

tms

the next step

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**Free
contraception
on demand.....**

**Oppose the
Gillick
ruling**

Demonstrate:

Sunday 23 June 11am

Lincoln's Inn Fields

(Holborn Θ)

London



The ballot

Last week Arthur Scargill denounced the leadership faction of the Communist Party for running a 'campaign of vilification' over the NUM's conduct of the year-long strike. Scargill also rounded on George Bolton, who is chair of the Communist Party and vice-president of the Scottish region of the NUM. He accused Bolton of criticising the NUM leadership even though he was 'part and parcel of every single decision taken by the NUM' during the strike.

Scargill condemned the Communist Party leadership and its journal *Marxism Today* for its tendency 'to compromise with the class enemy'. He also tried to use Mick McGahey, who is president of the Scottish NUM, vice-president of the national NUM and an executive member of the Communist Party, against Bolton and the Communist Party leadership. Scargill quoted McGahey's view that the Communist Party 'should have been activating in every factory in Britain' during the strike, but lacked the organisation in industry to deliver effective solidarity.

This was a cynical ploy because it is well known that McGahey takes the side of his Scottish deputy and his old pals at the head of the Communist Party. Within days McGahey had spoken out in defence of Bolton. But what has Bolton done to provoke such an acrimonious public dispute? He has made public his view that the miners were mistaken not to have held a ballot in the early stages of the strike last year. He has also criticised the mass picketing tactics pursued by the NUM leadership. He argues that the NUM should have concentrated on campaigning to win wider public sympathy for their aims.

Disaster strategy

At this time last year the left was united in support of Scargill's refusal to hold a national ballot. The NUM leaders too shared Scargill's determination to avoid consulting the membership. They backed the scheme of pushing ahead with area-by-area strike action, even though it was apparent that the Notts area would not join a strike called in this way. The only section of the left that opposed the Scargill line was the Revolutionary Communist Party.

In the first six weeks of the strike the RCP called for a campaign to win a ballot in support of all-out national strike action. Our argument was that dodging the ballot would make it impossible to unite the miners and win wider solidarity. We also pointed out that the failure to hold a ballot made the chances of winning the strike slim indeed. Our assessment was, unfortunately, fully vindicated by events.

For the RCP the question of the ballot opened up the wider political issues at the heart of the dispute. The NUM leaders were afraid to go out and persuade their own members to join the strike because they lacked a convincing strategy. It was impossible to unite the miners around their *Plan for Coal* programme because this made miners' jobs conditional upon the profitability of different pits and different regions.

The only way to unite the miners was by throwing out the whole approach codified in the *Plan for Coal*. This was the policy of collaboration between management and

union which has dominated coalmining since nationalisation. A campaign around a ballot would have provided the means to challenge the NUM leaders' divisive strategy and take the control of the dispute into the hands of the rank and file. For the RCP the ballot campaign was not an alternative to mass picketing, but a way of mobilising bigger and better organised mass pickets.

The defeat of the miners' strike has led to bitter recriminations in the NUM and beyond. The controversy is intensifying in the run-up to next month's conference as all the NUM leaders try to offload responsibility for their own failures. The issues of the strike remain at the centre of the wider discussion of the way forward for the labour movement.

Hard and soft

The supporters of Scargill on the so-called hard left continue to uphold the strategy of bureaucratic manipulation that he pursued throughout the strike. Since the strike ended Scargill has received the left's backing for his latest round of rule book changes. These aim to consolidate his own position and the grip of the union leadership over the rank and file. The term 'hard left' in the unions and in local councils has become synonymous with posturing, evasion and manoeuvre.

Scargill's critics on the soft left lacked the political courage to speak out in support of the position taken by Kinnock and other right-wing labour bureaucrats during the strike. But since the strike ended factions from the Labour Coordinating Committee through Militant to the Communist Party have become bolder about backing the leadership line. For them the failure of the strike was that it was too militant and the NUM leaders too intransigent.

All these factions have now joined the clamour that there should have been a ballot and more campaigning. But the RCP called for a ballot last year to raise the political stakes and transform the strike into a wider struggle. The left calls for a ballot now as a concession to Kinnock's attempts to give the Labour movement a more moderate image.

For the factions of the soft left the question of the ballot is a narrow tactical matter. For us it raised the whole strategy of the strike. For them the object of the miners' campaign should have been to persuade the government of the virtues of the *Plan for Coal*. For us the object of the campaign was to unite the miners and other workers to make the strike effective. Their aim was to make public opinion sympathetic to the idea of using coal as the nation's major fuel. Our aim was to bring the nation's fuel supplies to a halt and force the bosses to concede the miners' demands.

The problems of strategy that emerged in the miners' strike remain pressing concerns for the working class movement. The continuing debate around the ballot confirms that the old labour movement has no new answers. The hard left hides behind the union rule book while the soft left responds to the pressures of the media. The RCP fought long and hard in the miners' strike for a new way forward. We intend to carry on the debate about the strategy that we need at our Preparing for Power summer school in July (details, page 7).



RCP candidate Jean Smith leads Monday's protest at Lambeth town hall

Defending immigrants' rights

Councils must house Tamils

'I approached all the London boroughs to provide housing for homeless Tamils. Only Haringey was willing to provide any houses.' Ranjit from the Tamil Refugee Action Group joined Workers Against Racism on Monday to lobby Lambeth councillors and demand they find houses for Tamils who have fled the terror in Sri Lanka.

The 2300 Tamils who have recently come to Britain to escape government death squads in Sri Lanka are living in grim conditions under threat of deportation. First the authorities herded them into detention centres. Some were even sent to borstal. Now hundreds are crammed into makeshift refugee camps in Hindu temples. Others have found floorspace with friends, relatives and 'volunteers' in the Tamil community. 'Many are threatened with being sent back into detention because there is no more room,' Ranjit explained.

Left-wing Labour councils have complained about the inhuman treatment meted out to the Tamils by the Tories. But the councils have failed to put their outrage into action by providing accommodation which could give the refugees a home in Britain.

Lambeth's Labour council has only come up with a wrecked building to act as a temporary hostel for 100 homeless Tamils. The GLC has coughed up enough cash to get the place into a barely habitable state. 'But what good is a run-down hostel to us?' asks Ranjit. 'What we need is proper council housing. The hostel is only for six months anyway. What are we supposed to do after that?'

After getting no joy from Lambeth, the GLC and other Labour councils, the Tamil

Refugee Action Group contacted Workers Against Racism. WAR launched a campaign to fight for the Tamils' right to stay in Britain and their right to decent council accommodation.

On Monday WAR supporters held a lively protest outside a meeting of Lambeth council's housing committee. Angry homeless Tamils were joined by a lobby of Vietnamese people facing eviction from a council hostel. The protesters held their own 'housing committee' meeting outside to discuss their demands for the council to put its anti-racist rhetoric into practice. When they called on the councillors to come out and hear what they wanted, the committee gave a vague promise to 'consider' the cases and promptly closed its meeting.

Jean Smith, the Revolutionary Communist Party candidate for the GLC by-election in Vauxhall, joined Monday's demonstration. She is making the treatment of Tamils in the area a central focus of her election campaign.

'Lambeth council has always given people around here shabby treatment when it comes to housing', Jean told *tns*, 'and foreign refugees get it worst of all. Lambeth turned its back on the Vietnamese boat people and tried to evict Chilean refugees from its Springfield estate. We say the council shouldn't have to "consider" whether Tamils deserve homes. And we want to convince Lambeth people that they have every interest in lining up with the victims of the council's policy and demanding decent housing for everybody who wants to come here.'

Kenan Malik

Vauxhall by-election

Vote for Jean Smith

In the 11 July Vauxhall by-election for the GLC south London voters have the chance to support a candidate who is out to break with the rotten traditions of bad jobs and worse services in British local government. Jean Smith is standing for the Revolutionary Communist Party under the slogan 'Fighting for a change'.

Jean Smith is a post office worker and an active trade unionist. She joined the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1983. Jean and the RCP stand for:

- Work and a living wage for every worker: no to all redundancies, and no concessions to the employers' need for higher productivity and profits. We need to feed, house and clothe ourselves and our families no matter what problems the bosses have got
- Houses for all: we must reject every cut, get rid of councillors who refuse to challenge cutbacks, and fight for the housing we need
- Full racial equality: an end to all immigration controls and to race checks in

housing and welfare departments. We are for active resistance to all forms of police harassment and racial discrimination

- A woman's right to work: women need free all-day nurseries and free contraception and abortion on demand to give them the chance to go out to work. And we need child benefits that guarantee the economic independence of all mothers

- Full equality for homosexuals: no discrimination against homosexuals in employment. We have to stand against state harassment and victimisation of gays

- Freedom for Ireland: we stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops, self-determination for the Irish people and an end to the anti-Irish Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Jean's campaign is already off to a flying start around the streets and estates of Vauxhall. On Saturday our stalls and street meetings got a good response across the constituency. If you want to get involved in fighting for a change, ring us on 01-729-0414

ACTION

Rate-capping: last stand at Lambeth

Ted Knight on the brink

Will Lambeth council go over the brink and refuse to set a rate? Will Labour leader Ted Knight end up in Brixton jail? These are the questions all the papers are asking. But will the outcome of the rate-capping battle make any difference to council workers and tenants? *Joan Phillips* went to Lambeth to find out.

If you walk up Brixton Road to Lambeth town hall you cannot avoid the posters plastered everywhere proclaiming that Lambeth services are 'well worth defending'. Your eyes are drawn to the banner billowing above the council building pledging a fight to the finish against Tory cuts. Outside the town hall people stand and watch the latest rate-capping battle bulletins flash on and off a new electronic billboard. If you go inside and wander round the scruffy corridors you trip over box after box of multi-coloured leaflets putting the case against rate-capping.

Lambeth is the only council which has not yet set a rate. Last week district auditor Brian Skinner sent letters to Labour councillors warning of surcharges, bankruptcy and disqualification from office. Why has Lambeth gone so far? As the architect of the no-rate policy adopted by a host of left-wing Labour councils last year, Knight's radical reputation is on the line. But there are other factors which have pushed him to the brink.

Knight has held out longer than any other council leader because the consequences of giving in are more starkly apparent in a borough which is one of the most downtrodden in the country. Other Labour councils have sidestepped confrontation by opting for creative accounting, deficit budgeting and other measures to avoid making drastic cuts in jobs and services. But Lambeth has no fall-back options left and no reserves to bridge the £15m gap between Tory spending limits and the amount needed to maintain jobs and services. The choice facing the council is crippling cuts or defiance.

Knight fears that more cuts will provoke riots on a scale far greater than the 1981 disorders because he knows that his council has already pushed people close to the edge.

Labour's cuts

Last week Knight declared that 'no cuts have taken place' and 'no vacancies have been left unfilled'. 'Go and ask Ted Knight why there are 300 unfilled vacancies in the DLO,' said one angry worker. The direct labour organisation has been hit hardest by Knight's harsh but hidden cuts in jobs and services over the last six years. Lambeth tenants who have to suffer the consequences in permanently blocked drains, leaking roofs and rotting windows want to know why there are 100 unfilled jobs in the maintenance division. They laugh incredulously at Knight's excuse that 'we can't get the men'.

One woman on Cowley estate in Brixton who complained about rat-infested drains advised the council to recruit more cleaners 'from the ranks of the unemployed'. Another woman, sick of waiting for months on end for the council to fix her windows, asked in despair 'what do Stockwell glaziers do?' She found out that there is only one glazier at the Union Grove depot in Stockwell and no glaziers on the council's apprenticeship scheme.

Many Lambeth council workers are dismissive of Knight's big talk about defending jobs. They want to know why the council hands out a quarter of all building work to cost-cutting private firms if it is really serious about protecting their livelihoods. The council is forced to put more and more work out to tender because it has failed to replace skilled workers in the direct labour force. Knight warns that 2000 jobs will have to go if the council goes along with government spending cuts. But Lambeth plumbers, carpenters and glaziers are already languishing on the dole because of Knight's refusal to fill vacancies.



The laugh's on the workers: Labour council leaders Margaret Hodge (Islington) and Ted Knight (Lambeth)

Almost half of Lambeth's 47 000 tenants have to live in council houses built before 1919. More than 15 000 Lambeth families live in homes that are unfit for human habitation and 7000 live in overcrowded conditions. Nearly 16 000 council homes need major repairs and nearly 5000 lack basic amenities such as bathrooms and inside toilets. Knight says that rate-capping will mean more misery for council tenants. But most don't see how things can get any worse than they are already.

Major repair work has ground almost to a halt. Tenants complain that thousands of empty properties could be repaired to house some of the borough's 8000 homeless families. But the council says it does not have the money. Trying to get the council to do ordinary repairs is just as unrewarding. The council says that decentralisation of housing services to 32 neighbourhood offices has meant greater consultation among housing managers, councillors and tenants. But the repairs still don't get done.

