tns
the next step
Revolutionary Communist Party weekly • 7 June 1985 • 30p

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Revolutionary Communist Party weekly ● 7 June 1985 ● No 8

Power politics

In this week's *tns* we open a discussion about the prospects for revolutionary change in British society and how we can make it come about. We aim to continue this discussion up to our week-long open conference Preparing for Power in London in July.

For the Revolutionary Communist Party preparing for power means building a working class party through political struggle. This struggle is directed against the employers and their government. It is also directed against the existing leadership of the labour movement which plays such a divisive and demoralising role. For us the key moment is the present. This issue of *tns* illustrates some of the ways in which we are preparing for power now.

On these pages we report on the plight of Tamil refugees in Britain and the activity undertaken by Workers Against Racism to protest against the government's racist response. Fighting for the rights of black people is vital to build the unity and strength workers need to resist the power of the capitalist class. For some time the RCP has been mobilising for the demonstration on 23 June against Victoria Gillick's campaign to restrict contraceptive rights. We report in this issue on the wider offensive against young people.

Defending the rights of women and youth in face of the Tories' drive to reinforce family values is another way of strengthening the power of the working class.

Fatal fantasies

We also give our answer to the establishment's attempt to blame the working class for the tragic events at the European Cup final in Brussels. The Tories are using the disaster as a pretext for further restrictions on people's rights. We pin the blame for the violence squarely on the aggressive chauvinism that the ruling class has long fostered in British society. This is an important step in tackling the crippling influence of patriotic prejudices in the working class movement. In this issue of *tns* we announce a major demonstration in London this August called by the Irish Freedom Movement. The march will be in protest against the continuing barbarities being inflicted in Ireland under the shadow of the same Union flag that disgraced the terraces of Brussels. There is no better way of preparing to take power in Britain than by supporting the Irish cause that is the biggest threat to the British ruling class.

At Preparing for Power in July we hope to clarify the key issues of theory and strategy and work out the best ways of drawing wider and wider layers of society into the fight for a better system. This approach stands in marked contrast to that of the remainder of the British left. While we are out to prepare for power now, the traditional left restricts its horizons to working out plans for a Labour government of the future.

The latest issue of *Labour Briefing* puts forward yet another list of policies to be carried out by the next Labour government as a basis for the regroupment of the left today. The list includes proposals to withdraw from Nato; to re-nationalise industries sold off by the Tories (and to take over the banks and monopolies); to introduce a 'charter of democratic rights' and 'massively' extend the rights of women, blacks, lesbians and gays; and to withdraw the troops from Ireland. The left will find much here to discuss and most will readily agree that the list includes some highly desirable objectives. But two things can be said with certainty. First, even taking the most optimistic view of Kinnock's prospects there is very little chance of another Labour government until 1987. Second, if Kinnock became prime minister he would not implement a single item on the left's shopping list.

One measure of the fatalism of the left is that few of its supporters would disagree with our assessment of Kinnock's prospects or his likely performance. Yet in the bleak hope of better times after 1987 they intend to spend 1985 and 1986 campaigning on behalf of the party of Healey and Hattersley. They dream of nationalisation under workers' control. Meanwhile they give critical support to Kinnock's 'jobs and industry' campaign. This campaign, which proclaims that 'profit is not a dirty word', does nothing to defend the four million out of work at present. Left wingers fantasise about nuclear disarmament and a Nato-free Britain. Meanwhile they grudgingly back Denis Healey's pro-US and militaristic foreign policy.

The left puts off the fight for rights for black people or women or the Irish until after 1987. For now it offers token gestures, campaigns for constitutional reform and grandiose promises. But who wants to wait two years, especially when the left does not even believe that its own promises will be fulfilled?

Prepare for power

While the left indulges in its customary combination of fantasy and factional manoeuvre, the ruling class is making clear that it is preparing to safeguard its power. The paramilitary assault by the police on a bunch of harmless hippies heading for a picnic at Stonehenge last weekend is a sign of the times. The establishment is anticipating more trouble ahead and it is gearing up to smash it. The policing of the miners' strike was no hasty over-reaction. It was a carefully prepared prelude to a more systematic application of state coercion. The recent review of public order shows that the working class has no rights which the establishment is not ready to suspend if necessary.

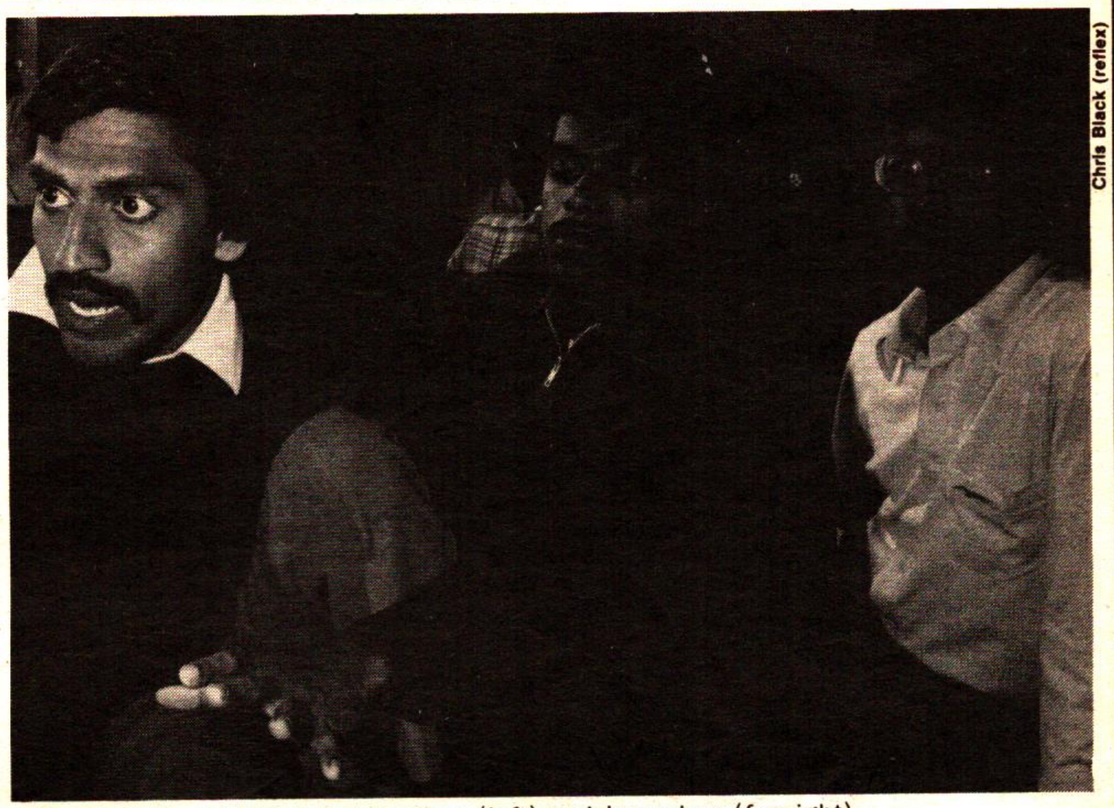
We need not panic about the coercive power of the British state. The danger that it presents is really a danger for tomorrow. The problem for today is not the police of the British state but the self-policing of the working class by the official labour movement. The working class movement has not so much been defeated as disarmed. We are living in a time of both unprecedented dangers and of real potential for social change. Yet the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party promote the slogans of moderation and realism. These slogans were bad enough in the past. Today they open the way towards a devastating defeat.

The British left wants to regroup its forces to lead the working class to another betrayal at the hands of a Labour government. Our aim is to regroup the working class into a force that can take power over society and build a better world.

Publisher Revolutionary Communist Party, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX © copyright
Printer Morning Litho Printers Ltd (TU), 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16.

Annual subscription rates ● Britain and Ireland £19 ● Europe £24 ● Middle East and North Africa £26 America, Asia and Southern Africa £27 ● Australasia £32 ● Libraries, institutions £30.
All cheques payable to Junius Publications Ltd.

Circulation 01-729 3771. *Newsdesk* 01-729 3771. *Correspondence to* The Editor, *the next step*, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. ISSN 0144 350 X 7 June 1985. Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office.



Chris Black (reflex)

'They said they'd shoot me': Nadhan (left) and Jeyaruban (far right)

Struggle in Sri Lanka

Terror against Tamils

'A week ago the army raided my village and took 50 young men. They put 35 in a library building, locked the door and blew them up. Then they lined up the other 15 and shot them through the head.' Nadhan is a 32-year old factory worker from the village of Valvettiturai in northern Sri Lanka. His wife told him to get out while he still had a chance. Last week Nadhan and his fellow refugees told us what it was like living in the war-torn province of Jaffna.

Tory foreign secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe told the house of commons last week that there was 'no reason to believe' that Tamils face persecution in Sri Lanka and therefore they could not be considered 'genuine refugees'. Sixteen-year old Jeyaruban, who has seen family and friends tortured and murdered by Sri Lankan troops and police, told us a different story. Like other boys of his age he has been a refugee in his native land for the past two years. Anybody between 16 and 40 is a target for an army bullet. 'They always keep about 5000 boys in the camps,' Jeyaruban told us, 'when the Tigers kill one soldier they kill 50 of us.' The army travels everywhere with young Tamils as hostages.

The Tigers are a guerrilla army which has enormous support in the Tamil community. They are fighting for Eelam, a separate state for the Tamils, who make up 20 per cent of the population. The constant repression meted out to young Tamils by the government security forces has convinced the majority that the only way to defend their rights is to set up a separate Tamil state. Popular support for the establishment of Eelam only developed in the seventies, but the divisions that have given rise to the conflict in Sri Lanka were imposed and maintained during 150 years of British rule.

Britain seized Sri Lanka from the Dutch in 1796. It immediately set about encouraging divisions between the majority Sinhalese, who lived in the south and west and the central Kandyan highlands, and the minority Tamils who lived in the north and east. The British drew the Tamils into the colonial and administrative services to act as a counterweight to the Kandyans who had put up the stiffest resistance to British rule. The British also managed to split the Tamil community by importing indentured labour from the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu to work on the tea plantations. The Indian Tamils were kept out of traditional Tamil areas and confined to Kandy, a Sinhalese stronghold. While the British groomed the Sri Lankan Tamils as civil servants and professionals, the Indian Tamils were allotted to work as labourers on rural plantations.

Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, but its economy was entirely dependent on the export of tea and rubber from the plantations. Successive Sri Lankan governments have been forced to impose drastic austerity measures to overcome the country's massive debt problems. The ruling class has increasingly played on the communal divisions created by Britain to divide and weaken the working class. In particular, it has cultivated anti-Tamil chauvinism to win the allegiance of the Sinhalese masses. The anti-Tamil pogroms that swept Sri Lanka in 1983 were the culmination of decades of discrimination and repression.

For the past five years the northern Tamil state of Jaffna has been under virtual military rule and the army has imposed a reign of terror. 'The movement is everywhere but the army can't catch them,' one young Tamil told us, 'that's why they kill us.' Thousands of Tamils have disappeared. One young Tamil who wished to remain anonymous for fear of retribution told us that he hasn't seen his family for years. Tens of thousands of Tamils have lost their livelihoods because fishing has been banned in the northern waters. The Sri Lankan navy has shelled Tamil ports and burned their villages. Since the anti-Tamil pogroms of 1983 the conflict has escalated from sporadic clashes between state security forces and the guerrillas to a state of civil war.

The death squads are everywhere in Jaffna. Nadhan used to have to travel through three army camps to get to work. Five weeks ago the army stopped the bus on the way back from the factory. The soldiers told everybody to get out and stand in a queue. 'One soldier put a rifle to my head and told me to give the names of all the Tamil militants in the factory. He said if I didn't he would shoot me and my wife and baby. I was crying, but I wouldn't tell him.' Nadhan got away with his life, but he didn't go back to the factory for two weeks. Two days after the massacre in the village a factory worker narrowly escaped death when he was fired on by a soldier and Nadhan decided it was time to get out.

Nineteen-year old Premadasan from Karaveddy fled to Britain after watching the army kill his cousin in the street four weeks ago. He told us that there are still thousands of Tamil women trying to get their sons out of Sri Lanka. But there is no money and no transport from Jaffna to Columbo. Premadasan's mother sold her jewellry to get the money to save her son's life and he came to Britain last week. He thinks it is ironic that the British government should now decide to condemn him to death by deporting him back to Sri Lanka. 'The British are hypocrites. First they ruled our country by setting Sinhalese against Tamil. Now they are helping to kill us by sending gunboats to the government and sending us back to the torture camps.' The best way British workers can show their solidarity with the Tamils is by supporting their right to stay in Britain *and* their right to determine their own future.

