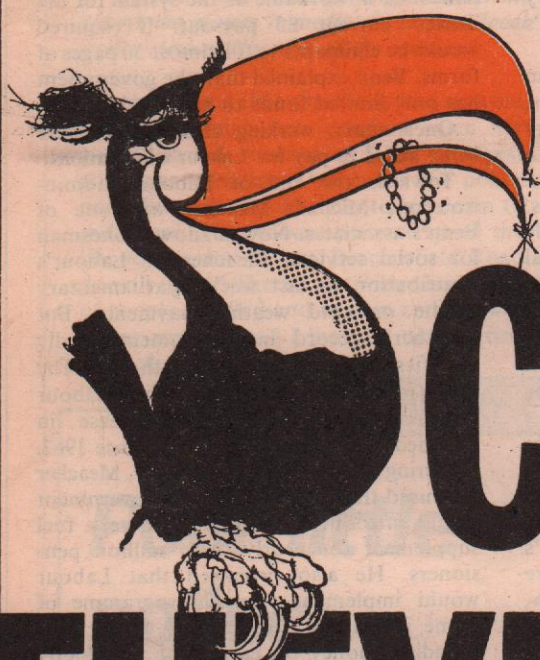


Guinness scandal
exposes City vultures



**THEY'RE
CROOKS...**

THEY'RE LIARS...



**THEY'RE BRITISH
CAPITALISTS**

The Red Front

This week we publish an open letter from the chairman of the Revolutionary Communist Party, inviting other groups and individuals to support *The Red Front* — a platform for working class unity (see pages 6 and 7). It is a timely announcement.

Another British political party has just launched a glossy journal for its members. Its front page is splashed with a big map of Britain, wearing a Union Jack and towering over the rest of the globe. Inside, an article on the economy asserts that 'our policy represents not just good sense, but good value for British money.' Elsewhere the party leader insists that 'defence is the first duty of any government.' To prove his point the journal reprints his party's commitments to building warships, nuclear-powered submarines and fighter aircraft. The magazine is called *Labour Party News*.

Kinnock's Labour Party is now educating its supporters in Thatcherite values. It has declared its commitment to the tight-fisted 'value for money' economics of the corner shopkeeper, and the flag-waving gunship politics of the Empire loyalist. The choice facing British people in the run-up to the general election is unappetising: which party

leader would you prefer to cut public spending and jobs, and to organise paramilitary policing at home and armed excursions abroad?

Today we are passing through the political lull before the storm. Kinnock and Thatcher are both watching their step until polling day. But whoever wins the election, it will be a watershed in British politics. If they are to keep their commitment to saving the system, the winner will have to launch savage attacks on our living standards and civil liberties. The Revolutionary Communist Party has launched *The Red Front* to try to make sure that the working class is ready for them.

The case for joining *The Red Front* as an electoral bloc is set out on the centre pages of this week's *tns*. It is an attempt to unite all those who hate Thatcher and mistrust Kinnock under a banner of basic working class demands. Its success is vital if we are to ensure that left-wing people survive the period ahead with the confidence and clarity required to deal with the harsh new conditions. In reply to Kinnock's journal, we insist that defending our class is our first duty. Everybody who wants to share that responsibility should back *The Red Front*.

City scandals

'Once a friend, always a friend' declared Lord Iveagh, head of the 'Guinnessy' clan, last week. He was talking about Ernest Saunders, whom he and his relatives had just sacked as chairman of the Guinness empire after the revelations of corrupt and criminal share-dealing. The Guinness scandal, sackings and resignations indicate that the old gentlemen's agreement, through which Iveagh and his 'friends' kept their dodgy City deals private, no longer holds. The fierce infighting and competition prompted by the recession have forced the City's skeletons out of the cupboard and into public view.

Until his fall from grace, Saunders was typical of the sort of spiv/salesman who passes for a success story in Thatcher's Britain. His celebrated rebuilding job at Guinness was based entirely on sharp dealing while the stock markets underwent a takeover boom. Financiers who can see little point in investing their money in clapped-out British industries have chosen instead to get a slice of somebody else's action, buying up existing firms. Under Saunders, Guinness took over Arthur Bell's, the whisky firm, and the drinks giant Distillers. He overstepped the mark in that deal. But the only thing that distinguishes him from his 'honest' colleagues is the fact that he was found out.

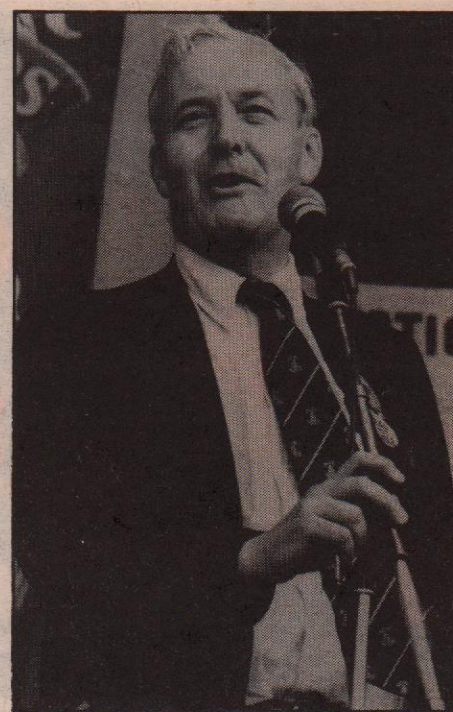
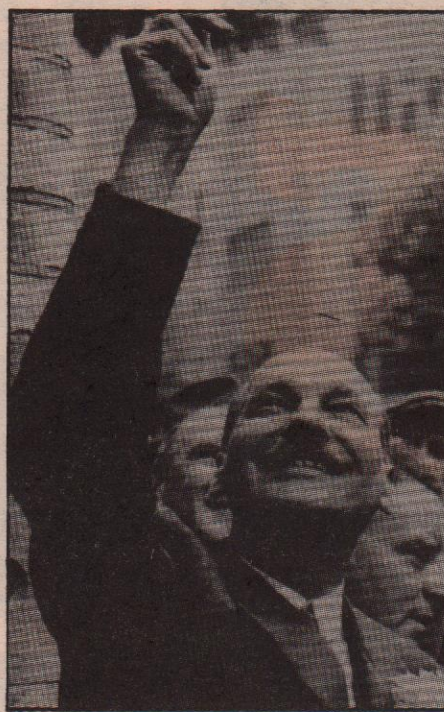
The latest spate of City scandals shows that the cream of the British capitalist class are a bunch of liars and tricksters. They cannot compete with their foreign rivals in the harsh world of manufacturing exports. As their system crumbles about their ears, they can only survive through sleights of hand in the murky financial markets. Their plight is summed up by the fact that Guinness, a company built on stout, is one of Britain's top exporters. A capitalist class that once built the workshop of the world is now reduced to running the public bar of Europe, a bar full of card-sharps and con-men. Britain's bosses have stopped laughing at the joke about Abba being Sweden's biggest export.

The Guinness affair has caused an outburst of popular resentment against the City slickers. The Tory government fears that this might do it some electoral damage, and is working overtime to find some scapegoats to prosecute. But apart from immediate electoral considerations, the establishment does not mind too much if its opponents vent their spleen against the City crooks. It helps to divert attention from the exploitation and oppression which runs through every vein of the system. The current row over Pilkington, which is expected to join Guinness in the headlines this week, illustrates the point.

Pilkington, the Merseyside glass manufacturer, is under threat of being taken over by the City conglomerate BTR. Despite some suspicious movements in share prices, Tory trade and industry secretary Paul Channon (himself a member of the Guinnessy), has refused to refer the bid to the monopolies and mergers commission. This has prompted complaints from all quarters — the Labour Party, the unions, the Confederation of British Industry — about a respectable British manufacturing firm being bought out by flash City financiers.

But Pilkington, described as 'the face of caring capitalism', is a company owned by capitalists who survive on the sweated labour of their workforce. When the workers aren't putting enough profit in the coffers, their 'caring' employers are as ruthless as any finance shark in throwing them out on the street. Over the past decade, Pilkington has cut 13 000 jobs. Yet this is an institution which the official labour movement now upholds as a model of all that is good about British manufacturers.

The line which separates the criminals in the City from the profiteers at Pilkington is far too thin for the working class to worry about. None of them are fit to rule over us. We should tar them all with the same brush as our enemies, and send them packing into the wilderness where vultures belong.



FROM ATTLEE TO BENN, LABOUR HAS PUT PENSIONERS LAST

THE BIG FREEZE

Labour's cold heart

The Tories' attempt to appear warm-hearted during last week's cold snap didn't fool anybody. But Labour's record on looking after freezing pensioners is equally shameful

Every Labour government has cut the cloth of public expenditure according to the system's measurements. When the wind starts whipping the snow around your ears, looking after ordinary people has always come bottom of Labour's list of emergency measures.

The winter of 1946-47 was the coldest in living memory. Sub-zero temperatures, combined with the incompetence of energy minister Emmanuel Shinwell, caused a major fuel crisis. The radical Labour government soon showed its true loyalties. Prime minister Clement Attlee told people that they would have to endure 'essential hardship' so that the employers could keep their businesses running. He banned domestic consumption of electricity for hours each day. The only parts of London exempt from power cuts were Whitehall, the City, and the West End.

While millions suffered, Labour made sure that the top people could still run the country, make another million, and enjoy a swish night out.

Today, left wingers often take Attlee's administration as the model for a future Labour government. Yet then, as now, Labour's priority was to save money and keep industry running, regardless of how many people had to sit at home without heat or light.

THE SQUEEZE

The last Labour government had the same priorities. In 1974, Labour came in promising to 'squeeze the rich until the pips squeak'. But working class people were the real victims of Labour's squeeze. Pensioners came in for brutal treatment.

Labour dropped the £10 Christmas bonus for pensioners and repeatedly turned down TUC requests for a £10 pensioners' fuel bonus. The minister explained that the government could not afford to add £100m to the already high public sector borrowing requirement' was Labour's way of saying that balancing the books was more important than a tenner towards heating bills.

Labour's claims that pensions were keeping up with inflation were based on calculations which missed out the months when inflation was highest. In her diaries, former Labour minister Barbara Castle admitted that saving government money was the reason for changing the method of calculating pensions. Frank Field, Labour MP for Birkenhead and chairman of Age Concern, was moved to condemn 'the Labour government's manoeuvres on pensions'.

