

tms

the next step

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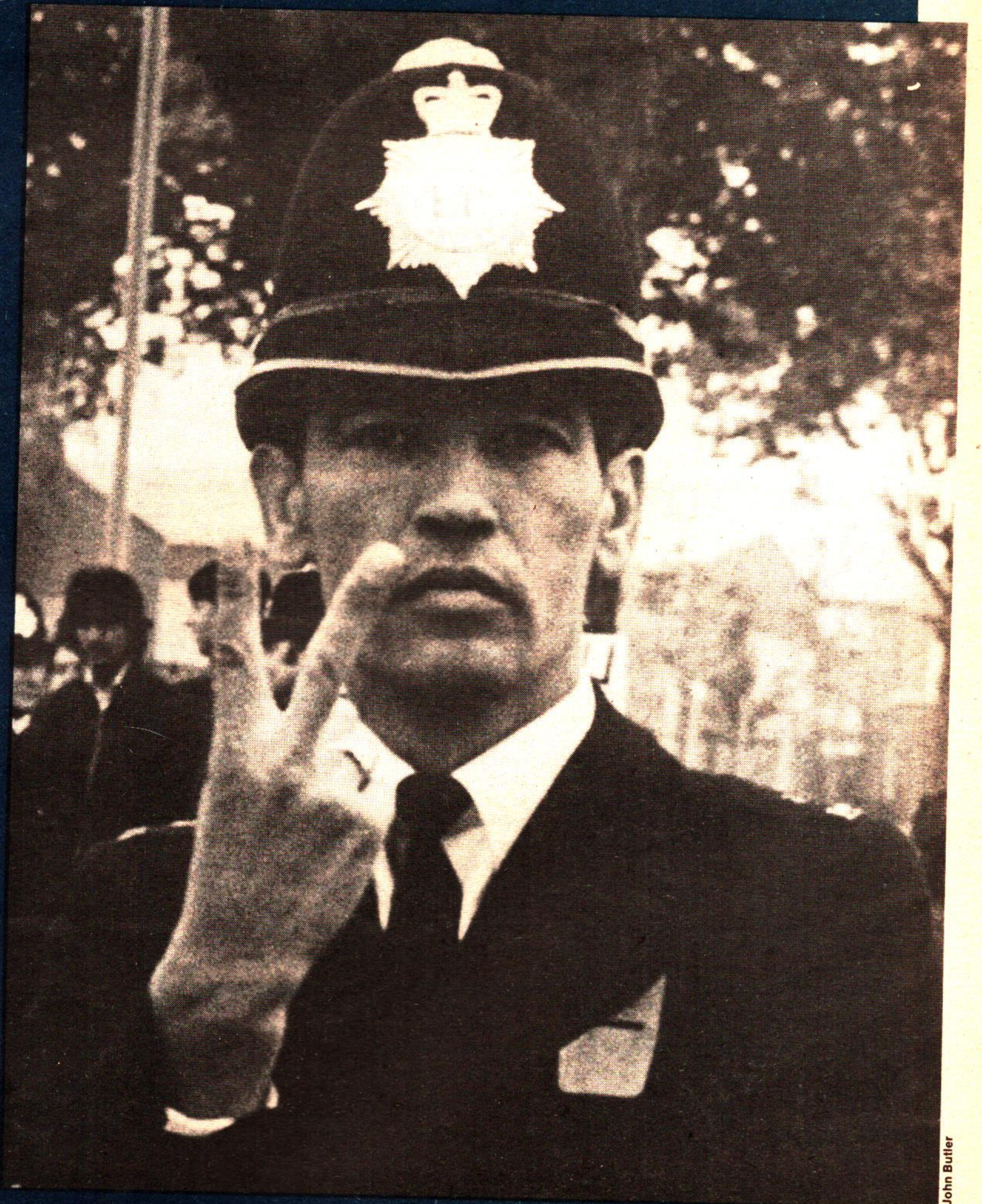
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Tory justice

- Pickets murdered
Police praised
- Scab killed
Miners jailed for life

Last Thursday South Wales miners Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland got life imprisonment for killing a scab taxi driver. On Wednesday Tory home secretary Leon Brittan praised police terror tactics during the miners' strike. Nobody has been charged with the murders of David Jones and Joe Green, striking miners killed on picket lines.



John Butler

Their law and order

Last week a judge imposed life sentences on two Welsh miners convicted of murder for unintentionally killing a scab taxi-driver. This vindictive judgement, and the government's new white paper on public order, show that the authorities are determined to seize the advantage gained by their victory over the miners to tighten their grip over political life in Britain.

The Tory proposals for new public order legislation threaten drastic restrictions on rights of public assembly and demonstration. They will give the police formal powers to ban events outright or to dictate conditions to organisers of marches, rallies or pickets. Those who defy the regulations will face the threat of imprisonment or heavy fines. The leaders of the official labour movement have protested strongly over the white paper. But the labour movement and the left have laid themselves wide open to the Tories' law and order offensive.

● collaboration

Trade union officials often cooperate with the police in controlling protests. The TUC and many individual trade unions have issued guidelines for picketing which would render picketing as ineffectual as if pickets were surrounded by police. At the beginning of the miners' strike the Yorkshire NUM issued instructions to its branches, recommending that pickets should not exceed six. In the event the miners took no notice — and the police put their faith in their riot gear rather than the NUM guidelines.

● interference

Labour's shadow home secretary Gerald Kaufman protested last week that the Tories' new proposals would force the police into 'playing a more political role'. He was right, but his protest would have had more force if the leadership of the labour movement had not itself approved the 'political' interference of the police in its own demonstrations. Labour's May Day march in London in 1981 took place at a time when there was a blanket ban on demonstrations in the London area (in response to the threat of fascist marches). As the march formed up its organisers allowed senior police officers to pick out and detain individuals carrying placards or papers or even badges supporting the Irish hunger-strike then in progress.

It was the same story on a series of marches organised to protest against the Falklands War in 1982. Again police chiefs were allowed to mingle with the march, carefully recording slogans and scrutinising leaflets and papers. Some organisers went further and helped the police by pointing out for arrest demonstrators who supported Argentina against Britain. The Tories now intend to widen the political role of the police to take in not only the left but even the mainstream labour movement. There is a lesson here for Kaufman and his party followers, though history suggests that they will fail to learn it.

● inviting bans

The new white paper is the result of a review of public order in response to disturbances at National Front demonstrations in Leicester and Southall in 1979. At the time the left took the lead in calling for bans on fascist marches. But the experience of state restrictions on democratic rights is that they are directed more against the working class than they are

against racists or fascists. The 1936 Public Order Act, which the new proposals will replace, was introduced on the pretext of curbing fascist protests. In fact its first use was against striking miners at Harworth in Nottinghamshire and it was used to ban communist demonstrations in East London from 1937 until the war.

Racists and fascists are no threat to the system, though their activities may sometimes provoke excessive disorder and therefore require to be restrained. The organisation and political activity of the working class, however, is always a potential threat to the system. This is because there is a basic conflict of interests between workers and a state machine which upholds the capitalist establishment. Since the left called for police bans on fascists in the late seventies the police have used their repressive powers extensively against blacks (in the riots of 1981), against strikers (at Warrington and in the miners' strike), and against the left (over Irish demonstrations).

The fate of the Tory public order proposals will not be decided in parliament or in the courts, but on the streets. The immediate priority for the labour movement is to tackle the weaknesses which have paved the way for the Tories.

The labour movement should

- stop cooperating with the police and minimise all contact, especially the friendly banter which the police use to extend their influence
- close ranks against police interference in any march or demonstration
- stop giving legitimacy to legal interference in the affairs of the labour movement by calling for bans, requesting police protection from fascists, or having recourse to the courts to resolve internal conflicts within the labour movement.

The labour movement must also take a firm stand alongside workers who are victimised as an example to the rest of the working class. On hearing of the imprisonment for life of their former workmates, hundreds of miners at Taff Merthyr and Oakdale collieries in South Wales walked out on strike. Last Sunday more than 1000 people marched in their home town of Rhymney in protest at the savage sentences. Thousands of miners and other workers know that the only reason that Russell Shankland and Dean Hancock are in prison today is because they took the only sort of action that seemed open to them to break the deadlock of the miners' strike. Police and scabs who resorted to systematic violence against the strikers have been praised by the Tories and the media. Nobody has been arrested or charged for the murders of the miners who were killed on the picket lines, or for countless other assaults on striking miners.

While the police and the scabs are heroes, the miners who fought back are labelled criminals. Unfortunately the leaders of the labour movement go along with this. The NUM leadership has launched a campaign for the South Wales convictions to be changed to manslaughter and the sentences reduced. The first step in resisting the Tory law and order offensive is to reject the criminalisation of all prisoners of the class war. We should defend those who fought on our side with the same ruthless resolution with which they defend those who fought on their side.



Photograph by Chris Black (reflex)



Jimmy Knapp blames railway workers for not supporting a tube strike he had already sold out

Rail strike

Who needs anti-union laws?

Last Friday London Regional Transport management won a High Court injunction against threatened strike action by 16 000 workers on the London tube system. But the union leaders proved so effective in disorganising strike action that after Monday the employers never needed to enforce their injunction.

Many railworkers reacted angrily to the call by the NUR leadership for an all-out indefinite strike on the tube from Monday against the introduction of one person operated trains on the East London section of the Metropolitan line. They were angry, not because they were opposed to taking action to save 2000 jobs and prevent even higher stress from longer shifts, but because they knew that their union leaders had already capitulated to the employers.

The union leaders' main objective in calling the strike in the first place was to press management into consulting with the union before it extended one person operation. In recent months the employers have introduced a series of measures over the heads of the union officials. These include new ticket machinery, stricter insistence on the wearing of official uniform and new lateness and absence procedures. The proposed extension of one person operation without prior agreement provided the union leaders with an issue on which it could use rank and file resistance as a lever to force the bosses to recognise the value of consulting the officials.

After the employers made a few minor concessions in late night talks over the weekend, the union leaders were in a difficult position. The employers agreed that there would be no compulsory redundancies, in the secure knowledge that conditions would be so bad that sufficient workers would take voluntary redundancy. And they agreed to phase in the new system and to withdraw threatened bonus cuts for non-cooperation. The NUR leaders were satisfied that they had been consulted even though the consultations had resulted in no improvement in the threat to railworkers' jobs.

But now the union's senior negotiators, led by left winger Jimmy Knapp, had to save face with the railworkers whom they had half-heartedly mobilised for action. Their solution was to claim that they could not call off the strike on Sunday night, because that decision could only be taken by a full meeting of the NUR executive the next day. They therefore let the strike go ahead in the full knowledge

that they had already made a deal and that the executive would call off the 'indefinite strike' within hours of its start.

In fact the NUR leaders signed an agreement to accept one person operation as long ago as 1968. Last year they negotiated a 7.5 per cent bonus in return for the introduction of one person operation on certain tube lines. For the NUR leaders the only issue involved in the extension of one person operation is how far they can take advantage of rank and file hostility to this measure to strengthen their own bargaining position with management. Their decision to call the strike in defiance of the court injunction was a calculated risk. The fact that many railworkers were prepared to come out on strike in defiance of the law raised the pressure on management to negotiate. At the same time the union leaders were fairly confident of their ability to make a deal before the full force of the law was unleashed upon them.

The result of all these manoeuvres was chaos, not, unfortunately, for London's transport system but for London's transport workers. On Monday morning railworkers crossed picket lines complaining bitterly that the only information they had received about the strike was from the *Standard* or from the television. And everything that they had heard convinced the majority of workers that coming out on strike was simply a waste of time and money. The strike was a model of bureaucratic bungling and ineptitude. It was ineffective in putting pressure on the employers, but it provoked conflicts among NUR members, between NUR and Aslef members and between railworkers and other London transport workers who could not see the point of it. The strike, while it lasted, was divisive and demoralising.

London railworkers are ready to fight back against job cuts and ready to defy the law to do it. But they are not prepared to go over the top behind a union leadership that treats its members with such contempt. The defence of jobs on London's railways — and throughout the railway system — in face of a major programme of rationalisation depends on getting rid of the existing union leadership, its policies of collaboration and its servile and manipulative mentality.

With leaders like we have in the NUR, who needs anti-union laws or new public order legislation? The first line of resistance to Tory anti-working class legislation is within the labour movement.

ACTION

Notts miners

Reject Lynk - and Scargill

'We're in no man's land now,' one Notts miner told *the* last week, 'who do we turn to?' Nottinghamshire miners had just voted 15 000 to 6000 to reject Arthur Scargill's proposed rule changes and risk expulsion from the national union. Notts miners who stayed on strike to the bitter end now feel that a Notts breakaway is inevitable. The question is why did so many vote for it and what can be done to stop it?

Last week's ballot result and the NUM executive's decision to expel Notts working miners' leader Roy Lynk have brought to a head the divisions between the Notts area and the national union. The NUM has tried to impose its will on the Notts miners by bureaucratic diktat rather than political argument. Unfortunately, leading striking miners in Nottinghamshire are supporting Arthur Scargill's latest manoeuvres against Lynk and his sidekick David Prendergast, rather than proposing a strategy that can unite the union.

When the majority of Notts miners decided to stay at work last March, the NUM leaders didn't try to win support for all-out national action through a campaign to win a national ballot. The NUM endorsed the area-by-area strike strategy that deepened the divisions between the Notts miners and the national union. When Nottinghamshire still refused to budge, Scargill introduced rule 51 to whip the area into line. When the new Notts leaders Lynk and Prendergast changed the area rules to evade disciplinary action, the NUM threatened the Notts area with expulsion. When the Notts leaders sacked the area general secretary Henry Richardson, the NUM leaders replied by sacking Lynk. Now Scargill has decided that the only way to solve the union's problems is to change the rules completely.

Scargill's resort to the rule book during the 12-month strike was an admission that he had no strategy to unite the union in a fight for jobs. Most Notts miners who turned out to vote against the rule changes last week saw the ballot as a re-run of the area vote against national strike action last March. The fact that an identical percentage (73 per cent) voted against the national union on both occasions only confirms that in 14 months the NUM leadership has done nothing to challenge the divisions in the union.

In the wilderness

'It's like nothing has happened,' said Fred from Thoresby, 'they talk to you as if you've had a week on the club not a year on strike.' The 2000 Notts strikers who fought to the finish were expecting to get a hard time when they went back down the pits in March. They are surprised to find themselves back on full wages and bonuses. 'It's like a holiday camp here compared to what the Yorkshire lads are getting,' said Terry from Welbeck. The 72 Welbeck strikers have all been put to work on the same side of the pit, well away from miners who worked throughout the strike.

The coal board is bending over backwards to avoid trouble. Bob from Welbeck described the scene in the manager's office the first day back: 'There was no aggro, just a lecture about how we fought the war to defend democracy'. There have been few flare-ups in the pits and even fewer post-strike victimisations. The Notts militants might be getting an easy ride from management, but they are an even smaller minority now with bigger problems than ever before. As Denis from Bilsthorpe put it, 'You can almost smell the division — it's them and us'. To stop a Notts breakaway rank and file activists need to break out of their isolation and take control of the struggle to rebuild a fighting union.

Lynk and his cronies on the Notts area executive and area council have taken a tougher line than management against the



Unite with Notts or against them?: the problem of divisions remains to be resolved

strikers. They demanded that former strikers pay back 50 pence a week in unpaid dues for every week they were out or face suspension. The moderates have expelled strikers from branch meetings at Bevercotes and other pits and threatened disciplinary action against anybody who 'disrupts' a branch meeting. One former striker was hauled before the Bevercotes branch committee for 'abuse and vilification' of branch officials and committee members. These antics have hampered the militants, but the real thing holding them back is their own disorganisation and lack of direction.

Many NUM militants can see that Scargill's rule changes are another attempt to consolidate bureaucratic control. But their former strikers' leaders in the Notts Forum argue that they must support the national executive against attacks by the right wing and the media. Paul Whetton, a *Socialist* *Organiser* supporter on the Notts Forum, says that he would have 'strong reservations' about the rules had they been proposed by the right, but 'unfortunately we've got to play with the cards we are dealt with'. Whetton maintains that 'it's politic at the present moment' to go

along with the rule changes. But just because Scargill's latest attempt to cook the books has come under fire from right wingers like Lynk is no reason why NUM activists should feel obliged to defend them. The Notts strike leaders' support for Scargill's manipulation of the rule book means that they can offer no political challenge to Lynk and Prendergast.

One Labour Party activist from Ollerton told us that the Forum leaders have to keep their heads down because 'Lynk would be down on us like a ton of bricks' if he discovered what the group is up to. But clandestine meetings and underground organisation are no use to Notts miners. They need a clear strategy and an aggressive campaign to overcome their isolation and break new ground. The Notts Forum has done little at branch or area level to coordinate a campaign for the forthcoming union elections. Militants at Bilsthorpe haven't even thought about standing in the elections and five former strikers standing for the Welbeck branch committee are resigned to getting nobody elected.

