

tms
the next step

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Kinnock: out-Thatchering Thatcher? pages 6 and 7

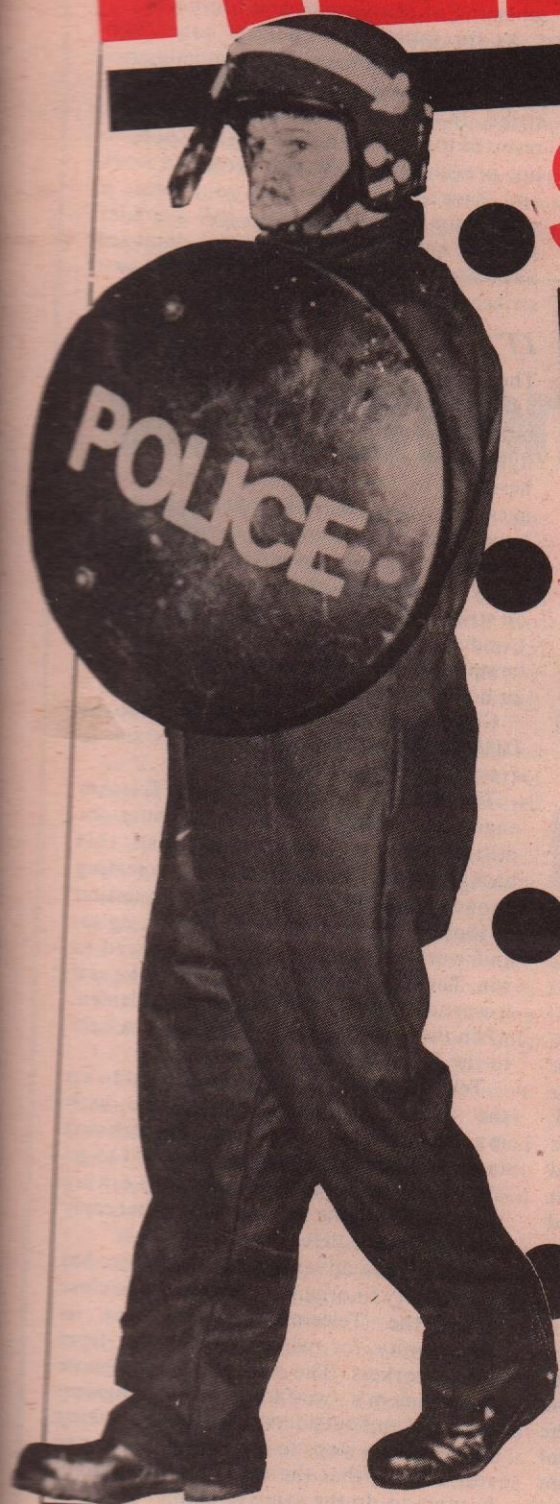
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REPRESSION



- **Secret police raid BBC**
- **Armed police cruise motorways**
- **Police in rubber gloves raid gay pub**
- **Riot police attack picket lines**

Repression

The Special Branch raid on the BBC was a farcical waste of time, but it's the thought that counts. The political police will find nothing subversive in the crates of films and documents about the *Secret Society* series which they carted away in Glasgow. But the raid will help to strengthen the climate of repression and censorship which now dominates political discussion in Britain. The authorities have come to rely on the power of the police baton, the court order and the ministerial diktat to keep their version of democratic government going.

The capitalist system is crumbling into a ruin of mass unemployment, financial crises and industrial exhaustion. It is taking with it the framework of polite conventions and political compromises through which the establishment ruled in the past. Now the authorities often have to resort to violence and victimisation to stay on top. The police control centre frequently displaces the cabinet committee room as the place where government policy is put into practice.

The last week has brought fresh evidence of the menace the modern police pose to anybody who steps out of line. Apart from the BBC raid, we have seen armed police banging away at car thieves on the M1. The practice of shooting joy-riders now seems to have been imported from Northern Ireland to the Midlands. Meanwhile police in rubber gloves have turned over a London gay pub, and the government has threatened new powers to back up the sort of police savagery that recently hit the picket line at Wapping. In their desperation to dig in and maintain some order, the Tories are making the legal system and the police force drop the pretence of neutrality and concentrate on their most important job — organising the violence of the ruling class.

The government is trying to justify the build-up of repression by running a propaganda campaign about subversives and extremists. At its most ludicrous, this ideological offensive targets pathetic establishment figures like Alasdair Milne, forced to resign as BBC director general last week after sustained Tory allegations of left-wing bias in the corporation's coverage. At its most dangerous, the Tory campaign accuses the victims of the system of conspiring against the public interest.

Black youth from Broadwater Farm have been dragged into the Old Bailey and accused of deliberately planning a murderous riot. This serves to cover up the coordinated and racist regime of police repression on the estate which sparked the spontaneous revolt in October 1985. Police, press and politicians have blamed 'outside

agitators' for organising the trouble at Wapping. This distracts attention from the military-style manoeuvres which the riot cops used to rampage through the print workers' demonstration.

With one twist of Tory logic, the police aggressors are cast in the role of victims who deserve public support in their battle to preserve British standards. Just to drive home the point, the gutter press this week dredged up another story about the Queen being chased by 'a lunatic' — a traditional device for mobilising right-wing opinion behind demands for tougher law and order measures.

The Tory propaganda campaign has swept the board of British politics. Every leading opposition spokesman now accepts that the nation is beset by 'enemies within' who must be stamped on. Labour leaders objected to the excesses of the BBC raid. But as they had already accepted the government's right to ban the offending spy satellite documentary, their complaints came across as petty quibbling. On every political issue, Kinnock's party now competes with Thatcher in an effort to become the true champion of law and order (see pages 6 and 7).

The leaders of the labour movement who stand behind Kinnock are no better. TUC chief Norman Willis has come out of retirement to blame the Wapping violence on 'undesirable elements' among the demonstrators. If ever an element was undesirable in the trade unions, it is Willis who sits in Congress House and condemns striking workers for daring to fight for their jobs.

The degree to which Tory ideas about law and order now influence the thinking of the opposition has important consequences. It means we should expect no respite from the forces of repression, even if Thatcher is displaced from Downing Street. Whichever servant of the system sits in the driving seat, the state machine will serve the interests of the capitalist class.

The only way we can cope with the legal clampdown is to organise our own forces as the Tories have organised theirs. We need to bring together everybody who is not taken in by establishment propaganda to take a stand against every infringement of our rights. Campaigning against state repression is a central theme of *The Red Front*, a platform of working class demands laid out on the centre pages of this week's paper. We want to make *The Red Front* a focus for uniting people who recognise the police, and all their political supporters, as a threat to the future of the working class.

Terry Waite

The disappearance of Terry Waite is the occasion for another outburst of anti-Arab racism and sabre-rattling in the West. British dignitaries encourage us to pray for Waite's release from the hands of the Beirut 'barbarians'. American secretary of state George Shultz brands Lebanon 'a plague-infested place from the Middle Ages' and threatens to take military action against those holding Western hostages. The fact that the Western powers are holding whole Middle Eastern nations to ransom goes unmentioned.

America, Britain, France and the rest of the slaveholding states are responsible for a long list of wars, invasions and massacres in the Middle East. They have built and armed

the Israeli state to crush the Palestinian people. They have supported stooge dictators from the Shah of Iran to the sheikhs of Saudi Arabia. When their control is challenged, they have lashed out with attacks like last year's US/British air-strike on Libya. Now they are using the capture of a handful of Westerners as the pretext for another bout of Arab-bashing, while American warships loom up on the Middle Eastern skyline.

Whatever fate has befallen Waite, it is nothing compared to what the charlatans showing concern for him in Washington and Whitehall have done to the peoples of the Middle East. We should accept no excuse for more military interference in Arab affairs.



OUTSIDE AGITATORS AT WAPPING: BOSSES BUSSED IN RIOT POLICE TO BREAK THE STRIKE

Saboteurs and conspirators

BT management has warned strikers not to break the rules. Meanwhile, the employers have played dirty in their determination to win the dispute

British Telecom managers were screaming 'sabotage' at engineers before the strike even began. The employers and the media have used the row over violence at Wapping to put pressure on the BT strikers, warning them to abide by the law and to keep 'outsiders' and 'extremists' off their picket lines. The National Communications Union has responded by condemning sabotage and stressing that its strike is non-political and moderate. Local officials and more conservative strikers have thrown other trade unionists and left-wing paper sellers off their pickets and protests, for fear of damaging the dispute's respectable image.

Nobody likes the idea of being branded a 'mindless militant' or pilloried in the press as a 'picket-line bully boy'. But the union's insistence that it won't play dirty puts the strikers at a dangerous disadvantage — because the employers certainly will pull whatever dirty tricks they think will win them the dispute.

Sabotage, illegality, conspiracy and intimidation are the hallmarks of management's tactics in the BT dispute and every other big industrial struggle.

Telecom chiefs acted as professional provocateurs to set up the strike. First they came up with a package of harsh new working conditions. When the engineers rejected it, management hit them below the belt with a combination punch of suspensions, compulsory loyalty oaths and mass lock-outs. They left the workers with no option but to strike. During the dispute, BT has kept up its underhand tactics. It has accused strikers of 'criminal' interference with phone lines, while it disregards the rules and taps the phones of NCU leaders.

STRIKE-BREAKERS

The NCU is fond of saying that this is its first national strike and it has always enjoyed good relations with the employers. But this is not the first time that BT management has proved willing to flout the law and the conventions of industrial relations to get its way. In 1983, on the night BT began a lock-out in London, it kicked out all the engineers at 1am, chained the doors and cut off union telephones. It wasn't legal but it was effective.

Time and again when workers are forced to take industrial action to defend their jobs or conditions, their employers resort to skulduggery and sabotage. A glance at the insider accounts of the miners' strike or the Wapping dispute reveals the conspiratorial character of management tactics. Both Ian MacGregor of the coal board and Rupert Murdoch of News International plotted with

scab organisations, spies and state agencies to undermine the strikers' efforts. We can be sure that the hard men among BT managers have picked up a few tips from the successful scheming of MacGregor and Murdoch.

As for sabotage, employers have often been willing to damage their own industries if it brings longer-term benefits in beating a strike. In the past coal bosses have often resorted to flooding pits during a dispute, to put pressure on strikers to return to work and 'save our industry and your jobs'. It would not be beyond BT to pull a similar stunt. It has already claimed that damaged lines are losing contracts that could cost strikers their jobs.

IT'S NOT CRICKET

The campaign by employers and media against 'outsiders' getting involved in industrial disputes is the richest piece of hypocrisy of all. Management never hesitates to seek assistance from outside agencies to help smash a strike. Scab armies have been a feature of strikes from Grunwick in the seventies to Wapping today. When Telecom clerical workers went on strike last week, employment agencies in London were offering jobless people 'temporary positions' with BT at £6 an hour.

Government agencies from the police to the DHSS now weigh in on the employers' side in every big industrial contest.

