strike. Val and the families of other jailed Shirebrook miners want something done.

● **Full story page 2.**



Unfinished business

The NUM leadership's acceptance last week of the coal board's 1983 pay offer of 5.2 per cent was its final admission of unconditional surrender. After two years of conflict, reduced earnings and hardship through the overtime ban and the longest strike in the history of the industry, miners have a right to ask — what have we got to show for all our sacrifices?

At the time of the return to work in March the NUM leaders promised that 'guerrilla war' would carry on in the coalfields. In practice the employers have waged guerrilla war while NUM officials at every level have gone cap in hand to sue for peace on any terms.

In South Wales the area leaders made an informal deal with local management. The bosses agreed to take a soft line on the small number of victimised miners in the area while the area officials promoted the option of a return to work without a national settlement.

In Yorkshire Jack Taylor has appealed for 'a constructive approach' from management. At national level Arthur Scargill proposed extending the 5.2 per cent wage rise for another year to create 'a period of stability' in the industry. If this is 'guerrilla war' the employers will want to see much more of it.

When the NUM leaders led the return to work they insisted that they would carry on the fight for an amnesty for the victimised miners. In the event they did nothing to force the coal board to reinstate the men. Instead they called — and lost — a ballot over a proposal to set up a fund to support the victimised workers. Ordinary miners used the ballot to express their disgust at their contemptuous treatment by the national leadership.

General secretary Peter Heathfield declared the ballot result 'disappointing but not unexpected'. His cynical explanation was that many miners wanted to fight for reinstatement rather than a levy to support the victimised men. Heathfield conveniently forgot that the only reason the leadership had called the ballot was because it had already given up the fight for reinstatement.

Off the hook

In the end the only people who have won an amnesty are the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC. Within days of the end of the strike Mick McGahey welcomed Neil Kinnock to the Scottish Labour Party conference. Kinnock and TUC leader Norman Willis have both been invited to the Durham miners' gala this year as usual after earlier suggestions that they might be snubbed. Scargill now looks forward to a Labour government in the distant future to resolve all the outstanding problems facing the miners.

The NUM leadership has carried on blustering and evading the issues. While victimised miners face up to the prospect of a lifetime on the dole, the NUM

leadership is getting on with the activity that has become its speciality — fiddling with the union rule book. The NUM's conference in July is to be asked to approve a series of changes which will strengthen the bureaucratic grip of the leadership. Scargill wants to avoid the need to face re-election by changing the status of the union president. He wants to give the executive new powers to call area-by-area strike action and make it virtually impossible to remove area officials.

The bureaucrats' scheming bears no relation to the needs of miners to regroup their forces against the new management offensive. Its sole object is to secure the positions of the union leaders by putting them even further out of reach of ordinary union members.

The consequences of the failure of leadership from beginning to end of the miners' strike are a dangerous state of fragmentation and demoralisation in the coalfields. One result is the rush of miners to take voluntary redundancy and get out of the industry before things get even worse. At the same time many miners and their supporters have come out of the strike with a deeper and more politically conscious hostility to the employers and the government.

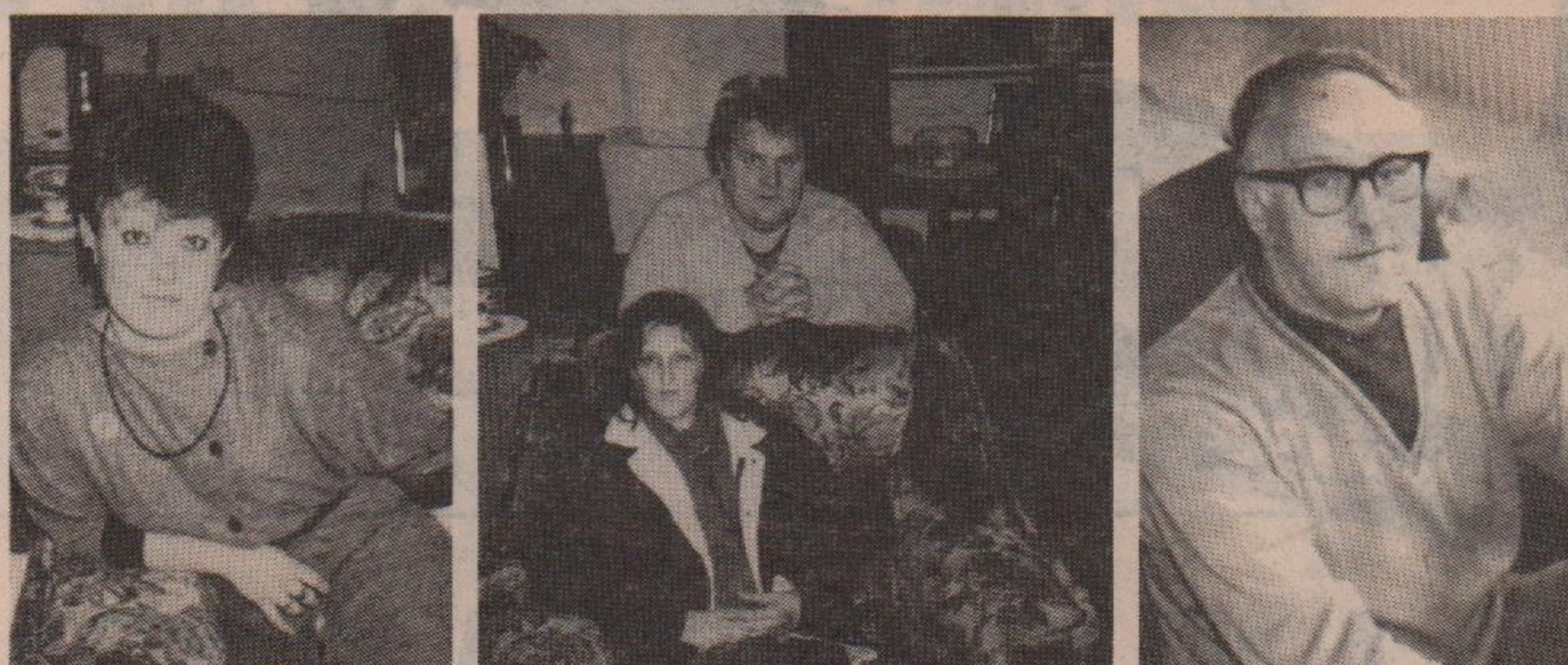
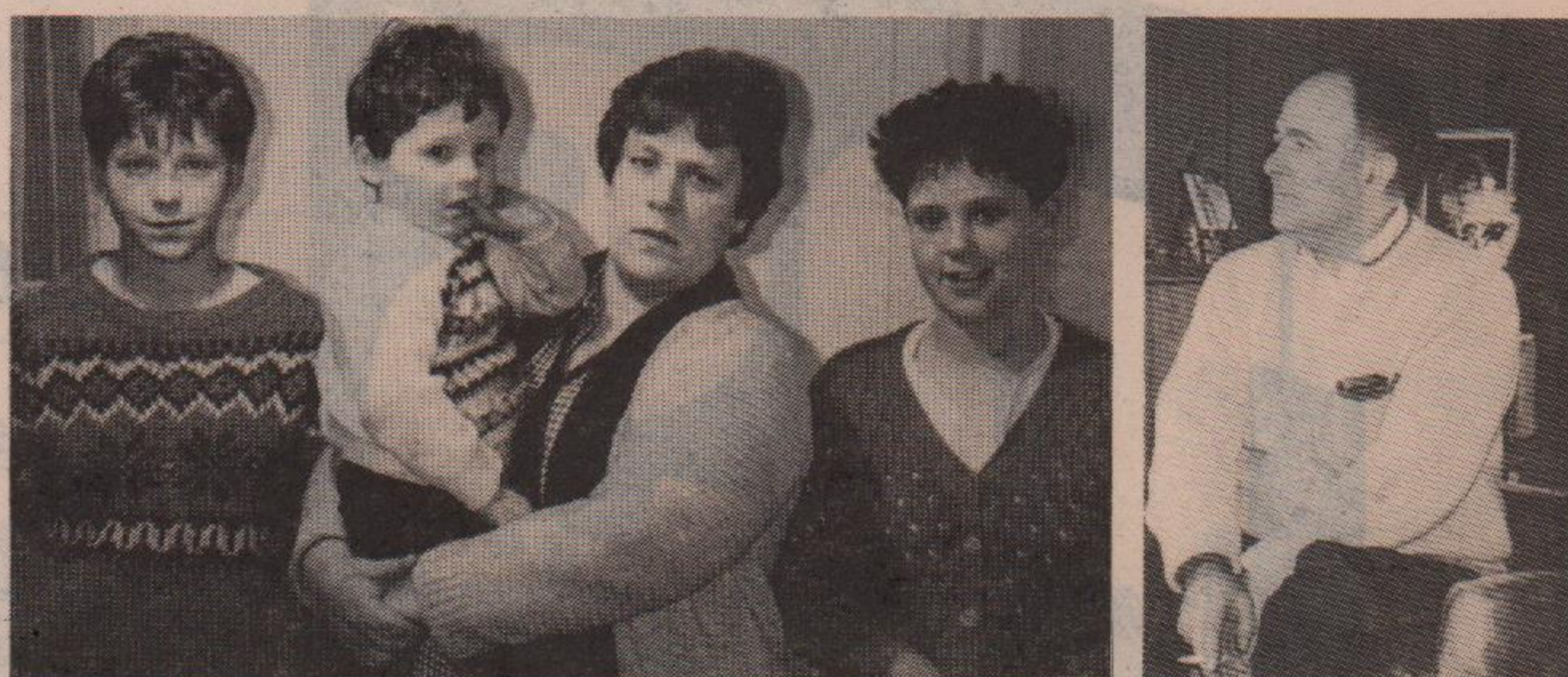
Over the top

To go forward we need to channel miners' anger and bitterness against the union leaders whose policies and activities have betrayed the miners' courage and determination. The miners did not fight for 12 hard months for the struggle to end like this.

The first line of battle is in the NUM itself. Miners must set about rebuilding their union from the ground in the course of really carrying on the fight for jobs, rather than just talking about it like the union leaders. Articles on these pages look at the three crucial areas of struggle — the defence of the victimised and imprisoned miners, resistance to closures and redundancies and the defence of living standards and working conditions.

The NUM leadership has abandoned the struggle on all these fronts in the hope that it can get back to business as usual with the coal board. But after the battles of the past year both the bosses and rank and file miners know that there can be no return to the old ways.

The lesson of the miners' strike is that if we try to fight a class war with the trade union methods of the past we will lose. The miners' struggle seriously threatened the establishment only when the miners and the mining communities went over the top, took matters into their own hands and themselves took on the riot police and the courts and the massed ranks of the press and the Tory Party. This was as much a threat to the old leaders of the labour movement as it was to the Tories. It is this spirit of struggle that we need to develop in the battles ahead.



Top left: Finding it hard to pay the bills, Val Kestle with Catherine (13), Tammy (12), Danny (3). **Top right:** Unemployed miner Meynell Pearson won't forget the day they took his son away. **Bottom left:** 'Peter used to be a miner — now he's stuffing catalogues in plastic bags in jail', Joyce Southwell. **Bottom centre:** Bill and Carol Jones — 'every letter breaks your heart'. **Bottom right:** 'I want to see them out'. Trevor Gaunt's son David got three years.

Amnesty for every jailed miner Free the Shirebrook 10!

'Ian's in Leicester prison — two and a half years for fighting for his job'. Ian Kestle is one of the forgotten men of the miners' strike. His wife Val says that 'he looks rough, he's white, he's lost weight and he really misses the kids'.

'I was bad at first — I had to go on nerve tablets. There's always been one of the kids poorly since their dad went away. Sometimes the baby wakes up in the night asking me to fetch his dad. Tammy, the youngest girl, takes it ever so bad. They talk about him a lot, the kids, and they read all his letters.'

The Shirebrook 10 — nine miners and a farm labourer — were rounded up and charged with arson after five buses used for transporting scabs were burned at Pleasley last August. 'I think the union stabbed Ian and the other lads in the back going back without an amnesty,' says Val Kestle.

Meynell Pearson's son Peter is serving two and a half years in Sudbury Prison:

'Nobody knows how it started — the police just started coming round picking them up. My lad wasn't at home, but they kept coming. Peter worked at Shirebrook, but I don't think he will again.'