Labour councillors claim that 'Lambeth's record in helping homeless people is second to none'. The 141 families thrown on to the streets by the council last year find this hard to stomach. Far from helping the homeless, the council is toughening up its eviction policy. In the past the council evicted tenants with rent arrears in non-priority groups and transferred those in priority groups into alternative accommodation. Now the new Rent Arrears Eviction Panel will make priority tenants 'intentionally homeless' if they don't pay up.

At a recent council meeting the Tories demanded to know why the Labour group feels it has to plaster the whole borough with posters stating that its services are 'well worth defending' if people really believe it. Lambeth tenants who depend on council services think they have a point. Last year the council cut the money spent on refuse collection and left people with more overflowing rubbish chutes. It got rid of more places in old people's homes and consigned more of the elderly and infirm to misery. It cut the number of day nursery places from 768 to 744 and denied more women the chance to go out and find a job.

Labour bosses

Working for Lambeth council is much the same as working for any other capitalist employer. Every department is understaffed, overworked and underpaid. The council has consistently refused to fill vacancies or provide automatic cover. It will

not provide a free staff nursery because 'it would seem inappropriate for staff of the council to receive free of charge a service for which the community is required to pay'. Lambeth proclaims its commitment to women's rights, but it isn't prepared to pay money to make it mean something.

Labour councillors are proud of their record in combatting racial discrimination, but like women, black workers are still ghettoised in the lowest grades. Knight boasts of the 'spirit of trust and cooperation' among councillors and unions. Yet the construction services committee on which Knight sits recently ruled that 'the committee reserves the right to exclude stewards in any meetings at which the business to be transacted would involve a conflict of interest'. Knight is not interested in consultation when it comes to defending management prerogatives.

An AUEW member in the vehicle maintenance workshops at Kennington told us he'd had enough of Knight's posturing. There should be 81 workers in the depot, but there are seven unfilled vacancies. He complains that he hasn't had a pay rise for three years and recounts how he had to go on strike a year ago to get a decent bonus scheme. He takes home £110 a week and says that management is on his back all the time. 'They watch every move you make, they really want to get rid of people and they don't want to pay redundancy.'

Deja vu

Knight says that there will be 'no surrender' to Tory cuts. He said the same thing in 1979 when the Tories reduced the rate support grant by £3m. Three months later he was proposing 'real savings, involving rationalisation, greater efficiency and a reduction in overall staffing levels'. Five months after this he recommended a rent increase. Yet he still had the nerve to talk about fighting the cuts!

For the past 10 months Knight has been deluged with budget strategy reports from senior officers detailing how the council can secure 'long-term cost savings with the least possible damage to council policy objectives'. The options include a freeze on recruitment, a rent increase, creative accounting and other savings 'avoiding compulsory redundancy if possible'.

So far Knight and all but three of his fellow Labour councillors have rejected these recommendations. Knight says that he will go to prison rather than concede. But his past record of loyalty to Labour indicates

that sooner or later he will do what he is told. He has already taken management's advice to save money through changes in accounting practices. And the council has embarked on numerous studies of how to cut costs. Knight accepts that cuts have got to be made somewhere, but he wants it done discreetly.

Knight's appeal for support to Labour leader Neil Kinnock stands in sharp contrast to his cries of 'no surrender'. Knight declares that he expects maximum support from the Labour Party 'in line with conference policy'. He has 'no doubt that the leader of the party will be making statements supporting us'. But Kinnock has already made it clear that he does not accept 'that chaos in local government brings benefits, either to the people of the borough or the Labour Party'. Knight's pledge to fight to the finish is merely a tactic to disguise the fact that he has already capitulated to the cuts and is likely to do so again.

All the debate about whether Knight will go over the brink misses the point. For council workers and tenants Knight made his surrender a long time ago when he made the decision to keep faith with a party that sets more store by keeping chaos out of local government than by keeping the working class in jobs and homes.

RCP

The Revolutionary Communist Party has just sent the updated and expanded edition of the Irish Freedom Movement handbook *The Irish War* to the printers. Next in line are a new book on the Soviet Union and the launch of a theoretical journal in the autumn. We have set up a special fighting fund to help us meet printing and production costs. We depend on our readers and supporters to send us whatever they can afford.

Our special thanks go this week to 'an admirer' in Glasgow (£3), 'anonymous' in Balham (£100), Tony in London (£30), Derek in Canterbury (£30), Brendan in Manchester (£10). Send your contribution to Special Appeal, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Please make cheques/POs payable to RCP Association.

EVENTS

Militant on Merseyside

Liverpool's Labour bosses

The Militant supporters who run Liverpool city council claim the illegal rate they set on Friday is another victory for their 'no service cuts, no job losses' policy. *Mick Hume* explodes a few myths about a council that insists it is 'building a land fit for heroes' by hiking people's rates up nine per cent.

Many on the left, both inside and outside the Labour Party, seem convinced that Militant-controlled Liverpool council is something special.

When Sheffield's Labour council gave up its no-rate position a few weeks back, the left screamed 'traitor' at council leader David Blunkett. And when Blunkett tried to atone for his sins by setting an illegal deficit budget last week, nobody was impressed. Yet when Liverpool council dumped the no-rate policy overnight last week and passed a deficit budget (£117m above what the rate rise will bring in), many left wingers applauded deputy council leader Derek Hatton and his Militant followers for maintaining their resistance to Tory cuts. So what gives the left the idea that Liverpool is different from other Labour councils?

Militant certainly has a style all of its own. Outside Liverpool town hall on Friday Militant's Broadgreen MP Terry Fields was on man-of-the-people duty, kissing babies and singing to the 400 people lobbying the council. Inside, Labour councillors sat reading copies of *Militant* during Tory contributions to the debate. When it was the Militants' turn to speak they all made the same speech: 'a historic meeting', 'stand up to this vicious Tory government', 'Liverpool will fight alone'.

But Militant's distinctive style only serves to disguise the way its Liverpool councillors behave like any other group of Labour Party local government administrators.

Militant councillors never tire of expounding their administration's 'magnificent' record on jobs, houses and services. The rest of the left repeats these achievements uncritically. In fact there are two things which need to be said about Labour's record in Liverpool, and 'magnificent' isn't one of them. First, the council's reported achievements are inadequate to meet the needs of Liverpool people. Second, the council has not even done what little it claims. Militant's boasts are based on distorted facts and juggled statistics (see box).

Council conflicts

Many left-wing groups express their admiration for the Merseyside Militants' involvement of the trade unions in council affairs, and mobilisation of local working class people behind their campaign against Tory spending cuts. This month's *Socialist Worker Review* declares that 'we must support the council and the workers of Liverpool against the Tories', as if the authority and the people who work for it were the same thing. But they are not. The council is an employer. Its employees are workers. And there's the rub.

Militant councillors' position as employers sets them in direct opposition to Liverpool council workers. Like any other boss, the council needs to get as much out of its workforce for as little as it can and to save money wherever possible. The conflict between the two sides was summed up by a council worker who spoke to us last week: 'They say they're opposed to all job losses, but the council and the workers have got different ideas about what a job loss means. We say every job here exists and there's a job loss if no-one is working in it. The councillors reckon it's only a job loss if someone is made redundant, so unfilled vacancies are alright.'

The fact that Militant councillors and their workforce operate from different ends of the pay packet has led to countless disputes. Only two days before the 'historic'



Hatton's stage army: council workers on last week's lobby

council meeting last week, electricians at the city's Breck Road maintenance depot walked out over a bonus dispute that has lasted nine years. Since it was elected in 1983, the Labour council has more than matched its Liberal predecessor in not meeting the demands.

Militant councillors have taken a similarly managerial line towards all sorts of workers' grievances brought to the disputes panel, which is chaired by either Derek Hatton or Militant district Labour Party boss Tony Mulhearn. One shop steward at the council told us that Militant's much-acclaimed introduction of union reps at disputes hearings made no difference to the way the system operates: 'When you go to the panel Derek Hatton's not even listening to the case. He just reads the paper, waits for the management rep to make his recommendation, then agrees with it. It's an open secret round here that Hatton has told a manager dealing with disciplining workers, "You kick them up in the air and I'll hit them when they come down again".'

The Militant faction on the council has exploited its trade union connections to help it hit council workers on the way down. Nalco recently went into dispute with the council after eight workers who had finished their MSC schemes were told they could only have the promised permanent jobs if they accepted lower grade work. Hatton amazed the union's negotiators by producing a confidential Nalco document outlining their strategy for the dispute, passed to him by a union ally. Hatton's pathetic attempt to pass his scabbing antics off as 'a joke' at last week's Nalco conference further illustrated the cynical attitude Militant councillors take to union affairs.

It would be amazing if a council guilty of so many offences against its workforce was sincere in its claim to have 'fully involved' council workers in the campaign to get more cash from the Tories. In reality, the campaign has been run as a private affair by the Militant machine on the council and its top union allies on the joint shop stewards' committee.

Far from playing a leading role in the campaign, the council workforce at large has been treated as Militant's stage army. The army is wheeled on to march through Liverpool when the council wants to make a public gesture to the government, then wheeled off again before it gets out of hand.

Take the 7 March day of action, agreed on as a publicity stunt by Militant supporters on the council and the shop stewards' committee. The event was simply announced

to the other 30 000 council workers and the council decided they would not be paid for the day. This bureaucratic manipulation annoyed many workers and gave less active union members plenty of scope for rejecting the action. Teachers who turned up for work and were turned away by council pickets have taken industrial action to support their claim to be paid for 7 March. The fighting socialists on Liverpool council have threatened to go to court to defeat them — a move which could set a legal precedent and give any local council employer the right to lock out its employees without pay. So much for Militant's 'broad-based campaign against Tory laws'.

Another issue causing dissent is the question of politically-motivated appointments on the council. The left has defended Militant on the grounds that it is at least 'honest' about its political appointments policy. This misses the point. There is nothing wrong with political appointments as such. The important issue is *what* politics guide the appointment.

Militant's jobs for the boys policy is objectionable because it has been used to insulate the council from working class pressure. For example, the Militant-run



Chris Black (reflex)

GMBATU branch has been given wide powers of job distribution at the cost of denying other unions like Nupe negotiating rights. Hatton justified his political appointments policy as a mechanism to protect people involved in the 1981 typists' strike from vindictive management action. Yet it has also been used to appoint strike breaking managers. A well-known scab from the typists' dispute was recently promoted to a senior position in the social services department. And the new £30 000 a year manager of the housing department is notorious for destroying the direct labour force in Walsall a few years back.

The council's sordid record in Liverpool and the growing list of disputes over pay and conditions have made many workers more suspicious than the left about Militant's motives. 'A lot of our members are asking how the council can expect us to support it with all this going on,' one steward told us. The demonstrations are smaller each time and the Liberals have won two by-elections in the past seven months.

At a mass meeting last Wednesday stewards reacted against Militant's call for immediate action in response to government threats to prosecute councillors. Under pressure from their members, the stewards rejected the hot air about 'striking now' coming from a council that has proved its commitment to opposing workers who take action in defence of their living standards.

The growing disillusionment with Militant on Merseyside could have either positive or negative effects, depending on what alternatives are on offer. Whatever the outcome of the legal proceedings now in motion against the council, the battle against Tory spending cuts in Liverpool seems set to go on. Council workers are not prepared to give up yet. Indeed it was pressure from the workforce which forced Militant to drop its proposed rate rise of 20 per cent down to nine per cent last week.

But there will be an increasing tendency for cynicism to set in so long as the con-men of Militant are running the campaign against the government. If the struggle is to be successful, Liverpool workers have to draw a line between themselves and the council employers who have proved willing to use the courts and every other dirty trick against them. It would help if the left stopped broadcasting the virtues of a dishonest Militant administration which has disgraced the name of socialism, and started organising to take on the council as well as the Tories.

LIVERPOOL JOBS AND HOUSES

Militant's record

Jobs: the council claims to have created 1000 jobs. If it had, it wouldn't change the face of a city with 60 000 on the dole. But in fact the council has compensated for new jobs by leaving old vacancies unfilled for longer than the Liberals did — up to 50 at a time in the housing department alone. The reorganisation of departments has cut workforces from their established levels; housing is down 300. The council insists the jobs have reappeared elsewhere. There is no proof of this. It seems probable that there has been no real job growth. Workers who have been taken on have not got what they were promised. Manual workers are now considering industrial action to win the 35-hour week which the council promised them and which white-collar staff got in March.

Housing: Militant's proudest boast is that it will have built or begun 3500 houses by the end of the year. If true, this would be completely

inadequate to deal with a waiting list of 22 000. But where are these houses? The council refuses to say what has been built where. Some housing department workers insist that 1000 houses would be a generous estimate of what is being built. Even those have been built by private contractors using low-paid labour with few union rights. At the same time the repairs situation has deteriorated under Labour. Around 20 000 council homes are in desperate need of repairs.