Labour left winger Tony Benn was minister for energy in the 1974-79 govern-

ment. He promised 'to cut 25 per cent off the winter electricity bills of all those on supplementary benefit'. But the administrative procedure for Benn's scheme was almost as unworkable as the system for the Tories' current £5 pay-out. It required would-be claimants to fill almost 50 pages of forms. Benn explained that 'the government has only limited funds to help.'

Once again, working class people were being asked to pay for Labour's limitations.

Towards the end of Labour's administration, Michael Meacher was one of Benn's associates. Now shadow spokesman for social services, Meacher led Labour's contribution to last week's parliamentary debate on cold weather payments. But Meacher's record in government hardly qualifies him to speak with authority. The year in which he joined the Labour government saw the first increase in recorded deaths from hypothermia since 1962.

During the parliamentary debate, Meacher promised that a future Labour government would introduce a regular £5-a-week fuel supplement for nearly three million pensioners. He also promised that Labour would implement a crash-programme of home insulation. He declined to say how spending money on caring for the elderly would be compatible with Labour's priority of caring for elderly British capitalism by making cuts. Whichever party wins the next election, the government will be under more pressure than ever to prop up the system by cutting expenditure. Under Labour, the old and cold would be in the firing line once more.

'JUMP ABOUT'

Labour spokesmen followed the Tory pretence that only pensioners were affected by last week's cold snap. Low-paid and unemployed workers did not rate a mention from either party. As far as the Tories are concerned, if you're young and on the breadline you must be a slacker or a scrounger. Labour takes the view that, if you're under 60, you can always jump about a bit to keep warm.

Last week's sub-zero temperatures showed that, under the present system, vast numbers of people — young and old — are denied the basic necessities of life.

Surrounded by the means to produce everything people need for a civilised existence, the capitalist system forces millions to spend the winter shivering over a one-bar electric fire, and waiting with baited breath for fuel bills to hit the mat. Even the weather is an advert for communism.

Tony Kennedy

LONDON POLICE LAUNCH PHONEY CAMPAIGN

NEWMAN'S NO ANTI-RACIST

Trevor Ferguson (pictured above right) will have trouble reading the new Metropolitan Police pamphlet on combating racism. But he knows the truth about how police let racists run riot in East London

Last week London police chief Kenneth Newman launched a glossy publicity campaign against rising racist harassment in Newham, East London. The pamphlet contains some amateurish tips for the victims of racist violence (get plastic windows, take your washing off the line, buy a dog, keep your hands out of your pockets), and a lot of professional lies about how concerned the police are to stamp out racist violence.

Let's compare the fine phrases of Newman's propaganda with the real police reaction to a racist attack.

A week before Newman's initiative, Cherry Reid held a party in Newham's Beaconsfield Road. Racists tear-gassed her house, and smashed a bottle into 24-year old Trevor Ferguson's face, puncturing an eye. The police Cherry called didn't seem to have read the relevant paragraphs in their new 'anti-racist' pamphlet.

'If you are the victim of racial harassment, report the matter immediately to your local police station. Speed is of the essence.'

Cherry realised that somebody had sprayed tear-gas through her letterbox when her guests started choking and her youngest child was vomiting. 'We called the police immediately and told them to get down to the house. The woman who answered the phone just said "sorry, Beaconsfield Road doesn't exist." There I was with a house full of people terrified and in pain and she was telling me the road I lived on didn't exist. Then she hung up.'

'If the victim of any attack sees a racial motive, it will be given high priority by the police.'

After several people in the street had rung the police, they finally turned up at Cherry's house. Everybody was sure that the attackers had come from another party across the road, and the police said they would keep watch. Then the racists came back with the tear-gas. Cherry thought the police would get them. When she opened the door, the police were nowhere. 'They must have just lied to keep us happy. They'd just gone.'

Cherry's cousin Gary and friend Trevor Ferguson had seen two men run across the road, and went out to tell them to grow up and pack it in. 'A whole gang of white boys

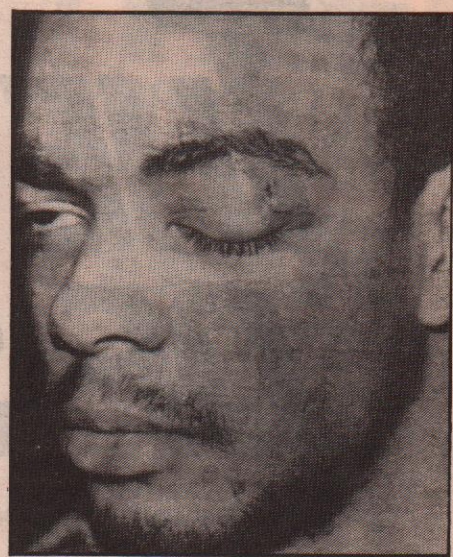
pounced on them, kicking them to the ground. They were shouting "kill the niggers, kill the niggers!" They had bottles and smashed one into Trevor's face. His eye almost came out of his head. They smashed bottles on Gary too and he got slashed on the back of the neck.'

'The definition of a racial incident used by the Metropolitan Police is simple: any incident in which it appears to the reporting or investigating officer that the complaint involves an element of racial motivation; or any incident which includes an allegation of racial motivation made by any person.'

'The next day when the police came round the first thing they said to me was "It wasn't a racist attack last night, the other people were just jealous of your party." I hadn't said it was racist, yet this was the first thing they came out with. There's no doubt it was racist.'

'There may be all sorts of reasons, rooted perhaps in cultural or religious backgrounds, why victims do not come forward to the police.'

Cherry has an alternative explanation of why black people can't take police 'anti-racism' seriously. 'The thing I remember



about the whole incident was the attitude of the police. They didn't come out to help when we needed them, they hung the phone up on us, they lied and when they came round they said "I suppose you'll be putting in for a transfer now." The cheek of it, suggesting I would use the attack just to get a quick move.'

RACIST SNAKES

Many people in East London are sceptical about the new police campaign. They know it is a cosmetic exercise, designed to stop black people taking matters into their own hands and lashing out at the racists. But the local Labour Party and the left are still spreading illusions in the ability of the police to combat racism.

While criticising Newman's initiative, they are calling for a proper police offensive against the thugs.

This is a dangerous waste of time. The police can never live up to their anti-racist publicity. They are the guardians of a system that depends on keeping black people in their place — under the heel. The police will always give racists room to swing a broken bottle in a black face. The only way we can deal with the problem is by organising ordinary people to take on the racists, and let them know that their party is over. While Newman preaches beneath his campaign symbol — 'a police officer and a member of the public grasping the serpent of racial harassment' — the racist snakes are still crawling over East London.

Richard Andrews



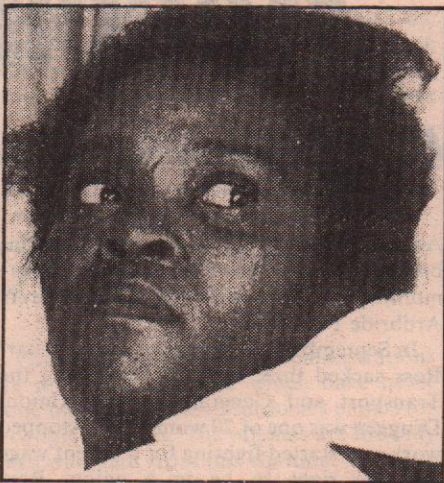
PROFESSIONAL LIAR KENNETH NEWMAN

CHERRY GROCE TRIAL

Poor little police marksmen

Anybody following the trial of police marksman Inspector Douglas Lovelock might have thought that he had been shot instead of his victim, black mother Cherry Groce. Last week Lovelock was cleared of deliberately shooting Groce at her Brixton home in September 1985, at the end of a trial in which he was set up as a sympathetic figure under terrible stress. 'I shot her, guv' a tearful Lovelock was supposed to have told his superiors. Shades of Jack Regan, the lovable rogue of a police bully from *The Sweeney*. How could anybody find him guilty? The judge even warned the jury not to feel any sympathy for crippled Cherry Groce.

In Britain today an armed policeman can burst into a house occupied by a black woman and her young child, cripple her for life and walk away wearing a halo. All reports of the case emphasised that Lovelock expected to confront Cherry Groce's son in the house, who was 'wanted in connection with armed robbery'. None of them mentioned that the police dropped those charges. He was black, so he



CHERRY GROCE, CRIPPLED FOR LIFE

must have been a criminal.

We feel nothing but contempt for policemen who suffer the 'stress' of being the government's hired gunmen in black inner-city areas.

In the week that Lovelock walked free, the trial began of six black youths charged with killing PC Blakelock on Tottenham's Broadwater Farm after police killed another black woman in October 1985. We can be sure that the media will not adopt a sympathetic tone and tell us about the stress they were under, living on an estate under police occupation.

Police have told the Groce family not to worry, they can expect a few thousand in compensation for the 'accident'. But they cannot buy off the anger of the black community for long.

George Roucou march

THE CAMPAIGN TO stop George Roucou, a shop steward at Manchester council, being deported to the Seychelles is picking up support. The defence campaign's energies now centre on the work-time march on 6 February. His supporters are arguing for people to stop work and join the demo. Labour movement bodies sponsoring the campaign so far include Manchester trades council, Ucatt regional committee, Ucatt joint shop stewards' council, GMWU regional committee, TGWU regional executive committee, North and South Manchester district committees of the AEU, Nalco town hall, Nupe housing, Nupe nursery nurses, Nupe Oldham hospital, CPSA DTI, Astms community branch. For further details of



the campaign and march ring Vanessa Young on (061) 234 3168.

Sheffield fishing raid

TWENTY POLICE AND immigration officers recently dropped into Bebek's kebab house in Sheffield for a take-away. They were looking for Turkish Cypriot immigrants who had 'overstayed'. They took away four, and deported three straight away. The fourth, Abdullah Mullaaziz, is out on bail. He has been spared for now because he has an English girlfriend whom he plans to marry.

While they wait for his case to come up, police have been trying to persuade his girlfriend to break it off, because 'he'll soon be going far away.' Workers Against Racism supporters have joined the fight for his right to stay. The campaign launch is next Monday, 26 January, at 7pm in SCAU, West Street, Sheffield.

THE DANGERS OF SAFE SEX

The left's endorsement of the official safe sex campaign has helped the Tories to target lesbians and gays

From the Tory point of view, the government campaign on Aids is already a success. It has done little to deal with the disease, but then that was never the intention. The aim of the official safe sex campaign is to endorse right-wing ideas about the dangers of promiscuity and homosexuality, and the virtues of family life. The fact that Tory calls for safe sex are now echoed by the left shows how far the rot has gone.