The debate about whether Telecom engineers should act as moderates or militants must be set against this background. It is not a matter of creating phoney principles either way. It is a question of looking at what the opposition is up to, and working out the response required to win. There is no point in running a strike as if it were a cricket match between gentlemen, when the employers are treating it as a fight to the finish between bitter enemies.

Telecom strikers have no choice but to up the action if they are to cope with management's aggressive, underhand tactics. If the employers are prepared to go all the way and use any weapon they can lay their hands on, the strikers must either reply in kind or face defeat.

The biggest advantage the workforce has is its ability to organise a campaign to close down the Telecom network, and its opportunity for winning solidarity from other workers. The strikers should ignore management's two-faced warnings against sabotage and outsiders, and set about taking the necessary steps to get a result. They can rest assured that the employers would not hesitate to do the same to them.

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UNITE CLERICAL WORKERS AND ENGINEERS

No time to lose



STRIKING ENGINEERS NEED TO UP THE ACTION AND STAVE OFF PASSIVITY

As we go to press the British Telecom dispute has reached a crucial stage, with the strikers losing some of their initial impetus. The only solution is to up the action — now

Telecom workers shocked BT boss Iain Vallance with their determined rejection of his harsh pay-and-productivity package and their willingness to strike. But the strikers have now lost the element of surprise. Every day that passes without a big breakdown in the phone system strengthens both management's hand and the moderate mood among some strikers.

Clerical workers have gone back to work, as instructed by the executive of their section of the National Communications Union.

This has added to the problems worrying many of the 100 000 striking engineers. After a fortnight on the picket line outside exchanges that have kept working, they are having second thoughts about 'indefinite' action.

The strike's failure to bite BT hard early on tends to endorse the conservative view that complete victory might not be possible, and makes more strikers open to accepting some sort of compromise deal.

Regional differences among the engineers threaten to fragment the dispute. In

Bradford, Leicester and Bristol, discussion in mass meetings has focused on the possibility of a quick settlement. Other branches, such as London North Central Internal, are preparing to dig in for a war of attrition. But everybody is apprehensive about the outcome. The best way to change the mood among strikers is to take some positive steps to put management on the defensive in the next few days.

SHOCK TACTICS

Marathon strikes by the miners and print workers have helped to create a labour movement myth that the longer a strike

refused to organise a campaign of effective action to disrupt BT's operations. Instead he has left his members on token pickets while he pursues secret negotiations with the employers.

Golding has no stomach for a ruthless reply to BT's aggression, because he shares the employers' aims of making Telecom efficient and profitable. He gives endless assurances that he is willing to talk about management's punitive flexibility proposals. But if profit-conscious employers insist that flexibility means 12-hour shifts without payment for overtime, what can BT workers

One union

Management has exploited the divisions created by the federal structure of the National Communications Union. The NCU's 140 000 members are divided into two sections: engineers (110 000) and clerical workers (130 000). Each section has its own national executive, which negotiates separately with management.

BT has made across-the-board attacks on both, but union officials are treating management's attacks as unconnected incidents.

When BT suspended engineers, clerical workers took solidarity action. Thousands voted for an all-out strike, but the clerical executive would only give official backing to a three-day stoppage in support of their separate pay claim. Management moved to intimidate clerical workers by suspending them and threatening that they would only be re-employed on short-term contracts.

Last Friday, the clerical executive instructed its members to return to work. Some branches, such as London West End and Westminster, voted to stay out. But by Monday they saw that they were isolated and went back.

The antics of the clerical executive have caused widespread confusion among clerical workers and their engineering colleagues. Last week, when the strike should have been gathering momentum, everybody was worrying about who was going back, and when. At the start of this week, thousands of clerical workers obeyed official instructions to cross picket lines. Some engineers said it didn't matter. But despite this bravado, the policy of the clerical executive has made a

...the attacks on their rights. The Womborne 12 are members of the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement in London and the Midlands. They were arrested, abused and held for a week over Christmas, after protesting outside the home of a Tory council leader who suggested gassing gays as a cure for Aids. They have launched a defence campaign to fight their case. They, and every other victim of the Aids panic, must be supported.

RTION

than never

...nus will be on doctors to prove that the foetus is less than 24 weeks old. In practice doctors will not be prepared to perform abortions on women who are more than 20 or at the very most 22 weeks pregnant. It is not possible to be certain of dates and doctors are not keen to risk prosecution.

Very few abortions are performed after 24 weeks — only about 30 in 1985 — but around 1500 abortions are performed at between 20 and 24 weeks. If the bishop gets his way thousands of women will be forced into unwanted pregnancies.

Under pressure from the pro-life lobby, many doctors now argue that it is commonplace for babies born after only 24 weeks to survive, thanks to improvements in neo-natal intensive care. They are using exaggerated claims for medical technology to justify their acquiescence to the anti-abortion lobby.

The main effect of higher standards of neo-natal care has been to give babies born after 28 weeks of pregnancy a better chance of survival. The mortality rate and the

Court Protest:

Monday 23 February, 11am, Seisdon Magistrates Court, Seisdon near Wolverhampton. Transport from Birmingham, Coventry, Bristol, Leicester, Oxford, Nottingham, London. Phone (01) 729 3771 for details.

incidence of serious handicaps such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation and deafness among babies born after 28 weeks have been significantly reduced by modern techniques. Before 28 weeks both mortality and the incidence of handicap remain very high. Before 26 weeks the outlook is grim, even in the best centres. Science provides no justification for an earlier limit than 28 weeks.

THE LEGAL LIMITS

Neither common sense nor science provide the rationale for the latest attack on abortion rights.

Late abortions have become a subject of debate in a climate where the establishment is keen to elevate the virtues of marriage, motherhood, and family life. The threat of further legal curbs on abortion rights is part of a broader offensive to reassert traditional moral values.

Women need access to late abortions for a variety of reasons — because often serious abnormalities in the foetus are only diagnosed after 20 weeks, because of inefficiency and bigotry in the NHS, because of indecision and failure to identify pregnancy at an early stage. As long as these problems prevail we have to oppose every attempt to restrict the legal limit for abortion. We should also recognise the Bill as a first step in another attempt to make big changes in the abortion laws. Fighting for free abortion on demand is more important than ever in the current climate of reaction.

notorious that judges lead sheltered lives, but I can't for the life of me see what the significance of that package is.' It was a fitting testimony to the manufactured farce. There was a touch of irony too in inspector Colin White's statement that Payne was 'obsessed with sex'. The people with the real hang-ups print editorials backing bigoted police chief James Anderton's crusade to restore moral standards next to articles that indulge their readers in steamy sex scenes from Streatham.

Since she first appeared in the 'sex for luncheon vouchers' trial some years back, the media have set Payne up as a sort of alter ego to Mary Whitehouse and a celebrity in her own right. She is depicted as a 53-year old 'golden-hearted whore', a symbol of the good times had by 'good-time gals'.

The press portrayal of the swinging lifestyle of today's prostitute is a far cry from the reality of standing in a mini-skirt on street corners in sub-zero temperatures, touting for enough custom to survive, risking assault from punters and harassment from police. The media seeks to glamorise a trade that is the most glaring example of the degradation of women in capitalist society. There is something particularly sordid about passing off prostitution as one big party in the week that two prostitutes were murdered on the same stretch in West London.

Rachel Applewaithe and Marina Monti, both in their twenties, were found dead in Bayswater and Queensway. The body of Applewaithe was found on the Monday dumped in a garage with severe head injuries, Monti was found strangled on wasteland on Sunday. All the press had to say was that the killer had stolen the footwear from both bodies, and that the women operated 'at the lower end' of the West End market, charging £20 to £30 a time. They certainly weren't as low as those who charge 18 to 25 pence a time for newspapers which mix moral sermons with voyeurism, and jump for joy when the murder of two women gives them a chance to write stories about a 'kinky-boots killer'.

BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION MARCH

PUT IRISH FREEDOM FIRST

Saturday's Bloody Sunday commemoration march in Sheffield was a wasted opportunity for showing solidarity with the struggle for Irish freedom

We don't expect anything from the British but internment, unemployment, showtrials, mass house raids, plastic bullets and Bloody Sundays.' Tony Doherty's father was one of 14 anti-internment demonstrators shot and killed by British paratroopers in Derry on Bloody Sunday, 1972. On Saturday, Tony addressed a demonstration in Sheffield to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the massacre. 'The machinery for making more Bloody Sundays is well-oiled and in perfect working order,' he warned.

KILLING MACHINE

Brenda Downes knows from bitter experience that the British killing machine is always ready for action. The Royal Ulster Constabulary staged another Bloody Sunday in August 1984, murdering her husband John with a plastic bullet at a Belfast rally against internment. She told Saturday's rally about the British cover-up which followed her husband's killing: 'My husband's murderer was acquitted. He didn't even have to give evidence in court. The only witnesses were police witnesses, and I wasn't even informed that the trial was taking place.'

Hearing such first-hand reports from the Irish war-zone always brings home the desperate need to build a movement in Britain that can support the beleaguered Irish.

Yet only 1500 people were on the march through Sheffield, 600 of whom were Irish Freedom Movement supporters. The Bloody Sunday demo, the biggest Irish solidarity march of the year, was reduced to a small and ineffective affair by the manoeuvring of



HANDS UP FOR IRISH FREEDOM: ON THE MARCH AGAINST BRITISH MURDER

the organisers.

The march was organised by a handful of groups in and around the Labour Party, most importantly the Labour Committee on Ireland and the Troops Out Movement. From the first, they set out to make the march a low-profile, token effort that would cause minimum embarrassment to the Labour Party leadership.

The LCI and TOM set up mobilising and

organising committees which formally excluded groups outside their own Labour Party circle. The banned organisations included the Irish Freedom Movement, which led the largest contingent on last year's Bloody Sunday march. The mobilising committee did little to mobilise anybody for Saturday's demo. Its posters came out late, few were put up, and those that were somehow ended up on top of Irish Freedom



SHOWING SOLIDARITY IN SHEFFIELD

Movement posters advertising the Sheffield march.

The disorganising antics of the LCI and TOM ensured that Saturday's march was miserably small.

TAKING A STAND

Even then, the march organisers barred anti-imperialist groups from the rally platform. The Irish Freedom Movement was forced to take a stand and put solidarity work before such sectarianism. Our supporters protested loudly until Phil Murphy was finally allowed to speak for the IFM. He pledged our unconditional support for the freedom struggle in Ireland, and our determination to ensure that 'the cause of Ireland takes precedence over the narrow interests of the Labour Party.'

The Irish Freedom Movement takes no pleasure in being the biggest contingent on small marches, or in having to demand the right to speak as if we were non-members at an exclusive club meeting. But we cannot allow the petty concerns of Labour Party supporters to overrule the crying need to build an active movement in solidarity with Ireland's fight for self-determination.

