

tms
the next step
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**INSIDE: Four page
Wapping special**



FOR DEFENDING JOBS,
THESE MEN HAVE BEEN MADE
OUTLAWS

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DON'T OBEY ORDERS IN COURT

'W'e don't want to be outside the law,' said print union leader Brenda Dean, after last week's high court decision to confiscate Sogat's entire funds. Yet recent legal judgements in industrial disputes indicate that any effective trade union action is now outside the law.

Since the end of 1983 the Tories have outlawed a wide range of different forms of industrial action:

- Resistance against victimisation In the *Stockport Messenger* dispute the NGA print union was heavily fined for fighting the victimisation of six union members by union-busting newspaper proprietor Eddie Shah.

- Trade union membership After a long series of appeals, the government was finally judged to be within its rights in banning union membership at its GCHQ spy centre in Cheltenham.

- Mass pickets and flying pickets In a series of court cases in the course of the miners' strike, the NUM suffered heavy fines and sequestration of its assets for refusing to call off the fight against pit closures.

- Strike action Industrial action at BL's Longbridge plant and on the railways has been declared illegal because no ballot had been held.

- Sympathetic action The flurry of injunctions in the current dispute at News International has made clear that any attempt to disrupt Murdoch's massive scab operation is against the law.

A STARK CHOICE

Every dispute between employers and workers now seems to end up in courtroom wrangles. The legal offensive sanctioned by the Tory anti-union laws poses a stark choice to the working class movement. We can succumb to the courts and give up workers' rights to defend jobs and living standards. Or, on the other hand, we can start defying the courts and standing up for our rights.

The attack on the unions has reached such a pitch that even respectable trade union leaders are now forced to proclaim their willingness to break the law. However, like Brenda Dean, they always preface their declarations of defiance with statements of their underlying respect for the rule of law. They plead exceptional circumstances and assert every individual's right of conscientious objection to unjust laws. But they never challenge the fiction of British justice itself.

BOSSES IN DRAG

By what right do these old men in wigs issue instructions that deprive thousands of workers of a livelihood? They pretend to stand above society, weighing all matters according to abstract principles. But how many employers have judges prevented from condemning workers to a life of idleness and misery, or from forcing workers to work in dirty and dangerous conditions for a pittance? The role of the legal system in recent industrial disputes shows that the courts are merely a pompous front for the employers, and the learned and distinguished judges merely bosses in drag.

The instant response of the courts to Murdoch's every demand shows that the law is now moving into the front line of the

employers' offensive. It is time to organise serious defiance of the courts, not as a question of individual conscience confronted with bad laws, but as a matter of working class resistance to a weapon of the capitalist class.

The labour movement will not be able to take a step forward against the courts as long as left wingers and union officials are themselves ready to use the capitalist law to sort out the internal affairs of the Labour Party and the unions. The Militant tendency has a particularly shameful record of going to the courts. Its five editorial board members resorted to legal action against the Labour Party when they were expelled in 1982. In the current round of witch-hunts its supporters have again tried to use the law against the Labour leadership. Last Christmas Militant supporters in Stevenage won a high court injunction against attempts to kick them out.

FORGET 'FAIR PLAY'

The latest issue of *Witch-hunt News*, the bulletin of all the threatened entrists fragments, recommends activists to 'consider court action if your case has not been dealt with fairly and in accordance with the rules'. The same expectation of fair play guides union appeals to the courts. The left-wing leaders of the miners' union tried to fight the Notts breakaway last year through a series of legal actions.

The problem of the labour movement resorting to the courts is not merely that such appeals are time consuming, expensive and, in the long run, almost always unsuccessful. The much more serious problem is that such appeals strengthen the legitimacy of the courts in the eyes of many workers. This popular respect for the impartiality of the law is what makes it such a powerful weapon in the hands of the bosses. The courts invest the dictates of the capitalist class with the character of neutral judgements which are widely accepted in British society. The fact that the left invites the judges to interfere in its internal affairs obviously makes it easier for the courts to interfere on behalf of the employers. This is why stopping all use of the bosses' courts by the labour movement is a vital step towards repelling the legal offensive against the working class.

OUT OF REACH

The second stage in resisting the courts is organising mass defiance. This requires careful preparation. The token defiance of the courts currently being undertaken by the leaders of the print and other unions serves no useful purpose. They might as well put union funds in a sack and send them along to the courts with one of their cringing letters. For union activists, the first priority must be to get union resources back into the hands of the rank and file where they are out of reach of the accountants and can be used to organise effective action.

The employers' use of the courts shows their confidence in embarking on more direct confrontation with the working class. If they are met with a response which exposes the true nature of the courts and refuses to back away from confrontation, their confidence will soon be shattered.

BUILDING WORKERS' STRIKE



THE 'SURBITON SIX' AND SUPPORTERS PROTESTED OUTSIDE THE COURT THIS WEEK

HOW TO TAKE ON TORY LAWS

Outside the high court on Tuesday rank and file trade unionists demonstrated their support for the 'Surbiton Six', the latest victims of the Tory anti-union laws. Inside the courtroom construction company John Laing Ltd was using the 1980 Employment Act to threaten the four bricklayers and two labourers with a huge claim for damages, and an injunction to prevent them picketing Laing sites.

The 'Surbiton Six' have shown unions like the print workers' the way to challenge Tory anti-union legislation, writes Andrew Calcutt

The 'Surbiton Six' are a bricklaying gang. All six are members of Ucat, the building workers' union. Four months ago they went into dispute at Surbiton, Surrey, after Laing's subcontractor, Jonoroy Ltd, reneged on an agreement to recognise their Ucat membership and give them regular terms of employment — most jobs on building sites are casual. The 'agreement' lasted one week before the whole gang was dismissed. The six were told there was a 'run down of work' — at a time when they were only halfway through building a block of flats.

They're sure they were dismissed because Laing operates a blacklist of militants, which by now included their names.

The gang hit back by picketing out the Surbiton site. So Laing closed it down. But the 'Surbiton Six' extended the dispute to other Laing sites, including the £100m British Library site at King's Cross. They brought two London sites to a standstill, and stopped the supply of materials to five more.

The six knew from experience that few strikes are effective without solidarity action. On this point the British establishment agrees with them. As part of a programme of legislation designed to disarm the unions, the Tory government introduced the 1980 Employment Act to outlaw secondary action. The writs served against the six cite them as 'acting in concert to induce breach of contract by spreading trade union action'.

During the past four months the six have

consistently flouted the anti-union laws. They have picketed 'any Laing's site we saw fit'. They have argued for rank and file militants to support the three basic demands of their campaign: reinstatement for victimised building workers, an end to the blacklist of militants, and an end to 'the lump' system of cash-in-hand casual labour.

'The lump' allows hundreds of employers to deduct 30 per cent from wages for 'tax' that's never paid. It leaves thousands of building workers without insurance cover, and effectively prevents union organisation on many sites.

Fourteen years ago the building workers tried to 'kill the lump' with a national strike. But the manoeuvres of trade union bureaucrats killed that display of rank and file action. At the end of the strike the authorities selected two pickets for exemplary punishment. The 'Shrewsbury Two', Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson, were jailed for 'conspiring to intimidate people to abstain from their lawful work'. They were jailed under a Tory government, left to rot in prison under a Labour government, and abandoned by their union leaders.

In 1972 many activists were shocked when their union officials betrayed them. But 14 years later the six began their dispute knowing what to expect. 'What happened in the seventies has been a lesson to us,' one of them told *tns*. 'Right the way through we've been on our guard.'

The officials have acted according to the gang's expectations. Ucat regional secretary Len Eaton has worked hard to undermine their unofficial action. Along with TGWU officials, Eaton has issued letters to lorry drivers instructing them to cross the gang's picket lines. Many drivers have been told their union will allow them to be sacked if they continue to take solidarity action.

The bureaucrats may have undermined some of the gang's support, but they've been unable to tie the six down through the procedural niceties of union-management panels. Not that the officials didn't try, but as the gang explain, they 'cut across the bureaucracy of Ucat and the TGWU. We put our faith only in the rank and file.' The resulting action has seriously disrupted Laing's completion schedules.

While trade union leaders occupy their time with endless wrangling in court, the contempt for the law shown by the 'Surbiton Six' is a shining example to rank and file activists. The 'Surbiton Six' have shown that effective action now depends on breaking the law, and on not trusting union bureaucrats any further than you can throw a full hod of bricks.

Law and Order

POLICE PERSECUTE MINER



FRAME-UP!

WHERE WAS YORKSHIRE MINER KEITH HAMMOND OVER THE FIRST WEEKEND IN FEBRUARY? THIS PICTURE PROVES HE WAS MARCHING IN LONDON WITH THE IRISH FREEDOM MOVEMENT. BUT ACCORDING TO POLICE WHO ARRESTED HIM LATER, HE WAS ROBBING A SHOP IN PONTEFRACT!

‘We know you’re anti-police,’ said the two CID officers who forced their way into Keith Hammond’s home and arrested him ‘on suspicion’ of armed robbery on Monday 3 February. The attempt to frame Hammond shows the Yorkshire police are still as anti-miner as they were during the bitter picket-line battles of the 12-month strike. This time the police messed up their scheme, and were forced to drop the case last Saturday. But the next miner they target may not be so lucky.

Keith Hammond is a supporter of the miners’ next step campaign. He was involved throughout the strike in picketing, setting up support groups, and even organising the power station pickets that the NUM

leadership refused to stage. Since the strike ended, Hammond has been at the centre of the campaign to stop the scab Union of Democratic Mineworkers getting a foothold in the Yorkshire coalfield.

None of this has ingratiated Hammond with the coal board — or the local constabulary. Police have spent the last two years trying to make his life a misery.

When they came calling at Hammond’s door at 10 past 10 that Monday morning, he had just gone to bed after finishing a nightshift. He told the police it was inconvenient for them to ask their questions. But inconvenient was just what they wanted it to be. They said, “Under the new Police Bill we can now search your house without a warrant. This is a very serious business,”

Hammond told me. ‘I asked what it was all about but they just got angry, told me I was being anti-police and evasive, then said they were arresting me and put me in the car.’