At first sight, the government's safe sex campaign appears moderate and rational compared to the anti-homosexual ranting of vicars, journalists, councillors and police chiefs. But it is not the innocent initiative which it seems. As health minister Norman Fowler said in launching the campaign, it 'complements' the efforts of the churches and other moral guardians to target lesbians and gays. The Tories are allowing the fringe fanatics to dominate the debate on Aids, while their safe sex adverts give subtle backing to the moralists' case.

WITCH-HUNT

The government's warning about the all-pervasive threat from Aids encourages hysterical reactions to a disease that has killed less than 300 people in Britain. It does nothing to change the widespread conviction that gay men are corrupting the health of innocent heterosexuals.

In this context, the Tories' repeated declaration that the disease is now 'a threat to us all' can only be interpreted as an invitation to lash out at the supposed source of the threat — homosexuality.

The campaign's concentration on the need to use condoms and stick to one sexual partner is a back-handed boost for the fire and brimstone brigade. It gives apparently scientific support to the anti-sex campaigners who want women chained to the sink and gays locked in the closet. It's a bit like the old advertising trick of using a bloke in a white coat and stethoscope to sing the praises of a brand of cigarettes.

The safe sex campaign will encourage calls for moral conformity and intensify suspicion and hostility against lesbians and gays. Yet most left wingers have gone along with it, complaining only that it does not go far enough.

LEFT LIES DOWN

The Tories' success is shown by the fact that everything you read about Aids, from the 'Don't die of ignorance' leaflet commissioned by arch-reactionary Lord White-law, to the feature in this month's *Socialist Worker Review*, carries the same message. The left has fallen for the Tories' presentation of Aids as a medical problem requiring a technical solution. It has all but ignored the political matter of homosexual rights at the centre of the Aids issue.

Left wingers have proved unwilling or unable to stand up to the weight of the moral offensive. They have sought to combat the right's excesses without challenging its basic arguments.

They have tried to give a socialist edge to the campaign for safe sex, and dodged the debate about defending homosexual rights.

One popular argument among radicals is to point out that Aids is not exclusive to gays, and that in Africa it seems to be transmitted mainly through heterosexual intercourse. This simply sidesteps the fact that in Britain the disease and the hostility it has aroused are still concentrated among gay men. Worse still, while the search for scapegoats hots up over here, the left is



pointing the finger at other groups whom the Tories can target alongside gays. For example, the government has already used the arguments about straight Africans carrying Aids to start a racist anti-immigrant scare.

In the latest issue of the hard-left journal *Labour Briefing*, Jane Stockton dreams up an alternative trick for getting around the question of gay rights:

'The Labour Party leadership could even counter anti-gay prejudice by arguing Aids is yet another infection men give women. Imagine the Labour Party promoting lesbianism as the only way over half the population could stay Aids-free!'

While Stockton fantasises about Kinnock the self-confessed 'reactionary' advocating lesbianism, the moralists can use her arguments to blame bisexual men for acting as a 'bridge' and giving the 'gay plague' to women. The Tories just stand back and watch the left lining up fresh victims for the bigots.

Other left wingers who back the safe sex campaign have been busy thinking up ways in which they can appeal to people not to pick on gays, without tackling the 'difficult' arguments in defence of homosexual rights. The prize for the most crass piece of opportunism in this vein goes to Jeffrey Weeks, writing in the Communist Party journal *Marxism Today*.

CONDOM COP-OUT

Weeks establishes that 'the identification of Aids as a "gay plague" has potentially disastrous effects.' Quite so, but for whom? The lesbians who have lost their jobs and gays who have lost their lives in the Aids backlash? Not according to Weeks. He is concerned with the 'disastrous effects' of anti-homosexual ideas on the health of the general public. Calling Aids the 'gay plague' opines Weeks, 'encourages those who do not see themselves as gay to believe that they will not get it'. Telling people they shouldn't be anti-homosexual because they might get Aids is like telling them they should oppose racist attacks because they might get hit by a splinter of glass the next time a black man has a bottle smashed in his face.

In their efforts to sweep the issue of lesbian and gay rights under the carpet, left wingers are leaving the real victims of the Aids scare to their fate.

The Socialist Workers' Party has proved vulnerable to the safe sex campaign, running

front-page headlines that echo the *Sun's* description of Aids as 'a time bomb'. But the SWP remains wary of being too closely identified with a Tory campaign. Thus it has sought to distance itself from the anti-sex arguments of the right by championing the condom as the solution to Aids.

The editorial in the latest edition of *Socialist Worker* attempts to criticise the Tory Aids leaflet along these lines:

'About sex, the leaflet says, "It is safest to stick to one partner." This is no protection against Aids. The real way to safeguard your health, using a condom, only comes after this moral exhortation.'

Socialist Worker's point is patent nonsense. If you want to discuss Aids in a purely technical way as a sexually transmitted disease, it is obvious that monogamy is a better safeguard than condoms. In fact, if you pursue this discussion to its logical conclusion, you should be advocating celibacy as 'the real way to safeguard your health'. The SWP has conceded the Tories' central point about safe sex and shunted the issue of homosexual rights on to the back burner. Thus it can only come up with ineffective quibbles with the government, which serve to endorse rather than challenge the current climate of the Aids debate.

Many on the left claim that we should distinguish between today's problem of stopping the spread of Aids, and the longer-term problem of homosexual oppression. This misses the point. The oppression of gays means that there is no technical solution to the problems posed by Aids.

DEFEND OUR RIGHTS!

Homosexual men are denied democratic rights. They are forced either to deny their sexuality, or to live in fear on the fringe of a hostile society. They have to conduct their social lives in circumstances which often mitigate against any sort of safe sex. They also know that coming forward with worries about Aids will expose them to ridicule and repression. Far from encouraging gays to come out, the increased prejudice which accompanies the safe sex campaign has driven many back underground. Thus the problems of tracking the spread of Aids, identifying carriers and organising treatment are largely attributable to the denial of basic civil rights to homosexuals.

Our job, today and tomorrow, must be to fight for full equality for lesbians and gays.

The biggest danger facing homosexuals in Britain comes not from Aids but from the safe sex campaign, which disguises Tory morality as medical concern. The left is doing lesbians and gays no favours at all by backing it.

ARDBRIDE STRIKERS

Keeping solid

'We didn't accept the offer. It would have been pointless going back on those terms.' In Ardrossan, near Glasgow, Anna Druggen spoke to *ins* about a union-backed offer designed to break the four-month picket of lampshade manufacturers Ardbride Products.

In September, when factory-owner Stuart Ross sacked three workers for joining the Transport and General Workers' Union, Druggen was one of 20 women who stopped work and started fighting for a decent wage and the right to be in a union. Ross sacked them.

Just before Christmas, management offered to take back five employees at £2 an hour, with an option to re-employ the other 18 later. The strikers refused the offer. 'It meant going back on the same terms as we came out — without union recognition. The ones who went back would have been victimised. We would have ended up with no picket line and no job.'

The Ardbride pickets expected management to press them to accept. But they were surprised when transport union officials also tried to twist their arms. 'They told us it was the best we'd get. They said no one would think badly of us if we just drifted away. They put it over as if taking the deal was the best thing for everyone concerned. But we want to keep solid.'



ANNA DRUGGEN: 'WE CAN WIN'

To make their strike effective, the Ardbride pickets need solidarity from other workers.

British Telecom engineers have refused to fit new phones in the factory, and the Ardrossan postman won't deliver, despite threats from post office inspectors. In Glasgow, Edinburgh and London, supporters picketed Ardbride's most important customer — Laura Ashley shops. According to Druggen, 'the publicity from these demonstrations is now paying dividends. But it's been the RCP — not the union — that's helped us. Now we've got this far, I think we can win.'



THE PROPAGANDA WAR

JACK COLLINS

WAPPING: ONE YEAR ON

On Saturday, sacked print workers will mark the first anniversary of their battle against Rupert Murdoch and his Fortress Wapping. **Andrew Calcutt** looks back at a year of grim determination by the strikers, and gutless betrayals by their union leaders

The struggle

News International print workers have held out for a year against the might of Rupert Murdoch's scabbing machine. They have shrugged off the dirty propaganda war Murdoch has fought against them through his sneering *Sun*. They have been undaunted by the speeding

convoys of scab lorries, even when TNT trucks have ploughed through picket lines and killed a teenager. They have refused to be cowed by the paramilitary police who have occupied the area since last January.

Even after 1400 arrests, hundreds of 'guilty' activists keep coming back to the picket lines

to pour scorn on the police and the courts.

Twelve months ago, the Wapping strikers demanded reinstatement. The hard core of 2000 activists still want nothing less. Many are middle-aged and, so the scab papers said, too comfortable to want to fight. Yet the grim determination of the print workers is living proof of a fighting spirit which management cannot ignore. The print may be one area where the labour movement has taken a hammering in recent years, but its militants refuse to give up.

The sell-out

While print workers have stuck it out regardless, their union leaders have begged Murdoch to negotiate over 'acceptable' job losses and jumped at every bone he has thrown them. Brenda Dean of Sogat and Tony Dubbins of the NGA have refused to fight for effective solidarity action, which is the only way to force Murdoch to reinstate the sacked workers. Instead they have sought to reinstate union-management procedures. They have proved willing to sell their members' jobs, if only the press baron will recognise their role as negotiators. All along Fleet Street, Dean and Dubbins have pushed print workers into accepting deals which cut jobs while protecting official procedures.

But every time they tried to con News

International strikers into accepting a shabby deal, the activists told them to stuff it.

In spring, summer and autumn, the strikers said 'no way'. They turned down Murdoch's offer of a clapped-out building to house an understaffed union newspaper; spurned the cash offer which print union leaders endorsed in July; and, in September, threw out the union-backed no-strike deal which offered seats at Murdoch's negotiating table in exchange for 4500 lost jobs.

Now, while pickets face a bleak mid-winter, union officials are up to their contricks again. Without bothering to campaign for a 'yes' vote, Sogat officials balloted the union's entire membership over the call for a weekly 58p levy to offset legal costs arising from the dispute. They got the result they

wanted: the call was rejected, allowing Dean to claim that a quick deal with Murdoch is the union's only option. Stepping up the action is the only real option for strikers. But Dean is using the ballot result to blame rank and file union members for the officials' refusal to take the strike forward.