Rents: Militant says it hasn't put a penny on the rent. But neither has it made the rent cut it promised when elected. Rates have now been put up by 26 per cent in a year, and the services people get for their money are worse. Top of Liverpool people's list of concerns is refuse collection, with gaps of up to 50 days being recorded between visits from the dustcart. Militant's response to this problem has been to try to attack binmen's working conditions.

Sinn Fein shows up Unionists

Last week the high court in Belfast was forced to uphold an appeal by Sinn Fein councillors at Craigavon. The court ruled that the attempt by the Unionist majority to transfer all council business to committees from which the Sinn Fein representatives would be excluded was illegal.

The dispute at Craigavon is just one instance of the conflicts that have erupted in council chambers throughout Northern Ireland since 59 Sinn Fein councillors were returned to the 26 district councils last month. Sinn Fein representatives have been elected chairs of councils at Fermanagh and Omagh and vice-chair in Magherafelt. The reaction from the Unionist camp reveals the charade of British democracy in the occupied territories of Northern Ireland.

Loyalist councillors have responded in a variety of traditional ways. In Magherafelt they cracked a chair over the head of councillor John Davey and assaults and expulsions have taken place in other councils. In Omagh Unionists offered to cut the throat of Sinn Fein council leader Seamus Kerr whom they described as 'a Fenian papist bastard'. They have shouted similar abuse in virtually every council as well as singing patriotic songs and waving the union flag. In Derry Unionist councillors are still standing up because they have not got used to the city's recent name change (from Londonderry) and are refusing to take their seats. Ian Paisley's daughter Rhonda made her council debut in Belfast by blowing a toy trumpet whenever Sinn Fein councillors spoke.

Wiser Unionists have begun to appreciate that anti-Sinn Fein stunts are rebounding to their discredit. They have become concerned at Sinn Fein's propaganda successes as Loyalist councillors have made public fools of themselves.

Sectarian state

The appointment of Belfast councillor George Seawright, who was recently imprisoned for recommending that Catholics should be incinerated, to sit on the local fire authority was the last straw for some. Presbyterian minister Bill Moore told the church's general assembly last week that 'by refusing to work with Sinn Fein the Unionists seemed to say to the nationalist people, there is only one alternative — the Armalite'.

Sinn Fein's success and the Loyalist reaction have also caused problems for another part of the Northern Ireland political establishment — the middle class Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party. The SDLP has found itself squeezed between Sinn Fein and the Unionists. Despite its repeated denunciations of Sinn Fein its councillors too have been barracked and abused and kept off council committees by the Loyalists. When Loyalist blood is up all representatives of the nationalist people are the targets of their sectarian hatred.

Sinn Fein councillors have skilfully allowed the Unionists free rein to show the world the real stuff of British democracy in Northern Ireland. They have taken advantage of the platform provided by the councils to expose the true nature of the sectarian state.

In Derry Mitchel McLaughlin emphasised Sinn Fein's indifference to town hall pomp. He suggested that the mayoral regalia — a gift from King Billy himself in 1691 — should be deposited in St Columb's cathedral and that the office of mayor should be abolished.

The tantrums of the Unionists have added to the embarrassment caused to their British sponsors by Sinn Fein's electoral successes. Immediately after the elections Northern Ireland secretary Douglas Hurd said he would continue to refuse to meet Sinn Fein representatives. Yet last week Hurd's deputy Christopher Patten told a Belfast radio interviewer that ministers would have no choice but to recognise and meet Sinn Feiners who were elected council leaders. The government still has to decide what to do about Sinn Fein representatives who are nominated to statutory bodies.

Paisley is now demanding 'anti-Sinn Fein legislation' from Westminster to prevent republican councillors from taking their seats.



Early last Tuesday the 1st Royal Tank Regiment rolled into Bradford unopposed. The Army's annual recruitment stunt aimed to induce unemployed youth to fight in Ireland with slogans like 'No qualifications needed' and 'Want to be a tankie?' Revolutionary Communist Party supporters picketed the display to dissuade the unemployed from becoming full-time British terrorists. 'Brits out of Bradford — and Ireland.'

As one irate Unionist councillor from Craigavon put it, 'they expect us to sit down with murderers but they won't do it themselves'.

Cookstown council has already taken action, apparently within the law, to disenfranchise nationalist council voters. The four Sinn Fein councillors, who together won more than 25 per cent of the votes, have been twice kicked out of the two council meetings held so far. The Unionists have worked out a system of transacting virtually all council business through four committees.

The last time Sinn Fein won many council seats in the North was in the local government elections of 1920, the last held in the whole of Ireland. Under the different system then in force republicans and nationalists won control of Fermanagh and Tyrone county councils, 13 rural councils, ten urban councils, including Armagh, Omagh, Enniskillen, Newry, Strabane and Derry. In the stormy period around the

Partition of Ireland in 1921 the British authorities dissolved councils and handed them over to specially appointed commissioners. The system of gerrymandered council elections was subsequently introduced to guarantee Unionist control.

Both the Unionists and the British patrons will be reluctant to dissolve councils and send in the commissioners again. The Unionists will hesitate to push matters that far because it would deprive them of the last vestige of power they have under the Direct Rule system. The British would be loath to dissolve the councils under Direct Rule and thus remove the final pretence of democracy from British rule in Northern Ireland.

Whether the councils go or stay, the events of the past fortnight confirm Derry Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness's remark that 'elections will change nothing in Ireland — it will be the cutting edge of the IRA which will bring freedom'.

Mick Kennedy

CURBS ON CONTRACEPTION

Teenage kicks

NEXT WEEK Victoria Gillick's attempt to ban contraceptive services to under-16s goes to the House of Lords. A special survey carried out by Fiona Fareweather in Coventry reveals some startling facts about the sex life of young people:

- many young people are sexually active without using any form of contraception
- some believe that pregnancy is unlikely to result and some have faith in highly unreliable methods such as withdrawal
- girls are afraid of the pill because of scare stories about its side-effects
- both boys and girls believe that drinking gin and falling down the stairs are effective abortion techniques.

Our survey was carried out among 30 under-16 year olds last week. The sample included 18 girls and 12 boys. Less than half of those interviewed (40 per cent) were well informed about contraceptive methods. Only three girls and six boys said they would use one of the available alternatives. Five girls said that they would trust the boy to 'do something'.

Whereas boys tended to rely on elder brothers for information and supplies of condoms, girls were in a more difficult position. Most were wary of informing their parents and reluctant to go to their family doctor. Experiences of friends being refused contraception, and being lectured about sex by parents or doctors put most off even

asking.

'I wouldn't go on the pill — it messes up your hormones,' said one 15-year old. Nearly half the sample knew somebody who had become pregnant under 16. Yet they remained confident that 'it won't happen to me'. But what if it did? Few would tell their parents. One boy said he would help his girlfriend out by kicking her in the stomach to help her get rid of it. Another suggested that she would 'drink lots of whisky and drop a wardrobe on my tummy'.

Most found sex education at school inadequate. 'You learn about your private parts, and they tell you about the joys of becoming pregnant,' said one. 'But they don't tell us about how to avoid getting pregnant or what to do about it.' Many were put off the idea of having an abortion because they understood that it was not available on the health service and cost a lot of money.

Victoria Gillick's campaign has already succeeded in curbing sex education in schools and in forcing the authorities to withdraw leaflets specially designed to explain contraceptive services to young people. Our survey shows the alarming level of ignorance that prevails among sexually active young people. The effect of Gillick will be to reinforce ignorance and to trap thousands of teenagers into family life at an early age. It's one way of restoring family values.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

LIVE AID

'Henry Kissinger had nothing on this,' said Bob Geldof announcing his latest extravaganza to raise money to relieve the famine in Ethiopia. Geldof's shuttle diplomacy has set up a 15-hour trans-Atlantic rock concert featuring 45 different acts on 13 July.

Cynics have accused Geldof of using the Ethiopian cause to advance the cause of Geldof and his floundering Boomtown Rats. Nobody who has witnessed the sincerity of The Crow singing 'You'll never walk alone' on behalf of the Bradford fire appeal would stoop so low as to question the charitable motives of showbiz personalities who are down on their luck.

Others have complained that Geldof's prodigious fund-raising achievements are letting the government off the hook. If Live Aid goes well Geldof's total contribution to the famine relief may well exceed the £25m official aid from Britain. Indeed Norman Fowler may be able to put Geldof's talents to wider use closer to home when he tires of Ethiopia. Next month Fowler publishes plans to 'contract out' the care of children, the elderly and the handicapped to charities.

Pop stars have become the modern equivalent of the aristocratic philanthropists of Victorian Britain. In those days the rich and famous sponsored protests against slavery and prostitution and organised good works to relieve the impoverished of the slums. They campaigned against the demon drink and to stop cruelty to animals.

Now the pop stars front the movements against disaster and disease and vice. The charts are full of records raising money — for the Ben Hardwick appeal and the Bradford appeal, as well as for the Ethiopian famine. Other rock musicians are backing campaigns against heroin and cocaine or Greenpeace's heroic struggle to find a decent home for Nemo the Clacton whale.

These campaigns are popular with the British establishment. They receive enormous publicity and official encouragement. This is not only because they save the state money. They also play a useful role in hard times of 'bringing people together'. They unite people 'from all walks of life' against various external sources of menace or evil.

When Margaret Thatcher met Bob Geldof his critical remarks about the government's poor performance over Ethiopia and his little tiff with the prime minister were widely reported. But Thatcher's praise for Geldof, on whom she bestowed a *Daily Star* award 'for services to mankind', were not so widely reported. Yet she was outspoken in her praise for the cheeky over-grown punk.

'The world feels a better place when we see a true Brit with true grit doing things for himself and his country,' Thatcher told him. 'It lifts everyone,' she enthused, 'it lifts our country'. The fact that Geldof is Irish makes his patriotic achievement on behalf of the Brits even greater. But Thatcher hit on the true significance of pop patronage for charitable causes.

Marx and Engels too understood the role of people they characterised as 'conservative or bourgeois socialists' in their *Communist Manifesto*. 'To this section,' they wrote, 'belong economists, philanthropists, humanitarians, improvers of the condition of the working class, organisers of charity, members of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, temperance fanatics, hole and corner reformers of every imaginable kind'. Not much new in 140 years.

Victoria Gillick's attempt to restrict contraceptive services to young women may be rejected by the House of Lords in the case that begins this week. Enoch Powell's attempt to outlaw embryo experiments may get no further in the House of Commons. Mary Whitehouse's latest attempt to get film — *Scum* — banned failed in the courts recently. Yet these campaigners have achieved a major success in shifting the focus of the whole public discussion of women's rights.

In the fifties and sixties much of the discussion about women took place around issues of child-rearing and development. It was dominated by doctors and psychologists and sociologists. Later in the sixties and seventies the terms of the debate changed. Now the focus was on women's role as workers, and a series of legislative reforms provided the framework for public discussion. Politicians were the key figures in the debate. Today women's issues have left the field of politics for the sphere of morality where fundamentalist Christians define the terms.

The changing character of controversy over matters affecting women reveals much about the changing position of women in our society. It also reveals that despite some setbacks Gillick, Powell and Whitehouse and the rest of the new moralists have already had a major impact.

Dr Benjamin Spock's book on how to bring up your baby was the international best-seller of the post-war years. Its sales were second only to the bible in Britain and the USA. In fact the word of Spock soon replaced the word of god in guiding women on how they should run their family lives. From breast-feeding to potty-training, women received full instructions on how to bring up their children. Spock advised mothers to make 'a career' out of motherhood and their instruction manual was as demanding as that of any professional worker.

In Britain, Dr John Bowlby advised the public that close and undivided maternal attention was essential to ensure the normal development of the infant. Bowlby was a psychologist who had studied the effects of 'maternal deprivation' on war orphans. Public policy was to encourage mothers to look after their pre-school children. The alternative option of high quality state nursery care was not seriously considered because of its likely cost.

The baby boom

The post-war baby boom made child-rearing — and women's role in it — a major focus of public discussion. As the babies of the forties turned into the problem children of the fifties and the juvenile delinquents of the sixties, the great debate continued. Were they weaned too soon — or too late? Was the potty-training too tough — or not tough enough? Should they be indulged more — or spanked more often? Were women neglecting their off-spring by going out to work, watching too much television or by going to the bingo? As more and more women went out to work, the 'latch-key kids' — children who came home to an empty house — became another great social problem about which everybody had a strong opinion.

While emphasising the primacy of women's responsibilities in child-rearing, establishment commentators accepted that more women were required to go out to work. As post-war economic expansion got underway many employers faced an acute labour shortage and women were in demand on the labour market. The proportion of married women at work more than doubled from 10 per cent before the war to 22 per cent in 1951. The problem was how to reconcile women's role in production with their family responsibilities.