The police wouldn’t tell Keith Hammond what the ‘very serious business’ was that they were arresting him for (that’s illegal, Police Bill or no, but then legal technicalities only matter to the police when it suits them). He only found out later that it was supposed to be about a shop that had been robbed with a pickaxe handle the previous Saturday. The ‘connection’ police had dreamt up between Keith and this crime was that he had been present when a car changed hands, and the car had later been seen — along with thousands of others — in Pontefract on the day of the robbery!

Such damning evidence was enough to justify arresting Hammond, holding him for six hours, and searching his house. Hammond’s solicitor told him that if a hardened hood with a long record of violent crime was the suspect, police would have needed a lot more ‘facts’ than that to get away with such an operation. But known activists in the miners’ ranks qualify for exclusive treatment.

GRILLED AND RAIDED

‘On the journey down to the station they kept saying, “This isn’t political,”’ says Hammond. But it was clear from the police interrogation that the whole exercise was a political frame-up aimed at intimidating one supporter of the miners’ next step campaign and getting information on others. When he didn’t tell them what they wanted to know, the interrogators accused Hammond of ‘resisting’ and refused to let him contact a solicitor — ‘The constable told me that had been “blocked from higher up”’. And while Hammond was grilled at Pontefract police station, a hit-squad raided his home. They went through his personal and political papers, and took away ‘incriminating’ items they thought might help with the frame-up — two woollen hats, a flat cap, half a pool cue and an old bit of gas pipe.

NOT THE KRAYS

Unfortunately for the police, they had picked the wrong day to accuse Keith Hammond of being Pontefract’s answer to the Kray twins. While the robbery was taking place he was on a crowded bus, going to London for a weekend of events commemorating Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland. Hundreds of people heard Hammond speak at an Irish Freedom Movement rally on the Saturday, and marched with him through north London on the Sunday.

So the police had to release him on Tuesday afternoon, and when he went back to the station to meet his bail conditions last Saturday, the police told Hammond they were dropping the case. The detective returning Hammond’s property tried to laugh the whole thing off: ‘He said he didn’t want to come to my house carrying the cue and pipe, because he didn’t want people to get the wrong idea about the police, ho ho.’

There is no chance of miners like Keith Hammond getting the wrong idea about the police. Their experience has proved to them that the police are thugs, out to terrorise anybody who stands up to the authorities.

NO JOKE

Hammond has a long experience of being harassed: police once accused him of ‘peddling explosives from town to town’ when he was selling the Irish Freedom Movement handbook. This time he has lodged an official complaint — which police used as an excuse to drag him in front of the whole Pontefract force, so they all got a good look for future reference. Hammond doesn’t expect to get any joy from the complaints procedure. But he is entitled to expect support from the many people who backed striking miners against the state.

If we are to defend miners facing police persecution, we must use every opportunity to publicise and oppose political frame-ups. Let the law know they can’t arrest workers as ‘armed robbers’, and expect us to laugh about it two weeks later.

Mick Hume



Rupert Murdoch’s supporters understand the importance of the print dispute. They have thrown the resources of the police, the courts, the government and the rest of the media behind his effort to get the scab *Sun* on to the streets. We need the same resolute support for our paper if we are to oppose the employers’ offensive. Every pound you send us will help to turn the tables on the press barons.

Rush donations to our fighting fund at BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX. Cheques payable to RCP Association.

Racism

BEHIND THE 'SCHOOL OF FEAR' STORIES

IT'S BLACK PUPILS WHO ARE UNDER ATTACK

'Whites flee school of fear,' screamed the gutter press last week. The tabloids claimed that seven white boys had been forced out of Liverpool's University Community Comprehensive by black bullies from the 'school of race hate'. They faithfully reported the allegations of white pupils and parents, and listed examples of 'black racism' at the school:

- 'Blackboard' was a racist word. Instead it had to be called 'chalkboard'
- Discos were out, reggae parties were in
- A pupil was disciplined for drawing Greenland bigger than Africa
- Allegedly racist library books had been censored
- Two minutes silence was observed for a hanged black South African 'terrorist'.

A quick trip to the school showed us the gutter press was up to its usual tricks. First, the stories of racial conflict were exaggerated. And second, what racism there is in and around University Comp is directed against blacks.

Last week 'racism in schools' hit the headlines — not the real racist violence suffered by black pupils, but an imaginary anti-white pogrom in Liverpool.
John Pearson and Kenan Malik report

White pupils we spoke to laughed at the media tales of an anti-white culture at the school. 'Greenland bigger than Africa,' giggled Julie, a second year, 'What a dickhead!' Two minutes silence had been held for the hanged South African poet Benjamin Maloise, said Kevin, a fourth year, but he knew for sure that blackboards were still called blackboards. And as Jackie, another second year told us, 'We've only had one disco all year, and they only played one reggae record.'

The seven pupils' allegations of black bullying didn't hold much water either. There are gang fights and bullies at University Comp, just like at every school. But, as one 12-year old told me, 'They're not just coloured lads. Irving — he's coloured, but Tommy Walters — "Pegleg" — he hit me in the face the other day, and he's white.' The gang fights are between different schools, or over rivalries which started when three schools were merged to form the Community school in September. But few fights have anything to do with race. The incident dragged up by the seven pupils is only the third clash between blacks and whites since early December, when adults and pupils from nearby Nugent school incited a fight with racial abuse.

'Niggers out' is painted in white letters on the school playground. It's testimony to the real racism that does exist in the area — against blacks. 'Wogs out!' chanted white youths at a crowded local youth club we visited. 'The blacks only have to riot and they get new youth clubs,' complained Pete, one of the eldest. Racist attacks on Liverpool estates mean many black families live in fear. An Asian described how the constant abuse from his neighbours made him feel 'like I was going to be hung', and pushed him out of his home in Croxteth 'into



ASIANS FACE RACIST VIOLENCE AT MORPETH SCHOOL, EAST LONDON

a ghetto'. One black pupil told us he had recently moved to University Comp, after his family was forced out of Cantril Farm by racists who poured petrol through their letterbox and smashed their windows.

Liverpool City Council pays lip-service to the sort of token anti-racist policies pursued by Labour councils throughout Britain. But empty gestures like minutes of silence and vetting text books can't challenge the racist prejudices that lead to anti-black violence in Liverpool. In the words of one local teacher, the council's anti-racist code 'isn't worth a carrot'. Worse still, such gestures give ample scope for the gutter press to whip up 'black racism' scare stories, and add to the racist climate in the city.

So how can we combat the real racism now growing in our schools? East London Workers Against Racism has shown the way at Morpeth school in Bethnal Green.

In contrast to the meal the national media have made of events in Liverpool, the racist attacks at Morpeth have hardly warranted a mention in the local press.

Every day, Bangladeshi pupils at Morpeth have faced racists, often armed with knives, metal bars, broomhandles and sticks. 'One day there were men hanging about outside with a shotgun,' said 15-year old Asif. 'They wouldn't fire them, but just threaten us with them and chase us.' Bangladeshi boys who walk the wrong way home run the risk of racist violence. 'I went out of the front gate one day,' said Asif, 'Two boys grabbed my arms and another with a mask on hit me with a baseball bat. I got really bashed up by them. Things like that happened all the time.'

The trouble at Morpeth is no one-day story. Asian pupils have faced racist attacks for years. After racist gangs roamed

the school, the Bangladeshi boys were confronted by armed men at the school gates. 'That was after we started fighting back. All the Bengali boys said this ain't going to go on any more.'

It's only since the Asians have started hitting back that the authorities and the press have taken any notice. 'They didn't like us fighting,' said Asif. 'They knew there was going to be problems.' Many of the active Asian pupils have been victimised by the authorities. The final straw came last month. A series of particularly vicious racist attacks incensed the Bangladeshi students. They came out on strike, with 100 per cent support.

The Labour-run Inner London Education Authority, a much bigger supporter of token anti-racist policies than Liverpool council, condemned the black pupils' action. Ilea refused to accept that racist attacks were a big problem, denying that boys from other schools were involved or that weapons had been used. The London *Standard* wrote its first piece about the conflict — 'exposing' the involvement of East London Workers Against Racism.

DIRECT ACTION WORKS

Contrary to the press stories, the strike was a spontaneous outburst of the black pupils' anger. But Elwar has been at the centre of organising opposition to the racists. Pupils, parents and a local campaign against racism in schools have joined Elwar supporters in:

- covering the nearby Bancroft, Wessex and Bethnal Green estates, with door-to-door canvasses to identify the racists, build support against their activity, and isolate them within the community
- patrolling the area around the school every day, confronting the racists every time they try to make trouble.

Up to a dozen racists would frequently meet outside the school gates to plan their attacks. After a major confrontation last week the racists were forced to back down. Their response to our activity was to call the police to harass us! In the face of determined opposition the police too backed down. It's a measure of our success that not only have the attacks stopped for now, but the racists no longer congregate in front of the school as they used to do. But Elwar supporters know that trouble could quickly flare up again, and are keeping an eye on Morpeth.

While the 'anti-racist' bureaucrats on Labour local authorities make stupid gestures that give the press a field day and condemn black pupils who fight back, East London Workers Against Racism is showing that direct action by pupils, parents and anti-racists can stem the rising tide of racist violence in our schools.

POLITICS OF POLICING

RIOT COPS AND COVER-UPS

Last week the press and politicians were up in arms over news that police had got away with beating up five youths, and hospitalising the two blacks involved, in London's Holloway Road in August 1983. The Police Complaints Authority slammed the uniformed thugs, but complained that, since other policemen would not identify the guilty officers, there could be no prosecution. Tory home secretary Douglas Hurd promised a personal apology to the victims' parents. One Fleet Street editorial remarked that the Holloway cover-up 'isn't a shocking exception. It is what happens whenever any police officer does anything against the law to anyone whom the police regard as fair game.'

The row over the Holloway attack is a sort of Westland crisis for the British police — an unexceptional incident that has brought to a head a lot of establishment disquiet over the way the police are operating in the eighties. A series of police shootings — of Stephen Waldorf in his car in west London, five-year old John Stonehouse in his bed in Birmingham, and Cherry Groce in her Brixton living room — alongside the death of Cynthia Jarrett in a police raid on her

Tottenham home, have helped to sow the seeds of doubt. Right-wing commentators have condemned the 'bullies in blue', and the officers in the Holloway incident were even branded 'bastards' in the *Police Review*.