'I was a miner for 25 years at Pleasley before it shut. Now I'm unemployed, one of the forgotten. I'm crap-heap material aren't I? But our Peter's 25 and he shouldn't be forgotten. He's rotting in jail and he shouldn't be.'

'Arthur Scargill said on telly that the union would look after them didn't he? But what effort have they made up to now? If it's left to the union I reckon they will be forgotten. It's up to us to make sure they're not.'

Meynell Pearson's neighbour Joy Southwell left her husband Michael hoovering upstairs on 16 September when she went out to see her mum. That was the last time she saw him outside of a cell:

'At first it didn't hit me. But when they sentenced Michael to two and a half years I could have screamed. The judge was born specially for the job — he was there to make an example of them. I've got no respect for the police or the courts because I've seen what they've done. I want to see the sentence dropped. But more than anything I want Michael to get his job back.'

Bill and Carol Jones see their 18-year old son Paul once a fortnight and it's grim:

'Paul's heading for a nervous breakdown. He's in a cell by himself and they're very strict. He had a paper last week but they cut out all the stuff on the miners. Every letter you get it breaks your heart.'

Trevor Gaunt's son David has been a miner since he left school at 16. Now he's counting the days in Millers Park Youth Custody Centre:

'Our David's 18 — he's got the longest sentence of anybody except Terry French from Kent who got five years. They ought to be treated as special prisoners because that's what they are. They got special treatment from the police and they need special treatment from the labour movement.'

The Shirebrook 10 and other jailed miners are prisoners of the class war. If they hadn't put up a fight they wouldn't be where they are now. The NUM and the whole labour movement have a duty to campaign for their immediate release and reinstatement.

Time and again the miners' leaders promised that there would be no return to work without an amnesty for all jailed and sacked miners. They went back on their word and left hundreds of miners high and dry, without a job and without their freedom.

Jailed miners and their families need more than sympathy. They have a right to demand full wages from the NUM — not just token payments for bills and coal. The NUM has told the jailed miners to wait for an amnesty from the next Labour government. But the Shrewsbury pickets rotted in jail throughout the lifetime of the last Labour government — imprisoned miners need a national campaign to get them out of jail now! Support the campaign demanding:

- Amnesty for all prisoners of the class war
- Reinstatement for every victimised miner
- All-out union support for the prisoners

Send donations and messages of support to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques payable to Class war prisoners

Joan Phillips

ACTION

Pit closures

Coal board moves in for the kill

'The union hasn't got a clue about what's going on — you find out first from the local paper'. There were 1100 miners at Ackton Hall colliery in Featherstone, Yorkshire when the miners' strike began. Now there are less than 600. Nearly 400 have been transferred to other pits and 120 have taken voluntary redundancy since the strike ended in March. The pit is set to close in July if not before. The miners left behind at Ackton Hall can see no alternative but to vote for the closure. Management has done a good job softening them up. Only one face is working, there is no bonus and the men are £30 and £40 down on their wages. They are resigned to moving on just to get a decent wage. The union doesn't exist any more — the branch committee has already gone and the militants have been transferred to short-life pits. It is the same story everywhere.

● Closures

The coal board is moving fast to streamline the industry. It lost no time implementing the closure of five pits agreed before the strike — Glasshoughton and Savile in North Yorkshire, the Highgate pit at the Highgate-Goldthorpe complex in Doncaster and Moorgreen and Pye Hill in South Nottinghamshire. Three more closures — Bedwas in South Wales, Frances in Scotland and Ackton Hall in Yorkshire — are going ahead and rumours of a major closure programme in Scotland, South Wales and Kent are rife. The board's decision to close two of its three Scottish workshops, at Lugar in Ayrshire and Newbattle near Edinburgh, seems to confirm rumours that eight more Scottish pits are to close over the next two years. In South Wales 13 pits are meant to be earmarked for closure and all three Kent pits are under threat.

● Redundancies

Signs have gone up in every pit urging men to take voluntary redundancy and early retirement. The coal board is hoping to cut the workforce by 50 000 this year. The first target is Scotland, where nearly 4000 voluntary redundancies have been agreed since the strike began. At Solsgirth — one of the few Scottish pits with a future — 600 men have already applied for the voluntary pay-off. South Wales and Kent are the next in the firing line — in Kent the board claims that it has already received 500 inquiries. This week management at Frickley colliery in Yorkshire announced that 430 men had to go within 12 months — 50 through 'natural wastage', 100 through transfers and the rest through redundancies.

The coal board strategy aims to achieve the maximum number of pit closures without disruption or the need to resort to lengthy procedure. It has already worked to good effect at Bedwas in South Wales where the men voted overwhelmingly for closure after accepting transfers and voluntary redundancies. At Ackton Hall the union's readiness to accept voluntary redundancies has demoralised the minority of men who wanted to put up a fight. The coal board is so confident that it is even pushing through compulsory redundancies. Some men over 50 at Ackton Hall who refused to take voluntary redundancy have been told that they won't be transferred because they are too old.

● Turning the screw

The coal board hopes to speed up the redundancy drive by making life so difficult for miners that they want to get out. Area managements have enforced a dictatorial clampdown. New work practices and disciplinary measures are being imposed with little resistance from the union. 'Management wants to drive us out of work' say miners at Solsgirth. Nobody can leave their machines during breaks and the men no longer get paid for washing-up time. Management in the Doncaster area has stopped all bonuses and water money. Craftsmen have lost their weekly £14

payment for filling out shift reports. Wages are down by £30 or £40. The board has employed a private security firm to patrol all the collieries in the Doncaster area. North Derbyshire area director Ken Moses is proud of being a hardliner. Last week he warned local militants that they would be in deep trouble unless their attitude changed:

'They were not performing well and I just told them "Go on like this and you will have the first economic closure" and they knew I wasn't joking.'

Union officials have done very little to resist the bosses' new regime except to complain about having their facility time taken away.

● Action

Miners urgently need some guarantees from their union leaders and a plan of action to combat the coal board's offensive:

- The union must stop passing the buck to the rank and file and start giving a national lead against pit closures.
- Rank and file miners have got to take a stand against voluntary redundancies and transfers. We should only support transfers on the grounds of exhaustion. Older miners who cannot move should be guaranteed a full wage.
- Don't let them get away with their divide and rule tactics! Militants from every pit and every coalfield must link up to work out a coordinated response to management attacks.

Out now! *The miners' next step* bulletin No 4. Phone 01-729 0414 for details

COAL SACKINGS

'These men want their jobs back'

'The union leaders think they've got all the time in the world to get the sacked men back in. They need a kick in the backside and us women will give it to them. These men want their jobs back, but there's nothing going on for them except talks. The national union have passed it back to Barnsley and Barnsley have told our union men to sit tight. We could be waiting forever at this rate.'

Pam Jones, a miners' wife from Mexborough in south Yorkshire, is not prepared to wait forever. While the NUM leaders have abandoned hundreds of victimised miners to their fate, Pam and her mates have been doing the union leaders' job for them. They have been gathering support for a national campaign against victimisations and imprisonments.

The NUM has given up the fight to get every sacked miner reinstated. The union leaders didn't even try to raise the issue at last week's talks with the coal board. This week 18 miners from Fryston colliery in Yorkshire are appearing in Castleford magistrates court on charges of riot, grievous bodily harm and criminal damage. They received letters of suspension at the end of the strike and have now been sacked. But the men who threw everything into the battle for jobs have been forsaken by their union. Like victimised miners everywhere, the Fryston men are still allowed into branch meetings — but they don't have a vote. They are out of a job — but they are getting no wages from the union. Their union leaders have told them to sign on the dole — but they are being denied benefits.

● No say

At a branch meeting immediately after the end of the strike Fryston voted unanimously for a motion demanding that the NUM nationally should pay full wages to all sacked and suspended miners. The motion

has sunk without trace and the sacked men no longer even have a chance to make their views heard in the union.

● No wages

The Fryston men are relying on bucket collections down the pit to scrape by — they are getting no regular income from the NUM. Yorkshire NUM president Jack Taylor has told them to hang on until the NUM sets up a national trust fund.

● No dole

The Fryston men signed on three weeks ago on the advice of the union — but they haven't had a penny. According to the department of employment the NUM is still in dispute and even though they have been sacked, victimised miners are still being refused benefits. The department ruled that the dispute would only be deemed over when the overtime ban had ended and coal production has returned to the levels achieved before the ban was imposed in 1983. Sacked miners continue to suffer a deduction of £16 a week from benefits for their wives and children because the DHSS still considers that the NUM should be paying them £16 a week.

Action

Unless the NUM starts now and organises the defence of its sacked members it will be incapable of resisting the attacks to come. Rank and file miners must fight for:

- a coordinated national campaign in defence of men suspended or sacked by the coal board
- reinstatement for every victimised miner, no matter what his 'crime'
- the equivalent of full pay for every sacked miner until he gets his job back
- action by civil servants to make sure miners and their families get their full benefits.

National Coal Board
North Derbyshire Area, Bolsover, Chesterfield

Mr. G. Butler,
Area Secretary,
NUM (Derbyshire Area),

Dear Mr. Butler,

'We will not cede our duty to manage in the face of demands.'

'I confirm that it is my intention to operate a policy of firm but fair and even handed discipline. Men must understand, however, that they have duties and obligations

- to carry out instructions
- to give proper effort and to cooperate to secure efficiency
- to take proper care of equipment in the mine
- to obey the law and rules of the mine made under the law.

Failure to do any of these things will result in appropriate disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.'

'I confirm that it is my intention to establish a late evening shift as a permanent feature of our operations irrespective of whether you seek to maintain the overtime ban or not.'

Yours sincerely,

K. MOSES
Area Director.

North Derbyshire area director Ken Moses puts the NUM straight on who rules down the pits. Last week Moses threatened 1800 miners with

the loss of bonus and other payments if they did not stop their 'bolshiness'.

'Sometimes you have to act a bit mad' says Pam Jones:

'Pete Townsend, one of the sacked miners, got it right. He went down to the dole to sign on. They said he couldn't have any so he got on the roof and said he wasn't getting off until he got his cash. They had to get the fire brigade to get him down.'

Pete Townsend staged a one man act of defiance — and got his giro. If rank and file miners and other workers staged a mass act of defiance they could get a lot more. ■



The new *tns* weekly is a cause for celebration. Now we're out to make revolutionary communism a celebrated cause. We need your help. Rush donations to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association. Special thanks this week to Tom Bruggen, Coventry and Dennis Hunter, Essex

EVENTS

Tories take on the unions

Battle of the ballots

The Tories are now turning the full force of their anti-union laws against the unions. The teachers, post office workers and civil servants have all been forced to hold strike ballots under threat of court injunctions. The Tories' aim is to impose a 'cooling-off' period, to demoralise strikers and disorganise action.

Every proposal for strike action now leads automatically to a discussion about a ballot. How should militants respond? The response of the union leaders in recent weeks provides examples of how *not* to respond. While the right has vacillated, the left has postured. Right-wing leaders in the post office have argued against defying the law to justify giving up the struggle to defend jobs, working conditions and living standards. Left-wing leaders in the civil service have indulged themselves in empty rhetoric about defying the law but failed to work out a strategy for winning majority support for industrial action.

● The experience of recent weeks contains valuable lessons for workers. Our response to Tory ballots on strike action must be decided according to the course of action that can best advance workers' interests. Making a principle out of defying the law is not necessarily the best way to do this. The key question is not whether or not to hold a ballot, but how to win majority support for industrial action and how to make that action effective.

In the present political climate rousing calls to defy the law are more likely to isolate the militants and bankrupt the unions than to galvanize the majority of the workforce into action. Our priority must be to convince the majority of the need for action through an aggressive political campaign. This means devising tactics to minimise the delays and divisions caused by Tory interference. We should not allow ballots to obstruct strikes, but organise meetings to ensure the involvement in action and discussion of the largest possible number of workers. Ballots should be organised swiftly and where possible ballot papers should be filled in at mass meetings.

The best way to render the Tory laws ineffective is through winning mass support for industrial action. Resistance to further legal interference in the unions would be greatly strengthened if union leaders did not endow the courts with legitimacy in the eyes of workers by having recourse to the law to resolve internal union disputes.

