

tms
the next step

Revolutionary Communist Party weekly • 12 July 1985 • 30p

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Another firebombing in East London

Stop racist attacks!

Arshad Aslam and her baby outside the charred remains of their home in Walthamstow, East London. They are the latest victims of the racist attacks and firebombings that have become commonplace in the area. We investigate how the Labour Party has made racism respectable in East London, page 6,7.



After Brecon and Radnor

The result of last week's by-election at Brecon and Radnor was a disaster for the Tory government and a triumph for the Liberal/SDP Alliance. The by-election marked a considerable electoral advance by the Labour Party. It was also a good result for the Revolutionary Communist Party.

The swing away from the Conservative Party at Brecon turned a majority of more than 8000 at the general election into a poor third place. The poll and the campaign revealed a widespread sentiment that the Tory government 'has gone too far', especially in cutting public spending and raising unemployment. Tory candidate Chris Butcher was handicapped by his close personal association with Margaret Thatcher as a political adviser at Downing Street. Despite his attempts to distance himself from Thatcher — she stayed away from the constituency and he steered clear of the Welsh Tory conference at Llandudno — he could not escape carrying the can for the policies of Thatcherism.

The Tory defeat has already deepened conflicts among top Tories about how to rescue the party's prospects for the next general election. It has strengthened the position of those such as Peter Walker and John Biffen who have been arguing in the cabinet against further cuts in public spending. The problem is that while Thatcher has evidently gone too far for voters in Wales and elsewhere, she has not gone far enough to satisfy the requirements of ailing British capitalism. From the standpoint of the British establishment Thatcher is right that there is no alternative to her package of harsh policies to get the economy out of recession. But the clear message from Brecon is that cuts and longer dole queues do not win votes.

Party line-up

The Tory government is now in a worse position in terms of public popularity than it was in 1981. The only thing that saved Thatcher then was the Falklands War. The way things are going it looks as though it will take another war to get Thatcher back into Downing Street.

The Brecon victory was another by-election boost for the Alliance. Liberal candidate Richard Livsey was the natural beneficiary of disaffection with the government in a safe Tory seat in the Welsh countryside. The Alliance remains the alternative to the Tories in the predominantly middle class rural areas and the south of the country. Both David Steel and David Owen try, like the Tory wets, to present Tory policies with a more human face. Many middle class people are alienated by the abrasive style of the Thatcher regime. They want to uphold British capitalism, but they would like to do it without creating social strife and wrecking the welfare state. The consolidation of the Alliance also reflects the continuing weakness of the major opposition party, Labour.

Labour's vote in Brecon was its best by-election performance for a decade. Richard Willey failed by 500 votes to win the seat, but at the outset it was not even on Labour's list of 130 winnable seats for the next general election. The fact that he came so close is a measure of the success of Neil Kinnock's team in shaping the party up to win the next general election. All commentators congratulated Labour for its professional organisation of the by-election campaign. All agree that Kinnock is looking more and more like a potential

prime minister.

Kinnock immediately took advantage of Labour's failure to win the seat to back up his crusade to smash the left inside the party. He regards this as vital in getting the establishment approval he needs to win the next general election. Kinnock had no hesitation in naming the culprits for Labour's failure: Arthur Scargill and Tony Benn. In the closing stages of the by-election Kinnock had condemned Scargill's call for another miners' strike and Benn's campaigns for an amnesty for victimised miners and for land nationalisation. When the votes were counted he returned to the attack, blaming the standard bearers of what remains of the left for frightening away the voters.

No choice

Kinnock's renewed onslaught on the left will put it even more on the defensive. The left's weakness is that it has no more confidence in the rhetoric of Scargill and Benn than does Kinnock. Everybody knows that Scargill has no intention of calling another strike and that Benn's amnesty bill is just a parliamentary stunt. The posturing of the leaders of the left is designed to maintain their own positions and reputations. It is not a serious attempt to mobilise active defence of workers' rights. The left's empty rhetoric discredits socialism and allows Kinnock's policies to dominate the labour movement. As Kinnock asserts that the left is an electoral liability and that it should shut up or get out, the left will increasingly toe the line.

The Brecon result is a good one for the RCP because it reveals the urgency of building an alternative to the Labour Party. One of the most striking features of the campaign was the difficulty of distinguishing clearly among all three major candidates. On all the major issues that emerged during the campaign they put forward a common line. They all added their voices to the condemnations of the alleged IRA bomb plot. Nobody spoke out in defence of the Irish fight for freedom or against the atmosphere of anti-Irish hysteria being whipped up by the media. All three candidates condemned the call for an amnesty for victimised miners.

The biggest controversy in the campaign was the suggestion by the Liberal team that their candidate was the only one with 'a secure family background'. Butcher upheld his honourable status as 'a bachelor' and Willey made clear that even though he was not married to his long standing partner, he was a 'deeply committed family man'. There was no doubt about it — all the candidates were pleasant, decent, moderate and respectable local chaps.

The Brecon campaign was dominated by the absent personality of Margaret Thatcher. The opposition parties based their appeal to the electorate on her unpopularity. But from terrorism to family values, they expressed views which Thatcher herself has put at the centre of British politics. Kinnock has already rewritten Labour's programme to bring it into line with Thatcher's economic policies. The Brecon by-election shows that Labour could yet win a general election with this programme. It confirms that we have no time to lose in building a working class alternative to Labour that can lead effective resistance against this government and the next — whether Tory, Labour or Alliance or any combination of the three.

PREPARING FOR POWER

Week-long conference of the Revolutionary Communist Party, 19-26 July. See page 12 for details.

We asked some of the people who are coming to Preparing for Power what got them interested in politics and what attracts them to Preparing for Power. We also asked some of the convenors of the specialist courses what they are offering.

Mick

clerical worker for a left-wing Labour council

'I never thought much about the Labour Party before I started working for the council. I thought it was just irrelevant. But when you're a bit closer to it you realise that it isn't just harmless. What struck me most of all was the contradiction between what they say and what they do.

'We've had campaign after campaign against the cuts. But behind the scenes the cuts keep going through. I've seen a steady process of housing decay over the past few years with nothing done to stop it. It's more or less the same story in every section. The council is always running anti-racist campaigns and talking about racial awareness, but they still put black workers in the rubbish jobs in every department.

'At first I thought the RCP was a bunch of nutcases. But then I found myself agreeing with a lot of things they were saying. And I realised that having a healthy cynicism about the Labour Party was not enough. You just find yourself getting isolated. You need to get involved in a party to overcome isolation and do something effective.

'I'm going to the courses on Labourism and Ireland at Preparing for Power. Labourism because that's what I'm up against every day. Ireland because I've been involved as an individual in going on demonstrations and doing one-off things over the years and I think it's time to do something more systematically about it.'



Sheona

law centre worker

'I've been to the last four Preparing for Power conferences. It's been a real breath of fresh air after more than 10 years of being involved in women's organisations, left groups, and voluntary organisations. I've understood more about politics and the world after those few days than after four years at university.

'The main thing about Preparing for Power is that it enables you to make sense of a wide range of political issues. It's not just academic, it's Marxism as a basis for action. What I especially appreciate about

Preparing for Power is that you're not expected just to sit there and listen. The whole thing invites criticism and real discussion and it demands an active response.

'I've particularly enjoyed learning about the Marxist method and Marxist economics and I'm really glad there's going to be some "advanced Marxism" sessions this year. I wouldn't miss it.'



Andy

American student in Britain

'It was the invasion of Grenada in 1983 that first made me think about politics. I was at college but I had been registered for the draft a year earlier. I thought "it could have been me" and it made me think about what you could do as an individual about the way things were going in the world.

'When I came to Britain I thought it would be more left-wing. I found the British left very unconvincing — and very chauvinistically anti-American.

'I was impressed by the way the RCP stood out from the rest, the way they made no attempt to conform with public opinion. I spent some time with party activists in the north and I was really impressed by the party's practical work around the miners' strike. I've also spent a few days in the Vauxhall by-election campaign which has been an insight into British politics.

'I'm especially interested in the course on the Russian Revolution at Preparing for Power. That's the issue that people always bring up. Whenever you say "communism", they say "get back to Russia" — especially in the States. It's obviously used to trivialise political discussion so I'm looking forward to looking into the whole question in a lot of detail.'

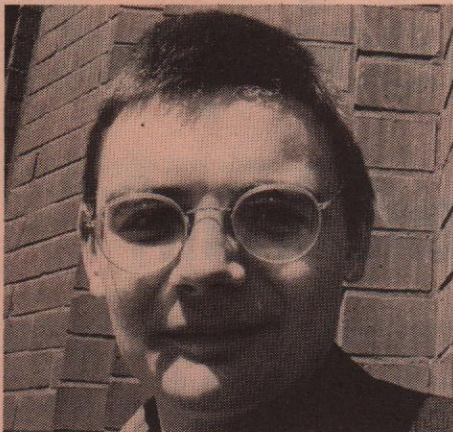
James

clerical worker for a quango

'Two things have pushed me into political activity. The first thing was when I got involved in an occupation against the cuts and got suspended for one year as a result. I realised the problem was that the campaigning never went beyond the education cuts. We were always just kicking back, just responding, letting them define the terms.

'The second thing was working as a clerk for the DHSS in a supplementary

PREPARING FOR POWER



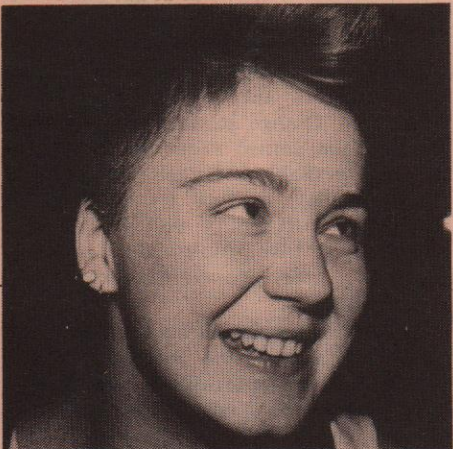
benefits office. I found myself taking all the flak from claimants across the counter, trying to justify the system to them. I realised then how useful it is having graduates behind the counter. They are much more articulate about saying no, they can put it in all sorts of different ways.

'After four years at college I've realised how little useful I've learned — just abstract knowledge useful for shuffling paper about. That's my main interest in Preparing for Power. I'm interested in real knowledge with some practical purpose. I'm fed up with losing arguments with academic Marxists. It's easy enough to put these sort of people in their place by drawing out the practical consequences of their theory. But it's not so easy to take them on theoretically. I think you've got to challenge the arguments where they are stated, not where you'd like them to be stated.'