These critics don't really care what happens to the victims of police violence.

Behind the outcry over police brutality in Holloway, the state is tooling up for the conflicts to come

They are only worried that such strong-arm tactics are undermining the neutral image of the British police, and exposing the force as a gang of uniformed thugs licensed to stamp on anybody who poses a problem to the system. The authorities hope to restore the public reputation of the police by pointing a

critical finger at individual officers. Many respectable figures wanted to make an example of the Holloway cops, to excuse the incident as the work of a few 'bad apples'.

All the apologies the establishment may muster cannot hide the drive towards open police terror on the streets of Britain. As the capitalist system goes into terminal decline, the authorities need to attack their opponents as never before.

Black youth are at the top of the target list, but striking workers and demonstrators are also getting a taste of the new-style policing. In the week when the Holloway row hit the headlines, other news reports showed police being trained to tackle trouble-makers in a mock-up riot city. And they are getting the legal powers and plastic bullets they need to put their training into practice. Pickets at Fortress Wapping can testify to how efficient the new hit-squads are.

We must not fall for the cover-up or the 'bad apples' theory. Every policeman is guilty of 'going over the top' to defend the power of his political paymasters. And the beatings and shootings won't stop until they are all off our streets.

Toby Barrett

THE WAR WON'T GO AWAY

NO THATCHER U-TURNS ON IRELAND

Whatever other concessions Thatcher may make in an effort to get her government off its current hook, she will not drop the Anglo-Irish agreement. The deal she signed with the Dublin government last November is far more crucial to Tory strategy than selling off any helicopter or car company. It formalises arrangements for cooperation with the Southern security forces against the IRA, and promises concessions to nationalists in Northern Ireland, designed to undermine support for the republican movement. The British authorities see this two-pronged approach as their best hope of containing the Irish War through the eighties.

Thatcher and her Northern Ireland secretary Tom King are now trying to edge ahead with the next stage of their scheme — setting up some form of devolved government in Belfast that could give an air of normality to Northern Ireland politics. But even if the Tories succeed in coaxing both the Unionist parties and the moderate nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party back around the negotiating table, recent events show they have little scope for reforming the repressive regime in Britain's Irish colony.

NO CHANGE

Take two debates this week, one over the Stalker report into assassinations by the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the other over modifying the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Both indicate that, whatever may change in Northern Ireland, the brutal character of British rule over Irish nationalists will remain the same.

Manchester deputy chief constable Stalker's report, into a series of killings carried out by the RUC in Armagh in 1982, was this week handed over to the director of public prosecutions. Stalker recommends the prosecution of three RUC men involved in the shootings which killed three IRA volunteers, two Inla members, and a 17-year old youth — all of whom were unarmed. The report is an attempt to prove to nationalists that the authorities are seriously seeking to restrain the security forces, and to make the RUC 'serve all sections of the community'.

But even in the extremely unlikely event of the three RUC men named by Stalker being prosecuted, convicted and sent to jail for hundreds of years — a sentence not unknown for republicans — it would not change the situation on the streets of Northern Ireland.

The killings in question were not the work of RUC cowboys. They were carried out as part of a shoot-to-kill policy against nationalists, authorised at British government level and executed on the orders of senior officers in the RUC and the British Army. Indeed, the Stalker report was ordered when two previous court cases concerning the killings exposed a top level cover-up to disguise the calculated character of the assassination campaign. Three RUC men have already been charged with the murders. All were found not guilty, and congratulated by the presiding judges for their deadly displays of marksmanship.

BRITISH GODFATHERS

The British cabinet, the police and Army chiefs and the judiciary in Northern Ireland were all up to their necks in the six murders Stalker covered. So long as these men and women of violence preside over the Six Counties, what happens to a handful of RUC officers is irrelevant. Britain may punish the hit-men as a public relations exercise; but if the Godfathers who ordered the executions are still running the show, the criminal character of British rule in Belfast, Derry or Armagh will remain unchanged.

The incidents investigated in the Stalker report are not aberrations, but the best



THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE RUC AND IRISH YOUTH CAN'T BE ENDED BY INQUIRIES

examples of the fact that the RUC is an anti-Irish paramilitary machine. This is a crucial point, given the way in which the RUC is currently being portrayed as the most neutral of the security forces in the North. When nationalists complain of the terrorist acts committed by the Ulster Defence Regiment or the British Army, they are being told not to worry because police officers are now accompanying all troop patrols. The authorities are not saying who will accompany the RUC next time they pump 109 bullets into three men, shoot another two through the back of the head, and blow a teenager apart with pump-action shotguns, as they did in the three Armagh attacks in November and December 1982.

As she presses on with the Anglo-Irish agreement, Margaret Thatcher has little room for reform in Northern Ireland

An extra 'reform' now under discussion is the idea of having three judges rather than one in the no-jury courts where republicans are tried. It is not clear what odds this would make if two of the three were the judges who praised the police killers in the Stalker cases.

This week's parliamentary debate on the Prevention of Terrorism Act is another illustration of the Tories' limited ability to tone down British repression against the Irish. In the 11 years since it was passed, the Prevention of Terrorism Act has been used to detain more than 6200 people without charge in Britain. More than 250 of them have been served with 'exclusion orders' under the Act — kicked out of Britain back to Northern Ireland or the Irish Republic. Almost all the victims of the Act have been Irish. Only around two per cent of them have

ever been charged with any offence.

The PTA has been the British face of the Irish War. Introduced by a Labour government, it has survived Thatcher's legislative revolution because it allows the authorities to terrorise Irish people in Britain into keeping quiet about the colonial war in their country. The PTA was the focus of a lot of criticism from the Dublin government in the run-up to the Anglo-Irish agreement. In an attempt to head off such complaints, the Tories have set up an annual review of the Act. But the government's response this week to the latest report on the operation of the PTA indicates that it cannot compromise on the Act's repressive powers.

The official review of the PTA, carried out by former chair of the police complaints authority Sir Cyril Philips, recommended that the Act be amended to do away with the power of exclusion. Instead, Philips thought the police could use the extensive powers given them under the new Police and Criminal Evidence Act to deal with republican suspects. Tory home secretary Douglas Hurd dismissed that idea, declaring that 'now is not the time' to reform the PTA. Hurd understands that the PTA's specific powers of exclusion remain crucial to the government's ability to isolate the Irish War from mainstream British politics. So long as the fight for Irish freedom continues, 'now' will never be the time for the British authorities to stop terrorising the Irish.

STATE TERRORISM

Whatever happens in the current round of Thatcher's talks with Dublin and with the Unionists, the Irish War will not go away.

The IRA remains a formidable force with an unshakeable core of support for its struggle to free Ireland from British rule. Thatcher cannot go back on her agreement with the Dublin government. But neither can she reform the regime of state terrorism with which Britain has to run its oldest colony. The debates on the Stalker report and the PTA can't hide the fact that the only change that could count in Northern Ireland would be the exclusion of every British war criminal from Irish soil.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

WHO DARES WINS

Last week's announcement that up to 90 SAS officers are to be sent into Botswana to help train its army has been presented as a sympathetic response by the British government to an appeal from a country that has suffered gravely from South African aggression. The sparsely populated black state on South Africa's northern border is desperate to repel further attacks, such as last June's raid on the capital Gaborone in which 12 African National Congress refugees were massacred.

The apartheid regime has threatened to retaliate against any of its neighbours which harbour ANC guerrillas. Early last month thousands of troops from the notorious South African Defence Force flooded the town of Stockpoort near the Botswana border after a number of whites were killed in landmine explosions. But will the SAS help defend the people of Botswana against Pretoria's killing machine?

Diamond-rich Botswana has close ties with both Britain and South Africa, and it is of great strategic significance to the whole region. Despite British criticisms of the excesses of PW Botha's regime, Britain and South Africa have a common interest in suppressing black resistance throughout Southern Africa. The real aim of the SAS is to assist South African forces in dealing with the growing threat from the ANC, not to help repel their attacks on Botswana.

Reports from Gaborone last week noted that, 'The skills to be learned from the SAS would also make it easier for the Botswana Defence Force to detect and counter infiltration by ANC guerrillas.' While British diplomats were meeting ANC leaders in Zambia for the first time, Britain's most ruthless militia was on its way to help South Africa to crush anti-imperialist resistance in Botswana.

The role of British military advisers in Uganda since 1981 shows the sort of contribution the SAS can be expected to make to the people of Botswana. The British media turned Ugandan premier Idi Amin — himself a product of British army training — into a racist stereotype and exposed his regime as a savage dictatorship. After Amin was ousted, the British forces were sent in to help the new rulers restore 'civilised' government. Under the government of Milton Obote, the British-trained Ugandan army was soon found to be guilty of even more atrocities than took place in the days of Amin. Under the inspiration of Sandhurst, the armed forces became little more than mobs of marauding thugs terrorising the population.

The official British response to the latest revelations of mass graves in Uganda was to claim that things 'would have been far worse had the British team not been there'. This must be very reassuring to the thousands of victims of British-backed terror in Uganda. The British officer despatched to establish relations with the latest regime to be established in Kampala recently caused a diplomatic stir, by handing the new president a scruffily-typed memo urging his government to display 'full respect for human rights and for the process of law'. Given Britain's officially 'cordial' relations with Obote, whose human rights record was described by a US official as 'horrendous', this was imperial cheek on a considerable scale, even by British standards.

As the SAS go into Botswana, we can only hope that they have as much difficulty in the border areas of South Africa as they have had in the Border areas of South Armagh over the past 10 years. 'Who dares wins,' as they say in Crossmaglen.

Why we will general

A lot of people are cynical about politicians, parliament and electioneering. They are sick of hearing grey, middle aged men talking in clichés and platitudes. They have listened with disgust to the Question Time chorus in the house of commons that sounds like a public school playtime. And they regard the five-yearly performance of walkabouts, kissing babies and wearing rosettes as a farce.