No to Labour's levy

The unions have begun their campaigns to preserve the political levy to the Labour Party. The first ballots are already under way in the print union Sogat and in the general, municipal and boilermakers' union. The bureaucrats' approach is to present the issue in the most non-political way possible. They are pretending that the money is not for the Labour Party, but for harmless MPs who pursue the narrowest possible defence of trade union interests in parliament. The Sogat campaign material, suitably coloured in red, white and blue, contrives never to mention the Labour Party. Sogat general secretary Bill Keys is adamant that the political levy has nothing to do with the Labour Party:

'We cannot over-emphasise that the ballots are about the retention of the political fund. They are not about affiliation to the Labour Party.'

The union leaders are trying to con their members into financing the Labour Party by claiming that they are simply voting for a political fund in the abstract. This cynical ploy reveals their contempt for the rank and file and their lack of confidence in the Labour Party.

The second line of argument in defence of

the political levy is that if it goes the unions will not be able to carry out political campaigning of any sort:

'If we lose our rule which allows unions to be active politically we could soon be banned from campaigning publicly on questions which affect our members. And it would be illegal to lobby parliament.'

The union leaders want to evade the central question of whether rank and file workers have anything to gain from continuing to pay the political levy to the Labour Party. It has always been understood that the political levy is for the Labour Party and that funding for any other sort of political activity comes out of general funds. The Trade Union Act does not prohibit unions from political activity — its purpose is to put a block on trade union funds to the Labour Party.

● Rank and file workers should vote against the political levy to the Labour Party and fight to set up an alternative fund to organise political activities that are of some use to the

working class. For example, the NUM could much more usefully spend its political funds on a campaign for the imprisoned and victimised miners, rather than wasting it on the Labour Party. Why should workers hand over their money to a party which has done nothing to defend them in or out of office? Labour's spineless role in the miners' strike should convince militants that the political levy is a waste of hard-earned cash.

If union bureaucrats insist on restricting members to a choice between a political fund for the Labour Party or no political fund at all, it would be better to have no fund than to continue financing a party that has nothing to offer the working class except more defeats.

Ballot-rigging scandal

Retiring TGWU general secretary Moss Evans is set to call a re-run of the election of his successor after allegations of ballot-rigging. The media has launched its witch-hunt against the ballot fixers as a prelude to the introduction of new guidelines for union elections in the autumn. The centre of controversy is the conduct of the ballot in

last year's election of a new general secretary for the TGWU. Broad left official Ron Todd won the post with a majority of nearly 45 000 votes over his nearest rival, right winger George Wright. The ballot has been presented as a left-wing conspiracy to secure Todd's election and defeat the moderate Wright. The TGWU's own inquiry has resulted in the expulsion of two union officials and disciplinary action against a third. Intrepid investigative journalists have unearthed a trail of corruption leading from Birmingham to Belfast and from London to Liverpool. The purpose of the ballot-rigging scandal is to legitimise Tory interference in the affairs of the unions and stir up anti-union prejudices.

There can be no doubt that there is corruption in the TGWU and in every other union — just as there is in the Tory Party, the Federation of Conservative Students, the CBI and in countless other institutions. The hunt for the perpetrators of ballot-rigging in the TGWU has been presented as a campaign to restore democracy to the unions. In reality, the campaign fits into the wider objective of the Tory government to weaken workers' organisations. The establishment is concerned about democracy in the unions only to the extent that it can use this issue to discredit them and justify further state interference in union affairs.

● We should resist all attempts by the Tories to strengthen their influence in the unions. The Tories should have no say in how we conduct our union elections — that is our business. However, Tory smears against the unions have some resonance among rank and file workers because the unions *are* undemocratic. The best way to counter the Tory propaganda war is by bringing unions and union leaders under the control of the rank and file. We need to make the unions unconditionally committed to the workers they represent.

We must make every attempt to encourage rank and file organisation at workplace level. Union democracy can only be guaranteed by the direct accountability of workers' representatives to workplace assemblies. Full-time as well as lay representatives must be directly accountable and elected, not appointed. The only way to resist Tory attacks on workplace organisation is to take control of it ourselves.



Backing off: transport union chief Moss Evans retreats before press hysteria about bent elections

Chris Black (reflex)

WAGES, PRICES AND PROFITS

Paying the price

The rail unions NUR and Aslef have agreed to a cut in the real value of railworkers' pay packets. Their acceptance of British Rail's 4.85 per cent offer makes a mockery of the unions' original 33 per cent claim. Left-wing train drivers' leader Ray Buckton said that the decision to abandon the 33 per cent claim was taken in 'a sense of realism':

'We weighed up the alternative of having an industrial dispute and decided it was in the best interests of our members to accept the 4.85 per cent.'

What was 'in the best interests' of the railworkers turned out to be a cut in real wages. The problem with the union leaders' approach is that it starts from what the employers say they can afford, not from what workers need. Thus Buckton argued that the retreat from 33 to 4.85 per cent 'was not a climbdown' but an accommodation to reality:

'We realised that it was as far as BR would go. We understand the tremendous cost of the

miners' strike to the industry — we suffered more than others — and we believe BR's figures.'

Buckton and NUR leader Jimmy Knapp share the bosses' concern about getting the rail industry back on its feet and accept that workers must make sacrifices to bale out the employers. They pay more heed to 'BR's figures' than to the dwindling pay packets of their members. Union leaders in the civil service and local government have followed a similar approach and accepted pay rises below the rate of inflation.

● Workers need a different approach to safeguard living standards. We should base our wage claims on what we need for a decent living, not on the bosses' profit levels and market performance. This means rank and file workers getting together with others in the community whose livelihoods depend on wage levels, and working out what we need to maintain living standards.



'Realistic' Ray Buckton of Aslef

Once we have decided on the amount we need it should become the focus of a campaign to unite workers across sectional divides. Having a clear target would put direct pressure on union negotiators to come up with a definite result rather than the usual fudged settlement.

Chris Black (reflex)

Sectarian murderers

Last week's arrest of an Ulster Defence Regiment member for the off-duty murder of a Catholic civilian showed that the UDR is a gang of anti-Catholic killers. The arrest of a regular British soldier for the same murder illustrated Britain's complicity in the Loyalist regiment's campaign of sectarian slaughter.

Martin Love was a 24-year old unemployed Catholic from Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. He had no republican connections; his family supported the moderate, pro-British Alliance Party. On Easter Sunday, on his way home from a holiday drink at a local hotel, he was shot in the back and the neck by the Loyalist Ulster Freedom Fighters.

Love was the first Catholic to be killed by Loyalist paramilitaries this year. His murder took the number of Catholics butchered by Loyalist gangs close to 550 since the Irish War began in 1969.

Three days after Love died Robert Kenny, a 20-year old Protestant private in the Ulster Defence Regiment, was charged with his murder. Kenny's arrest came within a week of the Ulster Defence Regiment's fifteenth anniversary as an integral part of the British Army. Throughout those 15 years, members of the UDR have doubled up as gunmen for Loyalist paramilitary organisations.

Alternative Ulster

At its formation in April 1970, the UDR was hailed as a 'non-sectarian' replacement for the rabidly Loyalist 'B' Specials, an armed police reserve disbanded after its members led Loyalist mobs in attacks on nationalist ghettos in 1969.

But the UDR has operated as a better trained, better armed version of the sectarian Specials. In uniform its members have harassed, detained, beaten and executed nationalist men and women. A Belfast UDR patrol shot dead a teenage Catholic joy-rider in January.

Out of uniform, UDR men have played a prominent role in the Loyalist paramilitary groups which have terrorised the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. Between 1973 and 1979, at least 35 serving or recently resigned members of the regiment were convicted of offences ranging from membership of the illegal Ulster Volunteer Force through armed robbery to sectarian murder. Hundreds more committed similar outrages with impunity.

Butchers and bombers

Off-duty UDR soldiers have featured in some of the most grisly sectarian attacks of the past 15 years. During the mid-seventies the infamous Shankill Butchers brutally murdered 19 Catholics in Belfast. A UDR member, Edward McIlwaine, got 15 years in jail for his part in the Butchers' campaign.

In 1975 three Catholic members of the Miami Showband were killed and two more maimed when the UVF bombed their bus and machine gunned them. The bus had been stopped by a UDR sergeant and corporal in uniform. Two members of the regiment blew themselves up in the explosion. Another two were later convicted of the murders.

In the eighties UDR men have again stepped up their off-duty activities. In November and December 1983 a dozen based at Drummadd barracks in Armagh were arrested in connection with two years of sectarian terror carried out by the Protestant Action Force. Five of them are still remanded on murder charges.

In January this year, UDR private Geoffrey Edwards was convicted of killing Sinn Féin activist Peter Corrigan in 1982. Edwards had used the regiment's intelligence system to pick out his victim.

'A matter of pride'

British commentators claim convicted UDR members are a few bad apples who have deserted the high principles of the regiment. But the only principle guiding the UDR is the need to terrorise nationalist opponents of British rule in Northern Ireland.

A part-time UDR officer told a British Sunday paper in January that private Edwards was considered a hero for killing



Acceptable sectarianism: British guns, uniforms and officers for the Loyalist thugs

Catholic Peter Corrigan. Edwards had carried out 'an act of war, a matter of pride' for the regiment. When two of the UDR men arrested at Drummadd barracks in connection with a sectarian murder were asked to resign in 1983, their fellow gunmen threatened to mutiny until they were reinstated.

The British Army commanders who run the UDR, and the Westminster politicians who run Britain's war effort in Northern Ireland, understand that the random sectarian terror of the Loyalist paramilitaries is vital to keep the nationalist community under control. They have endorsed the off-duty activities of UDR men.

In 1972 the British commander of the UDR defended the right of his men to join the Loyalist Ulster Defence Association, then engaged in a vicious anti-Catholic crusade. In 1983 prime minister Margaret Thatcher responded to the furore around the Drummadd arrests by flying out to the barracks to give the local UDR/Protestant Action Force members her personal

blessing. Early in 1984 the Drummadd assassins became sectarian killers by royal appointment, when the Duke of Edinburgh followed Thatcher's trail. This year Tory Northern Ireland secretary Douglas Hurd has leapt to the UDR's defence after its involvement in shoot-to-kill incidents, sectarian killings and kidnappings brought further calls for the regiment's disbandment.

The British establishment knows that the 7000 sectarian gunmen in the UDR are no different than the rest of the security forces. Their job is to crush nationalist resistance by whatever means are necessary. The murder campaign which claimed Martin Love as its latest victim is just one part of Britain's Irish War. The fact that a regular British squaddie was also charged with Love's murder illustrates the dangers of singling out the Loyalist regiment for criticism. The way to end the sectarian bloodbath is not by asking the British government to reorganise its armed forces and break up the UDR, but by forcing it to get all its gunmen out of Ireland and breaking Westminster's hold over the lives of the nationalist community. ■

CERVICAL CANCER

The pill panic

'Sex can damage your health' is the message behind the latest moral panic about cervical cancer. Cancer of the cervix kills 2000 women in Britain every year. But the current controversy has nothing to do with saving women's lives. It is about bolstering a system of morality that makes women's lives a misery.

It has been well known for many years that cancer of the cervix is common among prostitutes and rare in convents. The link between the early start of sexual activity and numerous partners and the incidence of cervical cancer has been well established. Controversy, however, has arisen over the possible role of the pill in causing cervical cancer. The problem is that it is very difficult to distinguish between the effects of the pill and of sexual behaviour on the incidence of cancer.

A series of recent medical reports have arrived at conflicting conclusions. The latest and largest survey by the World Health Organisation, which prompted the current panic, concludes that the increased risk from the pill is of 'borderline significance'. It is difficult to generalise from the study because it was conducted in a wide range of countries with widely differing social conditions. It also included women on high dose oestrogen contraceptives which are no longer widely used in Britain.

The facts are of no concern to the moral rearers and their friends in the gutter press. They bury scientific doubt in straightforward prejudice. According to them the pill encourages promiscuity, and promiscuity leads to cervical cancer. Like herpes and AIDS, cervical cancer is God's punishment for the licentious. They want to use the fear of disease and death to force women to accept the constraints imposed on

their sexual and social life by the sort of respectable family life approved in Thatcher's Britain.

The moralists' concern about women's lives is entirely hypocritical. They, and the system they fervently uphold, are the real threat to women's welfare. The risk of developing cervical cancer can be minimised by low dose pills and barrier methods of contraception. It can be detected early and treated effectively if regular smear tests are performed. Yet the same people who promote the cancer scares have made access to these preventive measures even more difficult.