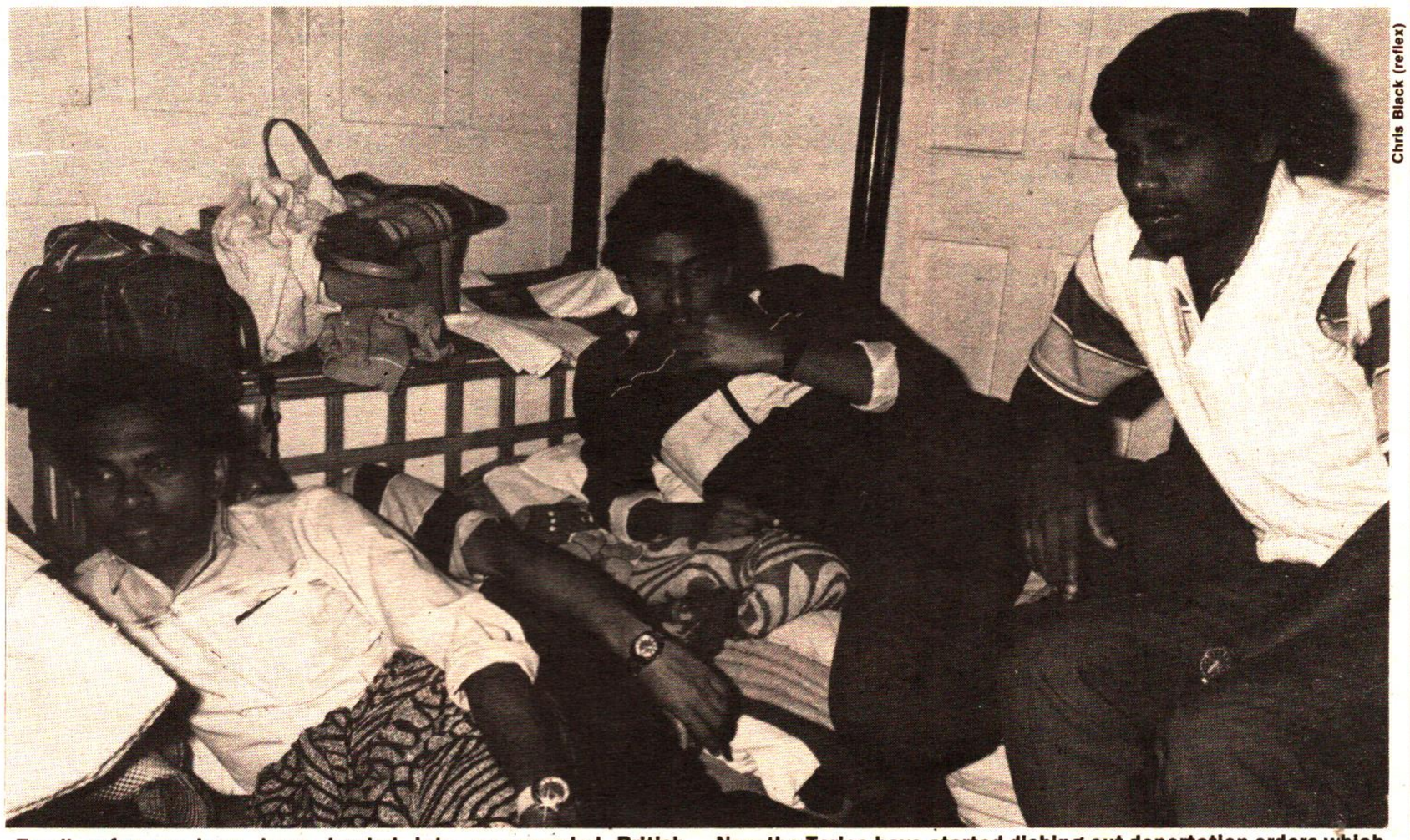
Tamil refugee storm

Immigrants don't cause unemployment

'People ask me why I came here — I could give them a thousand reasons.' Kumar is a 24-year old Tamil. He came to Britain last week to escape from the anti-Tamil pogroms in Sri Lanka. Yet the British government wants to send Kumar back to certain death in the concentration camps. For the British establishment thousands of Tamil lives are a small price to pay for stirring up prejudice against immigrants.

Kumar watched his home in the Sri Lankan capital Columbo being razed to the ground in the anti-Tamil riots of 1983. Last summer he was beaten within an inch of his life with cement-filled plastic pipes in an army camp in the northern province of Jaffna. In February he was seized by Sri Lankan military police, interrogated and threatened with death. Last week he told *tns* that 'getting out was the only way of staying alive'.

Thousands of Tamils have fled Sri Lanka since communal violence erupted between the majority Sinhalese population and the minority Tamil community in 1983. More than 1000 Tamils have come to Britain in the past four weeks as the war between government security forces and Tamil 'Tiger' guerrillas threatens to tear Sri Lanka apart. Last week the British authorities ordered a drastic crack-down on Tamils entering the country and threatened those already here with deportation.



Chris Black (reflex)

Tamil refugees have been herded into overcrowded British detention centres or forced to shelter in packed Hindu temples. Now the Tories have started dishing out deportation orders which could send them back to death camps in Sri Lanka

Blame the system

The Tories do not mince words about their anti-Tamil immigration policy. Home secretary Leon Brittan says that the Tamil exodus from Sri Lanka into Britain is a threat to British workers' jobs and living standards. 'This must stop,' says Tory MP Terry Dicks, 'we are a small island and we have problems of our own.' The *Sun* agrees. 'Keep those Tamils out of here!' scream the headlines. The *Sun* blames immigrants for the blight of mass unemployment and shoddy services: 'There is a limit on the numbers a small country can absorb without intolerable strain on housing, schools, hospitals and social services'.

Even in the respectable press the message is the same. The *Financial Times* sums up the establishment line:

'Britain is an overcrowded little island, down on its luck. It can't even find enough jobs for its own people. The last thing the country needs, as it tries to cope with record unemployment, is a flood of new immigrants....We've got to be realistic; there are already three million unemployed.'

All the pundits agree that there are no jobs and no houses for 'penniless Tamils'. The *Daily Telegraph* also raises the 'terrorist' bogey, declaring that there is no room in Britain for 'Tamil terrorists' who have already turned Sri Lanka into 'a tropical Ireland'.

The media complain that Britain is 'an overcrowded little island' and that more immigrants would put an 'intolerable strain' on housing and other services. This is nonsense. Britain is full of vast open spaces and is far from overcrowded. If many people are crammed into squalid council estates in run-down inner-city areas, it is the fault of the government and local councils not immigrants. In the nineteenth century the employers built rows of back to back tenements to house their employees as near to the factories as possible. The aim of central and local government administrators ever since has been to house the working class as cheaply as possible. Workers have to put up with overcrowded and decaying housing because this system cannot provide them with anything better.

Nor are immigrants responsible for unemployment. Unemployment was a feature of the capitalist system long before mass immigration developed in response to capital's demand for more labour in periods of expansion. Unemployment is an inherent feature of a system that provides jobs only if labour can be exploited to make a profit and not according to the needs of society. The return of mass unemployment in the recession has nothing to do with Tamils, East African Asians, Vietnamese boat people or any of the other targets of anti-immigrant hysteria. Mass unemployment is testimony to the bankruptcy of the capitalist system and a compelling argument in favour of fighting for an alternative that can provide every worker with a job and a decent life. Unemployment is a problem of capitalism, not immigrants.

The Tories' anti-Tamil tirade has focused the public eye on immigrants as the cause of all the social problems of modern Britain. The aim of the anti-Tamil scare is to rally the British people behind the establishment against an imaginary threat to the nation. The immediate victims of this wave of anti-immigrant prejudice are Tamil refugees. They face deportation back to police and army terror in Sri Lanka. Next in line are British blacks, who will suffer more discrimination and more racial harassment as anti-Tamil hysteria makes racist sentiments in general more widely acceptable in British society.

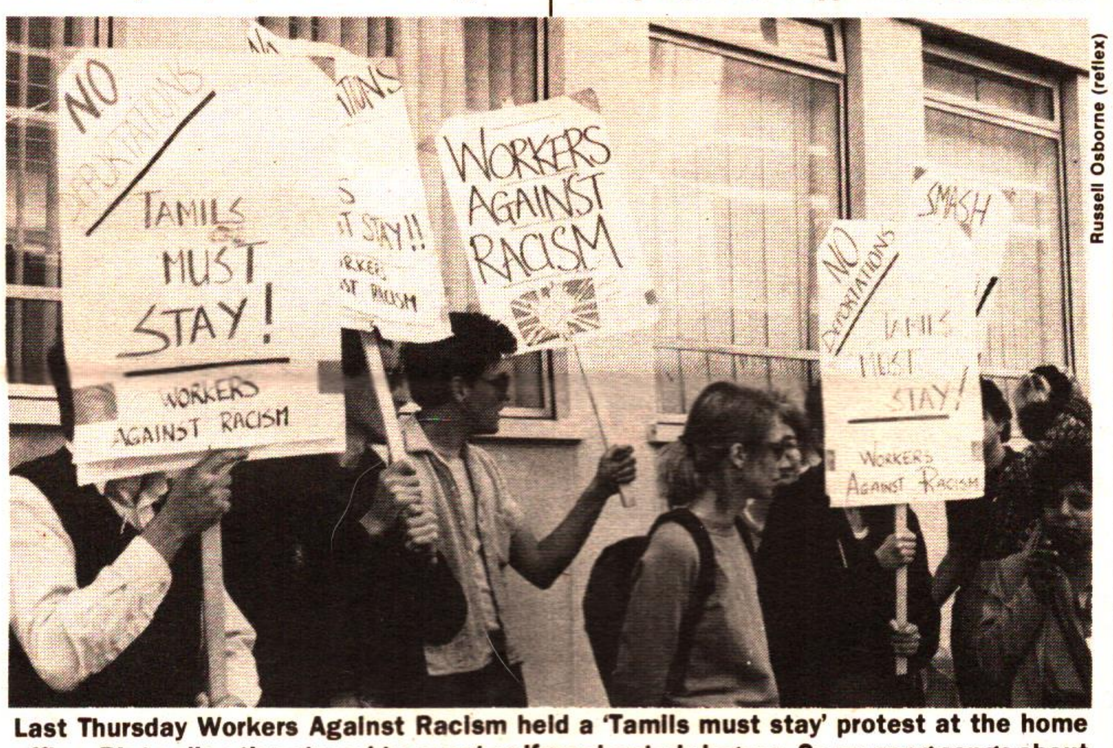
The other victim will be the working class. Official labour movement support for the government's anti-immigrant schemes to 'save the nation' makes workers a hostage to the establishment. It puts workers in a weak position to resist other drastic measures that the system requires to ensure its survival. By backing the establishment's crusade to keep foreigners out of the labour market, the labour movement goes along with the idea that the government must take drastic steps to safeguard the British economy. But if workers accept that they have got to be realistic about keeping Tamils out, they are in no position to resist demands that they should also be realistic about the need for them too to make sacrifices to help revive the British economy. Accepting the realism of the bosses means accepting more redundancies and more cutbacks.

The Tories aim to turn workers' anger away from the real cause of all their problems and direct it against a foreign scapegoat. The establishment is relying on the British labour movement's traditional hostility to foreign immigrants to weaken and divide the working class. The bosses aim to use racial and chauvinist prejudices to undermine resistance to the capitalist system of exploitation and oppression. Our aim is to direct workers' anger against those who are really responsible for the degradation of working class lives and to unite the working class in a struggle against the system that cannot provide everybody with a job or a decent place to live.

Immigration controls play a vital role for the establishment in regulating the movement of workers and dividing the working class into first and second class citizens. But the consequences of immigration controls go far beyond the mere control of workers moving in and out of the country. By emphasising workers' nationality they help to foster a climate in which chauvinist prejudices can flourish. Support for immigration controls unites British workers with British bosses against foreign immigrants and undermines workers' capacity to resist the bosses' offensive.

Opposition to immigration controls is a vital step towards uniting the working class and building a movement that can challenge the system. That is why British workers should support the rights of Tamil refugees and every other immigrant against establishment attempts to divide us.

Joan Phillips



Russell Osborne (reflex)

Last Thursday Workers Against Racism held a 'Tamils must stay' protest at the home office. Riot police threatened to arrest us if we shouted slogans. So we sang songs about Leon Brittan instead

RCP

The Revolutionary Communist Party needs money fast. So far this year we have launched a weekly paper, set up a new national centre and published new pamphlets on the miners' strike and women. We are planning to produce new books on Ireland and the Soviet Union and to start a theoretical journal before the year is up. To take us through the rest of the year and to keep our propaganda promises we need more money.

The RCP has no rich backers and no friends in high places. We have to rely on our readers and supporters to pull us through. If you want to invest in some propaganda that can help us change the world, send your contribution to Special Appeal, BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Please make cheques/POs payable to RCP Association.

Football hooligans abroad

Killing foreigners is Britain's 'national game'

Who was responsible for the riot which left 38 dead and 200 seriously injured at the European Cup final in Brussels last Wednesday? The Liverpool supporters who screamed 'kill the wops' as they charged the Juventus fans clearly started the stampede which crushed and suffocated Italian spectators. But it was the patriots of Fleet Street and Westminster who gave British football fans the idea that foreigners were fair game in the first place.

British press and politicians tried to blame the National Front for stirring up anti-Italian fervour on the terraces. Liverpool FC chair John Smith insisted the NF had provoked the trouble, pointing out that 'there were many Union flags in the stadium'. Indeed there were many hooligans carrying the red, white and blue. But so there are at every major football ground in England. British football fans don't need the feeble National Front to tell them to wave the Union Jack and chant anti-foreign slogans. They do so as a symbol of the patriotic feeling that the authorities have bred into British football and British society in general.

The British establishment is to blame for the carnage in Brussels because it has educated its people to fly the flag and attack foreigners. It encourages aggressive displays of patriotism because they help to unite the British nation behind its rulers and against those who threaten their power.

The spokesmen of the ruling class may have condemned the vicious display of British chauvinism in the Heysel stadium as a 'national shame' perpetrated by 'scum'. But when thousands of British people lined the beachheads at Portsmouth three years ago to wave Union Jacks and cheer the British task force for trampling hundreds of Argentines to death in the Falklands, the media talk was of 'national pride' restored by 'heroes'.

The British authorities objected to the 'flag-waving fanatics' in Brussels only because the violence was an *unofficial* outburst outside the government's control, which caused the establishment considerable embarrassment abroad. But the government has no qualms about waving the Union Jack to win public support for official British state violence against foreigners. And football continues to play a central role in uniting the British people in support of British army hooligans abroad.

'Never-say-die' spirit

The British ruling class has long used football to stir up patriotic emotions which consolidate popular approval for Britain's military adventures. For 100 years John Bull has promoted the idea that football, like 'democracy' and 'justice', is a peculiarly British institution which must be defended against foreign competitors and detractors. Every British statesman from Thatcher down who condemned the Brussels deaths spoke of the damage done to *'our national game'*. The notion of football as 'our national game' was first popularised in the late nineteenth century, when economic, political and military rivalry among Western powers became the dominant feature of world affairs. The Victorian establishment invented international football matches in the 1870s. It manipulated patriotic sentiments fostered around football to win public support for its armed interventions overseas.