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Time and again when workers are forced to take industrial action to defend their jobs or conditions, their employers resort to skulduggery and sabotage. A glance at the insider accounts of the miners' strike or the Wapping dispute reveals the conspiratorial character of management tactics. Both Ian MacGregor of the coal board and Rupert Murdoch of News International plotted with

hospital. Walter blamed doctors for not telling them Trevor was sick. If Trevor's injuries were internal this might make sense. But by the time Trevor arrived half-naked at Brixton prison, every inch of his body was covered in blood and bruises.

NOT HUMAN

As proof of their good character the police now claim they dropped the charges against Trevor on 'humanitarian' grounds, and dismiss complaints about police conduct as 'a mischievous attempt to stir up anti-police feeling in the community'. But there is nothing 'humanitarian' about Stoke Newington police, and black people don't need anybody to get them going about police brutality. Danny Rama, a black printer arrested at Wapping, missed the human touch of Stoke Newington police when he ended up on his back with multiple injuries on the floor of a police van last year. He was the latest in a long line of black victims of police beatings.

SCARRED FOR LIFE

Trevor Monerville's shaved hair is starting to grow back over the eight-inch scar on his skull. His brain is swollen and bruised. Scabs now cover the cuts over his body. The bruises, evidence of blows from head to toe, are starting to fade. A damaged shoulder and swollen leg are on the mend. His double vision and slurred speech are slowly improving. He is still partially paralysed.

Trevor Monerville is coming back to life, but the people who left him for dead are still at large.

The family and friends of Trevor Monerville need all the support they can get to find out the truth. Come to their first public meeting on Tuesday 17 February at 7.30pm, council chambers, Hackney town hall, Mare Street, E9. Get in touch with the campaign at 42 Brooksby's Walk, London E9 or phone (01) 985 6878.

Joan Phillips

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POLICE RAID PUB IN RUBBER GLOVES

If you're gay, you're nicked

Police are using the Aids panic to step up their persecution of homosexuals.
Don Milligan reports

Rubber gloves have joined riot shields and plastic bullets in the 'protective' arsenal of the Metropolitan Police. The police wore the surgical handgear the other Saturday night, when they raided the Vauxhall Tavern, a big gay bar in South London.

They threw out the customers and arrested 11 for 'drunkenness'. Nobody believes that the Met would send out 30 officers, three vans and a coach to pick people up for being drunk in a pub during licensed drinking hours. Nor did those assaulted and arrested include any of the imaginary 15-year olds whom police claim were drinking and watching drag acts at 1am. The rubber gloves gave the law's real game away.

The police were there to harass adult homosexuals as potential 'gay plague-carriers' and to rubber-stamp the idea that 'Gays=Aids=Death'.

'They just burst in and commandeered the place,' said one of the arrested drinkers, Dennis. 'They went up to the dressing room and ordered the performers out. They announced that the pub was closed and ordered everybody outside. I was arrested because I wanted to finish my drink. My friend tried to stop them pushing me around and they arrested him, too. They had a coach waiting outside to take us away in. We were kept in the cells for two and a half hours. When we were released I had to go to hospital with injuries that I got from being dragged along in an armlock.'

BIGOTS IN BLUE

Another victim, Ken, ended up limping away with blood pouring down his leg. 'I've just had a cartilage operation on my knee. When the police bus got to Kennington they were forcing us to walk in straight lines to see if we were drunk or not. Because I was limping they decided to tear off the plaster and dressing from my knee to see whether my limp was genuine. More of them put on rubber gloves in the police station.'

The raid on the Vauxhall comes at a time when the local murder squad are pinning up posters about the killing of John Noles, a gay man beaten to death with a broken bottle in Kennington Park. It shows that, for all their



POLICE BROUGHT THE CURTAINS DOWN ON DRAG DANCERS AT THE VAUXHALL TAVERN

mock concern about attacks on homosexuals, the police are operating hand-in-rubber glove with the freelance 'queer-bashers'. Manchester's bigoted police chief James Anderton may be a little too loud for the authorities' liking. But his message — that lesbians and gays deserve all they get — is being acted upon across the country.

The prejudices whipped up by the Aids hysteria pose more of a threat to gays than the disease itself.

Militant lesbians and gays are starting to fight back against the attacks on their rights. The Womborne 12 are members of the Lesbian and Gay Youth Movement in London and the Midlands. They were arrested, abused and held for a week over Christmas, after protesting outside the home of a Tory council leader who suggested gassing gays as a cure for Aids. They have launched a defence campaign to fight their case. They, and every other victim of the Aids panic, must be supported.

DEFEND THE WOMBORNE 12!

Planning meeting:

Thursday 5 February, 7.30pm,
Red Rose Club, 129 Seven
Sisters Road, London N7

Court Protest:

Monday 23 February, 11am,
Seisdon Magistrates Court,
Seisdon near Wolverhampton.
Transport from Birmingham,
Coventry, Bristol, Leicester,
Oxford, Nottingham, London.
Phone (01) 729 3771
for details.

ABORTION

Better late than never

'I don't want to abolish abortion' declared the bishop of Birmingham, the right reverend Hugh Montefiore, as his Bill to reduce the legal limit for abortion from 28 to 24 weeks passed through its second reading in the house of lords with the backing of the government and medical establishment. The bishop has tried to pass off his move to tighten legal curbs as a sensible step to take in line with advances in medical science.

But Montefiore's mild rhetoric masks a drastic attack on women's rights to abortion.

The Bill seeks to reduce the stage of pregnancy at which abortion is still legally permitted in a way which has never been attempted before — by amending the Infant Life Preservation Act rather than the Abortion Act. This defines the crime of 'child destruction' as the killing of any child capable of being born alive. The Act says that there is an indisputable case for the viability of the baby after 28 weeks.

The bishop's Bill will change one word of the law, amending the 28 weeks to 24. The

onus will be on doctors to prove that the foetus is less than 24 weeks old. In practice doctors will not be prepared to perform abortions on women who are more than 20 or at the very most 22 weeks pregnant. It is not possible to be certain of dates and doctors are not keen to risk prosecution.

Very few abortions are performed after 24 weeks — only about 30 in 1985 — but around 1500 abortions are performed at between 20 and 24 weeks. If the bishop gets his way thousands of women will be forced into unwanted pregnancies.

Under pressure from the pro-life lobby, many doctors now argue that it is commonplace for babies born after only 24 weeks to survive, thanks to improvements in neo-natal intensive care. They are using exaggerated claims for medical technology to justify their acquiescence to the anti-abortion lobby.

The main effect of higher standards of neo-natal care has been to give babies born after 28 weeks of pregnancy a better chance of survival. The mortality rate and the

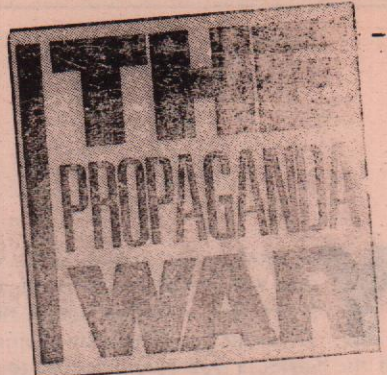
incidence of serious handicaps such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, mental retardation and deafness among babies born after 28 weeks have been significantly reduced by modern techniques. Before 28 weeks both mortality and the incidence of handicap remain very high. Before 26 weeks the outlook is grim, even in the best centres. Science provides no justification for an earlier limit than 28 weeks.

THE LEGAL LIMITS

Neither common sense nor science provide the rationale for the latest attack on abortion rights.

Late abortions have become a subject of debate in a climate where the establishment is keen to elevate the virtues of marriage, motherhood, and family life. The threat of further legal curbs on abortion rights is part of a broader offensive to reassert traditional moral values.

Women need access to late abortions for a variety of reasons — because often serious abnormalities in the foetus are only diagnosed after 20 weeks, because of inefficiency and bigotry in the NHS, because of indecision and failure to identify pregnancy at an early stage. As long as these problems prevail we have to oppose every attempt to restrict the legal limit for abortion. We should also recognise the Bill as a first step in another attempt to make big changes in the abortion laws. Fighting for free abortion on demand is more important than ever in the current climate of reaction.



STREATHAM VICE

The press has turned the trial of Cynthia Payne, who faces 10 charges of controlling prostitutes for financial gain, into a cross between a *Carry On* film and a circus of sexual stereotypes for the consumption of a prurient British public.

Police witnesses involved in Operation PC Vice have given the court case all the ingredients of a farce. They described how, disguised as transvestites, country squires and bisexuals on undercover visits, they were 'confronted with an orgy of sex' at the Payne parties in Ambleside Avenue, Streatham.

PC Taylor described the first candidate for a Benny Hill sketch — 'an old man with a walking stick' — who apologised to the crowds queuing for bedroom space 'for taking so long'. Then there was the 'elderly gentleman dressed as a woman in a black evening dress, high-heeled shoes, a white lace blouse, and a grey curly wig' who introduced himself as 'Amanda' and his wife as 'Inga'. Asked to describe the 'house of a thousand and one delights', PC Jones quoted a 'masculine woman' who told him, 'It's like bleeding Piccadilly Circus in the rush hour upstairs.' The appearance of *Monty Python* star Terry Jones, who claimed he was researching a film about 'Madame Cyn', got another laugh. After the *Carry On* jokes came the plugs for prejudice. From transvestites dressed as French maids to lesbians in 'bizarre sex' shows, police and press paraded all the stereotypes of 'sexual deviancy' before the public.

When the police finally got round to raiding the house in May 1986 they took away a bag containing Mrs Payne's phone and gas bills and some wooden beads. Judge Brian Pryor was bemused: 'It is notorious that judges lead sheltered lives, but I can't for the life of me see what the significance of that package is.' It was a fitting testimony to the manufactured farce. There was a touch of irony too in inspector Colin White's statement that Payne was 'obsessed with sex'. The people with the real hang-ups print editorials backing bigoted police chief James Anderton's crusade to restore moral standards next to articles that indulge their readers in steamy sex scenes from Streatham.

Since she first appeared in the 'sex for luncheon vouchers' trial some years back, the media have set Payne up as a sort of alter ego to Mary Whitehouse and a celebrity in her own right. She is depicted as a 53-year old 'golden-hearted whore', a symbol of the good times had by 'good-time gals'.

The press portrayal of the swinging lifestyle of today's prostitute is a far cry from the reality of standing in a mini-skirt on street corners in sub-zero temperatures, touting for enough custom to survive, risking assault from punters and harassment from police. The media seeks to glamorise a trade that is the most glaring example of the degradation of women in capitalist society. There is something particularly sordid about passing off prostitution as one big party in the week that two prostitutes were murdered on the same stretch in West London.

Rachel Applewaithe and Marina Monti, both in their twenties, were found dead in Bayswater and Queensway. The body of Applewaithe was found on the Monday dumped in a garage with severe head injuries. Monti was found strangled on wasteland on Sunday. All the press had to say was that the killer had stolen the footwear from both bodies, and that the women operated 'at the lower end' of the West End market, charging £20 to £30 a time. They certainly weren't as low as those who charge 18 to 25 pence a time for newspapers which mix moral sermons with voyeurism, and jump for joy when the murder of two women gives them a chance to write stories about a 'kinky-boots killer'.