Militant action threatens the union officials' chances of sweet-talking Murdoch into making a dirty deal. That's why they have tried to keep the lid on the dispute. The officials disowned all the print workers who fought against scabs and the police. They turned their backs on the first eight pickets jailed last year. They are only calling for the release of the ninth, Mike Hicks, because he is a Sogat executive member whose role in marshalling the pickets and liaising with the police matches their image of respectable trade unionism. As far as the print union leaders are concerned, if you go beyond their rulebook in defence of jobs you are a 'legitimate target' for police attack.

The sideshows

The print union chiefs have set up several diversions to keep the strikers occupied and provide a cover for their attempted sell-outs. The Wapping demonstrations have been one such device. Three times a week for 52 weeks, strike activists have been marched up and down Wapping Highway and encouraged to tire themselves out shouting 'scab' as TNT lorries hurtle past under police escort. This kind of activity won't worry Murdoch. The officials keep it up because it makes them look good.

According to official stewards, the demonstrations are 'mass pickets'. Yet the route of the march is never less than 50 metres away from Murdoch's front gate. The officials abide by Tory anti-union laws, and only allow six print workers to stand at the entrance to Fortress Wapping. Everyone else is herded into a cul-de-sac on the other side of Wapping Highway. Whenever militants try to make something of it, the officials help the police by keeping them in line.

For strikers, the routine demonstrations are a wasteful exercise which have never done more than delay Murdoch's papers for a couple of hours. The officials are the only ones who gain from this charade.

The biggest sideshow of all has been the joint NGA/Sogat campaign to have the electricians' union expelled from the TUC for its role in recruiting scabs for Murdoch. This has done more than any other tactic to keep the dispute under the officials' control.

Electricians' chief Eric Hammond certainly used the EETPU as a scabbing agency for Murdoch. But the print union leaders' quarrel with Hammond is only that he got inside Fortress Wapping while they were left outside. At the start of the dispute, Dean and Dubbins even offered Murdoch what amounted to an EETPU-style no-strike deal, if he would let them get a foot in the door.

Since then, the officials have sought to scapegoat the EETPU to draw attention away from their own attempts to sell out print workers' jobs.

The call for the TUC to expel the EETPU

has won wide backing from angry strikers. But it has pushed their energies in the wrong direction, and kept their demands trapped within official union procedures. Looking to the TUC to sort out strikers' problems has left the destiny of the dispute in the untrustworthy hands of union bureaucrats, whose concern is to settle the strike on any terms they can get. It has undermined the prospects for rank and file solidarity. Strike activists found themselves lobbying the fat cats of the TUC to intervene in Dean and Dubbins' squabble with Hammond, when they should have been arguing for support from other trade unionists — starting with rank and file electricians. 'Expel the EETPU' is a carefully contrived slogan which has kept the strike on a short leash.

After a year of determined effort, Wapping strikers are in limbo. The 'keep it quiet and sell it out' strategy adopted by their leaders has dampened the strikers' militancy. It is based on a political approach which puts outdated labour movement structures before our need to defend jobs. Until the rank and file break away from this approach, they will be unable to step up the action against Murdoch. For the sake of their year of bitter struggle, they need to make the break.

Kent miners' leader Jack Collins died aged 57 on 8 January after a long struggle against cancer.

'My name is Jack Collins and I am a working miner. I started working in the pits at the age of 15 and I am now 42. I have been in the pits for 27 years....I have spent over 20 years on the coal face, mainly as a ripper....The men at the pit where I now work wear no clothes when working and because of the amount of sweating they do they have to drink a lot of water. The coal board provided them with salt tablets to stop them getting what they are supposed to get when they drink a lot of water. This is a way of encouraging the men to work in the heat rather than improving the conditions in the pits.

'In order to get to work on the day shift I now get up at half past four in the morning and travel half way across Kent to get to the pit. I think the court should know that I have one child still at school now and I have not been able to afford a holiday for the last four years. That is fairly typical in an industry for fellows like myself, coal face workers.'

In his testimony to the Wilberforce Inquiry, formed to set a pay award for the miners during the 1972 strike, Collins described the indignities of a miner's life. His speech stirred even Lord Wilberforce and helped win the miners' claim.

From his early days as branch delegate at Chislet pit through to his election as general secretary for the Kent area seven years ago, Collins remained a militant fighter for the miners in the most militant coalfield in the country.

The men who came to work in Kent were often activists victimised elsewhere for their stand against the employers. They built a powerful base at pits like Betteshanger, scene of the famous 1942 stay-down strike. In the sixties Kent miners took wage cuts to make way for the introduction of the national power loading agreement, which established national wage bargaining and laid the foundation for the industry-wide strikes of 1972 and 1974. Kent miners played a big role in both, picketing docks and power stations throughout the South-east. In the late seventies the Kent miners were the last to accept the Labour government's divisive area incentive schemes.

Kent was the last area to end the 1984-85 strike, having tried to picket out miners in Yorkshire and South Wales during the bitter days after the return to work. Collins played a leading role in the strike despite his illness. But his last struggle also exposed the problems with his style of leadership.

The last ditch stand by Kent miners was a brave refusal to abandon the sacked and jailed miners. But it offered no challenge to the NUM leadership's strategy which led the miners to defeat. Collins was enough of a class fighter to reject the call of the final delegates' conference for 'an orderly return to work'. But he was too tied to the NUM's traditions of collaboration and negotiation to challenge Arthur Scargill's leadership.

Collins backed Scargill's strategy of defending an outdated employers' plan for the industry (the *Plan for Coal*) and his calls for a negotiated solution. He endorsed Scargill's ban on a ballot in the strike's early stages and his bureaucratic attempts to bludgeon Notts miners into submission, rather than organise a rank and file battle to win them to the fight for jobs.

Jack Collins was a fighter all his life. The danger now is that his successors will have none of his guts and all of his political weaknesses.

JOIN THE

RED

OPEN LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY

To all left-wing groups and individuals:

THE NEXT GENERAL ELECTION will be the most critical for 50 years. While the date of polling remains uncertain, the prospect of the election has created an uneasy stalemate in the class struggle in Britain. But the unstoppable decline of British capitalism means that, whichever of the major parties comes out on top, the consequences are inevitable: more attacks on the unions, higher unemployment, lower living standards, more state repression and the growth of racism and prejudice against women and homosexuals.

The central problem of the general election is that most people will vote against the Tories, rather than for something they believe in. While most working class people will vote Labour, they will do so without any serious expectation that a Labour government will protect the interests of the working class.

THE ABSENCE OF a genuine choice in the election can only have a destructive effect. The working class will not be presented with a case for fundamental change in society. The mainstream parties only offer a choice among different varieties of pro-capitalist policies. The outcome of such a contest can only be widespread demoralisation in face of the impending capitalist offensive.

The Revolutionary Communist Party has set out to build a working class alternative to Labour. We have long indicated our intention to pursue this objective by running candidates in the election. We recognise, however, that our modest resources and influence limit our

capacity to make an effective challenge to Labourism nationally. This will not distract us from following through our perspective, but it leads us to consider how we can mobilise on a wider front.

Instead of postponing to the future what has to be done in the present, we must consider any option which might help to speed up the emergence of an effective alternative to Labour. This is why we are proposing that other left-wing organisations and individuals join us in running a slate of candidates in the election on a platform of basic working class demands under the banner of *THE RED FRONT*.

WE BELIEVE THAT there are thousands of activists just as concerned as we are about the future of the working class. We do not expect them to agree with the full programme of the RCP. Nor do we expect those with long associations with Labour to change their views overnight. What we propose is a way of giving the working class a voice in the political struggle around the general election.

At present the working class is taken for granted by Labour and ignored by the other parties. It is a spectator in the whole election circus. If we allow this situation to persist, we are abandoning the field of national politics to those whose aims and actions are hostile to the interests of the working class. As things stand, people will be denied the chance to consider a working class alternative to the other parties.

It is essential that those committed to getting rid of the capitalist system pull together in the coming months, to put this

point of view across in the clearest possible terms to the widest number of people. We are proposing a platform of basic demands around which all anti-capitalist forces, regardless of their other differences, can work together in the general election campaign.

WE BELIEVE THAT the case for *THE RED FRONT* is overwhelming. Unless anti-capitalists organise to promote basic class politics in the labour movement, their message will be lost on a whole generation. Without such organisation, militants will lack a political focus and will be even more isolated. We will lose precious time as the emergence of a working class alternative is delayed.

Even those who reject the revolutionary communist analysis of Labour should seriously examine our proposal. They must agree that a successful campaign for workers' interests will put more pressure on the Labour Party than the continuation of the current inertia. At present, there is nothing to prevent Kinnock conceding everything. Only if he faces a challenge to his electoral ambitions and realises that Labour's traditional constituency cannot be taken for granted will he even consider making concessions to the working class.

The aim of *THE RED FRONT* must be to maximise the influence of the forces prepared to fight for anti-capitalist policies. It is a project designed to prevent the working class from hearing only one message — that of the capitalist class. It can reduce the danger of both a Tory and a Labour victory at the

polls. It allows the election to be used to launch the labour movement on a new course. *THE RED FRONT* will be an agreement of organisations and individuals to fight around a set of basic demands — work or full pay, defence union rights, equal rights and stop the war drive (opposite). Anybody who is committed to the interests of the working class should support it.

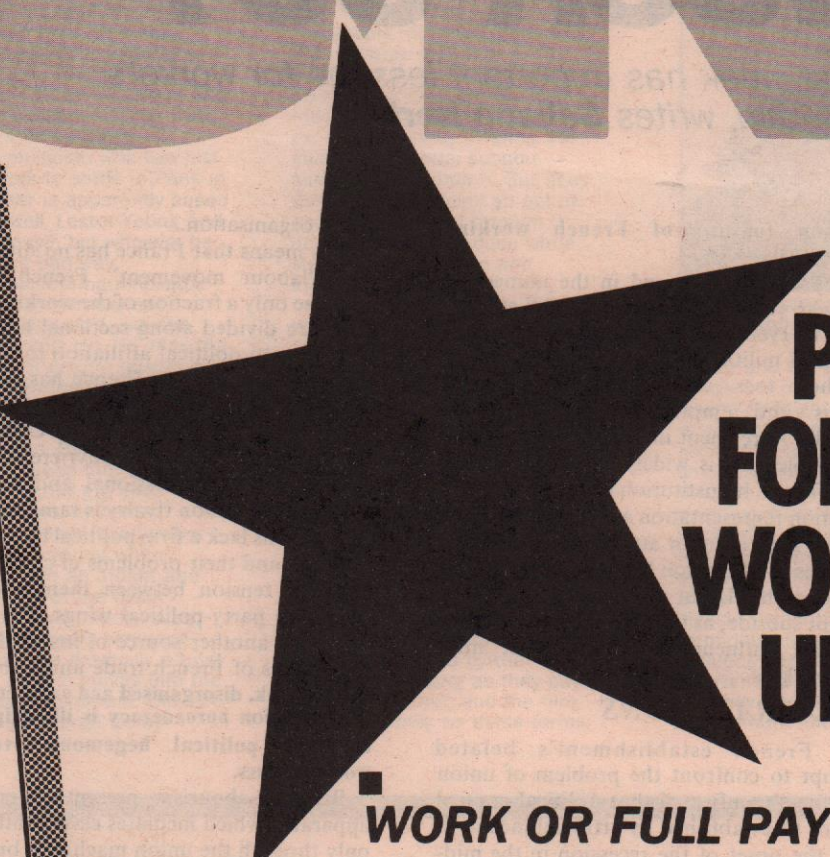
THE RED FRONT is a bloc. It will field a range of candidates, each of whom will campaign around its Agreement on these issues. The question of how supporters of the campaign choose to fight. *THE RED FRONT* enables the various elements of its basic platform to be campaigned in a way consistent with their distinctive positions.