Jackie student

'The thing that most annoys me about student politics is that it is often the left wingers who end up working against ordinary students. Our union voted to give £500 to the miners — but it was the Labour and Liberal activists who blocked the whole thing with bureaucratic arguments and manoeuvres.

'I'm coming to Preparing for Power because I'm interested in learning more about Marxism with a practical edge. I've been to a few RCP supporters' groups and that's what I like about them. They discuss interesting things and they force you to think. It's so different from studying Marx at college where it's so remote from the real world.'



'I'm going to the courses about women and Ireland because I would like to know more about them. I'm also interested in the welfare state discussion, because that was the great promise that is now falling apart.'

Kunli

local government clerical worker

'When I was 16 I first got picked up by the police in a stop and search operation under the "sus" law. And it carried on like that. That's what first made me realise what we were up against.

'It seems to me that black people are part of the working class, but a part that is largely ignored. I wanted to get involved in something that could get to the bottom of the problems. I could see that the Labour Party had nothing on offer.

'I'm coming to Preparing for Power because I want to understand things like racism and imperialism in more depth. I want to find out more about what goes on in places like Ethiopia and the rest of the

Third World. The only thing you usually hear about these places is appeals for charity, but I think it's important to find out what's really going on.'

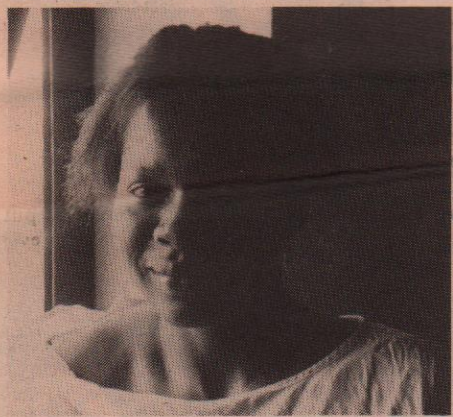
Linda

unwaged with two young children, Yorkshire mining town

'The miners' strike showed that people can't seem to pull things off properly on their own. They need some sort of political guidance, no matter how many of them there are, or all that energy just gets wasted. In the mining areas there's still the strong elements, but a lot of demoralisation. I think people need a glimmer of hope that somebody can do something. They know that the Labour Party has had it, and they're looking for something new.

'I've always thought how awful it must be to live in Northern Ireland, with the police acting as they do, and I've wondered if it could ever happen here. Now I know it could, because I've seen the riot police going into Kellingley and the other pits around here. I've seen the way they treat people who stand up for their rights.

'I don't know a thing about Marxism or Leninism really and I'd like to learn. I know the RCP is always clear and precise in explaining these things. I find I can learn a lot more from somebody explaining things than I can from reading things. There's such a lot to choose from at Preparing for Power, I think I'm just going to pick and choose what takes my fancy.'



Jim Burke (Constant Agitation)

Claudia

trainee social worker

'I'm going to Preparing for Power because some of the topics seem interesting. It's a chance to get a better understanding of things. I know bits and pieces but not enough to argue about them.

'I'm especially interested in the Marxism for beginners. I'd like to have a wider understanding of what it's about. I'm going to the course on women too, because that's something I'm interested in anyway and this will be looking at the question from a different angle, one I haven't come across much before. I'm sure I'm going to enjoy myself.'

Course convenors



Sabena Norton

convenor of 'Marxism for non-beginners'

'This course is aimed at people who have been to Preparing for Power before or who have a basic familiarity with the Marxist method. The first session is about dialectics and the materialist conception of historical development. We have a couple of sessions on the Marxist critique of political economy as developed in Marx's *Capital*. And we are going to be looking at Lenin's theory of imperialism

and its relevance today. The final session will deal with the recent attempts to make out that Marx is obsolete, or to revise his theories to turn him into a harmless academic.'

Sabena Norton is the international editor of *tns*, and an authority on the European labour movement

Mick Hume

convenor of 'An anti-imperialist's guide to the Irish War'

'As we've seen in the last couple of weeks the Irish War is never far from the headlines in Britain. Yet the troubles have been going on for so long and the issues have become so confused that many people who are sympathetic to the Irish freedom struggle don't know where to start. The object of this course is to demystify the whole issue and clear the way for building an effective solidarity movement in Britain. We're going to be answering the basic question — "why does Britain stay?"' looking at issues like Loyalism, republicanism, and Catholicism. We're also having a session on events in the South and looking at the difficulties facing solidarity work in Britain.'

Mick Hume is the author of the Irish Freedom Movement handbook *The Irish War* and a regular contributor to *tns*.

Alan Harding

convenor of 'The Britishness of British politics'

'This is one of the most important courses at Preparing for Power because it deals with the particular difficulties that face any attempt to build a new form of society in a country with profoundly conservative traditions. The historic strength of the British capitalist economy has left a legacy of stability and given rise to influential myths about 'the British character'. We're going to be looking at the history of class struggles in Britain to try to understand the problems created by these traditions and to ask how they can be overcome. The course covers the emergence of the modern labour movement from Chartism through the ILP to the Communist Party, to the Revolutionary Communist Party.'

Alan Harding is RCP organiser in the Lancashire area, and a regular contributor to *tns*.



Kate Marshall

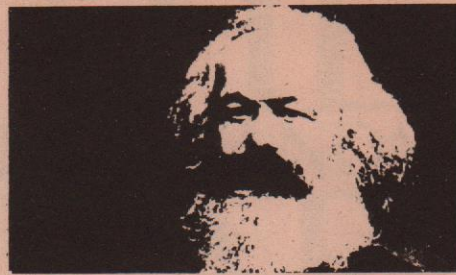
convenor of 'Women, their morals and ours'

'We've had a lot of meetings and discussions over the past few months about embryos and under-age sex, about Aids and other moral panics. At Preparing for Power we want to move away from this focus to look in greater depth at the key issues of women's oppression and how to overcome it. We will be examining the Marxist theory of women's place in society and its relevance for today. We will also be evaluating the theories of patriarchy and their influence in the women's movement. The final session is about the troubled relationship between feminism and Marxism. Activists from the women's movement are particularly welcome.'

Kate Marshall is the author of the recently published pamphlet, *Moral panics and Victorian values*

Other specialist courses include:

- Frank Richards: 'Introduction to Marxism'
- Helen Simons: 'Introduction to Marxist economics'



- Mike Freeman: 'The rise and fall of Labourism'
- Joan Phillips: 'The roots of racism'
- Rob Knight: 'Leninism, the politics of liberation'
- Inez Landa and Charles Longford: 'The West and South'
- Ann Burton: 'The Russian Revolution'
- Mike Freeman: 'Religion and the decline of capitalism'
- Phil Murphy: 'The West and the Eastern bloc'

A booklet containing full details of the agenda and arrangements for Preparing for Power, with brief suggestions for books to read for the specialist courses is available for 30p.

Other highlights include:
Round table discussion on the miners' strike: Sunday night



John Lloyd, industrial editor of the *Financial Times*, author of *Understanding the miners' strike*

Mike Freeman, editor of *tns*, author of *Our day will come: the miners' battle for jobs*

Keith Hammond, striking Yorkshire miner, imprisoned during the strike and currently on bail pending appeal

Debate: Which way forward for the left?

John McDonnell, former deputy leader of the Greater London Council

Dave Cook, national organiser of the Communist Party

Kate Marshall, Revolutionary Communist Party

RCP

The Revolutionary Communist Party will be launching the updated and extended edition of the Irish Freedom Movement's *The Irish War* at Preparing for Power. We need funds to cover printing and production bills, as well as to carry the cost of the conference. With a week to go before Preparing for Power we are counting on generous donations from our readers and supporters to help us out.

This week our special thanks go to Linda in Middlesbrough and Peter in Exeter. Please send contributions to Special Appeal, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Make cheques/POs payable to RCP Association.

EVENTS

Britain and the Loyalists

Marching to the beat of a different drum?

Loyalist politicians claim that the British authorities' original decision to re-route Sunday's Protestant parade through Portadown showed that Westminster was being 'held to ransom by the Dublin government'. British left wingers claim that the final decision to let the march go ahead showed that the government was being 'held to ransom by the Loyalists'. The real root of the conflict is that Britain is holding the Irish people captive against their will.

The Northern Ireland office and the Royal Ulster Constabulary had decided to re-route Sunday's Loyalist march away from the Catholic nationalist area of Portadown after earlier clashes between Loyalists and the RUC during banned marches at Castlewellan, County Down, and Cookstown, County Tyrone. When the authorities changed their minds and allowed the Loyalists to march through the nationalist 'tunnel' district, there were clashes between police and Irish protesters.

Many in Britain were left bemused by television pictures of Protestants carrying Union Jacks and swearing allegiance to the Queen while they tussled with members of a Crown police force. Things got more complicated when the same police fought with Catholic counter-demonstrators on Sunday.

To cut through the air of confusion, we have to answer three questions: why do Northern Ireland Protestants want to march through Catholic districts? why has the British government decided to object to this age-old practice? and why did the authorities have a change of heart and allow the Portadown parade to go ahead?

Protestants ascendant

The recent Loyalist marches have been building up to the big one on Friday 12 July, when the men of the Orange Orders and Black Institutions commemorate the victory of Protestant King William of Orange over Catholic King James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. But the 'marching season' is no museum piece. It is an occasion for the Loyalist 'majority' in Northern Ireland to celebrate its modern domination over the nationalist 'minority' community.

When the British authorities partitioned Ireland in 1921, they created the province of Northern Ireland as a 'Protestant state for a Protestant people'. Westminster drew its boundaries with care to ensure a permanent majority of Protestants, and to leave a few hundred thousand Catholics — part of the Irish nationalist population which formed an overwhelming majority throughout the island — in a permanent, manufactured minority within the Six Counties. The British authorities erected a sectarian system of allocating jobs, housing and votes which discriminated in favour of Protestants. This ensured that the 'majority' community in Northern Ireland remained loyal to the British monarch whose rule gave Protestants their privileges.

Today British commentators accept that a 'Protestant ascendancy' used to rule in Northern Ireland, but insist that it is a thing of the past. In fact the state institutions of Northern Ireland are as sectarian today as they have ever been.

Even officially-doctored reports cannot disguise the scale of modern discrimination in favour of Protestants and against Catholics. A report published last week by the research unit of the department of finance and personnel showed that Catholics generally had fewer educational qualifications and worse jobs than Protestants in 1983-84. Most importantly, official Catholic unemployment ran at 28 per cent while only 13 per cent of Protestants were jobless.