Observers pointed to the new automation processes that had made factory work lighter and the introduction of shift systems that allowed women to organise their family life around the factory. Sociologists Myrdal and Klein noted 'the technical and social developments of the last few decades that have given women the opportunity to combine and to integrate their two interests in Home and Work'. In their view 'the best of both worlds' had come within women's grasp, 'if only they reach out for it'. Investigating like anthropologists in the

Amazon basin, Willmot and Young reported from deepest Bethnal Green in London's East End that the extended family had readjusted to the post-war world and was still playing a useful supportive function in working class communities.

The debates of the fifties and the sixties reflected the difficulties of adjusting the structure of family life to the post-war world. Women's position came to be defined more flexibly to allow her to combine the roles of mother and worker, wife and homemaker. The expansion of the markets for both jobs and consumer durables to ease the burden of housework was crucial in loosening the restrictions on women's activity in society. Doctors and academic experts pontificated on the new order, and nobody then asked — 'why should women do all these jobs?' This question was outside the terms of the debate.

In the sixties and seventies the popular media celebrated female firsts with increasing frequency. There was the first woman on the floor of the stock exchange, the first female station master and then 'businesswoman' of the year. In 1961, 30 per cent of women were at work. By 1971 the proportion had risen to more than 40 per cent. Between 1971 and 1976 more than one million married women joined the labour market. The focus of public debate now shifted away from a concern with mothers of babies and children to take an interest in women themselves. By the end of the seventies there were women bus drivers, lorry drivers, plumbers, and the first female judo judge. Women in the world of work, rather than in the family, moved centre stage.

The central forum for the new discussion of women was parliament, where a spate of new legislation codified women's new position. There was not a single significant piece of legislation affecting women's employment rights in the fifties and sixties. Yet after 1970 new laws came in a flood:

- **Equal pay act, 1970:** established the principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value
- **Matrimonial proceedings and property act, 1970:** women entitled to claim a share in property jointly acquired during marriage
- **Finance act, 1971:** allowed husband's and wife's earnings to be taxed separately
- **Domicile and matrimonial proceedings act, 1973:** allowed women to stay in the family home
- **Matrimonial causes act, 1973:** gave women married to foreigners the same right as men for their spouses to live in Britain
- **Employment protection act, 1975:** dismissal on grounds of pregnancy illegal, provisions for paid maternity leave
- **Sex discrimination act, 1975:** outlawed discrimination on the grounds of sex and established the Equal Opportunities Commission
- **Social security act, 1975:** set up maternity allowance, and included income supplements for divorced women
- **Social security pensions act, 1975:** stipulated that pension schemes must be open on an equal basis to women.

There was a wide consensus of support for this series of measures to encourage women's participation in the labour market. It was widely agreed that petty restrictions on women's employment rights were no longer appropriate to the needs of the economy. The changing structure of the labour market, particularly the rise of the service sector, offered increasing scope for the employment of women. Employers were particularly keen to employ women in part-time work, which allowed lower overheads and greater flexibility. And the welfare state was there to help with the children, the sick and the elderly.

There was little parliamentary opposition to any of the acts affecting women's rights at work. The equal pay legislation was introduced by a Labour government with full Tory support. Indeed much of the legislation outlined above was introduced by Edward Heath's Conservative government between 1970 and 1974. The last wave of laws was introduced by Labour, partly in an attempt to sweeten the bitter pill of wage restraint under the 'social contract' between the government and the unions.

The prominent figures in the new debate about women were, for a change, women. It was Barbara Castle who, as a leading minister in Harold Wilson's Labour government, announced plans for equal pay legislation to the 1969 Labour Party



From Spock

conference. And it was Margaret Thatcher who achieved one of the decade's most notable firsts for women when she took over the leadership of the Conservative Party from Edward Heath in 1975. Back in the fifties Thatcher had declared the modern intention of combining 'marriage and a career', adding her view that the 'idea that the family suffers is, I believe, quite mistaken'. The full extent of Thatcher's Victorian values remained under wraps until after Mark and Carol were off her hands and she became prime minister in 1979.

The women's liberation movement made a distinctive contribution to the discussion in the seventies. In its early days the women's movement joined in the wider debate about women's access to the world of work. Its demands for equal job and educational opportunities, for free 24-hour nurseries, for free abortion and contraception facilities, all aimed either directly or indirectly to enhance women's capacity to go out to work. The women's movement recognised that legislative

changes were insufficient to guarantee equal rights to women.

So long as women were still forced to carry the burden of work in the home and were denied access to safe and reliable methods of controlling their fertility, they would still be unequal no matter what the lawyers said. This recognition led the women's liberation movement to the slogan 'No women's liberation without socialism — no socialism without women's liberation'. The fight for women's liberation had to go beyond changing the law to changing the whole system if it was to achieve its aims.

In the late seventies the debate moved on. It became apparent even to establishment observers that in a climate of deepening economic crisis legislative changes had had little real impact on women's lives. Catherine Hakim, an official researcher for the Equal Opportunities Commission, made the startling discovery in 1978 that 'women were more evenly represented among managers and administrators in 1911 than at any time since then'. Yet the EOC experts could not

SAY ABOUT WOMEN



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Back to Spuc

explain why, despite the law, women had become more unequal. They noted the persistent segregation of women's work, but could only point to a series of subjective factors to explain it.

Some blamed direct discrimination by male employers, indirect discrimination by bosses who simply underestimated women's potential. Others pinpointed women's reluctance to push themselves up the career ladder and the socialisation of girls into low expectations through upbringing and education. But such a wide-ranging phenomenon as the inequality of women in employment cannot be reduced to such accidental factors. The common theme of these theories was the failure to make any link between women's position at work and their family commitments.

The feminist response to the debate about persistent inequality was the theory of patriarchy. This was developed in academic journals such as *Feminist Review* by Heidi Hartmann, Michelle Barrett, Mary McIntosh and Veronica Beechey. While it was

presented in a more radical style, the feminist theory had much in common with the subjective theories of the EOC studies. While they blamed male employers for keeping women down, the feminists were more likely to point the finger at male workers and point to the dubious advantages accruing to working class men from the enslavement of their sisters.

Hartman, for example, blamed the segregation of the labour market on male workers who 'viewed the employment of women as a threat to their jobs'. The fact that 'their response was to exclude women rather than organise them' was 'to be explained not by capitalism but by patriarchal relations'. But where did the 'patriarchal relations' come from? The answer was — from the family. Barrett and McIntosh took a similar view. They wrote that 'the relegation of women to the home' could not be explained 'solely with reference to the "needs" of capital'. It was the result 'of struggle, and therefore choice of the

working class'. Working class women too were held to blame for the reproduction of patriarchal ideology in the family.

The theory of patriarchy represented a retreat from the broadly anti-capitalist outlook of the early women's movement. The early movement identified the problem as a social system — capitalism — which could not free women at work while it tied them to the family at home. This approach carried considerable potential for linking the fight for women's rights with that of other enemies of the system — notably the working class. The later feminist movement identified the problem as a theory — patriarchy — which was continuously reproduced in the family in isolation from the rest of society. This approach turned the women's movement in on itself in a futile quest to change individual men's minds without challenging the wider system. The result was isolation, fragmentation and demoralisation.

In the eighties the initiative in the public debate about women has passed out of the hands of the politicians into the hands of the crusaders of the new morality. The doctors and the politicians now give way to the self-appointed guardians of the national morals. Church pulpits and synods of various denominations are now a major source of public pronouncements on all questions regarding women's role in society.

The new moralists

Mary Whitehouse has been campaigning against pornography and sex and violence on television for many years. But never has there been such a ready audience for calls for tighter censorship in the media. Graham Bright's bill to outlaw 'video nasties' became law last year. The trial of workers at Gay's the Word bookshop opens next week. They have already been subjected to intense harassment and intimidation and the confiscation of books.

Victoria Gillick's campaign to outlaw the provision of contraceptive services to girls under the age of 16 has unleashed months of heated debate in the press on the dangers of under-age sex. Enoch Powell's bill to restrict experimentation on human embryos has similarly provoked a long-running controversy. The new moralists have succeeded in creating a widespread climate of opinion which elevates the sanctity of the 'life' of a microscopic cluster of cells over the rights of all other forms of human existence. Even more importantly they have succeeded in restricting the terms of discussion about the position of women in society to a narrow debate about the moment life begins. In this debate every bigoted cleric has access to the national media.

The emergence of explicitly reactionary trends in the sphere of women's rights has shattered the broad consensus which has prevailed for decades. The new morality has had a widespread impact. Its campaigners have gathered millions of signatures for their petitions. They have won support from across the political divides in parliament. Campaigners formerly regarded as marginal eccentrics have overcome their isolation to become respected figures. They have swept

PREPARING FOR POWER

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Preparing for Power costs £15 if you're working and £12 if you're not. Phone 01-729 0414 for details or write to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

the remnants of the old women's movement before them, picking up a few recruits, such as Germaine Greer in the process.

The flourishing world of feminist publishing reflects the old women's movement's abandonment of the political field. While the moral majority go on the rampage, the feminists take refuge in the escapist fantasies of Marge Piercy or the self-indulgent reminiscences of Michelle Roberts.

The key question excluded in this whole debate is — why are we talking about the dangers of 'video nasties', 'schoolgirl promiscuity', or 'embryo rights' anyway? Are these the real problems of life in British society in 1985? All these issues have been pushed to the centre of public discussion as part of a drive to enforce the subordination of women within the family to help to bale the system out of its current mess. The expanding labour market for women is a thing of the past. The openings for flexible, part-time, unskilled workers of the sixties and seventies have either closed or been exposed as opportunities for super-exploitation. And the welfare state that provided both jobs and vital services is now shrinking too. The only place women are in demand is in the home, to take on a greater burden of the care for children, the sick, the elderly and all the other victims of the recession.

Turning the tables

All the discussion about pornography, promiscuity and embryos points in one direction. It points towards tighter state controls over society in general and over women's position in the family in particular. This is why these discussions — and the widespread resonance that different aspects of the moralists' offensive have received — are so dangerous for women's rights. It is vital to turn the tables in the debate and identify what are the real issues at stake.

- There is no problem of teenage promiscuity, but there is a problem of the lack of sex education and the provision of adequate contraceptive and abortion facilities for all young people who need them.
- The question of embryo rights is an absurdity which distracts attention from the real restrictions on the rights of women to contraception and abortion facilities as a result of health service cuts, reactionary doctors and scare campaigns.
- The British establishment and media have a prurient obsession with women's sexuality, but most women are more concerned about getting rid of the job discrimination they still face and getting the facilities, particularly in terms of all-day nurseries, to allow them to participate fully in the labour market.

The first step in reorganising the fight for women's rights in Britain is to shift the debate away from the pulpits and the priests. But we do not want to put it back in the hands of the parliamentary reformers or the child psychologists. We need to put it in the hands and hearts of ordinary women — and men.

Kate Marshall

INTERNATIONAL

Racism in France

Socialists against blacks

Last week French minister Georgina Dufoix proudly outlined the socialist government's record on immigration. Over the past 12 months the Mitterrand regime has deported more than 12 000 black people and turned back 40 000 immigrants at the country's borders.

In 1981 Francois Mitterrand came to office promising a better life for France's three million blacks. Instead his government has launched an offensive against black people that has created the atmosphere of a pogrom in the immigrant areas.

The rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen's racist Front Nationale, which gained nine per cent of the vote in the March local elections, is a symptom of the climate of intense racial hatred which now prevails in France. But the real problem is that the policies advocated by the Front Nationale differ only in degree from the race and immigration policies already in force. Under the Mitterrand government repatriation is no longer a slogan of the extreme right. It has become a key component of official government policy.

Every morning French radio stations broadcast advertisements for the government's repatriation schemes. Unemployed blacks are offered £1740 to pack up and go. Last month several hundred Vietnamese refugees were rounded up and despatched to Devil's Island, the desolate French Caribbean colony of Papillon fame. This was promoted as a model scheme for removing unwelcome Third World refugees from Europe to more 'customary surroundings'.

Burning them out

Meanwhile negotiations are taking place with the government of Senegal over arrangements to repatriate 35 000 Senegalese workers. And, to speed up the shake-out of France's ailing motor industry, black workers are advised to take a couple of thousand pounds and go. To qualify for this repatriation scheme black workers have to surrender their residence permits and social security and pension claims.

The government's offensive against blacks has encouraged official and unofficial racist abuse. Many immigrants are being denied residence permits by racist mayors who operate a 'no blacks' policy. Such overt persecution of blacks is not strictly legal. But it takes place under the guise of presumed 'housing shortages'. The question of where to put blacks has become the subject of sordid squabbles among socialist, Communist Party and right-wing local government officials. Communist Party mayors have complained bitterly that their areas house a disproportionately large number of black people.

