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Revolutionary Communist Party • 6 March 1987 • 30p

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**AFTER
GREENWICH**

PANDORA ANDERSON

Kinnock's Party is no place for Socialists

No place for socialists

'W'e have got to reassure our traditional supporters that Labour is not a party of lunatics' declared Brian Nicholson, chair of the Transport and General Workers' Union, in the aftermath of the Greenwich by-election rout. Nicholson had just announced the formation of Londoners for Labour, a right-wing pressure group set up to break the influence of the left within the London Labour Party. His was one of several attacks on the left last week, from prominent Labour supporters who blame the bad publicity attracted by radicals like Deirdre Wood for their party's problems in places like Greenwich. Neil Kinnock is now coming under increased pressure to move in harder against Labour left wingers. He is unlikely to be slow in rising to the challenge.

Today's Labour left is the latest generation of socialists to discover that the Labour Party is not a vehicle for radical change. Back in 1981 the left won some constitutional changes that it claimed would alter the face of Labourism for ever. Over the next few years the left gained control of numerous constituency parties, local councils and committees. Now it is being told that all of this means nothing. The party remains the private property of labour movement bureaucrats, and they are not about to let a little thing like inner-party democracy interfere with their electoral ambitions. So Kinnock and moderation are in, the left and militancy are out.

The attempt to scapegoat the 'loony left' for Labour's failure in Greenwich indicates that the rightward drift of Labour policy is set to accelerate in the run-up to the general election. The Labour moderates insist that the left's paper support for contentious causes like lesbian and gay rights, anti-racism and Irish unity is upsetting 'traditional working people', and must be scrapped. This highlights the Labour bureaucrats' attitude to winning working class support.

STARK CHOICE

The Labour leaders accept that reactionary ideas about race, sex and nation have got a strong grip on some working class people today. Indeed, their capitulation to Tory propaganda campaigns is largely responsible for this state of affairs. Their conclusion is not that these right-wing notions should be challenged, but that Labour must adapt its policies to suit the prevailing public prejudices. With both eyes on the main chance, they are willing to pay any price to get into power. The post-Greenwich comment of the *Mirror*, Labour's sole friend in Fleet Street, summed up this 'tell 'em what they want to hear' attitude: 'Labour's choice is stark. Either it selects the candidates and adopts the policies which the voters want, or it will get the results that it doesn't want.'

The left is now being presented with a crucial choice. If it wants to contribute to Labour's election campaign, it will have to sit on its hands while the party spokesmen pander to all manner of prejudices about women, black people, homosexuals, the Irish and any other oppressed group. But if left wingers want to contribute to the development of the working class as a political force, they must reject the 'do nothing' directives from Walworth Road, and take up important issues even if it means enduring short-term unpopularity.

The fact that many working class people see issues such as lesbian and gay rights as irrelevant may make these taboo subjects for Labour leaders. But it makes them more important for anybody who is serious about changing society. Arguing for the working class to take up the cause of the oppressed is a vital step towards building an effective labour movement. It involves challenging the strongest links in the ideological chains with which the capitalist class holds our people.

Unless ordinary people are free from the influence of the establishment's prejudices, they will be incapable of taking a fresh look at who rules the world and how they run it. Workers who have rejected Thatcherite bigotry about homosexuals or black people will be in a powerful position to throw out all the backward conventions on which the power of the capitalist class rests. But the Labour leadership has no interest in challenging that power. It is prepared to knuckle under to the current climate of reaction, and it expects all those who support its party to do the same.