British rule in Northern Ireland depends on keeping the Loyalist community together as one united anti-Irish bloc, and separating



Loyalist marchers beat out their anti-Catholic message

Protestant workers from Catholics. The Protestant churches, community organisations and political parties are as one in promoting the idea that every Protestant is superior to his Catholic neighbour. Irish Catholics are portrayed as dirty, godless trash who 'breed like rabbits'. Typically, Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party claimed last week that Catholics' low standard of living was due to the size of their families. The armed sectarians of the Protestant community have taken this creed to its logical conclusion by assassinating more than 600 Catholics since 1969.

Loyalist ritual plays an important role in promoting the unity of 'Ulster' Protestants. With their sashes, bowler hats and Lambeg drums, marchers on the annual Loyalist parades are asserting their domination over Catholic nationalists. Marches through Catholic areas, accompanied by outbreaks of sectarian violence and vandalism, are a way of reminding Irish people that their streets are really 'our streets' as Paisley made clear last week.

The British authorities created Loyalism as a tool of their power in Ireland. They remain acutely aware of its importance for keeping 'Ulster' British. Thus the Crown forces have always allowed, and often participated in, displays of Protestant sectarianism.

Members of the Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary often double up as stalwarts of the Loyalist murder gangs. The few Loyalist terrorists who are brought to trial are treated with extraordinary leniency, compared to the brutal sentences meted out to Irish republicans who take up arms against the British occupation of their country. Last Friday a Belfast judge freed 20 Loyalists after throwing out the evidence of Ulster Volunteer Force supergrass William

'Budgie' Allen. The verdict means there are no Loyalists serving prison sentences on the uncorroborated word of paid perjurers.

Loyalist marches through Catholic districts have traditionally been protected and supported by large numbers of RUC men. 'They make you move off your car from in front of your house to make way for those boys,' explained one Catholic resident from the Portadown 'tunnel', 'you're to park in the side streets and await their pleasure.' Even this month the RUC joined Protestant marchers in shouting sectarian abuse at Catholics during parades and turning a blind eye while Loyalists stoned nationalists out of their homes. So why did Northern Ireland secretary Douglas Hurd tell the Loyalist police to ban two recent Protestant parades and initially try to re-route Sunday's Portadown parade?

Loyalists insisted that the change in British policy came out of recent talks between Westminster and Dublin, and reflected the Irish Republic's new influence in the North. Paisley accused the RUC of coming to marches as 'stooges of Dublin to do Dublin's dirty work'.

The idea that Dublin holds sway in the North is bizarre. The Southern Irish state has been indirectly under British control since its formation 60 years ago. Far from indicating Dublin's influence in Northern Ireland, Hurd's opposition to the inflammatory parades reflected Britain's concern about how to preserve its control over the Republic of Ireland.

The British authorities have always taken a broader view of Irish politics than their Loyalist agents. While bigots like Paisley are only concerned with crushing the nationalist community in the North, British governments must also pay attention to

maintaining some measure of stability South of the Border. The guarantee of British rule in Northern Ireland is that the struggle against British domination remains confined within the Six Counties.

Westminster has become concerned about the possibility of widespread unrest in the South, as Irish society cracks up under the pressures of economic recession. This fear has been exacerbated by the recent military and political successes of the Irish republican movement.

The IRA's successful mortar, bomb and machine gun attacks on Crown forces around the Border have made London more aware of the need for military assistance from Dublin. The election of 59 Sinn Féin councillors in Northern Ireland in May showed that the nationalist community is becoming increasingly alienated from the Six Counties state. The success of republican candidates in the Border counties at last month's local polls in the South reflected the danger of that alienation from all things British spreading throughout Ireland.

Britain needs to get increased security cooperation from Dublin for its war against the IRA, but without sparking off anti-British protests in the South. Hurd is willing to make some token concessions to Garret FitzGerald's government in the Republic to ease the security measures through. Banning and re-routing Loyalist marches through nationalist areas is one such concession. It can give the impression of British fair play, while leaving intact the basic oppressive relationship between Loyalists and nationalists in Northern Ireland.

Hurd's decision to reverse the re-routing and allow the Portadown parade to go ahead did not mean he was being 'held to ransom' by Loyalists. It was merely an attempt to limit the damage done by violent clashes between police and Protestants, both in terms of adverse publicity and political stability.

If further trouble occurs at marches this weekend, it will not represent any fundamental conflict between Loyalists and Britain. They remain united by the wish to stamp out Irish opposition to the Crown occupation of the Six Counties. More clashes at Orange parades would simply confirm the limited room for manoeuvre which is available to British imperialists in Ireland today, as they try to keep the Protestant community united, limit the alienation of Irish people in the South, and step up military cooperation with Dublin against the IRA.

Whatever happens during the rest of the 'marching season', the British authorities remain the force for division and sectarianism in Ireland. British domination has partitioned Ireland, ruined the South, created Loyalism and condemned Northern nationalists to life under a regime built on discrimination and violence. The anti-Catholic marches and massacres are only the ugliest aspect of British democracy at work on Irish soil. They will end when the Irish people are free to walk, work and live where they choose in a united Ireland.

Mick Hume

March in London on 10 August!

- TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND!
- PRISONERS OUT OF JAIL!

Assemble 1pm, march from Jubilee Gardens to Brixton, followed by rally

BR/Tube: Waterloo

Organised by the IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Further details from BM IFM, London WCIN 3XX, or ring Carol Taggart on 01-729 0414

The price of Scargillism

Arthur Scargill's fiery rhetoric may frighten Neil Kinnock, but it is proving increasingly ineffective in disguising the disastrous consequences for the miners of the policies of the NUM leadership.

The departure of the Nottinghamshire miners from the National Union of Mineworkers last weekend is the final result of more than a year of bureaucratic manoeuvring by the NUM leadership. At the beginning of the miners' strike last March Scargill refused to put the strike in the hands of the rank and file by calling a national ballot. When the Notts miners refused to come out the national leadership endorsed a policy of area-by-area strike action. The divisive consequences of this policy have now been fully realised in the Notts breakaway.

Rather than launch an all-out campaign to involve moderate miners in Notts and elsewhere in the strike in March and April last year, the NUM leaders simply tailed behind the action already underway in the militant areas. From the very beginning of the strike they were more concerned about manipulating the union rule book than winning the hearts and minds of all rank and file miners for the strike. Instead of uniting the miners, Scargill's tactics deepened the divisions in their ranks.

When the divisions rendered the strike ineffective and acted as a barrier to winning wider solidarity action, the NUM leaders pointed the accusing finger at the Notts miners. They were 'born scabs', 'bought off by higher bonuses', and had no right to be consulted about national strike action. Scargill's solution to the disunity in the miners' ranks was to introduce new disciplinary measures into the union rule book.

Scapegoats

Since the end of the strike the Notts miners have been made the scapegoats for all the failures of the NUM leadership. The aim of the rule changes pushed through last week's national delegate conference in Sheffield is to provide retrospective justification for the Scargill strategy. The rule changes strengthen the grip of the national union leadership and centralise the power of the national union over the areas. They allow Scargill to stay president for life without facing re-election. The common theme is the weakening of accountability of the national leadership to the rank and file. The sacking of the Notts area leaders Roy Lynk and David Prendergast is consistent with this approach and with the determination of the NUM leaders to blame the consequences of their own failures of leadership on the Notts miners.

There are undoubtedly some hard core scabs in the Notts area. But the majority of the Notts miners are no more scabs than are miners in the other coalfields. Just as many Notts miners today remain sympathetic to the national union, many miners who worked throughout the strike remained sympathetic to the aims of the national campaign. The Notts miners have been driven out of the NUM by the same force that made sure the majority worked throughout the strike — the bureaucratic mentality of Scargill and the NUM leadership.

Scargill cannot unite the miners around his strategy for saving the British coalmining industry. The NUM's continuing commitment to the philosophy of the *Plan for Coal*, reaffirmed at last week's conference, makes miners' livelihoods dependent on the viability of the British mining industry. This commitment inevitably divides miners in areas where the pits have a profitable future from miners in areas facing major closures. Given its allegiance to this divisive programme, the NUM leadership can only try to unite the miners by exhortation, or by waving the union rule book. When this fails there is no alternative but expulsions. The end result is to weaken the miners at a time when they are already reeling from the impact of their defeat in the strike.

The Notts breakaway is only the most damaging outcome of the Scargill strategy. The gulf between the rhetoric and the reality

Chris Black (reflex)



Pointing the finger at the Notts miners: Scargill's policies have split the NUM

was apparent on a number of other vital issues under discussion at last week's conference. On the opening day of the strike Scargill claimed that 'the board's pit closure programme was not carried through because the miners took strike action'. He claimed that the strike 'delivered the worst blow ever dealt to the Thatcher government and created a crisis in international capital'. But ordinary miners who have to confront the harsh realities arising from the defeat of their long and heroic struggle know that things are different.

Far from being delayed, the coal board's closure and redundancy programme has been speeded up as a result of the defeat of the strike. The bosses originally proposed to close 20 pits. So far at least six have been shut and another 18 are going through the procedure. Press reports this week suggest a final total of 50 closures and 50 000 job losses — more than 23 000 jobs have already disappeared.

Miners are flocking to take voluntary redundancy to escape the repressive terms on which they have been forced to work since the defeat of the strike. Tens of thousands are still paying off the debts they built up during the strike and expect to be doing so for years to come. Just as Scargill blustered through all the problems of the strike, he now continues to evade the real problems facing the miners.

The only practical outcome of the conference discussion of the victimised miners was the agreement to call another union conference in October. Behind the scenes Scargill agreed to tone down the NUM motion to the Labour Party conference which demands an amnesty for imprisoned miners from a future Labour government. In the full certainty that Labour would never grant an amnesty, the NUM has altered its request to a review of the cases of the imprisoned miners. While these meaningless resolutions are

shuffled from one labour movement conference to another, more than 600 miners have lost their jobs and 60 are languishing in prison.

The most controversial points in Scargill's conference speech were his demands that a future Labour government sack the coal board chairman and the area managers and replace them with union nominees. 'The NUM must then be invited to share in the responsibility of running the coal board as it should be run — of the people, for the people, by the people.' This rhetorical flourish was widely denounced by the media as a call for union control over the mining industry. But in reality Scargill is appealing for the continuation of the collaborative relationship between the NUM and the coal board that has prevailed ever since nationalisation. Scargill does not expect a future Labour government to sack MacGregor. But he hopes that it will restore close links between union leaders and top managers around a new *Plan for Coal*.

This is where Scargill meets Kinnock. When Kinnock says that the only future for the miners lies in the return of a Labour government, Scargill agrees. While Kinnock gets on with the canvassing, hoping to get into Downing Street, Scargill gets back to business as usual with the coal board, dreaming of drawing up a *Plan for Coal* of the future with a new Labour government.

