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ULSTER LOYALISTS ON THE RAMPAGE

Britain's bootboys kick back

See pages 6 and 7



MURDOCH'S OFFER

Rupert Murdoch's offer to hand over the old Gray's Inn Road plant for the production of a labour movement newspaper, as a solution to the Wapping dispute, is an insult to the 6000 workers he sacked. The fact that his offer has not been rejected out of hand by the print union leaders should set the alarm bells ringing. Brenda Dean's willingness to negotiate over Murdoch's stunt shows the union leaders put saving face before securing jobs and union rights at News International.

If Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis want a newspaper, that is their concern. But their eagerness for talks with Murdoch shows that they too are ready to make a deal to settle the dispute and get themselves a paper, even if it means sacrificing jobs and union rights for print workers. The Wapping dispute is about reinstating the sacked workers and winning union recognition. It is time the union leaders started fighting for these demands.

Instead of leading a real fight against Murdoch, the union leaders have turned the strike into a campaign of token gestures. The Saturday night demonstrations are better than nothing — but what about the rest of the week? Symbolic protests may be good for morale but they put no real pressure on the employers. That's why Murdoch is in a stronger position now than on the first day of the dispute.

The union leaders are running the dispute as if the picket lines are their private domain. They have discouraged 'outsiders' from picketing. Instead of mobilising maximum support, Brenda Dean and Tony Dubbins have put their faith in public opinion. But public opinion does not win industrial disputes. Indeed public opinion is moulded by the very employers the print workers are fighting against.

The union leaders have also promoted a divisive approach to the dispute. During the first few weeks of the strike they

directed all the anger against the scabs in the electricians' union. Instead of fighting Murdoch, the union leaders advocated expelling the EETPU from the TUC. They ignored the fact that the EETPU was not alone in scabbing. Lorry drivers in the TGWU, engineers in the AUEW and members of the NGA, Sogat and the NUJ are all crossing the Wapping picket lines.

It is not surprising that workers have little confidence in the union leaders. Thousands of jobs are being negotiated out of existence in Fleet Street. Dean and Dubbins are not even pretending to defend jobs. All they are interested in is negotiating a deal — any deal.

The print workers cannot succeed against Murdoch while the conduct of the dispute remains in the hands of Dean and Dubbins. To fight effectively, workers must have direct control over the conduct of the strike. We need strike committees that can organise action — action that relies on *involving* rather than *excluding* other sections of the labour movement.

The only way to win the strike is to take whatever steps are necessary to bring Murdoch to his knees. Half-hearted gestures and appeals to public opinion are useless. Murdoch has all the resources of the government and the media, the courts and the police behind him and he is out to win. The only language that Murdoch understands is the language of force.

Print workers are being picked off at one paper after another. By establishing the principle that all jobs are sacred it is possible to unite all workers in the print industry in a common struggle. Today workers are fighting on several fronts, one at a time, often against each other. To win at Wapping we need to change the direction of the dispute so that it can become part of a united struggle of all print workers against all newspaper bosses. This is the only way that the Wapping strikers can inspire wider solidarity and win the support they deserve.

NO SURRENDER

The wave of attacks on the Royal Ulster Constabulary from the Loyalist community reveals the tensions between the British state and its traditional allies that have been unleashed by the Anglo-Irish agreement. The paradoxical feature of these conflicts is that they arise, not from any attempt by Britain to retreat from the Union and abandon the Loyalists, but from its attempts to strengthen British domination over Ireland and reinforce its drive to crush the movement for national liberation (see pages 6 and 7).

The Anglo-Irish agreement is designed to ratify the division of Ireland under British control and achieve closer coordination among the authorities in London, Dublin and Belfast in hunting and imprisoning those who oppose these arrangements.

To win approval from moderate nationalist representatives on both sides of the Border, the deal had to include token concessions to the Catholic community in the North. Hence Thatcher agreed to give Dublin politicians a consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland, and directed the RUC to halt provocative Loyalist marches through Catholic areas.

These concessions have inflamed the Loyalists and led to ugly confrontations

between RUC officers and their Protestant neighbours, as well as the more familiar sectarian murders and arson attacks on Catholic homes. Given the reliance of Ulster Protestants on the British state to guarantee their privileged access to jobs, housing and social status, even a token modification of the terms of Anglo-Irish relations sends a wave of insecurity through the Loyalist ranks. This insecurity has been expressed in the official 'Ulster says no' campaign and in the activities of the Loyalist gun gangs.

As the marching season progresses, the British forces will try to reassure the Loyalists by stepping up repression of the nationalists. Despite the bitter words exchanged between Ian Paisley and Tom King and the bricks and plastic bullets flying in the Shankill Road, the Loyalists and the British forces march under the same Union flag when it comes to suppressing the struggle for Irish freedom.

That is why the Irish Freedom Movement will be campaigning in the coming months against the Anglo-Irish deal, against all British plans for Ireland and for the immediate withdrawal of British forces, as the only way of ending the barbarities inflicted by both British paramilitary police and Loyalist paramilitary gangs.

LABOUR IN FULHAM



'SMILE, IT'S A BY-ELECTION' — RAYNSFORD AND LIVINGSTONE

BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER THAMES

At a Fulham press conference a Labour Party official commented on candidate Nick Raynsford's likeness to Neil Kinnock. 'Look at Nick's hair line,' he said, 'it's following Neil's.' But the Raynsford-Kinnock likeness goes beyond his receding hair line. Their political likeness has been the focus of Labour's Fulham campaign. Raynsford declared himself 'a total Kinnock supporter', and organised his campaign in line with Kinnock's recent speeches.

The Fulham by-election shows how Kinnock's Labour Party wants to bridge the gap between yuppies and workers, reports Andrew Calcutt

Decency, dignity and individual freedom were the Kinnock-style keynotes of Raynsford's electioneering. Raynsford also promoted himself as the only local candidate. For 17 years he has lived in Cranbury Road SW6, one of Fulham's gentrified districts. In his supporters' windows the Labour stickers read 'Nick Raynsford lives here' — causing some confusion for social security snoopers. When the March winds blew down the Alliance signboard above their temporary office in North End Road, Raynsford compared their flimsy base with his own roots in the constituency.

Raynsford became a Hammersmith and Fulham councillor in 1971. Veteran Labour right winger Michael Stewart held the seat from 1945 until he retired in 1979, when he was succeeded by Tory Martin Stevens whose death led to this week's by-election. Fulham Labour Party stressed its 'unbroken' tradition by bringing Stewart out of retirement to vouch for Raynsford. 'He represents the real Labour tradition,' said Stewart. 'He is a local man who knows and cares for the community.'

The Fulham community has changed since Stewart first went to Westminster. A middle class invasion has pushed house prices in trendy Fulham above £100 000. A short walk from Raynsford's Harold Laski house headquarters, the Fulham Road futon centre does a snoring-good trade. But Fulham's up-market transformation is far from complete. In Gibbs Green ward there is 26 per cent unemployment. There are 11 000 people on Hammersmith and Fulham council's housing waiting list, and 130 families in bed and breakfast accommodation. 'Fulham', says Raynsford, 'is a divided society.'

Raynsford was chosen to bridge the divide. A Cambridge graduate, he has spent the last 10 years as director of a housing quango. His wife, Anne, is a part-time teacher at the local school attended by two of their children. All three young Raynsfords were born in the NHS West London hospital, now under threat. 'If we care about tomorrow', he says, 'we've got to care about the health service.'

Raynsford is the caring yuppie. His concern about unemployment, housing and the health service is matched only by his interest in the arts. He is a strong supporter of Hammersmith's Riverside arts centre. Protest singer Billy Bragg and classical guitarist John Williams were booked to support his campaign. 'I am a pragmatic radical,' says Raynsford, but a professional colleague describes him as 'a natural conciliator', whose stability would satisfy the middle class vote. He displayed his pragmatism and conciliatory skills when sharing a platform with Denis Healey and Ken Livingstone. The message was clear: the Kinnockites together could win Fulham and go on 'to form a government committed to social need'.

Agony aunt Claire Rayner came to convince Fulham voters of Labour's commitment to the consumer. Raynsford echoed her call for eggs to be sold in twos, and praised Fulham's Sands End food co-op for its services to old people. TV cops Jill Gascoine, Anna Carteret and Colin Welland went walkabout on Clem Attlee estate to proclaim Labour's commitment to law and order.

Shadow home secretary Gerald Kaufman castigated the Tories for presiding over 'the worst crime wave this country has ever known', and revealed Labour's plans for discretionary crime prevention grants to householders. Six days after mounted police charged the Wapping demonstrators, Raynsford reaffirmed his support for the police: 'At Catherine and Laura's school fair, the children stroking the police horse was one of the most memorable sights.'

Raynsford is unequivocal about the use of the law against workers — he supports it. He has spoken against 'secondary picketing', and laughs off the Tories' attempts to label him an extremist.

Alliance candidate Roger Liddle could not fault him. He bemoaned 'Labour's evil' — the likes of Bernie Grant and Ted Knight', but had to admit that 'Raynsford is a nice man.' According to Liddle the spectrum of Labour opinion has shifted to the left, isolating the party's moderates. In fact Raynsford's ascendancy is proof of the opposite. With Kinnock-Raynsford to the fore, the Labour Party appeals directly to the middle classes. This may help Labour win votes in places like Fulham, but what use is it to the working class?

Racism

ETHNIC MONITORING ROW EXPLODES

'IT'S RACIST TO THE CORE'

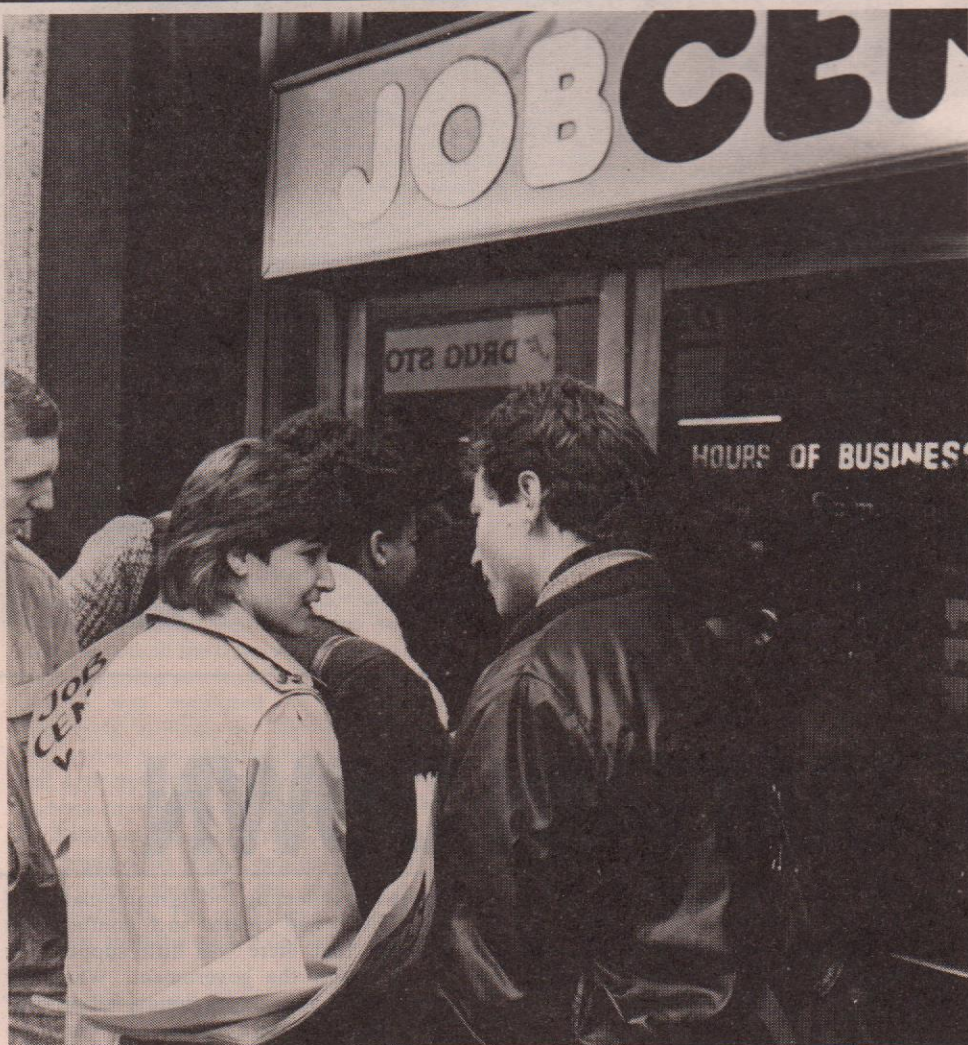
The Manpower Services Commission is attacking Workers Against Racism for opposing ethnic monitoring in job centres. We spoke to War organiser Alex Farrell about the row

The recent two-week test of ethnic monitoring in 150 job centres sparked protest strike action by 700 union members, backed by Workers Against Racism. This shocked Steve Loveman, the Manpower Services Commission boss responsible for the race checks, into issuing circulars to employees and writing to the press. His message? Workers Against Racism is wrong — the race checks are anti-racist. War organiser Alex Farrell told us different.