The authorities promoted football as a bulwark of the British 'bulldog spirit'. In the 1890s one football paper praised the way the game enhanced 'in our young men the spirit of pluck, opposition, competition, never-know-when-you-are-beaten, never-say-die, play up Wednesday or United kind of feeling, which tends to the greatness of our national character'. In the years leading up to the First World War working class involvement in playing and watching football soared. The establishment's success in popularising the militaristic values of the 'greatness' of the British 'national character' rose with it. If the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton, British imperialism won the First World War on the backstreet football pitches of working class communities.



Juventus fans were victims of Britain's 'bulldog spirit' in Brussels

During the build-up to the Second World War in the thirties, the British authorities took great care to ensure that England's football internationals helped stir public opinion against the foreigners on Britain's hit-list. The foreign office told the football association which countries it could and could not play against. Soccer success was considered so important to keeping patriotism alive at home that British diplomats provided the football authorities with dossiers on their overseas opponents' strengths and weaknesses. Pulp comics and papers featured dramatic tales of football players turned war heroes and vice versa — a tradition which survives today.

The post-war period has brought problems for those who use 'our national game' to shore up nationalist sentiments. Britain's replacement by the USA as the world's leading capitalist power was matched by a decline in England's football fortunes. In 1950 the English team was forced to give up its attitude of superior isolation and play in the World Cup for the first time. It was knocked out, in symbolic and humiliating fashion, by the United States.

In 1953 England lost for the first time to an overseas team at Wembley, when Hungary humiliated the home side. This national disaster was followed by years of footballing ignominy. England's desperate run was broken only by a fluke win in the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, which the establishment made the most of by parading the Union Jack-wearing lion 'World Cup Willie' across the nation. 'Two World Wars and one World Cup' ran the chorus of an anti-German song in school playgrounds.

Apart from the transitory success of 1966, British chauvinism connected with football had to assume a more domestic focus. England may no longer be able to beat foreigners at 'our national game', but the English first division is still promoted as 'the best league in the world'. British commentators have even come up with a suitably racist explanation for footballing failure. When England was knocked out of the 1970 World Cup in Mexico, Fleet Street blamed the defeat on Latin Americans who were supposed to have poisoned England goalkeeper Gordon Banks, tried to frame England captain Bobby Moore for nicking a necklace, and kept the English players awake all night by singing outside the team hotel.

The patriotic, anti-foreign feeling which Britain's rulers whip up around football reached its modern peak in 1982, when the World Cup in Spain coincided with the South Atlantic War against Argentina. The gutter press launched a witch-hunt against Ossie Ardiles, an Argentine player at Tottenham Hotspur, which forced him out of the team and into exile. The *Sun* had reported the sinking of the Argentine cruiser *Belgrano* with the loss of nearly 400 lives under the headline 'Gotcha'. Now it gleefully told the tale of Argentina's World Cup defeat beneath an 'Argies sunk' heading. Jimmy Greaves, a former England international who has become the epitome of the 'voice of the people' TV football 'expert', remarked that in his expert opinion he 'wouldn't want Argentina to win a game of tiddly-winks'.

The bloodthirsty patriotism which the British establishment mobilised against Argentina in 1982 paved the way to the attack on Juventus supporters in Brussels last week. The authorities have turned British football fans into the most bigoted and prejudiced on earth. Alone among footballing nations, Britain does not consider high standard foreign football worth televising. Instead British supporters are encouraged to look upon all things foreign as inferior, and to view football internationals as what George Orwell called 'mimic warfare'.

The establishment spokesmen who criticised hooligans in Brussels for treating football as 'war, not sport' have made a profession out of encouraging British fans to associate football with Britain's military violence around the world. The press and politicians who cried 'fascists' last week are responsible for the consequences when the hooligans take Britain's 'national game' of killing foreigners into their own hands.

Anti-hooligan hysteria

The universal condemnation of the Brussels riot by everybody from Thatcher through Jimmy Hill to Neil Kinnock aims to reinforce anti-working class prejudices and to legitimise an extension of the government's repressive powers. Establishment commentators are queuing up with theories which depict last week's events as an example of 'the moral decline' of working class people and the creation of a new 'lumpen proletariat'.

One Sunday newspaper observed that British football has become 'a slum sport played in slum stadiums and increasingly watched by slum people'. It called for 'a whole panoply of measures' to crack down on these 'slum people': a ban on British teams playing in Europe 'for at least five years', identity cards for supporters, alcohol bans at matches and 'above all', a 'specific offence of soccer hooliganism, carrying with it a minimum mandatory sentence of two years'. A feature in the same paper complained about the 'dull-witted chauvinism' of British football fans.

Chauvinism on the terraces has nothing to do with working class people being 'dull-witted' or born with the morals of 'the slum'. It is a product of the corrupting influence of the capitalist class and its propagandists. We should reject every attempt to point the finger at workers as the cause of Britain's problems. And we should reject too any attempt to use anti-hooligan hysteria to justify giving the state more control over where we can go and what we can do. Any measures imposed in response to the 'longer sentences and identity cards' lobby can only strengthen the government's hand for dealing with its political opponents and tightening its grip on the way we run our lives.

There is a standard phrase which TV 'experts' always drag out to sum up their disgust with British football hooliganism abroad: 'At the end of the day the game of football is the loser'. Let's make sure that this time the authorities who have used 'the game of football' as a cover for killing foreigners are the ones who lose.

Mick Hume



The same flag flew against 'Argies' in 1982 and Italians last week

Parent power

VICTORIA GILLICK'S SUCCESS in restricting contraceptive services to young people is part of a wider drive to contain youth and reinforce parental authority.

Lord Devlin has described the Gillick ruling as a case 'which may well be socially the most important to come before the courts in this decade'. Last December's high court decision insisted that parents have 'a right and a duty' to control their children up to the age of majority at 18. In the particular matter of contraceptive advice and treatment, Lord Justice Parker ruled that the rights of a parent could not be overturned by the consent of a girl under the age of 16.

The immediate effect of the Gillick judgement is to uphold parents' authority over their teenage children to the extent of denying them the right to consult a doctor confidentially about going on the pill or having an abortion. The health department's appeal to the house of lords is due to be heard next week. But even if the appeal is successful, Gillick has already done considerable damage to the rights of all young people. The wider significance of the Gillick case is that it has given judicial backing to the establishment's commitment to strengthen parental control over young people.

Young people have always been in the vanguard of social change. They are a particularly volatile force in a Britain which can only offer young people the prospect of a life on the dole. Young people have played a prominent part in every expression of revolt against the system in the last few years. It was black youth who took on the police thugs in the inner-city riots of 1981 and it was the young people in the mining communities who took on the occupying forces of the riot police during the miners' strike. In recent weeks school students have taken part in a series of strikes and demonstrations against conditions in schools and the prospect of being forced into slave labour schemes when they leave.

Britain's young people are a mortal threat to a decaying system. The authorities are desperate to curb the explosive potential of young people. The establishment has come up with a series of measures to enforce its control over youth.

● Lowering the school leaving age

Last week John Swallow of the headmasters' association proposed that the statutory school leaving age should be reduced from 16 to 14. This view was endorsed by Lord Young, the government's special minister for youth unemployment, and by Roger Sims, a Tory member of the commons select committee on education. Given that one of the objects behind raising the school leaving age was to remove a substantial body of young people from the labour market (and the dole statistics) this may appear a strange move. In fact the aim is not to swell the labour market but to create a comprehensive system for controlling the 14 to 18 age group.

'Flexibility' is the buzz word. By removing the legal requirement to keep children at school until the age of 16 the authorities can use 'flexibly' a range of institutions to contain all young people. These will include schools and further education colleges, in which the aims of education and methods of assessment will be increasingly tailored to 'vocational training'. Those deemed unsuitable for this sort of technical education will be allocated to the more practical training centres and workplace-based apprenticeships and work experience schemes. They will provide a 'flexible' pool of low-wage, insecure labour on the fringes of the labour market. For those who are 'poorly motivated' or 'disruptive' there are the government's 'short, sharp shock' detention centres which have recently caused a spate of suicides.

● The YTS charter

The Tories have extended the Youth Training Scheme to cover all 16 to 18 year olds in a two-year training programme. They are also proposing to introduce a new 'good behaviour charter' to enforce tighter discipline at work. It aims to ensure strict standards of attendance and punctuality and acceptance of managerial authority. It also seeks to involve parents in a joint government/home project to keep a firm grip on unemployed young people.

● Housing benefit cuts

Today some 85 000 people under the age of 26 live in bed and breakfast accommodation. As a result of the recent social security cuts up to 50 000 of these young people could lose their right to supplementary benefit payments which cover the costs of this accommodation. They have two choices — live rough or go home to their parents. Government spokesmen have made clear the official view that young people who cannot find work should remain under the custody of their parents.

● Higher education cuts

Keith Joseph's latest round of cutbacks in higher education mean that each year for the next 15 years between 8000 and 10 000 young people who are qualified to enter polytechnics or universities will be denied the opportunity to do so. The Victorian values of Dickens' Gradgrind are flourishing in the schools and colleges under the philistine direction of Joseph and Thatcher. The decay of the British establishment is so advanced that it will not be satisfied until it has reduced the whole education system to one grand YTS scheme.

The beleaguered British ruling class blames parents for all its social problems and aims to make them responsible for resolving them. Doctor Glenn Wilson, consultant psychiatrist to the *Sun*, reckons that 'sloppily permissive' parents are the real culprits behind the 'terrace thugs' who have disgraced British football. The Tories and their media are promoting the family and parental authority as a means of restoring their slipping control over society.

Neither young people nor their parents are to blame for the problems of British society. The responsibility lies squarely with a system that offers nothing to young people. The solution lies in taking on the system — and young people have a decisive role to play.

Helen Swift

'Keep protesting'

Chris Black (reflex)



JULIE AND SALLY are two 16-year olds from Tamworth who have recently moved to London. They are on the dole, living on £23 a week and looking for work. They told *Fiona Foster* their views on Victoria Gillick and life in Thatcher's Britain.

'I just want a good job and a good time,' says Julie. 'I don't want to be tied down by a husband and family.' Sally left home because she says 'I wanted to be independent and responsible for myself. Family life doesn't appeal to me. I might think about getting married when I'm about 30, and the same goes for having babies, but not now.'

Both are angry about the Gillick restrictions on contraception. Julie's view is that 'it's your own life, it's your own body, it should be your choice'. Sally thinks Gillick is 'living in the past' and trying to impose her own religious opinions on everybody else. 'If she wants to go on having babies all her life that's up to her, but what about kids of 15 and 16 who don't want to get married and have children? ' Julie wants to know 'who's going to look after the babies that are going to be born? And what about people who can't afford to have babies?'

Julie tried to go on the pill when she was 15. But when she went to her local doctor 'he gave me long lecture on sex, said I was irresponsible and told me to come back when I was 16'. That's what it will be like for everybody if the Gillick ruling is upheld in the house of lords next week. 'Most of my friends were having sex with their boyfriends before they were 16, but they mostly couldn't admit it to their parents,' says Sally.

'If they can't get the pill without their parents' permission it will just mean more pregnancies and more abortions.' One old schoolfriend who was refused the pill has just had a baby and been forced to get married. The whole thing makes her angry: 'They're just messing up people's lives — people who are forced into getting married and being fed up and having no money all their lives'.

'I don't feel very confident about the future,' says Julie, 'I don't think there's much hope for young people today, the way things are going in this country. And I've got no faith in governments or politicians.' 'I suppose you've just got to keep protesting about things,' says Sally.

Julie and Sally will be joining the protest march against the Gillick ruling in London on 23 June.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

Murder

In strictly legal terms the convictions for murder of the two South Wales miners Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland and their sentences to life imprisonment were entirely appropriate. They deliberately dropped two large lumps of concrete from a height on top of the cab in which David Wilkie was driving scab David Williams to work. Wilkie's death or serious injury were not an unlikely result. Under English law this makes murder the appropriate charge. Life imprisonment was the mandatory sentence once the jury had brought in a guilty verdict.

But culpability for death and injury in our society is not a strictly legal matter. Take the cases of Davy Jones and Joe Green, striking miners killed on the picket lines in the course of the strike. Jones and Green died violent deaths in the same conflict as Wilkie, but in the eyes of the British establishment their killings were not murder. Indeed they were not crimes at all. Months later nobody has been charged for either death.

It is the same story in thousands of lesser instances of violent conflict in the miners' strike. Hundreds of miners who engaged in sporadic acts of violence have been convicted of crimes. They have been fined, sacked and imprisoned. On the other hand, police and scabs who engaged in the systematic use of terror against the mining communities have not been charged with crimes of violence. Indeed they have been praised by politicians and the press for their courage.

The selective justice of the miners' strike exposes the class character of the forces of law and order. The police and the courts present a carefully cultivated image of impartiality. But when it comes to a major contest of class forces it becomes apparent that they act unequivocally on the side of the employers. The media are always ready to proclaim the lofty principles of British justice and fair play. But the rough justice of the miners' strike shows that these principles are at the service of the establishment. Killing scabs is murder, killing pickets is no crime at all.

From the point of view of the capitalist class Hancock and Shankland are guilty of murder. From the point of view of the working class they are guilty of no crime. Their actions arose from their involvement in the class war. We should no more accept that they are criminals than the establishment would accept that the policemen who brutalised pickets throughout last year are criminals.

The real responsibility for the incarceration of Hancock and Shankland lies with the leaders of the miners and the labour movement who failed to organise disciplined collective action against the police and the scabs. It was frustration at the ineffectiveness of picketing that drove two hapless lads to a desperate act. Now the NUM and Labour Party leaders argue pathetically that the events near Rhymney were an accident. They are appealing for the conviction to be changed to manslaughter and for the sentences to be reduced. The special pleading of the labour bureaucrats plays into the hands of the media moralists who have had a field day exposing their weasel words and garbled logic.

'Let them rot in jail,' said the *Sun* when the sentences were announced. Our only answer to the establishment's attempts to label any resistance against the system as a criminal offence is to demand an unconditional amnesty for *all* the class war prisoners of the miners' strike.

Don't prepare for a Kinnock government, start...

PREPARING FOR POWER

We have long argued in *tns* that the traditions and policies of the British labour movement are inadequate to meet the challenge of the eighties. Until recently our warnings were dismissed with contempt by the British left. But times have changed.