The only people left out of this scenario are the rank and file miners who fought for 12 months to defend jobs and living standards but who have been cynically betrayed by the bureaucratic politics of the NUM leadership. Militants in the NUM must carry on the fight to prevent the Notts breakaway. But the fight to unite the miners cannot be separated from the fight for a new leadership and a new direction for the miners' union.

Mike Freeman

SCARGILL'S BIGGEST FANS

Idiot chorus

'NUM GOES LEFT,' proclaimed *Socialist Organiser* last week. *Socialist Worker* greeted the Sheffield conference as a 'breath of fresh air'. Other left papers reprinted sections of Scargill's speech, joining in the chorus of acclamation. The left enthusiastically applauded Scargill's cover-up for the failures of leadership in the strike that have led to the split in the union and have left the victimised miners to fight on alone.

'But don't duck the problems,' advised *Socialist Worker* in an attempt to qualify its support for Scargill's line. But ducking the problems has been the Scargill line, and the line endorsed by the left, at every stage since the miners walked out in March 1984. The left has followed every twist and turn of Scargill's policy. The end result is the real threat of the disintegration of the miners' union and the demoralisation of the

militants who fought the strike.

The left cannot even raise a protest against the NUM's refusal to extend associate membership status to the women's support groups in which left wingers played a prominent role in the strike. The NUM's betrayal of the women in the mining communities is the grossest illustration of its cynicism and opportunism.

At every rally and conference both during and since the strike every NUM official has praised the women's role. But the bureaucrats are so fearful of losing control of what proved to be one of the most dynamic forces in the miners' struggle that they dare not even concede the token measure of associate membership. The left's silent acceptance of this humiliation is a true measure of its irrelevance to the real needs of the mining communities.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

THE FREEBORN ENGLISHMAN

Question: What have the barons who forced King John to sign the Magna Carta, Queen Elizabeth I, Charles James Fox, the Tolpuddle martyrs, Aneurin Bevan, a Battle of Britain fighter pilot and Winston Churchill got in common?

Answer: Nothing, except that they have all been assembled for a group picture on the front cover of the current issue of the AUEW journal. It appears that they have all been signed up as sponsors of the engineering union's campaign to save the political levy for the Labour Party.

The AUEW's object is to appeal to the traditions of tolerance for opposition which the AUEW reckons have 'distinguished the British people for a thousand years or more' to save the Labour Party's funds. The journal reckons that 'in this country there can be no greater offence against patriotism than to attempt to suppress opposition'.

In fact the history of the last 200 years shows that there is a direct link between patriotism and the suppression of opposition. The first outburst of British patriotism in modern times took place around the Napoleonic wars of the early nineteenth century. There was a corresponding wave of terror against radical opinion. Opposition pamphlets and newspapers were suppressed, journalists and agitators were imprisoned. At the close of the nineteenth century a similar outburst of patriotic fervour in response to the Boer War led to riotous attacks on liberal and socialist opposition meetings.

It has been the same story in more recent times. Patriotic sentiments ran high at the outbreak of the First World War, mobilising millions for the slaughter. In the factories workers were forced to give up the trade union rights and conditions they had only recently established. Where the government met working class resistance to its patriotic war effort — as in Glasgow — it was violently crushed. In the Second World War political and trade union rights were again suspended.

The AUEW's patriotic tradition leads from 'Good Queen Bess' who, the journal reminds us, 'repelled the Spanish armada and built her tiny country into Europe's one certain fortress against the Spanish Inquisition', to Churchill, 'who led the British people through their greatest crisis', to...? The obvious inheritor of this glorious tradition is the mighty Thatcher who vanquished the puny Argies and made the Falklands a fortress for the local sheep. But the AUEW wants its history lesson to have a different ending — in a Labour government under Neil Kinnock.

Kinnock is a good patriot to add to the AUEW's peculiar gallery of freeborn Englishmen. Like them he has none of the revolutionary spirit of Cromwell's yeoman armies who knew that the only way to get rid of the stultifying influence of the monarchy was by beheading the king. He has none of the radical instincts of Tom Paine who tried to bring the French Revolution to England, offering 'to nourish the tree of liberty with the blood of tyrants'. Nor has he any of the anti-authoritarian fire of the early trade unionists and Chartists who fought to win the very rights the AUEW has been busy giving away in no-strike deals.

The AUEW's pictorial history sums up the sentimental servility to British institutions that has long paralysed the British labour movement. A vote to break the AUEW from the Labour Party is a vote to end 200 years of servitude.

Why racism haunts East London

The legacy of Labour rule

Joan Phillips explains how an area run by the Labour Party has become a stronghold for racist thugs



Broken windows, broken lives, broken Labour council promises: East London Asians live in decayed housing and in fear for their lives

Last week a new report by the GLC's race and housing action team concluded that 'racial harassment as an extreme manifestation of racial hatred is alarmingly persistent and extensive in the London borough of Tower Hamlets'. Beatings, firebombings and endless acts of petty intimidation have become commonplace in all the East London boroughs. But why is racism such a potent force in an area which has been staunchly Labour for decades?

If you went to a Labour Party meeting in Weaver ward in Tower Hamlets you would begin to realise the scale of the problem. You might get caught up in a debate about the smell of curry. If you're a Bangladeshi and unfamiliar with the finer points of the Queen's English you are more than likely to be shut up by the Labour chair. If you happen to be in Holy Trinity ward you become accustomed to abuse about being from 'the Paki ward'.

If you recruit black people to the party you must be prepared to put up with objections that 'these are not our people' from officials on the general management committee. If you arrive early at the Tarling estate tenants' association meeting, you might just be in time to hear complaints about 'black muggers' and the latest immigration figures read from the tidy pile of *Sun* clippings on the table. If you ask a Labour councillor in Shadwell ward about housing conditions you may get a mouthful of racist

abuse about 'dirty pakis'.

The Labour Party is far from being the most racist of British political parties. The Tories still hold the title as the most virulently anti-immigrant party. Yet in East London Labour tolerates racists in its ranks and relies on the racist vote in local council and parliamentary elections. In many respects Tower Hamlets seems an extreme and exceptional case. But it merely illustrates in an extreme form the consequences of Labour's pro-British politics.

Successive waves of immigrants into East London have come up against racial prejudice. The French Huguenots, the Irish, the Jews and many other minorities have all faced hostility and discrimination. Yet, despite the strength of chauvinism, racism did not become a major issue in British politics until the last 40 years. Racist sentiments existed as an underlying current ready to emerge when the conditions were ripe. From the Second World War up to the early sixties racist views became much more popular. Large-scale immigration provided a visible focus for the mobilisation of racist and chauvinist sentiments. The establishment, backed by both Tory and Labour leaders, ensured that immigration was identified as a problem and that racism became a coherent force.

In the early post-war period immigration into the East End was mainly from Africa. By the early sixties the total African population was

still less than 600, but this was steadily supplemented by the arrival of Indians and Pakistanis. The area around Cable Street, described by Michael Banton in his book *Coloured quarter*, became the centre for seamen from north, west and east Africa. The growth of 'cafe society' and the expansion of clubs provided the pretext for an anti-immigrant campaign in the late fifties.

The Stepney campaign against 'physical and moral dirt' went through two stages. The first, in 1957 and 1958, paralleled the race riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham. Labour Party and Communist Party activists were at the forefront of the campaign. They were careful to dissociate themselves from any taint of racism and stressed that they did not identify Maltese or blacks 'except where unavoidable'. They even made efforts to win the participation of black people in their campaign. Yet because the campaign linked blacks with vice and crime, it could not avoid fuelling anti-immigrant prejudices.

By 1960 the campaign had been taken over and given an explicit racist thrust. Local anti-vice campaigner and Catholic priest Father Williamson pointed to the prostitutes who now paraded Cable Street and said that 'the situation has been made far worse by the numbers of coloured people who have moved into the area'. He argued that 'most of the bad cafes and clubs that have been opened in the

area in the past few years are owned by Maltese, Somalis, Cypriots, West Indians and other immigrants'.

The campaign against 'physical and moral dirt' resulted in the dispersal of the immigrant community. In 1958 the *East London Advertiser* reported that black people were leaving Stepney because of 'a terrible colour prejudice'. In 1963 the black community in the Cable Street area suffered a similar fate to that of Brixton's front line community, which was bulldozed by the local Labour council in 1982 after a six-month campaign against 'mugging', shebeens and illegal gambling dens. The Graces Alley compulsory purchase order initiated the gradual demolition of the area between Commercial Road and the London docks. The black community moved a mile north to Brick Lane in Spitalfields.

The Tories' 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act marked the transition of racism from a local into a national issue. The Act made the state directly responsible for enforcing racial oppression and racism became respectable. In the East End racism became a burning issue and one capable of mobilising significant numbers.

The key to the emergence of racism as a powerful force was Labour's accommodation to hardline racists in the Tory Party. Out of office in the early sixties, the Labour leadership had stood out against the Tories' 1962 Act. A year later, with a general election in sight, the



Chris Black (reflex)

Peter Shore courted racists, James Callaghan's Labour government deported immigrants

Labour leaders had a change of heart. Labour's 1964 manifesto, largely penned by Peter Shore who took his seat in Stepney that year, accepted that 'the number of immigrants entering the UK must be limited'.

In the election campaign that followed Labour went out of its way to prove its anti-immigration credentials. Labour candidates in Southall, Wandsworth Central, Smethwick and elsewhere issued leaflets blaming the Tories for the immigrant influx of the fifties and early sixties. Once Labour was back in office it immediately set about establishing a more comprehensive system of controls. In 1965 its white paper *Immigration from the Commonwealth* strengthened controls on an explicitly racist basis. Labour's surrender to the racists was rewarded in the 1966 election when it gained votes in racist strongholds such as Smethwick.

The new racist climate of the sixties was reflected on the streets of East London. In January 1964 Pakistani doctor Akhtaruz Zaman became the latest victim of a spate of attacks on black doctors and nurses at Mile End hospital. A month later 100 members of the transport workers' union went on strike at a transport firm in Bow in protest at the employment of Jamaican driver Eric Taylor. Black people all over the East End reported similar cases of discrimination and the operation of colour bars. A report by the Council of Citizens of East London detailed blatant discrimination in the private housing sector. More than a third of all adverts for privately-rented flats in the local papers specified 'no coloureds' or 'Europeans only'.

Pandering to Powell

The Labour Party clearly demonstrated its capitulation to the racists in its response to the 1968 'Kenyan Asian crisis'. The arrival of British Asians from Kenya provoked a hysterical anti-immigration campaign by Tory right wingers led by Enoch Powell. Labour panicked and introduced a bill removing the right of entry of black UK passport holders. The bill passed through all its stages in record time — three days — to become the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1968). A month after the Act was passed Powell made his infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in Birmingham, calling for the repatriation of blacks. Tory Party leader Edward Heath's decision to remove Powell from the shadow cabinet as punishment provoked a furious response. Thousands of workers stopped work and staged demonstrations in support of Powell in towns and cities all over Britain. In East London the response was electric.