Catholic mother of 10 and anti-pill crusader Victoria Gillick recently won a court order banning doctors from giving contraceptive advice to girls under 16 — those most at risk from cervical cancer. Tory cuts have reduced Britain's already skeletal screening system to a shambles. Of the 2000 women who died from cervical cancer last year, 90 per cent never got the chance to have a smear test. The fervour of the moral majority is matched only by its hypocrisy.

The furore about cervical cancer can only make things worse for women. The only conclusive evidence to emerge from all the recent surveys is that the pill is the safest and most effective contraceptive on the market. The fact that the pill may protect women against cancer of the ovaries — a disease that kills twice as many women each year as cervical cancer — never hits the front page headlines.

We must reject the establishment's attempts to cut health and contraception services and to police women's sex lives. Women need the pill — or an even better, safer form of contraception — and they need an efficient screening service. ■

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

WHAM! GOES TO PEKING

The Chinese can't dance. This was the main fact to emerge from British press coverage of the two-stop tour of China by British chart toppers Wham! Fleet Street used the group's trip to Peking and Canton to stir up racist, anti-communist prejudice.

British pundits offered two explanations of the Chinese people's reluctance to get down to the sound of George and Andrew. First, they were Chinese. Second, they lived under the yoke of communist oppression. 'If any of them knew', wrote *The Daily Express* of the 12 000-strong audience in the Peking workers' gymnasium, 'it was normal to scream along with the songs or rush the stage as teenage girls normally do in Britain, they were far too polite in the Chinese fashion to do so'. Damned inscrutable, these Chinese coolies.

Other papers, and the performers, complained of the communist state's efforts to poop the party. According to *The Sun*, 'several Chinese youths who joined in the concert cavorting were hauled away' by police. Wham! star George Michael thought 'the younger Chinese were intimidated by the police'. This sort of thing wouldn't be tolerated in the West, of course. Who needs the police when you've got monkey-suited civilian sadists to bounce indis disciplined dancers out of London concert halls?

The Wham! boys were distraught at the grasping attitude of the communist officials. 'They took us to the cleaners' whined pop's favourite pair. *The Times* agreed that 'only in China would a chart-topping group have to pay for the privilege of performing'. The Chinese government had the audacity to make Wham! pay for the concerts while it kept the takings. The group spent £1m on the tour — less than half the sum Wham! expects to make from flogging videos of the trip to Western punters.

But if the Chinese communists' attempts to stop Wham! making even more money got the group's goat, the government's attitude to the pair's celluloid sexuality was even more upsetting for George Michael:

'Young people are encouraged not to have sexy pin-ups or idols. In fact sexuality is played down in life — even in advertising.'

George, a hunky male whose success depends on soft focus pin-ups in teen magazines and on advertising hoardings, knows he could never make it big under these conditions. His concern is truly heartfelt.

Wham! are not the kind of boys to be pushed around by any jumped-up yellow pinkos. *The Sun* reported how they 'ignored official requests to tone down their hip-grinding act — backed by gyrating girl dancers'. Hip-grinding sounds like a bad investment for George and Andrew, who recently insured their bums against damage to the tune of £1m. But no sacrifice is too great in the cause of freedom. 'Freedom' of course is the name of a hit Wham! single, which George gave a heavily-loaded introduction in Peking, encouraging his audience to 'make it number one in China'. Geddit??? The real irony is that this banal ditty, which British reporters hailed as an attack on repressive communist morality, is actually a celebration of the repressive morality of Thatcherite family values.

Fleet Street has long been willing to use any excuse for a bout of racist red-baiting and patriotic flag-waving. But the gentlemen of the press sunk lower into the gutter than ever in their efforts to portray the Wham! tour as an enlightening experience for the repressed Chinese. After 5000 years of developing an unrivalled culture, the Chinese people are supposed to be grateful for a glimpse of liberation in the synthetic glamour of Britain's most vacuous pop act. ■

THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

THE PARTY of the FUTURE

What is the Revolutionary Communist Party? Why have we decided to launch a weekly paper? *Frank Richards* outlines the RCP's plans to transform British politics.

The miners' strike showed the challenge facing the working class. Its defeat showed that we can only go forward in Thatcher's Britain under the leadership of a revolutionary party. A revolution is necessary because of the bankruptcy of the existing system. A new party is necessary because of the failure of the existing parties of the labour movement to defend or advance the interests of the working class.

Over the past few years the balance of class forces in Britain has shifted in favour of the capitalist class. The pressures of recession and mass unemployment have undermined workers' organisations and created widespread fear and insecurity. The government and the employers have adopted more and more aggressive methods of dealing with any resistance. The miners' strike brought all these trends to the surface.

The miners' strike was the longest and most significant dispute in Britain, if not in Europe, since the war. The intensity and duration of the strike demonstrated the miners' courage and fighting spirit. This alone will give workers inspiration for the struggles ahead. Yet the strike raised significant problems which may be expected to recur in future disputes. It revealed an unprecedented level of fragmentation and disunity in the working class.

The trade union leaders, whose policies are responsible for the defeat, never really lost control of the strike. Indeed the only serious challenge to the NUM leadership came from the right. Militant miners continued to the bitter end to put their faith in left-wing officials. Instead of questioning their leadership, most militants pointed the finger of blame at other miners and other workers. This can only enhance the likelihood of further fragmentation in the working class.

Although the miners' strike was a defeat for the working class, the main casualty was the official labour movement. We have no regrets about the damage suffered by the TUC and the Labour Party. Both the right and left wings of the official labour movement failed to provide effective leadership or solidarity for the miners and they richly deserve to lose workers' support. But we cannot rejoice at the way the bureaucrats have been discredited by the events of the past year.

Tory banana skins

The leaders of the labour movement have not been defeated through political struggle. They have come under pressure from press and television, rather than having to face a political challenge from rank and file activists. Workers' growing disrespect for individual leaders like Norman Willis and Neil Kinnock has not led to a wider questioning of the outdated politics of Labourism which produce such ineffective officials. Workers' resentment against Labour can easily be dissipated into the insecurity and demoralisation that has already begun to set in following the end of the strike.

The miners' strike exposed the historic weakness of the British ruling class. The government and the employers worked out their strategy well and executed it with determination. Yet, although they never once

lost the initiative, they made one blunder after another. Sections of the establishment — Tory wets, Church of England bishops, coal board managers — panicked and showed a reluctance to face the consequences of Tory policy. The strike also revealed the shift in ruling class strategy towards a more ruthless use of the state's repressive machinery in industrial disputes. This new departure may be effective in the short term, but in the long run it can only lead to a decline in public respect for the authority of the state. The government's willingness to pursue such a high-risk strategy indicates the seriousness of its problems.

The coincidence of political crises within both major classes points towards a long period of instability. The miners' strike did not cause this crisis — it merely brought the underlying tendencies to a head. The shift towards more direct forms of class conflict is not merely a new strategy. It marks the end of an era.

The political framework that the ruling class established in the forties has now broken down. The post-war system of cooperation between representatives of workers and employers in the service of the nation brought to a close three decades of strife, not only in Britain but throughout the Western world. In Britain the pattern of alternating Labour and Conservative governments and collaboration between union leaders and managements in running industry

and services prevented the re-emergence of a political class struggle. For 30 years after the war class conflict was submerged by a consensus in politics and stable industrial relations procedures in industry.

The breakdown of this consensus and the return of open class warfare leaves the bosses exposed on the political front while they fight a losing battle for economic recovery. For the time being the ruling class is firmly in the saddle. But it is only a question of time before its rule will be put to the test.

Winning the vanguard

The converging crises of the British establishment and the labour movement create great scope for revolutionary politics. The strength of the Revolutionary Communist Party lies in its distinctive approach to building a revolutionary party. Other left-wing organisations in Britain regard party-building as a straightforward matter. The rhythm of the class struggle dictates their activities and their policies. They seek merely to re-package existing struggles in a more radical form. Hence they can mobilise their forces around demands to 'generalise the struggle' or in support of calls for a general strike to help the miners.

Revolutionaries, however, have a strategy directly on the class struggle.

The RCP begins from the position of the mass of workers are struggling against the capitalist class. The official labour movement in Britain is a pro-capitalist bureaucracy. Despite the struggle, not even the NUM has questioned the NUM programme, a thoroughgoing programme to acquire an understanding of the capitalist system, to get rid of the capitalist system and to confront and overthrow capitalist ideas.

Given the weakness of the official labour outlook among British workers, the RCP's task is to win over the mass of workers to support a revolutionary programme. The RCP's strategy is to struggle indirectly through the most politically conscious workers on the banner of revolutionary politics. The masses lie together the most class-conscious workers around an anti-capitalist programme. Our propaganda is to transform the most class-conscious workers into a force for the revolution.

**Fighting
for the
future**



■ Women's rights



■ The miners' strike



■ The Irish War

in the struggle to create a new form of society. The transformation of the most advanced workers into an anti-capitalist leadership demands a broad education in revolutionary politics.

The development of a revolutionary vanguard requires a fundamental reorientation of the working class. Over the past century revolutionaries have fought to break workers from the influence of the traditional reformist parties of the labour movement. Our task today has been made more difficult by the legacy of the defeats of the working class movement before the last war and the long period of stability and anti-communist reaction that has prevailed since. Prolonged social stability has made capitalist society appear to be a natural and permanent order and made Marxism an alien ideology among workers.

We no longer have simply to break workers from reformism. The heritage of a depoliticised working class has restricted the emergence of significant currents within the working class which openly reject the capitalist system. Unlike in the period around the First World War, the leadership of the unions and the Labour Party has not come under great pressure to reconcile rank and file working class revolt against the system with the bureaucrats' own attachment to the establishment. Most of the pressure on the labour bureaucrats has come from the media and the right. Reformism, in the traditional sense of a political strategy that contains workers' anti-capitalist aspirations within the limits of the capitalist system, has not been tested and rejected. It has not even been widely accepted.

The working class movement has not been riven by clashes between a revolutionary rank and file and reformist bureaucrats. The tension has been at a more elementary level, between loyalty to class organisations and a general indifference to them resulting from negative experiences. Some workers declare their allegiance to their unions and their commitment to the Labour Party. Many have become cynical about their union leaders' commitments to saving jobs or fighting for their rights. They do not believe the promises of Labour politicians. They care little about anti-union legislation and vote for the Tories or the SDP/Liberal Alliance. As this division has opened up, the left has opted for the loyalty option and the right more or less unconsciously for that of indifference.

The left's solution is no solution. By trying to halt the disintegration of old labour movement institutions the left has become a prisoner of the past. In practice the left's strategy is just as divisive as the manoeuvres of the right. It leads to the more active sections of the working class blaming the more passive sections for the failure of the leadership of the labour movement. The scapegoating of the Notts miners by the NUM leadership and the left is the most striking example of a common feature of many recent disputes.

The tensions among different sections of the working class may develop into damaging divisions. To win over a class conscious layer under these conditions it is necessary to reformulate the problem of class unity. Through propaganda, ideological struggle and

practical work, we aim to expose the divisive consequences of bureaucratic unity and advance policies around which a new working class leadership can emerge. This approach is not only distinctive, but likely to be highly unpopular.

The fight for leadership means a struggle to redirect the politics of the working class. While the British left is preoccupied with the decline of labour movement institutions, we are concerned with the growing split in the working class. We aim to tackle the twin problems of the stifling of class instincts by the labour leadership and the influence of right-wing views over workers who have begun to break away from the official labour movement. No worker who seriously wants to fight can ignore these problems. We aim to ensure that workers who want to fight understand the basis for the divisions in our ranks and appreciate that only revolutionary politics can unite our forces.

Future prospects

The miners' strike has been more of a catalyst than a cause of recent developments. It has brought out and confirmed trends which were already evident not just in Britain but internationally. A conflict on this scale will have a considerable short-term impact on British politics. For the left the period ahead either demands the defeatism of the Communist Party's professor Eric Hobsbawm or necessitates the retreat into the organisations of the labour movement counselled by the Socialist Workers' Party's 'downturn' theoretician Duncan Hallas.

The conservative responses of the old men of the old labour movement are understandable. The forward march of the official labour movement has indeed been halted and the narrow trade union militancy of the seventies is no longer viable today. The right may well score further victories and win wider support for its policies. The period ahead holds few prospects for the left and its pessimism is entirely justified.