Since the defeat of the miners' strike there has been a rush of demands for a re-examination of socialist strategy. The new spirit of reflection and debate may turn out to be a positive development. But there is a danger that the left's emphasis on reappraisal and realignment may lead to further concessions to the forces of conservatism and reaction. The rightward shift of the Labour Party indicates that this process is already underway.

How can the British left overcome its present crisis? Tony Benn has provided a useful service by restating the left's traditional approach. By contrasting the RCP's approach to Benn's we can clarify the fundamental differences between Labourism and revolutionary communism.

In a series of articles and interviews in *The Guardian* and the left press, Benn has more or less admitted that the left is in a state of paralysis. He has conceded that the Labour Party in its present form cannot serve as a vehicle for change. These statements are evidently true. We would merely add the small qualification that the Labour Party has never been an adequate instrument for achieving real social change. But as a prominent Labour leader Benn cannot confront the traditions of his party. While rejecting the Labour Party of today, he wants to recapture the Labour Party of the past. Indeed, Benn goes so far as to demand that the Labour Party is relaunched:

'What we need and should be campaigning for is a refounding conference of the Labour Party just like 1918 when the unions affiliated for the first time, along with the socialist societies and so on....

'It may be a mid-term or long-term demand but the demand for the refounding of the Labour Party as a fully federal and representative body is a legitimate demand for the left to make.' ('The hole in the middle of Labour', *Socialist Organiser,* 22 May)

The attempt to refound a party that is still very much in existence itself suggests a failure to come to terms with the problems of the moment. A re-run of the events of almost 70 years ago is unlikely to meet the needs of the eighties. Unfortunately, the 1918 conference did not provide any solutions for the working class of the time either. (Nor did it allow the affiliation of the unions 'for the first time' — that took place at the real founding conference of the party in 1900. In 1918 Labour adopted a new constitution which ratified trade union control over the party, at the same time as setting up constituency organisations so that middle class people who were not union members could join the party). Let's look a little closer at the events of 1918.

Back to the roots

During the decade around the First World War the working class was a serious threat to the capitalist class, which came closer to losing its grip than at any time this century. Today's left, with its close ties to the Labour Party and its deeply conservative traditions, has become more or less convinced that revolution in Britain is not a realistic option. The history of these years reveals that the subsequent weakness of the revolutionary movement in Britain is not due to God or Nature, but to the successful intervention of the Labour Party.

In the years leading up to the outbreak of the First World War, the upsurge of working class militancy coincided with the violent protests of the suffragettes and the constant threat of open revolt in Ireland. The eruption of class conflict was only headed off by the war in Europe. The British establishment seized the opportunity to wage a virulently chauvinistic campaign to hold British society together. The First World War came not a moment too soon for the British capitalists. A report to the ministry of reconstruction in 1918 recalled how the war abroad had helped to contain rebellion at home:

'The naked fact is that the country, the mother of free institutions, was four years on the brink of civil war. And if the Germans had not saved us the struggle would have raged not only between Catholic and Protestant Ireland, but throughout Great Britain between class and class.' (Cited in RJ Scally, *The origins of the Lloyd George coalition)*

Yet the war could do no more than postpone the outbreak of class conflict. Within three years the British establishment was horrified to discover that the labour movement was becoming infected with the virus of Russian Bolshevism.

British workers' spontaneous sympathies for the Russian Revolution in 1917 also came as a shock to the leadership of the labour movement. For years trade union leaders and politicians had tried to wean workers away from the class struggle. Yet the threat of working class militancy was greater than ever before. By the end of 1917 the leadership of the labour movement was determined to develop a long-term strategy to contain the class struggle. Beatrice Webb, whose husband and collaborator Sydney was the author of Labour's 1918 constitution, recalled the mood of the period in her diary in January 1918:

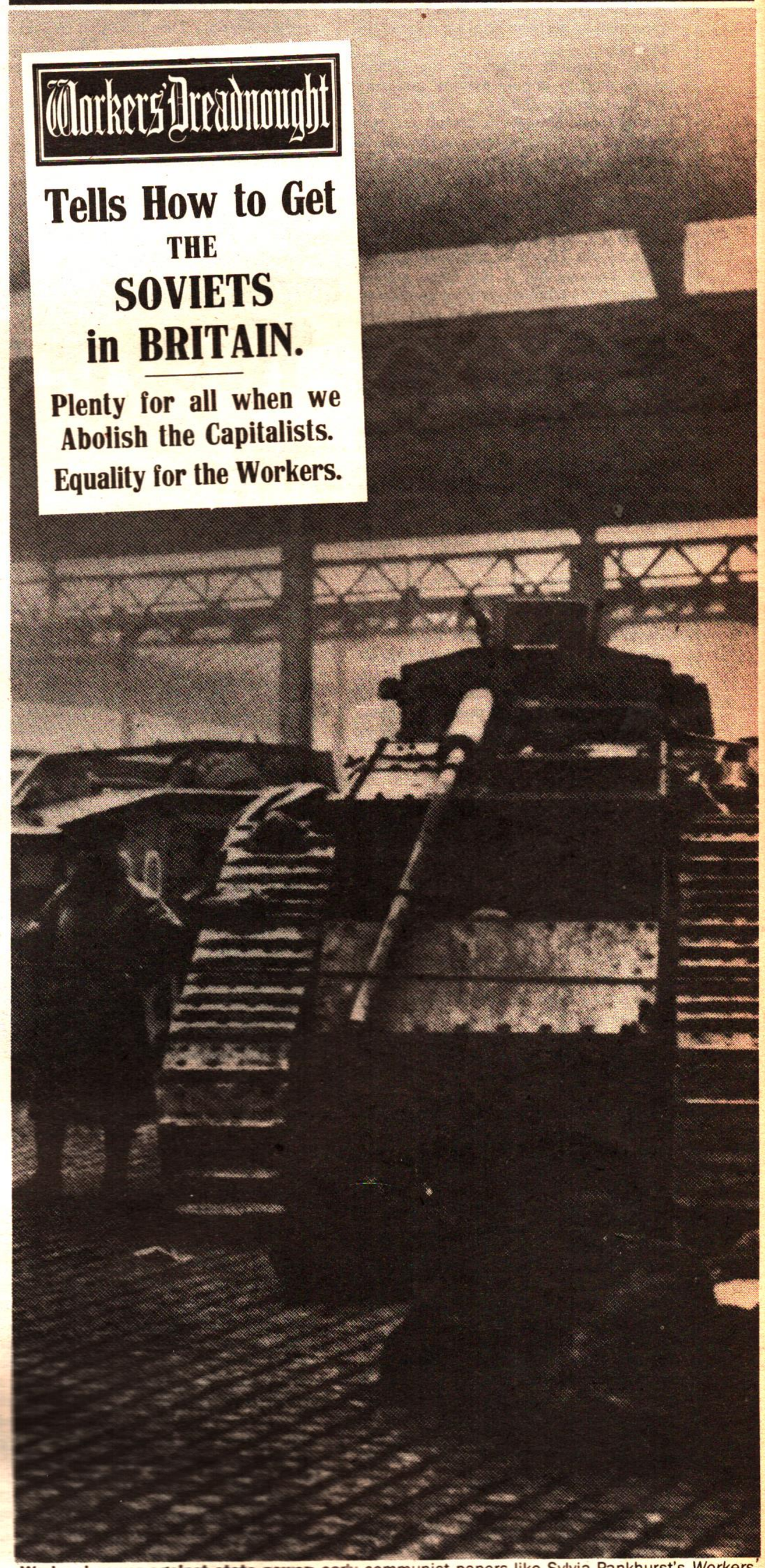
'Meanwhile the leaders of the labour movement are distinctly uneasy about the spirit of revolt among the rank and file, which openly proclaims its sympathy with the lurid doings in Petrograd.'

The response of the leaders of the labour movement to the rank and file unrest was to overhaul the Labour Party and to supply it with a new programme. The aim of the 1918 programme, *Labour and the new social order,* was to link workers' aspirations for change with the institutions of parliamentary democracy. The 1918 conference relaunched the Labour Party as a party of the nation, rather than as a party that fought for the distinctive concerns of the working class.

Many left wingers celebrate the 1918 conference because of its adoption of clause four in the new constitution. But the aim of clause four was not so much to outline Labour's socialist goals, but to turn the party into an all-class organisation:

'To secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

For the 1918 Labour leaders the importance of clause four was that it combined an appeal for radical change with a rejection of class politics. It equates 'producers by hand' with 'producers by brain', implying that all classes could comfortably support Labour. This theme was emphasised by WF Purdy, chairman of the 1918 conference:



Workers' power against state power: early communist papers like Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought* inspired revolts which the government only put down with the aid of tanks—and the Labour Party

'The broadening of the constitution to include worker by hand or brain (a step necessary if Labour is to take its rightful position in national life) will bring into our party all those willing to give their best in the social service of the community and place our claim to be a national party in the broadest and widest sense before the country....Our aim is not to serve sectional interests alone, or to set class against class, but rather to secure that all classes, as far as possible, shall come together to make this country a place in which every man, woman and child will have ample opportunities to live and enjoy a happier and better life than has hitherto been possible.'

This is the real tradition of 1918 that Benn now wants to recapture. The new look Labour Party had devastating consequences for the working class. By January 1919 Beatrice Webb could boast that 'the parliamentary Labour Party is a very tame lion; all the militants...have been ousted from parliament'. When the first Labour government came to power in 1924 the working class was conspicuous by its absence from the cabinet.

The main legacy of 1918 was the containment of working class militancy. A division of labour was established between the trade union leaders and the politicians. As trade unionists workers were allowed to be militant, but politics was reserved for the Labour Party. This separation of immediate economic issues of wages and conditions from wider political affairs had a paralysing effect on the labour movement. It restricted the scope of militancy and ensured that trade union action would not pose a political threat to the system. The Labour Party's monopoly over politics effectively denied the working class an independent outlook on political matters.

The division of labour between the unions and the Labour Party established the tradition that trade unions were for workers while political change was not the concern of any particular class. The notion that the working class had a particular interest in political action to get rid of the capitalist system, which led many workers to support the Labour Party in the first place, was buried.

The British working class became a prisoner of its own narrow brand of trade unionism. But trade unionism even in its militant form was no match for the offensive of the capitalist class. While the employers fought a broad political battle, a class war in the true sense of the word, the labour movement stood its ground in a limited battle over industrial issues. The working class was left politically defenceless and its defeat was inevitable. After 1921 even trade union militancy declined and the working class never recovered the ground that it had lost during the crucial period between 1918 and 1921.

The defeat of the working class was the Labour Party's gain. In 1924, as workers faced one setback after another, the Labour Party emerged as the largest party in the elections. We will let Beatrice Webb have the last word on the legacy of 1918. What were the questions that preoccupied the new Labour government in 1924?

' "Are Labour privy councillors to appear at court in uniform?" is one of the questions. "Are cabinet ministers' wives to attend evening courts?" is another. And then there is that mark of civility — the curtsy! It's all very ludicrous; though not altogether unimportant. Altering the form may easily transform the substance.'

The working class would gain a lot from discarding this tradition rather than thinking about refounding it. Yet the legacy of 1918 continues to haunt the labour movement today.

Left dogma

It was not long after 1918 that many militants and left-wing socialists began to have serious doubts about the Labour Party. Its conciliatory approach, its yearning for respectability and hatred for the class struggle showed many activists that the Labour Party had become just another part of the system. Many disillusioned Labour supporters united to form the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1921. A later generation of activists in the Independent Labour Party disaffiliated from the Labour Party in 1932. In the sixties several radical left groups such as today's Socialist Workers' Party left the Labour Party to set up independent organisations.

Unfortunately, the left-wing critics of the Labour Party were themselves too steeped in the traditions of Labourism to offer any real alternative. The British left has never seriously questioned Labourism itself. It has merely reacted against the reactionary consequences of Labour politics. This was the impetus behind the ILP's split form Labour after the MacDonald government's betrayal in 1931. Yet the ILP's own policies were merely a left-wing variant of Labour's programme and it was only a matter of time before it disintegrated.

The hold of Labourism over the left is so strong that it cannot imagine the labour movement without the Labour Party at its head. Left-wing parties from the CPGB, through the ILP to today's SWP have restricted their assertions of independence to secondary issues. When it comes to the crunch, whatever its reservations, the left calls on the working class to support Labour. The British left has all the characteristics of a pressure group, and none of the attributes of a serious political alternative. In the twenties the Communist Party established the model for pressure group politics. The party's line was that the Labour Party was not perfect, but that it was a lesser evil than the other parties. The 'lesser evil' argument has since become the left's defining dogma. Since the twenties the British left has made qualified support for the Labour Party a way of life.

The left's reliance on Labour has been damaging. It has legitimised Labour's monopoly over the labour movement and has sustained the myth that it is impossible to advance working class politics outside the party. Since the twenties this myth has acquired the status of an article of faith. As a result political discussion on the left always takes place in response to Labour's initiatives, rather than in response to the problems facing the working class.

The British left has allowed the Labour Party to do its political thinking. Since the left assumes that it will always be subordinate to Labour, its emphasis has been on pushing the Labour Party leftwards. Pressure group politics emphasise organisational issues at the expense of political issues. In 1923 the Communist Party's trade union paper *All power* insisted that 'the parliamentary representatives of the workers should be subject to the control of the general council of the Trades Union Congress'. Since the twenties successive generations of left-wing activists have come up with organisational proposals to make Labour more responsive to workers' interests. Recent debates on democratising the party, the mandatory reselection of MPs, and on black sections are evidence of the continuing obsession of the left with organisational proposals. Benn's suggestion that the Labour Party should be refounded is only the most absurd in a long line of organisational responses to deep-seated political problems.

The failure of the left to make the Labour Party more responsive to the needs of the working class has been the leadership's success. For as long as left wingers could hold out the prospect of a more radical and democratic party, Labour was assured of the support of militant workers. And since pressure group politics could never constitute a comprehensive alternative, Labour leaders have never had to worry unduly about their left flank.