WITHIN *THE RED FRONT* the RCP will put forward a wider programme. Other organisations will have the same. The important thing is that, by concentrating on anti-capitalist demands, we can have an impact on British politics.

The policies of *THE RED FRONT* are both long and short-term objectives. Our long-term objective is the establishment of a communist society and internationalism. We must achieve this goal in the short term. Our policies are designed to prepare the way for this.

We hope to build a nucleus of itself, our intention is to transfer the movement into British politics. We can overcome. But

THE RED FRONT



A PLATFORM FOR WORKING CLASS UNITY

■ WORK OR FULL PAY

TO SURVIVE IN capitalist society everybody needs either a job at a living wage, or the same level of income in the form of benefits. We cannot afford to go poor just because employers cannot make enough profit out of our labour, or because the state cannot afford to maintain our living standards. What constitutes a living wage? This can only be decided by wage-earners and those who rely on benefits. We reject all state attempts to regulate wages by means of incomes policy.

■ DEFEND UNION RIGHTS

WE STAND FOR the repeal of all laws that restrict the rights of workers to take action in defence of working class interests. We reject all restrictions on striking, picketing and solidarity action. We reject all state intervention in strike ballots, union elections or any other labour movement activity.

■ EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL

WE ARE IN favour of the widest extension of civil liberties and for equal rights for all. We reject all measures which strengthen the power of the capitalist state and extend the interference of its repressive forces in society. We repudiate attempts to criminalise sections of society

as a way of winning public approval for more repression.

WE OPPOSE DISCRIMINATION against women at work and call for the establishment of free nurseries, available all day for children of all ages, to free women to go out to work. We demand free abortion and contraception on demand.

WE OPPOSE DISCRIMINATION against black people in all spheres of society. We call for the repeal of all restrictions on immigration which divide the working class and give official approval to racism.

WE REJECT THE Aids panic as a propaganda campaign designed to take advantage of a fatal disease to proscribe homosexual activity and bolster conventional morality. We defend the rights of lesbians and gay men to full equality in society.

■ STOP THE WAR DRIVE

WE OPPOSE ALL forms of militarism, both conventional and nuclear, and all alliances among imperialist powers, particularly Nato. We condemn Western military interference in the third world and support countries such as Argentina or Libya against imperialist aggression. We support anti-imperialist struggles, especially those of the Palestinians in the Middle East, black people in South Africa and liberation struggles in Central America. We place a particular priority on supporting the fight for freedom in Ireland.

sure that the most active section of the working class learns to cope with its isolation today, so that it can become a coherent political force tomorrow. Unless the active core of the labour movement is strengthened, there is a danger that the period after the election will lead to widespread despair.

■ WE BELIEVE THAT only an intervention around the policies of **THE RED FRONT** can ensure that Labour's influence is put to the test from the left. Without such an approach, mass disappointment with Labour will turn to mass rejection of socialism and of collective solutions. Thousands will react to their experience by opting for an individual way out — or by moving further to the right.

Demoralisation can only be prevented if activists anticipate future developments, warn of the perils ahead and explain that Labour's failures are not those of socialism. If Labour is not challenged in this way the job of defending the working class will become immeasurably more difficult. Conservative moods in the labour movement would go unchecked, thus narrowing the basis for the future development of the anti-capitalist struggle.

In the battles ahead, the working class cannot afford to be without a voice. From those whose first loyalty is to the working class, we are fully entitled to demand support for our campaign and our policies. Join us. Help push Labour aside. Make the working class into a force that can change the world.

Fraternally,

Frank Richards

Chairman of the
Revolutionary Communist Party

END OF THE RAIL STRIKE

DEFEAT - BUT NO KNOCK-OUT

The rail strike which ended last week has important lessons for workers in France and Britain, writes **Sabena Norton**

Last week the French rail strike collapsed as swiftly as it had begun a month earlier. It achieved only symbolic concessions on pay and conditions. The settlements for the railworkers, and for the electricity and Paris transport workers who also walked out, provide wage rises of less than two per cent. This leaves workers with empty pockets after a four-week battle to recover some of the ground lost in five years of wage control, and to win improvements in working conditions.

But the defeat was no knock-out. Unlike other big conflicts like the British miners' strike, this one ended neither in a rout nor in drawn-out atrophy. The workers kept the pressure on almost to the end, forcing prime minister Chirac to start talks for a speedy end to the strike. Chirac had to act because the dispute was becoming a menace to the authority of his administration.

Despite their defeat, the railworkers gave the French establishment a fright it won't forget.

For the first time in 20 years France's rulers faced a vigorous national campaign of working class resistance, launched and organised by rank and file workers independently of the official unions. The union bureaucracy was consigned to the sidelines, unable to play its customary restraining role. As a result the strike acquired an edge and momentum rarely seen in ordinary union disputes — an experience which will not go unnoticed among other workers.

FRENCH HOTHEADS?

There were positive and negative sides to the strike. Which one prevails in people's perceptions once the dust has settled depends on the ability of political activists to confront the problems raised. Either way, the four-week-long struggle is a rich source of inspiration for the class struggle in Britain.

The first question we have to answer is: why were French workers able to mount such a formidable initiative, when all appears to be doom and gloom in Britain? French railworkers have been through a decade of setbacks and sell-outs. Yet they picked themselves up and took matters into their own hands, while in Britain a similar experience of defeat seems to lead to growing despondency and resignation. Why?

Popular prejudice would suggest that the irascible Gallic temperament — and the languid nature of the British — explains the contrast between the upheaval in France and the uneventful nature of political life in Britain. But British workers are no strangers to tough battles on the picket lines, and modern Britain is as tense and violent as other European states. It is true that in France conflict tends to take a more direct and political form than in Britain, where the class struggle has been more thoroughly institutionalised. But the reasons for this have nothing to do with national psychology. They stem from the peculiarities of the political order in the two countries.

RANK AND FILE REVOLT

The events of the past four weeks confirm that the control of the union machines over rank and file activity in France is far weaker than in Britain. Although this is not new, the dramatic decline in French union membership over the past decade (from an already low level of 20 per cent to no more than eight) helps explain why the union bureaucracy is so weak today.

Spontaneous strike movements which elude the control of the bureaucracy have been a

common feature of French working class activity.

They were widespread in the immediate post-war years and again after the student revolt in 1968, which sparked off a wave of industrial militancy that kept union leaders on their toes. After 1968, government, unions and employers concluded the Grenelle Agreement in an attempt to tackle the problem. It is widely acknowledged to have failed. It institutionalised procedures for union representation and consultation in the workplace, in an attempt to extend the tentacles of the union bureaucracy down to workshop level. But rank and file militancy did not subside, as the rival left-wing unions vied for influence over the most militant workers.

TWO TRADITIONS

The French establishment's belated attempt to confront the problem of union 'aloofness' confirmed that political control cannot be established by artificial means. It took the onset of the recession in the mid-seventies, coupled with a major campaign by the Socialist and Communist unions to direct workers' growing worries about the future towards the election of a left-wing government, to put the brake on rank and file militancy.

Britain's historical prosperity created conditions in which stable institutions of class domination could mature and develop for more than a century. In contrast, the French establishment never achieved anything approaching long-term political stability until after the Second World War.

In France, union growth on a big scale occurred as late as the thirties, in a period marked by profound political instability. By this time the British authorities had already cultivated a house-trained union bureaucracy, complete with its own political wing, the Labour Party. But in France the institutionalisation of class relations remained underdeveloped. Even after the war, when far-sighted politicians recommended a system of tripartite cooperation between unions, management and state in industry, the parlous state of the French economy ensured that many employers opposed

union organisation.

This means that France has no such thing as a 'labour movement'. French unions organise only a fraction of the working class. They are divided along sectional lines, and according to political affiliation to the rival working class parties. France has not one, but three major union bureaucracies — the Communist CGT, the Socialist CFDT and the 'non-political' Force Ouvrière — plus a host of minor professional and sectional unions. Inter-union rivalry is rampant. Left-wing unions lack a firm political base among workers, and their problems of control tend to cause tension between them and their respective party-political wings. This introduces yet another source of instability into the morass of French trade unionism.

The weak, disorganised and conflict-ridden French union bureaucracy is ill-equipped to establish political hegemony over the working class.

British Labourism presents a powerful apparatus which mediates class conflict, not only through the union machines, but more importantly through the reformist ideas which have shaped working class thought for 80 years. The fact that the British left still glorifies the concept of 'the labour movement' shows how deeply the notion that the working class, the unions and the Labour Party form an indivisible whole has become rooted in the popular consciousness here.

BREAK-UP

In France, only the Communist Party ever came close to performing the role of the British Labour Party. It attracted the most militant workers and ran the French left for almost 30 years. But its links with the Soviet Union ensured that it could never fully integrate itself into national political life or influence more than a minority of political workers.

French workers have now turned their backs on the party that helped Mitterrand's Socialist administration impose austerity. The Communist Party has become a shadow of its former self, and one of the few elements of stability in French working class politics has begun to break up. Railworkers who experienced mass job cuts under Communist

transport minister Charles Fiterman from 1981-84 quit the CGT in droves. Thus few railworkers — even CGT members — asked the union for advice before going on strike.