WE CAN DO THIS WITH

We are calling on all left-wing groups and individuals to break
Here **Frank Richards** looks at the Labour Party's problems in the opinion

You can't trust opinion polls. At best they tell us half of the truth. Only 48 hours after a Gallup poll in the *Daily Telegraph* put Labour five points ahead of the Tories, a poll conducted by the Harris Research Centre for the *Observer* reported that the Conservatives were on line to win a landslide majority. A closer look at the various polls suggests that Labour has regained the ground it lost in the 1983 election, but is no closer to victory than it was in 1979 — the year when Thatcher came to power.

There is plenty of evidence pointing to another electoral defeat for Labour.

The instability in the opinion polls is not really a see-saw battle between the Tories and Labour. It is more the result of the fluctuating fortunes of the Liberal-SDP Alliance. Labour can only win if the Alliance does well and takes votes from the Tories. For the time being Labour finds it hard to win support from those who voted Conservative in the past. Labour has managed to consolidate its traditional support but has failed to go much further.

Labour's failure to forge a credible alternative to the Tories has begun to undermine the confidence of its activists. Bryan Gould, Labour's campaign coordinator, tried to address this problem last month. He admonished the faint-hearted and warned that 'Politics is a business for those with strong nerves. Panic is the one response to an adverse trend which is guaranteed to intensify it.' But Gould couldn't do much to create a climate of optimism. His message was not to worry, things could be worse:

'Our standing in the polls, though not as good as we would like, is substantially better than many thought we could ever achieve again when we were being written off — even as a party of opposition — just four years ago. It now represents a launching pad for a general election campaign which can bring us victory.' (*Tribune*, 2 January)

Gould's reassurance will provide little comfort for the party faithful. They and others in the labour movement want to know why the opposition is making so little headway.

The Thatcher government is doing remarkably well. It has pursued unpopular policies and faced numerous crises and scandals without suffering significant damage. Thatcher's success is largely due to the ineffectiveness of her opponents. The opposition has just about given up opposing the government. Instead, the Labour leaders have decided that their best bet is to adopt Tory objectives as their own, and then insist that they are more committed to realising these aims than the present government.

Labour under Neil Kinnock has become a flag-waving party of law and order.

Kinnock takes every opportunity to push the image of Labour as a no-nonsense party that can be relied on to protect the vital interests of British capitalism. This strategy has taken Labour over the line that used to separate the two main parties. Kinnock's denunciation of demonstrators involved in violent clashes with the police at Wapping could have been delivered by any number of Tory backbenchers. His support for the government's clampdown on a BBC documentary about the Zircon satellite project, ostensibly in the interests of national security, stunned even the cynical British media.

With Kinnock trying to out-Thatcher Thatcher, the Conservatives have little to worry about. They understand that, given a choice between two essentially conservative parties, the voters will go for the genuine article. Kinnock's pathetic imitation of the Tories deprives the opposition of a political perspective from which it can challenge Thatcher.

Take defence. Labour uses any occasion to boast that, if necessary, it will increase defence spending to ensure that Britain is well-protected by its conventional forces. Any intelligent person will conclude that, if Labour is going to spend so much on arms, there must indeed be a major threat to Britain's security. In this situation the Tories' emphasis on nuclear weapons would seem to make more sense to voters than Labour's reliance on conventional arms.

On law and order, the new-found concern of the Labour frontbench with crime and a lack of safety on the streets can only confirm the view that the Tories have been right all along. Labour shadow home secretary Gerald Kaufman's recent discovery of a law and order problem is not going to impress an electorate accustomed to years of Tory propaganda on the question.

Instead of consolidating Labour's appeal, such an approach only helps to spread Tory ideas inside the labour movement.

The opposition's 'if-you-can't-beat-them-join-them' strategy shows that Thatcher has scored a big victory in influencing Labour Party thinking. Political debate is now a narrow affair which takes place on terms dictated by the Tories. Labour has long lacked a distinctive programme. In recent years even the mildest policies which could be accused of radicalism have been dropped in favour of objectives that minimise controversy. Thus Kinnock had to drop his spokesman on the arts, who insisted that a future Labour government would pursue the party's policy and take control of the BBC away from the home office. This was a relatively unimportant issue. But Kinnock was worried that he might be charged with engineering a left-wing takeover of the media, so conference policy and its champion had to go.

The care and attention Kinnock gives to cultivating a respectable image is based on the assumption that moderation and patriotism will appeal to middle class voters. The Labour leadership has calculated that, come what may, it can count on working class support. It reckons that most workers are so fed up with Thatcher that they will vote for Labour, no matter what. The working class can be taken for granted, and the party's task is to relate to what its bureaucrats see as the concerns of the middle classes.

Kinnock's electoral strategy has devastating consequences for workers. It means that their interests are unrepresented and they can be ignored by parliamentary politicians. The benefits of this strategy for the Labour Party are open to question. Its right-wing shift may seem to make sense on the drawing board. In the real world, however, such schemes rarely run according to plan. Presenting Labour as a tame imitation of the Tory Party is unlikely to have broad appeal.

Anybody inclined to vote against Thatcher will be attracted by a plausible alternative, not a copy-cat version of the Tories.

Middle class voters disenchanted with Thatcher are likely to see Kinnock's party as lacking conviction, originality and even an identity. This is why Labour has been unable to make any significant headway in the 130 or so Tory marginal seats that it must win if it is to form the next government.

Worse still for Labour, its position makes it susceptible to Tory pressure. Labour has volunteered to be measured by Tory standards. The consequences of this development were apparent during the scandal over Thatcher's move to ban Peter Wright's revelations about

MI5. Here was the government making one mistake after another. Its ludicrous attempt to prevent the publication of Wright's memoirs in Australia made Britain a laughing stock around the world. It took considerable skill for the opposition to make no political capital out of this scandal. Yet Kinnock managed it. In the end the Labour Party even contrived to come off worst. Thatcher had Kinnock on the run over his 'disloyal' phone conversations with Wright's lawyer. Having accepted Tory standards of behaviour, Kinnock is now vulnerable to every accusation of treachery which Thatcher chooses to make.

Facing no effective opposition, Thatcher is free to retain the initiative. The Tories have set out to distract from their failures by launching an offensive and making the Labour Party itself into a political issue. It used to be the case that opposition parties attacked and governments defended their record. The Tories have managed to turn that convention on its head. The government now fires the broadsides, while the opposition dodges the flak.

Labour's cringing subservience to Tory values has allowed Thatcher to turn her own political problems into an embarrassment for Kinnock.

The government used the leak of a so-called state secret on the Zircon project to attack civil liberties and raid the premises of the *New Statesman*. Before the debate began, Kinnock had already handed victory to Thatcher by conceding the right of the authorities to keep their spy satellite away from public scrutiny. One Tory politician after another used the opportunity to point out that it was 'no accident' that a left-wing paper had exposed vital information to the enemy. The message was clear: the left, the Labour Party and the likes of Neil Kinnock are disloyal and cannot be trusted to run the affairs of the British state.

It is even possible that the Tories set Kinnock up in the Zircon affair, knowing full well that the leak could be deployed to put Labour on the defensive. In British politics today, the credibility of Labour — from the so-called loony left councils to doubts about Kinnock's patriotism — is on trial, rather than the sordid record of the Thatcher government.

The Tories hope that their own hideous policies and incompetence will be dropped from the political agenda as they force Labour to account for its every turn. Kinnock has responded according to the expectations of the Tory central office. He now spends much of his time protesting that he is a good patriot.

Unless the Tories lose control over the economy or commit a big political error, they will win the election. They have little to fear from Labour and their only concern must be to avoid self-inflicted mistakes.

If Thatcher wins, the Labour Party must bear full responsibility for the outcome.

Anybody seriously concerned with the future of the working class must be sick to the stomach at the prospect of another Tory government. It

is clear that Labour is incapable of fighting the Tories and that Thatcher could win by default. Even worse, no matter what the outcome of a contest between Thatcher and Kinnock, the working class is excluded from influencing the shape of society.

This is the grim reality. It doesn't help to enter into idle speculation about how matters might change for the better if a different Labour Party got elected. Some Labour activists have even started to argue that Kinnock cannot be as bad as he makes out. They suggest that he is lying about his real views so that he can get elected, but that once in government he will pursue a more radical Labour Party line. This is not an appraisal of the real situation, but a fantasy born of desperation.

Desperation is not a reliable guide to action. Kinnock relies on such a reaction from working class activists and the left. A desperate left will be too preoccupied with its own survival to give Kinnock a hard time.

Labour Briefing, the journal of a hard-left pressure group in the Labour Party, sums up the dead end you reach by substituting wishful thinking for a political strategy:

'So the prospects for 1987 look gloomy. What should the left be doing? Despite everything, we must campaign vigorously for a Labour victory. Only a Labour victory can open the door to any of the political initiatives to which the left is committed. A third Tory government would be a huge defeat for us — and for the cause of the oppressed....

'But as we fight for the election of a Labour government, we must say clearly that we have no faith in the capacity of the present programme — or leadership — to solve any of the severe problems facing the working class.' (15 January)

If *Briefing* has no faith in Labour's programme or leadership, what is it asking us to vote for? Campaigning for a party that has no solutions to 'the severe problems facing the working class' is an admission that these problems must stay at the bottom of the list of political priorities.

We can achieve nothing until the order of priorities is reversed and the problems facing the working class are put on top of the agenda. This problem, rather than what a no-hope Labour Party may do in the future, deserves the undivided attention of those concerned to advance the cause of our class. We cannot defeat the Tories by fighting for the election of a party committed to policies similar to those of the present government.

Whoever wins the next election will do nothing for the working class.

Once this simple fact is grasped it follows that supporting Labour makes no sense. It can only help to perpetuate a situation where the problems of the working class are ignored. In these circumstances it is urgent that we set about building a movement that can express our grievances and fight for solutions. This task

YOU CAN BACK THE RED FRONT TODAY BY FILLING

AN'T WIN KINNOCK

with Labour and back **The Red Front**, an electoral bloc around a set of basic demands.
n polls, and explains why Kinnock can offer no solutions to the problems facing ordinary people

cannot be postponed until after the next election. Today and in the months ahead, anti-capitalists have to fight to ensure that the problems facing ordinary people are not swept under the carpet, but come to dominate British politics.

The Revolutionary Communist Party is campaigning for support for *The Red Front* — a platform for working class unity — as a way to fill the gap left by Labour. We want *The Red Front* to be an electoral bloc that can bring together left-wing groups and individuals around basic working class demands (see opposite).

Building *The Red Front* by uniting all those committed to the defence of workers' interests could provide a focus for the anger and aspirations of our class. *The Red Front* could not influence the immediate outcome of the election. But it could start to influence the overall balance of power in society, which is far more important. *The Red Front* could give shape and leadership to the yearning for change, and ensure that such sentiments cannot be ignored by the capitalist class. A credible electoral showing by *The Red Front* would be a warning to the authorities that if they push us, we're going to hit back. It would mean that any future government — Tory or Labour — would be more circumspect in its attacks on our people.