Yet beneath the disillusionment with traditional British party politics lie some deeply ingrained beliefs. Many people who are contemptuous of the current crop of parliamentarians believe that, with an influx of MPs of a different sort, things could be different. Indeed this faith has sustained left wingers in Britain for generations. Many people who hate Margaret Thatcher and are highly suspicious of Neil Kinnock still believe that the Labour Party could provide a better solution to the problems of recession than the Tories. This faith sustains loyalty to Labour, despite all its past betrayals. As the next election approaches and Labour's prospects of forming another government improve, these prejudices will inevitably strengthen, even among those who are today most hostile towards parliament and the Labour leadership.

For the RCP the general election raises not merely the narrow question of whether or not to stand candidates. More importantly, it allows rival strategies for dealing with the wide-ranging crisis of modern society to be put squarely before the public.

The RCP approach to parliamentary elections differs in two important respects from that of traditional labour movement parties. First, we regard taking part in elections as a tactic, not as a strategy. Second, we use elections to put forward a

programme of action for now, not a list of promises to be fulfilled by a government of the future. Let's look at these points in turn.

TACTIC NOT STRATEGY

The RCP has no faith in parliamentary democracy. The house of commons provides a framework within which all classes can participate in government through rival parties and take responsibility for running the capitalist system. It allows conflicts to be openly debated and resolved and thus creates a consensus of popular support for the measures required to perpetuate the existing system. Periodic elections provide a semblance of popular participation in government. Parliament thus confers legitimacy on the decisions taken in the interests of the capitalist class, and provides a sophisticated mechanism for enforcing capitalist rule.

The capitalist class is not sentimental about parliamentary democracy. In most of the world capitalist rule is exercised through military dictatorship, and, in the inter-war period, the ruling classes in several European countries resorted to fascism to sustain their grip over society. A few years ago the *Economist* summed up the pragmatic view the British establishment takes of parliament:

'Few observers of the modern house of commons are prepared to credit it with any higher status than as a periodic electoral college, remaining in uncomfortable permanent session, for whichever party is to lead Britain's notoriously all-powerful executive.'
(19 December 1981)

In 1981 *The Times* asked the question 'Could the army pull off a coup in Britain?' and reassured its readers — 'within minutes'. Parliamentary democracy is however a particularly efficient method of capitalist rule and the British establishment has been very successful in keeping this show on the road.

As a result of the prolonged stability of British society and the longevity of its political institutions, most people retain considerable respect for parliament. Contrast the way people in Northern Ireland or South Africa view the assemblies recently

established by the authorities to stabilise their rule. These institutions lack legitimacy and radical movements consider that participating in them would only ratify oppression and frustrate the development of the struggle. In many third world countries, notably in Latin America, people have little faith in elections and opposition groups often boycott them. For example, it was taken for granted that the dictator Marcos would try to rig the presidential election in the Philippines.

In Britain, however, parliament enjoys legitimacy and parliamentary elections are widely respected as an important indicator of the political balance of forces. Given that elections are a central focus of political life in Britain, it is essential for any party seeking to change the face of British politics to challenge the established parties at the polls.

FOCUS FOR ACTION

For the RCP the general election will provide a platform from which to take on all the old parties and reach out to a wider audience. The election campaign will create a period of intense public discussion and debate which we can use to advance our programme for change. By running a substantial number of candidates we aim to win access to the media, especially to television, to put across our policies to the widest possible audience. The election campaign will allow us to present the party as a serious contender for

'I thought the RCP action — not parliamentary democracy — was the supporter's real statement in a the RCP inter candidates in the election. Mike forward to the e

power, and in particular to challenge the Labour Party's claim to represent the working class movement.

Our key objective will be to use the general election campaign to mobilise for the wider activities of the party. We aim to use it as a focus for action to defend jobs and living standards, for campaigning for women's rights to abortion, contraception and nurseries as well as access to work, for organising workers' defence against racist attacks and other anti-racist action, for carrying on Irish solidarity work, and for all the other areas of party work. In this way we can take advantage of the climate of political discussion around the election to push the

Who's afraid

Many left wingers seem to regard taking part in elections as a betrayal of revolutionary principles. Yet electioneering has long been a feature of the Marxist tradition. The British left's distaste for elections has a more recent origin.

In 'Left-wing communism' — an infantile disorder, his famous pamphlet on tactics in the international communist movement written in 1920, Lenin criticised sections of the newly-formed communist parties which refused on principle to participate in parliamentary elections. He outlined the experience of the Bolshevik movement in Russia in both taking part in and boycotting elections according to circumstances. In general he emphasised the value of using parliamentary platforms to expose the charade of democracy:

'It has been proved that, far from causing harm to the revolutionary proletariat, participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament, even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet republic, and even after such a victory, actually helps that proletariat to prove to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be done away with.'

While Lenin called on Russians to vote Bolshevik, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht went to the polls in Germany. Participating in elections and parliaments was a recognised tactic of revolutionaries in all countries.

The British left has a rather sorry record at the polls. After a good start the British Communist Party degenerated rapidly and, although it had a couple of MPs in the twenties and again during and after the Second World War, it has been downhill ever since. In 1983 some of its candidates received less votes than the recorded party membership in the constituency. The Workers' Revolutionary Party has stood

more than 100 candidates in increasingly low-key campaigns over the past decade, but has now disintegrated.

The Socialist Workers' Party now makes a big issue out of its hostility to ballots in

New MP's

Following an amazing leak, *ins* has received the outline of the speech to be given by the first RCP MP on taking her seat in the house of commons. The convention that maiden speeches should be non-controversial appears to be only the first tradition to be violated:

'I don't need to tell you, Mr Speaker, that elections change nothing. Nor do I need to tell you that parliament can achieve nothing on behalf of the people who sent me here.'

'I haven't come here, Mr Speaker, to tell you that the only way we can change things in this country is by getting organised and fighting for what we want.'

'I've come here to tell these things to the whole country. I intend to use the platform provided by this house to show everybody that parliament is a sham that disguises a system based on the exploitation and oppression of the majority of people in society.'

'I intend to expose the honourable and right honourable ladies and gentlemen in this house as either the true representatives of capitalist greed or as the impostors of the labour movement, because everybody here falls into one or other category.'

'In addition to specific measures I propose



Gail Daniels

THE POLLS

stand in the election

stood for direct playing the old g-dong,' was one response to the recent tns that ded standing the next general Freeman looks election campaign

class struggle forward and draw more and more people towards the party.

Our approach stands in sharp contrast to that of the Labour Party. From the leadership to the far left, Labour is united in its commitment to parliamentary democracy.

The boldest policies in Militant's programme are supposed to be introduced by a Labour government through 'an enabling act' passed in the house of commons. Instead of using the election campaign to mobilise direct action, Labour's approach is to subordinate workers' initiatives to the demands of the election campaign. In the quest for electoral respectability the Labour leadership will tell any group of workers in

struggle to hold back from taking on the employers and their state directly, in case the conflict damages Labour's prospects. As an alternative to struggle in the present, Labour will hold out the promise of a future Labour government. Victimised miners and surcharged councillors are already waiting in the queue for jam tomorrow.

Labour's slavish pursuit of electoral victory forces its leaders to trim their policies to suit public opinion. But as public opinion merely expresses the demands of the establishment reflected through the media, this inevitably results in the party moving away from the requirements of its working class supporters to satisfy the demands of the system. Because the RCP puts the interests of the working class before any concerns of electoral expediency, we refuse to make concessions to public opinion. Instead of succumbing to establishment pressures and moving to the right in pursuit of middle class voters, our aim is to change public opinion by giving the working class a lead in an anti-capitalist direction.

NO CAPITALIST SOLUTIONS

The second distinctive feature of the RCP's approach to the general election arises from the nature of our programme, *Preparing for Power*. This programme is based on the recognition that the capitalist system is in a state of terminal decline. The capitalist class

can only save itself from ruin and salvage its system by forcing the working class to accept sacrifices, beginning with unemployment and falling living standards and ending, if unchecked, in mass impoverishment and war. A few years ago this perspective might have been dismissed as wild and paranoid speculation. Today this final solution is evidently in the process of being implemented on a global scale. Our response is that the interests of the working class and the future of society depends on mobilising resistance against all capitalist solutions to the crisis and fighting for a better system.

The object of RCP activity, around the general election campaign as in all our work, is to give every display of resistance a clear anti-capitalist thrust.

This means directing trade unionists' demands for jobs and decent pay and conditions, or struggles against racial or sexual or national oppression, into a wider challenge to the system. This is the only way that these struggles can begin to achieve their own objectives and become part of a wider movement to build a new society in which people can realise their aspirations. When the guardians of the existing system tell us that they cannot afford to provide jobs at decent wages or that women and black people will have to accept second best or worse, then we say that it is the system, not the working class, that must give way.

WE WON'T PAY

The programme of the Labour Party has a quite different purpose. It lists items of legislation which may or may not be enacted by a future Labour government, according to how the party leaders respond to the dictates of the British establishment. For the Labour Party, defending the interests of the working class is conditional upon the welfare of the British capitalist economy. As Labour's deputy leader Roy Hattersley recently explained, a future Labour government would respond to inflation by cutting its proposed public spending plans. In other words, if capitalism continues to decline, workers will be forced to pay the price.

The best that the Labour Party can offer is some compromise between workers' needs

and the demands of the system. The explicitly pro-capitalist statements of the Kinnock/Hattersley team indicate that in any compromises made by a future government under their leadership, the working class would be a heavy loser.

All sections of the Labour Party accept that the aspirations of the working class must be limited by the horizons of the capitalist system. This is what they mean by 'realism' or 'practical politics'. But while it may be reasonable from the bosses' point of view, this approach promises disaster for workers. When it comes to any confrontation between the working class and the system, Labour always sacrifices the working class. This is the historic function of Labour governments and it is the destiny of any future Kinnock government to play this role — if we let them get away with it.

BUILDING THE PARTY

Many people reject Labour's electoralism, but remain strongly influenced by the party's reformist political outlook. This point of view is echoed by left wingers who denounce Labour for its cringing parliamentarianism, but allow its pro-capitalist counter-crisis programme to go unchallenged. But Labour's electoralism, its subordination of the working class to the exigencies of the parliamentary system, is only a sign of its deeper commitment to reconciling the working class to the capitalist system.