Should we join the left-wing consensus and declare that now is the time for realism or the pursuit of modest objectives? Our answer is an unequivocal no! There are periods of reaction and periods of reaction. The working class has passed the last 30 years under the domination of a particularly suffocating form of reaction. There was some improvement in living standards and a liberal political climate, but it was reaction nonetheless. The climate of reaction that is spreading today is a response to the breakdown of past political arrangements.

The period ahead is not simply one of reaction but of instability and conflict. In the short run reaction cannot resolve the problems facing the ruling class. All that it can do is postpone them by weakening its opponents. The coming period invites questioning, new ideas and far reaching solutions. The process which is wreaking havoc on the organisations of the labour movement also provides the experiences necessary for the politicisation of the class struggle. We need not mourn the disintegration of Labourist traditions and institutions. Our only regret is that this has not taken place under the impact of revolutionary forces.

Going weekly

The Revolutionary Communist Party's decision to launch a weekly paper is a conscious attempt to force the party into a more active relationship with workers. The scope for revolutionary propaganda work is enormous. The miners' strike has politicised daily life and raised a series of issues around which it is vital to clarify a working class point of view. The strike exposed the conflict between workers' livelihoods and capitalist economic viability. It revealed the conflict between workers fighting for their jobs and the forces of capitalist law and order.

The miners' strike threw open the whole question of the legitimacy of picket-line violence against the violence of the riot police backed by the courts and the government. Thatcher's battle slogan about taking on 'the enemy within' introduced parallels between the miners and Galtieri's Argentina, Gadaffi's Libya and the IRA. All these are issues in a propaganda war in which the working class sorely needs an independent voice. *the next step* weekly aims to provide it.

We aim to do two things. We seek to politicise the workers' movement through responding to the bosses' propaganda attacks. This will clarify the real issues at stake and expose the narrow, sectional and defensive response that is characteristic of the spokesmen of the official labour movement. At the same time we have to relate to the defensive consciousness that prevails among the most militant workers by pointing out that the effective defence of working class interests demands that we prepare for power in the present.

Our propaganda and activities will continually emphasise the necessity for a new type of working class party. This cannot be done through issuing resounding declarations. Nor can it be done through counterposing the necessity for a revolutionary party to the disputes and conflicts in which workers are engaged at present. Our party aims to prepare workers to take power through the leadership and direction it gives to the day-to-day struggles of the working class.

Our approach will be to reformulate the problems workers experience, to provide a broad anti-capitalist perspective and to indicate practical solutions. We intend to confront the divisions in the working class by demanding that the labour movement defends all those it has traditionally ignored or patronised. Our weekly paper will promote activities which challenge the oppression of women, black people, the unemployed and other sections of society. A new labour movement can only be built through a ruthless exposure of the rottenness of all the old institutions.

the next step weekly is a political weapon designed to help to build a party that can lead the working class into a new form of society. The bankruptcy of the existing order is every day exposed in the barbaric measures the ruling class is prepared to take to save its profits — from star wars defence systems to social security cuts. History shows that they will stop at nothing. Our future depends on organising to stop them — fast.

cannot base their existing class struggle. recognition that the working class is today dominated by the ideology of the labour movement. The fear of hard-fought militant miners' *Plan for Coal* capitalist scheme for the working class is the strength of its destiny in the system, it is essential to the influence of

broad anti-capitalist workers, it is impossible to relate to the class first winning over workers towards communism. The conscious workers perspective. The aim to political work advanced section of the that can lead the rest



■ Racism

■ Unemployment

INTERNATIONAL

Sudan

The tailor-made coup

A Western-backed palace coup over the Easter weekend replaced Sudanese president Nimeiry with a military dictatorship under General Abdul Rahman Swar al-Dahab. But the strife ravaging the horn of Africa in response to poverty, famine and war remains a serious threat to Western influence in one of the world's most strategically sensitive areas.

Last December a top British foreign affairs journal expressed growing Western fears that Nimeiry might be replaced by a more popular and anti-Western ruler in the style of Libya and Ethiopia:

'A regime in Khartoum broadly in line with Gadaffi's or Mengistu's world views, or even a state of political anarchy in the Sudan, would represent a fundamental change in the balance of power in this part of Africa. It would have implications for the situation in Chad, would put pressure on Ethiopian dissidents, would surround Egypt with hostile territory, and would be a major strategic setback to American interests in the Middle East.' (*The World Today*, December 1984)

The article pulled no punches in its proposed solution: 'The only avenue out of the current economic and political crisis involves Nimeiry's replacement, either through a coup or his resignation'. It was a case of 'come in Nimeiry, your time is up'. Within a few months he did the decent thing and quietly handed himself in.

Sudan is a major prize for Western powers, for both economic and strategic reasons. It holds an estimated five billion barrels of untapped oil reserves. It is entirely dependent on imported industrial goods, a large proportion of which come from Britain (Sudan's ruler until 1956). The fertile and mineral-rich South presents the prospect of rich pickings for Western investors. Through the Lonrho corporation Britain has a well-established lead in Sudan, though the Americans and others are fast catching up.

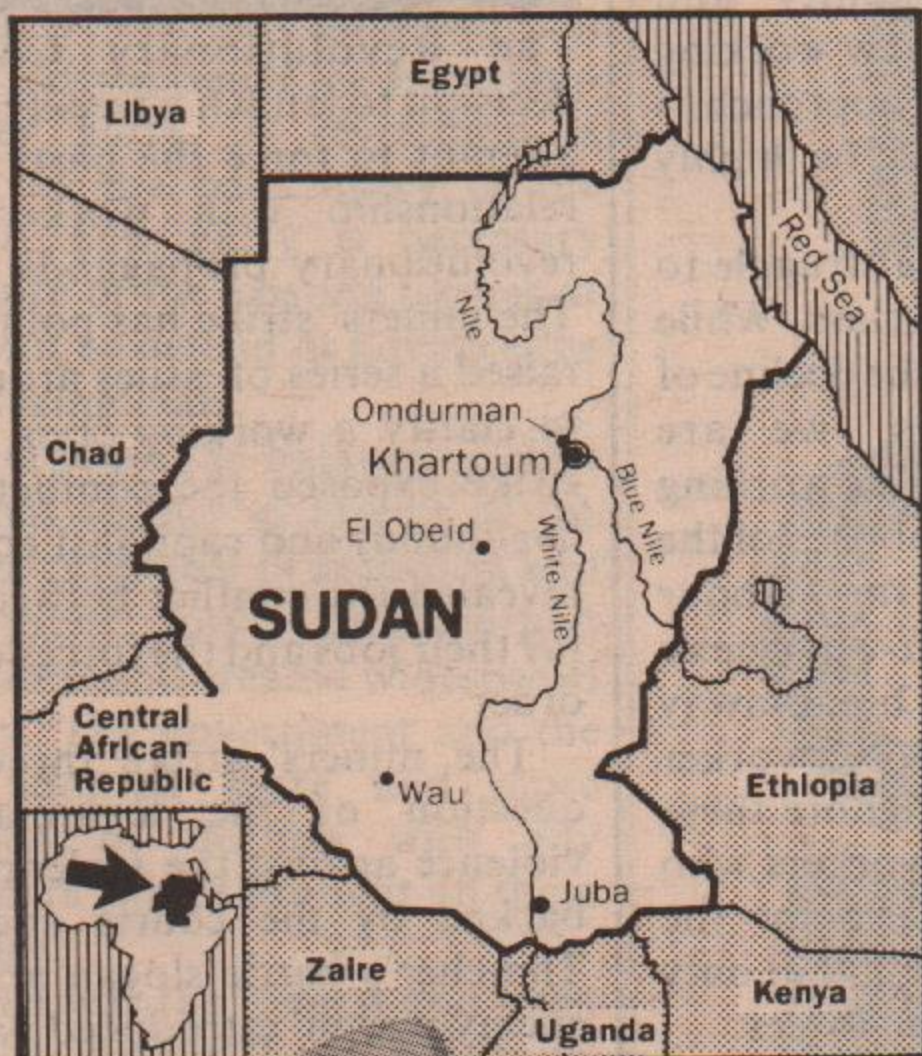
Strategic crossroads

Sudan stands at the crossroads of African and Middle Eastern conflicts. It borders on Chad and Ethiopia where famine and war have produced an advanced state of social disintegration and a flood of refugees into Sudan. It is also adjacent to Egypt where the regime faces considerable internal tensions as a result of economic problems and its mediating role in wider Arab-Israeli conflicts. Sudan faces across the Red Sea to the Gulf — the supply route of oil to the Western world and the focus of the explosive Iran-Iraq war.

The fate of Sudan is a key concern in London and Washington. It is the second largest recipient of British overseas aid and its armed forces are trained and supplied by Britain. Under president Reagan the USA has increased its military and political presence in this traditionally European-controlled part of the continent. Since 1981 the USA has maintained bases for its Rapid Deployment Force at Port of Sudan on the Red Sea coast, at Berbera in Somalia and in Kenya.

The consolidation of Western control over Sudan now depends on the ability of the new regime to contain economic and social problems in the North and civil war in the South. Much of Northern Sudan has been turned into a desert by the sub-Saharan drought. Six million people in Sudan — including one million refugees — now face starvation. Price increases and currency devaluations imposed by the IMF have cut into workers' and peasants' meagre incomes and sparked off the riots and strikes that finally precipitated Nimeiry's downfall.

The civil war waged by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army in the South is a major problem for the West. The conflict between the Muslim North and the Christian South is one legacy of British rule. The colonial authorities fostered sectarian



New man at the palace: General al-Dahab

divisions by giving preferential treatment to the Northerners. Even after Sudan's formal independence Western powers continued to encourage the North-South tensions to weaken potential anti-imperialist resistance. Guerrilla war raged throughout the sixties.

When Nimeiry came to power in a radical officers' coup in 1969, the West at first backed the Southern Anya-nya guerrillas in an attempt to destabilise his regime. At the time Nimeiry supported the militant Arab nationalism of the Egyptian president Nasser and included communist ministers in his cabinet. To teach him a lesson the CIA

and MI6 armed and trained the Anya-nya and sponsored ethnic minority and religious opposition parties.

Under this pressure Nimeiry eventually came to heel. After British intervention saved him from a coup attempt by left-wing officers in 1971, Nimeiry opened up the country to the West and unleashed a campaign of terror to destroy the Communist Party and the trade unions. In 1972 the civil war was brought to an end when Britain negotiated a settlement between North and South. Having domesticated Nimeiry and ended the civil war, the West looked forward to a period of stability in Sudan.

The onset of the world recession in the mid-seventies led to renewed tensions between North and South and shattered Western hopes of stability. Deprivation and discrimination fuelled Southern resentment against Nimeiry. The regime's pro-Muslim policies sparked off renewed guerrilla revolt in the South. Nimeiry responded with a policy of open discrimination and repression. He disbanded the regional administration, increased the tax burden on the South and built a pipeline to channel the South's oil straight to the North.

Explosive Islam

In September 1983 Nimeiry's attack on the South reached its climax with the introduction of the Islamic legal code. This attempt to strengthen the state apparatus through an alliance with the Islamic clergy only further alienated the South and made the clergy into a powerful potential threat to the regime. Earlier this year, Nimeiry realised that Islamic fervour was getting out of hand. His secret police rounded up and executed several Muslim leaders in a move

that finally isolated Nimeiry from his last remaining base of support.

The Western press seized on the floggings and amputations carried out under the Islamic legal code to foster chauvinist outrage against Nimeiry. Western politicians were not really concerned about the grisly punishments meted out to Sudanese people. They fear Islamic fundamentalism because it has become an explosive force throughout the Arab world. An Islamic Sudan could easily become an ally of Iran or Libya and thus further weaken the West's already fragile hold on the Middle East and North Africa. To forestall such a development Britain and the US schemed to bring about Nimeiry's downfall.

Now the West hopes that General al-Dahab will clear up the mess. He has gone to great lengths to win the support of the opposition parties for the construction of a broadly based national government. To enforce the harsh austerity measures needed to keep the regime afloat and to deal with the Southern insurgents, al-Dahab depends on the acquiescence of at least a section of Sudanese society. He did not have to wait long. Last week's friends of the workers and peasants in the Alliance of National Forces have already made their peace with the new regime. To gain representation in al-Dahab's administration they have accepted martial law and the banning of strikes.