The fight for *The Red Front* is not simply about elections. It is about the political future of the working class. At present the labour movement hears only Kinnock's message. It is a message of self-denial, sacrifice and hopelessness. Many Labour supporters have serious reservations about this message, yet they continue to campaign for Labour. This reluctance to make the break is doing serious damage.

If people hear left-wing activists saying that Kinnock is the only alternative, they will conclude that it really must be impossible to fight.

The Red Front represents a call to fight. It is based on a compelling argument: the more of us who stand up and indicate that we are prepared to fight now, the better we will be able to defend our class in the future. We can only avoid the dire consequences of a Tory victory or a Labour betrayal by challenging Kinnock's message to the working class.

Left wingers have conflicting views about what objectives we should fight for. The RCP has its own programme which represents a comprehensive strategy for liberation. In the years ahead the working class will have an opportunity to decide which programme it wants to support. But today the issues are more modest and straightforward. The task of the moment is to prevent Labour from hijacking people's hopes and aspirations, and to ensure that the working class has its own voice in the period ahead. That is something worth fighting for. The essential message of *The Red Front* is to put loyalty to our class before loyalty to Kinnock. It is a message that we hope all opponents of the system will seriously consider.



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.

IN THE BOX ON PAGE 11

AQUINO UNDER PRESSURE

No MORE CHILES!

The attempted coup against president Cory Aquino shows that the Philippines is heading for a crisis like the one which crushed the Chilean working class, writes **Russell Osborne**

Manila has been rocked by political violence for a fortnight. First government troops shot dead 18 demonstrators in the Mendiola Massacre. The marchers were rural workers, who brought Cory Aquino to power last February and are now starting new protests. Then right-wing army officers took arms against Aquino for the second time in five months. Government generals contained the mini-coup but did their best to avoid confrontation. They even appeared at a joint press conference with the top conspirators, whom they congratulated for their good behaviour during the abortive coup.

There is big trouble ahead in the Philippines.

The right is getting provocative and there is growing popular concern about the direction of the Aquino administration. As the February anniversary of the fall of the Marcos dictatorship draws near, and Aquino holds a referendum on her new constitution, the democratic experiment is entering a new and dangerous phase.

A year ago Cory Aquino, widow of assassinated opposition leader Benigno, was swept to power on a wave of protest against the corrupt and bloody dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Aquino's radical election campaign promised 'people's power' under a new democratic regime. It brought her triumph at the polls. When Marcos declared that he had 'won' the election, it fooled nobody. His thugs had torn up ballot papers and intimidated voters at gunpoint in full view of 700 foreign pressmen. The US leadership and the local military had to bow to popular pressure and wave goodbye to Marcos, America's longstanding stooge.

The Western media celebrated when the Marcos regime met a bloodless end and a popular government was installed. Surely, they said, this proved that enlightened, responsible politicians could reform the repressive and inefficient structures of capitalist rule in the third world. But events in the Philippines over the past few months suggest a very different conclusion.

SHAM DEMOCRACY

In a recent interview veteran Communist Party leader Antonio Zume described the reality of Filipino democracy. In the countryside people still live under the heel of the army and the landowners — Marcos' infamous 'cronies'. In Cagayan province whole families are being murdered by the army to crush support for the Communist guerrillas of the New People's Army, despite the two-month old ceasefire which is meant to lead to negotiations between the NPA and the government. Aquino's democracy extends little further than the major urban centres.

The rural proletariat lives in grinding poverty. Four out of five children suffer malnutrition and the collapse of the rural economy is swelling the mass of unemployed and landless labourers. The condition of rural labourers is as bad as it was under Marcos. Aquino promised land reform when she took office.

Yet, as the bloodbath in Manila showed, bullets remain the establishment's only answer to the plight of the masses.

Land reform is the most pressing issue in Filipino society. The desperation of the landless workers sparked resistance to the Marcos regime and support for the New People's Army, whose successful military campaign has been accompanied by widespread land seizures in the countryside.

Over the past few weeks finance minister Jaime Ongpin has been touring Western capitals, seeking funds for land reform. But the obstacles to redistributing the land will

not be removed by cash. Land reform challenges the Filipino ruling class, whose wealth and power are based on close links between land ownership and industrial capital. Aquino hails from a wealthy landowning family. She has refused to consider reforms for her 5000-acre Hacienda Luicita.

The structure of Filipino capitalism rules out a peaceful solution to the crisis on the land.

Twelve months of Aquino government have exposed the sham of 'people's power'. They have shown that exchanging Aquino for Marcos has done little to solve people's problems.

Filipino workers schooled in the struggle against Marcos have been quick to react to Aquino's failures. The NPA runs 25 per cent of the country. The guerrillas have reduced rents, raised agricultural wages, stopped usurious interest on loans and executed landowners and officials. Such actions reinforce the determination of the military to keep Aquino on a tight leash and step up the pressure against the working class.

In the cities, more than half the working class has no proper job. Urban youth are flocking to the NPA and other Communist-led organisations which have millions of members. The future of the Philippines will not be decided by the manoeuvres between the aggressive right-wing military and the embattled government. The tension between the hardline and the liberal wings of the establishment is a symptom of the escalating class conflict which signals the beginning of the end for Aquino's experiment.

DANGER SIGNS

The Filipino working class is now at a critical juncture. The situation resembles the crisis of the left-wing Allende regime in Chile in 1972-73, which preceded its overthrow by General Pinochet and the slaughter of tens of thousands of workers.

Allende, like Aquino, gradually handed the initiative to the right-wing generals. The military men began their come-back by softening up the Chilean working class, repressing militants and intimidating the left-wing government. It took two years of shadow-boxing between the right and the government radicals before the generals felt confident enough to move in for the kill. During this period the working class was reduced to a passive observer. It was demobilised by the Socialist and Communist parties who, blind to the looming disaster, appealed for moderation and loyalty to Allende's 'democracy'.

The lessons of Chile must be learnt to avoid a similar disaster in the Philippines.

The powerful Communist-led National Democratic Front has failed to challenge Aquino's sham democracy. The NDF was the strongest section of the anti-Marcos movement and it remains the major force on the left. But when last year's election campaign began, its leaders surrendered the movement to Aquino.

The NDF failed to put forward an independent platform, and allowed its supporters to build Aquino's campaign. From the day she took office, the NDF ran a futile campaign to persuade her to give it a stake in the regime. In January, only days before the Mendiola Massacre, Communist New People's Army leaders even offered to dissolve the NPA into the national army — the same army which they have been fighting for a decade.

The leaders of the left are so desperate to be accepted into the new order that they are prepared to disarm their own supporters. This would leave the working class defenceless against its enemies. Following in the



THE BODY-COUNT BEGINS:
AQUINO'S TROOPS GUN DOWN THE PEOPLE WHO PUT HER IN POWER

footsteps of the Chilean Communist Party, the Filipino Communist leaders are paving the way for the defeat of the working class — and for their own destruction.

The set-up in the Philippines looks ominously familiar. With the left demobilising the working class, the establishment can afford to sit and wait, like Pinochet, until the time is ripe to move in hard. More mini-coups and skirmishes are likely as the right raises the stakes to put pressure on the

working class and the government liberals.

The main hope lies in the experience and the distrust of the establishment which Filipino workers have acquired in almost 20 years of struggle. Recently the head of the Catholic clergy, Cardinal Jaime Sin, sent a party of nuns into the hills, boasting they would return with disarmed guerrillas. The nuns came back empty-handed. The leaders of the Filipino left should be sent packing in similar fashion.

IRAN, IRAQ AND REAGAN THE GULF WAR WIDENS

The Western powers are worried about the war between Iran and Iraq — not because of the rising piles of bodies, but because of the renewed threat to their control over the Middle East.

After more than six years of slaughter the Gulf War seems to be entering a new phase. The forces of Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran have broken through close to Iraq's second city, Basra. As civilians flee the city, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is under plenty of pressure.

The West has watched as the war has claimed around a million casualties.

Powers such as America, Britain and France are not squeamish about the sight of spilt blood. As long as the war was stalemated and other Middle Eastern states kept out, the West was willing to arm both sides and sit back while the bloodbath got deeper. The American arms at the centre of the 'Irangate' row in Washington were only a small part of the tens of billions of dollars worth of weapons which the West has sold to Iran and Iraq since 1980.

But recent developments have set the alarm bells ringing in the West. Reagan, Thatcher and the rest fear that a breakthrough for Iran could spark unrest across the region and endanger their fragile hold over the vital oil wells and markets of the Middle East. Kuwait has already been embroiled in the war, with the Iranian navy firing on its ships. The Turkish air force has bombed Kurds within Iraq, fearing their insurrection could spread to Turkey's oppressed Kurdish minority. Last week, when Islamic rulers met within earshot of

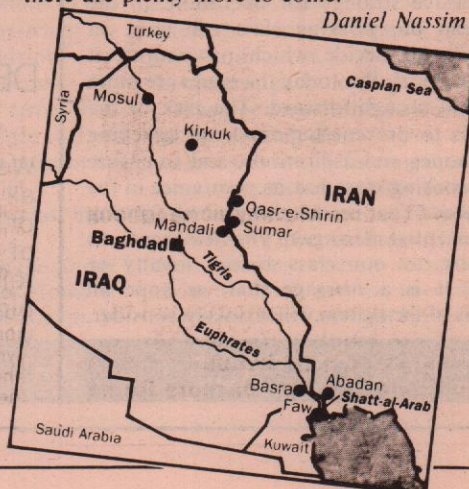
the fighting, their discussions were dominated by the fear of who might be dragged in next.

America's credibility as the policeman of the region has been strained by the Irangate revelations. It even turned out that the missiles Reagan supplied were vital to Iran's recent advance. Now the USA is seeking to reassert its power, sending warships and bombers to lurk in the Gulf and threatening to strike if Iran endangers its 'strategic interests'.

But the Americans know that any action they take only risks spreading the conflict further.

Reagan is waiting with his gun cocked and hoping that the Gulf War settles back into its routine of localised slaughter. The West's contempt for the people of the Middle East has already left a million dead. It seems that there are plenty more to come.