• Why is War fighting the race checks?

The only reason the government wants to know the race of benefit claimants or job applicants is to deny them their rights. Attempts to carry out race checks started in 1982, when the Nationality Act made many blacks second- and third-class citizens. The Tories plan to reorganise the welfare system in line with the Act — to deprive black people of equal rights to benefits. Of course that's not what the Tories are telling us.

But it's already under way. Black people have to produce passports in hospitals, doctors' surgeries and housing offices. A new immigration rule says that immigrants who want relations to join them have to prove that they'll be independent financially, with no claim to any benefits. Otherwise they won't be let in. That's what the checks are part of. And that's why we've fought them since they first surfaced.



ALEX FARRELL PUTS THE CASE AGAINST THE RACE CHECKS TO JOB CENTRE STAFF

• Why is the government trying to get them into job centres?

They thought the job centres would be a soft touch — a backdoor route into the dole and social security offices, where the checks would really count.

They tried the doles in 1982 and together with rank and file workers we beat them off. They tried the doles again early this year. Strikes at Toxteth and Thornton Heath saw them off again. So they went for the job

centres — traditionally less militant and with less workers in the union.

They went for a two-week test at 150 job centres. We contacted as many as possible and put pickets on where we got the best response from union members. Workers refused to operate the scheme at job centres in Hackney, Leeds and Fulham. Those boycotting the scheme were suspended without pay. By the end of the test period over 700 Civil and Public Services Associa-

tion members had taken strike action in protest. All this with no strike pay or official union support.

• What was the response from the MSC?

At Hackney it was a case of headless chickens. The local manager sent for the area manager, who sent for the number two at the MSC. At the MSC national HQ in Sheffield, management put out a statement to their employees to counter the War leaflets. Loveman has also written to the press, defending the race checks.

He claims the MSC needs the race checks to stamp out job discrimination against black people. If you take a close look at the Youth Training Scheme — run by the MSC — it's racist to the core. A survey of the YTS in Birmingham and Solihull proves the point. One in five school leavers there are black, only one in 20 got on to the better schemes where there's most chance of ending up with a job. So who does the MSC think it's kidding? All the facts show that they're racist.

The MSC knows the real score, and they know there will be opposition. They've told local management to keep the scheme secret from 'any organisation suspected not to be sympathetic towards the idea of ethnic monitoring'. But that category doesn't include the CPSA leadership.

• What's the CPSA up to?

At first CPSA leaders backed the checks. After the dole workers began to strike against the checks, there was a fight in the union. Now official policy is to oppose ethnic monitoring of claimants.

When the MSC told the CPSA about the job centre race checks, the union organised a vote in the offices affected. But by the time the vote was counted — it was 376 to 178 in favour of strike action — a CPSA official had already made a deal with the MSC to sabotage opposition. The vote result was suppressed and members were told that action would not get official support. So job centre staff assumed the vote had opposed strike action.

Many workers still need convincing that all race checks have to be opposed. The union leadership argues that so long as it's voluntary, ethnic monitoring is OK. The left in the union argue that we shouldn't fight for all-out opposition to the checks, in case we lose the vote at conference.

But we'd rather double or treble the core of committed opponents of the checks, than get a wishy-washy motion passed at conference. If you only oppose the method used to collect information, all the government has to do is change the method and the checks go through.

• So what are War's plans now?

We've given the MSC a thick ear this time, but they're not finished. We have to be on the look out for the next attempt to get the checks through, and build all-out opposition in the union. We'll be at the CPSA conference in Brighton on 10 May. Any union member who wants to fight racism should contact us straight away.

FISHING FOR BLACKS

Just before 10pm on Friday 14 March Ade walked into work as usual. A black student at Hackney college, he spends his nights cleaning the British Telecom office in Newgate Street, City of London. Like his workmates — nearly all of them black — Ade earns £67 for a week's work.

Two hours before Ade arrived that night, 36 police and immigration officers entered

the building and lay in wait. When the cleaners clocked on, they were herded by security guards into the rest room, to face six immigration officers armed with home office files on every worker.

'One by one they called out our names', says Ade, 'and asked each of us questions like, "How long have you been in the country?" The questions were unimportant. They had all the answers in front of them. They just wanted to catch people out. Each interview lasted two minutes. After that they told you to go out, either through the left-hand door — back to work — or through the right-hand door — to the police station and deportation.'

RACIST LAWS

Ade was one of the lucky ones who went through the left-hand door. Nineteen of his workmates were taken to Wood Street police station and interrogated for up to 14 hours. Five were transferred to Latchmere remand centre. Two have already made what the home office calls 'voluntary departures' from Britain. One is being

forcibly deported this week, and two cases are still 'under consideration'. All the others arrested have been charged with 'overstaying' or 'working in breach of conditions'. They are due to appear in court. All are likely to be deported.

The raid on the British Telecom offices shows the real face of Britain's racist immigration laws. Employers, police, immigration officials and government cooperate closely to hunt and persecute immigrants. The spectre of Latchmere remand centre hangs over every black in Britain. The Manpower Services Commission might claim it needs race checks to fight racism in employment. But the checks provide vital information to tighten controls on black workers in Britain.

The fishing raid shows it's vital that workers refuse to cooperate with the authorities. We cannot fight racism by feeding information to the racists.

The raid underlines the importance of opposing all immigration laws. They make every black worker a potential 'illegal', liable to interrogation, arrest and deport-

ation. By dividing workers into 'legals' and 'illegals', the establishment divides us against ourselves. The labour movement must organise against every deportation and all immigration controls.

RCP

Rupert Murdoch won't give us a printing plant, we derive few benefits from falling oil prices, and we backed a loser in the Grand National. So it's still down to you to come up with the cash we need to make *tns* a winner.

We're looking to expand the paper and its circulation, to make sure the working class has the paper it needs to counter the Murdochs and Shahs — and the Kinnocks.

Rush donations to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association.

Labour movement

LIVERPOOL AND LAMBETH FARCE



COURT JESTERS HATTON AND KNIGHT

BRING THE CURTAIN DOWN

When the GLC went out in a blaze of fireworks, Liverpool and Lambeth councils also chose to put on a theatrical final performance. Liverpool's takes the form of an appeal to the high court. Lambeth's runs in the council chamber for the next few weeks. Local people will give their verdict on the Labour left's municipal pranks on 8 May.

The decision of the high court to surcharge and disqualify from office for five years 80 councillors from Liverpool and Lambeth, over their delay in setting a rate last year, is an outrageous attack on democratic rights. The judges have deprived people of their elected representatives, and made clear that any attempt to resist cuts in local government spending will be penalised in the courts.

Revolutionary Communist Party candidates will be running in council elections in Liverpool and Lambeth next month to challenge the record and the policies of the Labour left

But instead of going all out to mobilise popular resistance to the Tory cuts, the left-wing Labour councillors have chosen to pursue the same sort of policies that have undermined workers' willingness to fight against the cuts, and have left the councillors vulnerable to victimisation by the Tories.

Meanwhile they are passing the cuts on to local people. In Liverpool the councillors have sworn to take their case to the court of

appeal. The transport workers' union, which had offered to finance this appeal, has backed off under pressure from a Labour leadership which would be happy to keep Liverpool's Militant councillors out of office. Yet the councillors say they will take their fight for 'natural justice' all the way to the house of lords.

It is appropriate that the Labour left's campaign against rate-capping should end up with its leading figures traipsing cap-in-hand through the courts. Heralded as the left's great cause of 1985, the rate-capping struggle was promoted at mass rallies, days of action and in hundreds of articles in radical journals. Yet the campaign collapsed at the first hint of confrontation with the establishment. A few dozen councillors were left to carry the can for continuing their rhetoric of defiance for a few days longer than their colleagues deemed expedient.

DEMORALISING

The Liverpool councillors held out the longest, but this timetable was dictated by the government, not by Derek Hatton and his colleagues. They are not being penalised for their actions in resisting the cuts — they have imposed austerity policies just like every other council. They have been charged and convicted for making token gestures which conferred no benefits on local people.

The rhetorical character of the Liverpool Labour councillors' campaign against the cuts has had the effect of demoralising resistance to the Tories. Tens of thousands of Liverpool workers took to the streets to demonstrate their opposition to government policies during 1984 and 1985. But that spirit of resistance has been dissipated by a council leadership committed to balancing the books. Instead of going out to rally popular support, the council leadership put its faith in creative accounting and other manoeuvres to postpone the showdown. In June 1985 the council dumped its policy of not setting a rate, increased rates by nine per cent and passed a deficit budget.

But this only put off the confrontation until November. By then the council's

backroom scheming and its manipulation of committees had created such confusion in the city that there was little support for conflict with the government. When the councillors' appeals for action fell on deaf ears, they accepted a rescue deal from Swiss bankers. The package included a commitment to 'unallocated cuts' of £3.8m, a clause to abide by the law, and it stored up massive debts for the city in two years time. This was no last minute retreat — the deal had been worked out by city accountants months in advance. At every stage the council was prepared to push its luck with the Tories to the limit while preparing for capitulation.

BLAME MILITANT

On their last day of action in March, the isolation of the Liverpool councillors became fully apparent. On a day when 30 000 Liverpool council workers had been called out, only 400 turned up to a rally. Where else could the councillors turn but to the courts? The Militant Tendency has often shown its willingness to resort to the capitalist courts during its long-running squabble with the Labour leaders. The main legacy of the Militant Tendency in Liverpool seems likely to be to boost the authority of the courts to interfere in labour movement affairs. The other legacy of the left-wing Labour council will be even worse conditions for local people. This week the council is expected to announce a further package of rent rises, rate rises, redundancies and a freeze on recruitment.

If the Alliance succeed in taking control in Liverpool on 8 May, the Militant councillors will blame the Tories, the Labour leadership, the media and the weather. But the central responsibility for the fiasco of Liverpool council lies with the council's left-wing Labour leadership.

The final gesture of Lambeth's Labour group, before the disqualification of 31 of its members took effect, was to install council powers in the hands of a three-person committee composed of Labour councillors who have not been disqualified. The Lambeth councillors, able to raise only half

the amount required to meet fines and legal costs, have ruled out the option of following Liverpool through the courts. But their alternative depends just as much on manipulating council structures as Liverpool's, and has nothing to offer as a way of fighting the cuts.

Although popular resistance to the Tory cuts was never as widespread in London as in Liverpool, there were several large demonstrations last year, with substantial contingents from Lambeth. On Democracy Day in March last year, and again in October, tens of thousands of workers came out to demonstrate their opposition to the Tories. In an area of acute deprivation such as Lambeth, where until recently signing on was a bi-monthly ritual, cuts are already hitting people hard. But in Lambeth, just as in Liverpool, the Labour council's commitment to balancing the books has gradually sapped resistance over the past six years.

Lambeth first pledged to defy the Tories just after Thatcher came to power in 1979, when the government cut the council's rate support grant. Yet three months later left-wing council leader Ted Knight was proposing 'real savings, involving rationalisation, greater efficiency and a reduction in overall staffing levels'. Five months later he recommended a rate increase, while still talking about fighting the cuts. Knight has pursued the same vacillating approach ever since.