Enough of this farce

The British left remains true to its traditions. It refuses to recognise that Labourism is responsible for the present political crisis of the working class. Instead the left concentrates on safeguarding its position inside the institutions of the labour bureaucracy. Many left wingers, notably Ken Livingstone, have simply defected to the centre. The more radical sections of the left have dug in to organise one of their periodic debates about how to strengthen themselves against the rightward shift of Labour. The current discussion is all about regroupment, realignment and reappraisal. Underlying this discussion is the fear that even if the Labour Party is re-elected in 1987, it would be no better than the last Labour government. This fully justified fear does not inhibit the left from promoting Kinnock's party, with all the traditional reservations and qualifications.

The most striking feature of the present debate is that it is devoid of any discussion of programme or policy. From Benn's discourse on 1918 to the SWP's open letter to Militant, the discussion is conducted entirely in terms of organisation. The left's preference for manoeuvring to win support for black sections inside the Labour Party, rather than fighting racism in the real world, sums up its whole approach. This obsession with organisational proposals is an evasion of the political problems facing the working class for which the left has no answers.

For the RCP the left's discussions are important because they are symptomatic of the wider political crisis of the working class. This crisis will not be resolved by the election of another Labour government in a few years' time. True to its 1918 traditions, any future Labour government will follow its predecessors and dutifully serve its masters in the British establishment. The Labour Party is not a solution to the problems of the working class, but a permanent menace. This is not a matter of speculation, but a generalisation from the overwhelming evidence of decades of experience.

Preparing for power

Many of our opponents are amused by our call to prepare for power. This is understandable for a movement whose outlook is governed by the realism of pressure group politics. But the realism of a Labour Party meeting is different from the reality of capitalist oppression facing the working class. Preparing for power is not about fulfilling fantasies. It is based on the experience of the working class in modern Britain. The British establishment turns every dispute into a power struggle. Power was the central issue in the government's offensive against the miners. The employers' 'right to manage' was counterposed to the miners' 'right to work'. The strike showed not only that the two sides were incompatible, but that the conflict could be resolved by only one thing — class power.

Preparing for power does not mean working out a schedule for the revolution. Preparation means above all political struggle. In a technical sense the working class already possesses tremendous power. But politically, the working class lacks the independence to have any decisive impact on society. The miners' strike showed that the working class does not exist as an independent political force. Preparing for power means transforming the potential strength of the labour movement into actual political power. This is possible today because many of the forces which have held back the working class movement in the past have lost their vitality.

British capitalism can no longer sustain the myth that recovery is around the corner. The illusion of future prosperity which made capitalism appear to be the only realistic option has given way to demoralisation and despair. Our task is to fight despair by convincing working class people that they have the power to run a society where social need dictates the production and distribution of resources. The laws of profit are more transparent than at any time in recent history. Preparing for power means popularising the conviction that the capitalist market, created by human beings, can be destroyed by human beings.

Before we can take a single step forward we have to rid ourselves of the traditions and institutions that have ruled the labour movement since 1918. Preparing for power above all means building a new movement with new ideas. To opt for the old solutions would doom the working class to a re-run of the treachery of the MacDonald, Attlee, Wilson and Callaghan governments. It would cause even more demoralisation and reinforce the view that there is no alternative to a life of degradation under the capitalist system.

To build a new working class movement seems a daunting task. But nothing less can answer the challenge of the eighties. ***Frank Richards***

PREPARING FOR POWER

Conference 19-26 July 1985



Chris Black (reflex)

Preparing for Power is a week of discussion and debate in London in July. Its aim is to thrash out some answers to the questions of theory and strategy facing the working class movement in the eighties.

The opening weekend of Preparing for Power begins with a full discussion of the class struggle worldwide and concludes with another plenary on the prospects for revolution in Britain. In between there will be 45 workshops on every aspect of British and international politics.

On Sunday we begin a series of specialist courses which continue through the week. These cover the basics of Marxism and Leninism, imperialism and the Soviet Union, women, racism and Ireland, as well as questions of religion, Eastern Europe and advanced Marxism. A wide range of evening talks and workshops are planned, as well as extra debates, films and entertainments.

Preparing for Power takes place at the University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1, from Friday 19 July to Friday 26 July.

Preparing for Power costs £15 if you're working and £12 if you're not. Make cheques and POs payable to RCP Association and send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. A creche and accommodation are available.

● Now available! A special guide to Preparing for Power, containing full details of the agenda and arrangements and the contents of all the courses. It also includes suggestions for reading for the specialist courses. It costs 30p.

INTERNATIONAL

South Africa

Black unions at war

This week the leaders of South Africa's black trade unions are meeting to discuss moves towards the creation of a united black trade union federation. The strength of the black unions reflects the militancy of a working class that has recently shaken South Africa and its Western backers. Their weakness arises from the fact that trade unionism is a weapon of limited usefulness in tackling the apartheid system.

For almost 40 years black trade unions were banned under the apartheid laws. But the rapid growth of industry and of the urban working class in the sixties and seventies forced the regime to modify its approach. A wave of strikes in the foreign-controlled car industry provoked growing business pressure for a more conciliatory approach to industrial relations. In 1979 the Botha government legalised black trade unions as part of a reform package to cater for the employers' need for a more stable and skilled black workforce. During the past six years the regime's attempt to reform class relations in industry has run into difficulties.

Since 1979 black trade unions have mushroomed. Today more than 500 000 of South Africa's five million black industrial workers are organised in the black and non-racial trade union federations FOSATU and CUSA, which includes the miners' union, and in a host of smaller unaffiliated unions. During the past 12 months workplace struggle has spread through a range of industries. The revolt has spread even into the public services where strikes are still illegal. The employers' tidy schemes to foster stable trade unionism have been brushed aside by a surge of militancy. The fact that most strikes over pay and conditions have succeeded in winning significant concessions, even in conditions of deep recession, is an indication of the pressure on the employers.

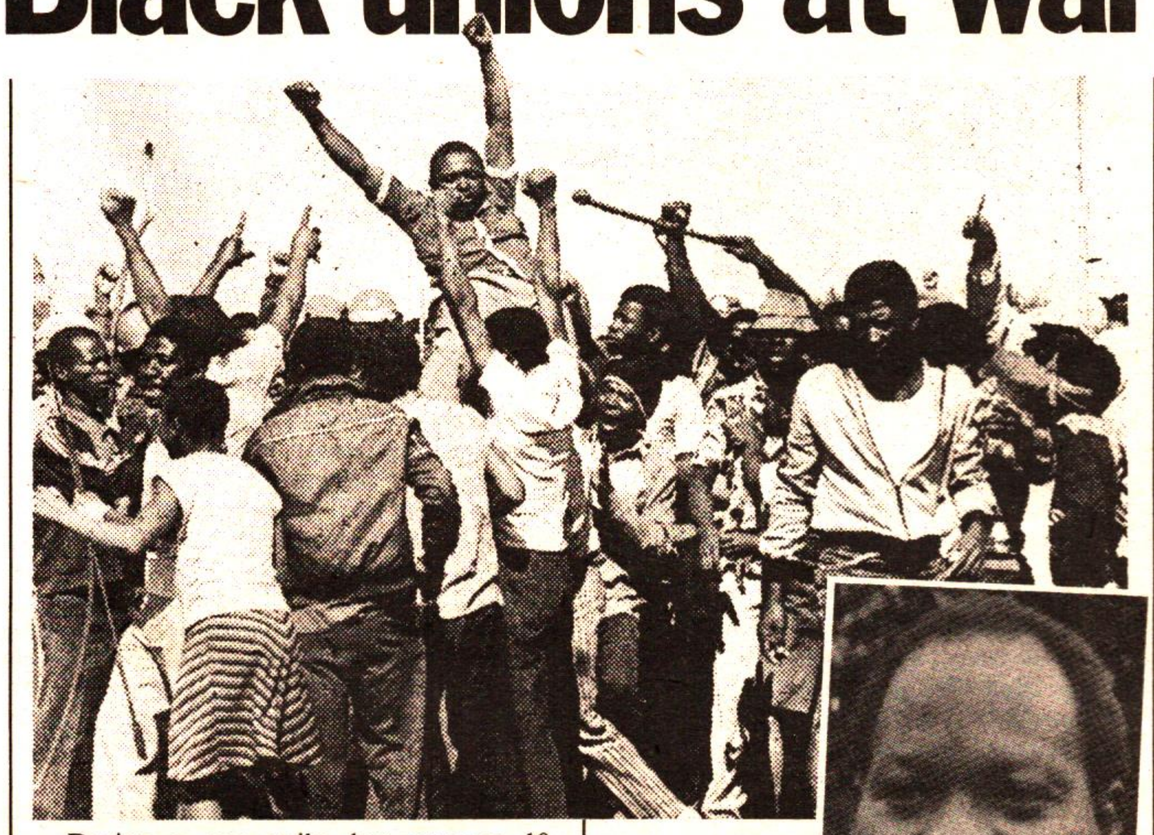
The trouble started when the majority of the newly-formed unions defied government regulations for official union registration. Black workers have shown contempt for law and procedure in their fight to win better wages and conditions. Even radical union leaders have been hard pushed to maintain control over rank and file militancy.

Strikes, sackings and shootings

But the central barrier to winning decent wages and conditions for the majority of South African workers is the apartheid system itself. Black workers' lives inside and outside the workplace are shaped by coercion, discrimination and the denial of the most basic rights. Western-style trade unionism has little scope in a country where an oppressive system dictates where workers are allowed to live, travel and work. This is why every industrial struggle has a tendency to explode into a wider political conflict. The problem facing black workers is that while they have built up union organisations, they still lack a coherent political force to lead a wider resistance against the apartheid system.

Yet even trade union organisation presents an unacceptable source of instability to the South African ruling class. Its response is mass sackings and deportations, imprisonment, torture and shootings.

In May, 17 400 black miners were sacked at two gold mines in the western Transvaal and deported at gunpoint to the black homelands. This brutal tactic was pursued ruthlessly by the management of Anglo-American and Anglo-Vaal, two corporations renowned for their advocacy of reform and conciliation. The black National Union of Miners began to organise in the gold mines after unofficial wage strikes in 1982 which ended when hundreds of miners were shot dead. Since then the mining employers, faced with the problems of falling gold prices and low productivity, have attempted to establish a working relationship with the union. But the appalling pay and conditions endured by the migrant mineworkers in the compounds and underground do little to foster conciliation.



During a pay strike last summer 10 miners were shot dead and hundreds injured. The mass expulsions a few weeks ago took place in response to unofficial action against the employers' attempts to get blacks to do the skilled work officially reserved for whites — at black rates of pay. According to 'progressive' Bobby Godsell, head of industrial relations at Anglo-American, the spontaneous walk-out for equal pay for equal work was 'the last straw'. Godsell explained that Anglo-American looked to the union leaders 'as partners in trying to create adequate channels for tabling grievances' and for 'maintaining good order on the mine'. The employers' response to the strike — summary dismissal and selective re-employment — was in line with traditional industrial methods under apartheid. The struggle at Anglo-American sums up the true meaning of apartheid reform.

Botha met black workers' revolt by killing union leader Andries Raditsela

The rapid extension of industrial disputes into the political sphere has led to tensions between the trade unions and the wider struggle against apartheid. Given the insecurity of union organisation, many black union leaders have been reluctant to get involved in political struggles. At times this has led to open conflicts between union officials and rank and file militants over how far to go in taking on the system.

The course of events in the stay-away strikes and boycotts in the Transvaal last November illustrates the problems. The two-day action was sparked off by price, rent and fare increases resulting from government cuts. But it was also a wider political protest against black local councillors who implemented the cuts and against Botha's sham constitutional reforms. The action was organised by students and supported by the black trade union federations FOSATU and CUSA. Management at the state controlled SASOL coal-liquefaction plants near Johannesburg leaned on the leaders of the chemical workers' union to instruct their members not to join the action. The leaders of the stay-away agreed to exempt SASOL. When the workers insisted on joining the strike they were instantly sacked and shipped to the homelands. Having backed down before management pressure, the union leaders were ill-prepared to mount any fightback.

The SASOL experience showed that black workers have no choice about taking political action to defend their interests. It also showed that attempts to restrict the class struggle to the terrain of legal trade unionism are doomed to failure. Union resistance to bold action which presents a threat to union funds and organisation is understandable, given the merciless brutality of the apartheid regime. The killing of chemical workers' leader Andries Raditsela in police custody a few days after the events in the mines was an example of how the white establishment deals with prominent black leaders.

State terror and popular resistance have shaped the South African trade union movement. New unions independent of the major federations continuously emerge as workers leave the ones they regard as inadequate. This is both a positive sign of the growth and development of the workers' movement and a telling symptom of the limitations of trade unionism. The gap between industrial struggle and the fight to destroy the apartheid system has yet to be filled through the development of revolutionary working class politics.

Sabena Norton

MIDDLE EAST PEACE MANOEUVRES

Spitting on Palestinian graves

WHEN KING HUSSEIN of Jordan arrived at the White House to discuss the 'peace process' in the Middle East last week, Reagan declared that he had come at 'the best possible moment'. The president's enthusiasm was understandable.

The Palestinian refugee camps at Sabra and Chatila had been flattened by three weeks of Syrian-backed Shiite artillery bombardment. As the first Western reporters entered Sabra, Shiite militias were murdering the last remaining Palestinian fighters in the camp while dazed and half-starved women and children emerged from the rubble.

The liquidation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Beirut and the slaughter of countless Palestinian civilians has raised the hopes of Western and Arab rulers for a final solution to the Palestinian problem. They reckon that now Arafat has nowhere left to go except to the conference table.

The terms of the deal were reaffirmed in Washington last week. The Palestinians are to sign away their right to their country, in exchange for a refuge on the — presently Israeli-occupied — West Bank of Jordan, to be run as some form of Jordanian-Palestinian condominium. Hussein's confident assertion that the PLO was now prepared to recognise the state of Israel is a major propaganda victory for the West. Arafat's positive reaction to the Reagan-Hussein talks suggests that, after the defeat in Beirut, moves within the PLO leadership to submit to this disastrous scheme are gaining ground. But what is in it for Egypt and Jordan?