State persecution has given the green light to ordinary racist thugs. They back up official racism with unofficial acts of terror and intimidation. Racist attacks and murders have become commonplace over the last six months:

- November, Chateaubriand: two white unemployed youth shoot dead two Turkish workers
- December, Paris: police torture an Algerian suspect
- December, Pereux: an unknown gunman shoots dead an Algerian worker
- February, Notre Dame de Gravenchon: a Moroccan worker escapes with his life after four secondary school students attack him with knives, iron bars and chains
- March, Menton: Aziz Madik, an 18-year old Moroccan youth, is shot dead by whites who explain they just 'don't like Arabs'
- March, Miramas: A white gunman shoots and kills 18-year old Noureddine Hassan Daoudji from a passing car
- March, Clermont-Ferrand: several whites douse an Arab youth in petrol and burn him to death
- April, southern France: Karim Hamdani



Noureddine Hassan Daoudji: the immigrant victim of the socialist president

is taken into police custody, forced to wear a hood soaked in water and prodded with electric rods. Karim sustains serious burns and is dumped in the streets unconscious.

More than 75 000 immigrants and blacks have chosen to leave France over the past year to escape the pogroms. In her speech to the national assembly Georgina Dufoix welcomed the mass exodus. Her only regret was that problems of 're-integration in the mother countries' stood in the way of an even faster pace of repatriation. In the run-up to the general election due next year the government is set to make life unbearable

for blacks in France.

During his first year in office Mitterrand introduced reforms which promised some improvement in conditions for blacks. Mitterrand temporarily revoked the Bonnet Law, introduced by the conservative Giscard d'Estaing government to widen the scope for repatriation. For the first time immigrants were given the right to free association. Mitterrand promised to introduce black voting rights in local elections.

But behind these measures, government strategy aimed to strengthen state control over the movements of blacks. Mitterrand's

'regularisation' programme allowed illegal immigrants to acquire legal status by applying to the authorities. This policy was advanced as a step towards the 'integration' of immigrants and was generally regarded as a progressive move on the French left. However the slogan of integration concealed a drive to criminalise illegal immigrants.

Of the 150 000 people who followed the government's call to register 30 000 were denied legal status. These illegals have since been hounded by police, as have many more blacks who anticipated that no good could result from going to the authorities. In June 1983 Dufoix declared a 24-hour deadline for illegals to hand themselves in. A new special immigration police force was set up to track down illegals. Today French jails overflow with black workers awaiting deportation. Thousands of north African and Turkish workers now hide indoors to avoid separation from their families.

Until Mitterrand's election the state had little control over the movements of black people. Mitterrand has turned France into a vast prison for immigrants.

The socialist government's racist policies have boosted the French right. The Front Nationale and the more respectable right-wing parties have used the racist climate to mobilise popular opposition to the socialists on a platform of chauvinist reaction. Under Mitterrand millions of workers have been consigned to a life on the dole. The right wing lacks an attractive political alternative and approaches the elections in a state of internal division. But the right has skilfully used promises to rid the country of blacks and to restore the grandeur of the French nation to restore its own fortunes.

The left, having unleashed the racist tiger, is now forced to run with it as the hardline racists demand ever tougher policies. The socialist mayor of Mons recently decided to include some black delegates on his local council — a step in line with official Socialist Party policy. Yet in today's climate he has been ostracised by his party. According to Dufoix anything that 'injures the collective feeling of the French people' must be crushed.

As the elections draw closer, French politics is being turned into a contest between left and right over which is the more consistently racist.

Sabena Norton

RADICALS AGAINST RACISM

A French Anti-Nazi League



THE MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT'S racist response to the pressures of recession flows from the French labour movement's traditionally nationalist outlook. In France

national chauvinism has been a key feature of left-wing politics since the turn of the century. Over the past 40 years the Socialist and Communist parties have backed French colonial exploits in South East Asia and north Africa.

The problem is that the 'French first' policies of the official labour movement have never been challenged by the left. In the run-up to the 1981 elections racism was already a key issue. The Communist Party organised raids on migrant workers' hostels and patriotic appeals were prominent in the official left's electoral campaign. Yet far left groups still called on workers to give their votes to Socialist Party and Communist Party candidates.

The left-wing parties have failed to respond as passive French chauvinism has given way to an open witch-hunt against blacks and foreigners. Resisting racism has been left to immigrant organisations and middle class liberals.

In March a group of Arab youth set up a campaign called SOS Racisme to mobilise opposition to racist attacks. SOS Racisme uses the slogan 'Touche pas a mon pote' ('Don't touch my mate') to mobilise

humanitarian sentiments against the barbarism of racist violence. Within weeks the Front Nationale responded with its own slogan: 'Touche pas a mon peuple' ('Don't touch my people').

Politicians of all parties — bar the Front Nationale — stand on SOS Racisme platforms to demonstrate their concern about the excesses of racist thugs. The Socialist Party in particular has welcomed SOS Racisme as a force which can help stem the growth of its right-wing rivals. But anti-racists who limit their resistance to the violence of unofficial racists present no challenge to the racist activities of the state and the nationalist fervour which pervades French politics.

The British experience of the seventies should serve as a warning to French anti-racists. Labour politicians like Neil Kinnock patronised the Anti-Nazi League while the Labour government implemented virginity tests on Asian brides, dawn raids on illegal immigrants and mass deportations. The French left's failure to challenge the racist policies of the official labour movement leadership means that the same disastrous division of labour could develop in France.

REVIEWS

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

Lessons from history

AJP Taylor, *The troublemakers: dissent over foreign policy 1792 - 1939*, Penguin, pbk £3.95

Historian AJP Taylor is one of the few academics to have managed the transition from the lecture theatre to the television screen. *The troublemakers* proves that he owes this success to his ability as a professional historian, and not to some indefinable 'star quality'.

The troublemakers is based on Taylor's famous 'noteless lectures'. It is highly readable, wholly intelligible and refreshingly demystifying. In it Taylor demonstrates his clear grasp of twentieth century British history and illustrates the forces which have shaped the Labour Party's approach to foreign policy.

Taylor's troublemakers are the great mavericks of the British establishment. They are men like William Ewart Gladstone, who was highly critical of the corruption of office but still became prime minister four times in the late nineteenth century. Taylor's essays reveal that controversy over foreign policy in modern times has been more a debate about how to achieve Britain's objectives than about the aims themselves.

This point is well illustrated in his essay on the Boer War. Almost all radicals and socialists opposed the war. But few were prepared to stand up against the wave of jingoism which accompanied it. They resolved the problem in two classic ways. First, they argued that the war was not so much wrong as unnecessary. British objectives in southern Africa could be secured through negotiation. In fact there was little scope for this approach because the Boers did not think they had anything to negotiate.

Second, the radicals hit on what Taylor describes as 'a stroke of genius'. They 'switched the argument from the causes of the war to the way in which it was being conducted'. Liberal



Liberal maverick: Gladstone addressing parliament

leader Campbell Bannerman protested about the 'methods of barbarism' employed by the British army to crush the Boers. Radicals and Liberals could unite in an orgy of patriotic handwringing.

Taylor points out that the British left never confronted the terms of the foreign policy debate within the establishment. As a result the socialists were sucked in on the side of Taylor's mavericks. 'Dissent over foreign policy', Taylor observes drily, 'far from pulling the radicals towards socialism, pulled the Labour Party back towards

the radicals.'

The weakness of the official labour movement on questions of foreign policy helped unite the workers' movement behind the establishment. 'Foreign affairs sustained the Lib-Lab coalition when social issues at home threatened to divide it,' writes Taylor approvingly. It is interesting that an academic historian like Taylor can penetrate the link between foreign affairs and domestic policy where left-wing historians founder.

Alan Harding

FEMINIST FICTION

Women down under

Dorothy Hewett, *Bobbin up*, Virago, pbk £3.50

Many women will recognise their own experiences in this story of a group of women workers at the Jumbuck woollen mills in Sydney, Australia in the fifties.

Bobbin up is constructed like a collection of connected short stories. Each woman is introduced in a separate chapter. Each chapter deals with the woman's individual and personal concerns. What connects the individual stories is the mill where they all work. It dominates the women's lives and it dominates the novel.

Nell has three children. She goes out to work in the mill because it is the only way she can make ends meet. But even with her wages Nell and her husband cannot afford to pay anyone to look after the children. So the couple work alternate shifts to make sure there is always someone there to look after the children. Nell's preoccupation is how to use the few hours a week she can spend with her husband to save their marriage.

Alice is a young widow. She does not want to remarry so she shares a home with her sister Beth.

Both have to work to pay the rent and the bills. Now Beth is planning to get married and Alice is faced with the choice of trying to get by on her wage alone or finding herself a husband too.

Dawnie, Patti and Shirl are teenagers. Dawnie is afraid of marriage, Patti does not want to marry, and Shirl can think of nothing else. Dawnie and Patti want to take the advice of the older women at work who advise them to enjoy their youth. But they find it hard going on the wages paid at the Jumbuck. Shirl has already discovered the risks of enjoying your youth — she is four months pregnant and plans to marry her boyfriend.

Bobbin up is about the lack of alternatives for women. Low pay in Sydney's textile mills, or as a London typist, means that most women have no choice but to get married. Marriage means children, which means women have to fit their working lives around looking after them. This in turn means accepting rotten jobs and rotten wages.

Bobbin up does not seek to resolve these problems. It leaves the women torn over whether to take industrial action against sackings at the mill. They do not know whether they can win or what will happen if they do not. Dorothy Hewett does not need to provide a neat or happy ending. She concludes by indicating the way forward for women — fighting.

Carolyn Price

ITALIAN CRIME AND CAPITALISM

Church, state and mafia

Luigi Di Fonzo, *St Peter's banker: Michele Sindona*, Mainstream, hbk £9.95

International banker Michele Sindona now stands trial in Milan accused of murder. Originally a fruit merchant for the US troops based on war-torn Sicily, Sindona was determined to bridge the gap between the rich north and the poor south, Italy's notorious *mezzogiorno*. When Sindona was a tax lawyer in Milan he became acquainted with Giovanni Battista Montini (better known as Pope Paul VI).

By 1969 Sindona was financial adviser to the Vatican and had close links with Italy's ruling Christian Democratic Party (founded by Paul VI's father). He was also well in with the mafia, the infamous P2 masonic order, president Nixon

and the CIA. Di Fonzo believes that Sindona was the conduit for the money the CIA spent to finance the colonels' coup in Greece in 1967.

St Peter's banker tells Sindona's story and details his complex financial dealings. By the end Sindona was the most powerful banker in Italy. Christian Democratic premier Giulio Andreotti called him the saviour of the lira. Sindona fell in 1974 when his American bank Franklin National collapsed. In 1980 a US court sentenced him to 27 years for fraud, misappropriation of bank funds, perjury and jumping bail. His conviction followed an attempted 'kidnapping'. Ostensibly by left-wing terrorists, the kidnapping was actually carried out by the mafia. Things went wrong when the mafiosi tried to use the bluff as an opportunity to fill their own coffers.

In 1981 the Italian government charged Sindona with fraud and with ordering the murder of the Bank of Italy's official receiver, who had been investigating Sindona's affairs. Last year he was extradited to Italy and sentenced to 15 years at his first trial in December.

Di Fonzo has been thorough in tracking down the facts about Sindona, but his assessment of the