GRAND FINALE

At the Labour local government conference called to coordinate the rate-capping campaign in November 1984, Knight spelt out his position. He argued that the government had 'got to believe we are prepared to go to the brink'. In the event the Tories called the left's bluff, and Knight's attempt to convince the government — and the rest of the Labour Party — that he meant business landed him in court.

The left's policy of making gestures, and then pulling back at 'the brink' to remain within the constraints of legality, left it exposed to the courts without providing any effective way of rallying popular opposition to the government.

The isolation of the Lambeth councillors has been apparent at their recent rallies. A conference called last month to build support for the surcharged councillors and opposition to the cuts attracted only 100 people. A fund-raising rally featuring Tony Benn and Diane Abbott attracted only a couple of dozen more.

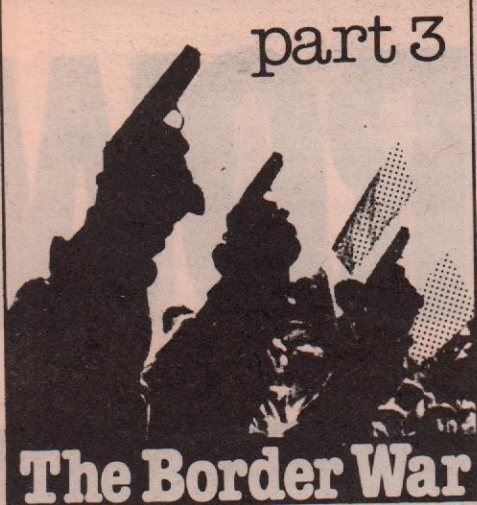
The final night of the surcharged councillors started with Knight filibustering, because his colleagues turned up late for the debate. He finally manoeuvred the council to ensure that the Labour group would remain in power for a few weeks more, under the control of a hand-picked junta. The debate degenerated into farce. Portraits of Lloyd Leon — outgoing mayor and pub landlord — bobbed across the chamber. Surcharged councillors danced together while votes were counted. A plaque was unveiled to commemorate the councillors' fight, and the evening reached its climax in a singalong to a pre-recorded tape of the Internationale.

This show was witnessed by 150 Labour Party members from all over London and other parts of the country. Council staff and local people were conspicuous by their absence.

The Revolutionary Communist Party is running for the council in Liverpool and Lambeth, to expose the hypocrisy of the Labour Party and to make the point that the only way to save jobs and services is to organise direct action against the Tories. The past three years in Liverpool and seven years in Lambeth have shown that conference rhetoric, committee room manoeuvres, deals with the unions and stunts are worse than useless. We intend to put our class struggle policies forward during the campaign, and to carry on fighting for them after we are elected. (See page 11 for campaign details.)

If you live in Liverpool or Lambeth and would like to get involved in a council election campaign with a difference, get in touch with Ann Burton on 01-729 0414. Vote RCP on 8 May: class struggle is the only promise our candidates make.

John Pearson



THE BRITISH SICKNESS



MARGARET BOYLE'S HUSBAND PAINTS IN PRISON AT THE 'SECRETARY OF STATE'S PLEASURE'

Margaret Boyle has been dragged from her home, sexually abused, beaten until she vomited blood and warned her children would be killed unless she did what her captors wanted. Yet her ordeal prompted no hysterical headlines in the gutter press, no TV documentaries about 'our violent society', and no calls in parliament for tougher police action.

But then Margaret Boyle is not an English vicar's daughter from Ealing. She is an Irish republican from Strabane, County Tyrone. And her attackers weren't hooded hooligans with strange tattoos on their arms. They were men in uniform with 'Royal Ulster Constabulary' emblazoned across their caps. Tougher police action is the last thing she needs.

These days people in high places pretend that the RUC is an even-handed police force, confronting both republican and Loyalist opponents of the Anglo-Irish agreement. But away from the cameras, people in places like Strabane on the Border know the closest the police get to being 'even-handed' is using both fists to beat up supporters of Irish freedom.

Behind all the ballyhoo about Loyalists fighting police, republicans are the real victims of the Anglo-Irish deal.
Mick Hume reports from Strabane

Margaret Boyle's ordeal in RUC custody happened after the Anglo-Irish deal was done. But it seems nobody had told the RUC they were now a reformed, impartial force.

In Northern Ireland, it's the worms who get up early. The RUC were at Margaret Boyle's home at half past six in the morning to drag her away from her crying children. 'My oldest boy was clinging to me, they had to tear him off. That nearly destroyed me. Then my youngest said, "Can I come too, mummy?" and this policewoman said, "No you're too young yet, son." But the policewoman was wrong. As her superiors reminded Margaret Boyle at Castlereagh interrogation centre, an Irish nationalist is never too young to suffer. 'They threatened my eldest son's life if I didn't talk to them. They said, "In another year or two you mark my words, young Terry will be walking down the road one night and a Saracen or something might run over him, or he might meet with a plastic bullet — very accidentally."

'They were serious, they do kill children. He's 11 in July — they've killed younger than that, haven't they? Then they got my boy at the shops, and said, "You wee bastard, we're gonna get you!" How can a man talk to a child like that?' Margaret Boyle was sick when the RUC raided her, and they dragged her off roughly enough to ensure she was soon throwing up blood: 'I was ill three or four times on the way up to Castlereagh, the police had to stop, all these armed men standing around guarding me while I was vomiting at the side of the road.' But when she got to the RUC torture centre, she discovered the police interrogators were much sicker than she could ever be.

'I didn't speak to them when I was in. All I said was, "I have to go" when I was going to be sick. And the policeman says, "You sit

there you bitch, and if you're sick I'll make sure you lick it up." But he had to let me go, for I would have thrown up on him for badness.'

'You're in a cell and there's two of them at you, a man and a woman, one sitting right up at your face. They're kicking you and shoving you all the time. And they really get into degrading you because you're a woman, like I was supposed to be screwing everybody in Strabane. Then she would go out, and he'd say, "I'm coming down to your cell and give you something tonight." You go back to your cell and you're thinking he's probably only pulling a bluff, but Jesus if he did come what would you do like? But the thing that shocked me most was the policewomen. The stuff they come out with is worse than the men, it degraded them, not me.'

FILTHY PHOTOS

Another favourite trick the RUC uses to get at its victims is to go on about deadad loved ones. 'My brother had a tragic death, he was stabbed, and they came out with some disgusting things about his body and all. They're always doing that kind of thing. When the three boys were shot up the hill there, they showed photos of one of them to his brother, with the back of his brains hanging out all over the field. A girl I know was really close to one of the boys, and the RUC stopped a jeep down the town and called her over and showed her a picture of him all riddled to death and all, and them all stood there laughing and everything.'

'The three boys' were young IRA volunteers, blown apart by an SAS heavy machine gun and then shot through the head as they lay wounded, in a sloping field near Margaret Boyle's home in February 1985.

We were in Strabane shortly after thousands of nationalists marched to remember them. The RUC harassed the march, pulling flags off graves and provoking riots — part of its everyday business of beating up nationalists in Border towns. Margaret Boyle knows all about the suffering of young Irishmen whose 'backs are up and they join the IRA to express that they don't want these people in their country doing what they're doing'. Her husband, Terry, has spent the last eight years in jail for shooting a British soldier. The day before we met her he had been out on a 24-hour parole for his mother's funeral. Nobody knows when he will see Strabane again, because he hasn't got a set sentence to serve. He is the victim of a legal system designed to dress up a war as a problem of law and order.

Terry Boyle was 21 when he was arrested. But the attacks he was charged with dated back five years. Because he was convicted of a murder committed before he was 18, he was sentenced to be detained 'at the

Secretary of State's Pleasure'. He is in prison until the government decides he can come out. And 'pleasure' is the right word for the British state's reaction to having republicans behind bars.

There are more than 50 'SOSPs' in jail in Ireland. One of the reforms hinted at before the Anglo-Irish deal was done was that they would be given release dates. But there has been little change. Instead the British are pushing the SOSPs to renounce their republicanism, in return for freedom sometime in the future.

'Terry had a review, where the governor decides whether you should be considered for release. My husband said to him, "Look, I'm a republican, you're a Loyalist, the people on the review board are Loyalists, so what chance have I got?" They asked him why he was on the republican wing, why he didn't move into the mixed prisoners' wing, implying that he'd have a better chance. Terry told them he doesn't like mixing with rapists and housebreakers because he's not a criminal.

'Then they said, "Now suppose I propose you be released, what would you do if a guy slithers up to you in the pub and says he's a wee job for you?" They just want to know if you're a republican, whether they release you is a political decision.

'It's nothing to do with "guilt" or "innocence" or anything. But my husband is a republican, he's a prisoner of conscience, and he's not going to pretend he's something he's not just for them.'

ANOTHER COUNTRY

Over the 17 years of the war in Ireland, Strabane has bred its share of men and women who were not prepared to pretend. 'There'd be a lot of support for the IRA in Strabane,' says Margaret Boyle. 'The Provisionals are an honest reaction to the troubles in our country and the British presence, and the people's demand for them to go. It's very basic, it's very honest, and it's the only truth for us.'

Outside the Boyles' home on an estate decorated with 'IRA land' graffiti, we could see the hillside cemetery from where the SAS shot those three young IRA men, and where they lie buried. And the next generation of Irish republicans played in the street, keeping one eye on the ball and the other on the road from where the Army, the police and their plastic bullets might come.

Strabane was the last stop on our Border tour, and we raced through the night to catch the plane back to Britain. As the plane banked over the lights of London, a bunch of trendy Belfast Loyalists in Italian t-shirts gawped out of the window. 'Jesus,' says one, 'it's like another country, isn't it?' Yes, it is indeed.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

A LABOUR PAPER?

Ever since the collapse of the *Daily Herald* in 1964, the labour movement has lacked a newspaper of its own. Rupert Murdoch's cynical offer to give the old *Times* plant to the unions has reopened discussion about a labour movement newspaper.

Back in 1983 the question was the subject of a major TUC inquiry, chaired by industrial relations academic Lord McCarthy. The TUC decided that the £6.7m it would require just to launch such a paper was more than the unions could afford, and the project was shelved. In fact it was not shortage of funds that deterred the union leaders. As Murdoch well knew when he challenged them to take over his presses and meet him in the marketplace, their reluctance to launch a paper reflects their lack of political confidence.

The old *Daily Herald* began as a strike sheet produced by print workers during a lockout in 1911. Under the editorship of George Lansbury, it soon became the paper of the rising labour movement in the period leading up to the First World War. Lansbury was a militant left-wing socialist who opposed the First World War, supported the Russian Revolution and the movement for independence in Ireland, as well as demands for women's emancipation and trade union rights. As leader of the Poplar councillors' revolt against the 1919 equivalent of rate-capping, he served time in Brixton prison. The *Daily Herald* reflected the campaigning approach of its editor.

The *Daily Herald* reached the peak of its influence during the working class upsurge that followed the First World War. Its circulation varied between 250 000 and 500 000 in 1919 and 1920. In those years the *Daily Herald* was not run by the leadership of the labour movement. Indeed the Labour Party launched its own paper — the *Daily Citizen* — in an unsuccessful attempt to meet the left-wing challenge. The *Daily Herald* reflected the mood of rank and file revolt not only against capitalism, but also against the bureaucratic leadership of the unions and Labour Party. The *Daily Herald* first labelled as 'Black Friday' the day on which the leaders of the rail and transport unions sold out the miners in April 1921.

Yet the *Daily Herald* reflected the left's weaknesses as well as its strengths. Its opposition to war and colonial repression was pacifist rather than anti-imperialist. Its support for workers' struggles accepted the limitations of the existing system, rather than trying to direct these struggles against the system itself. As the defeats of the early twenties strengthened the grip of the labour bureaucracy over the movement, the *Daily Herald* too succumbed. In 1925 Lansbury sold the paper to the TUC and the publishing giant Odhams.

The *Daily Herald* retained its popularity in the inter-war period, but this was no longer based on its radical and campaigning journalism. It thrived on the more familiar Fleet Street mix of sentimentality and sensationalism. In the post-war period it languished until it was finally taken over by Murdoch to suffer the ultimate ignominy — relaunch in September 1964 as the *Sun*.