The aim of the RCP in engaging in the general election is to challenge Labourism in all its forms. We aim to take advantage of the parliamentary platform to build a party that can lead working class resistance from now all the way to the next government, whether it is formed by Tory, Labour, Alliance or any combination of the three.

of elections?

general and parliamentarianism in particular, but in the late seventies it stood in a series of parliamentary by-elections. However at a time of growing disillusionment with a Labour government it proved unable to offer

peaks out!

to bring forward from the manifesto on which I was elected, I will support any measures to make the house of commons more democratic and to televise its proceedings.

'Mr Speaker, my party favours the most democratic possible method of election, so that we can show most clearly that the real problem in this society is not the lack of democracy but the profit system which acts as a barrier to the realisation of all democratic rights.

'We want the television cameras in here for the same reason that you have kept them out for so long — so the world can see you as you really are and witness the emptiness of your debates.

'In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I hope to use this house and my status as an MP to keep a constant national focus on a number of issues that have too long been ignored or neglected. I want to make sure that this assembly hears the voices of the unemployed, the voices of workers in struggle and the voices of every section of society that is fighting back against the system.

'And I want to help make sure that you don't have to listen for long, because we've got plans for turning this place into a museum.'

a convincing alternative. Handicapped by the fact that it had recommended support for Labour in both elections in 1974, its candidates polled badly, despite energetic campaigns. Even *Mirror* journalist Paul Foot was beaten at Stechford in March 1977 by a candidate from another left faction which has since liquidated into the Labour Party. Disappointed with these poor performances, the SWP's 1978 conference called a halt to independent election work.

This did not mean that the SWP gave up electioneering. In the 1979 and 1983 general elections it campaigned actively in support of the Labour Party. And its hostility to ballots has not ruled out calling for a vote for Labour in the political levy polls in the unions. The SWP's hostility towards elections reflects its loss of confidence in putting its own programme before the electorate. And the SWP's support for Labour shows that despite its criticisms of electoralism, it is unable to offer a coherent alternative to Labour's reformist programme.

The RCP's first electoral experience was in council elections in London and Manchester in 1981. We stood in the Bermondsey by-election in February 1983 and in four constituencies in the June 1983 general election. Votes were low — an average of around 200 each — but the experience was invaluable.

The general feature of the campaigns was a swing back towards Labour by disillusioned Labour supporters when it became apparent that a major Labour defeat, either nationally or locally, was in prospect. The strength of reluctant support for Labour, even at a time of increasing volatility among working class voters, was the evident obstacle to attracting support to the RCP. These campaigns helped to put the RCP on the map and to build the party locally. We're looking forward to the general election to do the same but much better.



PATRIOTS AT THE POLLS

Francois Mitterrand, the first left-wing head of state to govern France since the thirties, came to power in the 1981 presidential election. He won 52 per cent of the vote for a programme of nationalisation and social reform, promoted by his Socialist Party and its Communist Party allies. After the assembly elections next month, Mitterrand will count himself lucky if he survives his remaining two years in the presidency in 'cohabitation' with a government dominated by a right-wing parliamentary majority.

The latest opinion polls suggest that the Socialists may not do as badly as expected last month, when their projected share of the vote plunged below 25 per cent. But the elections are certain to confirm the dramatic shift to the right in French politics which began within a year of the left's 1981 victory.

MONSIEUR LE PEN

Today, France stands out as the only European country where the extreme right is a serious political force. Jean Marie Le Pen's Front National, an openly racist movement with fascist tendencies, is likely to win up to 10 per cent of the vote next month. The French National Front first hit the headlines in September 1983 when its joint slate with the two mainstream right-wing parties, the UDF and the RPR, took over the Socialist-controlled council of Dreux near Paris. It went on to win 12 per cent of the poll in the 1984 Euro-elections. In last year's local polls up to 30 per cent of the electorate supported the National Front's anti-immigrant platform in the movement's key strongholds — urban areas in the Marseilles region, the Paris belt and in the rapidly de-industrialising north.

The electoral success of the National Front is the most conspicuous sign of the shift to the right in French society. The clearest indication of the impact of Le Pen's party is its success in dictating the political agenda of the more respectable right-wing parties. Both Jacques Chirac's Gaullist RPR and Giscard d'Estaing's centre-right UDF

have made the appeal to racial prejudice a key element in their electoral campaign. They promote slightly more respectable versions of the National Front's policies for excluding, repatriating and policing blacks.

The Socialist government has also adapted to the racist clamour. It has introduced one law after another demonstrating its concern to tackle the 'immigration problem'. Chauvinist hysteria, whipped up on the extreme right by the National Front, has permeated mainstream French politics.

THE PATRIOTIC COMMUNIST PARTY

The rebirth of the French right under Mitterrand reflects the collapse of French working class politics since the seventies. According to recent polls, only four per cent of voters in the 18-25 age group are likely to vote for the Communist Party, the traditional party of the French working class. More than half prefer the right — including substantial support for the National Front — and around one third back the Socialists. Over the last 10 years French workers have deserted their old party en masse. But workers' disenchantment with the Communist Party does not result from any great attractions offered by the other parties.

Growing electoral support for the right

The French left is bracing itself for defeat at the polls next month. In her first report on the elections, Sabena Norton examines the rise of the far-right Front National

simply reflects the irrelevance of the policies of the old French left to the conditions of France in today's recession.

Since the forties the Communist Party has been trying to reclaim the national prestige it enjoyed as a result of its leading role in the wartime anti-fascist resistance. The communists joined the post-war administration led by Charles de Gaulle, demobilised a militant working class movement and helped to get French capitalism back on its feet. Ever since, the Communist Party's strategy has been to promote the spirit of patriotism and class collaboration on which it thrived in the immediate post-war years.

Unfortunately for the Communist Party, the world has not stood still. The party's modest reform programme managed to retain working class support through the fifties and sixties. But the onset of recession and renewed class confrontation since the mid-seventies has undermined the credibility of the Communist Party's strategy of class collaboration and social reform. The rationalisation of traditional manufacturing industry has decimated the party's working class base, and its middle class sympathisers drifted away as the scope for reform narrowed. In a series of desperate manoeuvres, the party leadership has adapted to the rightward shift of French politics. The pressures of decline have exposed the reactionary implications of the Communist Party's nationalist outlook.

In 1977 the Communist leadership declared its commitment to French militarism, including the nuclear 'force de frappe'. It also launched a chauvinist campaign for import controls to protect French industry against foreign competition. A year later it organised a law and order campaign against drug abuse in the Paris region — a thinly-veiled drive against immigrants. The Communist Party also organised an infamous racist program at Vitry, near Paris, where a mob led by local party officials bulldozed a migrant workers' hostel to the ground.

Threatened by rising support for the National Front in working class areas, the Communist Party has attempted to demon-

strate that it is equally committed to protecting the French nation against immigrants.

The consequences of the Communist Party's nationalist programme were further exposed when Mitterrand's election victory in 1981 enabled party leaders to join the coalition government. As junior partners in the Socialist administration, the Communist Party leaders shared responsibility for Mitterrand's austerity programme. They participated in the shake out of half a million jobs, appealing to workers to sacrifice their livelihoods in the interests of French industry. This practical demonstration of the outcome of Communist Party politics led millions of workers to abandon their lingering faith in the traditional party of the left. Within five years the Communist Party's share of the vote plunged from 22 to 11 per cent — its lowest share in 50 years.

AUSTERITY SOCIALISM

Socialist austerity under Mitterrand has created the conditions for the revival of the French right. The Socialist government's attacks on workers' jobs and living standards have provoked deep resentment against the left, and against the unions which have collaborated with the government's drive to restructure French industry. Under the impact of this offensive, the old organisations of the working class have lost what coherence and credibility they had managed to retain. In 1985 trade union membership reached 15 per cent, its lowest post-war level. The combined effect of austerity and political demoralisation was a serious setback for the French working class.

The paralysis of the working class is the key to the revival of the right. Real wages have declined and productivity and flexibility in French industry have increased. Black workers have been forced to bear the brunt of austerity. Under the government's racist repatriation programme more than 50 000 blacks were kicked out of the country last year. The Socialist government's vigorous pursuit of capitalist policies has exposed the reality of traditional 'left-wing' solutions to the crisis.

Given the absence of any coherent anti-capitalist alternative, demoralisation has pushed many workers towards more right-wing solutions.

At the same time, the alienation of substantial sections of the middle classes from the policies of the Mitterrand government provides most of the increased support for the parties of the right. Since 1982 the middle classes have become more and more hostile to Mitterrand. In 1983 the government was forced to shelve plans to restrict private religious schools which provoked the first mass street protests against the government. Since then racism has emerged as the key focus for right-wing activity. Last year brought a spate of attacks on black people by white vigilante groups in urban areas throughout France. Many of these gangs included middle class supporters of the National Front and the other right-wing parties. Growing social tensions have fuelled middle class fear and prejudice, providing the raw material for the chauvinist crusades of the far right.

WHAT NEXT?

Mitterrand's strongest card in the forthcoming poll is the divided state of the opposition. On the right only Le Pen promotes a coherent policy which connects with the concerns of the most backward sections of French society. The rest — Chirac, d'Estaing and Barre — represent fragments of the old parties, riven by patronage and personal rivalry.

However much they try, neither the UDF nor the RPR can find much to disagree with in the Socialists' anti-working class strategy. Nor can they better Mitterrand's bullying abroad, like the bombing raids he launched against feeble rebel forces in Chad last week. This is why establishment debate around the elections focuses on the rival claims of the contenders for their share in power after the poll — dressed up in obscure disputes about the constitution. The shame is that with such a fragmented right, the left cannot give them something more substantial to worry about.



MITTERRAND'S POLICIES HAVE MADE THE RIGHT RESPECTABLE

junius publications



Moral panics and Victorian values: women and the family in Thatcher's Britain

Last week Victoria Gillick claimed as 'an enormous victory and a breakthrough' the General Medical Council's new ruling that a doctor is entitled to notify a young woman's parents that she has requested contraception if he considers she's not 'mature' enough to be having sex.