Many militants still refuse to speak to anybody in the pit except strikers. There

may be no point trying to have a political argument with a hardened scab, but it is vital to win over the mass of Notts miners who occupy the middle ground. Fifty per cent of Notts miners came out at the start of the strike and kept faith with the overtime ban until the end of the strike. They have grave reservations about moves to cut free from the national union. Many strikers reported that they got an embarrassed and even apologetic reception when they returned to work in March.

Tens of thousands of Notts miners are waiting to be convinced. But as John from Thoresby told us, 'if you ignore people you're not going to convince anybody'. The Thoresby strikers are making sure that their views get heard by standing 70 candidates for the branch committee. Their action to unleash rank and file initiative stands in stark contrast to the backroom manoeuvres of Scargill and his Notts camp followers.

Notts miners have a hard battle ahead to reclaim their union for the rank and file. They need to do two things to make sure they win.

- **Keep Notts national:** a breakaway union in Notts, Britain's second largest coalfield, would be a lasting blow to the miners' unity. It should be fought all the way by militants in Nottinghamshire and every coalfield. The majority of Notts miners are not scabs. The Notts strikers have the biggest responsibility to convince the mass of Notts miners that it is in their interests to keep the national union. An aggressive campaign at national level could help turn the tide against a split. But to really win the allegiance of the Notts miners, we need to challenge the sectional traditions which the NUM leadership, from left to right, has cultivated over many years.

- **Reject Scargill's rules:** the new rules are an evasion of the political problems facing the miners' union and the measures necessary to tackle them. If they are passed they will put the NUM leaders even further out of reach of the rank and file. Lynk is opposed to the rule changes because they threaten to end his scab rule in Nottinghamshire. We are opposed to the rules because they threaten to stifle rank and file energy and initiative completely. We want to see changes in the way the NUM is organised, but we want changes that will make the union accountable to miners not to the bureaucrats at the top.

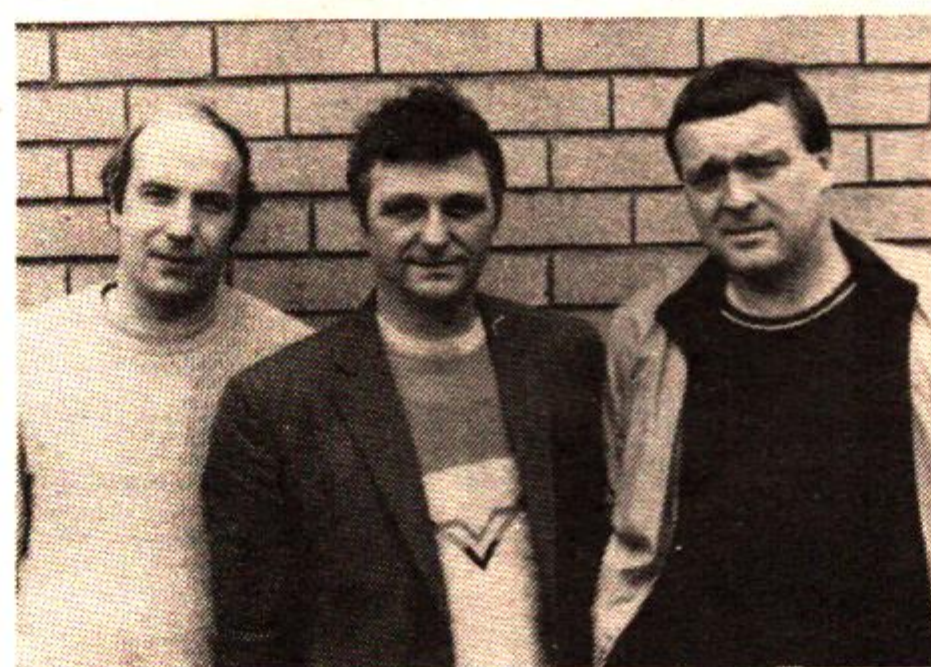
Joan Phillips

AMCO STRIKE

National action needed

FOR TWO WEEKS James Russell and Ian Covill were the men at the centre of a Yorkshire-wide pit strike. They were sacked from Houghton Main colliery for refusing to move to different jobs on less pay. Last Monday 1000 of their fellow NUM members returned to work after management agreed to negotiate over their reinstatement.

James Russell and Ian Covill work down the pits, but they are not ordinary miners. They work for the Amalgamated Construction Company Limited, not the National Coal Board. They are members of the NUM, but they are not ordinary members. They receive the same wage rise as ordinary NUM



Sacked Amco miners James Russell, Eric Jenkinson, Ian Covill

members, but they get the equivalent cut out of their bonus payments.

Amco employees do development work down the pits, sinking shafts and doing general repairs. They have not had a wage rise for eight years and unlike the miners, their bonus payments include bath time, shift allowance and travel time. Their recent strike shows the determination of many workers in the mining industry to carry on the struggle. It also reveals some of the weaknesses of sectional organisation.

James Russell and Ian Covill went to see management on Friday 3 May over their dissatisfaction with wages. Management refused to discuss pay and the men walked out. When they reported for work the following Tuesday they were told that they had been moved to another job on less pay. Again the two walked out, but this time Amco workers on every shift walked out with them. Management responded by threatening them with the sack. Within days nearly every Amco member in Yorkshire was solidly behind the strike.

The strikers displayed solidarity and determination, but they made no attempt to get the miners to join them on strike, even though both groups belong to the same union. Isolated action by one section of

workers was bound to have little impact on the bosses. The Amco strikers were forced to return to work with no guarantee that the two men had got their jobs back.

The strike could have had a very different ending if the NUM leadership had mobilised all its members behind the fight for reinstatement. But as long as the leadership leaves it to isolated groups of militants to fight alone, the NUM will never be a national fighting force that strikes fear in the bosses.

Bob Radcliffe



The people of Britain may soon be able to go shopping on Sundays. Why not stay at home in solidarity with shop workers and send us the cash you save? Rush donations to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association

EVENTS

Labour Party

The right stuff

Neil Kinnock's personal attack on Social Democratic Party leader David Owen last week served to disguise the growing similarities between SDP and Labour policies. In fact there is now little to distinguish Kinnock from Tory wets like Francis Pym.

Labour has learned that to win respectability as a party of government it must adopt respectable policies. But policies that are acceptable to the likes of Owen and Pym spell disaster for the working class. When Labour leaders proclaim that we must be realistic and that 'profit is not a dirty word', it is only another way of saying that the Labour Party is prepared to sacrifice the working class to save the system.

● Be realistic

Labour's jobs and industry campaign sets out to prove that the party can 'manage the economy competently and fairly'. It fits into the coalition of concern about unemployment that stretches from Tory wets like Francis Pym to the Confederation of British Industry, the TUC and the Alliance. It also encapsulates the new mood of realism that has overtaken the Labour Party. Renationalisation, reflation and radical measures to cut unemployment are out. Rationing, retrenchment and reining back on public spending are in.

Under the slogan 'Britain can work', Labour promises that there will be no irresponsible spending spree if it gets back into office and proposes a modest reflation package of £5 billion. 'No longer will we have to defend ourselves against the charge that we have hopelessly unrealistic unemployment targets,' celebrates the *New Statesman's* Peter Kellner. Kinnock's abandonment of his promise to reduce unemployment by a specific figure over a number of years indicates that Labour has no answers to the crisis and nothing to offer the four million victims of mass unemployment except more useless 'education and training'.

● Value for money

'We must show — and we can show — that Labour gets value for money,' stressed Kinnock. To stand a chance of getting back into Downing Street, the Labour Party must prove that it is just as willing as the Tories to attack the working class and cut workers' living standards.

The Labour Party and the trade unions must march 'shoulder to shoulder' into the next general election armed with a new 'social compact' declared Kinnock's right-hand man Roy Hattersley. Hattersley has ruled out both statutory and voluntary incomes policies, but everybody knows that he is talking about wage restraint and a new social contract. The establishment no longer needs the measures made infamous by Labour governments in the seventies; the Tories have managed to drive down wages without any of Labour's pay-restraining devices. But Labour is determined to show that it is prepared to make the working class pay for the crisis.

Kinnock has made it clear that although a future Labour government would welcome union participation in decision-making, the unions have to realise that economic success depends on slashing production costs — including wages. Rather than fight for the resources that workers need, Labour accepts that there is only a limited amount to go round. 'We cannot duck the difficult questions,' said Hattersley, explaining that there has to be a trade-off between pay and investment. Workers must make sacrifices in pay and cooperate with management to boost profits and get British industry back on its feet.

● Here to stay

The Labour Party has given up its commitment to repeal the Tories' anti-union laws. Employment spokesman John Prescott said that people could not expect Labour to

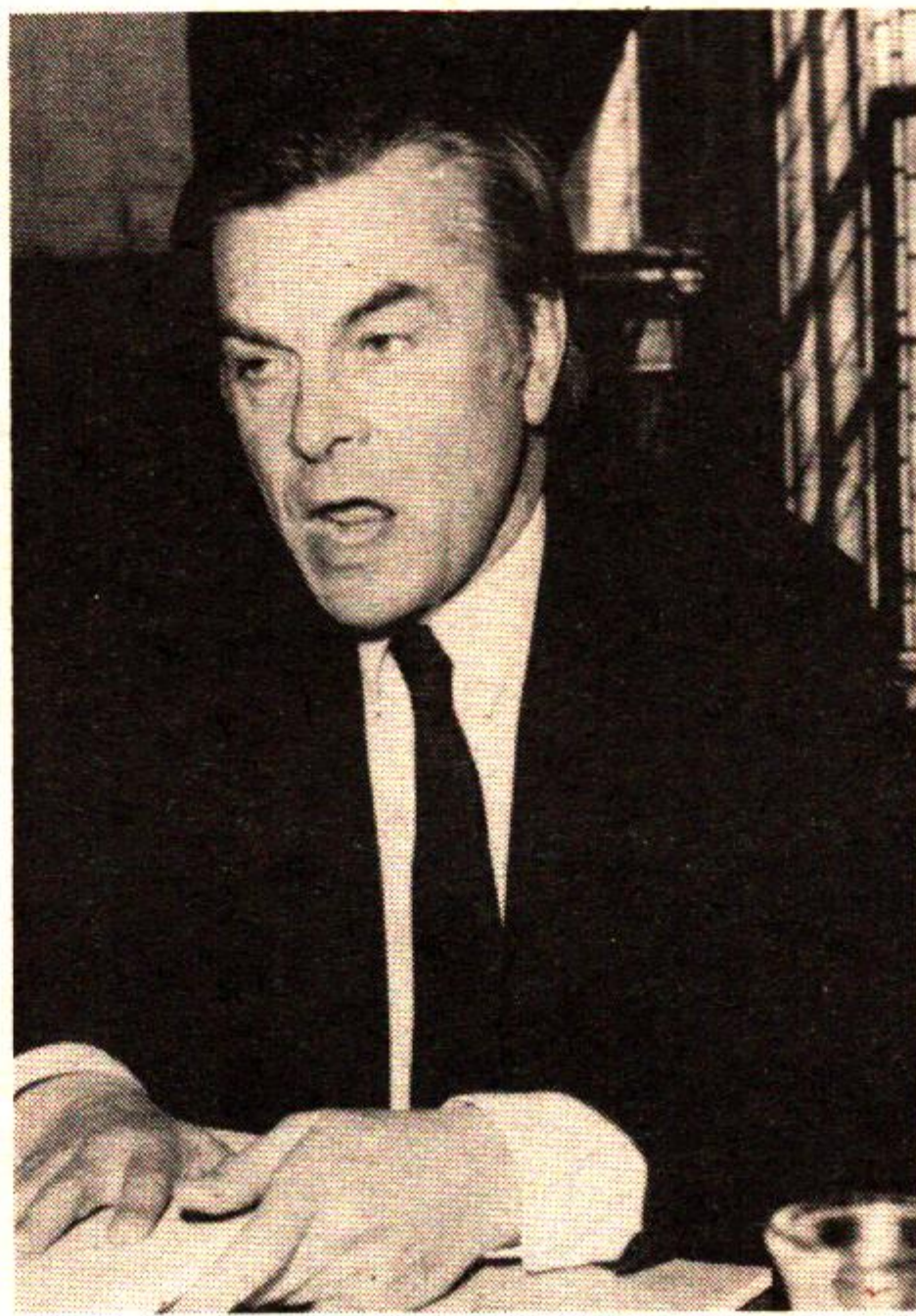


Conflict disguises convergence: Kinnock says Owen has 'an ego fat on arrogance and drunk on ambition', but Owen says he could easily do a deal with a Kinnock government

'get rid of the government's legislation' and 'go back to the old legislation'. As part of its 'social compact' with the unions Labour wants to modify some of the laws and leave others intact. Prescott said he also had 'great difficulty' seeing a Labour government refund trade unions which have been fined and had their funds sequestered. The Labour leaders have no difficulty seeing the advantages of holding on to legislation that will help them keep the working class in check.

● Labour's law and order

Labour will deal 'in a pretty heavy handed way with the thugs', Kinnock reassures the



Photographs by Chris Black (reflex)

concerned middle classes. During and after the miners' strike the Labour Party put itself firmly on the side of Tory law and order. Kinnock condemned picket-line violence and made it clear that miners 'properly tried and convicted' could not expect an amnesty from a Labour government. Since Labour strongly believes in British justice that means that every miner on the wrong side of a prison wall can stay there as far as Labour is concerned. More recently Kinnock has stated that football fans cannot 'be reasoned out of animal behaviour'. Punishment must be 'very direct, very hard' and must involve 'periods of detention'. Labour's man of the people believes that the party should be even

more committed to security on the streets than the Tories 'because it's our people who are getting belted, getting mugged, who are afraid to go out'. Labour's support for the police who belt and mug the working class every day on picket lines and in inner-city ghettos means that it can do no more than quibble with the strong arm tactics proposed in the Tories' latest law and order package.

● Britain's defenders

'I think the Labour Party is increasingly now getting down to the nitty gritty of defence in the real world,' observed Denis Healey. By this Healey meant that Labour has revamped its defence policy to persuade the populace that it can best defend the nation. Kinnock wants to get rid of nuclear weapons 'because they give absolutely nothing to the security of this country'. Both agree that money spent on nuclear weapons would be better spent on building up and modernising Britain's conventional forces. Labour has renewed its commitment to Nato and modified its promise to remove US nuclear bases from Britain. To do so without prior consultation, argues Healey, 'would create a serious danger that America would reduce her conventional contribution to Nato'. Kinnock and the right are taking no chances when it comes to convincing the electorate that Labour has the best interests of British imperialism at heart.

Kinnock's new model Labour Party is riding high in the opinion polls and the odds on a future Labour government are shortening. Such a government would be disastrous for the working class. But the Labour Party's ideas for reviving British capitalism are already dragging workers down. We must make sure that we ditch Labour before it drags us all down to disaster.

Joan Phillips

LIVERPOOL HOUSING

Militant - slum landlord

'SOMEBODY'S GOING TO get killed here soon. We've got a roof coming through in the kitchen, rats, damp and a collapsing balcony.' Susanne is a single mother with two children living on St Saviour's estate in Liverpool 8. She has been waiting for two years for the Labour council to do the repairs. The two years in which her house has been collapsing parallels the period that Militant has been in power on Liverpool city council.

Last month Militant lost a council by-election in St Michael's ward in Dingle, when the Liberals overturned a Labour majority of 600 to win by 87 votes. Militant councillor and president of the district Labour Party Tony Mulhearn was shocked that so few Labour voters bothered to turn out. But traditional Labour voters like Susanne have no enthusiasm for a council that promised everything and delivered nothing: 'I wouldn't even bother to get myself out of bed to go and vote'. The Labour loser Alan Deane was 'surprised' at the scale of the defeat. But people living in council slums like Susanne's have no difficulty understanding why Labour lost.

In May 1983 the Militant-controlled Labour Party took control of Liverpool promising a £2 rent cut, a massive house repairs programme and 6000 new council homes. 'Near election time', remembers Susanne, 'they set up meetings and liaison committees and said "we'll do this, we'll do that"'. But two weeks after the election you're forgotten.' Susanne's rent has gone up to £27 a week and all she has seen of Militant's 'massive housing repairs programme' is a troupe of 'inspectors, photographers, councillors and god knows who'

coming to look at the damage. 'They say we'll do it tomorrow, or the next day, or the day after and it never gets done. This is a slum.' St Saviour's estate is a grim counter to Militant's claim in the latest issue of *Liverpool Labour News* that 'the people of Liverpool at last have a council which is working for them and for them to better their lives and surroundings'. The estate is meant to be an 'intensive housing management project'. Half of it is uninhabitable but the council is still moving people in. 'You look out the window and all you can see is four walls — it's like a prison. There's no green, there's nothing.'

Susanne lives on £17.70 a week social security and meagre one parent and child benefits. She would withhold her rent in protest, but it is paid direct to the council. Her bills are enormous. The rain leaking through the roof in the kitchen and the decrepit window frames mean that it costs a fortune to heat the place. After last winter Susanne had £800 arrears for heating. The council's broken promises have broken the health of one of Susanne's children who is always ill — 'he's got asthma from the damp' — and Susanne suffers from blackouts.