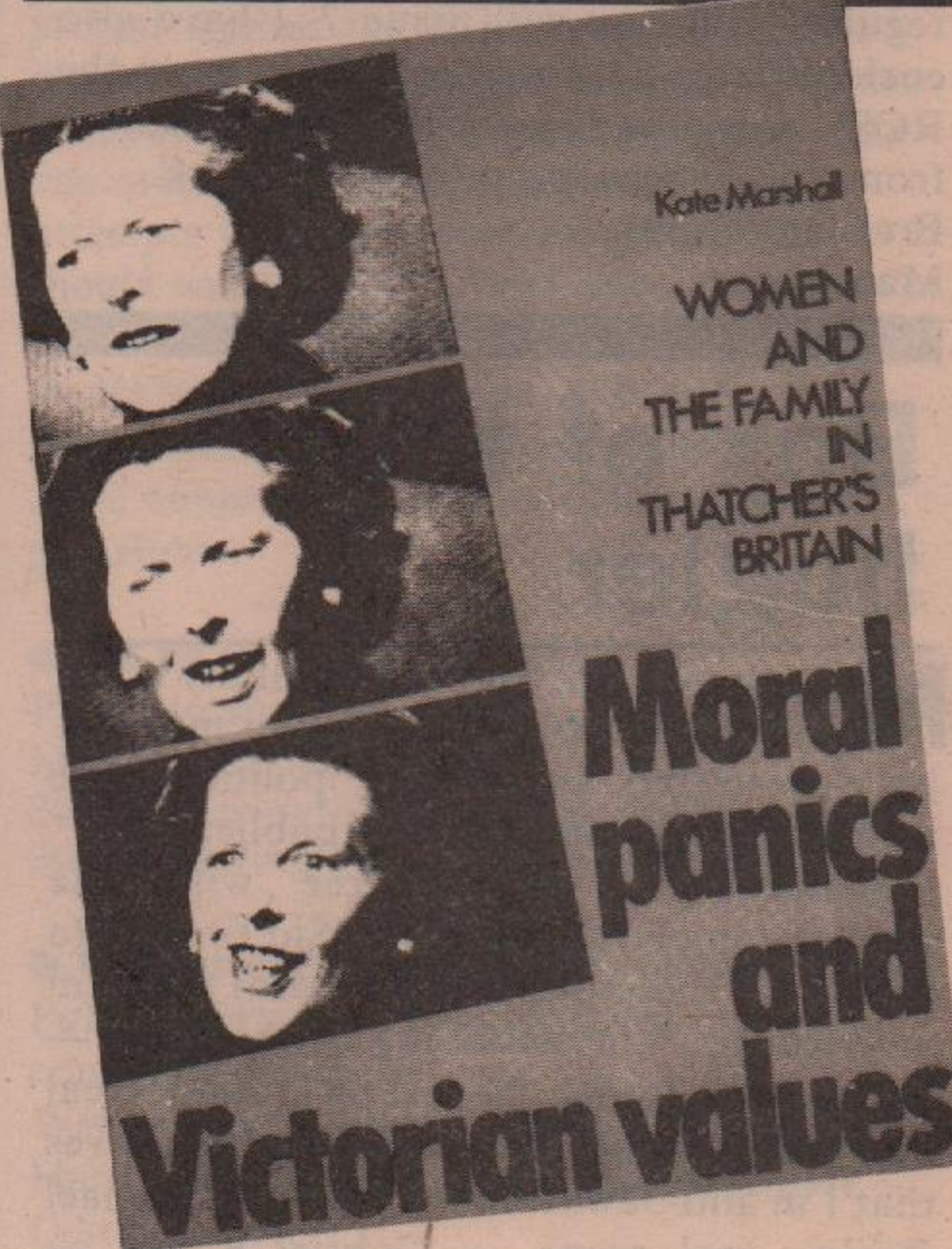
man leaves much to be desired. Di Fonzo's method is to examine Sindona's fall to find clues about his rise. He speculates like a *News of the World* reporter about sexual relationships between Sindona, his grandmother and his daughter. He is also preoccupied with Sindona's migraines, psychological disorders and that old chestnut — the mystery of Sicily.

Sindona's own explanation for his fall, which Di Fonzo dismisses out of hand, is closer to the mark. Sindona believed that a section of the Italian ruling class wanted to get rid of him because he knew too much. Di Fonzo reveals that Enrico Cuccia, the head of the state investment bank, was a partner of Sindona's in the early sixties. Many Italian businessmen felt uneasy when Sindona threatened to tell all on his return to Italy in 1984.

Sindona is not the evil excrement on Italian capitalism that Di Fonzo likes to make out. He is a natural product of a weak capitalist class that has had to rely more than most on crime and corruption — and on the spiritual support of the Church of Rome.

Andy Clarkson

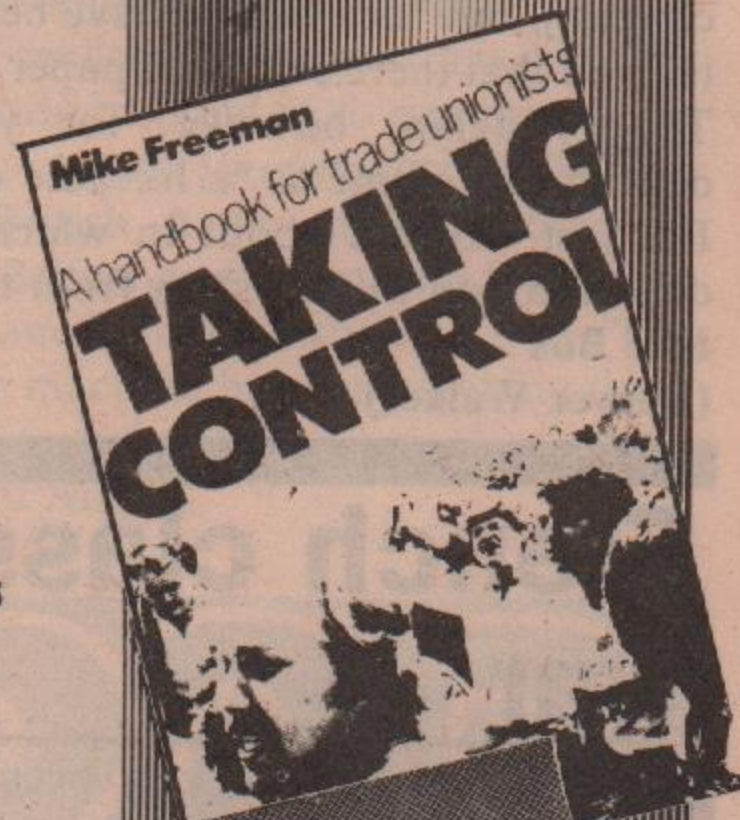
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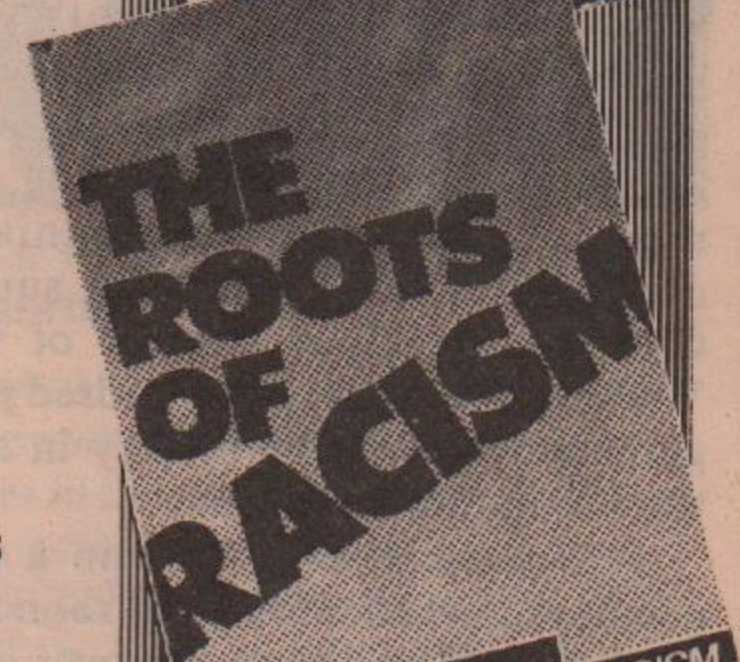
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LETTERS

New subscriber

After taking *tns* now for over a month, I have found it excellent reading. It's honest and hard-hitting and presents you with the real facts. You will be pleased therefore to learn that I will be taking *tns* regularly starting with issue 7. I have also enclosed a postal order for £10 to go to the RCP's party fund. Look forward to hearing from you and keep up the good work.

Brendan Glynn
Manchester

Box of the bugler

Many thanks for your review of my book, *Quite right, Mr Trotsky!*. You may not have answered any of my political case against Trotskyism, but any publicity...

However, I can't agree with the implication of your reviewer 'Sid French' (a recent RCP recruit, I understand) that I'm anti-semitic. Nor would my mother have — and she was Jewish. My use of Trotsky's real name and that of Tony Cliff no more proves that I'm anti-Jewish than my use of Michael Pablo's real name — Gabriel Raptis — proves I'm anti-Greek. And nowhere, despite the implication of your review, did I use the word 'Jew' to describe either Trotsky or Cliff.

As to my own 'pseudonym', many of your readers may not have realised that your statement that I am in reality 'Eric Box of the Bristol Bugler' was a joke. I know you've only got two members in Bristol, both recent imports (and until this year *tns* was giving a London phone number for its Bristol contact), but they should have been able to tell you that there's no such paper in Bristol. Thanks again, however, for your mild description of me as 'a likeable eccentric'. I'm just worried about in which political direction you think I stray from the centre!

Eric Box
(Denver Walker)

French class war

On the 28 May, workers occupying the SKF ball-bearing plant at Ivry, a suburb of Paris, were violently evicted by a force of CRS riot police. Just over a week later, in the early hours of the morning, some 200 militants of the Communist Party-dominated CGT trade union surprised the CRS and regained control of the plant. Within an hour several hundred people had gathered outside the factory in support of the occupying workers.

Ten companies of CRS in a convoy of armoured vehicles followed soon after and a pitched battle on two fronts was joined. The occupying workers were forced back up on to the roof. The red flag and the French tricolour which they had hoisted fluttered together overhead as the cornered workers were beaten into the ground.

In the streets below the CRS used shrapnel grenades, plastic bullets and tear-gas to disperse the growing crowd. They were met with molotov cocktails, bricks and (appropriately) ball-bearings fired from slings. The battle continued until after noon, leaving over a hundred injured, many seriously.

Such scenes reflect the need of Mitterrand's socialist government to back up its austerity programme with naked repression. They have also led many commentators to speak of the PCF (French Communist Party) renewing its long lost traditions of class struggle.

It is certainly true that the communist mayor of Ivry, with the help of neighbouring PCF-controlled municipalities, played a large part in the confrontation. But can things really have changed that much in the 18 months since the decision to close down the SKF plant was approved by a government that included the communist Jacques Ralite as minister for employment?

A glance at the PCF daily *L'Humanite*

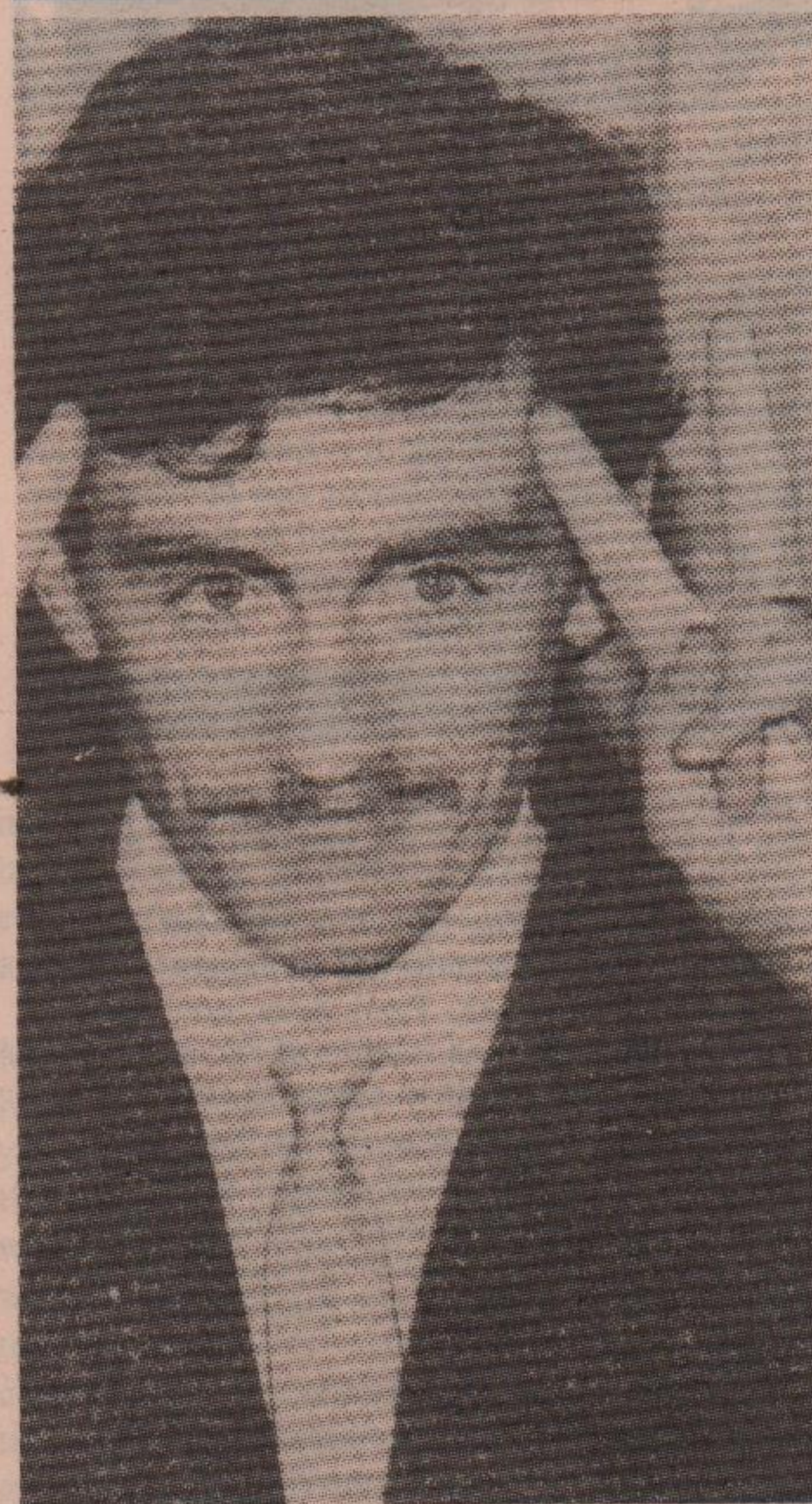
could quickly answer that question. Behind the outrage at police brutality are the same old alternative economic solutions, both for SKF and for the French economy as a whole. The party may have joined a battle, but the war is still being fought for France, not for the independent interests of the French working class.