In the stormy years around the First World War, the labour movement could sustain its own newspaper because it had something to say. The best that Norman Willis and Neil Kinnock could manage would be some sort of cross between the *Morning Star* and *Today*. No wonder Murdoch is ready to risk the competition.

Ulster against the Anglo-Irish deal

LOYAL TO THE CROWN

Why are Ulster Loyalists shooting at the policemen they have sworn to support? Mick Hume assesses the battle over the Anglo-Irish agreement

There are few more confusing sights than television pictures of an Ulster Loyalist using a Union Jack to batter a member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary over the head. As the RUC comes under fire from its 'own people' in the Protestant community, many in Britain must have echoed the thoughts of Tory backbencher Michael Latham: 'What kind of Loyalist puts on a hood and stands at a barricade?'

The people who pose as the bedrock of British law and order are now lobbing rocks at the Queen's police. This has been seized on by British commentators as confirmation that Northern Ireland is an irrational place which people in Britain can never understand. Media reports stress the mystical character of the 'tribal' marching season. But the current conflict has nothing to do with Irish tribalism. It is about British imperialism, and its relations with the two communities in Northern Ireland. Let's look at the Loyalists first. Why are they suddenly up in arms over the Anglo-Irish agreement?

The Unionist campaign against the accord has progressed through council boycotts and parliamentary by-elections, to illegal marches, riots and shooting the RUC. Meanwhile, Loyalists and Tories have pursued a political pantomime. The deal is a stepping stone to a united Ireland, say the Unionists. Oh no it isn't, says Northern Ireland secretary Tom King, it's 'a massive great wall against it'. Oh yes it is, say the Unionists. And so on.

In fact King is right. By affirming the permanence of Partition, the accord with Dublin underlines the Union rather than undermines it.

But it would be wrong to conclude that the Loyalists are simply too stupid or stubborn to recognise the truth. Their protests are the latest manifestation of a real historical fear that any change might displace them from their privileged position within Ulster.

PANIC BUTTON

Since Britain created Northern Ireland in 1921, Protestants have been guaranteed privileged access to jobs, houses and power over their Catholic neighbours. The British government's own reports confirm that sectarian discrimination continues today. Catholics are three times as likely to be unemployed as Protestants. Most recent statistics show only 16 Catholics among 116 officers on the government's own employment training schemes. It's the same story across the job market.

The Loyalists rely on the link with Britain to perpetuate their advantaged status. This means Westminster has always been able to rely on them as dogged defenders of British rule in Northern Ireland. But it has also made Unionists sensitive to any move that threatens to shift the status quo, however slightly.

The lifeline that keeps the Loyalists strapped to their British paymasters is a slender and shaky one. The Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is entirely artificial. There is no natural or national justification for it. It can only be maintained through an extraordinary system of state controls — repressive laws that are the envy of South African statesmen and the presence of 30 000 troops and paramilitary police.

The artificial Union is inherently unstable. Anything that alters the established power relations in Ulster — like the Anglo-Irish agreement — puts added pressure on the Protestant ascendancy, and has Unionists pressing the panic button.

The Unionists object to the accord because it shifts authority away from Belfast, on to a London-Dublin axis. The Loyalists have always tried to avoid pressure for reform by

keeping political power in the province in their own pockets. They achieved this for 50 years, ruling Northern Ireland as they liked from their private parliament at Stormont, and subjecting Catholics to brutal treatment.

Loyalists have also tried to isolate their state from outside pressures by excluding Northern Ireland from the process of political debate in Britain. As the Unionists' hero Lord Carson put it before Partition, 'Ulster wants above all things to be removed from the area of party politics in the imperial parliament.' Carson's wish has been fulfilled, with the cooperation of all British parties.

Unionists have confirmed their splendid isolation by treating the Southern Irish state as a hostile and alien power which, as Ian Paisley always says, 'gave birth to the IRA and still harbours terrorist murderers'. In fact the modern IRA was created by the persecution of Catholics in the Northern state, and its activists are almost all Northerners. But blaming the South is a useful ploy for Paisley to maintain Ulster's siege mentality. Loyalist power depends on cutting Ulster off from the world and maintaining its sectarian traditions. This explains the Protestant preoccupation with the past that has the media mocking them for being 'locked in a time machine'.

TONING IT DOWN

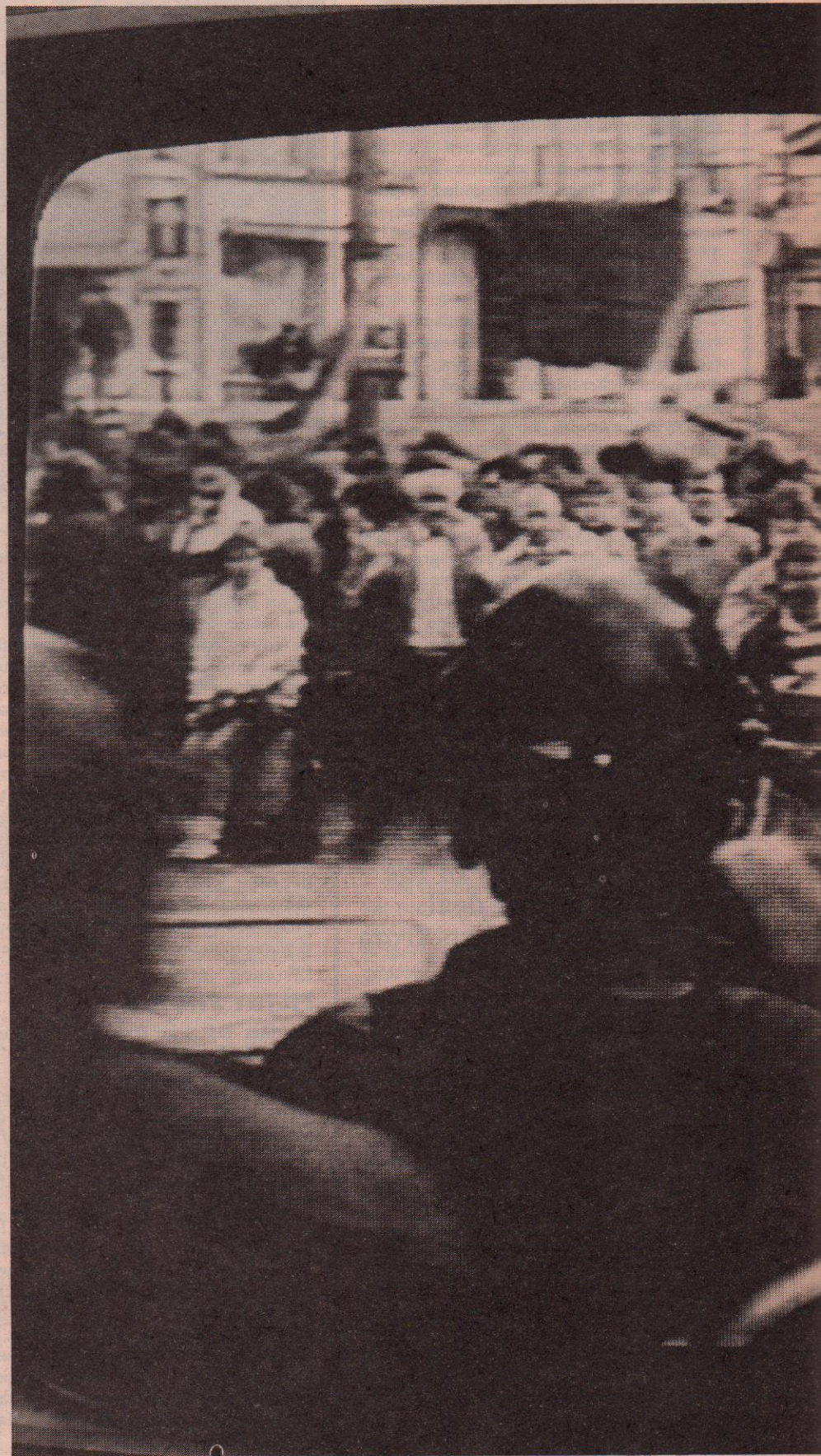
Westminster now wants to alter the established set-up in the Six Counties. But that doesn't mean Britain is a modernising force for progress in Ireland. Doctor Paisley may have as little contact with 1986 as Doctor Who, but Paisley's Tardis was built in Britain. The British authorities created Loyalism and have encouraged its backward, anti-Catholic features as a vital prop of their power.

The conflict over the Anglo-Irish accord only indicates that the British take a more long-term view of oppression in Ireland than the narrow-minded bigots of Ulster.

British governments share the Unionists' concern with crushing the republican struggle for Irish freedom, and keeping Irish nationalists under the heel. But Westminster has wider concerns. It has to convince people in Britain that Northern Ireland is a fairly normal place. It has to keep international opinion on its side. And, increasingly, it has to stop the instability in the North from spilling over into the Southern Republic.

Since the present stage of the Irish War erupted in 1969, British governments have launched political initiatives to put a democratic veneer on their colonial regime in Ireland. And they have tried to tone down the more embarrassing excesses of Protestant privilege. None of these changes challenged the basis of British power or the Loyalists' position of economic advantage. But they have panicked Protestant leaders by altering political arrangements in the North, and prompted some Loyalists to take on the authorities in an attempt to turn back the tide. Relations between the British and Unionist establishments have deteriorated over 17 years of the Irish War. Loyalist protests against British 'reforms' have often been more violent than today.

When the British government tried to nip the troubles in the bud by abolishing the Protestant paramilitary 'B' Specials in 1969, Belfast Loyalist rioters killed the first RUC man to die in the war. In 1972 Britain abolished the Protestant parliament at Stormont and introduced Direct Rule from Westminster. Loyalists went on strike, demonstrated and built barricades, while the Unionist Party broke off formal links with the Conservatives. In 1974 Loyalist shop stewards and paramilitaries —



ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY MEN IN RIOT GEAR FACE LOYALIST MOBS WAVING UNION JACKS IN

backed by the British Army — organised a successful and violent general strike against a British government plan for power-sharing. In 1977 they tried to repeat the exercise. Without the backing of the British security forces they failed, but not before they had claimed a few lives. The campaign against the Anglo-Irish agreement now threatens to match the 'best' and bloodiest tradition of Loyalist 'democratic protests'.