Militant councillors in power blame the old Liberal administration for the squalor that makes life a misery for thousands of Liverpool people. But women like Susanne have watched their council houses collapse on top of them during the lifetime of the present Labour administration. They are paying a heavy price for Militant's failure to fight for the housing we need.

Grant French



Why Labour council tenants vote Liberal

Russell Osborne (reflex)

Losing the wrong battle

'BLACK SECTIONS HAVE posed a challenge to the Labour Party,' Russell Profitt told *tns* last week after Labour's national executive had declared invalid his selection as prospective parliamentary candidate for Lewisham East, on the grounds that unconstitutional black section delegates had taken part in the selection process. 'We want something done, but we don't want to split the party,' said Sharon Atkins, another prospective Labour candidate and one of the leaders of the campaign to establish autonomous black sections within the Labour Party. What is the controversy over the black sections all about?

The campaign for black sections began in earnest after Labour's catastrophic election defeat in June 1983. For the first time ever the Tories made a concerted bid for the black vote, traditionally regarded as solidly Labour. They ran a controversial campaign around the slogan 'Labour says he's black, we say he's British'. In the event the proportion of blacks voting Labour remained twice as high as in the population as a whole. Yet there was a slight drop in the black vote for Labour and a very high level of indifference, especially among younger voters. Labour advisers were less worried about blacks voting Tory than about the prospect that blacks might drift further away from Labour and that some might begin to organise independently.

Mark Wadsworth and Julian Ozanne, two Labour supporters of black sections, express the fear that black people 'are unlikely to find sanctuary in any political party'. In a document entitled *The importance of the black electorate* they recall the inner-city riots of 1981 and warn that blacks 'are likely to seek redress through extra-parliamentary activity'. These activists and others in the black sections campaign recommend the formation of separate organisations within the Labour Party structure to prevent black people moving away from Labour into forms of direct action.

The black activists particularly emphasise the importance of the black vote to Labour's electoral prospects in what they have identified as 25 key 'ethnic marginals'. The submission by the national steering committee for black sections to the current national executive investigation expresses the hope that black sections will be 'allowed to act as a transmission belt from the black community into the party'. Black activists are promoting black sections as a device for recruiting members and votes for the Labour Party from the black community. Many also feel that independent organisation is essential to give black activists a chance of advancing up the party and parliamentary career structure.

The Labour leadership remains unconvinced. Since the 1983 election Neil Kinnock and his team have carefully rebuilt Labour's image to court the 'upwardly mobile' middle of the road voters. The party leaders fear that the formation of black sections and the association of the party with black militancy will lose Labour more in white racist votes than it will gain in black votes. This view has been reinforced by Labour's studies of Walter Mondale's Democratic Party campaign for the US presidency against Ronald Reagan last year. Mondale's appeal to America's diverse minorities was an electoral flop, as a recent Labour Party internal document entitled *A coalition of minorities do not make a majority* notes. The document was written by David Cowling, adviser to leading Labour MP Peter Shore, and circulated confidentially in top party circles.

Cowling notes that 'for every one additional ethnic voter gained by Mondale he lost at least two white votes'. Back home he observes that 'a clear majority' of Britain's electorate is 'unyoung', 'unpoor' and 'unblack'. He concludes that 'the proposition that a coalition of minorities is a majority is for losers'. A resolution proposing the formation of black sections was decisively rejected at last year's party conference. The Labour leadership has tried to encourage the party's appeal to blacks without taking organisational steps that might alienate its middle class target voters. The executive has produced a consultation

(reflex)



Black sections may help Russell Profitt to become an MP, but will they help to fight racism?

document called *How we should recruit more black members* and set up a working party to look into the matter. The furor at Lewisham East resulted from the local Labour Party jumping the gun and setting up its own black section in defiance of the national party. Sharon Atkins admits that 'Lewisham broke both its own rules and the national party's'.

The issue of black sections has divided and confused the left. It has given rise to two different forms of opportunism. On the one hand Militant, in an accommodation to the prejudices of the Labour leadership, opposes black sections. As Sharon Atkins rightly says 'Militant is colour blind', and as a former member of seven years standing she ought to know. Militant denies the fact that black people face particular forms of discrimination and harassment, which other workers do not experience. This is a capitulation to the pressures of racism in British society that is characteristic of trade union officials and Labour Party politicians. It is an evasion of the labour movement's responsibility to take special measures to defend the rights of black people.

On the other hand, Labour left wingers around *London Labour Briefing*, *Socialist Action* and the Labour left council quangos go along with the call for black sections in an attempt to curry favour with black activists. They prefer to make an organisational concession to demands for black rights rather than take on the much more difficult project of making the Labour Party adopt genuinely anti-racist policies and undertake some real anti-racist activity. They rightly draw parallels between Labour's women's sections and their proposals for black sections. The Labour Party has long been prepared to put token women's representatives on constituency committees and on the national executive. Yet the party has yet to take up a serious fight for women's rights. But the left has gone along with Labour's token gestures towards women, so why not the same for blacks?

The black sections debate is not about organising to defend and advance the rights of

black people in Britain. It is about how the Labour Party can win the next election. By freezing the selection process at Lewisham East the national executive has made it clear that the leadership regards black sections as an electoral liability. In practice the left has quietly accepted this and in a number of constituencies — Norwood, Streatham — it has backed down from a challenge to the leadership on the black sections issue. The left and the black activists in the Labour Party have allowed the whole issue to be put in limbo until party conference in October. The fact that the executive working party has this week come out in favour of black sections shows that the party is still divided about its electoral chances.

Russell Profitt acknowledges the climb-down by black sections activists in the characteristic style of the Labour left — by claiming that 'we have already won'. He says that 'the issue of black involvement in the party has already been conceded — the idea that more blacks have to play a prominent role in the Labour Party'. In fact this has never been an issue. The Labour leaders have always been keen to promote black involvement in the party, but they have remained adamant against black sections.

Sharon Atkins reveals the outlook of the black sections activists in the way she contrasts the Labour Party to the GLC. 'At least the GLC has faced up to some of the issues, at least it has paid lip-service to fighting racism — the Labour Party hasn't even done that,' she says. Black people urgently need a political party that will really fight racism not just pay lip-service to it.

Profitt and Atkins may well succeed in their ambition of becoming Labour MPs. The Labour Party's concessions and token gestures may provide careers for a handful of black activists, but they do not answer the needs of black people in Britain. We need policies as well as organisation that can mobilise working class resistance to immigration controls, job discrimination, police harassment and all the other features of racism in British society. This means fighting against the Labour Party, not trying to organise within it.

Kenan Malik



Black youth vs racist police: whose side is Labour on?

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

POLICE AGAINST ABOLITION

At a Blackpool conference last week a rank and file delegate from South Yorkshire attacked the government for its 'constant squeezing of local authorities' finances'. But it wasn't a shop steward from a Labour council. It was PC Paul Middup, addressing the Police Federation conference on behalf of his county's constables.

The Police Federation had a few bones to pick with the Tories in Blackpool, where the boys in blue (toggled up in their conference casuals) alternately laughed at and booed home secretary Leon Brittan. They are worried about their pay and manning levels, and furious over plans to make racial discrimination by police a disciplinary offence. But many observers were really surprised when police started objecting to the government's attack on local government and its plans to abolish the metropolitan councils. Hasn't the Old Bill spent the last few years bickering with these same Labour councils over the issue of police accountability?

There have certainly been a few public dust ups between Labour-run local police committees and chief constables over policing methods and money. But it hasn't interfered with the police chiefs' ability to stick the boot in at will.

Kenneth Oxford is the loutish Merseyside chief constable. Margaret Simey is the priggish chair of Merseyside county council police committee. They are old sparring partners whose rows hit the headlines around the 1981 Toxteth riots. This week Margaret has been trying to get Kenneth to resign his post because he refuses to take any notice of her little committee.

During the miners' strike the Labour council supported the NUM. Oxford didn't and spent an unauthorised extra £5m of the council's money on paying police overtime to terrorise pickets. For this year the Home Office says Merseyside police need £105m. But the department of the environment says they can only have £92m. Oxford has simply told Simey that she had better come across with the bigger figure. Margaret got annoyed with Kenneth's impolite attitude and summoned him to a showdown budget meeting. Oxford flew off to an anti-terrorist conference in Washington instead. Now Margaret was really worked up and decided Oxford had to go. Unfortunately, she is only empowered to ask the home secretary to request him to resign. Despite his Blackpool barracking, Leon Brittan seems unlikely to oblige.

For Labour police-watchers like Simey, making the police accountable means getting them to talk to you. 'We would have given him permission had he asked,' she whined after Oxford's departure for the US anti-terrorist binge, 'but he didn't.'

Presumably she would also have approved the extra cash for anti-miners operations if he had asked nicely. Police chiefs can put up with this sort of harassment all day, every day. They are keen to preserve the big metropolitan councils because they give chief constables large areas to run. And they run them more or less as they see fit.

The police are accountable to the capitalist class and nobody else. They are allowed to do whatever is necessary to protect the system, and the Margaret Simeys of this world have to lump it. Brittan emphasised police impunity last week by telling the federation there would be no inquiry into how they battered the miners. As the disgraceful sending off of Kevin Moran in last week's Cup Final showed, even retired Durham police inspectors turned football referees can do as they like these days.

Unemployment Benefit Attendance Card

UB40x

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Notes About Claiming Benefits

continue claiming unemployment benefit because you have signed at the Unemployment Office at the times shown

benefit



in advance for all or some of the dates you have written in

unemployment benefit which is due to you by post to your home you have returned this card with parts 2 and 3 filled in.

Tory social security chief Norman Fowler is about to propose cuts that will rob people of their homes, heating, food and families. Welcome to the welfare state, 1985.

After the fire disaster at Bradford City football club, Tory sports minister Neil MacFarlane insisted that sports ground safety must be tightened up. He insisted even more strongly that the government would not pay for the improvements. Human lives may be cheap in Thatcher's Britain, but the Tories will not spend a penny to save them.

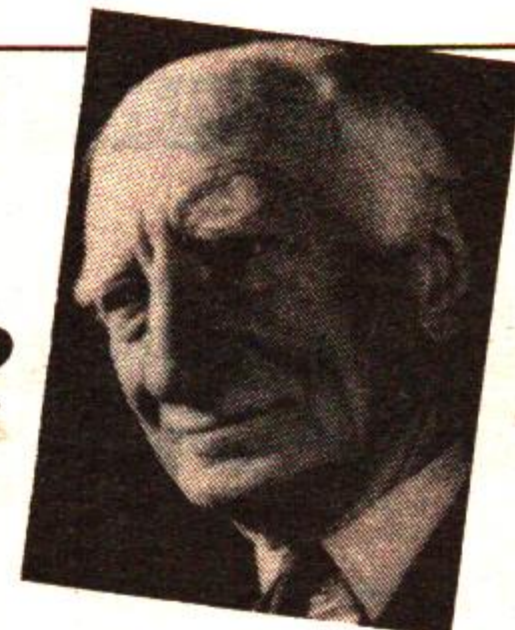
The government's cash crisis means it must slash spending on anything that does not help deliver a profit for British capitalism. Paying to improve football grounds is out of the question. Cutting the services which help to save people's lives is top of the government's agenda. On 3 June Tory social services secretary Norman Fowler is set to publish a harsh review of the welfare state which will devastate the lives of millions.

The Tories need to cut social security to secure the future of a capitalist society in Britain. All state spending is a drain on the employers' profits which fund it through taxation. Social security puts a heavy strain on the Treasury purse. In 1979 the Tories came to power promising to curb hand-outs to welfare 'scroungers' and lighten the tax burden weighing down British business. Six years later the effect of mass unemployment has forced up the Tories' social security bill by more than a quarter.

Social security payments now run at £40 billion a year — almost a third of all public spending and more than double the cost of defence, the second most expensive department. Fowler has stepped in to reduce the welfare burden, declaring that the unemployed and poor can no longer rely on the 'all-providing state' to meet their needs. His widely-leaked cuts proposals target vulnerable groups like the young, the aged and women as the people who will have to pay the price for the crisis of the British economy (see box).

Fowler's proposals will have drastic consequences for more than four million people

From Beveridge



to F

Whose welfare state are they w

on the dole and millions of others on benefits and pensions or in low-paid jobs. Yet his scheme is not nearly drastic enough to solve the government's spending problems. Social security is a nightmare for the Tories. Their attempts to work out a reformed version of the welfare state have led to acrimonious disputes within the cabinet. They have also provoked furious lobbying from powerful business interests with opposing views about what needs to be done to staunch the flow of cash from government coffers.

Anarchy in the DHSS

The Treasury, under chancellor Nigel Lawson, wanted Fowler to bulldoze ahead with cuts worth between £2 billion and £4 billion. But Fowler appreciates that applying the axe to his department is far from straightforward. The social security system has expanded beyond all recognition since it was first put on a centralised footing in the years following the Second World War. The growing population of pensioners has been joined by the swelling ranks of the unemployed to form a huge pool of people who are forced to survive on welfare benefits. Any attempt to cut back this system of benefits threatens to prompt widespread resistance and even to provoke disorder, at a time when the government is more unpopular than at any time since 1979.

Despite the risk of unrest, the government has no option but to cut state spending on welfare. Yet the social security system is not easy to dismantle. The complex machinery of the welfare state is an uncoordinated mess. Its piecemeal character reflects the anarchy of the capitalist jobs market, and the inability of both Tory and Labour governments to plan to provide relief for the system's victims. The social security system is a loose collection of stop-gap measures introduced to ensure the bare survival of the old, the sick, the disabled and the unemployed. Each new welfare reform has been tacked on to the existing structures to create a labyrinth of rules and benefits, none of which can be hacked off without upsetting the delicate balance of the system, and all of which have their defenders in establishment circles. Everywhere Fowler turned to make savings, he ran into complications and high-level opposition.

Take child benefits. This seemed to be a good target for cuts. It is a 'universal' benefit, paid out to all parents regardless of income. The Tories deliberated whether to cut it, means test it or tax it. In the end they chose none of these options because Thatcher feared alienating middle class Tory voters who receive child benefits and are already feeling squeezed by the government's attack on spending. The best Fowler could do was to agree not to raise it in line with inflation.

Fowler caused another row over his plans for the immediate abolition of the State Earnings Related Pension Scheme. Chancellor Lawson complained that any money saved on Serps would be lost again in tax allowances to workers who switched to private pension schemes. The top employers in the Confederation of British Industry backed Lawson. They moaned about the cost to industry of contributing towards employees' pension schemes. The traditionally anti-state spending bosses in the Institute of Directors weighed in on the side of Fowler and the abolition of Serps. After a postponed cabinet meeting and a behind-the-scenes row, the government came

down in favour of scrapping Serps. But Fowler conceded that it should be phased out gradually, probably over five years.

Fowler's compromise cuts amount to little more than what one business paper dismissed as 'tinkering' with the welfare state. Yet the government's cash crisis demands a fundamental streamlining and reorganisation of social security. Fowler's proposals are likely to point the way towards more drastic cuts by emphasising the need to integrate the taxation and benefit systems. Integration would abolish most benefits. Instead low-paid workers would have their taxes cut, though not far enough to compensate for their lost income. The unemployed would be granted tax credits, at a lower level than existing benefits.

Using the tax system as the basis for welfare pay-outs could give the authorities a clear picture of claimants' income, and put them in a strong position to impose means tests. Through computerising a streamlined system, integration would also allow the government to cut thousands of jobs in welfare administration. Fowler has postponed a clash with workers in the tax and social security sectors by taking only one small step towards integration — the new family credit which will replace family income supplement. But the battle lines are clearly drawn for the cuts and conflicts which must come.

Poor Law principles

While significant sections of the British business community have slated Fowler for not going far enough, the Labour Party has criticised the government for deserting the principles on which the welfare state was founded. Labour spokesmen claim that Fowler's ideas fly in the face of the 1942 Beveridge Report which established the principles of the modern social security system. 'Defend the welfare state' has become the rallying cry of the official labour movement. But defending the institutions of the welfare state means protecting the capitalist system's mechanism for self-preservation.

The welfare state, as designed by William Beveridge and built by the post-war Labour government, was never intended 'to provide insurance for all our citizens from the indignities of poverty', as Labour social security spokesman Michael Meacher now believes. The welfare state was designed for the welfare of the employers, not to help the needy. 'It is to the interests of employers as such that the employees should have security, should be properly maintained during inevitable intervals of unemployment or sickness, should have the content which helps make them efficient producers,' wrote Beveridge in his 1942 report. The object of the social security system was to make sure that workers survived periods out of work so that when they were required for wage labour they could present themselves in good condition.