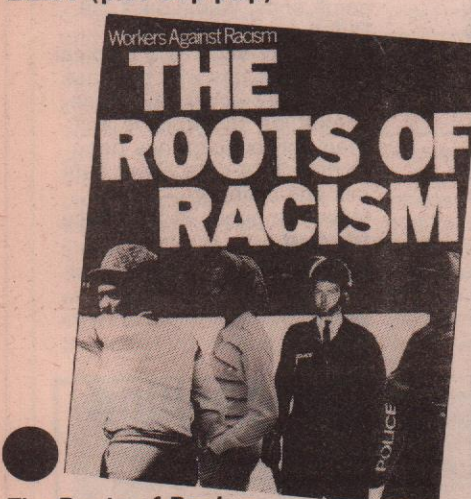
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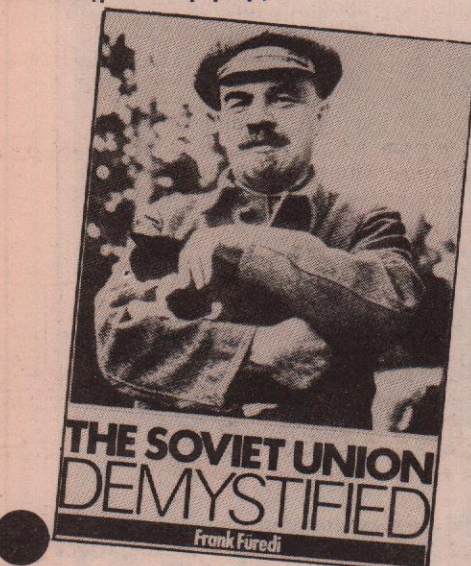
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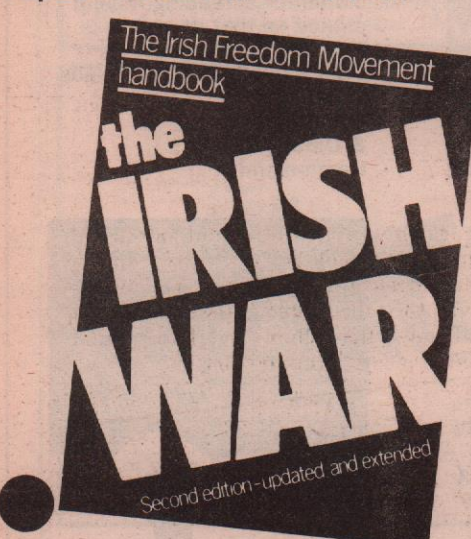
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Anti-racist illusions

Trevor Carter, Shattering Illusions: West Indians in British Politics, Lawrence & Wishart, £3.95

'The purpose of this book', writes Trevor Carter, 'is to argue that the black struggle and the working class struggle overlap and are interdependent.' Through a semi-autobiographical account of the West Indian community in post-war Britain, he looks at the changing relationship between the black struggle and the labour movement. The book is an indictment of the labour movement for its failure to defend the rights of black workers. It is also an indictment of black activists, like Carter himself, who have adopted some of the worst aspects of Labourism.

'NO BLACKS HERE'

Carter came to Britain from Trinidad in 1954, along with many other West Indians. Any illusions that this was the 'mother country', the 'pinnacle of civilisation' were quickly

shattered. From the 'no blacks, no dogs' signs at accommodation agencies to the murder in 1959 of Kelso Cochrane in Notting Hill, they soon realised this was a savagely racist nation.

BLACK PRIDE

Many West Indians who had been involved back home in trade union and anti-imperialist struggles came 'looking for politics'. As Carter says, 'When we came to Britain we considered the left and labour movement to be our natural allies.' That was another illusion which was quickly shattered. The unions often opposed the employment of blacks, collaborated with management's racist practices and campaigned for immigration controls. As black workers grew disillusioned with the labour movement, they set up their own community organisations. Their activists moved away from working class struggles and tried to 'redefine our own blackness and to develop a black perspective'.

Education came to preoccupy the West Indian community, and Carter gives it plenty of space

here. Many black activists thought they could fight racism by changing the education system. If black children got proper access to a multi-cultural and anti-racist education system, they would be able to take their place in society. They saw positive images of black people as essential. According to Bernard Coard (ex-deputy prime minister of Grenada, now sentenced to death), 'Pride and self-consciousness are the best armour' against prejudice and humiliation. This pride would be fostered by 'black dolls and toys and pictures, and storybooks about great black men and women'.

In the eighties a preoccupation with black culture and images has become the hallmark of the official anti-racist movement. The labour movement has adopted 'multi-culturalism' as a safe means of displaying its anti-racist credentials, and to avoid challenging the central problem facing blacks — the racist British state and its framework of oppression from immigration controls to police harassment.

Black activists also give support to the official labour

movement. For Carter, the fight against racism is a matter of building 'alliances, unity and the broad left'. With whom? Well, the race relations industry is both 'necessary and appropriate'. The Communist Party, of which he is a member, is the only organisation which understands 'the links between...socialism and black liberation'. Could this be the same party that supports 'non-racist' immigration controls and 'better' policing?

DEAD END

Carter is all for black and white unity, but he fails to see that racism is a force sponsored by the state, and sustained by the labour bureaucracy. He concludes that the issue can be resolved within the system, leaving its structures intact. He denounces his union colleagues for linking in one motion the demand for anti-racist practices in education with the demand for the repeal of all immigration laws. He argues too for a redistribution of wealth from the white working class to the black community, a divisive and defeatist strategy.

The aim of Carter's book is to win support from a new generation of black activists for bureaucratic anti-racism. We must make it our business to shatter the illusion that such an approach has anything to offer.

Kenan Malik

● TERRORISTS EVERYWHERE

The violence of the oppressed

Stephen Segaller, Invisible Armies: Terrorism into the 1990s, Michael Joseph, £15.95

Terrorism is the word the authorities use to describe the violence of the oppressed. They call their own violence 'preserving law and order' or 'a just war'. The prolonged struggles between the Western powers and the peoples of the third world over the past 20 years have produced much 'terrorism'. (The word acquired 'international headline currency' from the mid-sixties, when the PLO was formed.) As a by-product a new type of writer, the

terrorologist, has appeared — a combination of political analyst, sociologist, psychologist, military strategist and journalist whose job is to perpetuate the myth.

Terrorologist Stephen Segaller is a former producer/director of *World in Action*. On the first page of *Invisible Armies*, his survey of terrorism around the world today, he lays his naivety and his prejudice on the table: 'The developed world reacts to terrorism with understandable revulsion.' There is something almost comic, as he bumps into all the evidence throughout the book, in his inability or refusal to acknowledge the politically loaded nature of the term itself.

Even when he is forced to concede that the USA is doling out terror, as in the raid on

Tripoli last April, he continues to reserve the term for those fighting the West. Even when he recalls that only 465 Americans were killed worldwide by terrorists between 1968 and 1984, compared with 4864 murdered in Texas and California in one year, it doesn't seem to click that this is not a very convincing bogey.

The book does contain some interesting information on the role of the USA in world affairs and on the divergent interests of the Western powers. The chapter on the Achille Lauro affair, when Palestinians hijacked a cruiser en route to Israel, is well-researched. It demonstrates how the self-interest of one of the protagonists, Italy, served to undermine the USA's 'fight

against terrorism'. Segaller shows a good journalistic understanding too of the crisis in US foreign policy. Times have changed since the days when a call from Eisenhower was enough to make Britain and France back out of an adventure like Suez.

Segaller urges the USA to concentrate on pragmatism and political calculation rather than armed force to combat the rebellion in the third world. It is ironic that this is the strategy favoured by the European powers in their attempt to undermine the influence of the USA. (Although they don't mind using military might either, as the Falklands and Chad demonstrate.) Terrorism is not the threat to world peace. The source of a third world war lies in the conflicts currently engulfing the third world, which threaten to become a wider war among the Western powers themselves.

Mark South

● ANOTHER IRISH WAR FILM

No Provo ever called me Taffy

Boy Soldier, Karl Francis (Director)

A 19-year old Welsh squaddie, Wil (Richard Lynch), is in the glasshouse awaiting trial for shooting a civilian during a tour of duty in Belfast. This is not however a film about Northern Ireland (how often have you heard of a British soldier being charged with murder?). The victim here is the soldier himself, confronting the fact that the only real family he has ever known, a Welsh regiment in the British Army, is offering him up as a political sacrifice.

BREAKDOWN

'That's what you get for Empire-building,' observed Breaker Morant in the film of that title, as he was led to a firing squad, another sop to public concern over the British Army's methods, this time in the Boer War. No such clarity, or indeed wit, is to be found in *Boy Soldier*, although the film does contain a convincing and compelling portrayal by Richard Lynch of the psychological ordeal endured by Wil, including his mental breakdown, as the Army



tries to break him into pleading guilty.

Wil's route to the punishment cell is gradually constructed through many flashbacks, some only fleeting glimpses of a scene now racing through his maddened brain. Unfortunately

some of the street scenes recalled are very stagily shot, and there are some improbable confrontations between the soldiers and the locals. The low budget can probably be blamed for that. But it can't excuse a hopelessly miscast Bernard Hill

as the home office official, nor a psychiatrist who enquires of a youth whose progress from children's home to dole to Army to Belfast appears to have been a model of brutalisation: 'The violence Wil, where does it come from?'

EXPLOITATION

Wil's dawning understanding of the way in which he has been abused by the British authorities expresses itself in a militant accentuation of his Welsh identity. Speaking constantly in Welsh, he soon makes himself as alien to his English officers as the 'Micks' to whom he finds himself related, and with whom he begins to sympathise. Yet his Welshness, subversive as it may be in his dealing with the Brits, is also quite a conservative influence, accommodating his sergeant, and also the Salvation Army, the other institution from his past to which he now turns.

Karl Francis obviously feels strongly about the Army's callous exploitation of working class youth. I am sure we would have believed that without Wil falling in love with a Catholic girl, I have lost track of the films about Northern Ireland which feature a love story so that we can reflect on the heartlessness of 'the sectarian divide'. There are other things upon which we might reflect. 'Just remember this,' his sergeant tells him about the killing, 'you're alive. The Irishman's dead.'

Pat Ford

The safe sex debate

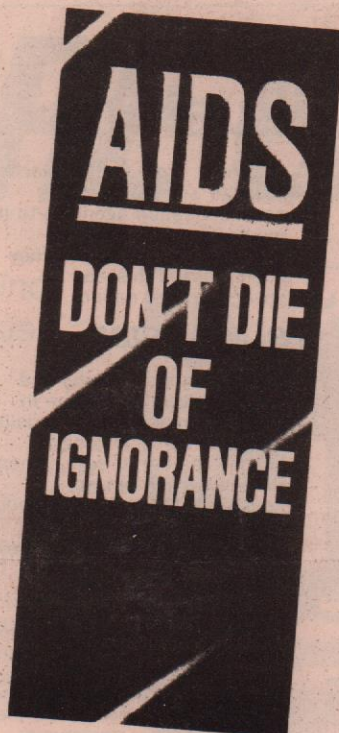
I WAS angered by the article 'The dangers of safe sex' (23 January). The idea of safe sex is not an invention of the Tory Party, but was taken up in this country by the Terrence Higgins Trust in the face of total indifference from the government to the dangers that this disease posed to everyone. Gay men needed and wanted this information and it was through the activity of the gay community that all the original work was done in this country.

There is still massive public interest in Aids and a massive amount of ignorance and misunderstanding. As this disease increasingly is seen as a threat to the whole community the 'gay plague' attitude will diminish as there will be as many heterosexuals who have the disease. So Aids will become a general problem not identified with any particular group. The lack of knowledge in the total population then becomes a danger.