On 23 April 1500 workers at West India dock marched to Westminster chanting 'back Britain, not black Britain'. They handed in a petition expressing support for Powell. East London MPs Peter Shore and Ian Mikardo were barracked by their constituents outside the House of Commons. The next day 800 men from London and St Katharine's docks held a one-day sympathy strike. The following Wednesday dockers at West India, Millwall and St Katharine's docks walked out and held another rally in support of Powell. Powell's racist outbursts had managed to galvanise a substantial body of East End workers in a racist block. But it was the ambivalent response of the Labour and trade union leaders which meant that Powell's call to arms went unchallenged.

There was some opposition to Powell's racist policies among East End workers. Some dockers spoke out against their workmates' action. A counter-demonstration of printers, builders, a few dockers, students and other

groups marched to Transport House in protest and there were clashes outside parliament. Shop stewards at Ford Dagenham condemned Powell, as did the Stepney branch of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers and Tower Hamlets Amalgamated Engineering Union. But the response of the trade union leaders and local Labour MPs Shore and Mikardo was more equivocal.

Six shop stewards at the Royal Docks, including unofficial dockers' leader Jack Dash, signed a document in response to the pro-Powell strikes. The document was circulated around the docks, but it was nothing more than an anti-Tory statement which made no reference to the immigration issue. Like the trade union leaders, Shore and Mikardo backed down rather than confront racism head on. In response to a flood of letters about immigration from dockers and other workers, the *East London Advertiser* published a letter from Shore. Rather than take an unequivocal position in defence of black workers, Shore pandered to the prejudices of his racist constituents:

'I understand the anxieties that you and some of your workmates have expressed about the flow of immigrants. The fact that they tend to concentrate heavily in a small number of already densely populated areas inevitably increases the housing and social problems that already exist. This was, of course, one of the main reasons why the Labour government decided to cut back the number of immigrants.' (3 May 1968)

Shore went on to explain how the government had reduced the number of work vouchers from 30 000 to 5000. He claimed that the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of a few weeks earlier had tightened controls and strengthened the law on illegal entry. Mikardo too took an equivocal position. At the height of the Kenyan Asian furore he tried to reassure local people that they had nothing to fear. He told Poplar West ward Labour Party that there was no unlimited immigration into Britain as some people seemed to think: 'There is in fact very rigid control'. Both Shore and Mikardo made obligatory statements about fighting racism, but these were more like afterwords to relieve Labour's guilty conscience. The real damage they did was in trying to placate the racists with proclamations about Labour's commitment to stemming the flow of immigration.

Housing backlash

Labour's surrender on immigration only made the racists more confident. The local Asian community had to pay the price in an upsurge of racist attacks. In 1969 skinheads rampaged through the East End in a mini-pogrom against the Asian community. One Asian kitchen porter was stabbed to death. The Tories stepped up their anti-immigrant offensive and implemented the 1971 Immigration Act.

In 1972 the arrival of 27 000 Ugandan Asians provoked a nationwide eruption of racist sentiment. In East London racists threatened a blockade. A vigilante group set up specially for the occasion said it would barricade all empty buildings in the area. In response to rumours that the old East End Maternity hospital would be turned into a hostel to house the refugees, the group declared its intention to 'burn the place down'. A group of women at a Mile End engineering factory got together a 3000-name petition in protest and took it to Downing Street. The Uganda Resettlement Board got the message, declared Tower Hamlets a 'red' area and advised immigrants not to go there.

By the late seventies racist hysteria had

reached such a pitch that the Asian community in Spitalfields was under virtual siege. But it was Labour's housing policies that unleashed the anti-immigrant prejudices that it had fostered over the decades.

For years the local council and the GLC had operated a discriminatory housing policy that consigned immigrant families to slum estates and homelessness. Bangladeshi families threatened with eviction from Varden Street demanded council accommodation. The Tory GLC response was to offer to set aside estates for Bengalis only. The decision, which was approved by GLC housing chair Jean Tatham and Labour's housing spokesman Ken Livingstone, provoked a furious response from the Asian community. The council was forced to back down and things went back to the status quo.

After Labour took power at County Hall in 1981 things did not get any better for the Bengali community. It was only after sustained pressure from local Bengalis that the radical GLC announced that in future Asians would be offered their 'fair share' of council homes. East Enders were outraged. After decades of being told that whites had first pick of Labour's shabby housing they were not prepared to countenance even a token change in council policy.

When tenants hit out at the 'fair share' policy Labour politicians ran for cover. GLC housing director Len Bennett typified the approach of the Labour old guard. With sickening nostalgia he celebrated the grinding poverty of the past and spoke out against the 'unfair' campaign to rehouse Asian families:

'I recall my happy childhood days in Poplar.... We were all poor and we all lived in poor housing.... We waited interminably for the borough or the LCC (now the GLC) to make us an offer of accommodation.... Tower Hamlets residents will always want to do their bit in absorbing into their community the poor and the oppressed from other countries but reason dictates that this must be achieved fairly and gradually through the system. To do otherwise would stretch the high level of tolerance developed in the population over many decades.' (*East London Advertiser*, 30 July 1982)

Bennett was not alone in his apologies for Labour's racist housing policies. In the 1982 local council elections Albert (John) Snooks campaigned in Holy Trinity ward on the principle that all empty homes in the ward 'should be allocated to sons and daughters of local residents'. The three councillors in Shadwell ward aired their anti-immigrant prejudices openly. Things came to a head in 1983 when a group of tenants threatened to withdraw their support from Labour unless councillors took a clear anti-immigrant stand:

'If they (local councillors) do stand and fight for the rights of the indigenous local community, they will get the backing of these people, particularly at election time. If not they will never again be elected in Shadwell or Wapping.'

Many Tower Hamlets councillors succumbed to this threat and set their face against equal housing opportunities for Asian families. Others, who objected to being held to ransom by the racists, felt powerless to do anything about it. Last summer tenants on Stifford and Exmouth estate in Stepney signed a petition calling on the GLC to stop moving Asian families on to the estate. The chair of the tenants' association, who is also chair of the ward Labour Party, did little to oppose them. Indeed some tenants' association leaders who have organised racist reception committees to greet Asian tenants, like Ron Osborne on Glamis estate in Shadwell, hold prominent positions on Labour's general management committees.

The legacy of Labour's anti-immigrant policies has posed a problem for the left wing of the party. They are embarrassed by the open racists in the party and by the degree of racial prejudice among Labour supporters in East London. But the GLC's token anti-racist gestures have done nothing to improve the position of black people while they have provoked Labour's East End racists. The GLC's attempts to share out its miserable housing stock more equitably among competing black and white tenants are a typical example of a policy which has only inflamed the situation. Many East Enders are not prepared to give up the housing colour bar which Labour has long established. They have organised physical resistance to prevent Asians moving on to their estates.

The GLC has proved incapable of dealing with the backlash which its past policies helped create. Labour politicians still proclaim their commitment to removing the colour bar. But in practice the council has given in to the racists. Providing Asian families with the physical defence they need is way beyond the scope of the GLC's token anti-racism. Instead the council has left them to fend for themselves or, in priority cases, transferred them back to the ghettos. Last year the GLC was forced to admit that 'there has been almost no progress in opening up the better estates in the E1 area to Bengalis' since 1982. All the efforts of the council to monitor housing allocation and racist attacks cannot get to grips with the problem because they do not tackle it at its roots.

What can be done to reverse the rot in East London? Over the past five years Workers Against Racism has indicated the necessary steps to rebuild an anti-racist, anti-capitalist movement among East End workers. We have undertaken physical defence of black families under attack from racists. By organising independent action against the racists it is possible to rally workers and challenge the labour movement's reliance on the state to defend blacks. We have also challenged the divisive policies of successive Labour councils which have created the racist wedge that divides the working class today. The precondition for mobilising East Enders is destroying the influence of a party whose policies have made racism respectable.

Conference 19-26 July, London

Preparing for Power is the Revolutionary Communist Party's week long summer school in London from 19 to 26 July.

Joan Phillips is convening a special course which aims to set the analysis of racism on a scientific footing. The course aims to show that racism is not an isolated issue but one that has profound implications for the working class as a whole. Many of the sessions will elaborate on the points raised in *The roots of racism*, the recently published analysis by Workers Against Racism.

Sessions include:

- Marx's theory of racism
- Labour: architects of discrimination
- Marcus Garvey to Jesse Jackson: black politics in the USA

- The European experience
- The communist tradition and racism
- Plus
- Why workers should fight racism
- The far right: who's who
- Zionism and anti-semitism

Preparing for Power also offers

- An excellent creche
- Swimming pool, gym, jacuzzi
- Free accommodation
- Lots more courses (see page 2,3)

Preparing for Power is being held at the University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1

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

INTERNATIONAL

Reagan looks for revenge

Target Nicaragua

Welcoming the released hostages home president Reagan vowed that, next time, he'd do it like 'Rambo', the macho hero of the anti-communist blockbuster which is currently filling US cinemas. Fear of unleashing even greater unrest in Lebanon has so far restrained Reagan from acting like 'Rambo', a psychopathic patriotic killer, in Beirut. But there are ominous signs of Western plans for more direct military intervention elsewhere in the Third World.

Last Wednesday US vice-president George Bush stopped off in London during a whistle-stop tour of Europe. His aim was to pull the Western allies together in a new offensive against 'international terrorism'. Bush's brief was to win European backing for punitive measures against Lebanon and to test European support for wider moves to step up military action in Third World.

Two years ago, after the Shiite bombing of the US embassy in Beirut, the USA invaded the defenceless island of Grenada to reassert its might. Given the logistical and political difficulties of US military operations in the Middle East, it seems likely that Central America is again likely to pay the price for the USA's bruised pride.

At the height of the hostage crisis, four US marines and two civilians were shot by left-wing guerrillas in El Salvador. Reagan responded by delivering a strong hint that Central America might well be the place to show the world that the USA won't be messed about by 'terrorists'. Moves to step up America's intervention in Nicaragua were afoot well before the recent events in Beirut. But the hijacking has strengthened American determination to oust the radical Sandinista government. The immediate response of the US congress was to pass a resolution authorising the president to despatch US combat troops to Nicaragua, whenever he considers it necessary.

Counter-insurgency crisis

During the past six months American efforts to destabilise the Sandinista government have suffered some serious reverses. Reagan's bloodcurdling threats of more military terror against Nicaragua reflect a sense of desperation arising from the impasse of America's counter-insurgency campaign. In May the US administration imposed an economic blockade on Nicaragua. But the country has been able to compensate for at least a proportion of lost US imports and markets by stepping up trade with other countries.