Beveridge calculated levels of benefit with all the meanness of a Poor Law official, using tables drawn up in the thirties showing the absolute minimum on which a worker could be expected to house, feed and clothe himself and his family. The post-war Labour government applauded Beveridge's tight-fisted approach — and reduced his proposed levels of benefits even further. The only principle in the welfare state has always been to ensure the bare survival of the working class at the lowest possible cost to the capitalist system. Working class people

Fowler welfare worried about?

have always suffered poverty and degradation when they find themselves at the mercy of the welfare state. The four out of 10 unemployed who told a recent survey they could not afford to eat are the true inheritors of the traditions of Labour's welfare state which Meacher now praises and pledges his party to defend.

The Tories never tire of pointing out that Fowler's proposals are consistent with the sort of social security system planned in the forties. They are quite right. The only difference is that Beveridge wrote his report as part of the reorganisation of the British economy for post-

war expansion. Fowler has drafted his plans to update Beveridge in line with the harsh economic climate of the eighties. As the Tory minister puts it, Beveridge assumed conditions of full employment where 'there would be no substantial need for national assistance or supplementary benefit'. In today's situation of mass unemployment the supplementary benefit 'safety net', which Beveridge intended as a cheap means of support for a handful of unfortunates, has become an expensive way of sustaining seven million people for whom the system has no use.

Wasted lives

While the Tories are busy updating the welfare state to cope with the strains of capitalist crisis, the Labour Party is still stuck in the forties dreaming of economic expansion. Labour spokesmen criticise the government for wasting money on benefits which would be better spent on industrial investment. In a recent interview Labour shadow chancellor Roy Hattersley railed against the 'tragedy' of the Tories wasting North Sea oil revenues on 'undesirable projects' like welfare benefits. Hattersley promised that a future Labour government would 'alleviate poverty for the unemployed by using money that ought to be invested in Britain to create jobs'.

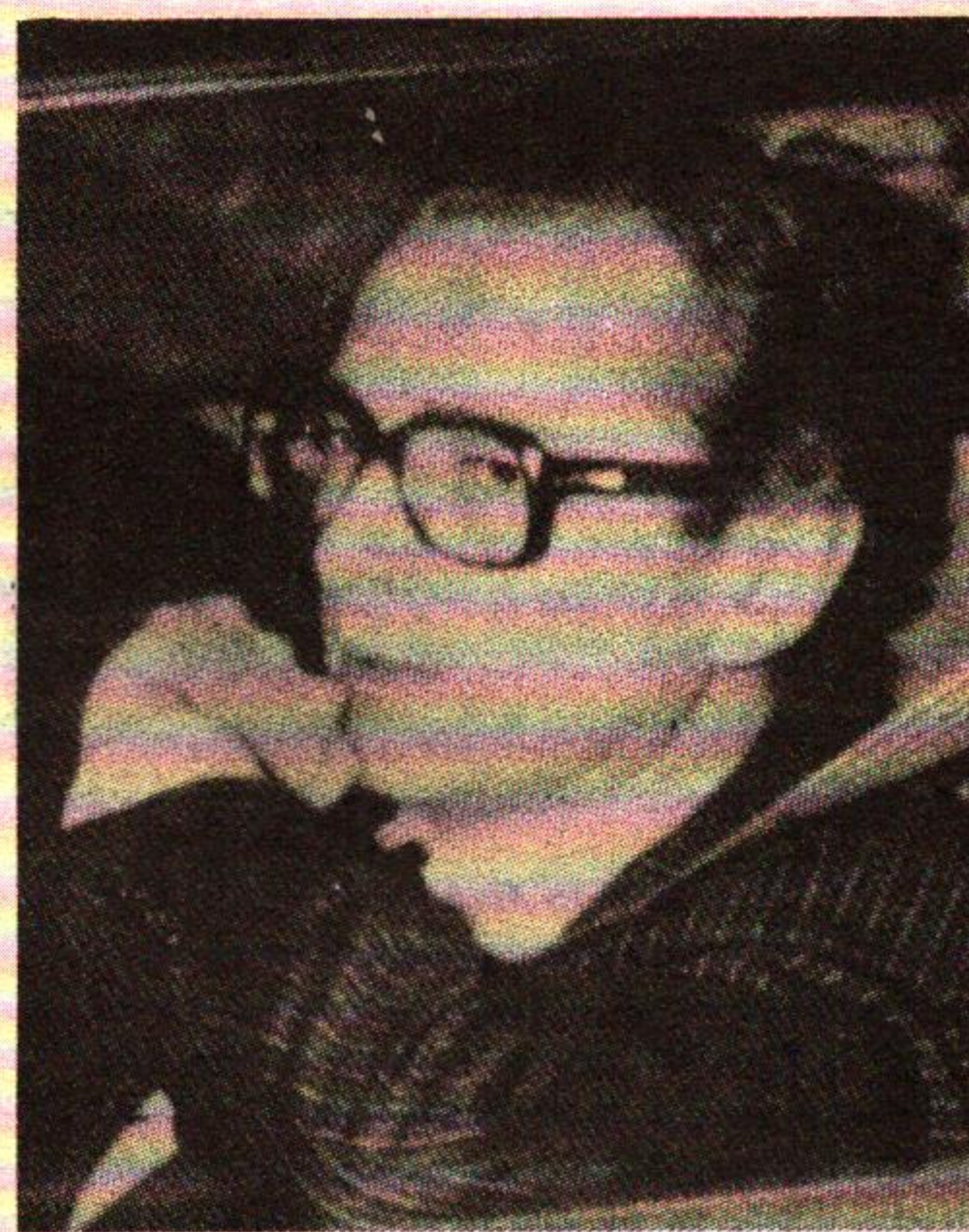
Hattersley's vision of benign state investment misses the point. In capitalist Britain, employers do not give workers jobs to 'alleviate poverty'. Workers are given jobs only if they can be put to work profitably for the employers. In today's recession, when the profits are not there to be had, neither are the jobs. The government then has to step in, not to invest in jobs in unprofitable industries, but to maintain the unemployed. From the point of view of individual employers to whom Hattersley seeks to appeal, paying out taxes so that the government can pay social security hand-outs maybe an unwelcome expense. But it is an expense that the capitalist class as a whole has no alternative but to accept.

Welfare payments to the unemployed play a dual purpose for the establishment. They help to maintain social stability by providing at least a subsistence living for the unemployed. Government funds for YTS and other job creation schemes and projects play a key role in keeping the unemployed, especially the young unemployed, off the streets and out of trouble. Dole payments also maintain a pool of reserve labour which can be used to put pressure on the wage levels of workers who still have jobs. The Tories' plans for 'pricing people back into jobs' are vital if the employers are to cut costs and restore profitability. State spending on social security is not an alternative to investment. It is crucial to contain the unemployed and as a lever to force down wages so that employers can return to profitable investment at workers' expense.

In the context of a capitalist social security system Labour's complaints about the 'waste' of money on social security can only lead to cuts in benefit payments. The Tories can agree with Hattersley that spending £40 billion on social security is an 'undesirable project' and that governments should not 'pay people to do nothing'. But the conclusion Fowler, Lawson and Thatcher draw is that they should pay people less to waste away on the dole. Labour's defence of the capitalist principles of the welfare state means it cannot contest the logic of the Tory cuts.

There are two ways to stop the waste of human and material resources on the welfare state. One is the Tory way of restoring profitability and putting British industry back on its feet. That means savaging social security, exiling thousands of homeless young people to live in tents on waste ground and sentencing millions of pensioners to a slow death by cold and hunger. The other is the way of rejecting every principle of a system that kills for profit, and fighting to establish an alternative where workers can control their own welfare.

Mick Hume



Fowler's targets

● Youth

People under the age of 26 living in bed and breakfast hovels now have their accommodation costs paid for only a fortnight in seaside resorts, four weeks in towns and eight weeks in major cities. After that they either have to sleep rough or get out of town. Those who still qualify have had their bed and breakfast allowance slashed by up to £40 a week. 'Bed' means sleeping five or six mattresses to a room, five or six hundred cockroaches to a mattress. 'Breakfast' means stale bread rolls and stewed tea. Even the young unemployed who find somewhere to live or are driven back to their parents will have their supplementary benefit cut by £5 a week and have to pay a proportion of rates bills.

● **It's not young people's fault if they don't have a job. They need a living wage and a decent place to live whether the bosses' system can afford to employ them or not.**

● Pensioners

Fowler is set to phase out the State Earnings Related Pensions Scheme and stop raising the basic pension to match inflation. Millions of pensioners can look forward to another winter of crying from cold with even less to eat than last year. Many will lose a big slice of their housing benefit. The token £10 Christmas bonus will be abolished along with the £30 death grant. Those who can't cope are to be means tested before they're allowed into the prison of a government home, and the maximum allowance for a place in a home will be cut to around half the current average cost. For some, Fowler's cuts amount to a death sentence.

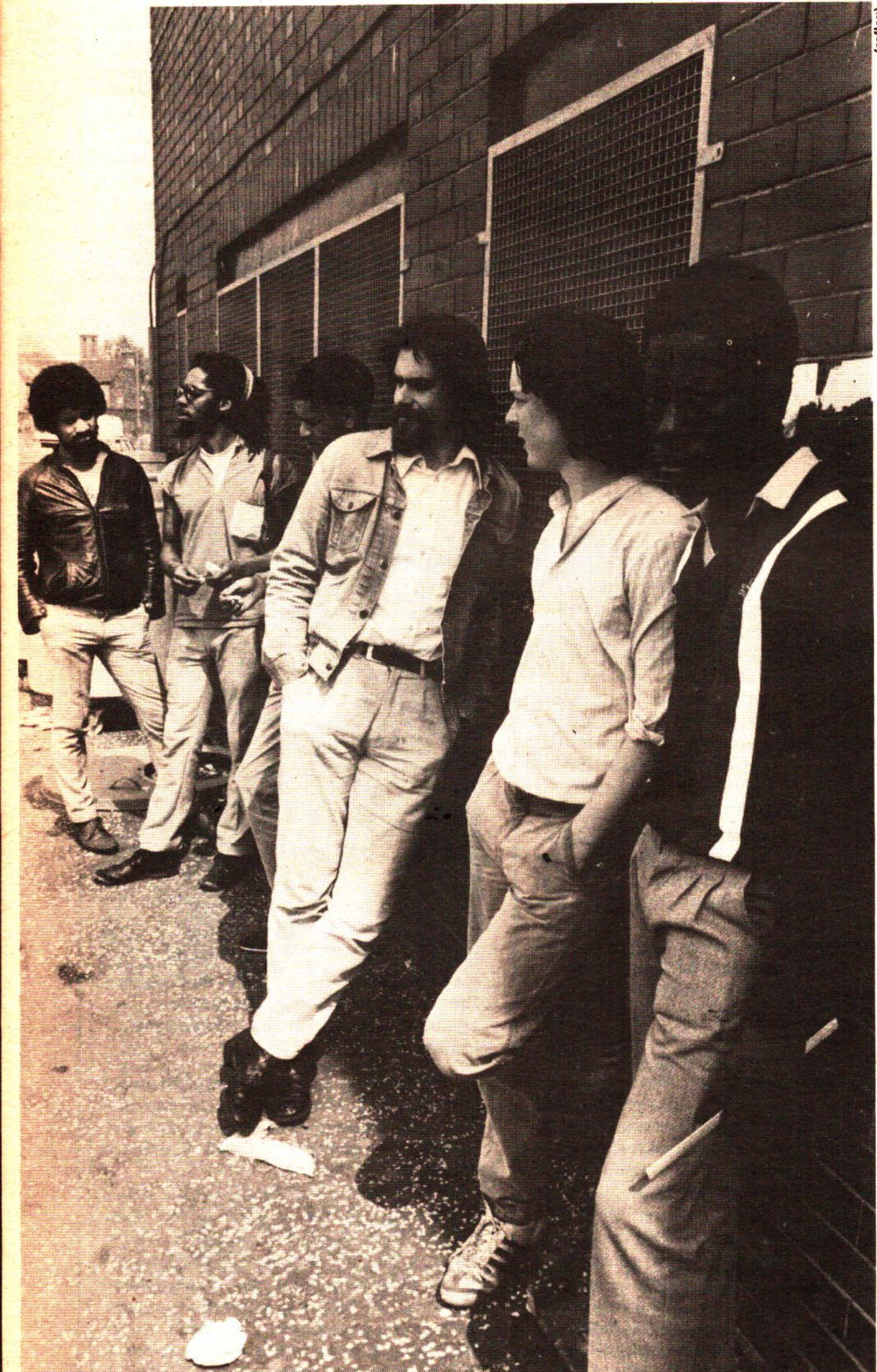
● **Retired people don't stop needing to eat and stay warm just because they stop working for capitalism. They should be paid the equivalent of a living wage.**

● Families

Fowler will abolish Family Income Supplement, now paid out to 200 000 of Britain's poorest families. The FIS giros which are vital to keep many low-paid families in food will be replaced by Family Credit, paid through workers' wage packets. The new scheme will be harder to qualify for, worth less and won't give families free school meals or milk. The Maternity Grant of £25 and £27.25 a week Maternity Allowance are both listed for means testing. All special payments for clothing, furniture etc will be done away with and replaced by DHSS loans, repayable from weekly benefits. Unemployed families will no longer have their mortgage interest paid for the first six months, and those renting homes will have their housing benefit cut.

Fowler is also going to cut the period over which unemployment benefit is paid by half to six months, and establish four separate supplementary benefit rates for the unemployed, pensioners, one-parent families and the long-term sick and disabled.

● **We can't let women carry the can for the employers by feeding and caring for the young, old and sick on less money. They need bigger benefits and better services just to keep their homes together.**



At least he's left the unemployed a wall to lean on: claimants queue for shrinking giros

INTERNATIONAL

Middle East

Dirty deal for Palestine

'W'e need to find people who are wholly recognised as representatives of the Palestinians and who have a background that is acceptable in the negotiating process,' said George Shultz, Ronald Reagan's man in the Middle East, as he shuttled from Cairo to Jerusalem last week. The problem that Shultz faces is that any Palestinian leader who is acceptable to the USA is likely to be rejected by the Palestinian people.

Some influential figures in the Arab world have given their backing to the USA's latest scheme for solving the Palestinian question. King Hussein of Jordan and president Mubarak of Egypt have staked their reputations on promoting a diplomatic solution to the enduring conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people. More surprisingly Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, last week admitted he was prepared to recognise the state of Israel if the USA acknowledged the Palestinians' claim for 'the right to national self-determination'. What is going on?

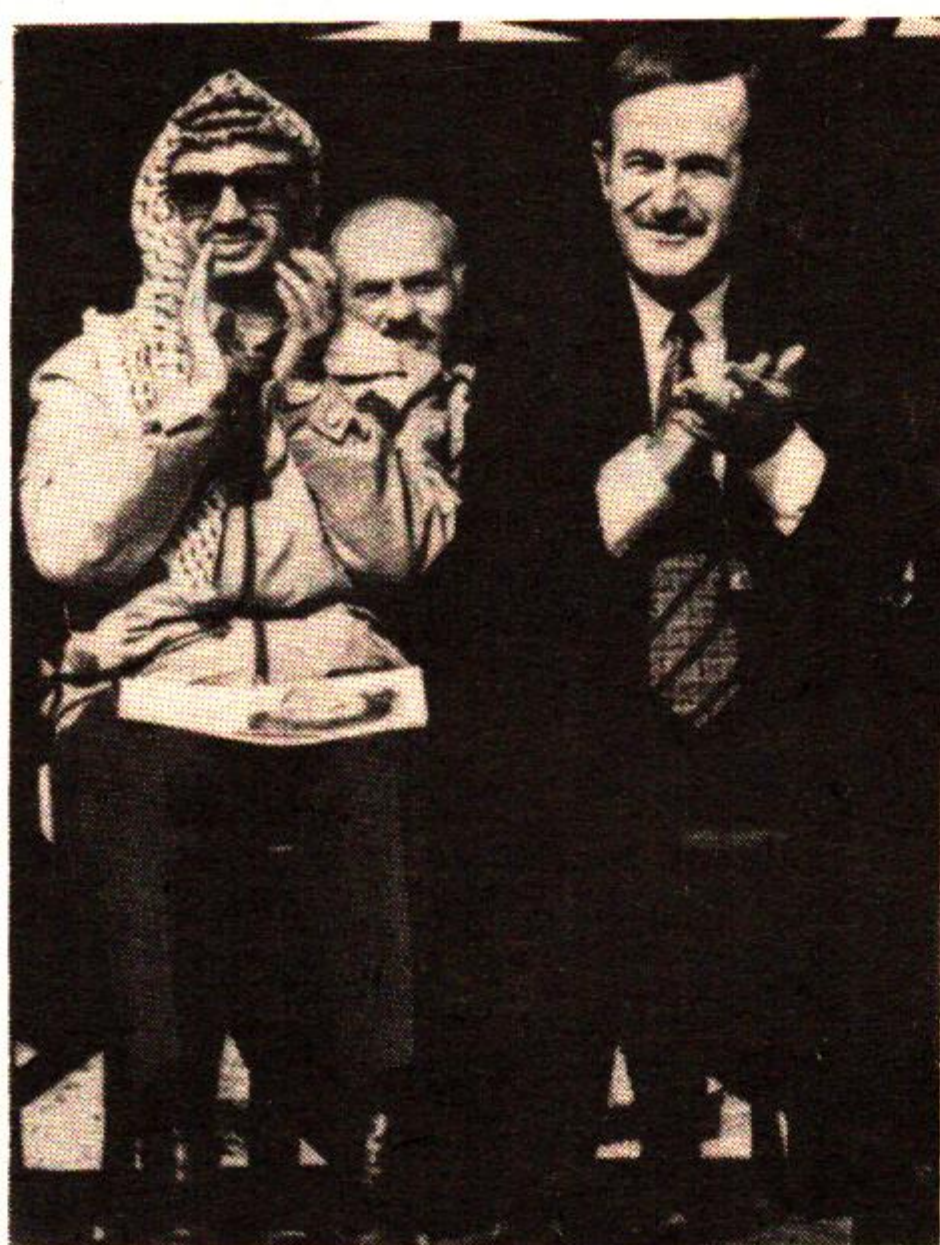
Israel's humiliating withdrawal from Lebanon and the continuing instability of the Middle East are serious problems for the Western powers. The Palestinian struggle is a popular cause, serving as an example and inspiration to the masses throughout the Arab world. The conservative Arab leaders cannot afford to ignore Palestinian resistance, so they continue to pay lip-service to the struggle against the Zionist state. Yet at the same time the stability of their own regimes depends on containing the activities of the liberation movement.