Sudanese workers and peasants however remain a formidable challenge to the new regime and its Western backers. British workers can do much to help the brutally impoverished people of Sudan by taking on the enemy at home that bears a heavy responsibility for the devastation of a potentially prosperous African country. ■

LEBANON

Israel's iron fist

Israel's phased withdrawal from southern Lebanon has embroiled the Zionist state in a new round of bloody warfare. Israeli troops invaded Lebanon in 1982 to crush Palestinian resistance. But they have only succeeded in adding the Shiites to the Palestinians as sworn enemies of the state of Israel. Now a wave of Shiite revolt threatens to destabilise the Western order throughout the Middle East.

The Israelis keep the peace in southern Lebanon with characteristic brutality. Israeli raiders have recently killed and kidnapped hundreds of Shiites, and bombed or burned their villages. Last week Israel deported 1200 Lebanese prisoners of war to camps in Israel. In response to war-weariness at home the Israeli government has promised to complete the withdrawal of its forces from Lebanon by the end of May. But in reality Israeli forces are being redeployed to more secure positions along a permanent buffer zone stretching up to Sidon.

To protect the Zionist state against the Arab people both within and outside its borders, Israel has to keep the lid on Lebanon. Israeli defence minister Yitzak Rabin recently explained the simple and unchanging objectives of Israeli strategy:

'Anywhere there are terrorists, wherever an operation is initiated, we will get there. It doesn't matter whether the front line is here or there.'

The policy of the iron fist is nothing new. As a state artificially created to police the Middle East for the USA and Britain in 1948, Israel has always had to use terrorist methods to contain Arab resistance. But this time Israel's occupation of Lebanon has

sparked off a Shiite resistance which it cannot contain.

In 1982 the Shiite communities of southern Lebanon welcomed the Israeli invading forces with rice and flowers. They hoped that the occupation would bring peace to a region which had become a battlefield for Palestinian and Israeli forces. Today, after almost three years of Israeli occupation, the Shiites have become the most lethal anti-Israeli fighters in Lebanon.

The Shiite guerrilla war against the Israeli forces, organised by the Amal and Hizbollah militias, marks a new stage in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The one million Shiites form the largest and fastest-growing section of Lebanese society. Concentrated in the poor south and in the slums on the southern and north-eastern periphery of Beirut, they are the country's most oppressed people. They have no stake in the sectarian Lebanese system established by the Western powers when France pulled out in 1943. Middle class Shiite leaders have proved unable to restrain the peasants in the south and youth in the cities from taking up arms against the terror of the Israeli army and its local Christian allies.

The Shiite threat to stability in the Middle East spreads far beyond the borders of Lebanon. Radical Shiite movements exist across the region. Shiite fervour has sustained Iran during almost five years of war with Iraq. Arab rulers fear that the resistance in southern Lebanon could inspire Shiite uprisings on their doorsteps. A line of nervous Arab leaders, from Egypt's president Mubarak to Jordan's king Hussein, has recently flown to Washington to beg the Reagan administration to bring its Israeli agents to the negotiating table before

Lebanon explodes. They know that the shockwaves would shake their own regimes to their foundations.

America and Israel have no alternative to military terror against the Palestinian and Shiite masses. But every attempt they make to crush the opposition risks spreading the conflict. The war in the south and this year's renewed anti-American bombings and demonstrations in Beirut have shown that the anti-imperialist spirit of the Arab masses remains unbowed. As the conflict in Lebanon continues, Israel's iron fist is in danger of having its knuckles broken. ■



Shiite sisters armed against Israel

REVIEWS

LEFT AND THE MINERS



Jo Boatman (reflex)

Insult to injury

Huw Beynon ed, *Digging deeper: issues in the miners' strike*, Verso 1985, pbk £3.95
 Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons, *The great strike*, Bookmarks 1985, pbk £3.95
 Mike Freeman, *Our day will come: the miners' fight for jobs*, Junius 1985, 50p

SINCE THE END OF the miners' strike a new consensus has emerged on the left that the NUM should have held a ballot in the early weeks of the dispute. This view now unites the Kinnockites of the Labour Coordinating Committee and their co-rethinkers in the *Marxism Today* wing of the Communist Party, with the 'Trotskyists' of *Militant* and *Socialist Organiser*. 'With hindsight', Huw Beynon agrees, 'the decision not to hold a ballot at that time might be seen as a tactical mistake'. This leaves only the Socialist Workers' Party, of which Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons are leading members, faithfully parroting the Scargill line that if there had been a ballot the majority would have gone against strike action and that anyway 'no man had a right to vote away another man's job'.

In fact, as Mike Freeman argues in *Our day will come*, the NUM's failure to hold a ballot was more than a tactical error. It 'meant an admission of defeat at the very outset'. The NUM leadership's fear of consulting its own members exposed its lack of confidence in its strike strategy. To succeed in winning Notts miners' support, a ballot campaign would have had to drop the NUM's attempts to justify the miners' strike on the grounds that it was in the economic interests of the British coal industry. Success depended on throwing out the policies of industrial collaboration which Scargill and his predecessors have pursued over the past 40 years. Scargill's manoeuvres to avoid holding a ballot revealed the strategic weakness at the heart of the NUM's approach.

It is a measure of the feebleness and irrelevance of the left that its various factions now come forward with their criticisms when the strike has already been defeated. In the stormy days of March and April 1984 the Revolutionary Communist Party stood alone on the left in calling for a campaign to go out and win a national ballot as the only way to take the strike forward. Now the left has discovered that the price of evasion of the rank and file and manipulation of the rule book is divisions and defeat. Yet its recognition of

the ballot fiasco remains a narrow and technical one.

Both *Digging deeper* and *The great strike* illustrate the left's superficial assessment of the failures of the strike. These assessments amount to a series of more or less petty criticisms of the tactical failures of the NUM leadership together with an overall endorsement of its strike strategy.

In *Digging deeper* South Wales NUM spokesman Kim Howells launches an ill-disguised attack on Scargill. The NUM's national leader is blamed for neglecting pickets of power stations and ports, for the collapse of the Triple Alliance of coal, rail and steel unions, and for emphasising Orgreave-style mass picketing. Howells' criticisms appear radical, but are in reality an accommodation to the right. Howells' approach amounts to an apology for the anti-capitalist aspects of the strike, especially picket-line violence, and an attempt to present the miners' struggle as a patriotic campaign to safeguard the capitalist coal industry.

Another popular criticism of the NUM is to blame the area leaders for all the failures of the strike. This was the central theme of the SWP throughout the dispute and it is recycled here by Callinicos and Simons. Beynon agrees that the area structure of the union prevented the national leadership from exercising effective control over picketing.

The notion of Scargill as a prisoner of the executive is a myth which obscures the NUM president's responsibility for the failure of leadership in the strike. Scargill had enthusiastic support at rank and file level in the NUM. He could have carried through any policy he wanted over the heads of the area leaders. Yet from the beginning to the end of the strike Scargill put his faith in a negotiated settlement. That was why he invested so much time and effort in round after round of talks. For the national NUM leadership picketing and other action at local level took second place to the action in the committee rooms.

There was no real conflict between Scargill's rhetoric on television and Jack Taylor's chaotic organisation on the ground. This double act was consistent with the NUM's overall strategy. When pressure for action mounted the national leadership organised token gestures like the Orgreave picket — a bureaucratic stunt taken at face value by Callinicos and Simons and the SWP. The left's superficial criticisms of the NUM's conduct of the strike only expose that it is too dependent on left-wing trade union leaders to be capable of serious criticism of their disastrous role.

Helen Swift

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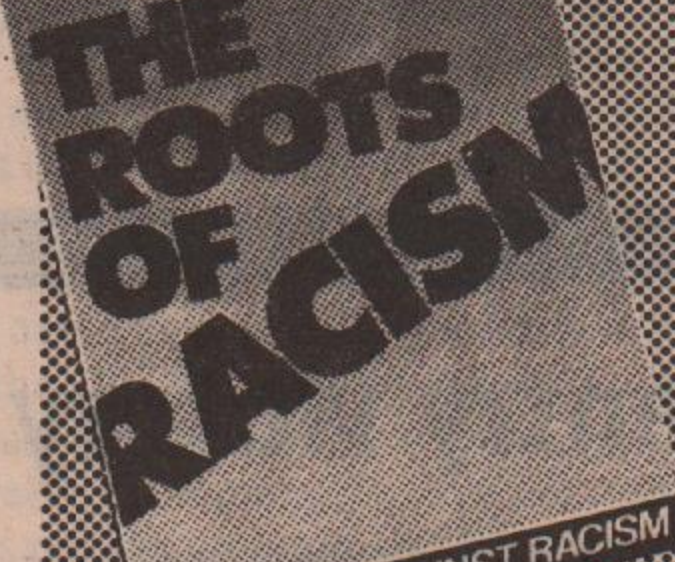


Out now — the pamphlet that tells it like it was in the miners' strike. *Our day will come* looks at different aspects of the miners' battle for jobs, from the problem of Nottinghamshire to Arthur Scargill's strike strategy. It tackles the failures of leadership that undermined effective action and points a new way forward for miners and other workers to take on the bosses and win.

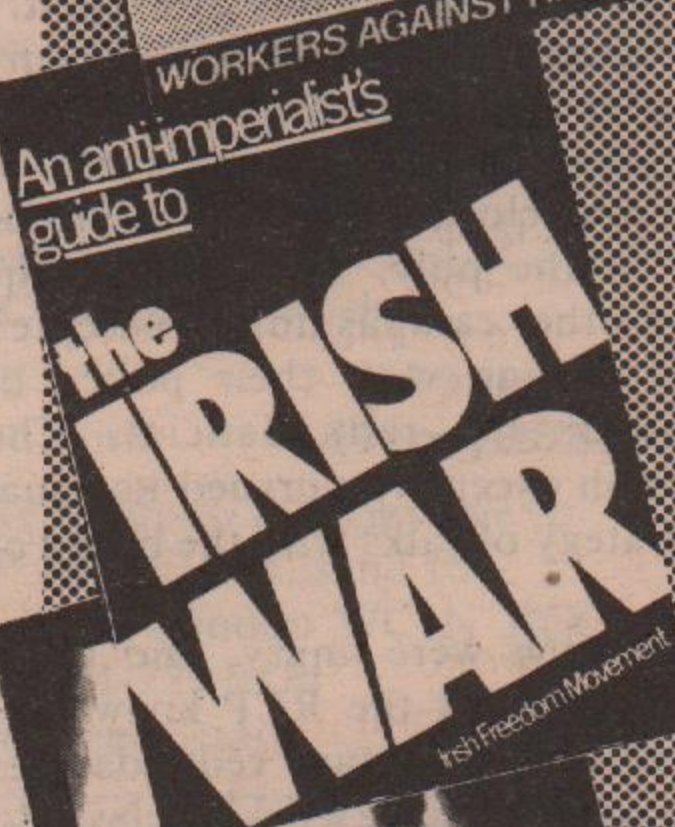
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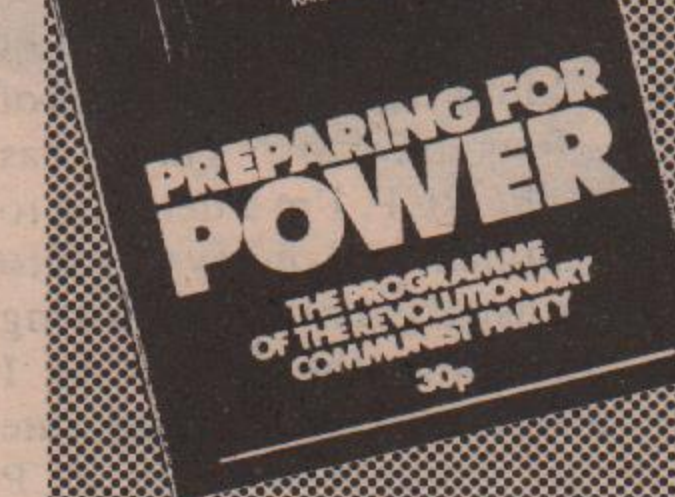
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FEMINISM



Don't do it

Robyn Rowland ed, *Women who do and women who don't join the women's movement*, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1984, pbk £5.95

THIS BOOK FEATURES 24 contributions by feminist and anti-feminist women. The trouble is it is hard to tell the difference between them. In her introduction Robyn Rowland attempts to define what is distinctive about those who do and those who don't. But in her conclusion she acknowledges that it is the similarities between both that are so compelling: 'All the women are pro-family, pro-children and pro-women'. If you haven't realised how right-wing the women's movement has become you should read this book.