The fragility of French trade unionism means that French workers are far less inhibited in taking independent action. This increases the scope for militant industrial struggle, but does not automatically spark the sort of anti-capitalist outlook needed to unite the working class against the system.

LESSONS TO LEARN

The recent rail strike showed that French workers have more than a healthy distrust for the union machines. They were ready to translate that sentiment into action, taking the fight for their livelihoods into their own hands. Their struggle may not have been enough to bring victory. But it proved that workers can organise their own battles, without the assistance of union officials, and confirmed that this is the way to unleash the power of the working class. We should put this lesson of the strike to the test in Britain.

The strikers' greatest strengths were initiative, motivation and organisation.

Militants did not wait for inspiration to drop from the skies, but took the initiative to start discussions and publish leaflets arguing the need for action. This work was begun by small groups of militant workers who campaigned to persuade others, often in the face of fierce hostility and dirty tricks by union officials. They built the strike until it spread to all but four of 94 depots.

As soon as the campaign for strike action began, militants demanded mass meetings to encourage the widest possible debate. This ensured that opponents of the strike, and those conspiring to sabotage it, were forced to subject their alternatives to the test of open discussion. It also meant that the machinery to direct the dispute was well developed by the time it started.

THE WAY AHEAD

Militants in some depots, notably the South-West region, sought to establish a national strike *Coordination* by linking up with delegates from other areas. Only a minority of workplaces joined the *Coordination* by the time the strike ended. But those that did confirmed the important role it played in circulating information, overcoming the isolation of individual workplaces and cohering the struggle. This proved vital for countering the government's anti-strike propaganda.

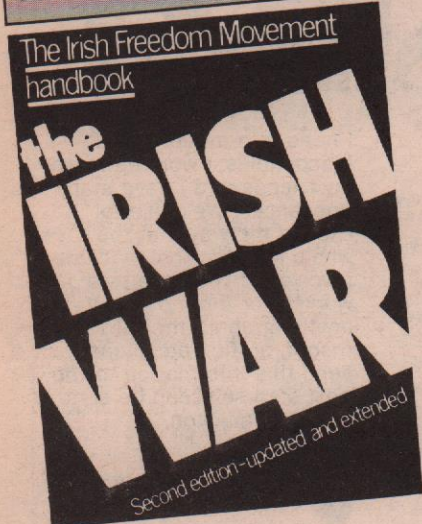
The rail strike had its strengths, but it was not short of weaknesses. These underline the urgency of political struggle to challenge narrow and backward attitudes among French workers. One big problem was the sectional attitude among train drivers who regarded the struggle as their personal property, rather than as a fight to unite all railworkers against the bosses. Some set up their 'own' *Coordination* which excluded other grades. This approach presented a major barrier to working class unity. It shows the need to combat chauvinist and sexist prejudices, and the narrow reformist outlook which breeds sectionalism, if the French working class is to be strengthened for the battles ahead.



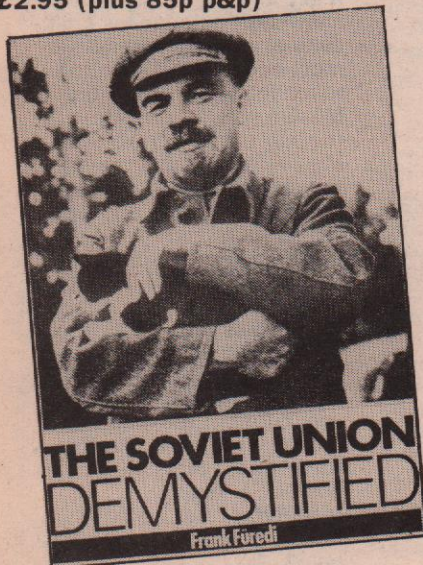
RANK AND FILE RAILWORKERS PUT THE BRAKES ON THE BUREAUCRATS. NOW THEY NEED TO MAKE A BREAK WITH THE POLITICS OF THE PAST

REVIEWS

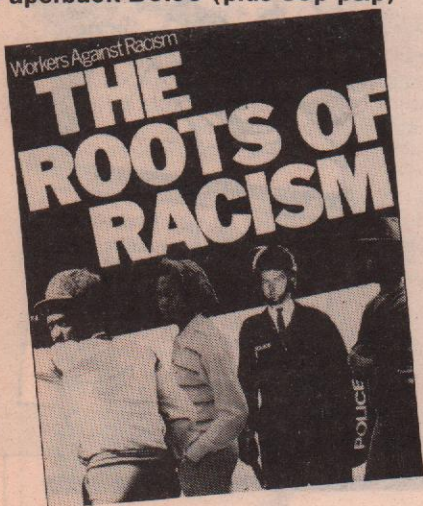
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● JAZZ FILM

The Dexter Gordon show

Round Midnight, Bertrand Tavernier (Director)

Round Midnight isn't the first film to use jazz musicians as actors, but it's the first I've seen which allows them to portray their own lives in a reasonably authentic way. The film stars Dexter Gordon (an important and influential saxophonist) as Dale Turner, a fictional black American musician who has just left New York to settle in Paris in 1959. Turner is apparently based on Bud Powell, Lester Young and Gordon himself, but whoever he is, he is in a bad way.

Once a pioneering innovator Turner is now mentally and physically exhausted, alcoholic and prematurely old. He joins the community of émigré musicians who have created their own world in Paris, located between seedy hotels and jazz clubs like The Blue Note. He has a minder who tries to keep him sober, fixes up a nightly gig and handles the money herself.

This microcosm is infiltrated by Francois, a young white Frenchman and an ardent and obsessive fan of the black musician. Turner initially sees him as someone to scrounge drinks from, but gradually a trust develops, and he moves into the Frenchman's apartment. Here he is nursed and cared for by

Francois and his young daughter; his health and morale return and his career undergoes a late renaissance. At the end of the film he decides to return to New York and we glimpse the cold and hostile environment from which he fled.

Francois idolises Turner. It is the romantic desire of a European to adopt a different culture that he sees as more real. The only way he can express this is by offering the musician material support — shelter, food, comfort. But does this support conceal an act of appropriation, and through it does the film reproduce white society's exploitation and mistreatment of black musicians? Yes and no. Black musicians have traditionally had to rely on white patronage, however meagre. This film knows that, and leaves us in no doubt as to what Francois is doing when he elbows his way into Turner's life. The revival of Francois' commercial art career as he is inspired by the music, is just one of the wry comments on this theme. But within white society's general envy, trivialisation and exploitation of black culture there have always been characters like Francois, who genuinely love the music and are accepted by the musicians as long as they pay their way. Turner, and the film, take him firmly on those terms.



DEXTER GORDON STEPPING OUT IN SUNNIER DAYS IN PICCADILLY CIRCUS

Jazz and the atmosphere in which it is played are what *Round Midnight* is about. There is a lot of good music, and a sense that it belongs to these smoky scenes and above all to this man. Yet the audience is given no access to the work involved in formal innovation. Instead we are invited to appreciate the music through shots of others appreciating it, a classic voyeuristic device. The formidable list of musicians includes Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter and John McLaughlin, but they play an excessively subordinate role to Gordon.

Beautiful though his playing is, this leads to a soundtrack which is pleasing but unchallenging, a backdrop rather than a dynamic element.

The best thing about the film is Gordon himself. From someone who has never acted before this is an extraordinary performance, full of nuance and authority. There is some sentimentality but I was genuinely moved, perhaps in part by the thought that at last a great musician has acquired fame and recognition, albeit in a quite unexpected way.

John Glyn

● THE GELDOF STORY

Ego trip

Bob Geldof, Is That It?, Penguin Books, £3.95

By far the best thing about this autobiography is the gossip. Did you know that Paula Yates used to be a charlady? Or that Stewart Copeland's father was a CIA agent? Or that the man himself can't swim? The rest of the book is pretty trivial, especially Geldof's ruminations on world politics.

He had a conventional background, growing up in middle class Dublin as a fan of the Who, the Rolling Stones and the Small Faces. He hated his father and his school, and forged reports to avoid beatings. He became officially anti-establishment when, being the only one in his class to fail the leaving certificate (A-levels), he



fled to England, then Spain, then Canada. What with sex and drugs, it was all too much for him. If he was as self-conscious about it then as he is now, it's no wonder that he tried to kill himself by banging his head on a rusty nail: 'I had opened a Pandora's box inside myself, which should have remained tightly closed.'

The rusty nail lost out and he returned to Dublin to form the Boomtown Rats, the band the Clash called the Bay City Rollers of punk. John Peel weighed in with 'ageing hippy' and the NME said he was on a huge ego trip. Geldof was too quick on his feet for this lot. 'Pop music should be treated with the disrespect it deserves' he said; all he ever wanted to do was 'get rich, famous and laid'. He stuck to making money and meeting Paula Yates.

After watching the TV coverage of the Ethiopian famine in 1985 Geldof decided to set up Band Aid and release a charity record for Christmas. He called it Band Aid because he realised that famine relief was just like a sticking plaster. He believes the real answer is changes in government policy brought about by pressure group politics. That's why he talked to Mrs Thatcher about the butter mountain, and met American congressmen about aid operations which treble the price of food distribution. He had lunch with Teddy Kennedy, and dinner with Charles and Di ('a laugh'). He is famous for his impatience with

humbug, but his iconoclastic zeal doesn't get him beyond seeing the famine problem as one of bad management.

Live Aid was a considerable technological and financial achievement (it raised over £100m), and it showed the willingness of millions of young people to reject the cynical, selfish values of their elders. But if we want to run the world for more than a day we have to get beyond the politics of charity, which pose the problem as one of individual responsibility (and individual gratification); and beyond the politics of lobbying, which amount to pleading with our masters to run things in a more enlightened way.

Geldof got a glimpse of the answer in Addis Ababa when he drove under a concrete arch bearing the message 'Long live proletarian internationalism'. He observed casually 'if there really was any proletarian internationalism you wouldn't have millions dying here.' But the artful dodger has now become the court jester and there is no danger of him seeing the truth in his own remark.

Sarah Watson

● SPOOKS

A gentleman's profession

Philip Knightley, The Second Oldest Profession, Andre Deutsch, £14.95

Knightley is sure that spy scares are artificially orchestrated, and the furore over the British government's attempt to squash the tired revelations of ex-MI5 agent, Peter Wright, seems to prove his point. But Knightley constructs an artificial distinction between the espionage agencies and the establishment which they serve. He concludes that witch-hunts can only be understood as campaigns

generated by the spymasters themselves, motivated by the desire to protect their own organisations.