Far more worrying for the USA has been the dismal performance of its surrogate 'contra' insurgents. After almost four years of war the contras' campaign is at a standstill. Conflicts between the rival wings of the mercenary forces, based in Honduras in the north and in Costa Rica in the south, have undermined the contras' military performance and political credibility. Now, after a successful counter-offensive by the Sandinistas, both armies have been driven out of their respective border bases. A leading British paper recently admitted that 'it is the guerrillas rather than the Sandinistas who face defeat'. Most observers are agreed that, even with a major injection of US funds, the best the contras can achieve is sabotage. They are no longer considered capable, by themselves, of overthrowing the Sandinistas.

The military stalemate in Nicaragua has affected America's most important regional allies — Honduras and Costa Rica. The combined effects of the American military presence and economic crisis have destabilised the fragile political system in Honduras. For the Honduran ruling elite a Sandinista military victory or more US interference are equally threatening. At the May meeting of the Contadora group of Central American nations Honduran representatives proposed expelling the contras altogether. Reports suggest that the



Reagan paid for the contras' training, now he is paying for their failure

Honduran army has begun to disarm contra units. At the same time the threat of a military coup hangs over the country's corrupt dictator Suazo Cordova.

The last thing the USA needs is a collapse of morale among its allies. America's moves to raise the stakes in the war against Nicaragua — including preparations for a possible direct invasion — stem from the need to be seen to take action to resolve the impasse.

The USA now has no option but to move in still harder. Even if America wanted to pull out, withdrawal is no longer an option for the US establishment. The effects of the upheaval the USA has already unleashed by trying to crush Nicaragua can no longer be reversed. To preserve its claim to hegemony in the region it has designated as its 'backyard', the USA has no choice but to step up

the Central American carnage.

In recent weeks the USA has taken steps to involve Costa Rica more closely in the war. American advisers were sent to Costa Rica, which formerly refused to permit an open US military presence, to train a new local 'Rapid Reaction Battalion' whose task it will be to back up the flagging contra forces already operating from its territory. In mid-June an alleged border incursion by Sandinista forces became a focus of mass mobilisations by the Costa Rican right wing against the Nicaraguan left. Crowds stoned the Nicaraguan embassy and demanded the expulsion of all Nicaraguan nationals from Costa Rica. Subsequent press reports have confirmed that the whole incident was staged by the USA to justify its military build-up.

American politicians used to boast of their 'splendid little war' in Nicaragua, which they could use to demonstrate US military might without great risk. But now the little war is set to turn big.

The Nicaraguan resistance has created big problems for Reagan. But he has remained ahead in the propaganda war on the home front. Reagan suffered a minor reverse in May when Democratic Party opposition resulted in the defeat of his request for a new \$14m aid package for the contras. Since then Democratic politicians have shelved their reservations about the drift to open warfare in Central America. In early June congress passed a resolution for \$27m aid to the contras. Even those Democrats who still voted against this proposal were careful to point out that they were not against US intervention in other countries, but that they wanted to 'define how, where and according to what values we should be involved'.

Reagan has succeeded in using the war in Nicaragua to discipline his political opponents and to drown the remnants of the American liberal conscience in a tide of chauvinist hysteria. Consolidating the consensus of support for American terror in the Third World stands as the major achievement of Reagan's second term. As *The Times* put it 'the subsoil of unanimity about the nature of the Sandinista regime and the array of measures needed to change it' presents a 'fillip' to the American establishment.

The Shiite hijacking has allowed the US administration to whip up the climate of chauvinist hysteria it needs to overcome residual public misgivings about US terror in Nicaragua. Resistance to the imperialist war drive — wherever it strikes next — remains a top priority for the labour movement in every Western country.

Keith Tompson

SOUTH AFRICA



Apartheid police 'hippo' hunts down black marchers

After 16 June

NOTHING MUCH HAPPENS in the sleepy village of St Wendolin's in Natal province. But a sunny day at the end of June was different. Hundreds of people packed the local parish church shouting and cheering, whistling and clapping. Hundreds more lined the road from the church to the home of Protas Madlala, whose wedding was the focus of the mass demonstration. They sang the African nationalist anthem 'N'kosi Sikele i'Africa' and waved clenched fists in the air.

What was different about this wedding was that Protas Madlala, who is black, was getting married to Susan McQuirk, who is white. It was the first legal mixed marriage to take place in South Africa since the repeal of the notorious Mixed Marriage regulations. That a measure intended to defuse tensions in South Africa was turned into a celebration of continuing resistance underlines the deep-seated problems now

facing the apartheid regime.

The so-called 'immorality act' was finally abolished on 14 June — two days before the anniversary of the 1976 Soweto uprising. This anniversary is marked by widespread strikes, rallies and demonstrations against the regime. This year there were riots outside the Regina Mundi cathedral in Soweto as police used tear-gas and rubber bullets to clear a crowd of 5000. Elsewhere five people died and dozens of houses — mainly occupied by councillors and black policemen — were burned down.

This year resistance has continued past 16 June. Across the country there has been a wave of strikes, bombings, grenade attacks and assassinations of collaborators. In Howick in Natal 900 workers were sacked by the British-owned company, BTR-Sarmcol rubber, after a two-year fight for union rights. The strikers recently killed two scabs

being bused into the plant. The threat of a strike by all the country's 550 000 black miners still hangs over South Africa following violent clashes between the police and non-unionised miners at the Gencor mines.

In addition to the government's widely-condemned terrorist raids into Botswana, Angola and Zambia, the authorities have been clamping down on resistance at home. At the end of June eight political activists were mysteriously killed by what the police claimed were their own defective grenades. Everybody else suspected police sabotage. Two prominent figures in a group in the Eastern Cape linked to the moderate nationalist United Democratic Front were recently found dead in the gutted shell of their car near Port Elizabeth. Two others travelling with them simply disappeared.

The government has stepped up its use of vigilante groups to police black townships. A group which calls itself 'the A-team' is based in government offices in Welkom's Thabong township in the rural Orange Free State. Vigilante victims include 17-year old Phule Mabenyane who was recently flogged to death and Sello Mofokeng who was shot. Another 66 young blacks were hospitalised after vigilante attacks on a vigil to commemorate Mofokeng's death.

The rulers of South Africa know that terror is the only way they can contain black resistance. But repression only breeds resistance. The youth of Thabong have already hit back and stabbed a local councillor and killed his vigilante assistant. The liberal black paper the *Sowetan* recently summed up the situation:

'The ripple effect of what is happening in Welkom today may take time to show, but when it does Heaven help the town councils and people of that ilk throughout the country.'

Russell Osborne

REVIEWS

SEXUAL FEELINGS



Terry Crabtree

Burning desire

Jeffrey Weeks, *Sexuality and its discontents*, RKP, £6.95

This book is Weeks' most ambitious work and a stimulating contribution to the discussion of sex and politics. It deserves a wide readership.

The sex question is one of the most challenging in politics. At issue is the tension between individual subjectivity in politics and a collective objectivity which can transcend the limitations of individual experience.

Because sexuality contains a natural element — the capacities and limitations of our bodies — it has the appearance of being natural. Since our

bodies are our most immediate physical selves, we associate sexuality with our individuality. But sexual relations are also our most immediate and intense social relationships. Sex sits uneasily at the interface between the individual and society.

Weeks departs from the dry historical approach of his earlier work. He examined the history of gay rights activism in *Coming out*, and broader changes in sexual behaviour and ideas in *Sex, politics and society*. In *Sexuality and its discontents* he starts with the failure of the 'sexual revolution' of the sixties and seventies and the growing influence of right-wing moralists in all Western countries today. He attempts to get to grips with these changes by mounting a critique of previous perspectives on sexuality.

Sexuality and its discontents examines the elevation of sexuality as a subject of political

debate especially in the post-war era. Weeks identifies the central weakness of writers on sex as their acceptance of sexuality as natural. This view Weeks characterises as essentialist. It was held in common by right wingers, who saw sexuality as a natural force that had to be contained, and by radicals, who saw sex as a natural force that should be released.

Weeks shows how the acceptance of the naturalness of sexuality helped to make sexuality into an issue of public discussion and debate, but on terms dictated by the establishment. Exponents of sexual liberation of the sixties, such as American radical professor Herbert Marcuse, recognised some of the limitations of permissiveness. But they accepted the view of the mainstream sexologists that there was an innate sexuality inside each individual straining to express itself. Rather than confronting the elevation of sexuality, they criticised its association with consumerism.

Weeks exposes the vulnerability of the radical approach to the attacks of the moral right in the changed social conditions of the eighties. Having accepted the terms of the debate in the first place, many are now turning away from their earlier radicalism and agreeing with the right that things went too far. A good example of this is the gay movement's response to the Aids panic. Most gay activists now endorse 'safer sex' and condemn the promiscuity they celebrated a decade ago.

Weeks' critique of the sexologists is limited by his attachment to feminism, itself an essentialist dogma. He attributes the mistakes of earlier sexologists to their 'masculinity'. But this attachment has destructive consequences for Weeks' analysis. The strength of *Sexuality and its discontents* is its grasp of the way that sexuality and individuality are moulded by wider social forces. It is therefore logical that anybody seeking guidance for political action around questions of sexuality must start from a recognition of the class forces that move society.

Weeks wants to be on the side of the angels. In an emotional introduction he sides with those 'genuine victims of sexual unfreedom' who remain 'untouched by any fashionable recantation of youthful foolishness'. But he is weighed down by too much ideological baggage accumulated in the gay movement. That is why he ends up with an appeal for everybody to be nice to one another, rather than an injunction to prepare for power.

John Johnson

MIDDLE EAST



Lawrence was a terrorist

Michael Yardley, *Backing into the limelight: a biography of T.E. Lawrence*, Harrap, £12.95

As a 'security consultant', Michael Yardley called last month for the use of 'terror against terror' during the Beirut hostage drama and on future occasions. Remembering the deeds of Lawrence 'of Arabia', which Yardley recounts in this new biography, most Arabs will say — 'so what's new?'

In 1911, Lawrence was a young archaeologist digging in ancient Syrian ruins for the British museum. He was also working for British intelligence services anxious about the growing influence of Germany over the decaying Turkish empire, which still reigned over much of the Middle East. When the First World War broke out with Turkey on the side of Germany, Lawrence's familiarity with the local Arab

peoples helped him to persuade various sherifs and emirs to rebel against the Turks.

Britain and France agreed on a carve up of the Middle East in 1915. France would get Syria and Lebanon. Britain would get most of the rest of the region. Britain used the chaos of the war and the break-up of the old Ottoman empire to establish new national borders and to set up stooge rulers in the new states, whose potential oil wealth was already recognised.