The feminist offerings are dull and defensive. Socialist feminist Juliet Mitchell confides that her involvement in the women's movement now consists of being 'interested above all in the question of "what are women?"'. An obsessive preoccupation with their individual selves is the most distinctive trait of the feminist writers.

The anti-feminists are far more confident and political. Right-wing women like Valerie Riches, head of the British branch of the Responsible Society, argue their enthusiasm for motherhood and hostility to abortion and promiscuity with conviction. The 'who do's' on the other hand give the distinct impression of not knowing what they are doing. The book is a fitting obituary for the middle class women's movement.

Kate Marshall

LABOUR AND GAYS

Gay diversions

Jamie Gough and Mike MacNair, *Gay liberation in the eighties*, Pluto Press 1985, pbk £4.95

GOUGH AND MACNAIR aren't shy about their political affiliations. Ken Livingstone's front cover endorsement of their book is hardly surprising given their claim that 'the Labour GLC has done much to counter anti-gay ideas' and advice to gay people to join the Labour Party. For gay radicals the Labour Party has become a welcome shelter from today's harsh climate of moral reaction.

The past 12 months have brought widespread attacks on gay rights, from raids and prosecutions at the Gay's the Word London bookshop, through Rugby council's discriminatory employment policy, to the anti-gay AIDS hysteria sweeping Britain. An analysis of gay oppression and a strategy for defending gay rights in the eighties are urgently needed. But *Gay liberation in the eighties* doesn't measure up. Gough and MacNair merely regurgitate the tired ideas which gay radicals have kicked about for 15 years.

The authors uphold the principle of autonomous organisation and the idea that gays need 'a self-governing movement of gay people fighting for gay rights'. The gay movement's insistence on autonomy means making gay people responsible for fighting their own oppression. In the early days of the gay movement this gave rise to the notion of 'coming out' and 'self-oppression'. Gay oppression could be fought by gay people declaring their homosexuality openly and thus changing other people's attitudes. The major obstacle to gay liberation was seen as the reluctance of gay individuals to come out — self-oppression.

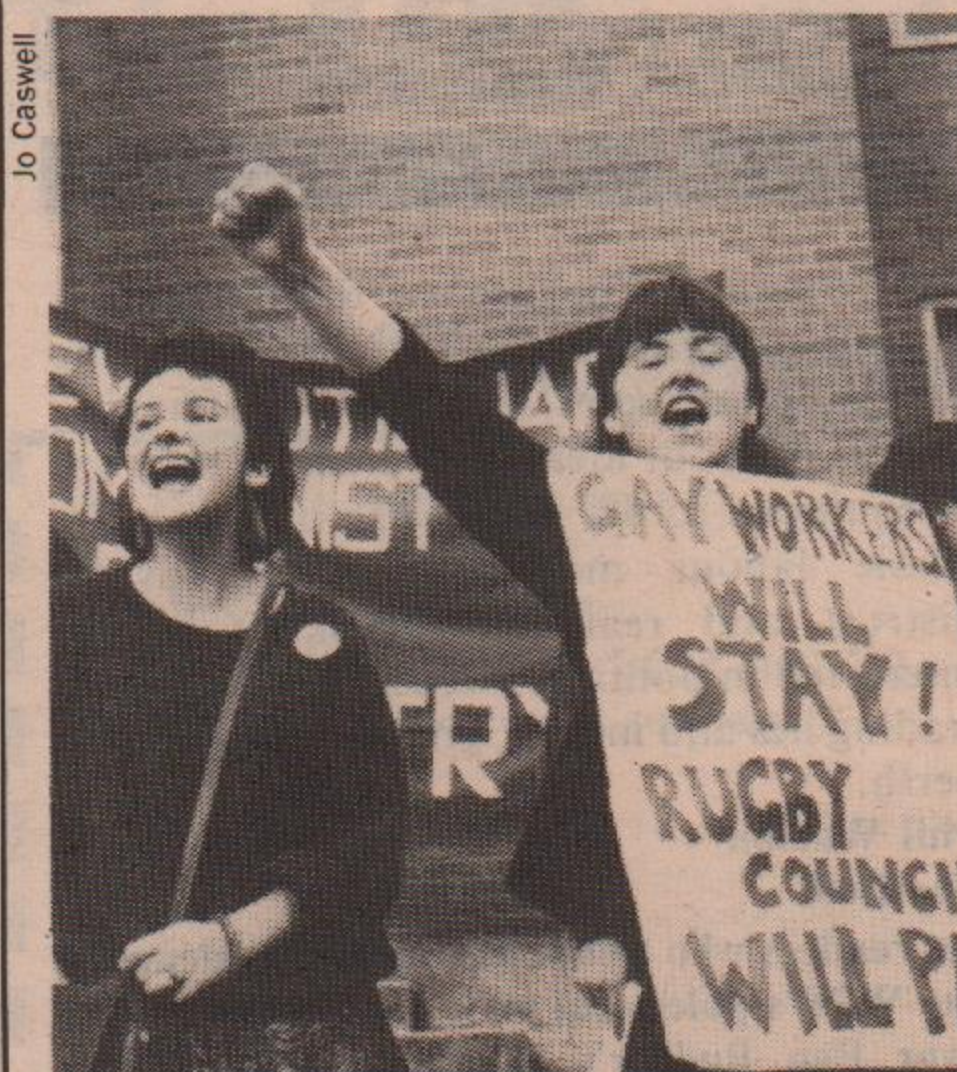
The obstacle to gay liberation is social, not self-oppression. It is rooted in capitalism's need to perpetuate the family and the morality that surrounds it. By stressing coming out the gay movement evaded the question of how to fight the system that causes their oppression. The struggle for gay rights was trivialised and turned into a question of life style. Autonomy meant isolating

gays from other struggles against the system. Gay politics became ghettoised. Aware of its own isolation the gay movement has now mortgaged itself to the Labour Party in return for a couple of centres and a few other odds and ends. The Labour left is prepared to stump up some cash from local government funds to allow gay activists to organise themselves and organise other gays to vote Labour. As long as gays don't demand that the Labour Party should fight for their rights, the left can easily pay lip-service to gays' concerns.

Gough and MacNair assert that working for gay rights outside the Labour Party is a 'recipe for isolation and ineffectiveness'. The truth is the other way round. The Labour Party has a consistent record of cynically using the concerns of oppressed people only to drop them at the first opportunity. Relying on the Labour Party is a recipe for isolation.

Gough and MacNair signal the retreat of the gay movement into the warm closet of the Labour Party. As attacks on gay rights escalate gay radicals are vacating the field.

John Johnson



RCP protest against bans on gay workers

LETTERS

STEPPING OUT

TERRORISM



RAF replies

It is very sad indeed to see such journals as *the next step* publishing such twaddle as 'Not the Red Army' in your March edition. Your theorists have obviously fallen into either one, or both of the following errors.

Exceptionalism. Being the assumption that for one reason or another that we, living in the 'affluent' West, with our advanced system of democracy are not subject to the same revolutionary conditions as our Third World Brothers. This is of course cultural chauvinism. It accepts that imperialism is

something different from, and unnecessary to capitalism, something that happens outside the sphere of Western society and the idea that armed struggle is somehow alien to these ideas.

Reformism. Which theory puts forward the strategy of peaceful transition to socialism. It pretends to reassure working people by spreading pacifist and conciliatory ideas, it disarms the revolutionary of his or her correct understanding of the true nature of the enemy and negates their power and will to fight, and win.

Thus many successful struggles, limited though they may be, which are parallel to and complementary to, militant armed struggle are instead turned against it and posed as an alternative.

I trust in future you will give full support to the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Fraction) and all freedom fighters the world over instead of such heart searchingly grudging admiration.

Fraternally,
Richard Collyer
RAF(UK)

tns replies:

Reformism is a political strategy which subordinates the working class to the capitalist order. Armed struggle is a tactic which can be used by reactionary, revolutionary or even reformist organisations. The important issue is not the tactic, but in what kind of struggle it is used. Richard Collyer's talk of revolutionary armed struggle in the West when no developed revolutionary movement exists is a middle class fantasy.

The RAF(UK) is unable to distinguish between the strategies appropriate to anti-imperialist struggle in advanced and backward capitalist countries — a characteristic feature of reformism. The notion that 'it's the same the whole world over' obscures the division of the world into a handful of imperialist super-powers and a large number of dominated countries. Reformists have always gone along with this notion because it absolves Western labour movements of the responsibility to make a priority of fighting their own imperialist ruling classes. It is sad indeed that the theorists of the RAF(UK) should fall for this old cop-out.

Constable Derek Noblett is the model non-racist policeman. As Asian affairs officer for the Tower Hamlets police, he often whips off his boots and helmet and pops into the local mosque for a chat with the Imam. Noblett says this helps him sort out Bengali's 'domestic disputes'. Last week he returned from a three week expenses-paid fact-finding jaunt around Bangladesh with two of his superiors, where they claim to have got a 'tremendous reception'. This is not surprising, since they probably saw lots of familiar faces from Tower Hamlets — like Bengali widow Afia Begum, whose 'domestic dispute' Noblett and company sorted out by raiding her east London home and deporting her last summer.

Still on the subject of non-racist policing in London, Met commander sir Kenneth Newman has ruled that under new stop-and-search laws constables can only look under a suspect's hat after taking him to a police station. It will come as a relief to Brixton's hat-wearing rasta population to know that they will be safely locked behind the door of a quiet cell before police start paying attention to the state of their heads.

Let them eat marzipan! Advertised in the latest edition of the Tory Party monthly, *Conservative newslines*:

'Marzipan Thatcher bust in real marzipan. Hand made, will keep for six months.'

While other right-wing Labour MPs are fighting off the constituency left's attempts to oust them, former Labour Northern Ireland secretary Roy Mason still lives in fear of being permanently de-selected by the Irish republican movement. He relies on the constant companionship of Special Branch body guards to secure his seat. Now the left in his Barnsley constituency has voted to ban the MP's minders from meetings, claiming they are reporting back to their superiors. As ever, the left has hit the wrong target. Who needs police spies when you've got Roy Mason, the man who ran the RUC torture and interrogation centre at Castlereagh, sitting in your meetings?

Sheffield city council, power base of left-wing Labour leader David Blunkett, is trying to cut labour costs by creating what Income Data Services calls 'participative structures to ease potential industrial relations problems'. In other words, the council is bringing in US-style company unionism. When similar deals are done between firms like Hitachi and the right-wing electricians' union, the left is up in arms. But in the hands of a left-wing Labour council, it becomes a progressive measure. Mind you, Blunkett's boys seem a little shy about their socialist productivity deal. The mere mention of it at a recent council meeting panicked Labour leaders into clearing the press and public galleries.

A timely warning has appeared for the Communist Party of Great Britain as it approaches next month's special congress, at which a split is widely predicted. A correspondent to the party paper *Focus* has pointed out that the leadership better get its act together quickly:

'There are other places people impatient to see some sort of revolutionary party may go to. The RCP is bringing out a weekly from 16 April.'

The date may be wrong, but it's the thought that counts. The *Focus* editors headed the letter 'Try the RCP for size', indicating that even they admit they can't handle the new competition.

ZIONISM

Sunderland poly

Last month's National Union of Students conference was largely the usual boring affair, most of the time being taken up by Tories raising disruptive points of order and left wingers making silly gestures by turning their backs when the right spoke. But one interesting debate was about Sunderland poly's banning of its Zionist Jewish society. Tory, Liberal and Labour students united with the executive to suspend Sunderland poly from the NUS.

This is a direct attack on that union's autonomy and was condemned by the delegates from most left-wing groups. So why did the Revolutionary Communist Students at the conference argue against Sunderland poly in the debate?

Roy Stone
Newcastle

tns replies:

Sunderland poly banned its Jewish society under two policies, one condemning Zionism as racism, the other giving no platform to racists. But Zionism is not racism. After centuries of oppression, the search for a homeland was a legitimate aspiration of the Jewish people. What is racist is the Zionist state of Israel, built by imperialism by denying the Palestinian people's right to self-determination. Students concerned about oppression in the Middle East should direct their efforts to supporting the Palestinian struggle.

Calling for bans is now a common feature of student politics, whether at Sunderland or North London Poly. But bureaucratic bans can never be an effective substitute for a political struggle against racists or anybody else.