In anticipation of a successful conclusion to the 'peace process', preparations are under way for a top level Israeli-Egyptian summit. Egypt's president Mubarak launched this shrewd diplomatic initiative last September with the aim of ending his country's isolation in the Arab world.

Following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Mubarak broke off diplomatic relations with Israel. This gesture was designed to restore his standing among Arab leaders. Having won Jordanian and Iraqi backing for his Middle East initiative, Mubarak is now ready to resume full diplomatic and economic links with Israel. Meanwhile the USA has granted the president a much needed increase in aid as a reward for his services. Western aid and a bigger role in Middle Eastern power politics is Mubarak's price for betraying the Palestinians.

Jordan has a more direct interest in the Palestinian issue. The proposed settlement would return the Israeli-occupied West Bank to the Hashemite monarchy. After the destruction of the Palestinian stronghold in Lebanon, Jordan is now the last refuge of the Palestinian people. Half the country's population is of Palestinian descent. King Hussein's concern for a settlement of the Palestinian conflict is above all motivated by fear of its potentially destabilising influence within Jordan. Hussein hopes that the establishment of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian condominium on the West Bank will consolidate Palestinian backing at home in the face of growing social instability and rumblings of Shiite rebellion.

Last week's events expose the reality behind the 'peace process' in the Middle East. Three years ago the Americans were blasted out of Beirut by Shiite bombers and the Israelis are still smarting from their recent humiliation in southern Lebanon. But the Egyptian-Jordanian 'peace process' threatens to consolidate the position of the USA as the supreme power-broker in the Middle East. It provides the crisis-torn Israeli state with a breathing space to recover its strength.

In a macabre twist of history the Arab rulers have taken on the job of finishing off the unfinished business of the 1982 US-backed Israeli invasion of Lebanon.



Reagan swears to help Hussein crush Palestine

REVIEWS

BRITISH COMMUNISTS

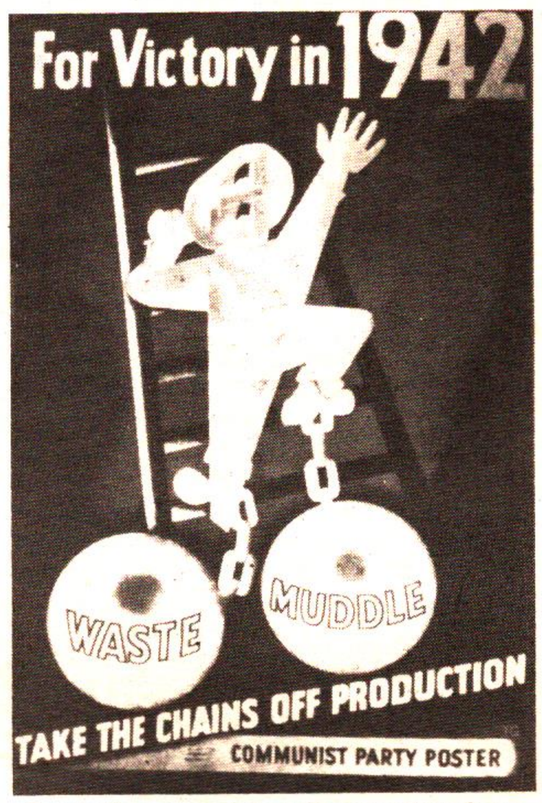
The party's over

Noreen Branson, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-1941,* Lawrence and Wishart, pbk £6.95

The history of the Communist Party is a sad story. It began with courage, vision and hope, but is now ending in cynicism, pessimism and despair. In 1921 the party brought together the cream of the working class movement. It included people like Sylvia Pankhurst who had rallied the people of East London throughout the First World War in the cause of women's liberation, internationalism and the overthrow of the capitalist system. It incorporated the leaders of the Red Clyde, the Glasgow shop stewards movement, and Noah Ablett, Arthur Horner and Arthur Cook of the South Wales miners. It brought together a generation of self-educated working class revolutionaries, including men of Irish origin like Arthur MacManus, Jack Murphy and Tommy Jackson. The Communist Party was only around 5000-strong, but its early members had deep roots in the working class movement and they were an integral part of the revolutionary international.

For the next 20 years the Communist Party continued to attract the most left-wing workers as well as a growing proportion of middle class intellectuals. Through the twenties and thirties the Communist Party was the most important political force in the unions and among the unemployed. Yet today the Communist Party has been reduced to a crumbling, squabbling irrelevance now on the verge of disintegration. How did it come to this?

As the party's official historian, Branson's main concern is to justify the current Communist Party leadership line with reference to the party's history. Today's party leaders hope to save the party by presenting it as a force for linking up various sorts of pressure groups in a loose alliance of radical forces. Hence any tendencies in the party's history towards asserting its independent role as a leader of the working class stand condemned as sectarian and ultra-left deviations.



Patriotic communism disarmed workers

On the other hand, any episodes where the party shed its proletarian edge and won influence among the middle classes are elevated as an example to today's party.

Branson seizes on the familiar bogey of the so-called 'third period' of the late twenties and early thirties. Under Comintern direction, the British party switched to an aggressive attack on the reformist leaders of the official labour movement. According to Branson the result was 'a disaster' — the party lost membership and influence. The real problem with the third period was that it was a tactical manoeuvre which lacked the backing of a coherent political challenge to Labourism. This was why some of its manifestations, such as the formation of separate 'revolutionary' unions, went over the top and isolated the communists even further. Yet it was in the third period that the British communists came nearest to working out an independent strategy towards the Labour Party. This development was partial and incomplete, but it was an advance on both the mid-twenties and the mid-thirties when party members acted as canvassing agents for the Labour Party.

For Branson the popular front period of the late thirties was the golden age. From 1935 onwards the British party followed the line of Stalinist foreign policy and subordinated the objectives of the working class to the defence of democracy against fascism. Branson and her colleagues like the popular front because the Communist Party could play a leading role in mobilising patriotic popular radicalism in support, not of communism, but of a less repressive form of capitalist rule than fascism. If the third period line was 'a disaster', the popular front was a catastrophe. It led directly to the defeat of the revolution in Spain and to the mass mobilisation of the British working class for the slaughter of the Second World War.

In passing Branson provides a discreet apology for the most embarrassing moments in her party's history. It is fair enough to congratulate the heroism of the British volunteers who went to fight in Spain. But when even social democratic historians have documented the treacherous role of Stalinism in Spain, it takes some cheek simply to repeat the same old evasions. Branson admits blandly that Andres Nin, the leader of the radical POUM, was 'almost certainly executed', omitting to say by whom. The well-established truth is that he was murdered by Stalinists. The Communist Party's denials of the mass murder of old Bolsheviks, Trotskyists, and thousands of others — including members of the British party — under the cover of the Moscow trials of the thirties are explained away as all very understandable.

Branson's book is the third volume in the official history of the British party. It follows in the tradition of James Klugmann who wrote the first two. As a man who once wrote a book entitled *From Trotsky to Tito* outlining the now long forgotten Stalinist theory of 'Trotsky-fascism', Klugmann was well qualified to become a historian of the Communist Party. Branson continues to prove that a party that cannot face its own past cannot face the future.

Paul Foster

ELVIS ON STAGE

The king is dead

'Are you lonesome tonight?', **Alan Bleasdale (writer),** Liverpool Playhouse, heading south.

On the night of 16 August 1977 Elvis Presley, grotesquely overweight and full of drugs, died. This play is a celebration of the early music and a homage to the playwright's own memories of the life and death of Elvis.

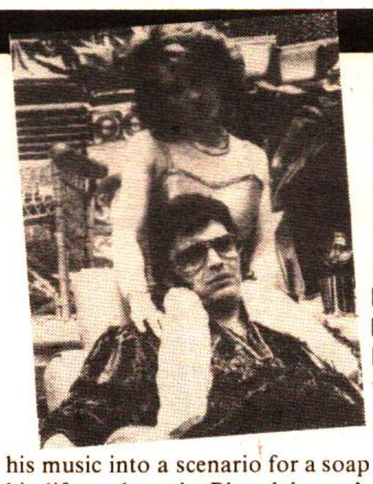
In the summer of 1954, a 19-year old boy spent $2 at Sun Records in Memphis to cut a disc for his mother's birthday. He was a poor white boy — 'white trash'— but he sang black music, not only gospel like in church, not only blues like in country, but R&B as well.

For middle America the impact was traumatic. As Elvis' first TV producer put it 'he's fucking in 20 million front rooms'. American white youth came of age. Reporter: 'what are you rebelling against?' Elvis: 'whaddya got?'

But, despite his early sullenness with the big city folks, the boy from Memphis was no rebel. He was godfearin and loved his momma. Taken in hand by Colonel Parker he was sanitized for mass consumption. On TV he was banned from the neck down: 'I had to wiggle my ears'.

From 1958 to 1968 there were ten wasted years, first in the army, then in Hollywood. It came right again in the famous 1968 Christmas special. Colonel Parker wanted Elvis to sing 'Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer', but Elvis kicked off with 'One night with you'. This was what everyone tuned in to see. By the time he did 'Jailhouse rock' half the playhouse audience was clapping, stomping, screaming and dancing. Elvis was back, but from there it was downhill all the way.

Bleasdale wants to tell us the story of the death of a lonely man but the hype keeps getting in the way. You can't miss the pain and desperation at the heart of much white American working class music, nor the maudlin sentiment. But Elvis' talent was not that of a Hank Williams let alone a Billie Holliday. He spent too many years turning



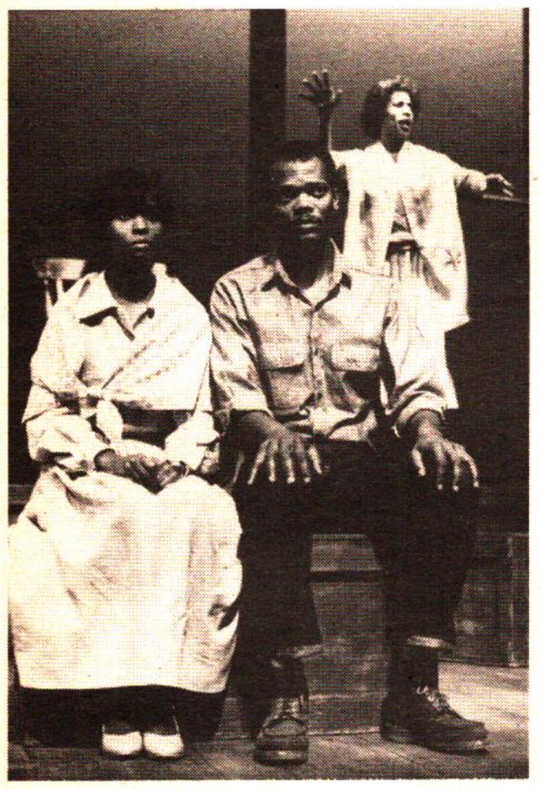
Bleasdale's bloated Elvis

his music into a scenario for a soap opera both in his life and work. Bleasdale can't make such a pathetic story tragic and the play suffers in the attempt.

After all it's about showbiz, not life. The audience doesn't really want to know. We just want to hear the king again. So never mind lousy accents. The play is sharp, funny, a good night out, and worth it just for the middle eights from the early tracks.

Alan Harding

BLACK THEATRE



Where the heart is

Home, **Samm-Art Williams (writer),** Shaw Theatre

'Where is god? In Miami on vacation!' The question is asked and answered by Cephus Miles, a poor black farmer with land at Crossroads, North Carolina.

Home is written with discipline and sharp humour, and performed by three actors (Samuel L Jackson, Elain Graham and S Epatha Merkerson) of the New York based Negro Ensemble Company almost like singers would a ballad.

Cephus Miles loses his land and his sweetheart. 'There's nothing there. They took my land for taxes,' he laments. Refusing to fight in Vietnam, he 'spits on the flag' and does five years in prison in Raleigh, North Carolina. Cephus runs to the big, cold northern city to 'strut, strut, the avenue strut'. Spurned by bourgeois blacks, unemployed and sodden with booze, Cephus is told by the whore 'where there's no money there can be no love'. He is a displaced person, and the city itself is corrupt. After 13 years in this urban wilderness Cephus is saved by a letter. Patti Mae Well, his down-home girl, has bought back his land and 'god has come home from Miami'.

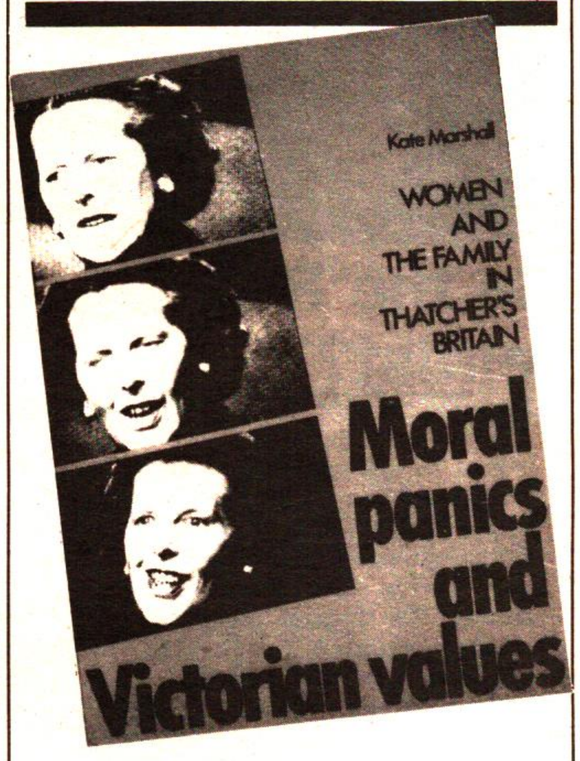
Home is a fable rooted in the eternal values of the soil, just like the *Wizard of Oz.* Like Dorothy, the white American who after the perils of the Yellow Brick Road discovers that Kansas is best, Cephus settles for North Carolina, life with Patti Mae Well, a few acres and a donkey.

Home is the day-dream of millions of people driven from their home towns, their villages and their countries by poverty and repression. It will have an emotional appeal for many workers. But for the vast majority of migrant workers the letter will not come. There is no road back. Williams' play ignores the truth.