Lawrence's exploits have long been celebrated as heroic in boys' comics and films, such as David Lean's 1962 epic *Lawrence of Arabia*, with Peter O'Toole in the title role. Yardley's account makes clear that he was simply a terrorist mercenary on behalf of British imperialism.

Lawrence was first assigned to the Hashemite family which controlled Mecca — the religious capital of Islam. In the end the British opted for the dynasty of Ibn Saud which they set up as the ruling elite of the new state of Saudi Arabia and the Hashemites were ousted. Yet Lawrence's favourite sheikh, Feisal, son of the shah of Mecca, was installed as monarch in neighbouring Iraq. British troops dealt with a little local difficulty by kidnapping and deporting to Sri Lanka the leading opposition politician on the eve of staged elections. Feisal won 96 per cent of the vote. Feisal's brother Abdullah was given Jordan, where his grandson Hussein is still king today.

Lawrence's celebrated guerrilla activities in the desert were designed to further the complex twists and turns of British diplomacy. Yardley's account shows that the British authorities were ready to endorse all sorts of terrorist atrocities — from the carpet bombing of Iraq to random kidnappings and assassinations — to consolidate their control over the region.

Britain was kicked out of the Middle East after the Second World War by the USA, which has fully lived up to the Western reputation in the area for barbarous violence and diplomatic skulduggery. One reason why the Shiites and the Palestinians have become adept at terrorist tactics is that they learned them from the real experts. *Backing into the limelight* is a good read for anybody who finds it difficult to understand why many Arabs are prepared to stop at nothing to end Western domination of their countries.

Andy Clarkson

BRITISH BACON

Bringing it home

Francis Bacon retrospective exhibition, Tate gallery

Years ago, in the Pitti gallery in Florence I overheard someone comment that a painting by Titian was 'the seventh most important painting in Europe'. This painting by numbers approach to European culture is not confined to members of the tourist class. We also get it from the established arbiters of taste. Francis Bacon is widely credited with being 'Britain's leading living painter'.

Of course, it is hardly fair to blame Bacon for his position at the top of the critical charts. The question we need to ask about Bacon's painting is — what is he trying to say and how does he go about saying it?

Bacon has two big problems. First he hasn't much to say. As he put it when someone asked him if he had always wanted to be a painter, 'no, I expected to have to earn a living'. Second, the representation of reality is a problem common to all twentieth century painters, who tend to see it as a technical question, separate from the content of their painting.

Bacon's work presents a view of the world as an abattoir with considerable technical virtuosity. But Bacon uses technique as a substitute for content, not as a complement to it. Farting 'Annie Laurie' through a keyhole is difficult but is it art?

All Bacon wants to say is that human beings suffer, and, since most of his human forms are alone, that we suffer alone. Despite the awfulness of such an observation Bacon's imagery is both derivative and sentimental.

Bacon can apply his technique to good effect when dealing with private grief. His best subject is the single human form incongruously trapped in space, colour and memory — a friend, a lover or himself. He is best when painting his own isolation and detachment from life. But that is Bacon's problem — not ours.

Alan Harding

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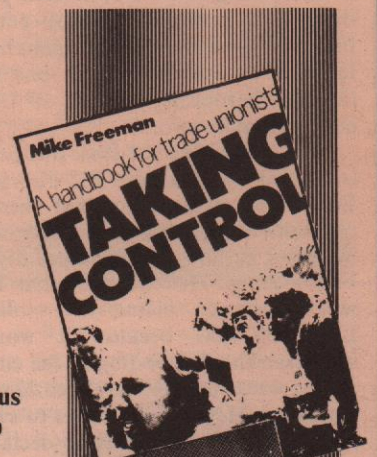
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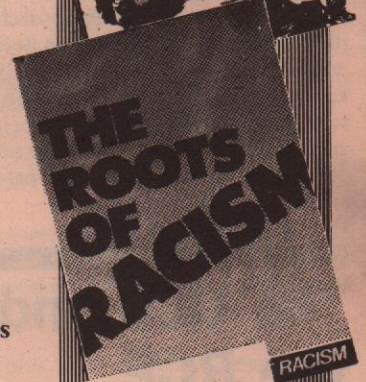
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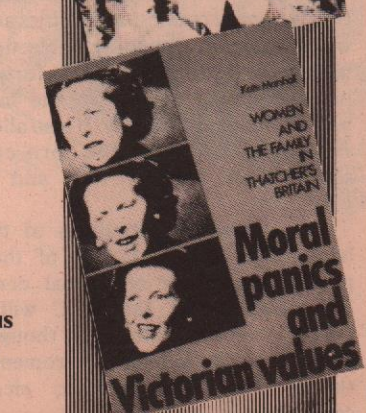
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LETTERS



Militant patriots

The Propaganda War column in *tns* 11 claimed that *Guardian* writer Jeremy Seabrook had the last word on the Heysel stadium riot in Brussels. Not quite.

Liverpool Labour Party's leading lights — Militant councillor Derek Hatton and left-wing MP Eric Heffer — are still trying to find somebody to blame. But their campaign has not pointed the finger at the real culprits. It has not nailed those who foster chauvinism against foreigners, namely the British ruling class. No, in their parochial defence of Liverpool, Hatton and Heffer finger the foreigners. The Belgians have been targeted as enemy number one and the faceless European officials of UEFA as enemy number two.

Hatton has been the most outspoken. He is backed by Liverpool FC director Tony Ensor who pointed out that there was a portable wooden shed in Z block: 'That would never have been allowed in Britain'. In parliament Heffer argued that Thatcher was wrong to blame the violence on Liverpool fans because it would put businessmen off investing in the city.

Last week the police arrested 23 people in Operation Heysel and are set to swoop on several more homes. Hatton declared that they should be tried in Britain because they would not get a fair trial in Belgium's kangaroo courts. Before Hatton and Co start blaming the Italians for being in the ground at the wrong time I have sent them a copy of your article in *tns* 8. Hopefully it will enlighten them.

Long-time Liverpool fan

The GLC and the RCP

Two letters last week asked us to explain why we stand candidates in elections and why we oppose the abolition of the GLC.

The RCP stood candidates in the local council elections in 1981, in the Bermondsey by-election and the general election in 1983, and this year in the GLC by-election in Vauxhall. We are not motivated by any belief in the process of parliamentary democracy. But we are interested in getting revolutionary communist politics across to a wider audience. Standing in elections gives us the opportunity to put forward our programme in relation to the immediate political issues of the day. It also allows us to challenge directly the pro-capitalist solutions of Labour, Tory and Alliance politicians.

We oppose the abolition of the GLC because we are in favour of the widest possible extension of formal democracy. The abolition of the GLC will restrict people's right to vote. Even though a vote gives us no say in local government we still support workers' right to elect local councillors.

The more democratic the system, the

better we can expose the fact that the barrier to defending workers' interests is not lack of democracy but the capitalist system that cannot allow the majority of people any real control over their lives. This does not mean that we support Labour's 'defend local democracy' campaign. On the contrary, we have tried to expose its narrow concern with defending Labour's stake in the local state machine at the expense of jobs and services.

Jean Smith
Vauxhall

Lambeth council — not worth defending

As a council worker I attended last Wednesday's council meeting at Lambeth town hall. Among numerous 'I love Lambeth' flags Labour councillors sang 'The red flag'. Earlier in the day they had used the courts to uphold an eviction order against a community creche.

Ted Knight's rate-capping strategy collapsed when the council set a legal rate amid acrimonious exchanges. The focus of the Labour group's attack were two Labour councillors who voted to set a rate. Knight insisted that these councillors did not represent the Labour Party. The Labour Party, according to Knight, was out to defend the people of Lambeth and would not cut jobs or services. Yet Knight was silent when questioned as to why the staffing budget underspent by £900 000 or why hundreds of vacancies remain unfilled.

On the question of illegality, Labour councillor Noel Hannan summed up the Labour Party's capacity to fight for working people when he said 'nobody has more respect for the law than this Labour group'. Respect for the law means accepting vicious attacks on the lives of working people. It means more unemployment, homelessness and poverty for working people and protection for those who live in luxury.

The Brixton parents' self-help group recently set up a community creche in a council building unused for four years. Parents in the area began the creche because it was impossible to find places in council creches which have a two-year waiting list. A few weeks ago Lambeth council sent two vans of police round at 7am in the morning to throw them out. So much for defending services people need.

Steve Riordan
South London

Terror terminology

The article on international terrorism (*tns* 11) asked 'but who is really to blame for the eruption of violent conflict around the world?' This was an incorrect way of posing the issue. 'Blame' implies that the Shiite activity, as part of the 'violent conflict', is unwelcome. The Shiites are, however, reacting against the continuous suffering caused by imperialist domination of Lebanon. There must be a clear separation of the cause of pain and the response required to destroy that cause.

The article defined terrorism as 'the use of violence for political ends'. This is indeed the bourgeois definition of terrorism, and as such, is unacceptable to revolutionary communists. The correct definition of terrorism is 'the use of force against the capitalist state without the support of the mass working class'. This was clearly stated in *tns* (monthly) 57.

The article incorrectly concludes that 'the real international terrorists are in Washington and London'. It is a fallacy to imagine that the conceptual propaganda weapons of the ruling class can be seized by a revolutionary party and turned against those for whose use these ideologies have been carefully tailored. They are concepts

which legitimise the rule of the state, and just as the state cannot be taken over and used for the purposes of the working class, but must be smashed, so too must the ideological weapons of the ruling class be argued from the minds of the people.

Paul Michael
Oxford

Bradford racism

Your article on racism in Bradford on 28 June is right in pointing out that racist headmaster Ray Honeyford is not the only problem facing black people in the city. The only exceptional thing about Honeyford is that he published his views in the right-wing press. In essence, his ideas are no different from those of many other teachers.

A far more pressing problem is the tokenism of Bradford council. When councillors of all parties promote 'multiracial' policies it is necessary to ask 'who profits', especially when the self-same parties all support some form of immigration control. Are they doing it from some form of liberal guilt or out of sheer largesse? No! They're doing it because by making minor concessions they feel they can 'neutralise' the growing political frustrations of the black community, and perhaps retain the growing black vote as well.

Bradford council is perfectly willing to provide resources for black organisations' social activities. It is perfectly willing to legitimise FE courses that lead nowhere. It is willing to provide a few temporary jobs for black graduates. What it is not willing to do is take action which would alter the material conditions of the vast majority of black working class Bradfordians.