Louis Dufoix
Paris

Eviction notice

Two weeks ago I wrote to Hackney council with a list of repairs needed in my council flat. Last week I got a reply — a letter telling me the council was starting eviction proceedings. The reason given was that I hadn't paid my rent. I hadn't paid my rent because every time I got on to the council about the repairs they told me they couldn't do anything until they had set a rate. That dragged on for months. Now it's all over the council is getting down to the business of penalising its tenants for its own failure to fight the cuts.

Ex-Labour supporter
Kingsmead Estate
Hackney



Clones - the real story

The British press is notorious for its selective reporting of Irish events. But the recent saga of the 'Clones cyclone', Irish boxer Barry McGuigan, beat everything I have ever read.

McGuigan and his home town of Clones, just South of the Border, were feted by Fleet Street as examples of how it is possible to forget about the war in Ireland and live in peace and harmony. As a native of County Monaghan I would like to tell your readers a few things about Clones which they wouldn't read in the British papers.

In January 1921 the Royal Irish Constabulary caught a group of armed men looting a pub in Clones. They killed one raider, injured another and arrested the others. The RIC was no doubt hoping they were a gang of Irish republicans. They turned out to be members of an 'A' specials platoon from the nearby village of Newtownbutler in County Fermanagh. The 'A' specials were part of the Ulster Special Constabulary, a viciously anti-Catholic Loyalist force.

In February 1922 the 'A' specials paid another visit to Clones. When the local IRA commandant challenged them at the railway station, the IRA having taken over from the RIC and the British Army, the specials shot him dead. Local IRA men then killed four specials and wounded or captured most of

the rest of the party. The Loyalists launched violent attacks on the nationalist community in Belfast in retaliation and demanded that the British Army reoccupy a series of towns on the Southern side of the Border.

In the seventies British forces in uniform and undercover have made numerous trips over the Border to Clones. In one incident a fully armed British Army patrol was intercepted in a private van in Clones. On another occasion a British Army helicopter landed in a field at Dromard near Clones. When a civilian told them they were on the wrong side of the Border they told him to 'fuck off' because they knew where they were. A few days later another British Army helicopter landed on the outskirts of the town. In May 1974 two jeeps carrying 12 members of a Scottish regiment drove through the streets as if they owned them.

The British government likes to make out that there is no war in Ireland and that its army is just keeping the 'Micks' apart and keeping the peace. But you can hardly go anywhere in Ireland without bumping into British Army murder squads going about their business of keeping the Irish people down. Clones is no exception.

Brendan McGonigle
London

Teacher talk

This week in the local papers the general secretary of Leeds NUT, Daniel Dewhurst, said that we must be prepared to strike again in September because 'Sir Keith Joseph does not like seeing reason', but that all-out strike action is out of the question. I know that's what I should expect from a union like the NUT but it's made me angry enough to finally get round to write a letter to your paper.

A few weeks ago at a mass meeting in Leeds a young woman from your party got up and criticised Dewhurst and others for thinking our aim should be to make the Tories 'see reason'. She said that the teachers can only win by giving the government no choice but to back down. It seems to me that she was right and that Sir Keith will never see Dewhurst's reason because for the government it is very sensible to pay teachers low wages.

Dewhurst's crazy reasoning is further revealed by his statement that 'from a logistic point of view, an all-out strike is easy but in terms of financial problems no union could afford to pay its members and the NUT pays members the full salary when we are on strike'.

I think many teachers would be prepared to strike without full pay if they thought striking would win them what they wanted. The NUT recently asked all its members to pay a day's wages into the sustentation fund to finance the present action and many of us have done that. But it galls me to put good money into the hands of our leaders who will then waste it on futile three-day strikes in a minority of schools.

From my experience the action we are taking today is only hurting us and our pupils. Meanwhile Sir Keith Joseph must be laughing to himself every time he reads the statements put out by the NUT. While the NUT leaders want Joseph to speak nicely to them and 'see reason', ordinary NUT members just want to see him on his knees.

NUT member

Leeds

Write to

tns

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STEPPING OUT

The Labour Party, I hear, is re-discussing its Northern Ireland policy. Who with? Well, last Wednesday Labour's Northern Ireland spokesmen Peter Archer and Stuart Bell hopped over to Belfast. They met two Assemblymen from Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, and were due to have a chat with Sinn Fein representatives after lunch. I don't know what they ate, but the Labour statesmen couldn't stomach the idea of meeting Belfast Sinn Fein organiser Joe Austin, elected councillor Mitchel McLaughlin and Denis Donaldson, who was sentenced to 10 years on explosives charges in 1971. Pleading an 'urgent engagement', Archer and Bell ducked out of the Sinn Fein meeting and went home. Their policy review will doubtless reflect the balanced view of the Irish War they got from the DUP spokesmen, whose Reverend leader has taken to being photographed carrying a sledgehammer to be used for 'smashing Sinn Fein'.

In the same vein, Brighton Labour Party is now considering a censure motion against councillor Richard Stanton after he refused to condemn the Brighton bomb and organised a public meeting in the town at which Daisy Mules of Derry Sinn Fein spoke. The censure motion is backed by Brighton Labour Party chair Mick Johnson, the party's Marine and Kingscliff wards, the transport workers' union — and Militant. Perhaps the infamous Tendency is trying to protect itself against witch-hunts by getting on to the Queen's honours list, seeing as just about everybody else who tangled with the republican movement in Brighton last October got a knighthood this week.

You may have noted the antics of a former SAS man who is playing Robinson Crusoe on the 63-foot lump of granite called Rockall, to stake Britain's claim to it and ward off rival claims from Ireland, Iceland and Denmark. Last week he was awarded planning permission to put up a shelter by the Scottish Western Isles council planning committee. Councillor James L Macarthur of Benbecula was all for it as a way of getting a few quid out of London: 'The Irish might then invade us, the government would send a task force, and then spend millions of pounds on us'. Another councillor insisted that Rockall was British because it is nearer to the Western Isles than to Ireland. 'What does that prove?' asked councillor William Macleod, 'The Falklands are much nearer Argentina.' Give that man a drink.

The deeply theoretical Workers' Revolutionary Party has set up a summer school next month on 'The process and practice of cognition', otherwise known as 'why you should support the WRP's miners' campaign'. Its advert, laced with quotes from Hegel and Lenin, concludes that the party's march for sacked miners manifests 'the syllogism of Necessity', the demand 'Release the jailed miners!' 'manifests the connection with the world economic and political crisis', while 'Reinstate the sacked miners' is 'the Particular which faces the individual when he is released from jail or if he is convicted'. The course costs £98 for a fortnight (including VAT). As Fred Pontin would have said, book early to avoid disappointment.

I have received some irate correspondence from NUJ member Mister Jim Brown, complaining that he has not been sacked from his job at Nalco HQ as this column reported last week. Furthermore he does not even work for Nalco, but has for some years been the cricket and opera correspondent on the *Bristol Bugler*. The story should of course have referred to NUJ member Jim Roberts, who has been summarily dismissed by Nalco on circumstantial evidence. Apologies all round.

REPORTS

Anti-racist action

Black people in Bradford and Walthamstow have received a lot of damage at the hands of racist thugs in recent months. But the police are the last people they would turn to for help. They have begun to take matters into their own hands and to organise the defence of their communities.

In late May racists beat Gurmail Singh, Amarjit Singh and Dara Singh unconscious outside Gallopers pub in the Bowling area of Bradford. In early June 18-year old Makhan Singh went for an evening drink in the Napoleon pub. The barmen refused to serve him, threatened to set the dogs on him and pulled him over the bar by the collar. Makhan defended himself and was promptly arrested.

Days later six white youths attacked the house of Akhtar Hussain, smashing his windows, door and car. It took seven phone calls and nearly three hours to get the police to respond. The community copper told Akhtar that he had been 'finishing his lunch'.

Last week the Bowling Asian Action Group called a meeting to discuss how to deal with the spate of attacks. Local Asians said they were not surprised at the police inaction and wanted to organise themselves to resist the racists. The meeting was critical of Asian councillors and council-funded anti-racist groups for cooperating with the police and failing to respond to the attacks. Many people agreed with Kirk Williams of Bradford Workers Against Racism when he called for defence patrols to confront the racists and local canvassing to win wider support. The meeting agreed to set up a committee to plan action.

Local organiser of the Pakistani Welfare Society in Walthamstow Dr Malik told *ins* that arson attacks on Asian homes are commonplace. Mohammad Islam was sleeping with his wife and eight-week old

baby when racists poured petrol over his back door and set the house on fire. The family were lucky to get away with their lives.

Fourteen-year old Raymond Seedin was not so lucky. A gang of 30 youths carved his face and neck with a Stanley knife at a bus stop. 'Kill the Paki before the police get here,' said one. The police were sitting in a parked car just down the road. They refused to take Raymond to hospital because it would 'dirty the car'. He needed 40 stitches and four pints of blood.

Malik and the Pakistani Welfare Society have no time for the police or their admirers in the local GLC-funded police monitoring group. They have organised defence patrols made up of young Asians who are sick of seeing their families and friends brutalised by racists and degraded by the police. Malik has no time either for his critics in the Labour Party who 'think that our organisation poses a threat to the establishment'.

Both Bradford and Walthamstow police have responded to black defence squads with horror. West Yorkshire chief constable Colin Sampson declares that 'there is no need whatsoever for groups to organise themselves and take independent action'. Sampson told local Asians that it would be much more constructive if they 'channelled their obvious public conscience into full cooperation and liaison with the police'. East London police commanders do not conceal their disapproval for Malik and his supporters. 'The police say they don't like vigilante outfits,' says Malik, 'but we don't like the attacks.'

The establishment does not like black defence organisations because they are a dangerous example of how workers can organise independently. At a time when respect for the forces of law and order is in decline, the authorities are more concerned than ever to stamp on those who flout the law and take matters into their own hands. They want to encourage workers' identification with state institutions and isolate anti-establishment trends.

We want to encourage working class people to make a break with the institutions of law and order as a first step to taking control of society. Asking the police to fight racism is like asking the employers to hand control of their factories to their workers. The police cannot combat racist violence because they are part of the machinery which enforces racial oppression in British society.

Fighting racism means workers getting together to take on the system that sustains it. Workers' defence against racist attacks is a basic expression of working class solidarity and independent organisation.

John Pearson



Block the cuts in Edinburgh

'When our full-time official wouldn't support us, we just thought what can we do?' Last week a laundry worker at Edinburgh's City hospital told *ins* why the workers called off their overtime ban. They got a call from Nupe full-timer John Lambie. He said that the health board was threatening to bring in contractors to deal with the backlog of work.

Keeping contractors out of the health service is so important to Lambie that the employers only have to mention the word contract and he will tell his members to call off disruptive action.

Laundry workers at the City have good reason to take action. All 43 — mainly women — are threatened with the sack. A 'restricted circulation' letter from Lothian health board spells out management intentions:

● July 1985: transfer responsibility for the laundry at Gogarburn hospital from the Edinburgh City to the Infirmary at Livingston ● April 1986: close the City laundry once work is transferred to the laundries at Edinburgh Western General

and Livingston.

Laundry workers at the City want to keep their jobs and they are prepared to fight for them. But John Lambie and the boys at Nupe head office just want a quiet life. They are hoping that Lothian health board will change its mind and leave the City laundry intact.

The urgent task for workers at City is to mobilise opposition to the cuts at Livingston and the Western General and at hospitals like Gogarburn which send out work to the City.

Mike Wall



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

COME ALONG!



No bans on gay rights!

Last summer police and customs officials rampaged through London's gay bookshops and seized literature they deemed unfit for public consumption. London's biggest and

best known gay bookshop Gay's the Word was their biggest hit. Customs officials declared that 221 volumes of American imports were fit only for burning.

The Revolutionary Communist Party will be joining Gay's the Word supporters in a protest against the seizure order when the court rules on the case on Monday 24 June. Everybody has an interest in opposing state censorship and resisting government attempts to dictate what we should and should not read. At a time when the establishment is witch-hunting gays through media scare stories about Aids and campaigns against 'obscene' literature it is more important than ever to stand up for gay rights.

● No bans on gay rights!