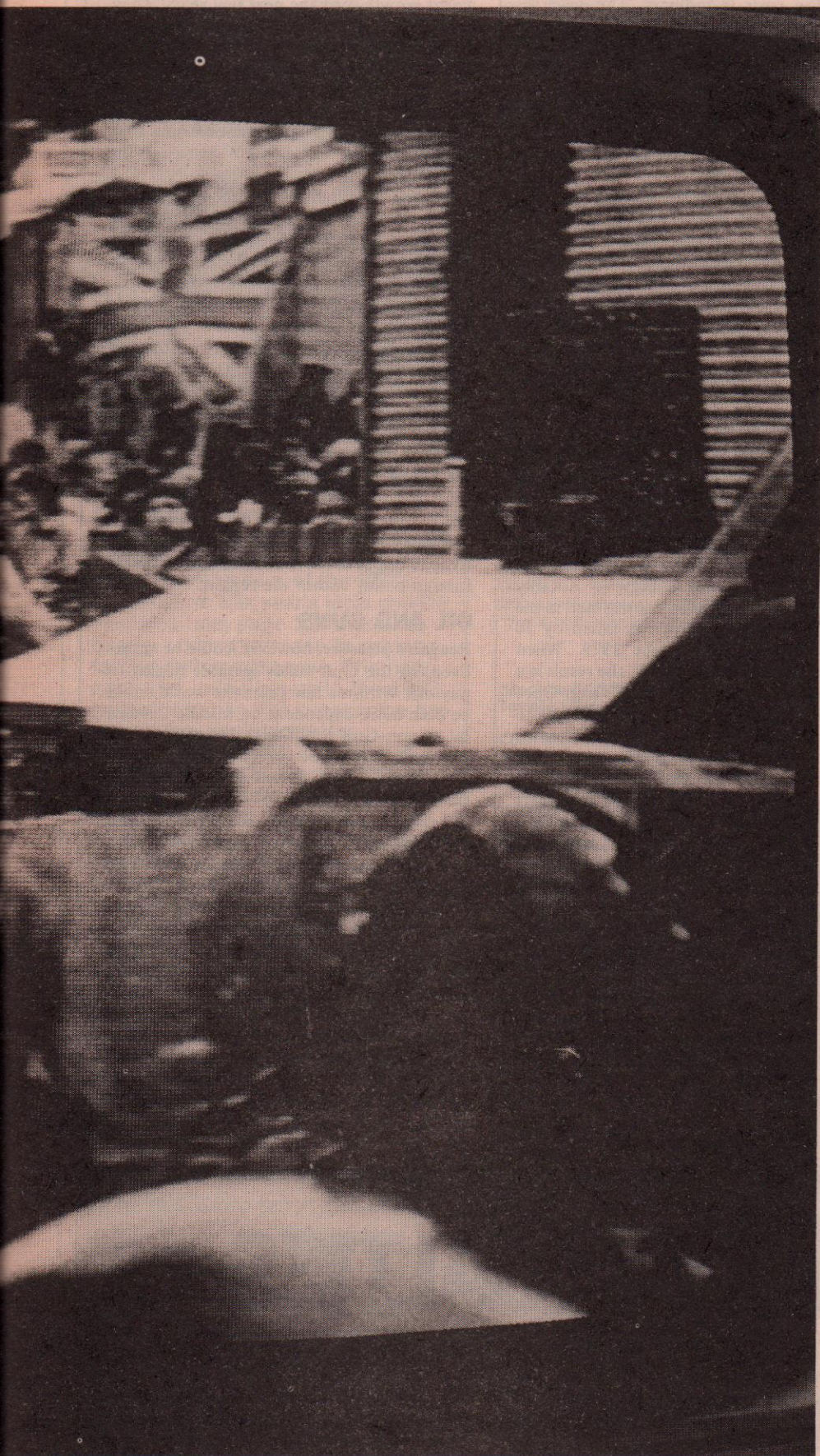
The question now being asked — 'How can the Loyalists be loyal if they fight the government?' — misses the point. The Loyalists are loyal to the British state machine which perpetuates their position in Northern Ireland. For them, the state is symbolised by the sovereign. But this loyalty to the British state does not mean they always kowtow to the commands of whichever British party happens to hold a majority in the house of commons. If

the Loyalists decide that the government is going against the interests of the Union, they will oppose it. Unionist newspaper adverts have warned RUC members that the Anglo-Irish deal 'radically alters the role of the RUC officers, who are employed and who took an oath to "truly serve" our sovereign' — and not, the message implies, to serve Thatcher.

LONG, HOT SUMMER

The Loyalists' dependence on the link with Britain means there are limits to how far their protests can go. The Protestant community is not capable of sustaining an armed uprising against the state that sponsors it. But a militant minority of Loyalists are more than capable of keeping up the current violent campaign throughout this summer's marching season. And, as with every Loyalist protest, they will

N, NOT TO THATCHER



PORTADOWN

save their worst excesses for the Catholics they identify as the worst enemies of the Union. Catholics in vicious little Loyalist towns like Portadown are in for a long, hot summer.

Loyalists also have a bloody tradition of dealing with 'traitors' in their own ranks. Unionist politicians who get too closely involved in British initiatives have quickly been ditched. And rank and file Loyalist activists who show signs of 'going soft' often end up face down in a ditch. The current attacks on RUC men are a new phase of this old practice.

Yet the contradiction of fighting the forces of the Crown under the Union Jack is already beginning to work itself out, fragmenting the Unionist alliance against the accord. Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party has to respond to its more militant supporters, while trying to restrain them within reasonable limits. His appearance on the illegal Portadown parade

last week was an attempt to re-establish his authority among radical Loyalists, and to defuse the situation. The fact that he failed to do so underlines Paisley's current credibility problem. Meanwhile Paisley's partner, Official Unionist Party chief James Molyneux, is keeping very quiet, aware that the violence upsets his more middle class and moderate supporters, yet afraid to condemn it outright and split the Loyalist camp.

Frustration at Britain's refusal to dump the Anglo-Irish deal may have sent Loyalist hardliners on to the street. But it has concentrated the minds of more level headed Loyalist leaders. They now talk openly of the need to reach an accommodation with Westminster. As Official Unionist general secretary Frank Millar put it this week, 'Failure to make an honourable peace with London would drive us inevitably to a radical

reassessment of our relationship with the Irish Republic.' Millar is making clear that, in the end, the only alternative to accepting the accord is to break the Union — which means there is no alternative.

The Loyalists can kick and bite, but when the British establishment insists, they will ultimately have to submit to the treatment.

Thatcher and King are now trying to pressurise Paisley and Co into negotiations about a form of devolved government, to include the moderate nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party. This could safeguard the Protestant position by returning most functions of the Anglo-Irish bodies to a Stormont assembly. Unionist leaders have responded by changing their calls to 'smash' the accord to requests to 'suspend' it.

But there is sufficient pressure from below to ensure that Loyalist politicians cannot give in to the government yet. The marching season will give Northern Ireland an unstable few months before any final bargain is struck. From Britain's point of view, the most important aspect of the conflict with the Loyalists is its impact on the nationalist community. The nationalists are always the Crown's biggest problem in Ireland.

THE REAL THREAT

Arguments between the Unionists of Belfast and the Tory or Labour unionists of London are about the specific form British rule should take in Northern Ireland. Crown control itself is never seriously questioned. But the war between the nationalists and the British state raises the all-important issue of who should have sovereignty on Irish soil. Despite all their 'impartial peacekeepers' posturing, the British authorities admit that the real threat to their power — what they call 'terrorism' — comes from the republican struggle for national liberation in Ireland. And the real purpose of the security forces is to crush nationalist resistance.

As a recent confidential commons committee report noted, 'Except for brief periods, the predominant threat has come from terrorists claiming to represent the nationalist community... This has inevitably meant that the operations of all the security forces... have had a greater impact on the normal life of the minority community.' The 'impact' the repressive activities of the security forces have had on nationalists in recent years is to harden opposition to the British presence and support for the republican movement, which has enjoyed a string of electoral successes. The aim of the Anglo-Irish agreement has been to reverse this process, by offering the prospect of reforms in Northern Ireland and recognising the Southern government's role in representing Northern nationalists.

Britain can offer no real reforms to the nationalists it oppresses. So the Tories have tried a cynical bluff to create the illusion of progress. They deliberately excluded the Unionists from their year-long negotiations with Dublin, knowing full well that this would provoke a Protestant backlash. They calculated that getting the Paisleys of Ulster to scream 'sell-out' when the deal was done represented their best chance of selling it to a section of nationalist opinion. The Tory scheme has enjoyed some success.

Since the Anglo-Irish deal was signed, there has been an increase in harassment of republicans (see page 5). And no reforms have been forthcoming. The British government has announced its intention to continue with supergrass trials and the strip searching of women republican prisoners, refused to commit itself to repealing the Flags and Emblems Act (which makes flying the Irish tricolour illegal) and has even re-introduced its shoot-to-kill squads, which shot dead two nationalists in February after a 12-month respite. Pathetic 'reforms', like sectarian RUC men accompanying the sectarian Ulster Defence Regiment, are still 'under discussion'. And while the cameras focus on clashes between the police and Loyalist marchers, the RUC ran riot through last week's republican parade in Derry.

At another time, such an increase in British terror would boost support for the republican movement. But repression is now taking place in circumstances which mitigate against a traditional anti-British response. Loyalist opposition to the accord and the clashes between the RUC and Orangemen mean many nationalists are unconvinced about the agreement's anti-republican character. Nationalists save their most bitter hatred for bigots like Paisley, and there is a feeling that anything which upsets them can't be all bad. The republican movement has had a problem cohering its support since the deal was signed. The SDLP's defence of the police during clashes with Loyalists has not damaged the moderate party's support among nationalists in the way that backing the RUC would once have done.

It is inevitable that, in a drawn-out war of attrition, some people on the receiving end will latch on to an initiative that promises movement towards peace. The Tories have been able to use the Anglo-Irish agreement to play on the cumulative build-up of 'war-weariness' within sections of the nationalist community.

Against this background, the impact of the accord has exposed the limits of the electoral strategy which brought Sinn Féin to prominence. The republican base of support in the nationalist ghettos relies on the IRA's armed struggle against the British forces of occupation. As leading republicans have often made clear, the IRA is a vital defence force for the besieged nationalists and there can be no question of giving up the use of arms. Yet more moderate nationalists are loath to lend their support to Sinn Féin because of the IRA's actions.

This tension means that, as Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin president and MP, says, the party's successes have been based more on activating existing support than attracting new layers to the republican cause: 'Firstly it is worth noting that even if Sinn Féin's performance and development in the North in recent years have received dramatic news coverage, this performance and these developments were possible because a fairly clear republican base already existed. What we have been doing in recent years has been to structure that base.' (*An Phoblacht/Republican News*, 8 August 1985)

A DANGEROUS GAME

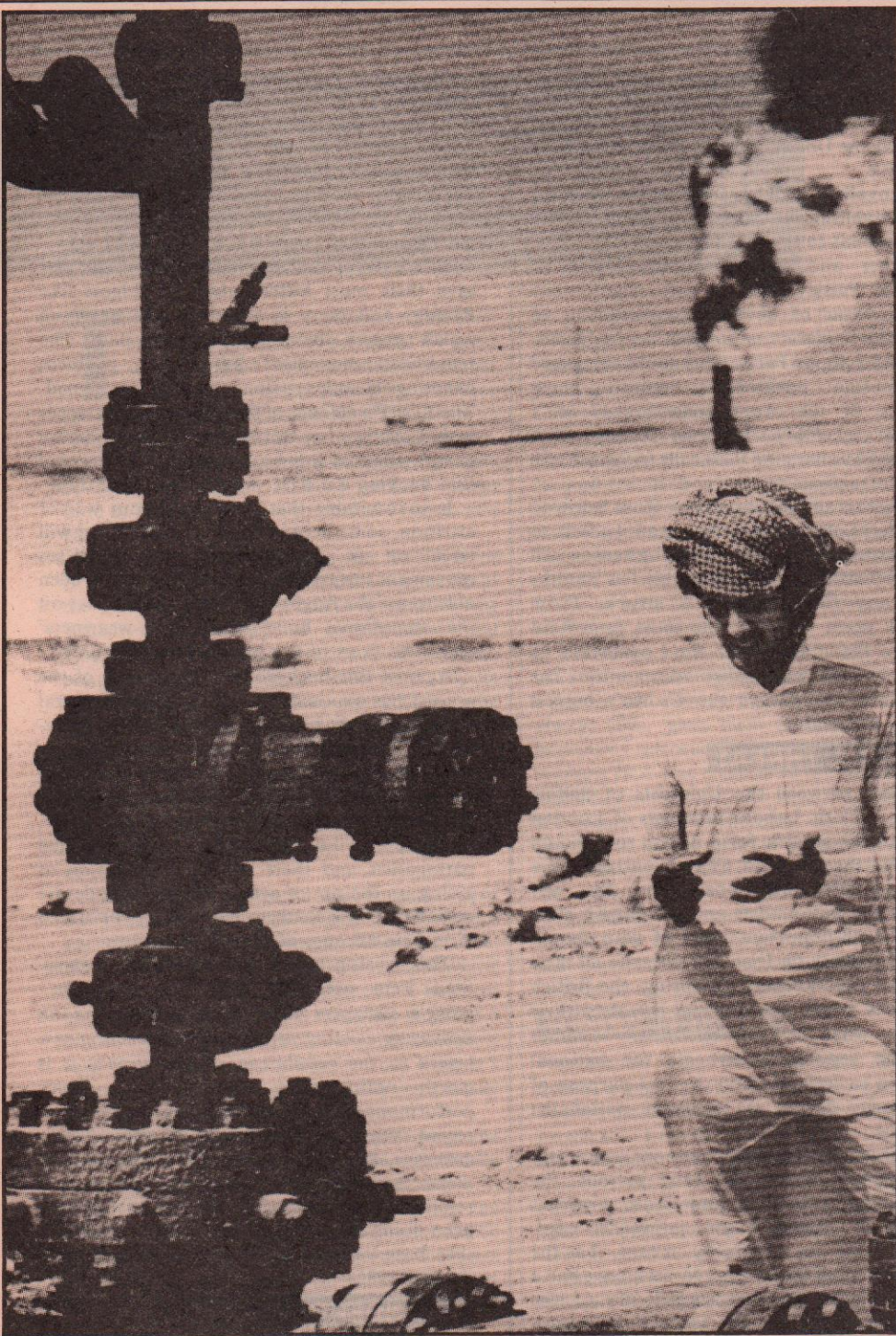
The initial reaction to the Anglo-Irish deal has made more difficult the republican movement's battle to broaden its base. This does not mean republicanism is in decline. Britain still cannot beat the IRA. So long as there are British troops in Ireland, there will be support for an armed struggle against them. And another British Army or RUC atrocity can always revitalise support for Sinn Féin. But in the short term at least, manipulating the Loyalist reaction to the accord has given Britain a useful propaganda victory within the nationalist community.