Dispersed throughout the Middle East since the formation of the state of Israel in the late forties, the Palestinian people have always been forced to rely on the hospitality of the governments of Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and the Gulf states. The ruling classes of the Arab nations have tried to control the PLO from the time it was formed in 1964. They have tolerated Palestinian freedom fighters so long as they behaved themselves. But every time the Palestinians have taken the initiative in fighting back against Israel, the PLO has faced the full force of Arab reaction.

In the early seventies the growing confidence of Palestinian guerrillas in Jordan led to a major clampdown. In the notorious 'black September' massacre in 1972 King Hussein unleashed his army on the Palestinians, slaughtering thousands and expelling the PLO to Syria and Lebanon. The Arab leaders have continually tried to push the PLO away from armed resistance against Israel into the pursuit of diplomatic solutions. After the Arab defeat in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, significant sections of the PLO abandoned the goal of overthrowing the Zionist state. They adopted instead the limited objective of setting up an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan.

Yet the very existence of the Zionist state, established and sustained through massive Western backing, meant that there was little scope for diplomacy. The expulsion of the Palestinians from Israel and their continuing oppression within its borders bred fierce resistance. Whatever the hopes of the West and the Arab regimes, the Palestinian people expected the PLO to continue its armed struggle to overthrow the state of Israel. The growth of the PLO in Lebanon in the seventies indicated the determination and confidence of the Palestinian resistance. This time it was Syria that moved against the PLO.

In 1976 Syria intervened in the civil war in Lebanon and stabbed the Palestinians in the back. This betrayal was only the prelude to the combined assault launched by Israeli and Syrian forces against the Palestinian community in Lebanon in 1982 and 1983. The PLO was forced to retreat and eventually



Arafat applauds Western diplomacy that spells defeat for Palestinians

leave Lebanon altogether. The dispersal of the PLO's forces throughout the Middle East deprived it of its military base. It also made the PLO even more dependent on the Arab states. The growth of Syrian influence and the emergence of a puppet Syrian-sponsored wing of the Palestinian guerrilla movement has threatened to undermine the integrity and cohesion of the PLO. The combined effects of these pressures have brought Arafat to the negotiating table with Hussein and Mubarak.

Last November the Palestinian National Council, the PLO's ruling body, met in

Amman, the capital of Jordan. King Hussein, the butcher of the Palestinians in the days of black September, embraced Arafat and declared his support for the PLO. Preoccupied with the problem of re-establishing its own authority, the PLO leadership simply said 'let bygones be bygones'. For Arafat the meeting provided a much needed opportunity to tell the world that the PLO was still alive and ready to do business. In February Arafat and Hussein announced that they had reached an agreement. Their joint objective was now a confederation of Jordan and a Palestinian state on the West Bank. Hussein indicated that the time had come to talk with Israel either directly or through Washington.

The Amman accord marked an important shift in the position of the Palestinian leaders and the Arab regimes. Until this initiative only Egypt had negotiated directly with Israel. Anwar Sadat's ignominious peace agreement with Israeli leader Menachem Begin and US president Jimmy Carter in 1977 led to his own assassination in 1981 and to the isolation of Egypt from much of the Arab world. Sadat's successor Mubarak quickly welcomed the new PLO-Jordan deal as an opportunity to overcome Egypt's isolation. Iraq and Saudi Arabia encouraged this approach because of their hostility to Syria and Iran. For Washington the initiative was a godsend promising the establishment of a pro-Western bloc in the Middle East. The response from Tel Aviv was favourable but Israel demanded more concessions. The Israeli government insisted on the exclusion from the talks of the PLO,

which it abhors as an anti-Zionist terrorist organisation.

Even Arafat could not go so far as to agree to his own exclusion from the negotiations. Yet not even a special trip from George Schultz could convince the Zionist leadership to play ball. Hence for the time being the Hussein peace initiative has come to an end. However, the American fixers have not given up their attempts to secure some dirty deal. The US shuttle diplomats are planning to organise separate talks with moderate Palestinian representatives and Zionist leaders. Through this approach they hope eventually to push both sides into a compromise. It is clear that any such compromise could only be at the expense of the Palestinian people and to the advantage of Israel. Any deal hatched between the USA and its collaborators in the Middle East would be a setback to the cause of Palestinian freedom. This is the danger that the so-called 'peace process' represents to the Palestinian people.

For too long reactionary Arab regimes have been allowed to interfere in the affairs of the Palestinian liberation movement. The main beneficiaries have always been Israel and the West. This time the stakes are higher than ever before. The people of Palestine need the support of the working class of the Middle East to tell Hussein and Mubarak that they have no right to preside over the future of the Palestinians. Only the masses can block any agreement that would acknowledge the Israeli state and doom Palestinian Arabs to yet another period of exile from their homeland.

Frank Richards

IRAN UNDER IMPERIALISM

Khomeini back at the old bazaar

IN THE EARLY days of the popular regime of Ayatollah Khomeini, which replaced the pro-Western dictatorship of the Shah in 1979, the Western media railed against the excesses of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran. Today they are silent because the Islamic regime has moved towards a reconciliation with the West and launched a wave of terror against the working class.

Under Khomeini trade unions and left-wing political parties have been destroyed or driven underground. More than 100 000 people have been executed and at least 40 000 political prisoners languish in jail. The deepening crisis caused by setbacks in the war with Iraq and economic recession at home are pushing Iran further towards the Western camp. Last week's open demonstration in Tehran and the defection to Iraq of the president's sister were a clear indication of growing tensions within the regime.

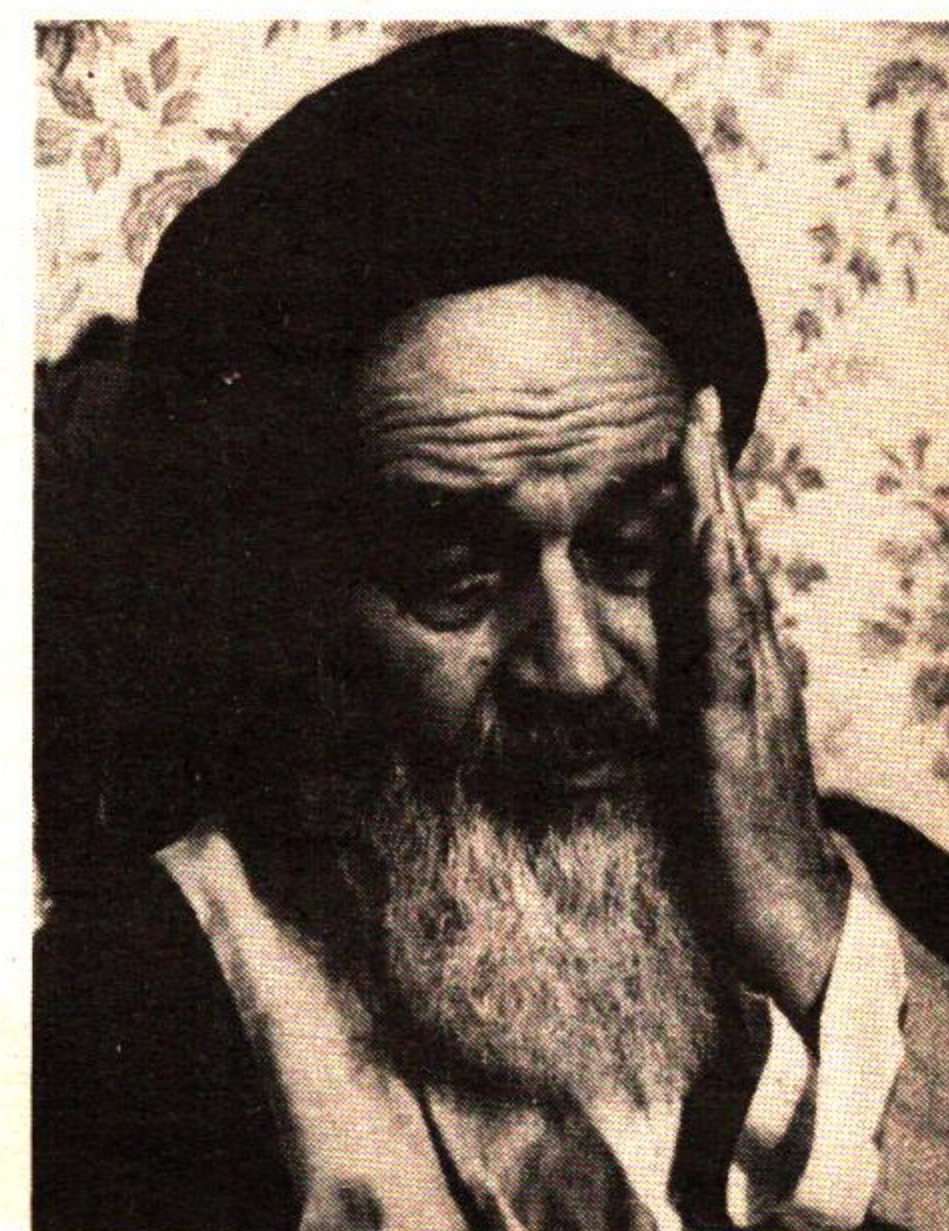
Iran's March offensive on the south western front in the Gulf war was a failure that cost 30 000 lives. It has triggered open conflict among fundamentalists and pragmatists in ruling circles in Tehran over the regime's whole strategy. The fundamentalists' main concern is to maintain the grip of the clergy over the people. They strongly support the war against Iraq because it is a focus for rallying the faithful. But they have come under increasing pressure from the pragmatists who reflect the interests of Iran's middle class traders and entrepreneurs — the bazaaris — and who want to get down to the business of economic reconstruction. The moderates are calling for an end to the war and for rapid moves to restore trade and investment.

There have been tensions between fundamentalists and pragmatists since

Khomeini first came to power at the head of a wave of mass resistance to the Shah and Western domination. Khomeini promised radical change, a major redistribution of land and wealth at home and a crusade for the Shiite Moslem faith throughout the Middle East. In its early days Khomeini's regime confiscated some property from the former ruling class, but the old elite has since been amply compensated. Khomeini placated the West by paying off all the country's debts accumulated under the Shah, making Iran the only major Third World country with a total foreign debt of less than \$1 billion. Properties and industries taken over by the state are being hived off to Japanese and West German investors — and to the country's burgeoning commercial bazaaris class which forms Khomeini's key base of support.

Yet to control the masses Iran's rulers still depend on the rhetoric of Islamic revolution. Shiite fundamentalism provides a means of channelling the struggle for social change into religious revivals and radical anti-Western ideas. This ideology has enabled Khomeini's regime to mobilise millions of Shiite youth in Islamic committees and militias which play a crucial role in enforcing social control. For the past five years the war against Iraq, presented as a fight against infidels and agents of imperialism, has kept nationalist and religious fervour alive.

But as economic pressure on the regime has grown, so have its moves to adjust Shiite radicalism to a level acceptable to nervous Arab neighbours and the Western powers. Behind the scenes leading clerics have used their influence to restrain militant Shiite youth in Lebanon whose campaign against the Israeli forces has deeply shocked the moderate Arab powers of the Gulf. To bail



The old Ayatollah rallied the masses against the West, but now relies on the traders

out the economy Iran's rulers need financial support from the Gulf states and the Western powers for which Islamic radicalism represents a major source of instability.

In 1979 the Iranian people took a major step forward in the struggle to free their country from Western domination. Today that struggle has been waylaid and betrayed by a leadership that has manipulated religious faith and anti-Western sentiments to its own advantage. The result is the continuing subordination of the people of Iran to the system that is responsible for all their miseries — Western imperialism.

Inez Landa

REVIEWS

THE PILL

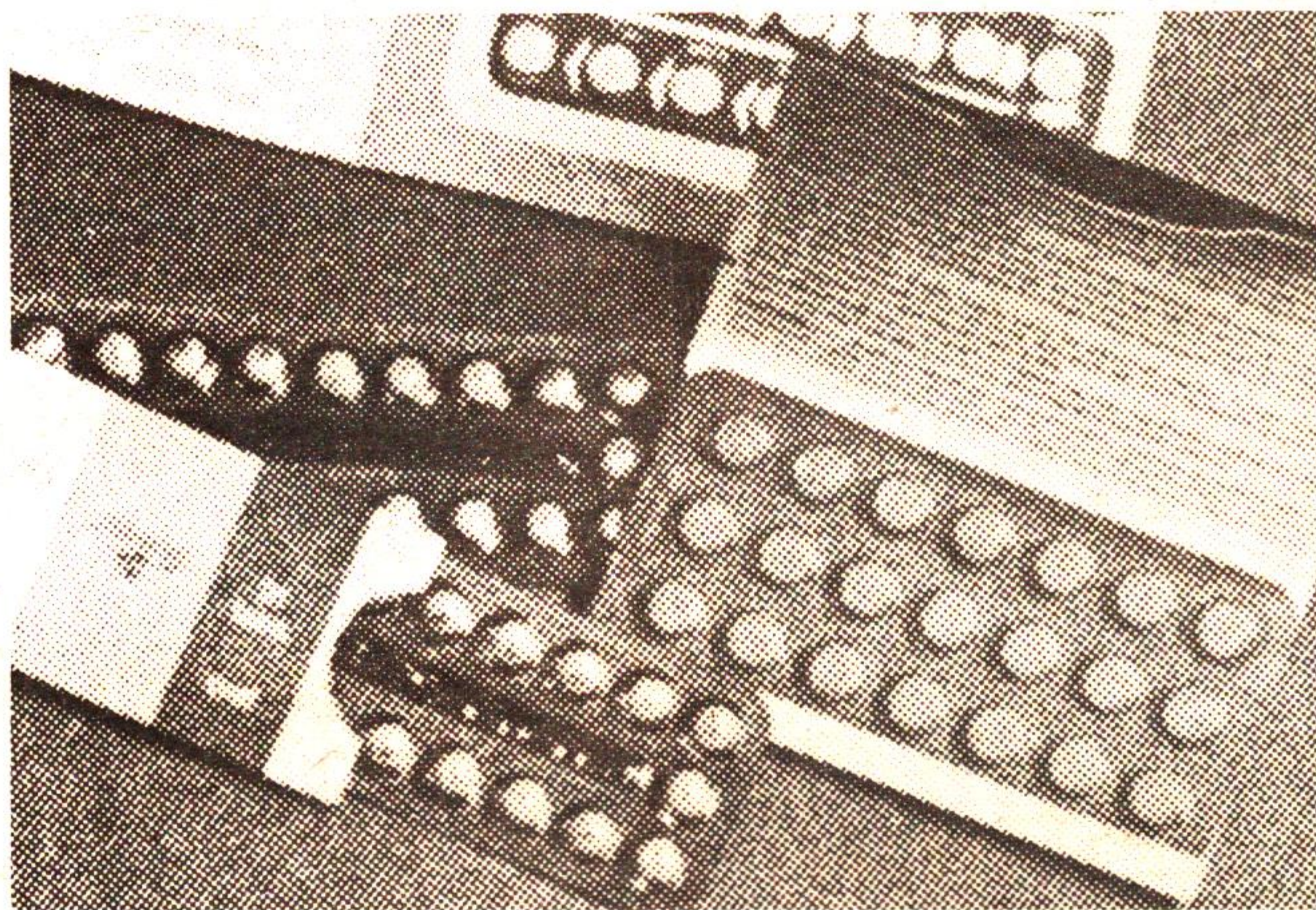
Witch doctor

Ellen Grant, *The bitter pill: how safe is the 'perfect contraceptive'?*, Elm Tree Books/Hamish Hamilton 1985, hbk £7.95

Suitably dedicated 'for my family and for everyone's family', this book will be warmly welcomed by all campaigners against women's rights. Written by a doctor, it seeks to give scientific authority to the new morality and to deepen the fears and confusions of the two million plus women in Britain who use the oral contraceptive pill.