In fact the establishment itself periodically organises spy scares. They divert attention away from society's real problems, focus on imagined threats posed by subversives (either home-grown or foreign), and help present communism as an alien ideology. Hysteria against spies creates an atmosphere conducive to the introduction of repressive legislation. The authorities then use these laws against more mundane 'enemies within' like demonstrators or trade unionists.

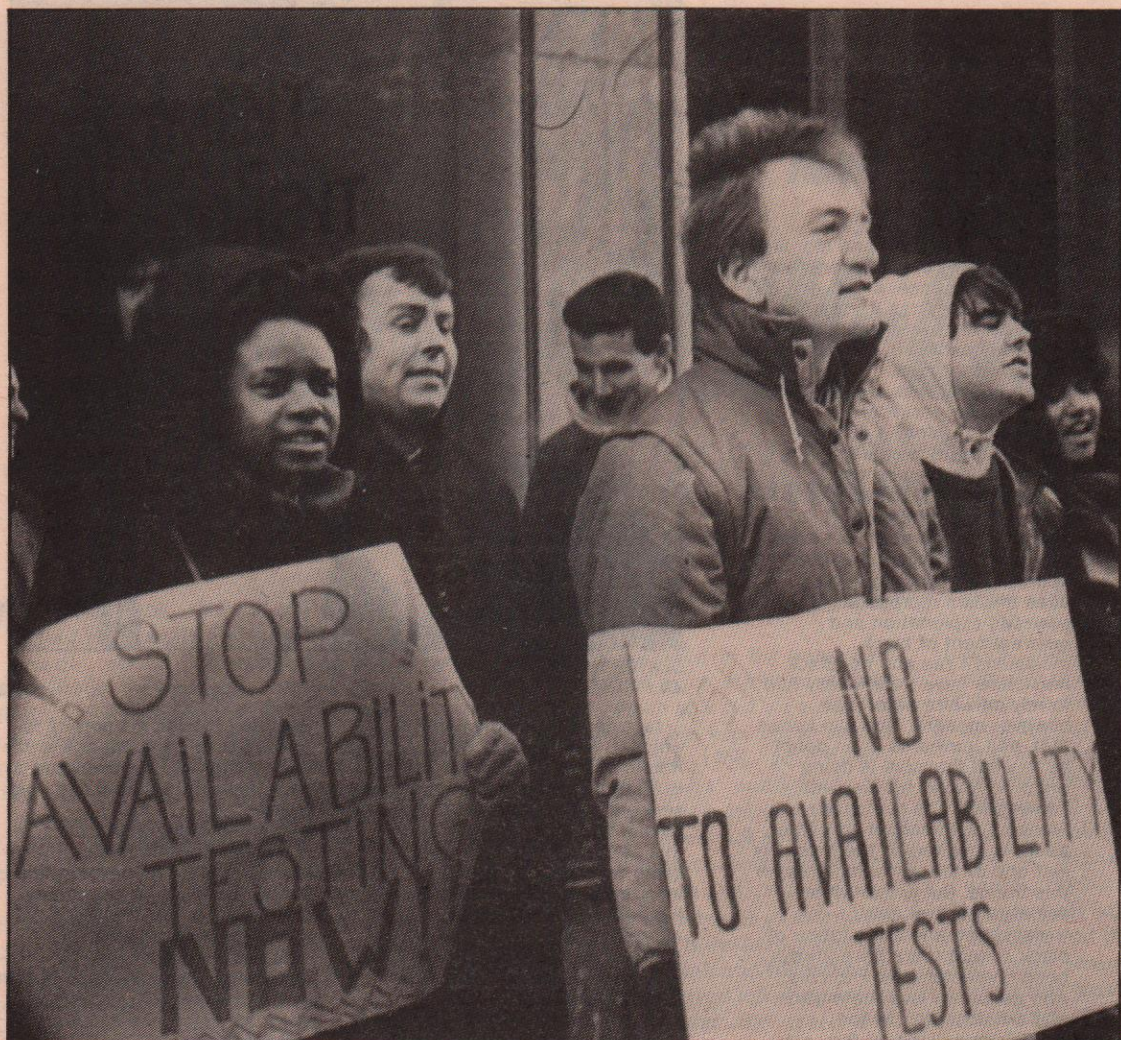
Knightley dismisses such concerns in his enthusiasm for targeting the spooks. For him, they are ineffective, expensive, unaccountable and provocative. He makes clear, however, that such criticisms are not to be taken as unpatriotic. Knightley is just as committed to the collection and coordination of useful information as any other member of the establishment. His beef is that spying is not the best way to do it: 'the intelligence community knows that open, published information, and that obtained through traditional diplomatic and other overt contacts, have proved this century by far the most useful source of military, political and

economic intelligence for both sides.'

Knightley's unworried desire to reform the establishment's espionage bureaucracies originates in the long tradition encapsulated in the adage 'Gentlemen don't open each other's letters.' But these days spying is essential to permit the continued survival of 'gentlemen' and their way of life.

Despite his naivety, Knightley provides a résumé of some of the more embarrassing mistakes made by both the British and US secret services. His material on the Second World War is particularly well presented. He explains that the British Special Operations Executive failed to 'set Europe alight' because it was unwilling to threaten Nazi rule if it meant precipitating revolution. The transformation of the 'anti-imperialist' American OSS into its CIA successor is easily the best chapter in the book.

Andy Clarkson



Pandora Anderson

Unemployed action

STAFF in 14 of London's dole offices hit back last week against the government's 'availability for work' tests. Civil and Public Services Association leaders disowned the strike. They see the worktests as a good opportunity to press for more staff and extra training. The government is happy to meet such union demands. 'Claimant advisers' have been appointed in most UBOs and training is underway.

CPSA members who don't want to do the Tories' dirty work of squeezing claimants

off the unemployment register will have to fight without official backing from their union, but they can rely on full support from claimants — many joined Monday's picket lines.

The TUC and Labour Party have failed to challenge the worktests. Apart from a short burst of synthetic outrage, Labour employment spokesperson John Prescott has done nothing — preferring to waffle on about bogus plans for cutting unemployment by a million. Locally the position is the same. Camden council are busy developing wordy programmes of 'job creation' and researching the 'needs of the unemployed'. The few commitments they make will hurt the unemployed more

than help them — for example their promise to create hundreds of 'trainee placements'. This means taking people on to do council jobs at a fraction of the going rate, with the sack as a reward at the end.

Just as sinister are Camden's plans for a survey of the long-term unemployed, which asks claimants to state their ethnic origin, detail how many interviews have been attended and explain why they have refused job offers. These questions are as bad as any in the worktest and complement the government's renewed attempts to bring in race checks to dole offices! Claimants need council surveys and phoney training like they need a bouncing girocheque.

Mick Gavan
Coordinator
Camden Unemployment
Action Centre

The Anderton Factor

THE evangelical outbursts of police chief James Anderton have dominated politics in Manchester throughout the last year — hardly surprising given the token opposition of our Labour council.

When he's not making speeches about homosexuals 'swirling about in a human cesspit of their own making', Anderton busies himself harassing young blacks in Manchester. The Labour council provides the police Peeping Toms with empty houses to spy on black people in areas like Moss Side. Perhaps this is what Labour councillors mean by 'establishing a direct relationship between the police and the local community'.

When Anderton made his anti-homosexual speech about Aids, the head of the council's equal opportunities committee asked the home office to discipline Anderton, because his remarks 'set back' the Tories' 'valuable' policy on Aids. When the Labour Party asks the racist,



anti-homosexual Tory government to deal with a racist, anti-homosexual policeman, it's no wonder that Anderton can say he's 'never felt such peace of mind before'.

In fact the poison words of Anderton and his cronies establish the climate for a wave of 'queer-bashing' similar to the violence faced by Britain's blacks. These attacks can only be beaten back if the arguments of Anderton are taken up head-on, and not swept under the carpet.

M Nidal
Manchester

Aids in Amsterdam

BEFORE Christmas I was interested to see Norman Fowler in Amsterdam on the news. He was observing the way in which the Dutch authorities are 'tackling the Aids problem' by issuing free needles to heroin addicts from mobile clinics. In fact this programme has been going on for years and has nothing to do with Aids. Its main function is to provide methadone (heroin substitute) as well as needles and advice, to heroin users — to combat criminality in Amsterdam.

On returning home to Holland I was surprised to find that Aids is not an issue. Although the percentage of people who have the virus is about the same as in Britain, the government and the media were treating the disease as a medical problem, that would be overcome through medical

To the point

A-team needed

I have just read the article on Ezaz Hayat, the East London shopowner (9 January). The police will not defend him from the racist attacks of the Croydon Road Gang because their role in the present system is to protect and support the policies of the bosses. Isn't it time that we changed our tactics in such cases? The normal procedure is to call a public meeting in the hope that some of the people who attend it would support workers' defence. In most cases the anti-racists who attend are full of good intentions. But when the thought of violent confrontation appears they back down. I do not believe in unnecessary violence, but sometimes it is necessary. Why not have a pool of people willing to fight if the need arises — as in this case?

Martin Jones
Middlesbrough

Judith Ward

Vaughan asks why the Irish Freedom Movement handbook doesn't list Judith Ward as an Irish political prisoner, and wonders if there is a political reason for this (letters, 16 January). There isn't, it was a mistake for which we apologise. Judith Ward was framed for the M62 coach-bombing, which killed nine soldiers and three civilians in February 1974. In the midst of all of the current debate about the way that the Guildford Four and Birmingham Six were framed in British courts, her case reminds us that there are other, silent, victims of British oppression. We must not forget them. She will definitely be included in the third edition of *The Irish War*, which is now being put together.

Fiona Foster
Irish Freedom Movement

Macdonalds shake-down

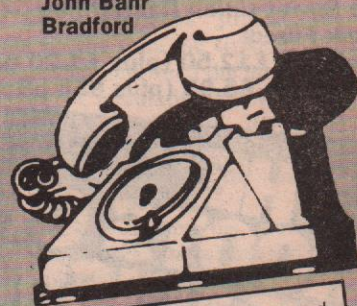
I need information about Macdonalds. I work there and my friends and I have many grievances. We'd like to expose the way that the whole Macdonalds' machine revolves. If you have ever worked for them or know anything about their track record, profits, etc, please send this information to the next step so it can be sent to me. Thank you.