Black theatre like this will not disturb the calm of the Bankers Trust Company who backed it, or the GLC and Camden council, who promoted it. *Home* depicts the suffering and the protest of migrant workers with great skill. But by his presentation of Cephus' hankering for a place in the sun, and the impossible fulfilment of the migrant workers' dream, Williams has let his desire for a happy ending get the better of him.

Don Mallory

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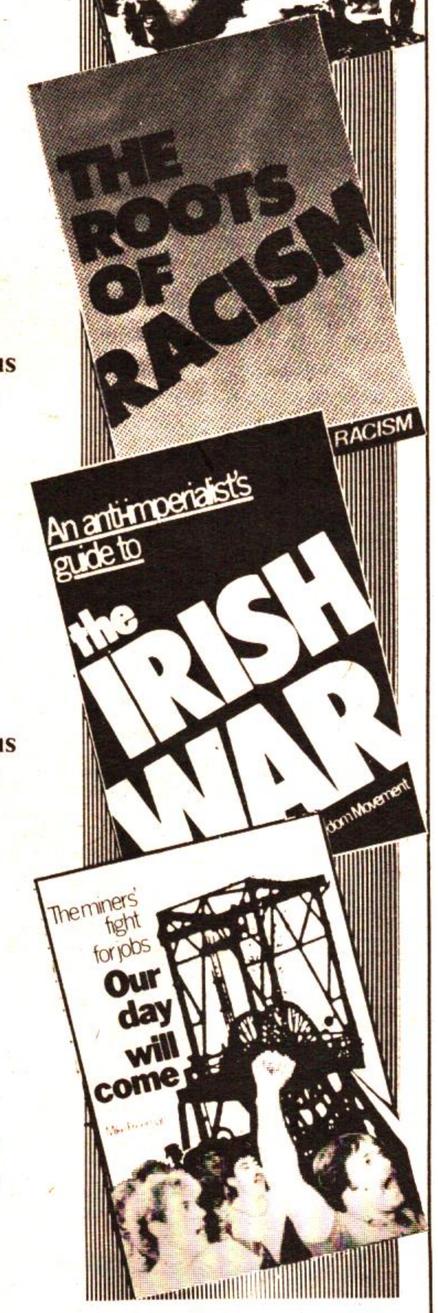
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LETTERS



Is the RCP elitist?

We feel we must write to compliment you on your refreshingly revolutionary paper. Its political content and analysis really gets down to the roots of this crisis-ridden system. A no-nonsense, down to earth approach makes it superior in many ways to the other socialist weeklies, by putting the struggles and the needs of ordinary working people (and the five million non-working) first.

Your stand on the Irish situation is an inspiration to read. It highlights the oppression being meted out to the nationalist minority in the name of colonialism. And it takes an unequivocal and principled stand on the armed resistance against the belligerent British imperialist state and for immediate and unconditional withdrawal by Britain.

Your coverage of the repression suffered by minority groups in society is particularly generous. Your coverage of black people's oppression and the fight for women's and gay rights in particular convey the sincerity and pure Trotskyist approach of your campaigns. However, we feel nothing is above criticism. To us, your aims are tantamount to everything that Marxists should be striving for, but your methods of operation leave a lot to be desired. We are speaking here as socialists becoming rapidly disillusioned with the make-up and structure of the presently bureaucratic and elitist Labour Party.

We feel as though we are flogging a dead horse in an attempt to convert people to our way of thinking and to radically change the party leadership into a fighting, democratic leadership which truly serves the needs and aspirations of the working class. Having said that we appreciate that you cannot possibly hope to eradicate this corrupt system solely through parliamentary or 'democratic' means or even with the help of this. We recognise the fact that the ruling class wouldn't just sit back and allow a peaceful socialist transformation of society through parliament.

On the other hand, we just don't see how you can possibly have a hope in hell's chance of persuading the ordinary, indoctrinated, nationalistic and patriotic true-blue Brit to take up arms tomorrow and carry out a full-blown revolutionary socialist struggle against capitalism. Your organisation appears to us to be very elitist, a sort of Marxist intellectual group, which in this context makes it not very appealing to the ordinary person, who will find it impossible to understand all the political jargon and rhetoric. This will effectively put a substantial amount of people off.

We would be grateful if you could enlighten us on this score, by, if not printing this letter and inviting comments, at least writing back.

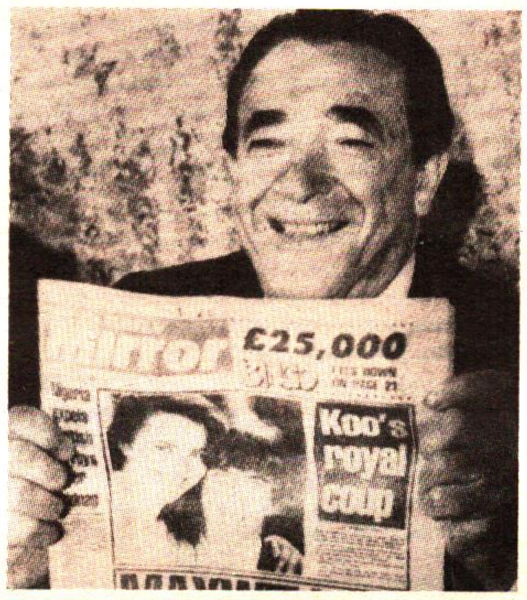
Two Socialist Organiser supporters
Huddersfield



Militant hooligans?

The other day I switched on breakfast TV just in time to see Robert Maxwell. He spent about half an hour telling everybody how great the *Mirror* was since he took over it. Then he started laying into the Militant Tendency for causing football violence. He said that the reason why Liverpool fans, who have a record of good behaviour on the terraces, have turned into 'red pigs' is because of the influence of Militant. I think it tells you a lot about the Labour Party when they can use people as disgusting as Maxwell to witch-hunt the left and to prove that they are the new hang 'em and flog 'em party. But I think it's a bit of a joke to accuse Militant of encouraging anybody to take violent action about anything. The next thing I saw on the telly was the deputy leader of Liverpool city council Derek Hatton, a Militant supporter, ranting on about how he would never condone violence of any sort and saying how disgusting it all was. The Militant council might have encouraged Liverpool people to get a bit violent about their crummy housing and crappy services, but that's about all.

Mick Sullivan
Liverpool



A violent system

The article concerning the Tories' propaganda campaign pushing the law and order issue *(tns* 7) was correct in showing this to be a method for arming the state with greater legal powers for coercing the working class and smashing any groups which take the side of the working class in the struggle against capitalism.

But the article was incorrect in ascribing the violence being used as the focus of Tory propaganda to 'mindless aggression' as a consequence of 'brutalisation' of youth, specifically those alienated by the 'mindless boredom' of work and the dole queue.

Surveys have consistently shown that the people participating in 'hooliganism', far from being the unemployed and low-paid, are in fact workers with average standards of living. Trips abroad to follow sporting events are clearly prohibitively expensive for the poorest sections of the working class. And the average £3 for a local sporting event is a large chunk out of a weekly dole payment.

The reason why ordinary workers engage in 'mindless aggression' is that this is the form of social behaviour which is most clearly expressed in the capitalist method of production. Capitalism is all about the ownership of capital. This ownership provides great power for the owners. Physical force is used to protect and extend the boundaries of capitalist power. This being so, it is inevitable that the ethic of the strong dominating the weak and success through physical coercion will find a resonance in society generally.

Furthermore, the extremely nationalistic and sectarian expression of working class 'hooliganism' — 'our country against yours', 'our town against your town' — demonstrates the close ideological relationship between violence on the terraces and violence in the trenches. These forms of working class violence are completely dependent upon the ideology of success and status as defined by the capitalist class.

To argue that 'hooliganism' is due to alienation is therefore incorrect since this form of violence is entirely due to the capitalist method of organising and controlling society. From this incorrect perspective, some left groups tacitly or openly support 'hooliganism' as a potentially progressive force. Their lack of a political alternative pushes them towards support for a particularly nasty type of capitalist violence which is both detrimental to the well-being of the working class generally and wholly reactionary.

Revolutionary communists must recognise this violence for what it is and not give in to the efforts of the ruling class to equate 'hooligan' violence with the genuinely progressive activities of the Newham 7 and the broader struggle for the overthrow of this vicious system.

Paul Michael
Oxford

Militant strikes again

I read the article about Militant calling the police to deal with black protesters at a Liverpool council meeting in last week's *tns*. But black people in Liverpool aren't the only ones who are getting a bit fed up with the way they are being treated by the council. This week hundreds of teachers will be taking action against the council in schools all over Liverpool.

In March the council called a day of action to 'defend local democracy' against Tory attacks. What happened next showed that the Militant councillors don't have much of an idea about what working class democracy is all about. The council just ordered everybody not to go to work that day without asking anybody what they thought. They pushed it through the joint shop stewards' committee with the help of the Militant-controlled Nalgo and GMBATU branches. But other unions, including the teachers' union of which I am a member, objected to the council dictating what we should do just to serve their own ends.

The council might have got more support for the day of action if people thought they were really doing something to fight the cuts. The pathetic turn-out on the demonstration showed that nobody was really bothered about defending Militant's version of local democracy. But what really made people mad was the council's decision to dock the pay of all those who took part in the day of action — including those it locked out of work on the day.

Since March all the teachers' unions have been to see the council's Militant education chief Dominic Brady to demand that their members get paid. Brady's point blank refusal to pay up made us decide to go on strike this week. Other unions have also indicated that they will support the action. The worst thing was that when we made a final appeal to Brady he told us that the council had already been in touch with its lawyers to prepare a case against the teachers if it went to court. If this happened it would set a precedent for any employer to lock out his workers and dock their pay.

The latest example of Militant's anti-working class politics also involves Brady. The education section of the council has overspent its budget for the school meals service by £230 000. Brady is now talking about sacking those responsible. It seems that the council is even more ruthless than the Tories when it comes to penalising those who break the budget limit. But then Militant is very proud of its record of financial stringency which it maintains at our expense.

Joey Regan
NUT Liverpool division

STEPPING OUT

The Labour Party may have won a couple of trade union ballots on the political levy, but pennies are still pretty scarce in the Walworth Road coffers. Labour's latest fund-raising idea is a 'Sponsored slim for political heavyweights', in which eight members of the party's national executive hope to raise a few quid by shedding pounds. The sponsorship form which has come into my possession was sent round by the engineers' union to its district secretaries on behalf of Ken Cure, the AUEW representative on Labour's top body. It seems that 'Bro. Cure' weighed in at an admirable 17 stones and eight pounds when he began his fund-raising fast on 1 May. I refuse to lower the tone of this column by making snide remarks about 'the fat cats in the trade union bureaucracy'.

●

Speaking of cats, two big saucers of milk are due to current *Tribune* editor Nigel Williamson and his predecessor Chris Mullin for their spitting and scratching debate in a recent edition of the Labour left weekly. A bitter and twisted Mullin accused his erstwhile allies of becoming 'upwardly mobile' and deserting the hard left for the soft comforts of Kinnock's camp. Williamson was very upset by Mullin's article, not because it was 'uncomradely' but because it was 'downright unpleasant and it leaves a nasty taste in the mouth'. In other words, call me a class traitor by all means but for solidarity's sake be pleasant about it. As for nasty tastes in the mouth, a long break from licking Kinnock's boots seems the best cure.

[redacted]

For his sins, radical Labour MP Eric Heffer writes a column in the awful *Liverpool Echo*. A recent example of Heffer's penmanship took up his political opponents for interfering with the beliefs of people who 'should have the right to practice their faith in the long-established tradition'. But he wasn't attacking the Labour right for witch-hunting his local Militant friends and admirers. He was having a go at the Tories for interfering with 'the traditional British Sunday'. 'There are those who say' writes Heffer 'this government is not only anti-trade unionist. It is also basically anti-Christian.' There are also those who say Labour's 'broad church' is basically anti-working class. One of them used to be a militant Merseyside building workers' convenor called Eric Heffer. But it can't be the same one. The *Liverpool Echo* would never have published his stuff.

●

***Socialist Worker* has come up with a new interpretation of 'exposing' the manipulations of Labour Party politicians. Last week's paper carried a full-frontal explanation of why Ken Livingstone has gone over to the side of the soft left. ' "Red Ken" always wore white underpants' declares *Socialist Worker* 'The tragedy is that his supporters never undressed him in public. He has now led people up the garden path.' No doubt Ken is thankful that his underpants were left intact, what with all those nettles and rose bushes he's been leading people past.**

[redacted]

The anarchic youth of the Sussex coast failed in their attempt to 'Stop Brighton' last week, although one did tell our on-the-spot reporter that he had managed to block up the toilet in a swish local department store. He did not reveal details. The police wrecked their own plans for giving Brighton's punks the same truncheon treatment as the Stonehenge hippies. First the boys in blue turned up at 7am, which is not an hour of the day known to the anarchist children of darkness. Then they lined up in pairs at intervals of only 20 yards along the main streets, creating such a presence that the few punks who had turned out refused to provoke a baton charge and went off to sunbathe instead.

REPORTS

Nursing the cuts in Glasgow

Shop stewards at Glasgow's Western Infirmary set up an unofficial committee when they discovered that the joint trade union negotiating committee had approved cuts worth £2.2m. But since our last report *(tns,* 17 May) they have failed to organise resistance among health workers.

● At the *Royal Infirmary,* where more than £200 000 worth of cuts are planned, management has told nurses that they are the new nursing home cleaners. The normal cleaners will replace cleaning staff 'naturally wasted' from the wards. The night catering service has already gone and staff make do with junk food which they re-heat themselves in microwave ovens.

● At the *Southern General* cuts in ancillary staff have doubled the workload of those left behind. Their only compensation for the extra burden is a couple of pounds more on their bonus.

● At the *Garthavel General* management has withdrawn waitress service on the wards. Who are the new unofficial unpaid waitresses? — the existing nursing staff.