Picket in support of Gay's the Word
Monday 24 June 10am
Stoke Newington Magistrates' Court
Stoke Newington Church Street N16

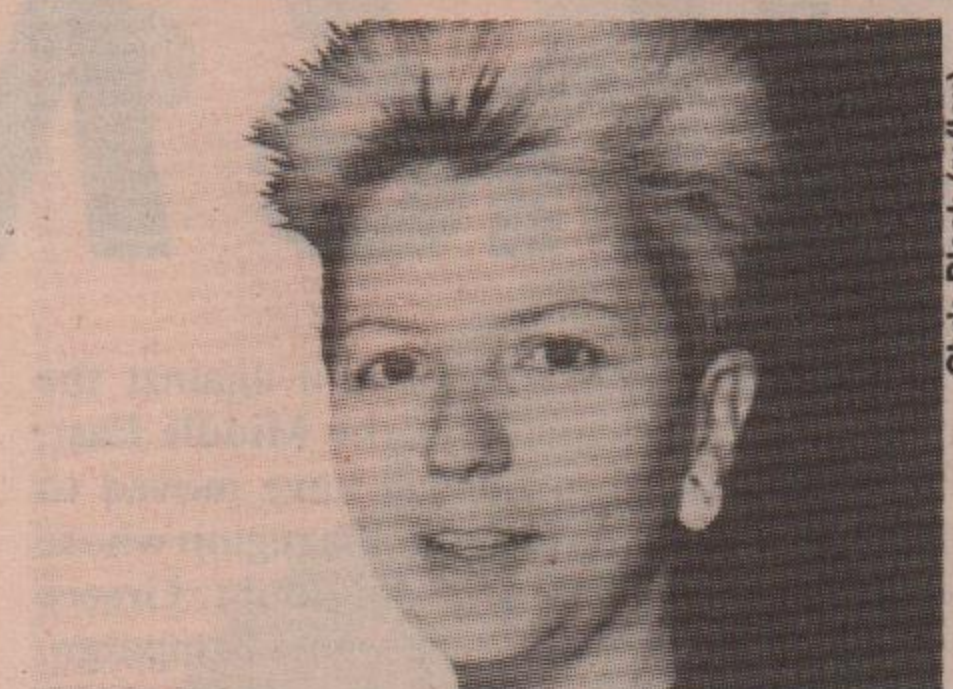
● Censorship, pornography and the state

Public meeting to discuss these controversial issues
Wednesday 26 June 7.30pm
Hampden Community Centre (upstairs)
Ossulton Street
London NW1

Other events

● Moral panics and women's rights

Dayschool to discuss the new morality and what it means for women
Saturday 6 July 10am-5pm
Partick Burgh Hall, Glasgow



● Fight for a change with the RCP

All the contenders in the GLC by-election campaign in Vauxhall are out on the streets canvassing support. Help us make sure that Vauxhall voters back the revolutionary communist candidate Jean Smith.

● Mass motorcade

Join the RCP's election motorcade through Vauxhall. Bring your car or jump on the float.
Saturday 22 June 10.30am
Meet Grantham Road, Stockwell

● Why vote Revolutionary Communist?

Put your questions and hear the answers
Thursday 27 June 7.30pm
Clapham Library, Clapham Common
tube

● Dance away with the RCP

Join the candidate at the by-election bash. Tickets £1.50 if you're working, £1 if you're not.
Saturday 29 June 7.30pm
White Hart Pub, Kennington Lane (Oval tube)

● British troops out of Ireland!

The Irish Freedom Movement has called a demonstration in London to commemorate the anniversary of Internment. In August 1971 the British Army raided nationalist ghettos in Belfast and Derry and locked up Irish freedom fighters without a trial. The British war machine has been locking them up ever since.
Saturday 10 August
London



● Become a Revolutionary Communist Party supporter

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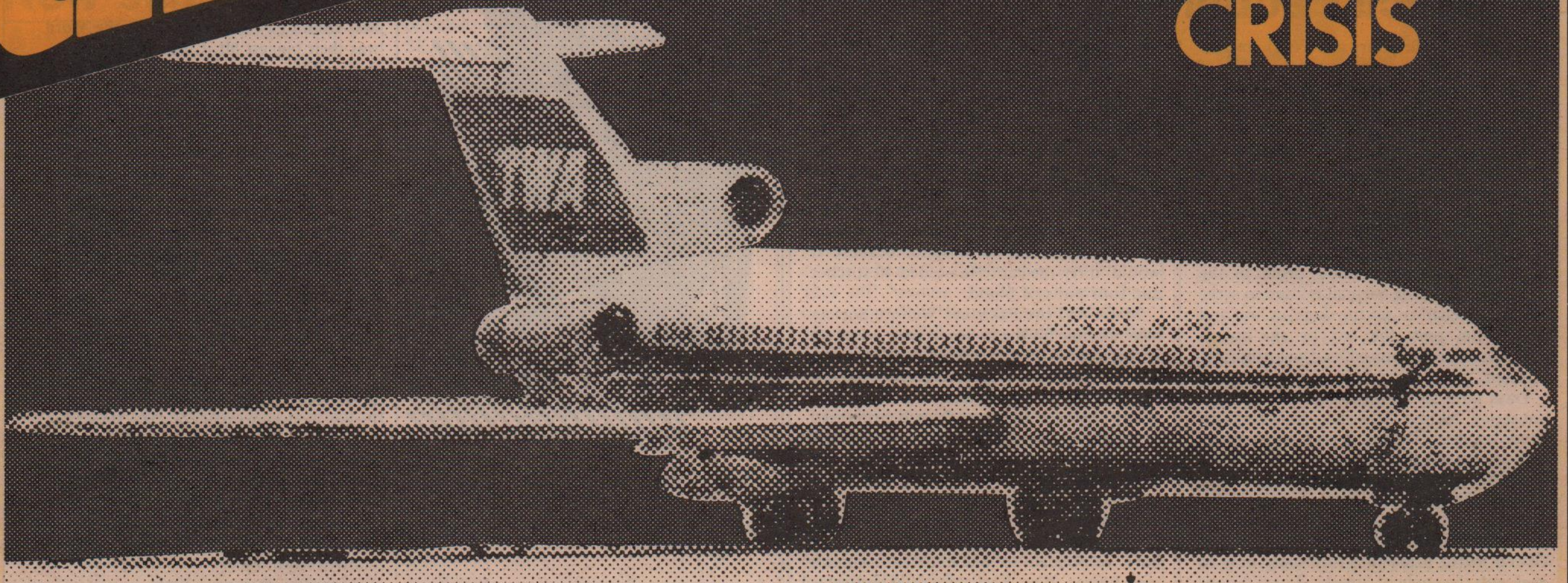
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HIJACK AND HOSTAGE CRISIS



Western gunmen out of the Middle East!

The hijacking of TWA flight 847 by a Shiite commando squad on Friday prompted a swift Western response. A vast US intervention force has been assembled in the eastern Mediterranean to launch a retaliatory strike against Shiite strongholds in Lebanon. Since Saturday the entire region has become a war zone as US aircraft carriers, destroyers and crack anti-terrorist forces close in on the Lebanese coastline in preparation for the showdown.

The Shiite hijacking has become the pretext for stepping up Western interference in the Middle East. The biggest intervention force assembled since Britain's South Atlantic War is being deployed by the USA and its Western allies to teach anti-imperialist Muslim militants a lesson. While negotiations continue about the fate of the remaining hostages dispersed in and around Beirut, a major offensive against the Shiite militias is in the making.

The hijacking has provoked a storm of outrage against Muslim terrorism and fanaticism in the Western media. A climate of anti-Muslim hysteria is being whipped up to justify the coming Western crackdown in the Middle East. When the hijackers killed one of their hostages, a member of the US navy, and dumped him on the tarmac at Beirut airport on Saturday night, Western commentators seethed with indignation. Yet when a car bomb planted by CIA undercover agents exploded in Beirut in March, killing 80 Lebanese and maiming 200, the incident was passed off as an unfortunate bungle.

In battle-scarred Lebanon thousands of Arab and Palestinian people die each year — victims of the turmoil created by the West's carve-up of the Middle East. For the past 40 years the West has maintained control over the region by sponsoring America's proxy Israel to terrorise the Arab masses. But when Arab people fight back and direct their arms at America, there are no limits to Western fury.

The world's real terrorists reside in London, Washington, Bonn and Paris. But in the Middle East, as in Ireland and Central America, those who dare fight back against the West are branded as criminals and fanatics.

To rally support for action against the militant Islamic forces in the Middle East, the major Western powers have moved to ostracise those countries in the region whose support for the venture is in doubt. Greece has become the target of a smear campaign. Allegedly lax Greek security arrangements — and the Greek authorities' release of the third man in the Shiite commando group left behind in the airport lounge — have been used to cast aspersions on Greek premier Papandreou. On Monday, British Tory MPs called for a boycott of Athens airport.

Behind the Western leaders' sudden preoccupation with the hazards of Athens air traffic lies the desire to bring their Greek ally into line. Greece's ambivalent attitude to the Nato alliance has long been a source of irritation to Western leaders. As the West braces itself for a major military operation in the Middle East, allies in the region who waver and prevaricate can expect rough treatment. The West's toleration of maverick 'neutralist' politicians like Papandreou ends when its power in the Middle East is at stake.

The problem for the West is that the militant Shiite movements which have spread throughout the Middle East since the late seventies present a novel and unpredictable challenge to Western control over the region. The fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979 and the emergence of the anti-Western Shiite regime under Ayatollah Khomeini was a major blow to the West. Anti-imperialist movements fighting under the banner of radical Islam have since spread throughout the Middle East and northern Africa — threatening to dislodge the conservative regimes which have policed the region on behalf of the West for the past 40 years. When Western leaders fulminate against 'Muslim fanaticism', what they are concerned about is not Arab religious customs, but the growth of militant resistance to imperialist domination in the Middle East.

The Shiite hijackers demanded the release of 700 Lebanese Shiite fighters interned in Israel. When the commandos aboard TWA 847 turned down an anonymous American offer of \$3m in exchange for the release of their hostages, saying they had not come for

money but to achieve their mission, their defiance was portrayed as a sign of Muslim irrationality.

People who are not motivated by money may defy the comprehension of Western journalists. But there is nothing irrational or fanatical about taking up arms against the powers which have exploited and oppressed the Arab masses for most of the century. Western scorn about Arab religious practices and fanatical suicide guerrillas conceals indignation and fear in the face of a courageous and determined enemy.

Since 1979 America has made repeated attempts to restore Western control in the Middle East. But so far every US intervention has failed. The US anti-terrorist 'Delta' force now preparing to move into Lebanon sustained a humiliating defeat in Iran in 1979 on their mission to free US hostages held in Iranian custody. America's bungled commando raid on Tehran became one of the most embarrassing episodes in US military history and cost Reagan's predecessor Jimmy Carter the presidency.

America's next gambit was the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in the summer of 1982 under US direction. The aim was to destroy the Palestinian liberation forces inside Lebanon and to create a stable pro-Western regime in Beirut. Again the outcome was a disaster for the USA. In October 1983 Shiite fighters killed 241 US marines in a Beirut bomb attack. The Americans were forced to withdraw. Far from pacifying Lebanon, the invasion served only to expose America's weakness and to fan the flames of anti-Western rebellion. Earlier this year the CIA's undercover bombing of the home of a militant Shiite leader in Beirut backfired as the target escaped unhurt from the carnage.

American defence secretary Caspar Weinberger's complaint about the 'disorganised anarchy in Lebanon' expressed US exasperation with a crisis that defies traditional solutions. The Shiite militias in Lebanon and their allies in the region are recruited from among the most oppressed sections of the Arab population who are prepared to give their lives in the fight against Western domination.

The West has been able to cope with the Palestinian liberation movement because it

has been isolated from broader Arab backing. But the Shiite resistance to Israel and the USA has captured the imagination of Arab people throughout the region. Any military attack by the USA on Shiite forces in Lebanon, Iran or Syria is likely to spark widespread upheaval.

Fear of the unpredictable consequences has so far restrained the US military from going in. Western leaders prefer to tackle Arab revolt through a mixture of diplomacy and selective undercover terror rather than meet it in an open military offensive. But, earlier this year, the US administration threatened that any further Arab guerrilla action against the USA would meet with stiff retaliation. America will not let its latest humiliation pass unpunished.

The slaughter of more than 500 Palestinian fighters and civilians in the camps at Beirut last month showed that the middle class leaders of the Amal and other Shiite militias know how to manipulate Arab militancy for their own purposes. But their hold over the Arab masses remains precarious. The commando unit which hijacked the TWA airliner was one of many guerrilla units operating outside the control of the official Amal militia.

Yet the kidnappers' action has consolidated the position of Amal leader Nabih Berri. Having presided over the destruction of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Beirut, Berri can now capitalise on the anti-imperialist aspirations of the Arab masses to play the role of power broker in Lebanon. Berri, Iranian leader Khomeini and Syrian president Assad were quickly engaged in negotiations with the American government to seek a peaceful way out of the crisis. The West hopes it can take advantage of the manipulative talents of frightened Arab leaders to isolate the militants.

But the conflict between imperialism and the Arab masses cannot be resolved through diplomacy. Sooner or later, possibly even this week, the West will take direct action to crush the Arab resistance. British workers should show their support for the oppressed workers of the Middle East by opposing British and American intervention.