The GMC ruling is a major setback in the fight for women's contraception rights. It reveals the success of Gillick and her fellow moral campaigners in pushing the medical profession to adopt a more active role in policing the moral values of British society.

The first edition of Kate Marshall's pamphlet on the new morality was published last year when the Gillick campaign was at its height. It emphasised the impact of the campaign in stirring up prejudices which would lead to further restrictions on women's rights. The new — revised and updated — second edition is essential reading for everybody who wants to carry on the fight for women's rights in face of the advance of the new moralists.

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POLICE BRUTALITY

Down the nick

Melissa Benn and Ken Worpole, *Death in the City*, Canary Press £3.95

ACAB (All Cops Are Bastards) is an enduringly popular tattoo motif. And with good reason. What *Death in the City* proves is that some cops are bigger bastards than others.

Death in the City is the report of a study commissioned by Inquest, the organisation of families and friends of people who have died in police custody, and paid for by the Greater London Council. It is meticulously researched and clearly presented. The centrepiece, an examination of Stoke Newington police station, makes grim reading as an account of the reality of modern policing.

Living in a military style barracks, which Benn and Worpole find reminiscent of a colonial stockade, the Stoke Newington police force are shown as a world-within-a-world seeking mutual reassurance in the masculine 'police culture' of 'heavy drinking, racist and sexist jokes...the technical world of fast cars, motor bikes, guns and riot gear'. It is from this world that the police launch their sorties into 'enemy held territory'. This is Stoke Newington. But it could be Brixton, Tottenham or Handsworth.

Wherever they are, the police are out to show who's boss. As Benn and Worpole show, they don't care how they do it. The case histories detailed in *Death in the City* reveal a catalogue of police beatings, lies and frame-ups. Their accomplices, the coroners, deliver cover-up judgements, and siege-like legal processes, which allow the state to sit out cases it cannot win, add to the anguish of the families and friends of their victims.

The authors point out that the consistency with which the police get away with murder produces deep cynicism within working class communities about the role of the police, and antagonism towards them. It is a pity Benn and Worpole don't share this healthy disrespect for the police. However, they acknowledge that, in many working class communities, hatred of the police goes back for decades, to the days when the police entered certain areas only at the risk of their lives. The fear that such conditions may return is what really disturbs the authors.

Yet, having gone to the brink, they reject the obvious conclusions: 'We do not subscribe to the view that London, or Britain, would suddenly become a happier place if overnight the police were taken off the streets.' But Benn and Worpole don't really know what to suggest as an alternative to excluding the police from working class communities. No wonder the book is full of gloom: they have mounted an effective indictment of the police but they still won't pronounce sentence.
Toby Barrett



SEATTLE'S SEAMY STREETS

Life as soap

Streetwise, Martin Bell (director)

Streetwise is a documentary which follows for a short period the lives of half a dozen or more teenagers on the downtown streets of Seattle as they scavenge, beg, steal, pimp, whore and hustle for their survival, that is, for their food and drugs. There is no commentary other than the voice-overs of the kids themselves, and for the most part we simply hear (and observe) them talking to each other and to social workers, doctors, policemen and so on (they never talk to camera or to an interviewer).

The film is of an astonishing technical quality — none of your bumpy camera, grainy finish and half-snatched conversations. Martin Bell obviously had the confidence of the kids (his wife, photographer Mary Ellen Mark, and writer Cheryl McCall had already done a feature on them for *Life* magazine) and also worked his passage into clinics, police stations, prisons, social work offices and the usual ports of call. He shot 56 hours of footage and Nancy Baker edited them down to 90 minutes.

The film's quality and the nature of the editing give it the feel of a piece of fiction. There are none of the *longueurs* or blind alleys of a Fred Wiseman documentary (such as the one

he did on welfare in the States). It moves fluently between the stories of the main characters including Tiny, who has her first trick before her first period; Rat, a pocket-sized con-man and everybody's favourite; Lulu, a butch lesbian who looks after the really young girls ('Come on, you're not 14!'); Dewayne, a wispy loser whose growth is retarded by chronic tonsillitis; and Shadow, 'I'm not a pimp, I'm a playboy'.

The kids may play up for the camera, but on the whole seem completely at ease. It is of course 10 years since the BBC's *The Family* and, with married couples getting into bed with Desmond Wilcox, I don't suppose we should be at all surprised. What is surprising is their sprightly eloquence and canny spirit, especially in the light of their pathetic, aimless lives.

Their wasting lives are not exactly glamourised, although the rougher, lonelier moments are probably glossed over by the pace and coherence of the film itself, which fixes, as you might expect, on crises and excitements. Bell says that he found 'a kind of soap opera of the underprivileged' in Seattle because the kids were not at the bottom of the heap and could talk about themselves so well. He didn't find a soap opera of course: he constructed one. His achievement is that his raw material is all for real — not fiction, not docudrama, this is verity turned into soap. The material is not only for real, it is usually very striking and often moving.

The problem with soap opera is that the spiciest slices of life often end up with rather a bland flavour. That is the problem here. The story of children in Seattle is served up for our consumption,

that's all. If you just take one slice of life of course it is more difficult to present histories and explanations. The most telling passages of *Streetwise* are those in which the parents try to come to terms with the mess which has grown out of their own miserable lives. But the emphasis is less historical and more 'Just look at this!' (Bell previously made wildlife films). It has already been praised for 'not preaching'. Given the subject I should have thought that a sermon was in order, and not the sort which many will now deliver about the family, drugs, juvenile crime and so on.

We have not exactly been

deprived of information about the victims around us. In programmes from *Cathy Come Home* to *Johnny* (the boy put to prostitution in London) to books such as Gita Sereny's *Invisible Children*, there is all the detail you could wish for (and anyway you just have to open your eyes). From Canada we had recently *Hookers...on Davie* where prostitutes in Vancouver were wired up just as in *Streetwise*. Forthcoming is Paul Morrissey's fiction film *Mixed Blood*, set among the Latino delinquents of New York's Alphabet. It's not a new Dickens that we need but a new Engels.
Pat Ford



Chris Black

WOMEN IN THE MINERS' STRIKE

From mums to militants

Lynn Beaton, *Shifting Horizons*, Canary Press £5.65

This book is the story of Doreen Humber and Pauline Radford who formed and ran the Blidworth Strike Centre in Nottinghamshire during the 1984-85 miners' strike. *Shifting Horizons* is light on political analysis and the reader would be forgiven for questioning the need for yet another inside account of the miners' strike. But Lynn Beaton, who interviewed the women throughout the strike, provides a fresh, readable and moving account of the strike as witnessed by two tough working class women.

The miners' strike transformed Doreen and Pauline from God-fearing mums into committed activists, taking on scabs, local councillors and the police. They left their husbands to do the housework and look after the kids, to organise women's pickets, food for hundreds, fund-raising tours, speakers for meetings and somewhere to

sleep for pickets and supporters.

Shifting Horizons conveys a sense of the women's elation at their own effectiveness. But its account of the women's anger and depression as the strike crumbles is also infectious. Both women recognised the importance of the failure to persuade the Notts miners to support the strike. Doreen and Pauline were too sharp to accept some of the explanations for the attitude of the Notts men current during the strike. Their conversations reveal that they did not see Notts miners as a 'different breed'. Nor did they believe that higher rates of pay in Nottingham could account for Notts men working during the strike.

Both women were solid supporters of miners' leader Arthur Scargill and their concern about the direction of the strike never led them to question his leadership or strategy. Both women are now activists in the Labour Party's women's section, apparently bearing little resentment against that party over its treacherous role in the dispute. *Shifting Horizons* confirms that the initiative and energy to change the world is in ample supply in working class communities. But it shows too how that potential can be contained within the structures of Labourism if the experience of defeat is not transformed into an awareness of the need to break out of the old institutions.
Kate Marshall



LETTERS

WRITE TO: *tns*, BCM JPLTD, LONDON WC1N 3XX

Tilting at fascist windmills

DAVID Rosenberg (letters, *tns* 7) wants to have his cake and eat it. He points out correctly that National Front conviction figures bear no relationship to the incidence of racist attacks. Why then does *Searchlight* claim that rising NF convictions are evidence of the NF's increasing involvement in racist attacks?

Workers Against Racism's analysis of racist attacks stems not from *Searchlight* figures, but from our own experience of providing defence against racists. In almost every case we know who the racists are, where they live and how they operate. The Vicarage Lane firm (see *tns* 6) is typical of racist gangs in East London. They have little connection with fascist groups, but a lot of exposure to the ordinary racism that pervades society.

I have no objections to any organisation receiving money from the GLC. What I do object to is organisations receiving their politics from the GLC. The GLC, and other Labour councils, have used their funding to create a network of organisations that act as the radical end of the local state machinery.

Ultimately, these radical



Dave Routledge

organisations act merely as servicing and intelligence-gathering agencies for the state. The fact that this month's *Searchlight* boasts of passing a dossier of information to the Director of Public Prosecutions is proof enough of that.

Rosenberg himself has no compunctions about standing up for the British state. As spokesman for the Jewish Socialist Group and Jewish Cultural and Anti-Racist Project (incidentally, a GLC-funded organisation) he defended the home office ban on Louis Farrakhan. Perhaps Rosenberg thinks

that Farrakhan is a greater threat than the British state? Or perhaps he thinks that opposition to immigration laws (under which Farrakhan was excluded) is a 'state-promoted delusion'?

On one final point I am forced to agree with Rosenberg. WAR has not been involved in Anti-Fascist Action, equally AFA has not supported any WAR activities. We have no wish to tilt at fascist windmills, and they have no ability to take real action against ordinary racists.

Kenan Malik
East London

Racism by the sea

ON Brighton's Whitehawk estate Bangladeshi families have been subjected to racist abuse and attacks. Amin Hooda's small supermarket was first daubed with racist graffiti, he got frequent verbal abuse from locals and soon physical attacks started. Recently racists smashed his glasses into his face.

The Ali family's restaurant has had its window smashed by rocks four times. The fire extinguisher has been set off inside and the family have been terrorised by gangs calling them outside to fight.