Grant claims that she is more concerned with women's health than with morality, but her sexual preoccupations constantly overwhelm her attempts at scientific objectivity. She informs her readers that she just has to agree with her father-in-law, a Scottish minister, that the pill leads to promiscuity. The pill is 'a passport to sexual license' and 'at a time of falling intellectual and behavioural standards of our children', she writes, 'there is no room for complacency'. Grant blames the pill for virtually every social evil. 'I would boldly draw some links between the mass use of steroid hormones and the common social catastrophes of today,' writes Grant. Her list includes child battering, suicide, homosexuality, Aids, dyslexia, divorce and football hooliganism. She claims homosexuality is a result of exposure to sex hormones in the womb. Aids, she explains, 'is more common in passive homosexual partners and many of these men take oestrogens'.

Really? Grant's bizarre theories are transparently prejudice masquerading as science. While Grant may be a prig and a bigot her views on the pill have a widespread resonance. She presents what appears to be an impressive array of scientific evidence against the pill. But readers should beware of being taken in by what is often conjecture and speculation in the guise of scientific study. She presents the results of small sample surveys which lack adequate statistical controls or verification by other authorities. She provides numerous case-study examples which



involve subjective reporting and interpretation and are unverifiable. For example, she makes much of the pill's effect on mood without making any attempt to consider other influences on women's emotional state. This approach explains nothing — but any theory that blames women's dissatisfactions on oestrogens rather than on the drudgery of their work in the home and outside it obviously has its advantages for the establishment.

Another issue which arouses great concern is the alleged link between the pill and cancer. Grant recycles the results of the studies that sparked off the latest pill scare in Britain with the suggestion that there was a higher incidence of cancers of the breast and cervix among pill takers. Grant ignores the fact that these studies have been widely criticised on various technical grounds, that their results have not been confirmed by other investigations and that the increased risks were slight. She also ignores other research that

suggests that the pill gives protection against cancers of the womb and ovaries. Anti-pill prejudice continually conquers science.

Nobody would disagree with Grant's contention that we need a better and safer form of contraception. In the meantime we should recognise that the pill is the safest and most effective form of contraception known to women. The objective of Grant and all the moral campaigners is not to improve contraception, but to control sexual behaviour and regulate family life. They do not want a better pill, but to restrict the use of the contraceptive methods that are already available. Last month Grant shared a platform with Victoria Gillick who has already succeeded in restricting the prescription of the pill to young people and wants to go further. *The bitter pill* is a classic illustration of science perverted in the service of reaction.

Jenny Graham

DEFENCE



Alternative war

Malcolm Chalmers, *Paying for defence*, Pluto Press 1985, pbk £3.95

Peter Tatchell, *Democratic defence*, Heretic Books 1985, pbk £3.95

The quest for an alternative non-nuclear defence policy has become a focus of controversy on the left and in the movement for nuclear disarmament. This controversy is a response to pressure from establishment critics of nuclear disarmament. They claim that if Britain unilaterally renounces its nuclear weapons it will be left defenceless before an external aggressor. Malcolm Chalmers of the Bradford school of peace studies and former Labour Party parliamentary candidate Peter Tatchell have set about trying to work out an alternative defence policy for the left.

Both Chalmers and Tatchell take the word 'defence' at face value. They assume that the defence of Britain is the same thing as the defence of the rights and freedoms of the British people. The appearance of defence minister Michael Heseltine at the Molesworth peace camp a few weeks ago, dressed in his combat jacket and at the head of the biggest British task force mobilised since the Falklands War, dramatically demonstrated that the defence of Britain increasingly demands the suppression of democratic rights. The 'defence' of Britain has always been used to justify military aggression abroad and repression at home. The object of the British military

machine is to 'defend' the interests of the British ruling class, not the rights of ordinary people.

When the ministry of war was renamed the ministry of defence in 1968 only the title changed. Britain is still one of the world's strongest military powers. Its past glory and its current survival depend on its capacity to dominate other countries, by force if necessary. Like every other war this century, the Falklands War was justified by the need to 'defend' something. Its real purpose was to defend the status of the British ruling class world-wide. 'Defence' is a euphemism for war.

The notion of 'alternative defence' is based on the dream that Britain's military machine could be restricted to defending Britain's shores from invasion. Both Chalmers and Tatchell try to convince the British establishment that it no longer needs to maintain its expensive military capacity to strike abroad. But the British ruling class knows that overseas trade and investments are its lifeline. When it comes to the crunch its survival depends on the capacity to intimidate its competitors. It will not be convinced by the left's wishful thinking. However the alternative defence strategists may yet serve a useful service for the establishment.

In their attempts to devise cheaper and more democratic ways of defending Britain the left endorses the mass mobilisation of the civilian population in conscripted militias for defence purposes. Twice this century left wingers have mobilised the masses to 'defend' Britain against 'foreign aggressors'. People who say 'never again' to the slaughter of the two world wars should start by saying 'never again' to the myths of 'alternative defence'.

Rob Knight

FILM

Don't die for me Argentina

Hector Olivesa (director), *A funny, dirty little war*, ICA

'For Peron,' yells the drunken pilot in the old biplane as he faces execution. He has just sprayed a load of pig shit over the police force and assassination squads attacking the local town hall.

'For Peron,' yells his executioner, a young policeman taking his orders from the right-wing mayor who wants to rid the sleepy town of its 'bolshhevik' officials.

The pilot sees in Peronism a symbol of resistance and independence. The policeman uses Peronism to justify repression.

In the forties Juan Peron won mass support in Argentina because he wanted to develop Argentina independently of British and American control. Overthrown by a coup backed by the Western powers in 1955, Peron returned to Argentina in 1973. Western backers hoped he would be able to contain popular resistance to austerity which rocked Argentina in the late sixties. Peron's failure to contain workers' resistance led to a wave of repression.

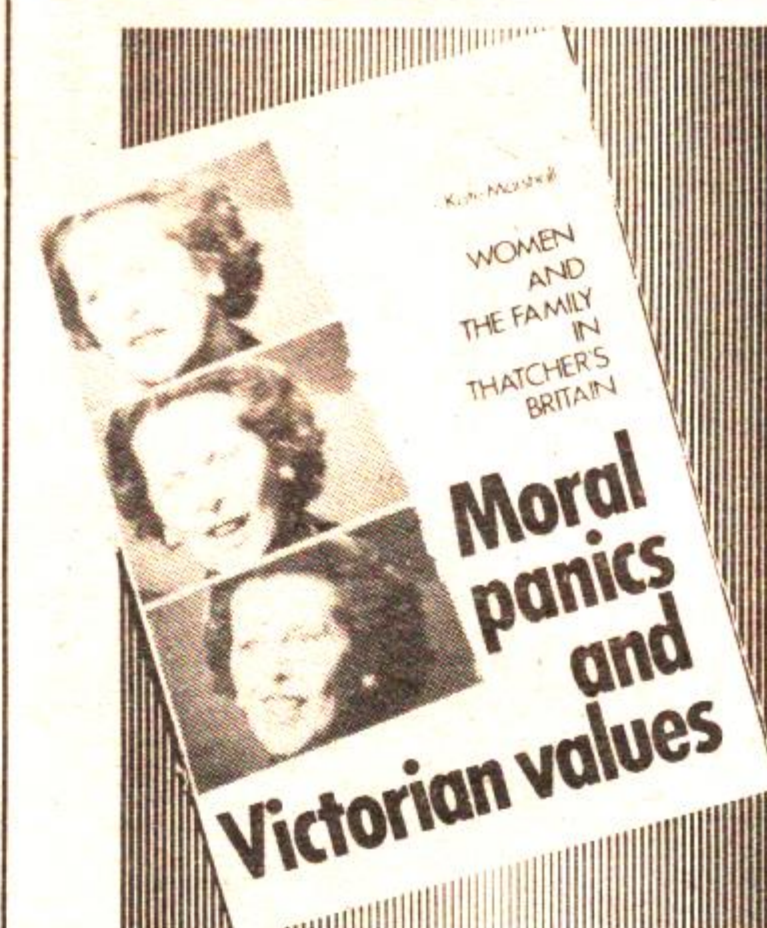
A funny, dirty little war uses humour to explode some of the myths about Peronism. Set in a sleepy Argentinian provincial town it exposes 'how Peron's attempt to be all things to all people in the forties led to the carnage and brutality of the seventies'.

The police chief acting 'on orders from above' tries to remove the radical Peronist town administrator and his 'bolshhevik' assistant, the harmless and cowardly town clerk. But the administrator refuses to give up without a fight. He bribes the patrolman guarding the town hall with a promise of promotion, enlists an aging gardener and the town drunk, bullies the town clerk, and with this motley company occupies the town hall.

Tensions in the town escalate as the local Peronist Youth decide to join the administrator. The police chief calls in the assassination squads. The film, and the town, career in a spiral of savagery for which nobody is prepared. Olivesa's juxtaposition of hilarity and brutality manages, where a more serious treatment might have failed, to show how Peron's mass movement left the masses exposed to the violence of their rulers.

Wendy Ellis

junius publications



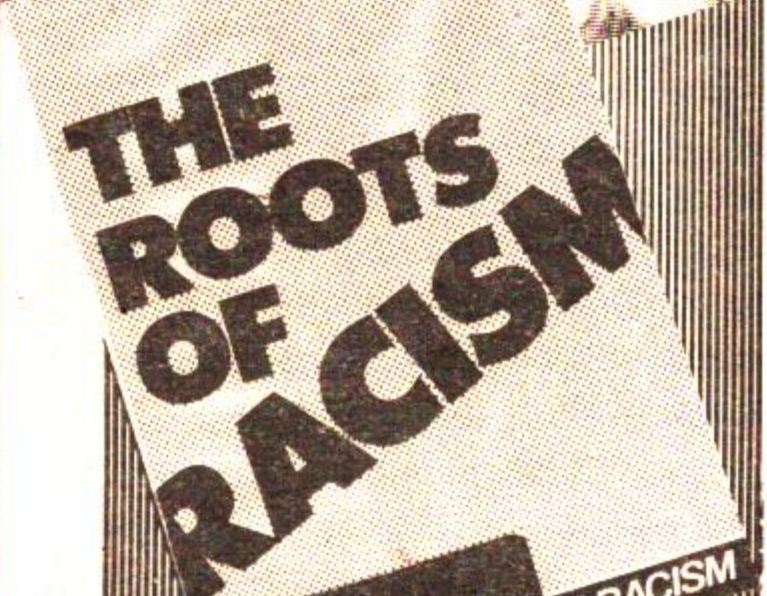
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'A great campaign is in progress to undermine the Christian culture and destroy the Christian heritage in Britain,' said David Smith, the new Moderator of the Church of Scotland in a sermon last Sunday. On the same day the Pope preached a 'homily on the family' in Belgium. He told 100 000 young people to beware of 'the promise of easy immediate pleasure, unbridled sex, drugs of all kinds, artificial gadgets, expensive fashions, thought-destroying noise, illusion mongers and dream merchants' as traps set by the devil.

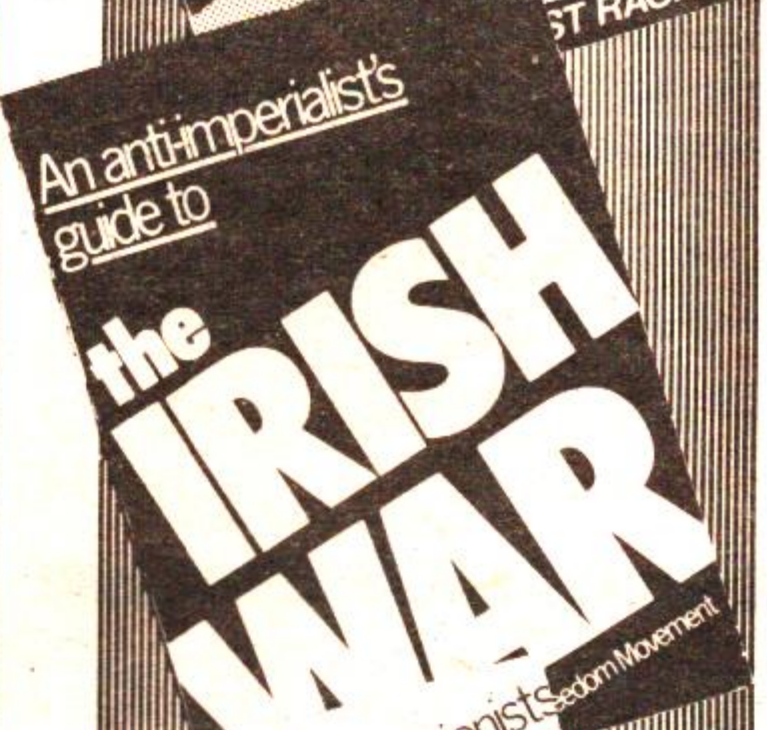
Why are the moral guardians of the old order in such a panic? *Moral panics and Victorian values* explores the sexual hang-ups of the establishment's spiritual spokesmen. It reveals why they are so concerned to promote the family and marriage, parental authority and chastity and law and order.



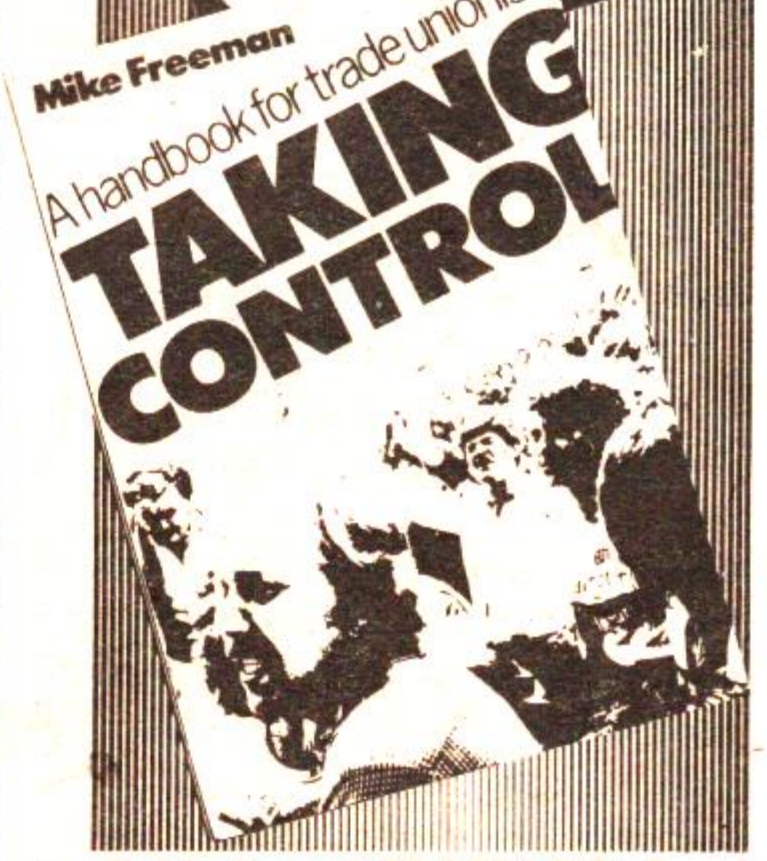
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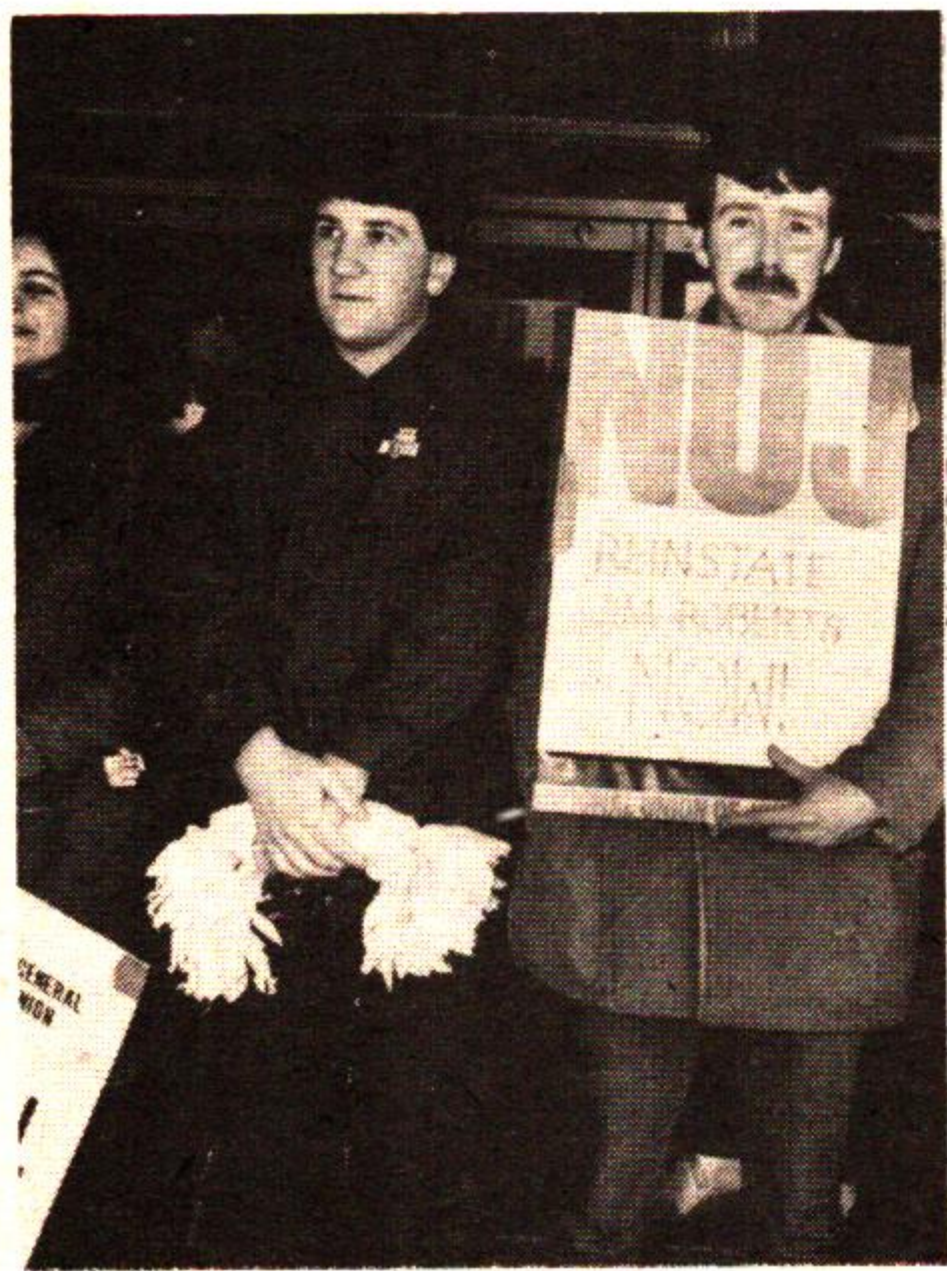