LABOUR COUNCILS

Miners' wives deserted

In January I was booked by the police for collecting without a permit for Middleton miners' wives support group. I had been collecting throughout the strike, more than £1000 altogether. Leeds Labour council said they supported the strike and dished out the collecting permits, but that weekend my name wasn't down. My local Labour councillor knew I was coming up in court but did nothing about it. The council could have said that I had permission if they were really concerned about the miners. The Labour Party has gone on a lot about the great role women played during the strike, but things like this show they have given us no support when we needed it.

Anne-Marie Bruce
Middleton miners' wives
Leeds

CUTS

Coventry victory

Our group of RCP supporters in Coventry has led a successful fight to stop the closure of a canteen at the polytechnic and save 12 women workers' jobs. The women were told the canteen was closing and they could be redeployed in the poly. Their union, the TGWU, and other campus unions accepted the closure in line with their policy of allowing voluntary redundancies. The students' union executive pursued its usual dead-end strategy of talks with the board of governors.

But the women were angry, and those students who support the RCP knew that redeployment and voluntary redundancies meant a loss of jobs for the working class. So we started a campaign among students and workers, arguing for 'No job losses, no redundancies, no trade-off of jobs for

services'. We got the students' union to pass a motion supporting the women by 200 votes to one, pulled off stunts to highlight the issue and organised lobbies of the board of governors and the Labour city council. A week after we protested outside their meeting, the board of governors told the women that the canteen would not be closing after all, and their jobs were safe.



The success of our campaign showed the way to fight the cuts — not by bureaucratic gestures and negotiations, but by wide campaigning and direct action. That's a lesson we need to learn as the Labour council gets ready to push through £7m of cuts.

Tom Bruggen
Lanchester polytechnic

SLANDER

'Police spies'

I thought you should know about the latest attack which the 'dirty tricks' department of the 'Workers' Revolutionary Party has launched against the RCP. I'm a delegate to Sheffield trades council, and on my way into meetings I run the usual gauntlet of left-wing paper sellers, including the WRP. As I passed them outside a recent meeting, one who knows me as a supporter of the RCP turned to his mate and said he had 'independent witnesses' to prove that I was with the police on the Orgreave picket line!

This sort of low-life attempt to discredit political opponents is typical of the way the

WRP operates. They seem to think slander is a good substitute for debate. Branding the RCP as 'police spies' lets them out of having to deal with our ideas — something they are ill equipped to do. But it also opens up the whole labour movement to confusion, distrust and real infiltration. If you're interested in political discussion rather than trading lies and insults, give the WRP a wide berth.

Phil Watson
Sheffield

tns readers who would like further evidence of the WRP's polemical style should cast an eye over Ben Rudder's scurrilous piece 'Once again who are the RCP?' in last month's *Labour Review*.

Write to
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REPORTS

Round one at Yarrow

Workers at Yarrow Shipbuilders on Clydeside are under attack on two fronts. Their present employer, British Shipbuilders, wants 450 redundancies. And their prospective boss — GEC — wants cuts in wages and increases in productivity.

The shop stewards' committee at the yard has failed to prepare the workforce for a fight. On 26 March, after Norman Tebbit had announced the GEC takeover, the stewards led an occupation. The immediate issue was the suspension of five senior shop stewards for refusing to talk to management. The occupation did not challenge British Shipbuilders' plans to get rid of 450 jobs and hold down pay or GEC's plans to exact punitive productivity increases.

Supporters of the next step argued that the occupation should demand a substantial pay increase and guarantees on jobs and conditions. This way rank and file members would be clear what they were fighting for and management would be under pressure to reveal its plans for the yard. We argued

that Yarrow workers should start visiting other yards — Scott Lithgow for example — and link up with other workers facing similar attacks.

The stewards' committee, led by Dougie Conroy, preferred to limit the action to the issue of suspensions. The occupation was successful in forcing management to withdraw the suspensions. But it was a missed opportunity to galvanize the workforce for the battles to come. Conroy and his committee have sacrificed wage increases for years to boost the bosses' profits. Now Yarrow workers need to be clear that fighting for jobs means fighting against the bosses' plans to make profits.

Yarrow workers need not fight alone. Workers at HM Naval Base Rosyth are also facing privatisation. Shipyard workers need to start serious discussions with each other about the attacks they are facing and the action required to save jobs and win wage rises.

Stevie O'Reardon

GLC jobs on the line

Labour left wingers in local government are at one another's throats. But while Ken Livingstone, John McDonnell, Ted Knight and the rest indulge their petty squabbles, our jobs are on the line.

The Labour GLC budget opted for immediate cuts of £42m and unspecified cuts later in the year. Behind the latest wave of GLC job ads and vacancy circulars, the priority of the Labour councillors is greater efficiency. They aim to increase workloads by not filling vacancies and by cutting back on programmes and projects. Higher efficiency for them means fewer of us working harder for less.

The Labour GLC campaign against abolition endorsed by the unions now lies in ruins. GLC workers have been taken for a ride. The central theme of the publicity campaign was that GLC workers and their employers had the same objective. But all the posters, petitions, balloons and democracy days could not disguise the conflict of interest between the council bosses and the council workers. They need to cut costs and provide services on the cheap. We need to save our jobs and defend our already appalling wages and conditions.

Our unions have surrendered their independence to employers who just happen to be Labour councillors. But they are



employers just the same. The unions must put jobs first. Only by defending jobs can we defend services. And we cannot defend jobs, wages and conditions in alliance with our employers.

Let's make sure future action is united and effective by getting organised now:

- There are 1800 vacancies at the GLC — insist that they are filled immediately
- Insist that every contract agency worker is given a proper Direct Labour job
- Fight all redundancies at the Greater London Enterprise Board, the South Bank concert halls and every GLC workplace
- Impose an overtime standstill — no increase, no decrease in overtime working.

Don Mallory

Anti-fascist fantasy

The well-publicised racist outbursts of Bradford headmaster Ray Honeyford have provided a local focus for the cruder nationalism of the fascist fringe.

Last Saturday the British National Party rallied its meagre forces for an election meeting in Bradford. Having failed to persuade the Tories to ban the rally, the Labour Party and the left fixed up a 'first come, first served' deal with the police to get into the rally. On the day the left turned out in force to take on a motley crew of 35 patriots. But the police went back on their word and locked out the left. 'Open the gates, first come first served' chanted the Socialist Workers' Party.

The left lives in a fantasy world. It calls on a Tory council that practices discrimination against blacks day in day out to put racists like Ray Honeyford in their place. It pleads with the police who do business in brutalising blacks to play by its rules. And it

picks on the wrong problem. Fighting racism means more than beating up a few fascists. Workers Against Racism is taking on respectable British racism at its roots, by challenging the all-party consensus that backs racist immigration controls and the racist police.

Fiona Ryan



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

COME ALONG!

Debate

Embryo rights and women's rights

Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child *and* Life *versus*

Revolutionary Communist Party *and* a communist doctor

Friday 26 April 7.30pm

Holborn Library
Theobald's Road
London WC1
(nearest   Holborn)

Demonstrations

Fight NHS cuts!

Monday 22 April 2pm

Chapel Allerton hospital, Harehills Lane, Leeds

Anti-Powell Bill protest

Saturday 27 April 1pm

Lincoln Inn Fields, London WC2

Join the RCP's 'Defend abortion and contraception rights' contingent

Meetings

The GLC and abolition

Stop Labour's faking — start fighting!

Speakers: Mick Hume and a GLC worker

Friday 19 April 7.30pm

Principal Floor, County Hall
London SE1
(nearest   Waterloo)

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South Africa in revolt

Black blood on British hands

At least 60 blacks have been shot in recent weeks in police raids on squatters camps, funeral processions and demonstrations. Last weekend's mass protests and riots showed that black people are undaunted by state terror. The question now is — how can apartheid be defeated and what can we do in Britain to hasten its destruction?

The token reforms introduced by South African premier PW Botha regarding the constitution, union recognition, and racial marriage bars, have only fuelled the resentment of the black masses who are excluded from the political life of the apartheid state. People in the townships are angry about the government's attempts to resettle them in the remote homelands allocated to blacks.

Apartheid terror

The regime has met resistance with ferocious repression. Deportations, bans, mass arrests and killings remain the only ways the South African ruling class can ensure its domination over the black masses.

- In February five blacks were shot dead and at least 30 injured when the 65 000 inhabitants of Crossroads, a black shantytown near Capetown, resisted forced removal to the barren lands of the Cape Flats.

- On 21 March police opened fire on 4000 peaceful demonstrators at Uitenhage near Port Elizabeth, killing 40 blacks and injuring many more. Following the massacre police attacked a funeral procession, claiming one more life and injuring 10.

- During the Easter weekend at least three more blacks were shot in townships in the Cape.

Last weekend's riots and demonstrations in the Transvaal and Orange Free State showed that the struggle is now spreading throughout the country. Black workers have erected barricades and attacked police and army patrols with stones and petrol bombs.

The government's attempt to contain resistance by promoting a layer of middle class black politicians and functionaries to help police the homelands and townships has backfired badly. In recent riots token black councillors 'elected' in sham polls have been the first targets. The government's stooges have felt the wrath of the masses and several have been hacked to death. Black resistance has succeeded in halting the government's resettlement scheme. Despite repeated raids, demolition of homes and mass arrests, the government has not been able to dislodge the blacks from Crossroads or from other Cape settlements.

Celebrity campaigns

The killings of the past few months have shocked and angered many people in the West. In the USA Stevie Wonder, Jessie Jackson and Amy Carter (Jimmy's daughter) and a host of other celebrities have been arrested on pickets outside the South African embassy in Washington. Similar protests have taken place in London and other Western capitals.

Anti-apartheid campaigners in the USA and Britain are calling for economic and political sanctions against the South African regime. All their demands are for initiatives to be taken by governments and business leaders against apartheid. They are calling for disinvestment, the ending of diplomatic links, trade boycotts and arms embargoes to put pressure on the South African ruling class to abandon its apartheid policies. But apartheid is no policy option for the rulers of South Africa. Their system depends for its survival on the oppressive conditions that



Asking Western politicians to challenge apartheid is like asking pimps to campaign against vice

prevail under apartheid. South Africa emerged as the dominant power on the continent through the super-exploitation of blacks on farms, in mines and in factories. The pressures of the recession are squeezing the South African ruling class between the need to intensify exploitation to secure the economy, and the need to contain the threat to political stability from the black masses. The way to get rid of apartheid lies through the struggle against South African capitalism itself.

It is not only the South African ruling class that benefits from apartheid. The Pretoria regime provides the West with one of its most profitable areas of investment. Behind Botha stand the beneficiaries of apartheid in Britain and the USA. Apartheid is one of the Western powers' most valuable

assets. It offers starvation wages, a brutal police force and a workforce that can be deported, imprisoned or killed when necessary. This explains why Britain, the USA and other imperialist countries invest their capital in the apartheid state.

The West fully supports the apartheid system. Apart from its crucial role in generating capitalist profits, the Pretoria regime also performs a vital political function for its Western allies. It guarantees to keep the black masses under control, not only inside its own borders, but throughout southern Africa. Of all the Western powers, Britain, South Africa's former colonial ruler, has the biggest stake in apartheid. More than 500 British companies invest in South Africa, holding assets worth at least £12 billion. Pretoria depends on Britain for supplies of military hardware, electronic equipment and oil and loans to stay afloat. Britain is one of the main supporters — and one of the main beneficiaries — of black oppression under Botha.

The black liberation struggle is a challenge, not only to the South African regime, but to the major Western powers. It is a particular threat to Britain at a time when economic decline has made British

bosses more dependent than ever on the profits they can squeeze out of oppressed workers overseas. Even Thatcher felt the need to express her 'regret' at the massacre at Uitenhage — because the escalation of conflict in South Africa is a threat to British interests.

British workers also have a big stake in South Africa. Every blow against apartheid is a setback for our own ruling class. We should not waste our time arguing for Western capitalists to disinvest from South Africa. The politicians and businessmen in the West who sustain South African capitalism cannot be turned into fighters against the apartheid system. And the wealth of South Africa is not theirs to withdraw — it belongs to the black masses who created it. We should declare our solidarity with the people of Crossroads and Uitenhage by taking on the backers of apartheid in Britain — the British ruling class.

The most effective way to support the black people of South Africa is to weaken the enemy at home. By emulating the black workers' resolution and courage in the struggle here we can hasten the destruction of our common enemy. ■