My main worries now are the fact that the information being given out by the government and other official bodies is being written with one eye on the reaction of the 'moralists' so that it is not giving information in a way that is easily understood.

If you just stand back and say that the safe sex campaign is an attack on the rights of gay men and lesbians (not to mention bisexuals), what do you want to replace it with? A long political lecture on what you loosely call 'full equality' which you do not define. An attack on the safe sex campaign seems similar to attacking the idea of providing workers with safety clothing and raising their awareness of the dangers they face at work.

I cannot see how advice that can save people from a painful death is bad. It is not a campaign that says you must stick to one partner. It says that you minimise the risk if you do. Just as when you don't smoke you diminish your chances of getting lung cancer. If people want multiple sexual partners there is nothing to stop



them, so long as they take the proper safeguards. This is not an attack on anyone but a human reaction to a real situation, not an idealised 'politically correct' world.

It is the attacks that have been made on the gay community as being 'responsible' for Aids that must be attacked. It is the tight-lipped non-information that seems to think the sensibilities of the Mary Whitehouse brigade are more important than giving clear, easily understood information that needs to be attacked. The safe sex campaign should not be attacked for trying to enforce some rightist morality on us all as it is actually an admission that people will carry on doing with their sexuality what they have always done whatever the state says or does. In your opposition you end up in alliance with the moralists. Aids unchecked will only fuel the backlash.

I am wary of the recent keenness of some people to start defending others' rights. It looks like bandwagon-jumping. Your attitude looks like stupid bandwagon-jumping in that you seem to want people to, quoting the government, die of ignorance.

**Clem Turff
Notts**

Aids in Holland

WILMA GEERTS asks (23 January) why the Dutch government doesn't use the Aids issue in the same way as the Thatcher regime to promote its own morality and family values. I think this is because the crisis in the ruling class in Britain is much more severe than in Holland. Aids was a welcome disease for Thatcher because it first appeared among gays, and thus allowed them to target 'promiscuity' and 'sexual deviancy' as a threat to the family and society generally.

Although this has not yet happened in Holland, the Dutch government is ready to use the Aids panic to the same ends. Wilma says the Dutch government has focused on Aids as a medical problem. If this was the case surely they would have done something constructive. But their only concern has been to preach to gays about safe sex and celibacy — and leave the public in ignorance.

**Iris Hart
Holland**

What's wrong with 'ethnic monitoring'?

I HAVE just read Richard Wilde's article 'Strike back against the race checks' (16 January). The organisation I work for monitors the race of respondents to job adverts. The stated reason is to make sure we provide a service to black people and employ black staff who, it is hoped, will be more sensitive to the needs of black clients. This seems an innocuous and reasonable thing to do, and I am unclear as to all the arguments against it. Several points, however, spring to mind:

1. The ever-tightening immigration and nationality legislation and the general climate of racism make this kind of information dangerous. Against this many organisations claim that the information is confidential and not linked to names.

2. We need more jobs, not simply a redistribution of them among different sectors of the working class. At the same time I cannot understand why the RCP sees this redistribution as counter-productive, rather

than simply inadequate.

3. Even on a sociological level, statistics of this kind are of limited value. They do not give us much insight into the reasons behind the plight of blacks in this country, but they do give a picture of exactly where black people are and what they do!

I would be grateful if you could clarify the arguments, and put the general trend towards 'ethnic monitoring' in context.

**Jenny
South London**

Not enough nurseries

I THINK *The Red Front* is an excellent idea, and I support it. However I want to know why you call for nurseries 'to free women to go out to work'. Surely we should have nurseries whether we work or not, study, look for a job, or spend time doing voluntary or community work. Also I'd like to know if you want nurseries or nursery education — particularly for older children who finish school at 4pm, before most women get home from work.

**Marcella Phelan
Islington**

For The Red Front

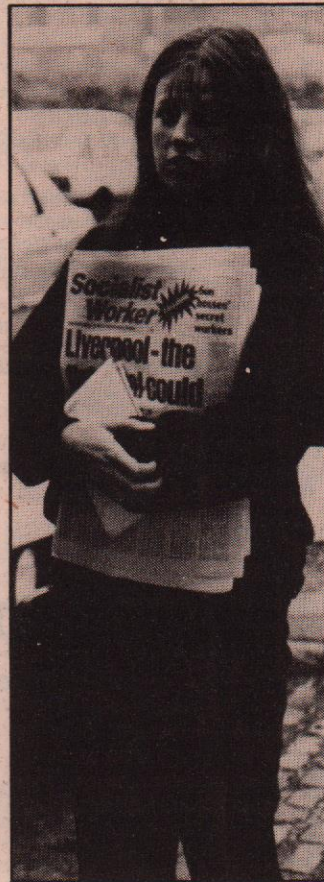
A FEW points in reply to Alan Bell's arguments against *The Red Front* in last week's *tns* (30 January). Bell says he agrees with the RCP's analysis of the Labour Party, but disagrees with its strategy for building an anti-Labour current in the working class.

Bell dismisses *The Red Front* platform as an 'abstraction'. Yet his alternative to challenging Labour's anti-working class politics at the polls is... 'to build a revolutionary party' (the Socialist Workers' Party). Building a revolutionary party is a worthy aim, but it remains an abstract proposition unless it is backed by a strategy to break left-wing workers from the Labour Party. The aim of *The Red Front* is to use the election campaign to expose Labour's anti-working class policies and provide an alternative for fighting back now.

One thing Alan forgot to mention — the SWP's alternative to *The Red Front* is to call for a vote for Labour in the election. What could be more abstract than 'breast-beating' (as he put it) about the dangers of

Kinnockism and the need for revolution, then telling people it's worth putting Kinnock in office?

**James Hunt
Preston**



Gay-bashing

WE were selling *tns* in Hammersmith this week when we saw a gay guy being chased down the street by a big bloke shouting 'fucking queers'. By the time we reached them the gay bloke was getting a beating. We shouted at the gay-basher to 'leave him alone'. The thug was so shocked that he stopped punching and turned round to yell at us. He accused us of being lesbians, then started ranting about gays killing people by spreading Aids.

Afterwards we went for a coffee with the gay bloke. He told us that things had got really bad since the Aids scare — you can't go shopping without getting attacked. This experience has shown us that the government campaign promoting safe sex cannot be separated from the attack on gay rights. On the streets of Hammersmith people have drawn the conclusion, implicit in the government campaign, that gays are to blame for spreading Aids. It strikes us that gays and lesbians are more at risk from a beating than the Aids virus.

**Eve Anderson
& Caroline Kelly
Hammersmith**



Another Wapping

WAPPING has come to Nottingham. In December Lionel Pickering, millionaire boss of the Trader Group of free newspapers, sent out 90 sack-o-grams — notices of dismissal to workers who produce his newspapers.

The sackings followed eight months of non-stop threats and broken agreements with the NGA and refusals to even meet Sogat. The dispute started

last April when Pickering announced a two-year wage freeze, threatening closure or going non-union if workers dared disagree. After months of wrangling workers thought they had reached an agreement — until Pickering tore it to pieces. Next came the sack and a determined attempt to smash print union organisation in the Midlands.

Send donations and messages of support to *Trader sacked workers dispute*, c/o 114 Stonehill Road, Derby.
**Richard Wilde
Nottingham**

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.



Supporting the BT strikers

Even before last week's *tns* hit the streets, we circulated copies of the article about the Telecom dispute as leaflets. Our supporters covered the maximum number of picket lines and protests to make sure that our strategy for winning the strike got discussed. As we go to press the strike is still on and we need to arm ourselves with the arguments to take it forward.

On most picket lines our arguments for a campaign of disruption led to a lively, and sometimes heated, debate. The novelty of standing outside a working exchange on a picket line, doing nothing but wave at cars, soon wears off, and many workers are impatient. Militants don't want a re-run of the marathon miners' strike or the Wapping dispute; they want to win, and fast. Many strikers are frustrated with the lack of direction from

the union leadership and worried that without a hard-hitting strategy the strike will be a long haul to defeat.

Worries about a long-term strike can lead workers in two directions. On the one hand it can force them to work out a way to win. On the other hand it can lead to passivity and resignation.

In London angry strikers grilled their officials about their strategy for the strike. They wanted to know what their leaders meant by 'indefinite action'. They were conscious of the dangers of a 'wait and see' approach, and wanted to know how to avoid it. These suspicions are voiced most frequently by the more moderate workers. They express a genuine problem that militants must confront.

Workers in the Midlands told our supporters that they would be back at work in two weeks whatever

happened. If the strike wasn't won within two weeks, they argued, it wouldn't be won at all. They have got a point. Everything hinges on what happens next. If we don't take action to make the strike bite these suspicions will soon turn to cynicism and strengthen the influence of conservatism over the strike. Unless we win the political arguments for pulling the plug on BT the strike will quickly lose momentum. We need to up the action now to give the strikers a chance of winning.

It is vital that we challenge the union's do-nothing approach by reaching as many strikers as possible and convincing them that our strategy is the only one that stands a chance of winning. All supporters should contact their local branch organiser so we can put our resources to good use.

We must make sure the

strike breaks out of the narrow confines to which the media and the union leaders wish to restrict it. The gutter press are on the look-out for 'outside agitators' and 'extremist elements', and have already succeeded in putting the union on the defensive. Last week union officials told *tns* sellers from other unions to leave picket lines because they weren't officially involved in the dispute. Some supporters met with hostility from moderate strikers who argued, citing the example of the Wapping violence, that left-wing supporters on picket lines would discredit the strike.

It is important to counter these defensive arguments. Telecom strikers can do without self-imposed isolation. Rather than restricting support for the strike to their own union, NCU members should be arguing for support from other unions, unemployed

people, community associations and other groups. This strike will be won or lost depending on how effective the strikers are in closing down their industry. But winning wider support is also vital, to cut across media smear tactics about the strike hitting the old, the sick and the vulnerable sections of society. By encouraging fellow workers to join their picket lines and putting their case at labour movement meetings, the strikers can open up a debate about the issues in the strike and how to win it.

Organising solidarity is one of the most important tasks for our members and supporters for the same reasons. We have a responsibility to make sure that the issues in the strike are debated everywhere, so that more people can learn the lessons of how to organise effective action against the employers. RCP members and

supporters should immediately raise motions calling for support for the strike in their own trade union branches, student unions, women's groups, tenants' associations, etc. Invite a Telecom striker to speak. All our supporters' groups should become a forum for discussing the problems and the potential for the strike with local strikers. Encourage strikers you meet to write a letter to *tns* saying what they think about our arguments. Keep our editorial board up to date with local developments by phoning Andrew Calcutt on (01) 729 3771.

PS. Our own office phone line (01 729 0414) 'went down' last Thursday. Anyone wishing to contact any department of the RCP should call the *tns* editorial board number (01) 729 3771.