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LETTERS

STEPPING OUT



Photographs by Chris Black (reflex)

Nalgo row

An all-out strike of all full-time staff at the Nalgo headquarters has entered its third week. Only the general secretary John Daly feels it his duty to scab on the strike and cross the picket line every day. The strike has disrupted the whole union and, if it continues, it will probably lead to the cancellation of this year's national conference.

The 850 Nalgo full timers (members of NUJ, Actss and Apex) walked out after a meeting of an appeals panel of three members of the national executive committee upheld Daly's decision to sack Jim Roberts, NUJ member and Militant supporter. He is accused of leaking a confidential document from Nalgo HQ to Derek Hatton, the Militant deputy leader of Liverpool council. Hatton is also a Nalgo member, but it was in his position as an employer that he used the document — to undermine the interests of Nalgo members in a local dispute. The document was a report recommending that the dispute should not be given official Nalgo backing. Hatton claims he got the document from an unnamed Nalgo member, not from Jim Roberts.

As a shop steward I object to the summary dismissal of a union employee on entirely circumstantial evidence. As a Nalgo shop steward, what I and many Nalgo members are angry about is the fact that somebody in Nalgo HQ collaborated with a council employer against the interests of rank and file members. We want Jim Roberts reinstated — and Derek Hatton kicked out of the union. How can we trust our union leaders when they are prepared on the one hand to work hand in glove with council managements and on the other to sack their own employees without proper evidence?

Donations to the strikers can be sent direct to Nalgo staff unions strike office, c/o NUJ, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP.

Tony Pople
Hackney

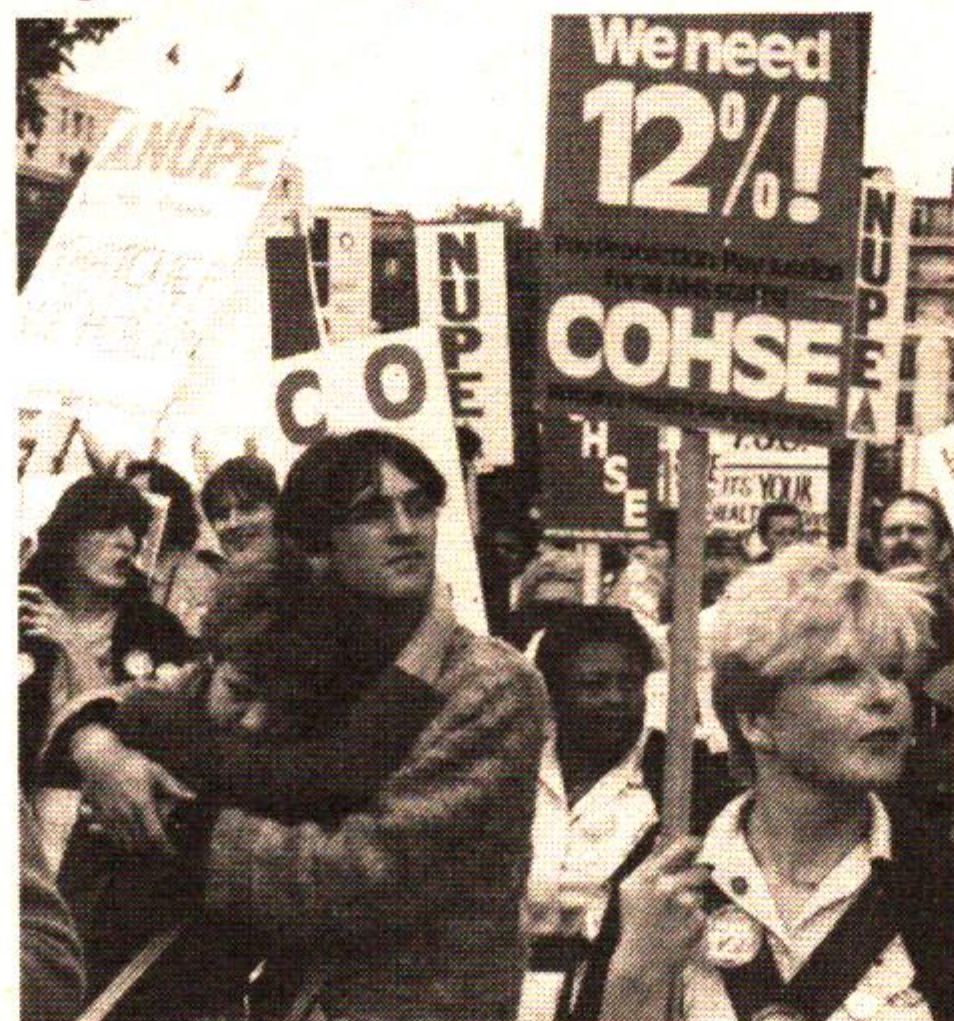
Hospital action

When Nupe failed to come forward with any proposals to fight privatisation plans, domestic workers at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Newcastle took action in order to put pressure on management. The action taken was the imposition of sanctions — refusing to clean the new areas of the catering department from the beginning of April.

At the end of April Nupe had a mass meeting to ask all staff to lift sanctions on the new dining room because of pressure being put on kitchen staff. This meant also lifting sanctions in other areas because of the lack of washing facilities. These were reluctantly agreed to on the condition that no further concessions would be made.

But by 7 May the union had lifted all of the

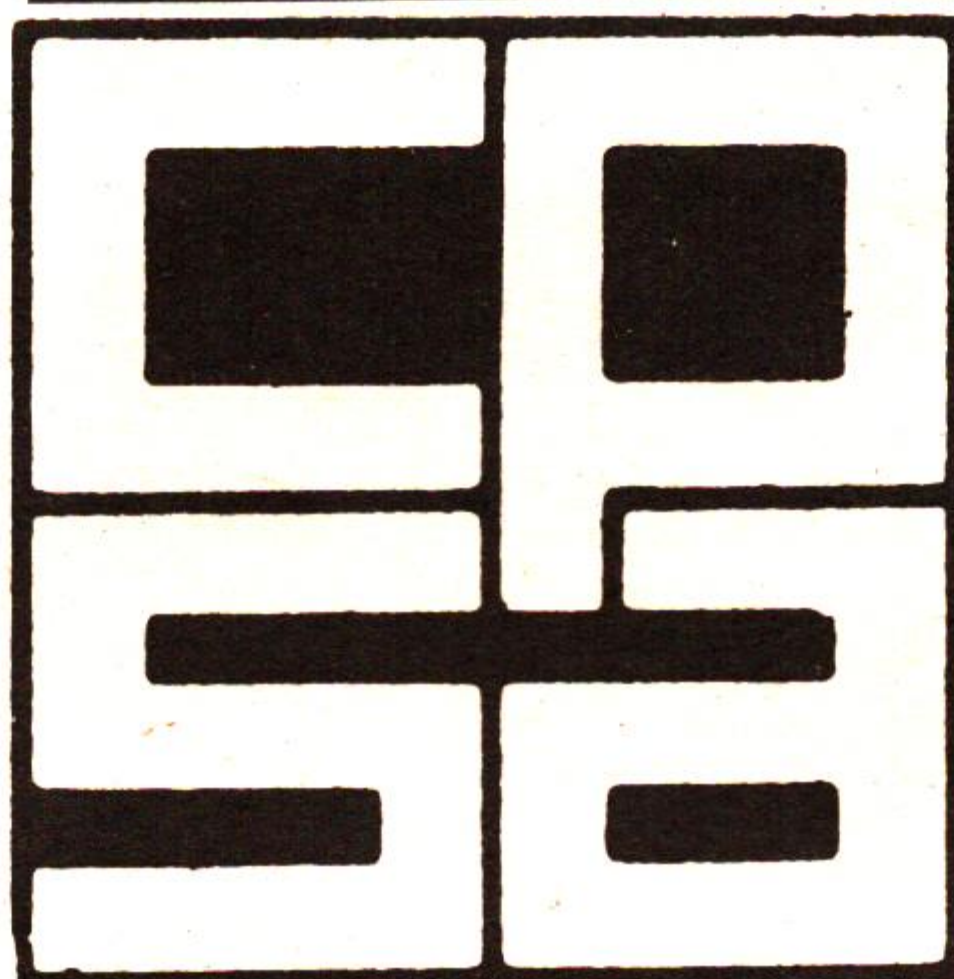
sanctions without the knowledge or consent of any of the workers. When the domestic staff and the catering staff complained to the union, the reply was that it was in everybody's interest to lift the sanctions. By refusing to do all the jobs now we would be in breach of contract leading to possible sacking. The only people who had anything to gain from lifting these sanctions were the



Nupe officials and management. Now the workers have lost 90 per cent of their fighting power.

If we've learnt anything it's that we can't trust the union. At the start of the action the Nupe full-time official said that there was no way we could talk of strike action because the union had no money. Nupe was not willing to mobilise the workers to effectively take on management. Just like at the Royal Victoria Hospital, the union cynically used the domestics' willingness to fight privatisation to exhaust militancy on token action.

RCP supporter
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Newcastle



Downturn hits CPSA

The left in the civil servants union CPSA received a severe drubbing at the Brighton conference last week. The split in the broad left, between a faction dominated by the Communist Party and the soft Labour left on the one hand and the old Militant-led left on the other, helped to give the right a clean sweep in the elections to the new executive. The left's record of failure to defend CPSA members interests, notably in last year's DHSS disputes also contributed to its demise. Only three bureaucrats from the CP/Labour left faction were elected and no Militant supporters. We are now saddled with an ineffectual leadership and a thoroughly discredited left.

At the conference the soft left linked up with pragmatic general secretary Alistair Graham and the right to defeat motions calling for a real fight against Tory anti-union laws and for the further democratisation of the union. On a more positive note, plans for a merger with the SCPS, the managers' union, were dumped. An appalling executive document attempting to justify bloated salaries for full-time officials was also thrown out.

The broad left is now trying to revive its fortunes by appeals for unity. But for the coming year organising to win a decent pay

rise and to fight the cuts is more important than trying to rebuild a bankrupt broad left that can no longer function even as an electoral machine.

Paul Foster
London



RAT poison

Anyone who works in local government will be aware that racial awareness training — RAT — has become fashionable with left-wing Labour councils. A recent RAT course for housing workers in Manchester produced a strong reaction. According to the course literature, the purpose of the programme was 'to raise the level of awareness on racism through information, education, discussion and self-examination exercises'. It also said that 'the tension and conflict generated by prejudice have to be checked and replaced with understanding and cooperation'.

The session I attended was clearly in the 'tension and conflict' category, with many of us shocked at the number of fellow workers who were prepared to openly express racist views. But this kind of course is not going to combat racism. Nevertheless a useful consequence has been that racism and anti-racism have become burning issues in every housing office. It has also become clear that as trade unionists we have not effectively taken up racism in the department in the past and something now has to be done.

Discussion has raised a number of issues. Some workers want to demand that the city council makes racist behaviour and comments disciplinary offences and want extreme racists to be sacked. However a number of us have argued against this as it relies on councillors and management when what we really need is a strategy to fight racism which is firmly under workers' control. Secondly it focuses on individual racists and doesn't address the problem of why racist ideas can find a sympathetic hearing amongst workers. It isn't surprising that there are racists in our workplaces when racism is not effectively challenged by the labour movement.

Nupe members in the housing department have agreed to produce a leaflet arguing that we combat racism because it divides our class and that it is in the interests of all trade unionists to fight racism. We have also demanded a half-day meeting in works time for all workers in the department to discuss the way forward. However the argument about asking management to sort out the problem for us have yet to be won. I'd welcome comments from other readers with RAT experiences.

Shirley Fitzgerald
Manchester



At this week's acrimonious Communist party of Great Britain congress the 'fundamentalist' supporters of the daily *Morning Star* were roundly walloped by the 'rethinkers' who support the monthly *Marxism Today*. A split seems likely. CP old-timer Solly Kaye recently sought a resolution of the conflict when he reviewed the third volume of the party's official history, penned by Noreen Branson after the death of James Klugmann, who lied his way unashamedly through the first two tomes. Branson's book covers the period 1927-41, and Kaye's review concludes that it provides an 'understanding of the origins of many of our present problems — as well as a guide to their solution.' He's right of course. Nothing would sort out the CP's problems quicker than another world war in which the party could unite behind British imperialism — just as Branson applauds it for doing in 1941.

Despite all their disagreements, the leaders of the Communist Party's factions take common umbrage at being looked upon as young rebels. The landlord of a Hampstead hostelry recently refused to serve CP members under his rule barring customers who are 'noisy, disruptive or under age'. Party press officer Andrew Murray rushed out a statement indignantly insisting that the party's members were 'quiet, well-behaved, and all over 25'. This is clearly the stuff that revolutions are made of.

The final battle of the Falklands War has recently ended in victory and the invaders have been driven out. The British commander of the operation announced that 'We were brought in to ultimately wipe out these pests so that they did not harm the workforce at the airport or the islanders themselves'. War-hero Prince Andrew making racist remarks about Argentines on his recent return to the Falklands with defence secretary Michael Heseltine? No, David White of Pest Protection Services, declaring that his firm has completed its British government contract to get rid of the Falklands flea epidemic. White claimed many fleas had been brought to the Falklands in Argentine soldiers' dirty bedrolls. A likely tale. Those deep, warm pockets in Heseltine's sharp-cut combat jacket have a lot to answer for.

The Scottish division of Astms is touting for recruits in the electronics industry. Anybody who gives the union the name and address of an electronics worker who's not in Astms gets a free entry into a raffle. The first prize is a gallon bottle of whisky. The union's top man north of the border, John Langlan, says 'We appreciate that we may be breaking somewhat with tradition in attempting to recruit in this fashion. However, where traditional methods have not succeeded we believe a fresh approach is called for.' Langlan wants to recruit a 'core membership' in key companies, which he can expand on 'come the return of a Labour government and sympathetic union legislation'. 'Sympathetic' union laws from a Neil Kinnock government? Sounds like the boys at Astms head office have awarded themselves one too many of those raffle prizes.

At a London meeting on 'Regrouping the left' last week Tony Benn, still the reigning champion of the Labour radicals, announced that the Labour Party had to be 'refounded on a federal basis, so that the Labour Land League and Welsh Language Society can affiliate'. Steady on, Tony. We know you want the labour movement to 'get back to fundamentals' and 'rediscover its roots', but don't you think that trying to stir up a revival of the peasants' revolt is taking things a bit far?

REPORTS

Raise the stakes at GEC

Nearly 800 workers at GEC Installation Equipment in Liverpool have been on strike over pay and redundancies since 10 May. Management has taken a hard stand against the strikers. The workers need to be equally ruthless in defence of their jobs and living standards.