Sharon
Yorkshire

Culture & class

A left-wing NUT member I know says he opposes multi-cultural education because most cultures are reactionary, especially the Muslim culture in relation to the way women are viewed. Muslim culture was mainly the culture of the landlords and rulers in India and was promoted to confuse and make easier the subjugation of the peasants. It therefore, he argues, has a reactionary ruling class content to it, and he includes all other cultures in this. Although he opposes multi-cultural education for very different reasons to those of someone like Ray Honeyford, I think his position is equally reactionary. But I'm not sure how to take him up. Can *tns* help?

John Bahr
Bradford



If you would like to respond to any of these points, raise questions or comment on what you have read in the next step you can write to *tns*, BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX. Or phone the letters page over the weekend on 01-729 3771.

research. The people I spoke to, of varying political backgrounds, were disgusted at the way the British government has used Aids to promote its own morality.

I would be interested to know why you think this is. Surely it would be just as powerful a weapon in their hands as it has proved to be in the hands of their British counterparts?

Wilma Geerts
Holland

North v South

THE only growth industry in Liverpool is all these people coming up here to make films about how awful it is. Have you noticed how all the dickheads in films and on TV are played by scousers? Everybody knows it's not easy to get a job anywhere these days. People don't believe the myths about rich

Southerners. I've got more in common with an ordinary Cockney than the rich people in my own city. It's the politicians who are promoting the North v South divide.

But when Tebbit says get on your bike and go South for work, it makes you think why are the jobs down there and not up North? The Labour Party is no better. It seems to me they just want to move jobs from the South up to the North. That's no way to replace unemployment — it's just spreading the misery. Labour should be arguing for more jobs for everyone.

Labour says it's worried about the North, but when our council fought to get the millions back that the Tories stole from us, Kinnock wouldn't back us. He's worried Labour will get a bad name, and that will cost him middle class votes in the South — that's all he's interested in.

Pete Donnelly
Liverpool

Building The Red Front

The open letter in this week's centre pages outlines why we think that left-wing groups and individuals should stop supporting Labour and start organising around a platform of basic working class demands. We want to build support for *The Red Front* and make it part of the debate on the general election that now dominates British politics. Whenever the election comes, we want as many left wingers as possible to stand as candidates on this platform for working class unity.

FOCUS

Most left wingers are resigned to supporting the Labour Party. They are unenthusiastic about Labour policies, but can see no credible alternative. The Revolutionary Communist Party has taken on the job of building such an alternative. We have stood candidates in local and parliamentary elections, on a platform similar to that outlined in this week's paper. Our aim has been to give the working class its own voice. This task is now more urgent than ever, as Kinnock's Labour Party moves further and faster to the right and the needs of ordinary people are dropped off the political agenda. Yet we recognise that the RCP does not have the influence to pursue this vital project alone. Thus we are asking those who are worried about the future of the working class to pool their resources in a joint campaign.

In launching *The Red Front* we hope to focus discussion on what the

working class needs, and raise it above any sectarian wrangling about narrow party interests. If it is to stand a chance of emerging intact from the struggles of the late eighties, the working class needs a campaign around the basic demands for a better society. This vital concern cannot be the preserve of any organisation. In the battle for working class survival today, our job must be to get as many individuals and organisations as possible fighting for *The Red Front*.

Within *The Red Front*, the RCP will run as many candidates as possible in the general election. We still aim to convince people that, if they agree with the demands we put forward, they should help build a new party to fight for them. But, at a time when the Labour Party and trade unions are in headlong retreat before the Tories, it is vital to pull together everybody who is prepared to organise for the immediate defence of the working class. A campaign based on a commitment to fight for these demands will benefit the working class, whether or not those involved decide to support the RCP. It will provide a focus for bringing together scattered anti-capitalist forces around a coherent platform.

BLOC

This is not another of the endless stream of 'unity' initiatives thrown up by the left. We are not asking different groups and individuals to fudge their political differences and form a new organisation with a mish-mash of

policies. We are not proposing a phoney 'united' party of the left, but a tactical bloc among different political trends which share a commitment to the cause of the working class. The demands of the platform are simply the minimum which the working class can afford to campaign on.

OFFENSIVE

It's important that RCP supporters understand our attitude to this campaign. The basic demands of the platform are not open to compromise — they're dictated by the needs of workers and cannot be negotiated away. But *The Red Front* will not be 'under the control of the RCP'. We can't and won't control *Red Front* candidates. Providing they argue for our common platform, they will be free to embellish it in whatever way their politics dictate. We're confident that providing there is general agreement on the central demands, the working class will hear a message broadly to its advantage. The left has been on the defensive for too long. It's time to move on to the offensive, and to do that we need to rally our forces.

All supporters should think now about who might give their support to this initiative. We need to find people who are prepared to support *The Red Front*. This means we need to get it discussed in as many forums as possible. Some supporters have already managed to get the issue of support on to their trade union branch agendas. Others have approached left wingers at work or college, and got them to

take copies of the platform to discuss with their comrades or workmates. As the election draws closer we'll need to contact individuals who might be prepared to stand as *Red Front* candidates.

During the next couple of months RCP branches will be organising to raise *The Red Front* in any forum where socialists gather. If you can help, get in touch on (01) 729 0414, and start getting groups and individuals to fill in the box below.

Anne Burton



I/we agree to support the demands of **THE RED FRONT** — a platform for working class unity.

NAME

ADDRESS

ORGANISATION

TELEPHONE

Send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

Diary

EDINBURGH: Tuesday 27 January, 7.30pm. Public meeting; Fighting for a woman's right to work. With sacked Ardbride worker Anna Druggen and a speaker from Edinburgh branch, Lothian Claimants' Union. Trades council, 12 Picardy Place (opposite Playhouse)

GREENWICH: Anybody interested in canvassing for the RCP candidate in the forthcoming by-election should contact Rob Knight on (01) 729 0414

LEEDS: Thursday 22 January, 7.30pm. Public meeting; Race checks are racist — back the CPSA strikers. Trades Club, Saville Mount, Chapeltown

LIVERPOOL: Thursday 29 January, 7pm. George Roucou defence campaign mobilising committee. Phone Vanessa Young on (061) 234 3168 for details

LONDON: Thursday 29 January, 7.30pm. All-London supporters' group; Why we say *Troops out now!* Holborn Library, Theobalds Road (Holborn tube)

▲ Tuesday 3 February, 7.30pm. New Living Marxism series starts. This week: Freedom and liberation in Marx. University of London Union, Malet Street WC1 (Goodge St tube)

MANCHESTER: Saturday 24 January, 11am. George Roucou defence campaign motorcade through Greater Manchester. Start city centre outside Chelsea Girl, Piccadilly Gardens

NEWHAM: Thursday 12 February, 7.30pm. Public meeting; Racists on the attack — stop them! St John's Church Institute, 27 Romford Road, Stratford

PONTEFRAC: Thursday 22 January, 7.30pm. Open meeting; Stop police revenge on miners. Railway Pub near Monkhill Station

SHEFFIELD: Tuesday 27 January, 6.30pm. Lobby of trades council; Fight for Irish freedom! Trades and Labour Club, Duke Street

▲ Friday 30 January, 7.30pm. Bloody Sunday public debate: Irish Freedom Movement, Workers' Power and Sheffield Republicans. Raynor Lounge, Sheffield University

SHEPHERD'S BUSH: Monday 26 January, 7.30pm. Public debate; Ireland — is peace possible? Clive Soley, Labour MP and John Fitzpatrick, RCP. Shepherd's Bush Village Hall, Bulwer Street, W12 (corner of Wood Lane and Shepherd's Bush Green)

Become
an RCP
supporter!

- ☐ I want more information about the RCP
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☐ I want to sell *tns*
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I want to help set up a new branch in

Name

Address

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the next step

BRITISH TROOPS OUT OF IRELAND

*Anybody who wants to see
an end to the Irish War
should march with the
Irish Freedom Movement
in Sheffield next Saturday*

Last week the news was full of heart-warming pictures of friendly squaddies transporting emergency supplies of food and fuel to Kent villages cut off by snowdrifts. The media likes to take such opportunities to show that the Army really are 'our boys'. But in occupied Ireland, the men in khaki show their true colours. When they visit nationalist communities, they bring machine guns rather than milk and leave behind corpses instead of sacks of coal.

Fifteen years ago next week, Britain paratroopers shot dead 14 unarmed Irishmen on Bloody Sunday in Derry. The massacre convinced many nationalists that the only way to bring peace to their country was to drive out the British troops. A lot of blood has flowed under the bridge since then, most of it Irish.

Loyalist MP Peter Robinson may have complained bitterly about the pathetic £15 000 fine he got in Dublin last week, for leading a Loyalist mob across the Border to attack nationalist villages. But what if the situation had been reversed, and Robinson had been an Irish republican caught crossing the Border to take on the Crown forces of occupation in the North? His sentence would not have been measured in pounds, but in years in jail or in bullets in the back.

Last month a Derry coroner held an inquest into the deaths of two young IRA volunteers, Danny Doherty and Willie Fleming, shot dead two years earlier by the

British SAS. The jury heard that the republicans had one hand gun, which never left the holdall in which it was carried. The SAS assassination squad blew them apart without warning, using five pistols, three submachine guns and two assault rifles.

The jury concluded that the SAS unit 'should have tried to arrest' Doherty and Fleming, 'in order to save their lives'. But saving the lives of those fighting for Irish freedom was the last thing on the minds of 'our boys' as they hid behind bushes, bristling with guns, on that day in Derry. They and the 30 000 other members of the British security forces are there to silence any Irish man, woman or child who refuses to hail them as conquering heroes.

The lash of British injustice does not spare the backs of Irish people living in Britain. This week home secretary Douglas Hurd finally reopened the case of the Birmingham Six, who have spent 12 years in jail after being framed for the pub bombings. Behind them stand the Guildford Four and others who have been stitched up by a legal system under which to be Irish is to be guilty.

The only way to end the dirty war against the Irish is to campaign for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. The British presence is responsible for all the suffering and bigotry that afflict the Irish people. Without the British war machine, there would be no war in Ireland. The experience of repression and injustice will ensure that there are always more Danny Dohertys and Willie Flemings ready to step forward and fight for Ireland's independence. The job of all those in Britain who support real democracy is to ensure that they do not fight alone.

Next Saturday in Sheffield, the Irish Freedom Movement will be out in strength on the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration march. March with us, and join the campaign to drive the British Army out from behind the bushes of Irish cities, and to win self-determination for the Irish people.

MARCH

AGAINST BRITISH MURDER IN IRELAND

Bloody Sunday demo

Saturday 31 January

SHEFFIELD

Transport details from (01) 729 0414