Anne Burton



In the run-up to last week's Bloody Sunday march in Sheffield the Irish Freedom Movement sponsored a debate between Labour MP Clive Soley and the RCP's John Fitzpatrick. Fitzpatrick put the case for Irish freedom and blasted Labour's bloody record in Ireland. Soley argued that withdrawal would cause a bloodbath and backed his party's policy on Ireland. The IFM will be putting Labour on the spot again in the general election campaign, when Fitzpatrick will be contesting Soley's Hammersmith seat. Join us. Contact Fiona Foster, BM IFM, London, WC1N 3XX.

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the RED FRONT

I/we agree to support the demands of The Red Front — a platform for working class unity.

NAME

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ORGANISATION

Send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

Diary

BIRMINGHAM: Friday 6 February, 9am. Transport for the George Roucou march in Manchester leaves from Cambridge Street. Tickets £2.50

GLASGOW: Saturday 28 February, 11am. A day of discussion and debate for trade unionists. Woodside Hall, near St George's Cross underground

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

the next step

**Shop Steward Faces
DEPORTATION!**

**GEORGE
ROUCOU**

WILL STAY!

DEMONSTRATION

& RALLY

FRIDAY 6

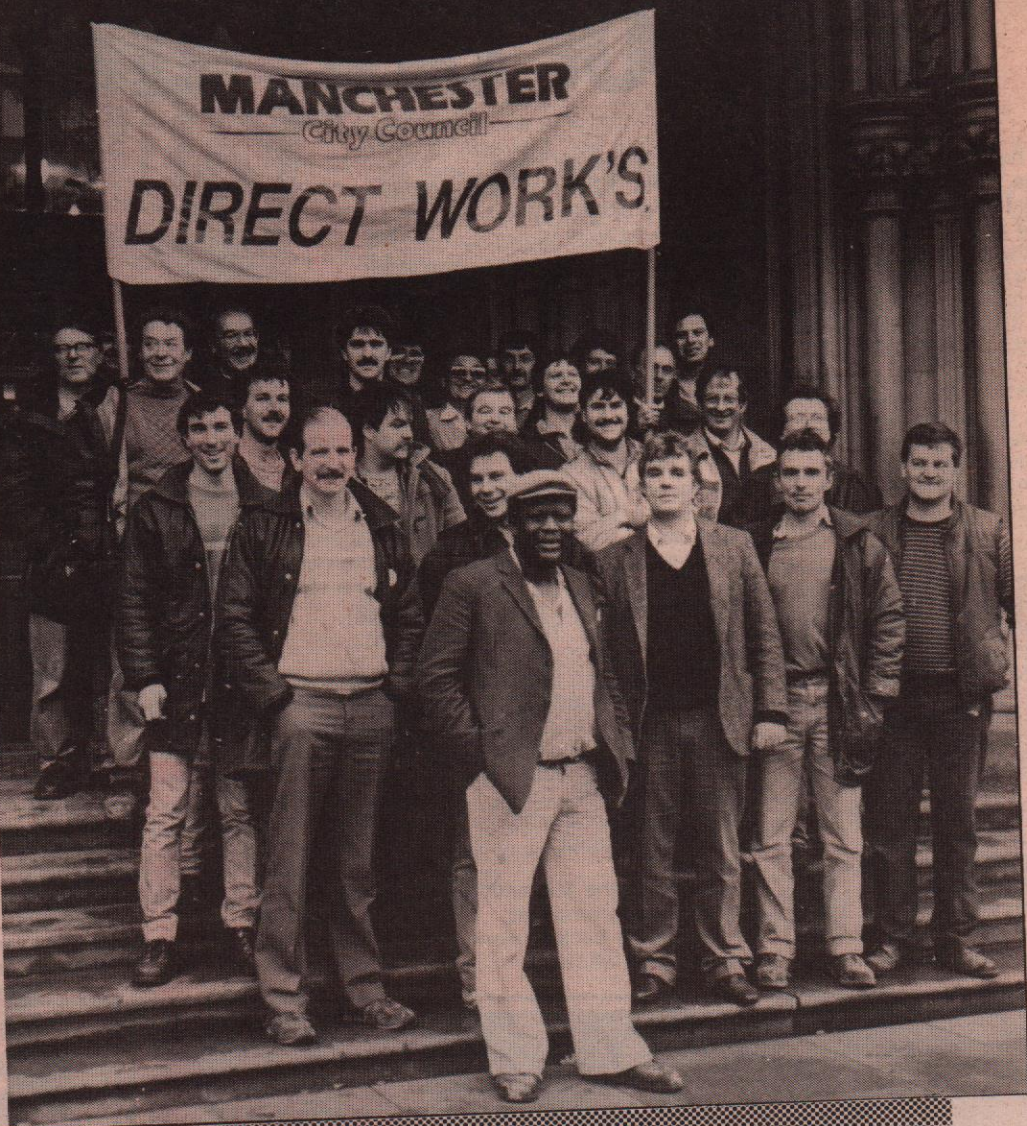
FEBRUARY

ASSEMBLE 12.00 PM

ALL SAINTS MANCUNIAN WAY

MARCH DEPARTS 1.00 PM

RALLY IN TOWN HALL 2.00 PM



David Rourke

The Tory government wants to kick Ucat shop steward George Roucou out of the country. We are determined he must stay — for his sake, for the sake of his common law wife Kim and her children, and for the sake of the whole British labour movement.

Roucou works in Manchester city council's direct works department. The home office has told him he must say goodbye to all that and clear off back to the Seychelles, which he left in 1975. The authorities have dreamed up a few phoney reasons for deporting Roucou. They lost his passport, then told him he couldn't stay without it. They insist that they must deport him and break up his family — on the grounds that his first marriage broke down years ago! None of these technicalities and word-games can hide the real reason why the Tories are picking on Roucou. He is black, and they are racists.

The British authorities now use any excuse to deport black people.

A Nigerian woman in North London is threatened with deportation because she supposedly forged a letter in order to stay in Britain. She was tricked into doing this by a policeman, who demanded sex in return for 'advice'. He lied to her, abused her and

sexually assaulted her. Yet the police officer's superiors at the home office still insist that the victim is guilty and must go back to Africa.

Britain's racist immigration laws stamp black people as second class citizens before they even set foot in the country. If they manage to get in, black people suffer discrimination in jobs, housing, health care and benefits. They also face the threat of violence from racists in and out of uniform,

who put Tory propaganda about 'floods of immigrants' into practice by trying to get rid of a few with petrol bombs or police truncheons. On top of all that, thousands of black people live with the daily threat of a deportation order dropping through their door.

The Tories want to deport people like George Roucou to turn public opinion against immigrants. Branding black people as

law-breakers helps to endorse the idea that immigrants are 'undesirable aliens', who can be blamed for everything from unemployment to Aids. This is a useful way for the authorities to divide the working class. It threatens the whole of the labour movement, by persuading people to support the government and to turn against black workers like George Roucou. That's why supporting the Manchester shop steward's right to stay must be a priority for every trade unionist.

Supporters of the campaign and march include:

Manchester Trades Council • Ucat Joint Shop Stewards' Council • Ucat Regional Council • Ucat Manchester 1st UD166 • Ucat Brixton 2nd Branch • John Laing Lock-Out Committee (Ucat) • Nalgo Branch Executive Council (town hall) • Nalgo City Engineering Joint Shop Stewards' Committee • Nalgo City Treasurers' JSSC • Nalgo Area Social Services • Liverpool City Council Direct Works JSSC • Astms Community Branch • Nupe Porters and Cleaners (town hall) • Nupe Housing • Nupe Nursery Nurses • Nupe Oldham Hospital • CPSA DTI Manchester • GMBATU GMW Section Lancashire • GMBATU 390 (Liverpool) • NUM Durham Mechanics • Actts 6/389 Branch • Usdaw Fallowfield D21 • AEU North and South District Committees • TGWU Manchester Executive Council • Sogat North-west Region • Kirkby Unemployed Centre • National Association of Probation Officers • Raj Vinda Singh Defence Campaign • Grassroots Cooperative • Jamaica Caribbean Society, Manchester • Ghana Brothers Welfare Association • Manchester National Union of Students • Manchester Poly Students' Union • Liverpool Poly and University Students' Unions

Labour Party

Eric Heffer MP • Alf Morris MP • Terry Fields MP • Bernie Grant • Labour Party Black Sections In Manchester

City Council • City Ward • Withington Ward • Withington CLP • Beswick and Clayton Ward • Hulme Ward • Harpurley Ward • Central CLP • Rusholme Ward • Wington Ward • Benchill Ward • Motherwell South CLP • Woodhouse Park Ward

We cannot hope to beat the Tories if our people are holding hands with Thatcher to defend 'the British way of life' against our black brothers and sisters.

The George Roucou defence campaign has taken the argument against deportations into workplaces and union meetings around the region. They have won support from an impressive list of labour movement bodies (see box). This week they hope to turn that support into an active display of working class anti-racism on Friday's work-time demonstration. Be there. The attack on George Roucou and every other victim of Britain's racist immigration laws is an issue none of us can afford to ignore.

ANTI-IRISH LAW EXPOSED

An act of war

The quarterly report on the Prevention of Terrorism Act, published last week, exposes its role as an instrument of repression against Irish people in Britain.

The PTA empowers the state to ban organisations and to detain and deport without charge individuals suspected of involvement in 'terrorist' offences. Last year 202 people were detained under the PTA, bringing total detentions to 6400 since it was passed in 1974. Only 13 of last year's PTA victims were charged under the Act, making

a total of just 181 prosecutions in 12 years. As usual, the vast majority of Irish people detained under the PTA were simply picked up, interrogated for up to a week, and released having been branded for life as a 'potential terrorist'.

Since 1984 the Act has been extended to deal with 'international terrorists'. Last year 55 people, including several Libyans, were detained under this title. None were charged. The 'international terrorist' dimension remains a sideshow to the Act's central aim of terrorising Irish men and women.

The PTA passed through parliament in record time in 1974 after the Birmingham pub bombings. It created the framework for the rabid anti-Irish hysteria that sent six Irishmen to prison for life on the strength of confessions beaten out of them. The case of the Birmingham Six is now under review, but the PTA's case against the Irish people rests.

The British authorities rely on the climate of suspicion and hatred towards the Irish which the PTA has helped create. It keeps public opinion on Britain's side, and leaves the state free to wage its dirty war across the water. Every IRA scare in Britain provides the pretext for road-blocks, radio-alerts and raids — all designed to target anybody with an Irish accent as a terrorist.

Some people would like to play around with the PTA to make it more palatable to the civil liberties lobby. The Labour Party wants to replace the Act with one that hits more republicans and less innocents. Viscount Colville, commissioned by the Tories to tinker around with the Act, proposes separate 'Irish' and 'international' laws. Politicians may quibble about how best to defeat the 'terrorists', but all parties back the anti-Irish prejudice that permeates the Act.

We are not interested in reforming the way the British state dishes out its anti-Irish bigotry. We want to abolish the PTA and every weapon Britain uses against the Irish.

Fiona Foster