In February the unions at GEC submitted a joint claim for a nine per cent pay rise. They got a big no. 'We went through the procedure, we exhausted the procedure and finally decided to impose an overtime ban,' said shop steward Ken. The workers soon discovered that 'going through procedure' gets you nowhere when they got a letter demanding 98 redundancies. The joint shop stewards' committee asked people not to volunteer but asked management to get rid of the jobs through natural wastage and early retirement.

On 8 and 9 May workers walked out after management had suspended 28 workers for refusing to work through the bank holiday at short notice. GEC decided it was time to force things to a head. Management sent a letter to every worker demanding assurances, amounting to a no-strike deal, that they cease all industrial action. Obviously expecting to get what it wanted, management went further and stated that anybody breaching the assurances would be

liable to instant dismissal. The workforce at GEC has been devastated by redundancies and pay cuts over the past decade. But every worker recognised that to give in to management's demands would be suicidal. At a mass meeting they voted overwhelmingly to stay out until management withdrew the letter. The situation has been a stalemate ever since. Workers at GEC cannot afford to let the bosses walk all over them any longer. To raise the stakes and force a climbdown, they need to broaden their demands and up the action.

The bosses know that they are at an advantage. Mass redundancies and drastic cuts in living standards have taken their toll on the GEC workforce. The picket line outside the factory gate consists of a rotating group of about 40 shop stewards. The passive majority of the workforce is sitting it out at home. But the strike can only win if the mass of the workforce takes action that will make the bosses sweat a bit in support of demands that are worth fighting for. The first task of militants is to campaign for opposition to ALL joblosses — either through compulsory and voluntary redundancies or natural wastage and early retirement. The second task is to make it stick by organising effective action to cripple the GEC operation. *Deborah Rogers*



GEC workers line up against management intimidation and redundancies

Miners on the shelf

'At the last branch meeting I went to some of us raised the issue of the sacked miners. I was told by one official that I was there as a spectator and couldn't speak.' This 22 year old miner from Yorkshire got an apology from his union official at the end of the meeting. But no amount of apologies can compensate for the NUM's failure to fight for his job and those of thousands more miners like him who fought their hearts out in the miners' strike.

John was sacked for 'breach of the peace'. What makes him angry is not being victimised by the bosses, but being abandoned by the union. 'We've been sacked since March and we've heard nothing from the union. The lads voted to look after us and give us money, but the attitude of the officials is "we're giving you this and you should be grateful". It makes me feel like a beggar.' The NUM told John to sign on the dole. He refused because it would mean signing his job away. 'The union has told us to accept a job if we get offered one. I don't want another job — I want my job back at the mine. That's what I am, a miner.'

One local official warned John that if he wasn't more cooperative he wouldn't get any more 'help' from the union. 'He told me "we've had a committee meeting and they're all moaning about you. If you're not willing to sign on, they're not willing to put themselves out to pay for you." As far as I can tell we're sat on the shelf waiting for them to pull us down.' John's branch official

wanted him to go to the committee meeting and apologise for all the trouble he had caused. John and the other sacked men aren't even allowed to go up to the pit: 'they say it's because of management, but I reckon they want to keep us out of the way.'

Thousands of sacked miners and their families are bitter about the way they have been treated by the NUM. But John says that he is saving his bitterness for the struggle ahead. 'The biggest lesson for me is that if you've got bad leadership you've got nothing. Rank and file miners have got to say "it's our union and you do what you're told." If the union men are not prepared to do that then they shouldn't have a job.' Fighting for the rights of sacked and victimised miners is the best way for the rank and file to start fighting to make the NUM our union.

Jenny Morgan



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

COME ALONG!



No to police state

If you get together with 11 or more other people and 'cause a person of reasonable firmness' to fear for his safety, under the new public order act that will be a riot and you could get 10 years. If you are on a picket with just a couple of others and do the same that will be 'violent disorder' and you could go down for 5 years. If you merely get involved in a fight with a fascist, that constitutes 'an affray' and the maximum is two years. If you shout 'scab' or 'fascist' and thereby cause some person 'to be substantially

alarmed, harassed or distressed' that will be 'threatening behaviour' and you will be liable to spend six months sewing mailbags.

Police harassment is nothing new to RCP supporters, but it is vital that we mobilise against the Tories latest attempts to impose a legal clampdown on political activity. If you organise a march in defiance of a ban you could get 3 months and a fine of £1000 — and you could be fined £400 for simply turning up. Organisers of pickets and rallies will be forced to restrict numbers, move location and stop and start according to police instructions. Protest against Tory restrictions on our rights!

- **Sheffield**
Thursday 30 May 7.30pm
Red Deer, Pitt Street
- **Pontefract**
Tuesday 4 June 7.30pm
Turks Head, near Infirmary
- **Manchester**
Thursday 30 May 7.30pm
Black Lion, Chapel Street

★ **Demonstration**
Saturday 1 June 2pm
Greater Manchester Police HQ
Boyer Street, Stretford

Other events

● **Welcome Princess Anne to Yorkshire coalfield**
The mining community of Dinnington is planning a royal reception for the princess
Dinnington Friday 31 May

● **Love and marriage**
Showing and discussion of the Responsible Society sex education video
Wednesday 29 May 7.30pm
St Matthew's, Brixton

● **Support the Newham 7**
Picket in solidarity with 7 black youths victimised for fighting back against racist attacks
Old Bailey 7.30am every Monday while trial lasts

● **Moral panics and women's rights**
A day of discussion and debate on the new morality and what it means for women
Creche and social
Saturday 1 June 10am — 5pm
Polytechnic of Central London, New Cavendish Street, W1

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SUPPORTERS of the party meet every week to discuss the paper and the events of the week and to plan action in the local area.

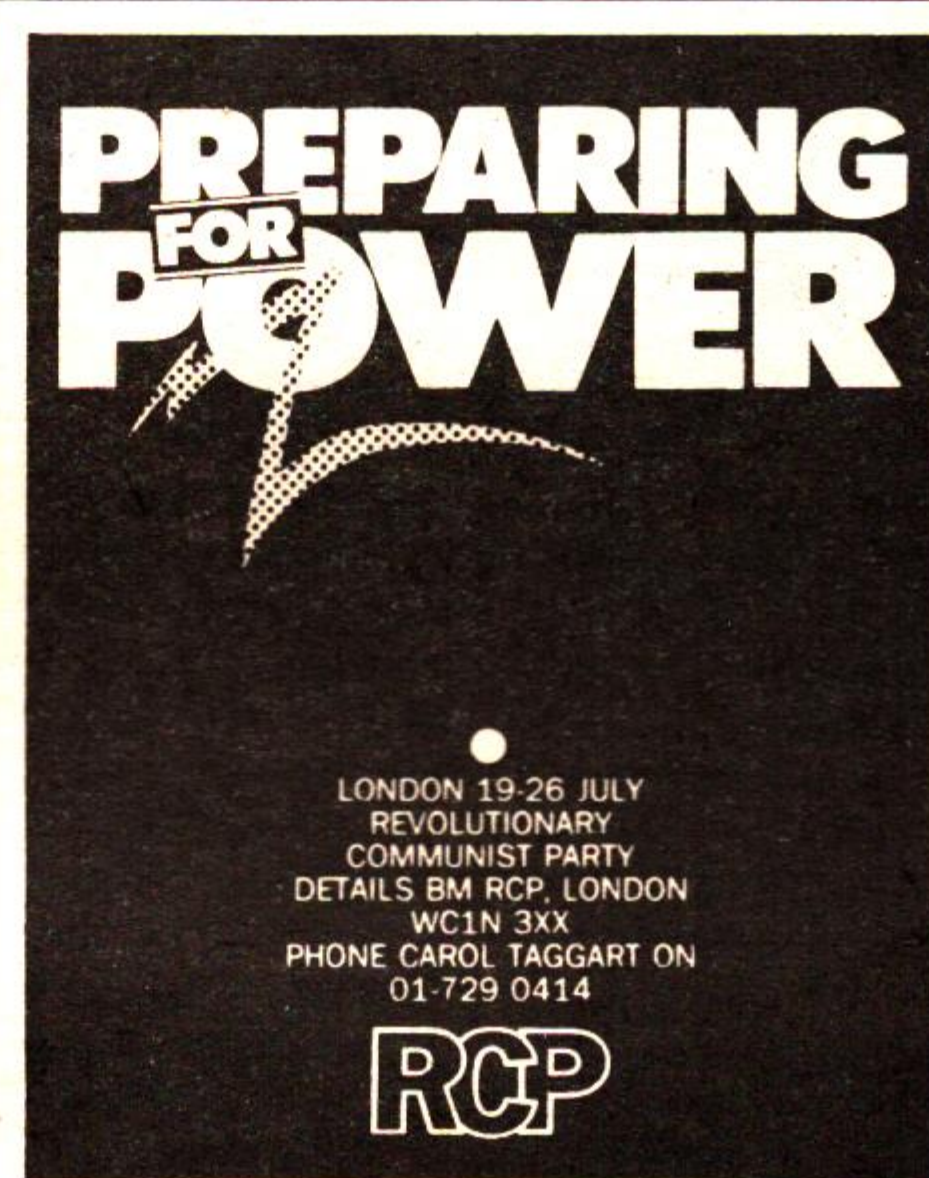
At present we meet in Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, East Kilbride, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hackney, Huddersfield, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, North London, Nottingham,

Pontefract, Sheffield, South London, Sunderland, Wakefield.

For details of times and places of meetings see sellers of *tns* in your area.

Find out more about the Revolutionary Communist Party!

For further information about the RCP or any of the events advertised here
WRITE to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX or
PHONE 01-729 0414



Francis Pym, Neil Kinnock, David Owen — the candidates for the most powerful office in the land — all staked their claims last week as Thatcher and her party hit a new low in the opinion polls. British party politics is more unstable than at any time for decades, but all the established parties and politicians are putting forward variations of the same old solutions. The aim of the RCP's week-long summer school Preparing for Power is to work out some new answers to the crisis of the old order and some alternatives to the stale prescriptions of the old politicians.

Preparing for Power costs £15 if you're working and £12 if you're not. A special course guide is now available at 30p. Make cheques/POs payable to RCP Association and send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

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Elections in Northern Ireland

IRISH VOTE FOR 'MEN OF VIOLENCE'

'When I went into the Guildhall 13 years ago it was a political protest — today when I go in it's the same political protest,' said new Derry Sinn Fein councillor Gerry Doherty on Friday. In 1972 Doherty bombed Derry's Guildhall as part of the IRA's war to liberate Northern Ireland from British rule. Last week in the same building he became one of the 59 Sinn Fein councillors elected by Irish people who back the IRA against the British Crown.

As Gerry Doherty emerged victorious from Friday's election count his jubilant supporters presented him with a dustbin. It was a reminder of the day when, dressed as a dustman, he had carried a bomb into the Guildhall hidden in a bin. The people of the Shantallow district of Derry had not forgotten the seven years Doherty spent in jail for striking back at their British overlords. They voted him on to the local council to show their solidarity with the republican resistance fighters. 'People here will come out and vote Sinn Fein because of our unambiguous support for the armed struggle of the IRA,' Doherty told *tns*. The people of Newry, County Down, elected former republican prisoner of war Brendan Curran to their local council. On Monday the IRA responded to this show of support by blowing up a car full of four Royal Ulster Constabulary officers outside the town.

Sinn Fein's success in getting two thirds of its candidates elected, taking seats on 17 of Northern Ireland's 26 district councils, blew the gaffe on the black propaganda put out by the British authorities. For the past 10 years British governments have tried to portray the Irish republican movement as a gang of murderers, thieves and protection racketeers who are able to operate in Catholic nationalist areas only by intimidating the local people. The republicans' return to electoral contests over the last two and a half years has given people the chance to express public support for the IRA's fight to kick Britain out of Ireland. Westminster spokesmen have had to dream up fresh lies to explain away Sinn Fein's successes at the polls.

When five republicans were elected to the 'Ulster' Assembly in 1982 British pundits dismissed it as a freak result, based on residual Irish sympathy for the 10 young republican prisoners who had died on hunger-strike a year earlier. When Sinn Fein accumulated around 100 000 votes in both the general election of 1983 and last year's Euro-elections, Tory and Labour leaders alike claimed that apparently good republican results were due to widespread personation — fraudulent voting. None of these British excuses hold water after last week's local elections. The hunger-strikes are now history, and the British authorities have introduced tight new rules on voter identification to cut out the personation they claim is rife among nationalists in Northern Ireland. Yet the republican election campaign captured almost twice the number of seats that Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams had publicly predicted.

With their latest lies about the IRA's lack of support exposed to ridicule, British propagandists have returned to the oldest tale in the British book of black propaganda — that Irish people only vote Sinn Fein because of the irrational 'tribal loyalties' which dominate the two 'religious communities' in Northern Ireland. Fleet Street likes to pretend that Northern Ireland politics is about past tribal traditions because it stops people looking too closely at what is happening on the streets of Derry and Belfast today.

Northern Ireland is not a place where two tribes go to war over ancient religious differences. It is a battleground between two modern peoples with conflicting national loyalties; Irish people who want the British authorities out of their country and supporters of the British state who want to keep the Irish people under their thumbs.

Irish men and women don't support the IRA and vote Sinn Fein because of any 'myths' their grandparents might have told them about the bad old days of British oppression under the Black and Tans. They back the young, armed republicans who live



Behind newly-elected Sinn Fein councillor Gerry Doherty, the armed struggle of the IRA

and fight in their streets because they know the reality of British terror 1985-style, which their fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers have suffered at the hands of the SAS, armed police and brutal British concentration camp guards.

Ask the Carroll family from County Armagh if they are republicans because of the call of the clan or because of the experience of life under British rule. Tommy Carroll stood as a Sinn Fein candidate in his native Armagh city and topped the poll. Most of his nine brothers and sisters and his mother couldn't vote for him. They were either dead or in jail on voting day.

Tommy Carroll's brother Roddy was a volunteer in the Irish National Liberation Army, until he was ambushed by a Royal Ulster Constabulary assassination squad outside the nearby village of Lurgan and shot 100 times in November 1982. His brother Adrian was 24 before he finally evaded the systematic discrimination against Catholics in Northern Ireland and got a job painting railings for Armagh council. On his way home from his new job in November 1983 he was gunned down by the Loyalist paramilitaries of the Protestant Action Force. His killers turned out to be off-duty members of the Ulster Defence Regiment. Days before last week's election his mother Theresa, 18 year old sister Bernadette and brothers Niall (21) and Dermott (20) were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. They were locked up in the British barracks in Armagh right through election week.

Like Gerry Doherty in Derry and Tommy

Carroll in Armagh, most of the republican candidates who did best in last week's election had close connections with the war against Britain. Two of them had brothers executed by the SAS last year. Many had served time in the concentration camps of Long Kesh and Armagh jail. The nationalist community in Northern Ireland is held together not by tribal tradition, but by the common experience of British tyranny.

The Irish people know that the councils they elected Sinn Fein candidates to cannot solve their problems. Local government in Northern Ireland has even less power than the British equivalent, and the Protestant majority built into the Six Counties means the Unionists control most councils. The nationalists voted Sinn Fein to express their hatred for the British Crown and belief in the armed struggle to create a free Irish nation. As Derry Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness said after the elections, 'the results are good but, at the end of the day, it will be the cutting edge of the IRA which will bring freedom'.

The British authorities and their agents in Northern Ireland understand what Sinn Fein's electoral success means; that nationalists now stand in unequivocal opposition to the British occupation. British and Unionist leaders have given up any pretence of political persuasion and taken to open coercion to keep the Irish in line. The Democratic and Official Unionist Parties signed a pact after the polls, in the words of DUP leader Ian Paisley, 'to make the lives of Sinn Fein councillors as unbearable as possible'. Outside the council chambers the security forces are bent on making life more

unbearable than ever for their Irish opponents.

Republican candidates and canvassers suffered armed harassment throughout the election campaign. One newly-elected councillor was arrested in Cookstown, County Tyrone, when the RUC declared his victory cavalcade an illegal procession. Police trailed republican election teams wherever they went. 'When our canvassers are on the street', Gerry Doherty told *tns*, 'the RUC come into the same street and pull up in their armoured vehicles. They try to intimidate people out of coming to the door for fear that the police will mark them down as supporters of the republican movement.'

When the polls closed on Wednesday night and RUC patrols came to remove the ballot boxes, the youth of Derry's Bogside were waiting to pass their comment on British democracy in Ireland by attacking the police. The RUC arrived with batons and plastic bullet guns at the ready and let fly with a hail of plastic bullets as they made their escape. Sixteen year old Fergul McDaid, who was passing with his girlfriend, was hit in the head with a bullet and was rushed to hospital with suspected brain damage. The RUC has threatened to charge him with riotous behaviour for daring to walk the streets of occupied Ireland. British people who want to know why the Irish vote for republican 'men of violence' should take a look at the life stories of Irish men like Fergul McDaid and Tommy Carroll. And we should give our support to their struggle to dump the British war machine in Gerry Doherty's presentation dustbin.

Mick Hume