But the culprits have not been fascists, just local people with racist ideas. While most people on the estate condemn racist attacks, there is a popular feeling locally against the Bangladeshis, who are seen as competitors for jobs and housing. One bloke explained that the fact that Asians

were working in estate shops showed that 'whites have been turned out by Asians'. Another local resident, this time a woman, explained how she had six relatives living in her flat and how the council had refused to move them. Her daughter had been waiting for a council flat for three years. On the northern side of the estate 90 per cent of people have a serious housing complaint.

It's not the Bangladeshi families who should be held responsible for the misery of white tenants. The degrading conditions on the estate are the responsibility of the local council which since the thirties has been dumping local workers in shoddy houses on the estate. Now it expects us to fight among ourselves over the scraps it is prepared to provide.

Amanda Clark
Brighton

Emergency ward, Wakefield

I'M a nurse at Stanley Royd psychiatric hospital which was recently in the news over a salmonella outbreak. On 4 January the laundry closed when administrators found they could not keep it going under the terms of the in-house tender. As a result 90 workers were made redundant. Now we have to use paper sheets, something that didn't even happen in the salmonella outbreak. Last week sheets were sent from

Coventry, and babies' socks were sent to the sick ward where I work — which is for geriatrics only! Next week the domestics are to be privatised — we are expecting food parcels from Oxfam!

The domestics have been told they can stay on if they take a pay cut. No wonder there's been food poisoning when this chaos is going on.

RCP supporter
Wakefield

Savaging wrong targets

I AGREE with Helen Swift (*tns* 7) that the Wendy Savage case raises important questions about women's rights. The well being of women in childbirth is not served by the anti-technology outlook of feminists advocating 'natural' childbirth. In making a brave stand for women's rights, Savage and her supporters have confused the issues at stake and directed their attack not on the system which misuses technology, but on technology itself.

The misuse of technology by the medical profession is the real problem. Hormone induction drugs and epidural anaesthetics, developed to ease the complications of childbirth, are being used to regulate labour time to suit the meagre resources of the NHS. Similarly the victimisation of Wendy Savage by her colleagues, based on her unwillingness to perform routine caesarean sections, has exposed how this method of delivery is now part of 'defensive medicine' — health care in which the primary motive is protecting doctors against malpractice litigation. Women need technology which offers painless and safer birth. To ensure this technology works for us we must fight the system which places professional protection and economic viability above our needs.

Jo Acres
Brighton

Notts NUM

ONE thing that seems to have missed the press during Ian MacGregor's visit to Welbeck colliery this week was the protest outside, which was hardly surprising given the turnout. Two NUM members at Welbeck had been suspended for 'distributing material likely to cause a breach in industrial relations' — that is, circulating pro-*NUM* leaflets at a UDM organised pit. The visit of MacGregor was to be used to highlight the cause of all the sacked miners in Notts.

Only three sacked miners turned up, backed up by half a dozen other miners and the Nottingham branch of the RCP. There were some Labour Party members present, but they were preoccupied making a video recording of this historic occasion. The miners who turned up were angry at the pathetic size of the demo. They blamed poor organisation and the fact that sympathetic miners were frightened to take action lest they be victimised. But the real blame, they said, lay with the NUM leadership. 'How was it possible to campaign for the sacked miners when our own leadership won't even come out and support us and Henry Richardson (Notts NUM leader) had stipulated that no action should be taken by NUM members, it's pathetic!' said one miner.

The miners are not wrong to point the finger at their leaders. But until they themselves stop trying to work within the confines of the official structures of the NUM, set by the leadership, and start to build a campaign based on the rank and file, until they themselves reject the political traditions of the present NUM leadership, this pathetic response was all they could expect.

Grant French
Nottingham

Coal board thugs

TWO youths, tired of earning £27.30 on a government scheme and feeling the cold, pinched some coal from a North Yorkshire pit last week. Private security guards with pickaxe handles and dogs caught them and beat them up, breaking a nose and an arm or two, and frogmarched them across the pit yard covered in blood. They were duly handed over to the police who we came to know and love in the strike. When miners found out, the coal board nearly faced a riot.

While all this is going on, the coal board is introducing YTS schemes at pits in Selby. But where is the NUM? Our leaders pride themselves on their opposition to YTS and their dedication to young people. But it was left to ordinary miners to take on the thugs with wooden clubs terrorising local youth, and it's up to us to fight for the rights of young people trapped on YTS.

Terry Anderson
Yorkshire

STEPPING OUT

Rupert Murdoch isn't the first newspaper publisher to have shut up shop at his old works, sacked his workforce and set up at a greenfield site with new technology and new pre-trained staff. A few years back a daily printed in London closed due to 'financial problems', and laid off its workers. The same publisher quickly produced a new daily from a hi-tech plant up in Runcorn. Outdoing Murdoch's cost-cutting, the new edition was cheaper but had an extra four pages. The old paper was called the *Workers' Press*. The new one was called the *News Line*. And the publisher of both was called the *Workers' Revolutionary Party* (now split asunder). It seems former WRP guru Gerry Healy didn't only teach the working class everything it knows about 'the syllogism of necessity'. He also taught the capitalist class how to run a newspaper.

And it seems Murdoch's rivals are out to catch up with his standards of journalism. Two Observer scribes contacted East London Workers Against Racism last week for a story on racism in schools. They wanted sensationalised accounts of racist attacks (the Morpeth school assaults, involving knives and a shotgun, were 'small-scale stuff') and proof that the National Front was behind the attacks. An Elwar organiser explained to them, with plenty of evidence and witnesses, that the violence was 'sensational' enough for the victims, and no, the NF wasn't organising the attacks; the problem of racist attacks was much deeper than the activities of a few fascist morons. The result? A feature in this week's Observer which begins: 'An alarming rise in racist attacks on school children has been blamed on the National Front and other right-wing groups.' If life on the Observer isn't sensational enough for you, boys, I hear they're keeping seats warm at Wapping.

Those Labour Party popsters in Red Wedge seem to be having some effect on the upper echelons of the party machine. Ken Livingstone, prospective MP, was recently asked if he was sorry to see the decline and fall of his beloved GLC, which disappears next month. Red Kenneth replied: 'I don't see it as a loss. (Tell that to the 4000 workers you're making redundant, Ken.) We've won the hearts and minds of Londoners. A lot of people have found themselves thinking, "If I was running the GLC, I'd behave like that too." That's the important thing — style.' What price Paul Weller for parliament?

A retired Yorkshire miner runs the St Albans guest house in Bridlington and, as a gesture of solidarity during and since the strike, he has offered a few free holidays to miners and their families. Last week he renewed his offer, and it was read out at a Yorkshire pit's branch meeting. It appears that the collier-turned-hotelier is sick of entertaining NUM bureaucrats by the sea, as his letter ended with a special note: 'NO BRANCH OFFICIALS THIS TIME'. Could this explain where the invisible A Scargill has been for the past year?

Also from Yorkshire, I hear more praise for that bottomless well of talent, TUC general secretary Norman Willis, featured on last week's cover of *tns*. One of our paper sellers reports being approached by a small boy who stared at the paper, appearing to be on the verge of vomiting. Pointing a stubby finger at the picture of the grotesque Big Norm, the sick-faced child asked his mother, 'Is that Rocky?' Move over, Sylvester Stallone.

THE PARTY PAGE

DEADLINE FOR NEWS AND REPORTS: MONDAY 9AM 01-729 3771



Dave Rourke

Intervening in the print dispute

'Why a special supplement on print? Why not just get down to Wapping and get stuck in?' said one supporter when she heard our decision to extend this week's paper. This common response underestimates some of the tactical difficulties thrown up by the print dispute.

The events at Wapping very much confirm trends we have identified over the past 12 months. The rejection of militancy by many workers, and the growing willingness to cross picket lines and scab, reveal the widespread disregard for old class loyalties and the disintegration of traditional trade unionism. The emergence of the miners' breakaway union, and the shift of the electricians towards open scab unionism have anticipated the collapse of solidarity that is now evident in the print dispute.

THE PROBLEM

Militants need to be armed with tactics to combat these trends. But the immediate problem is that most activists regard the defence of the old institutions as the only realistic response to the fragmentation of the labour movement. For the Revolutionary Communist Party, the old traditions are part of the problem. Because the union machines have become so much a part of the system, they help to divide and demoralise workers rather than giving a lead in fighting back. We have consistently argued that the process of regrouping and reuniting workers to fight for class interests demands a systematic challenge to the leadership and methods of the official labour movement.

At a time when militants are on the defensive the RCP

approach is inevitably unpopular. The instinct to cling on to the old leaders and old methods is very strong at a time when things are going badly, even when — as in the miners' strike — these lead to disaster. Any argument for a change of leadership and direction is often perceived as a threat, even though it offers the only way forward. The fact that militants today tend to follow the lead of the union officials makes it fairly easy for them to squeeze out any challenge from the RCP.

From our point of view, the print dispute is even more difficult than the miners' strike. The militancy and volatility of the mining communities meant there was always considerable potential for the strike to take a more anti-capitalist direction. It was possible to outline some basic steps to take the dispute forward and expect a positive response, at least from the younger and more political activists. The print workers are older and more conservative, and their unions are more sectional and bureaucratic.

LIMITED SCOPE

The tight grip of the union officials and the strong anti-communist prejudices of many print workers have been evident at Wapping, where left-wing paper sellers have been kicked off the picket line. The police and media have accused left-wing organisations of fomenting trouble on recent mass pickets, but in truth they have cooperated with Sogat officials to give the pickets a token character and provide the police with some riot practice.

It is important that RCP supporters have a realistic assessment of the limited

scope for *direct* intervention in the print dispute. Unless there is a major blow up of some sort at Wapping, the bureaucrats will remain in control. There may be more scope for intervention in Manchester and Glasgow, but reports suggest a broadly similar picture. This does not mean there is nothing we can do. The supplement indicates the steps that are necessary to win the dispute. We should take any practical steps we can to organise blacking or even simply to promote boycotts of Murdoch papers. But we recognise that the prospects for delivering this sort of action are not great and that our intervention in the dispute must largely remain at a *propaganda* level.