Natthe member
Bradford



FORWARD WITH BRITAIN

Racist Mirror

On 30 June I ran in the Piccadilly Radio Marathon. Although I had little faith in the *Mirror* I decided to run for the Cot Death Appeal organised by them. As a member of their Women's Mirrorthon Team I was given to believe that details of all winners would be printed in the paper.

As the winner of the Women's Mirrorthon Team I have been totally ignored in the reporting, and worse, have had to witness the article written on the woman who came second. I believe the reasons for the *Mirror* ignoring me are entirely to do with the fact that it operates as a sexist and racist rag.

Needless to say, the woman they chose to write about is white, tall and a blonde model. I am black and have no intention of flaunting my body in order to receive media attention. I feel that because I look like an athlete the paper does not regard me as newsworthy since its norm is to depict women as sex objects rather than as capable human beings.

Monika Muir
Manchester



STEPPING OUT

John Brightman is an 'independent' councillor in Wakefield who spent last year slugging off striking miners. Recently his house was attacked by 'a mob of about 20 young animals' who threw stones and sang 'The red flag'. Brightman insisted that those responsible were 'members of the Young Socialists and Revolutionary Communist Party'. He declared 'I am a proud supporter of democracy and of Margaret Thatcher and the police. I believe in law and order and justice and the Union Jack.' How would this upstanding democrat and opponent of picket line violence deal with his assailants? 'I will use anything at my disposal to blind or incapacitate them in some way. I will spray aerosol in their eyes.' The local Labour Party Young Socialists took fright at this bloodcurdling threat. They condemned the attack because violence was 'the lowest form of persuasion'. Perhaps they know another way of 'persuading' somebody who is spraying aerosol in your eyes?

The Brighton Labour Party duly passed the motion censuring councillor Richard Stanton for refusing to condemn the IRA bomb in the town and organising a meeting with a Sinn Fein speaker. Then the council voted to kick Stanton off all committees, amid much Tory and Liberal talk of 'crossing the line from commitment to fanaticism', 'the man's a disgrace' 'the people of Queen's Park ward were never told that Coun. Stanton supported the IRA' etc etc. Labour group leader David Lepper and party chair Mick Brightman (no relation to the aerosol-wielding independent from Wakefield) were at pains to make clear to the council that they dissociated themselves from Stanton's comments and had 'condemned the bombing from the moment it occurred'. From the moment it occurred? At 2.54am? In their concern for Margaret Thatcher's health, these men have clearly crossed the line from commitment to fanaticism. The Brighton public has a right to know the truth.

Dear oh dear, this government couldn't organise an anti-terrorist scare in a Beirut brewery. During the hostage crisis British police tried to cash in on America's 'kill the Arabs' hysteria by arresting eight Middle Easterners who were 'acting suspiciously' and opposing the Bahraini government. The British authorities had no evidence to deport the eight, so they 'persuaded' them to clear off to a terrorist haven of their choice. The suspects chose Syria. They arrived in Damascus without warning. This annoyed the Syrians. Meanwhile, Bahrain was very annoyed because the Brits had let the subversives go without working them over for information. When Bahrain sent a delegation to Syria to ask for the eight to be handed over, Syria said they had disappeared at the airport. This annoyed the Bahrainis more. Syria has since got even shittier with Britain for lousing up its relations with Bahrain. Another international success story for Thatcher Inc.

Big Norman Willis of the TUC has sent out details for the annual rally at the Dorset village of Tolpuddle (of martyrs fame). The highlights include speeches by Roy Hatterzzzly and John Hose (?) and a Methodist service. The big day's 'theme' — 'the threat to wages councils' — may not measure up to the historic achievements of the martyrs. But Big Norm assures us that 'the festival pattern of last year will be maintained' so 'as well as the events in the programme there will be a variety of other features on the day'. Does this mean we can expect the Big N to keel over and retire soon after, like his predecessor Smoking Len Murray did at last year's Dorset do?

REPORTS



Golden wonder: 'we're staying out'

After seven weeks the national strike over wages at Golden Wonder's four plants in Corby, Widnes, Long Buckby and Broxburn is holding steady as a result of rank and file action. The experience of workers at Broxburn near Edinburgh shows how strike action can be effective if workers take matters into their own hands.

The majority of the 218 transport and general workers' union members at Broxburn are women. Most of them are the sole breadwinners because most of their husbands are redundant miners. Grace Muldownie and fellow shop stewards Ruby Hilson and John McCormack told *tns* why Broxburn voted to go on strike for a 12.5 per cent wage rise. The majority are on £82 basic with a £12 staff allowance for a 40-hour week. This gives them £68 take home pay. With travel expenses of £7 a week, Broxburn workers are supporting their families on £61.

The Broxburn workers had never been on strike before. 'We were out for four weeks and nobody was giving us any help,' explained Grace Muldownie, 'we sat down there with two chairs and two umbrellas picketing that place 24 hours a day in the rain. Our union rep George Wilson (TGWU regional officer) never came down and organised us.' The workers weren't getting any strike pay and the drivers who had been supporting them went back to work after threats from management. The strikers decided to go back by one vote.

When the women phoned Corby to say they were going back the woman on the end of the phone told them 'no way'. Within an hour they had despatched a 52-seater busload of Corby strikers. It took them another hour to get the Broxburn workers organised. 'They were fantastic,' says Grace,

'if it hadn't been for them we would be back in that factory.' Broxburn managed to keep most of the workers out and even recruited some of the temps to the union thanks to Corby. But 30 per cent production has resumed at the plant and management is bussing in scabs.

The strikers' anger spilled over at a mass meeting last Thursday. They demanded to know from regional officer George Wilson why they had no strike pay. One irate worker said the union's decision to accept management's call for a press black-out at the start of the strike was ridiculous. The meeting voted for a press campaign and demanded that Wilson advertise the next mass meeting in the local paper to ensure a proper turn-out. The strikers also agreed that one worker should accompany officials to the London negotiations. Later stewards suggested the talks should be taped to make sure that workers were fully informed.

The Broxburn strikers have now got things under control. They have set up a strike committee and headquarters. They are in hourly contact with the Corby strike committee and are organising pickets from the office. Already miners' wives have been down to the picket lines and Nupe nurses have offered themselves for picket duty. Workers were delighted to hear about the Revolutionary Communist Party's picket of stores stocking Golden Wonder crisps. A mass meeting agreed unanimously to extend the action to Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Grace Muldownie says that the strikers 'are prepared to stay out as long as it takes'. RCP supporters in Edinburgh, Coventry and Liverpool want to make sure that it doesn't take long (see come along!).

Charles Longford

Militant bosses

On Friday 5 July Liverpool's Militant-controlled council showed it had learned another lesson from the 'how to be a responsible employer' handbook. Militant supporter and councillor Dominic Brady told the *Liverpool Echo* 'we are only in a position to guarantee wages until the end of July'.

Liverpool workers would then be paying to save the council. On the same day Plessey announced 700 redundancies. The city council and Plessey used the same method — a Tory rag — to announce the same intention to attack the working class. There the similarity ends. Plessey, unlike the council, does not bother to dress it up with pseudo-socialist rhetoric.

The new blow to Liverpool workers came at the end of another week of machine politics and bureaucratic manoeuvring. Earlier in the week Militant full-timers from the council's central strategy unit had argued at a Nalgo meeting for their latest masterstroke. They proposed a five-day strike after 19 July (when councillors may be surcharged) to force the government to back down. It is difficult to take seriously a think tank that comes up with such token action to force the government to collapse. But that is what was on offer with the blessing of the GMBATU majority of Militant supporters on the joint shop stewards' committee.

How did the Nalgo team respond? They argued that:

- One-day action better reflected the present strength of the campaign (true — but they had been running the campaign and this was

their responsibility)

- Surcharging councillors would not be seen as a direct threat to jobs (true — but why not take action to defend jobs anyway?)
- The government would not take a week-long strike seriously (true — so why suggest a one-day strike?)

Now Militant can blame Nalgo for copping out. Nalgo can blame Militant for being unrealistic. Everybody wins except the council workforce.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has stood alone in making one simple but crucial point about the Militant-run council in Liverpool. The Labour council must be treated like every other employer because it acts like every other employer. We need to put the interests of council workers first and we need action to fill all vacancies, freeze rates, consolidate bonus, get our 35-hour week and a decent weekly wage, not dependent on overtime.

This is a strategy that cannot be won behind closed doors. But it is a strategy that can unite the working class on Merseyside.

Alan Harding



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

Come along!

Boycott



Nearly 1000 workers are still out on strike for better pay at Golden Wonder factories nationwide (see opposite). Last week management tried to get an agreement on a 'suitable wage' through the government arbitration service Acas. The workers

weren't having any of it and sent the bosses and Acas packing. They are still holding out for 12.5 per cent on their wages.

Revolutionary Communist Party branches in Edinburgh, Liverpool and Coventry are organising action in support of the workers. We have started secondary picketing at shops stocking Golden Wonder products and started mobilising solidarity action at trade union meetings around the country. Get in touch with local *tns* sellers and get involved.

Boycott Golden wonder!

Join the protests to black Golden Wonder products

Coventry

Saturday 13 July 12 noon

Tesco, central shopping precinct

Glasgow

Saturday 13 July 11am

British Home Stores, Sauchiehall Street

How to beat the Tories

Frank Richards outlines a strategy for the working class in the eighties.

Manchester

Thursday 11 July 7.30pm

Black Lion, Chapel Street

Liverpool

Friday 12 July 7.30pm

AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant

Do animals have rights?

Brighton Animal Rights Group debates the RCP

Thursday 18 July 7.30pm

Springfield Pub, Springfield Road

Protest against Powell

The anti-abortionists are at it again. The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child is calling a mass meeting to discuss plans for another onslaught on women's rights to abortion. Enoch Powell, the man who wants to ban test-tube babies and embryo experiments, will be there. So will the RCP.

London

Monday 15 July 6.30pm

Methodist Central Hall

Westminster



Vote RCP in Vauxhall

Your last chance to come out and canvass with the RCP is Thursday 11 July, polling day in the GLC by-election in Vauxhall. Meet us at Stockwell tube at 10am or 6pm or phone 01-729 0414 for details. And don't forget if you live in Vauxhall, vote Jean Smith!

British terrorists out of Yorkshire!

Yorkshire Irish Freedom Movement is protesting against British Army terror tactics in Ireland.

Huddersfield

Thursday 11 July 12 noon

Army Careers office

26 Kirkgate

Leeds

Friday 12 July 12 noon

Army Careers office

Wellington Street

Bradford

Saturday 13 July 12 noon

Army Careers office

33 Westgate



Help!

We are desperately short of accommodation for people attending our Preparing for Power conference. This year we have had an overwhelming number of registrations from outside London. If you live in London and can offer a bed or even floorspace contact Ann Burton on 01-729 0414

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