The Tories are playing a very dangerous game. The Loyalist backlash they have provoked will keep Northern Ireland on the boil this summer. Meanwhile, the IRA continues its strikingly successful campaign of attacking British forces and fortresses across the Six Counties.

The British authorities are under considerable pressure in Ireland. The guarantee that they can get away with their scheme is the lack of opposition within Britain. Kinnock's Labour Party has proved a slavish supporter of Thatcher's deal with Dublin, only complaining that the two governments have been inefficient in persecuting republicans like Evelyn Glenholmes.

Our job in Britain is to demystify the conflicts between the Loyalists and the RUC, to explain the real issues in Ireland to people in Britain. We have to drum home one message time and again: the British state is the force for all violence in Ireland, and the Irish people are the only ones with the right to determine their future. There has rarely been a more important time to build the Irish Freedom Movement, to support the liberation struggle against the forces of the Crown and their Loyalist bootboys.

SOUTHFORK FOR SALE?



Pressures of declining profitability and hot competition meant they needed to cut production costs in industry. The drive to cheapen the costs of raw material and energy inputs became a major preoccupation. The result of the oil price rise was that the underlying crisis of profitability was interpreted as an energy crisis. For the Western media, the problem was not the basic laws of the capitalist economy, but 'greedy oil sheikhs'.

The oil price rises of the seventies caused changes in the oil world, which have led to today's crash in prices. High oil prices encouraged non-Opec countries like Britain and Norway to develop oil wells. Given the high costs of extracting oil from the North Sea bed, this enterprise only became viable after the price rises. Since 1979 Opec's share of the world oil market has dropped from more than half to less than one third.

THE SQUEEZE

Since the seventies oil consumption has fallen sharply. The sluggish performance of the world economy as a whole since the turn of the eighties, and the collapse of much manufacturing industry, has reduced the demand for oil. The development of alternative sources of energy — notably nuclear power — has also contributed to the decline. Oil consumption has fallen by 10 million barrels a day since 1979. When output rises and demand falls, the result is a glut. Given the refusal of non-Opec countries to cooperate with its attempts to restrict output, the only effect of this policy was to squeeze Opec producers into a smaller share of the market. The current crisis began when the big Gulf oil producers decided the time had come to reverse their policy of restraint. In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait export revenues were hit hard by the falling demand for oil, creating a growing gap between the oil states' incomes and their lavish expenditures on imported plant, machinery and consumer goods.

By switching to flat-out production, the Gulf states set out to flood the market and provoke a price collapse that would destroy their rivals. Their enormous oil reserves and cheap production costs make this a viable strategy. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are prepared to sacrifice some short-term revenue to knock out their competitors and allow them to regain their dominant

position in the world oil market. In the meantime they hope cheaper oil will stimulate demand, returning oil usage to the heights of the seventies.

The oil price collapse resulting from the actions of the Gulf states has its victims (see box), but it also has its beneficiaries. The top financial fixers of the capitalist world in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are determined to look on the bright side of the oil price collapse. They have already revised upwards their estimates for world growth over the next few years. They hope that cheaper fuel costs will encourage ailing manufacturing industry. The more dynamic Western economies of Japan, Germany, Italy and France are counting on the benefits of cheaper energy supplies. Even British Chancellor Nigel Lawson hopes that British manufacturing might benefit from cheaper oil.

Despite the plight of the US oil industry, Reagan has turned a deaf ear to demands for restricting imports. The USA is a net oil importer with more to gain than to lose from lower fuel costs. Given its poor growth rate in recent months, the US economy needs every possible stimulus. A few oil bankruptcies and bank failures in Houston and Dallas are a small price to pay for a revitalised economy.

Reagan also has political reasons for welcoming the oil price crash. The decline in oil prices is likely to hit his enemies — Libya, the Soviet Union — harder than it hits the USA. It will also make it easier for the USA to exert control through the debt system over countries in Central and South America. Reagan hopes to use such influence to aid his foreign policy within the region.

OIL AND GUNS

Reagan's pleasure, however, could be short-lived, as the Gulf states' gamble begins to pay off. Within a few years the world could be even more dependent on Middle Eastern oil as non-Gulf production is knocked out. For now, reduced oil revenues in the Middle East increase the potential for instability there. The intervention of the US sixth fleet in Lebanon and Libya in recent months, and the presence of the rapid deployment force in bases around the Gulf, suggests the likely pattern of US policy in the Middle East.

The steady decline of British manufacturing through the ups and downs of oil prices over the last two decades confirms that oil has only a marginal influence on the economy. The crisis of profitability — not the price of oil — lies at the root of the capitalist world's economic problems. It will take a lot more than cheap oil to revive British industry. Today's oil wars reveal the underlying tendencies towards international conflict, as rival powers struggle for survival.

In the seventies the rise in oil prices was blamed for the onset of the recession — today the oil price crash is greeted as the harbinger of recovery. *Helen Simons* looks at the world of JR Ewing and Sheikh Yamani

Oil prices have been plummeting for four months. In December a barrel of oil cost \$30 — now it fetches around \$10. Oil prices are lower than they were before the 1973 Arab-Israeli war triggered the major price increase at the start of the first wave of the world recession.

The fluctuation in oil prices is a symptom, not a cause, of movements in the world economy. The tendency for prices to oscillate wildly reflects the uneven impact of the recession on different oil-producing and oil-consuming countries. The consequences are likely to be less rosy than Western economists and politicians would like to believe. Instability in the oil markets will

lead to more Western economic and political interference in the Middle East and other oil-producing areas. The oil price war could even become a shooting war in some of the world's most strategically sensitive regions.

The immediate cause of the oil price collapse is the failure of the ministers of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries — Opec — to agree on production ceilings at their recent meeting in Geneva. For the past three years Opec tried to persuade its member countries to accept voluntary limits on output as a way of bolstering prices. But this policy, always difficult to enforce, has brought diminishing results. Steadily declining oil prices have made producers more reluctant to curtail output. Opec has been forced to abandon the policy.

In the seventies Opec was able to dictate oil prices to the world. At that time the dramatic rise in oil prices, after the Arab defeat in the 1973 Yom Kippur war, was seen in the West as revenge extracted by the Arab rulers. The Western media constructed racist caricatures of the oil sheikhs, condemning them for taking advantage of their monopoly to plunge their old masters into ruin. In reality Western countries had long taken advantage of their influence in the Middle East to buy oil way below its market value. The panic over oil prices arose because suppliers joined forces to compel the West to buy its oil at market prices.

For Western capitalists, the oil price rise could not have come at a worse time.

THE CASUALTIES

• American oil producers

Oilmen from Texas, Alaska, Oklahoma and Louisiana have lobbied the White House for measures to stem the flow of cheap foreign oil into the USA. Thousands of small rigs have closed over the past five years, and now even big companies like the Ewings of Southfork are being forced to cut back. The oil crisis precipitated 120 bank failures in the US oil belt last year and unemployment is rising fast.

• North Sea oil

In Norway falling oil revenues have forced the government to introduce its first austerity budget. In Britain Britoil has announced a 40 per cent cut in exploration plans for next year. The entrance to Aberdeen harbour is clogged by redundant rigs.

• Nigeria, Venezuela, Indonesia, Mexico

These third world countries rely on oil revenues to repay their heavy debts to Western bankers. All have already been forced to take measures to reschedule their debt repayment. Declining oil income forces governments to implement drastic austerity programmes, leading to more political instability.

• Libya, Iran and Iraq

Reagan may rejoice that the oil crisis has reduced Colonel Gaddafi's income by 80 per cent. He may take less pleasure from the fact that it is likely to strengthen Iran in its war against Iraq, which is even more dependent on oil.

• Egypt and the Gulf

Egypt, the USA's staunchest ally in the Arab world, has already been hard hit by the oil crisis, making its problems of internal instability even worse. Even in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia the costs will be high. Both states have considerable reserves and foreign assets but, if prices fail to rally fairly soon, they will have to impose further cuts with unpredictable political consequences.

• The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union relies on oil for more than 60 per cent of its export earnings. The price collapse will deny the Soviet Union the hard currency to import the technology that Gorbachev desperately needs, if he is to achieve his objective of modernising the Soviet economy.

junius publications



Preparing for Power, the programme of the Revolutionary Communist Party

In the opening days of the RCP's campaign in this year's local council elections (see page 11) there has been a sudden increase in demand for the party programme. Originally published in the run-up to the 1983 general election, the programme has since been reprinted twice. *Preparing for Power* is a concise summary of the RCP's assessment of the current state of the capitalist world and the forces of the establishment and the official labour movement. It outlines our perspective for building a movement in Britain that can advance from defending living standards and rights today towards taking power and building a new form of society.

Preparing for Power answers those who defend the existing system as the best attainable, and the cynics who say it cannot be changed. It issues a challenge to all those who are disgusted with the existing state of the world — join our movement to change it! 30p plus 20p p&p

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REVIEWS

RED WEDGE The broad church choir

Red Wedge at Hammersmith Odeon, featuring Billy Bragg, Style Council, Lorna G, Junior Giscombe, Tom Robinson, the Blow Monkeys, and the Communards

Red Wedge run a tight show. Four thousand fans were still filing into the Odeon when bumptious Billy Bragg, 'William' to those in the know, launched into his first story-song. A solitary minstrel in everyday clothes ('just because I dress like this doesn't mean I'm a communist'), he aimed his guitar at our heart-strings and sang of 'the power in a union' — 'all amounts to nothing if together we don't stand', and 'days like these' when 'wearing badges is not enough'. Bragg's best ballads are as gritty as the early work of another 'BB' — Bertolt Brecht.

No time to get a coke, the Style Council are on stage. Their 15-minute slot consists entirely of new material. Songs like 'Mix-up' and 'All gone away' are playgrounds for Council-leader Paul Weller's new sixties toy: soul-jazz. Weller's stopped sounding Motown and started playing Stax, using Booker T's Bar-Keys (Otis Redding's backing band) as his model. He's changed his jangly Rickenbacker guitar for a big semi-acoustic — just right for jazzy minor-seventh chords. But just when you think you've heard it all before — on Radio 2 — he adds his own brand of Anglo-pop wistfulness. That's nothing new either, but

the combination of styles is intriguing — if uninspiring.

With their musical ingredients the Blow Monkeys produce a strange brew — less developed and more exciting than Weller. 'Sweet murder' combines Average White Band funk with reggae-seaside organ. Then they switch to a vaudeville sound topped with a thick layer of Shirley Bassey-style vocals. Their appearance is equally theatrical: a thick-lipped, mutton-chopped, bowler-hatted bass-player is an effective stage-foil to the Norman Bates psycho-presence of their lead singer.

Jimmy Somerville's high voice carries the show to its emotional peak. The doo-wop techniques of the other Communards (including part-timer Junior Giscombe) provide a good backdrop to Somerville's vocal intensity — marred only by the dead sound of the pre-recorded backing-tape.

The appeal of the Red Wedge variety-pack lies in the musicality of its performers. But their political-patter, unlike their songs, distorts rather than describes what's happening. According to Billy Bragg, changing the Labour Party is possible 'because it's personal', and to beat unemployment 'all you have to do is register to vote and take part in the democratic process'. For Jimmy Somerville 'it's OK if socialism means different things to different people', even though Labour's broad-church socialism has



PAUL WELLER'S PARTY PROMISES JAM TOMORROW

always meant keeping gays in the closet. Red Wedge may have rejected the idealism of the past, but their idealised vision of social change is equally unreal.