FATAL LOYALTIES

The main purpose of the supplement in this week's *tns* is to guide the party's propaganda intervention. It is not centrally aimed at print workers, but at activists in every union. Supporters should target militants in the EETPU who are in danger of being isolated and need maximum support in the hard battle against the scab leaders of their union. Our aim is to use the supplement to challenge the fatal loyalties to the old leaders and the old ways that paralyse initiative in all the unions. We should also use it to challenge the way the left looks to Norman Willis and other TUC leaders, rather than the rank and file, to fight the menace of scab unionism. By using the Wapping special in this way, we may not be able to stop the newspaper lorries, but we can begin to build a movement that will stop the rot in the other unions that Murdoch has exposed in the print.



London
calling
anti-racists!

East London Workers Against Racism is stepping up its campaign against racist attacks (see page 4). We need more active supporters

- to take the arguments against racism around the local estates
- to popularise the notion of workers relying on their own initiative rather than expecting the police to deal with the problem
- to provide practical defence of black people against racist attacks.

If you want to get involved, call Kenan Malik on 01-729 0414

Council of War

Racism — how to fight it
Sunday 9 March

11am — 5pm

Fairholt House

Aldgate High Street, E1

Details from WAR, BM WAR, London WC1N 3XX, or 01-729 0414

Why the Revolutionary Communist Party?

Come along to find out why you should join the RCP!

GLASGOW Thursday 20 February 20-22 Langside Hall, S Langside Avenue, Govan Hill 7.30pm
BRISTOL Friday 21 February St Werburghs Community Centre, Horley Road, St Werburghs 7pm
NOTTINGHAM Wednesday 26 February International Community Centre, Mansfield Road 7.30pm
BIRMINGHAM Wednesday 26 February Carrs Lane

Church Centre, Carrs Lane 7.30pm
NEWCASTLE Wednesday 26 February Pickwick Room, The Red House, 40 Sandhill, Quayside 7.30pm
EDINBURGH Thursday 27 February Trades Council Building, Picardy Place 7.30pm
MANCHESTER Thursday 27 February Black Lion Hotel, Chapel Street 7.30pm
LIVERPOOL Friday 28 February AUEW Hall, Mount Pleasant 7.30pm
COVENTRY Friday 28 February Hand and Heart, Gosford Street 7pm
BRIGHTON Wednesday 5 March The Unemployed Centre, Tilbury Place 7.30pm

For your diary

• **London**
Meeting of all London RCP supporters
Thursday 20 February 7.30pm
Speaker: Frank Richards
Friends House
Euston Road NW1

• **Coventry**
Buy *tns* — not the Sun!
Friday 21 February 8am
Rootes Building, Warwick University
• **Saturday 22 February 11am**
Central precinct, Coventry
• **Manchester**
Boycott Murdoch! Support the print workers!
Saturday 22 February 2pm
Arndale Centre
Market Street
• **Glasgow**
Boycott Murdoch!

Saturday 22 February 12 noon
John Menzies
Sauchiehall Street
Glasgow G2
• **Newcastle**
Join the RCP motorcade!
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against British bank loans to South Africa
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Ring 01-729 0414 for details

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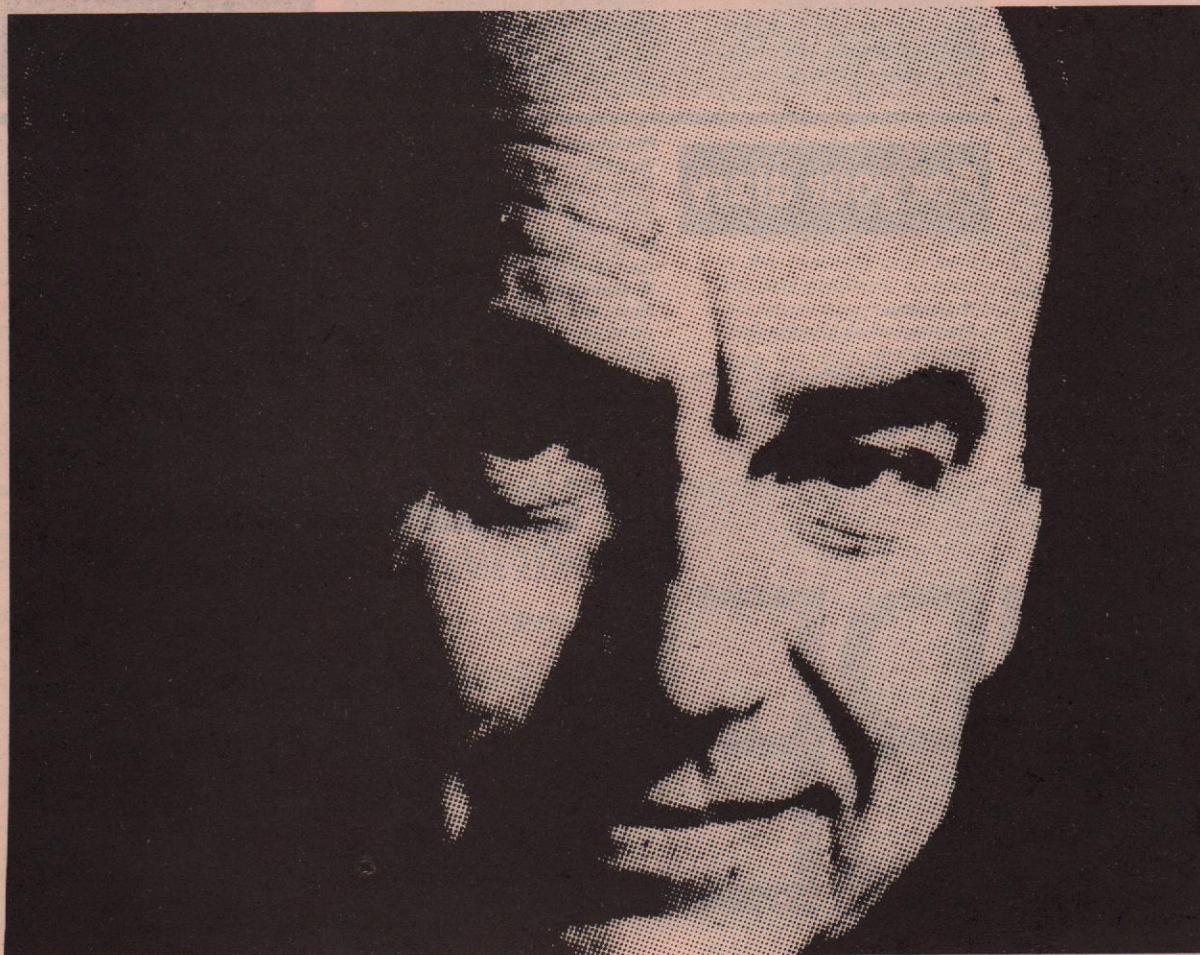
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Murdoch's Wapping lies

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Sun



The establishment claims the print dispute is about defending the freedom of the press. In fact it's about defending the bosses' freedom to exploit us

News International boss Rupert Murdoch has been portrayed as a principled defender of press freedom in his attempt to smash the print unions. But what does the freedom of the press mean to a millionaire like Murdoch?

The freedom of the press means the freedom of a handful of press barons to dictate what we read over breakfast, to distort the news in favour of the defenders of the system and to degrade those who suffer under capitalism.

FILTH

It means Murdoch's freedom to fill the front pages with pictures of Prince Andrew's girlfriend in the Swiss snow, while branding mothers whose families are freezing in snowbound Britain as unfit parents. It means Murdoch's freedom to accuse black youth of being racist thugs at a time when Asian schoolchildren are being attacked with iron bars and razors (see page 4).

It means Murdoch's freedom to encourage anti-homosexual pogroms by calling all gay men 'walking time bombs' with Aids. It means Murdoch's freedom to set up elected Irish republicans for assassination by accusing them of being the IRA chief of staff. And it means Murdoch's freedom to label every striker a 'bully boy' and every scab or newsagent selling his papers a 'hero'.

The freedom of the press which Murdoch upholds to get his papers out of his Wapping fortress is just the freedom to open the gates of his personal sewer and fill the streets of Britain with anti-working class filth.

Murdoch and his supporters in the establishment want to defend the freedoms which protect their power in society. As the owners of industry built on the blood and sweat of working people, they are free to exploit their workforce to make millions. And when their profits fall, they are free to move to more super-exploitative sites. In the process they are free to sack 5000 print workers without notice, and free to use the law and the police to punish those who dare to dispute their right to rule.

Of course, as workers we have our own freedoms. We are free to decide whether or not we work for the Murdochs of the world. But as they control all the jobs, if we don't work for them we starve. We are free to belong

to a trade union — so long as we don't try to use our unions to defend us, in which case we are breaking the law. And when Murdoch sacks us we are free to walk the streets — so long as we don't walk near the Wapping plant, in which case the police will be free to arrest us.

The freedom workers need is quite different from the degrading freedoms Murdoch and his capitalist clique uphold. We need freedom from want and exploitation, so we can build a better life. To achieve that, we need freedom from the oppressive grip of the employers and their police and courts that passes for democracy in Thatcher's Britain.

The print dispute is an important opportunity for us to reject the repressive freedoms of capitalist society. Workers can now stand up to Murdoch's mob and make clear that we do not accept their right to sack us or smash our organisations.

There are many ways this can be done. Print workers need to shut the Wapping plant and close down Fleet Street. Other workers must refuse to have anything to do with Murdoch's plants and his supporters. And everybody can play their part by boycotting his publications — *The Times*, the *Sunday Times*, the *News of the World* and, most importantly of all, the super, soaraway, scab *Sun*.

PRESSURE

Murdoch sells more than four million copies of the *Sun* a day. There are those who buy it because they believe in its version of events, where the world is full of topless models, black rapists and irresponsible social workers. But there are many more who only buy the *Sun* on sufferance. If these people boycott it we can undermine Murdoch's power. A national consumer boycott of the *Sun* would mean millions less pages of filth clogging up our works canteens and kitchen tables. It would mean less money in the pockets of the purveyors of the employers' views. And it would mean more pressure on the press barons in the current dispute.

If we are to free ourselves from oppression and exploitation, we must have nothing to do with Murdoch's lies about the freedom of the press. So boycott the scab *Sun*, and strike a blow for real freedom.

Mick Hume