Similar cost-cutting schemes are being introduced throughout Glasgow hospitals. But health workers everywhere told us that their union officials were nowhere to be found. Doreen, a Nupe member at the Royal, told us that she has never met her workplace rep. 'They ought to let the members know what's going on for a start. We don't even get a newsletter and there's been no meeting to discuss the cuts and how to fight them.' Doreen thinks the union should be organising strike action against the domestic and canteen cuts.

Elaine, a trainee technician at the Western Infirmary, is just as critical about her union reps in Astms. 'We're paying £1.25 a month for nothing at the moment. They're not calling meetings and there's no communication. Our union rep has a pretty close bond with the boss, but not with us, the membership.' Elaine takes home £60 a week and says that conditions were bad enough before the unions agreed the latest round of cutbacks. Now she says it's hell on the wards and in the kitchens. 'It's pretty ironic that the only improvement our department has seen in ages — we're now paid to work one Saturday in three, before we were unpaid — was introduced by our boss! The union rep had tolerated unpaid Saturday work for years.'

Looking at the 'strictly confidential' lengthy list of cuts drawn up by management and union officials, other workers commented that they could understand why their unions have no time to defend their members. Union negotiators in Glasgow are too busy sweating about how they are going to get their members to accept the cuts *and* persuade them to vote to retain the political levy to the Labour Party. Doreen and Elaine are unimpressed by union officials who have done nothing to resist cuts telling them that they should continue paying dues to a party that has done nothing to resist cuts. They want the unions and the Labour Party to know that they cannot expect workers to pay them when they have done nothing to earn it.

Cathy Barrett



Steve O'Reardon (reflex)

Paying Astms for nothing: Elaine

Forget the fiddlers

Last Thursday most post office counter staff in the London W1 district walked out in protest at the suspension of one of the staff. Una was suspended for allegedly 'falsifying her account' — this means fiddling. This suspension was a direct result of a report by the investigation department of the post office.

At a mass meeting on Friday morning we decided to stay out until we get Una reinstated. Local officials were locked in fruitless talks with management. We also agreed to picket out the three offices which were still working. This was successful, although management at one office were so scared that they called in the police. Three transit vans arrived to check that the three pickets were not intimidating the staff — even postal workers aren't that stroppy.

Local officials want a return to work because they say that nothing more can be done. Our union general secretary Alan Tuffin and district official Bill Flaherty have *ordered* us to go back to work as there is a 'procedure' for doing these things.

The dispute raises several important points. Management are clearly testing the ground by trying to sack a clerk with a bad work record who is not known as a militant, using the excuse that she is dishonest. Using the investigation department legitimises what they are doing because our union, the UCW, accepts that fiddlers have to be rooted out. If management are successful they will be able to root out anyone who stands up to them.

For us it should not be a question of whether the clerk is guilty or not guilty. If any worker does anything we don't like it's up to us to sort it out. Once we accept that management has a right to discipline our own workmates where do we draw the line? Neither is it a question of curbing the 'excesses' of the anti-fiddlers team. The very existence of the investigation department makes us all fair game for management attacks.

To get Una her job back we have to stay out until she is reinstated, build support among postmen and admin staff here and in other districts and get the snoopers out of the post office. The union officials are getting hot and bothered about us not following procedure. But procedure won't get Una her job back — only we can do that.

Jean Smith



Deadline for news and reports: Monday 9am

COME ALONG!



Black blood on British hands

British companies have a big stake in apartheid. Their profits depend on the barbaric system of butchery that keeps South Africa's black masses in chains. Next week the Revolutionary Communist Party is holding meetings all over the country to discuss the struggle of the South African people and how we can show our solidarity by taking a stand against the British bosses and the British government at home. Come to the meetings and join our contingent on the 16 June demonstration.

● **Solidarity with South African people!**
Demonstrate against apartheid's British backers
Sunday 16 June 12 noon
Hyde Park (Marble Arch tube)
London

● **Revolution in South Africa?**
Meetings to discuss what's going on in South Africa and what it means for us

● ***Bradford***
Wednesday 12 June 7.30pm
Central Library

● ***Birmingham***
Wednesday 12 June 7.30pm
Digbeth Civic Hall

● ***Hackney***
Wednesday 12 June 7.30pm
Pembury Tavern, 90 Amhurst Road E8

● ***Leeds***
Thursday 13 June 7.30pm
Trades Club, Chapeltown Road

● ***Liverpool***
Thursday 13 June 7.30pm
AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant

● ***Sheffield***
Thursday 13 June 7.30pm
Red Deer, Pitt Street

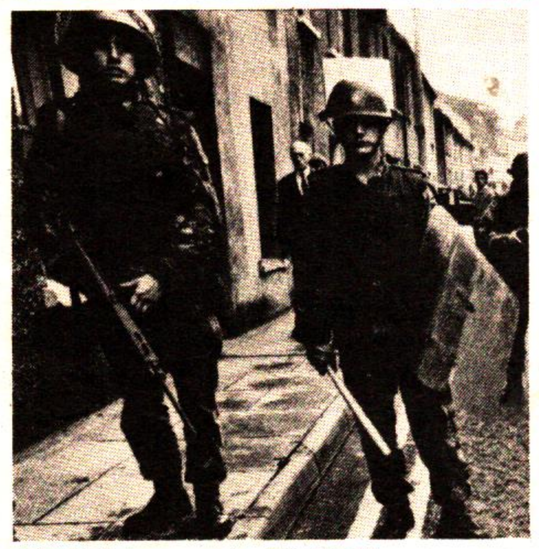
Other events

● **Get Gummer! — no to police state**
Tell the Tories what you think of their law and order when party chair John Gummer comes to town
Saturday 8 June 9.30am
Conservative Club
Zetland Street, Wakefield

● **Free abortion on demand!**
This Friday Tory moralists will be trying to get Enoch Powell's Bill to ban embryo experiments debated in parliament once again. If the Bill goes through it will threaten women's rights to contraception and abortion. Support our Glasgow protest!
Friday 7 June 5pm
St Enoch's Square
Glasgow city centre

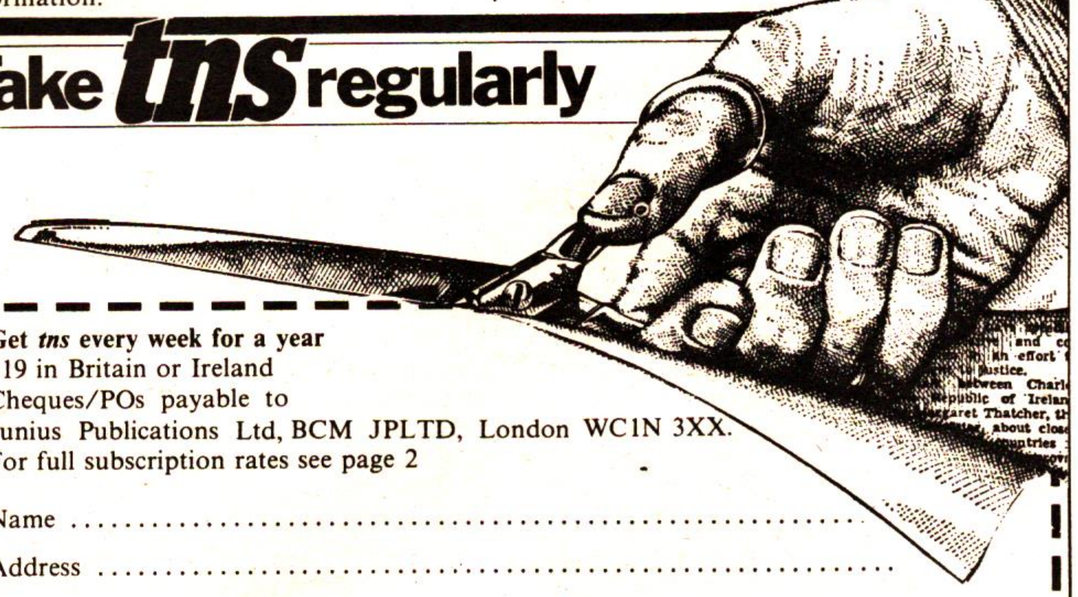
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● **British troops out of Ireland!**
In August 1971 the British Army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary raided nationalist ghettos in Belfast and Derry and interned 340 people in British concentration camps and prison ships. The detention and torture of supporters of Irish freedom provoked riots and street fighting and an orgy of violence by the British murder machine. This year the Irish Freedom Movement will be commemorating the anniversary of Internment by marching for Irish freedom in London.
Saturday 10 August
London
Called by the
Irish Freedom Movement

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tns

Reinstate victimised miners

NO GROVELLING TO MACGREGOR



Steve O'Reardon (reflex)

*Sacked Polkemmet miners were told by NUM lawyers to wait for a year, and then try to get their jobs back by appealing to an industrial tribunal 'on an individual basis'. But the victimised men need collective action from the union to win reinstatement **now**.*

The struggle to win freedom and reinstatement for jailed and victimised miners is still the number one issue hanging over from the 12-month strike.

It is now three months since the NUM leaders marched their members back into work, with the miners sacked during the strike at the front of the processions. What has happened to the victimised men they left at the pit gates in March?

Miners have been sacked for anything ranging from fighting on picket lines to shouting 'scab', and even for fishing in official coal board wellies. Few have got their jobs back from the coal board and around 670 remain sacked. Even in an area with a supposedly 'moderate' management like North Derbyshire there are still 30 miners on the victimised list. Where the industry is run by the coal board's 'hard men' the picture is even grimmer. In Scotland the board's area boss Wheeler has refused to countenance having any of the 208 sacked men back down the pit.

Coal board chief Ian MacGregor has refused to budge from the position he announced at the end of the strike: 'People are now discovering the price of insubordination and insurrection. And boy are we going to make it stick.' MacGregor has commended the board's Scottish hit-man Wheeler for his 'reasonableness' in kicking militants out of the industry.

The board's no-nonsense stand has been backed up by the courts. More than 60 miners are still languishing in jail for offences committed during the strike and many others have yet to come to trial. The life sentences imposed on South Wales miners Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland for killing a scab taxi driver show the sort of treatment miners can expect from judges keen to teach a lesson to those who make a stand against the system.

Management, the government and the guardians of law and order have announced to the world that there will be no quarter for the casualties of the year-long battle to save jobs and pits. What have the leaders of the labour movement done to defend the miners who have lost everything in the fight for the right to work?

National action needed

At a meeting in the Yorkshire mining village of Upton last Saturday, NUM president Arthur Scargill told miners that their national officials would 'not rest until every one has been reinstated'. But behind the fighting talk, the union has failed to lead the sort of national action that could put the sacked men back on the coal board's payroll.

Instead of launching an immediate campaign for an amnesty and reinstatement for jailed and sacked miners, the NUM balloted its members on a levy to support the men and their families. Miners rejected their leaders' cynical attempt to pass the buck to the rank and file and to dodge the fight with the coal board. Since the farce of the lost ballot, victimised miners have been left to struggle on more or less alone. Some have had support from their local branches. But many have simply been told by their officials to sign on the dole if they want to, and have been denied voting rights in union meetings.

The NUM leaders have appealed to the coal board for leniency rather than mobilise their members behind a national campaign of solidarity action. At Saturday's Upton rally, Yorkshire NUM vice president Sammy Thompson said he had 'got to suck up' to management 'to get our lads' jobs back'. 'I'm prepared to get on my knees and grovel,' Thompson declared. Scargill told the audience he was annoyed that the coal board refused to play by the rules: 'If they went by their own yardstick and reinstated all they said they would, 80 per cent of those sacked would be back at work on Monday'.

But the coal board has no interest in the old rules and 'yardsticks' of industrial relations. It is out to crush the miners' resistance to its pit closure programme by whatever means are necessary. The union's feeble protest that the employers are not doing 'what they said they would' is no match for the board's determination.

In management's eyes any miner who fights back is a criminal who deserves at best the sack and at worst a jail sentence. The NUM has tried to get around this problem by distinguishing between the '80 per cent' of miners sacked for trivial offences and the minority fired for taking forceful direct action. This grovelling approach has played into the coal board's hands. By admitting that some sacked men are serious offenders, the miners' leaders have given credence to the board's idea that striking miners are violent criminals. The NUM's failure to win reinstatement by 'sucking up' to management shows that those who follow Thompson's advice to 'get on our knees and grovel' can expect to get kicked in the teeth.

The only hope of an amnesty or reinstatement which the official labour movement can offer miners is to wait for the return of a Labour government at some future date. This is nothing more than wishful thinking combined with cynical betrayal. Miners' officials who promise their members that 'Thatcher and MacGregor will be on the dole in a couple of years' beg the question that matters: what is being done to defend the men in jail and out of work *now*?

Even if Labour gets back into government in the late eighties, the party's leaders have made clear that there will be no complete amnesty for victimised miners. A recent report by leading Labour MPs only suggested the need for an official inquiry into police and legal action during the strike — along the lines of the Scarman report that whitewashed the terror tactics used by the police and courts during the 1981 riots.

Instead of crawling to the coal board and wishing for a Labour government, the NUM should be organising a fighting national campaign against every victimisation and jailing. Thousands of ordinary miners have proved willing to take local action against the coal board and government offensive, striking against sackings at South Kirkby in Yorkshire and walking out in protest at jail sentences in South Wales. If this anger was given a national lead and direction, it could force the Tories and management to back down.

The NUM's leaders complain that legal action means they don't have the money for such a struggle. But one ready source of income would be to stop paying the political levy to the Labour Party and spend the cash on defending the miners who need it most. Why should money that is needed to protect miners be paid to a party whose leaders condemned strikers taking on the police, and have promised to keep 'violent pickets' under lock and key if they get into power?

On Saturday Labour leader Neil Kinnock is to address the Scottish miners' gala. Supporters of *tns* will be there to tell him what we think of his party's plans for the miners. If miners and other workers are to win the battle to free the jailed miners and get victimised men their jobs back, the compromisers and crawlers among the labour movement's leaders will have to be given the sack.

REINSTATE ALL SACKED MINERS!

FREE THE CLASS WAR PRISONERS!

PROTEST

Saturday 8 June 10.30am
Hillside Crescent
Edinburgh

Join the Revolutionary Communist Party's protest for sacked and jailed miners at the Edinburgh miners' gala this weekend.