Within sound proofed recording studios these ideas might be harmless. But the main function of Red Wedge is to recruit for the Labour Party. Diane Abbott, Bernie Grant, Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight were all in the theatre foyer afterwards, to

encourage youth to sign their own autographs — on Labour Party cards. The politicians' avuncular pose went down well with the predominantly middle class audience. But some were more sceptical. 'It's superficial', said one, 'and it could backfire on Labour.' For them, the music strength of Red Wedge could not hide the fact that Labour's loyalty is to the system, not the youth.

Jimmy Simpson

FIFTIES ON FILM Teen dreams



dictated by the need to incorporate the stars with box office appeal. Without Bowie, Sade and the rest the film would not have been made, let alone sold. Sade is in fact integrated very well (as Athene Duncannon, a rising singer) but Bowie for all his undoubted charisma is just a distracting Bowie.

Another problem which Temple has not really overcome is that any film which looks back to the fifties has to cope with the overwhelmingly nostalgic mode in which that period is now received in the cinema. From *American Graffiti* to *Back to the Future* we are given a golden age of innocence and prosperity.

Temple colludes with this tendency. He brings in old faces like Alan Freeman and Lionel Blair. He downplays Suzette's penchant for black men and the hero's reliance on the pornography trade. The fraught exchanges with his parents — pathetic with his father, blistering with his mother — are turned into a jolly burlesque. Of course Temple is nostalgic, at least about this early moment in youth culture. He is himself a product of punk and carries with him an inflated idea about the vitality and oppositional potential of the waves those early teenagers set in motion.

This star-ridden, video-driven musical paean to fashion and flash cannot carry the political weight to which it aspires. Too flat and thin to contain the complications of generation and race which were upsetting the post-war consensus, in the end it gives us the Notting Hill rioters as dancers. In MacInnes the language, characters and vignettes of London life are as stylised as in the film, but they are grounded in a much more disquieting psychological and social context.

The romantic MacInnes also expected too much of his teenagers — as well as being flip and hip he also wanted them to care, to be the conscience of the nation. He was 44 when he wrote the book and his old head is often gratefully obvious on his hero's young shoulders. The remarkable thing about the book is not its wet liberalism, but the fact that it mounted its critique from these sub-cultural margins. MacInnes saw a space opening up from which a fresh light could shine. Thirty years later we should have moved on, but if you just wanna have fun, you will.

John Johnson

Pat Ford

Absolute Beginners, Julien Temple (director)

Colin MacInnes published *Absolute Beginners* in 1959. Set in the preceding year, it celebrates the sub-culture of teenagers, their brassy energy and independence, their fashions, their sounds, the very fact of their being. It is a celebration of London too, especially of a mythical Soho and Notting Hill which could hospitably accommodate all of MacInnes' favourite outsiders, whatever their age, race or sexual orientation. Finally, it is about the racial tensions which are threatening to tear this boom world apart.

Taking all this pretty faithfully on board, Julien Temple has made a musical — in many ways an obvious move. The novel makes much of jazz, and the book's form, which consists of the restless wanderings of a central character seen through his own youthful eyes, lends itself to a succession of musical numbers. And how better to flaunt the detail caught by the acute eye and ear of the author — the clothes and hairstyles of the times and the abundance of commodities, oh yes, the Vespa, the Gaggia and the Rolleiflex!

The film is a spectacular eyeful, the wrap around screen bulging with energy and incident, and the camera always on the move, as neurotic and whimsical as the kids themselves. The music from Gil Evans, David Bowie, Sade, Style Council et al, if rarely outstanding, is competent and varied. They do

not try to be slavishly period, an approach made easier for them by the current jazz revival.

Julien Temple may know all about sub-culture and the meaning of style, but he can't prevent the pressures of the dominant culture from shaping his own product. However handy it looked, the musical, even at

the service of the streets (and *West Side Story* came out in 1958), is now a rather sedate vehicle, particularly in contrast with the zippy pop video.

This may be why he gives us a relentless succession of pop videos instead of a more thoughtfully paced musical. The effect might also have been

AIDS Gays for 'safe sex'

Dennis Altman, *Aids and the New Puritanism*, Pluto Press £4.95

Dennis Altman takes pride in the responsible response of gay organisations to the Aids scare, noting that gay groups have pioneered fund-raising, counselling and other services for Aids victims. Altman's book is part of a growing trend among former advocates of gay (and women's) liberation to adapt to the pressures of today's right-wing moral backlash. Altman welcomes the turn away from the promiscuous excesses of the early seventies which he glorified in earlier, more

optimistic works, like *Homosexual Liberation and Oppression*.

In its place he endorses the new caring attitude to sexual relations, epitomised by the gay movement's guidelines on 'safe sex'. His polemic is reserved for homosexuals who persist in their preference for what are now regarded as dangerous sexual practices.

'Safe sex' implies monogamy or masturbation. According to the new prescriptions, to avoid Aids gays must avoid sex. Radicals who once dismissed moral objections to their free and easy lifestyle, now provide medical

justifications for the abolition of most homosexual activity.

The book also illustrates a new twist to the tensions that have always existed between gay radicals and those who profit from the commercial gay scene. In the forties and fifties radicals rejected the gay capitalists' conventional behaviour and refusal to challenge the establishment. Today it is the radicals who lead the way in moderating gay behaviour, leaving the bar owners to dismiss the Aids scare because it is bad for business.

Is porn OK for miners?

AT a gay and lesbian march in Manchester I bought *tns* for the first time. I think it is good and hard-hitting, but I want to draw your attention to two contradictory passages in the paper. In *tns* 12 Kate Marshall writes: 'In a society which treats women like property, as child-bearers and child-rearers, and as objects of sexual gratification, the establishment will never be able to protect women against rape.' The week before, in a feature on the miners, Joan Phillips wrote: 'Last week a Yorkshire video shop owner, who tried to offset the crippling effects of the strike on his trade by forming an "adults only" porn club, received a heavy fine.'

Do you not see that there is some hypocrisy in objecting to women being used as 'objects of sexual gratification' on the one hand, and on the other pleading poverty as an excuse for someone who opens 'an adults only porn club'? It is mostly adults who rape, gang-bang, sexually abuse and degrade women from childhood to old age.

I feel I shouldn't complain because you mention the porn club in connection with the miners. But why should I feel I am risking 'street credibility' by pointing out this hypocrisy? Is it because you are only interested in 'real workers'?

Molra Durkin
Stafford

GLC goes to Edinburgh

LAST week's article on the GLC is proving useful for our Edinburgh election campaign. In the opening shots of its campaign to win control of Lothian Regional Council, Edinburgh Labour Party has promised to cut unemployment by setting up a GLC-style local enterprise board.

Under the terms of the scheme, say its architects, company managers would decide on factory closures 'according to the results of social audit', while workers employed by firms that were too far gone 'would be offered facilities so they could achieve some influence over the future'.

As last week's article showed, even 'Mr London' Livingstone could not make this work. His Greater London Enterprise Board proved disastrous for workers, with 20 firms going to the wall — leaving their employees on the dole. Edinburgh *tns* supporters are asking workers to ignore Labour's big lie, and to put their stake on the real fight for jobs. A vote for the RCP will say 'my money is on the class fight — winning workers take all'.

Andrew Gourley
Edinburgh

Write to

BCM JPLTD
London WC1N 3XX



Labour's victims

ALAN THORNETT'S TV film, recently shown on BBC 2's *Open Door*, showed the 500 miners sacked during the strike as the victims of the bosses' offensive.

These men were 'paying the price of insubordination — and, boy, are we going to make it stick,' as MacGregor put it. But what about the NUM leadership, and the Labour Party — to which Thornett belongs? Have they not victimised sacked miners by turning their backs on them?

The NUM leadership has neither set up nor proposed a real campaign to get these men their jobs back. Thornett didn't mention this. Nor did he mention that NUM officials, from national to branch level, are now too busy pushing forward the coal board's productivity drive to even think about a reinstatement campaign.

At one time Yorkshire

leader Jack Taylor would tell us that all would be well as soon as we got a Labour government — the 500 men would automatically be reinstated. But these days the only time Taylor talks to the sacked men is to tell them to do their own collections at pit gates — the NUM has nothing for them. They are an embarrassment to the officials.

To bolster Labour's image, Thornett slipped in a reassuring interview with Tony Benn, who talked about his justice for miners Bill. No one I've talked to in the pits has been fooled by Benn's piety. So what was Thornett's film all about? It was just a cover-up for the victimisation of sacked miners by the NUM leadership and the Labour Party.

Kelth Hammond
the miners' next step
Yorkshire

Ban page 3

THE man who sold me *tns* 12 said that feminism is an important issue for communists. So why in your article on rape do you say that banning the *Sun's* page 3 would be an affront to the freedom of publication? What about the freedom of women? You go on to say the elimination of rape is linked to eliminating the abuse and assumed inferiority suffered by women in contemporary society.

Exactly. That's why we need to ban the display of women as purely sexual objects, so that women can be liberated, not protected.

If multi-nationals were banned from selling lethal goods to the third world, you wouldn't say that was a restriction of freedom. Can you not see the parallel with the *Sun's* style exploitation of women?

Allison George
Bristol



Not a phoney war

THE racists and the Bradford police agree that Workers Against Racism should stay out of the Heaton area of the city. Last week our door-to-door anti-racist canvass was met by 13 racists carrying baseball bats and bottles. 'Nigger-lovers out of Heaton,' they shouted. We ran them out of the area.

To emphasise our point we carried on the canvass. As we were leaving the police turned up. They told us they didn't like anti-racists on their patch. Last Friday night 30 War supporters continued the canvass. Police in vans and unmarked cars were waiting for us. They

threatened to arrest us if we carried on — after all, knocking on doors is an offence! We could be behind the rise in break-ins, they said. But they said nothing about the Asian family forced out of their home by bricks through their windows.

The police finally arrested me for 'conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace'. War intends to carry on its work, despite the racists in and out of uniform. We will breach the 'peace' that has left Heaton Asians under siege.
Kirk Williams
Bradford War

Manchester student struggles

AT Manchester polytechnic the RCP students' society is leading a campaign in support of Bold colliery miners. But the students union executive is trying to stab the miners in the back.

Last year the union voted to donate £10 000 to the miners. In an attempt to evade the *ultra vires* laws, which prohibit political donations by students' unions the Labour executive recommended loaning the money to Bold NUM. In response to a letter of instruction from the official treasury solicitor, the executive now plans to call in the loan — the union officials' commitment to miners is thinner than a piece of writing paper.

The executive also claims that calling in the loan can offset the Tory cuts in union facilities. Left-wing groups at the poly talk about 'wanting to support the miners but having to put the students' union first'.

But the RCPSS, however, has convinced many students that the only way to beat the cuts is to fight the laws the Tories use to implement



them. We will continue our campaign against *ultra vires*, by defending rank and file miners from the effects of 'left-wing' sectarianism.

Up the road at the university, the authorities have reinstated the three SWP students suspended after racist home office minister David Waddington spoke there last year. The three students were also suspended from their union, but that didn't stop the SWP from supporting the union executive's plea to the authorities that suspension from the union was punishment enough.

While the left appeared to accept the students' 'guilt', the RCPSS argued for the need to kick racists off campus. Twelve hundred students, sick of left-wing support for the executive's realism, agreed with us. Unfortunately, after the left's pandering to the executive, many students have decided that politics is just a circus. In recent union elections the loony candidate polled the most votes.

The university authorities could have shrugged off the executive's collapsing campaign. Instead they decided to be charitable. I'm glad the three SWP members have been reinstated, but the university's charitable feelings are no substitute for real anti-racism.

Allison
Manchester

STEPPING OUT

Labour's Nick Raynsford may be a yuppie-loving middle class Kinnockite quango person. But it seems he doesn't mind getting his hands dirty. The Fulham Labour Party newsletter boasts of Labour's efforts to clean up the riverside at Crabtree, where 'broken prams, bundled newspapers and general litter are the unfortunate sights to be seen'. And, it proudly announces, 'Nick Raynsford and prospective ward candidates are leading the clean-up fight.' I hope they don't mean that literally. The spectacle of Natty Nick and his heavyweight celebrity canvassers — Denis Healey, Claire Raynor, Glenys Kinnock et al — donning wellies and waving their behinds about as they pull broken prams from the river bed would really be 'an unfortunate sight to be seen'.

If Raynsford's campaign has convinced you that Labour Party members are a bright-eyed bunch of happy hipsters, read the thoughts of Keith Lichman, a left-wing member of Labour's London executive: 'The 1986 London Labour Party conference was the most depressing I have been to for years. It wasn't just the unrelenting discomfort of the GLC Brixton conference centre...it wasn't just the psychological disorientation produced by the disembodied electronic voices, howls and whines that continually assailed the hapless delegates over the public address system. It was the sheer irrelevance of socialism to the proceedings in the face of the wave upon wave of masturbatory realism (?) heaped on us by the power brokers in the party.' Which only goes to show that if you try to build socialism by playing the game to the Labour Party's rules, you end up playing with yourself.

I have here a picture-book called *Macho*, which 'shows how Communism ties in with the Vatican plan to take over the United States'. The Vatican is backing Moscow to win the third world war, 'so they elected a communist Pope from Poland and they expect every Catholic worldwide to become a Communist'. The pamphlet proves that turmoil in Cuba, Poland, El Salvador and Guatemala is 'a careful plan by the Jesuits' to 'eliminate' Catholics who don't like Rome's liaison with the Reds. This book of revelations is put out by Chick Publications. They also produce a booklet called *The Next Step*, which 'contains vital information for your Christian growth'. So it is all a conspiracy.

A footnote to the Loyalist clashes with the Royal Ulster Constabulary, provided by news that Joseph Bennett has been arrested in the Midlands for armed robbery. Bennett was a Loyalist supergrass granted immunity and a new life by the British authorities for giving the evidence that jailed 14 Ulster Volunteer Force members. At a time when republicans were being jailed for centuries in supergrass trials, Bennett's case was another example of Britain posing as an impartial force in Ireland. But in December 1984 all 14 Loyalists were freed on appeal. There are now no Loyalists serving sentences on the word of supergrasses. British justice will always win through in the end.

Andy and Fergie are not alone. Miss Jane Buford has announced that she will wed Mr David Mellor. They met while she was recovering from a nervous breakdown. Miss Buford was the National Front sympathiser and Harrogate college students union president whose exposure caused a big row. She has since featured in *Love Kills*, a film about Sex Pistol Sid Vicious. So, in spring 1986, even a young fascist's fancy turns to thoughts of love and marriage. Roll over, Nancy Spungen.

EDDIE VEALE

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

What are we promising?

Over the last week we have been getting into gear for the 8 May council elections. Supporters have been roaming the streets collecting nominations for the 38 candidates we're running for council seats from Glasgow to Brighton. So far the only hiccup has been in East London, where we discovered at the last minute that one of our candidates was too young to stand, so we had to replace him. (Never mind Jim, there's always next year.)

When we have explained why we are running for the council we have generally had a positive response, especially in areas where our candidates are already known and have a record of involvement in local campaigns. But some people are inclined to be cynical about elections. Many say they are fed up of politicians and electioneering, people who make promises that amount to nothing.

Some of our supporters have been taken aback when people say, 'What you say in your programme sounds great, but what does it all mean for me now?' We have to be straight with people who want immediate answers to practical problems. Our candidates cannot

distinguish themselves from other parties by making more extravagant promises. After all, RCP councillors elected on 8 May would be constrained by shortages of resources just as much as Labour or Tory councillors. The only promise that we can make is that we will refuse to accept the limits imposed by government spending limits.

Our councillors would not give in to the constraints imposed by the system and settle for trying to share out the sacrifices more fairly. Instead they would devote their energies to organising all those who are ready to fight for more. To people who ask us to come up with immediate solutions, we should respond by asking them what we can do together with others who are ready to take on the system.

The problem with left-wing councillors who have made great speeches about fighting the Tories and bold promises about jam tomorrow is that they tried to realise their aims through conventional channels. For Liverpool council the way to get more money to build houses was through creative accounting. For Lambeth and Sheffield it was by raising the rates. But



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**CLASS STRUGGLE IS
THE ONLY PROMISE OUR
CANDIDATES MAKE**

juggling the restricted resources of local councils could not stretch the available funds to meet the needs of local people.

Because councillors confined their objectives to administering the limited cash available, they were inevitably absorbed into the

process of cutting here to spend there. Instead of fighting the cuts across the board, they ended up squabbling over where the axe should fall.

The role of local councils today is not to build new homes and provide high quality services for people. It is to share out the misery in the most equitable way. This sort of conventional council administration — whether it is Militant Liverpool or Tory Bradford — is useless for the working class.

RCP candidates demand a different sort of council as well as different specific policies. Our councillors will not play the role of creative accountants or back stage manipulators. We are running for office to win the best possible platform from which to organise resistance to all attempts to impose austerity measures.

Some people ask, 'Are you really concerned about housing or nursery facilities — or are you just interested in introducing a communist system?' For us there is no conflict between fighting to win the things we all need from this system, and fighting to bring in a system that can really ensure that everybody gets them. The people who run the existing system

openly admit they cannot afford to provide jobs and decent living standards. The only way we are going to get a decent life is by fighting for a new society.

We have to show people that there is no logical gap between our immediate demands and our long term perspectives. Our councillors will act as people elected to fight for the maximum concessions that can be extracted from the establishment. If the employers and the authorities say they cannot or will not give us what we need, then we will have to organise to replace their system with one that can.

It is understandable that people should react with surprise or even suspicion when we knock on their doors over the next few weeks. Politicians — especially left-wing politicians — have always failed to deliver the goods in the past and workers have paid the price. People will look at the examples of Derek Hatton or Ted Knight and say, 'If that's socialism, we'd be better off without it.' We need to emphasise our distinctive approach, not only to win support for the RCP, but to create confidence in communism as an alternative to the capitalist system.

RACIST ATTACKS

This means War!

Workers Against Racism has been organising with RCP supporters to take on the racists in cities where attacks are happening every day. Speakers from East London War and Bradford War will be discussing the politics and practical problems of the work at meetings around the country. All supporters should be there:

- **GLASGOW:** Tuesday 15 April 7.30pm, Daisy St Neighbourhood Centre, Daisy, Govanhill
- **MANCHESTER:** Thursday 17 April 7.30pm, Black Lion, Blackfriars St
- **BRADFORD:** Tuesday 22 April 7.30pm, Checkpoint, 45 Westgate
- **NEWCASTLE:** Thursday 24 April 7.30pm, West End Learning and Leisure centre (WELL), Elswick Rd

Get the arguments

To help our supporters become more familiar with our strategy and tactics, we are making available a selection of documents from the 1985 party conference. Although these documents were written a year ago, they anticipate developments in the labour movement and British politics which are only now

taking shape.

- These three documents are available exclusively to 'signed-up' RCP supporters
- **Revolution in our time** — perspectives for the RCP
- **What are we defending?** — perspectives for the official labour movement
- **The left** — Send £1.50 for the set to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX



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Diary

REPUBLICAN POW CAMPAIGN

Prison Picket: Long Lartin,
Sunday 13 April, 1.30pm

POLICE OUT OF OUR PRIVATE LIVES — PROTEST

BRIGHTON: Friday 18 April 10am, Sussex University. Police have been invited to speak at the Family Planning conference. We say police should get out of our private lives, as well as off the streets

POLICE OFF THE STREETS — PROTEST

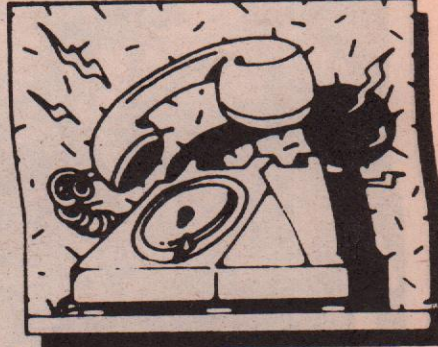
NOTTINGHAM: Thursday 17 April 1.30pm, County Hall, Trent Bridge. Protest at council backing for police harassment

ANTI-RACIST BENEFITS

NEWCASTLE: Thursday 17 April, The Red House, 40 Sandhill, Quayside, with King Volts and reggae disco
NOTTINGHAM: Friday 18 April, Trent Poly students union Easterhouse
LONDON: Monday 21 April, 8 'til late, 100 Club, 100 Oxford Street, disco

Deadline

for news and reports: Monday 9am 01-729 3771



the next step

'They are taking on the whole township'

More than 600 black members of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union are occupying an engineering factory just outside Johannesburg. Last week *Sipho D* spoke to one about their struggle

'When management fired the chair of our shop stewards' committee for "intimidating" workers who were working overtime, we decided enough was enough,' says a member of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union. 'Every day for weeks the bosses have been accusing Mawu of intimidation.'

'We knew they wanted to provoke a strike so they could get rid of us. So instead of walking out we occupied the plant and demanded our chair was reinstated. The bosses refused. So we are staying.'

The sit-in at the Barlow corporation, one of South Africa's largest industrial companies, is the latest in a wave of factory occupations by Mawu members. Two weeks ago, workers at Haggie Rand won a dispute over union recognition and wage increases after a three-week occupation.

The Haggie Rand victory was a great boost to black workers. Other factory occupations have not fared as well. Ten days ago a sit-in by Mawu and Pwawu (the Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union) at the Pan African Shopfitters in Germiston was smashed by police using tear-gas and dogs. Police arrested more than 70 workers and charged them with arson and damage to company property. At least six ended up in hospital with severe injuries. The lessons of that defeat have not been lost on the Barlow strikers.

'There are two reasons why we decided on a sit-in. First, the machines are here, so we are here with them. If the bosses send in the boers (police) they will have to break us from the machines. I don't think they will — they

like their machines more than us. Second, if we are inside the factory, the management can't fire us, lock us out and bring in a whole new lot of unemployed workers. We know the bosses want us to be outside the factory. Then their police, the SB (security branch) and the vigilantes can deal with us. But now we control the strike.

'But there is something else here which the Haggie Rand strike taught us. The Haggie workers' families set up support committees which provided food and money. We are doing the same. You see, Barlow's are not just fighting us workers here in the factory — they are taking on the whole of Alexandra township. Our shop stewards have set up a council which involves the Alexandra Action Committee, the young comrades, everyone. The wives and families are cooking us food. They are organising the people to get money from other workers. Everyone in Alex is talking about Barlow's thanks to them. The bosses must realise that we inside are fighting for our communities just like they outside are fighting with us.'

The determination displayed at Barlow's shows how black workers are meeting the challenge from their bosses. Barlow's is not only one of the leading industrial giants, its chair Mike Rosholt is closely associated with the business lobby urging president PW Botha to reform apartheid. But as economic conditions have worsened in recent months, the capitalist class finds itself with little room to manoeuvre. A new law now going through the parliamentary process shows the state is moving to tighten up its repressive controls on the black working class.

The new weapon in the apartheid armoury is called the Temporary Removal of Restrictions on Economic Activities Bill. It is intended to give the state president the power to suspend any of the existing minimum wage determinations, rules about safety, and health and working conditions in any industry if he deems it necessary.

The Bill is presented as a measure to raise efficiency by removing 'restrictive practices'. In reality, it will enable the state to remove all the gains the black trade union movement has made over the last decade.

Under the guise of fighting unemployment, the government wants to create conditions in which factories will be cheaper to run, and where wages will be as low as employers wish. Botha is set to launch a direct attack on the black trade union movement, in a fresh bid to re-create conditions in which the capitalists can enjoy the super-profits they became accustomed to in the sixties.

The Barlow sit-in shows that the South African establishment has a long way to go before it can feel confident about its ability to contain black workers. Shop stewards' councils linking workplace and community struggles are being formed throughout black townships. As workers extend their struggles to involve whole communities, the words of one striking Barlow's worker sum up the new confidence of the black workers of South Africa: 'The management will not break Mawu. They are not just taking on a sit-in. They are taking on the whole of Alex, our wives and families, the youth and other workers. If we organise, you can be sure, they will not have it their way for too long.'

**Report from
South Africa**