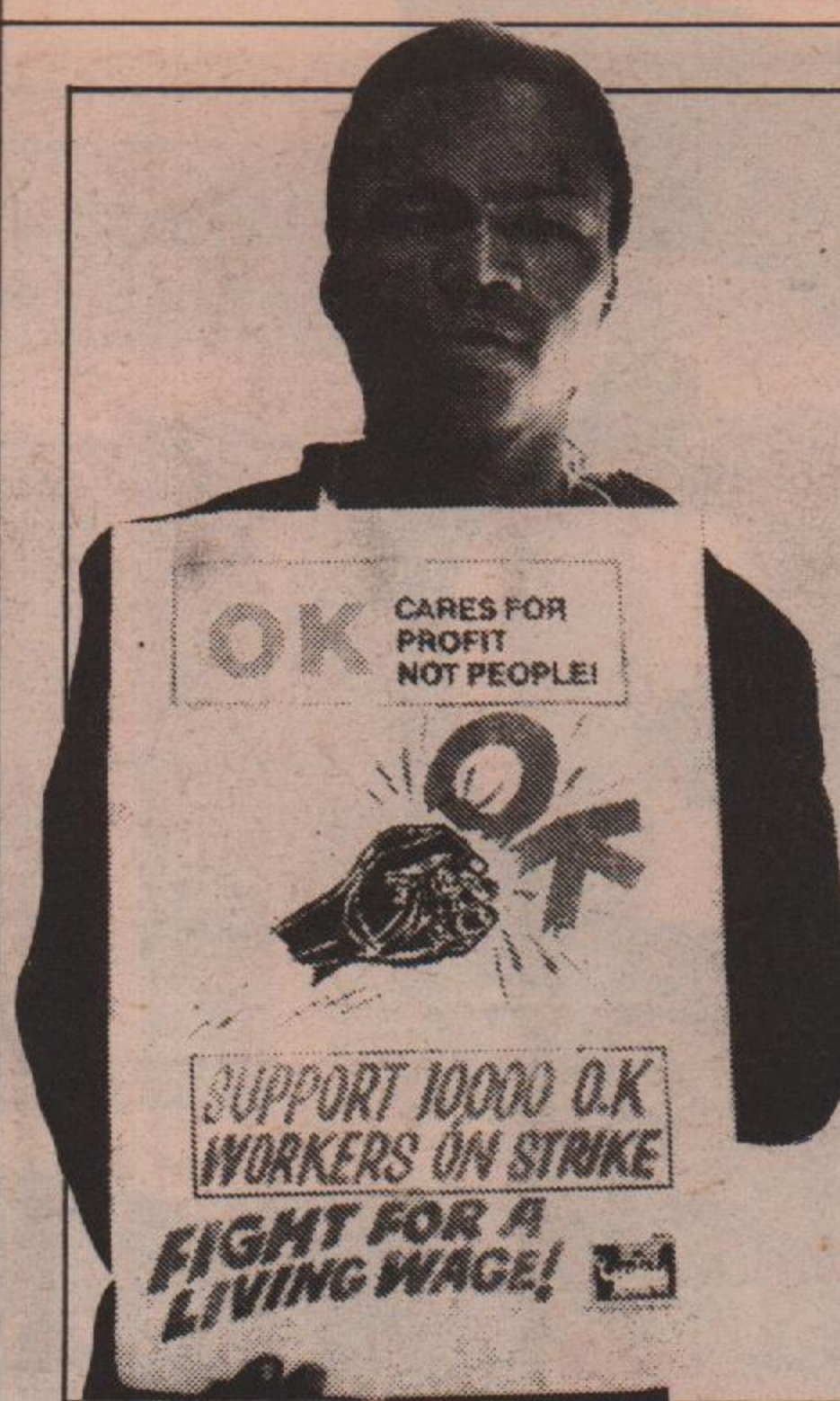
SPEAKING UP

The post-Greenwich debate about Labour policy has brought into sharp focus a question which we have been putting to the left for months: is your first loyalty to the working class, or to the Labour Party? This is a decision which no socialist can afford to put off any longer. If we allow the Labour leadership to restrict the scope of debate to what is acceptable to 'public opinion', we will be faced with a more intense climate of prejudice covering every important political issue. This is why we insist that now more than ever, the Labour Party is no place for socialists.

The Revolutionary Communist Party stood in the Greenwich by-election in the full knowledge that we could have little impact in an area where we have no record of work. But we are determined to take every opportunity to put the case for opposing Kinnock. Our aim is not to win elections, but to provide a focus for those who want to fight back today. Through our involvement in successful initiatives like the George Roucou Defence Campaign against a deportation, and the Wombourne 12 Defence Campaign against the victimisation of militant lesbians and gays, we are taking a stand on the issues which the Labour Party wants to sweep under the carpet.

The campaign which can draw all of these issues together, and get every socialist campaigning beneath a banner of basic working class demands, is *The Red Front*. We want to build *The Red Front* into a bloc of all those who recognise that standing up to the forces of reaction is too important to be forgotten on the Labour Party's say-so. We want to see left wingers standing as *Red Front* candidates in the general election. But unlike Kinnock, we are not interested in subordinating the issues of the moment to the end of getting votes tomorrow.

The Red Front is for self-respecting socialists who are sick of being called 'lunatics' by bureaucrats who think that a vote from a racist is as good as any other. We cannot promise you election-winning parties like the one the SDP held last week. But we can promise you that if we don't start speaking up for our class now, the red-baiters will seriously set back the prospects for real change. Join *The Red Front* by filling in the box on page 11.



A leading organiser of the Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa spoke to *tns* about his union's struggle against employer intimidation and police violence

'OK must die!' ON STRIKE IN SOUTH AFRICA

'T'his is the longest strike in the history of the South African retail trade, 11 000 shopworkers have been out for nine weeks against the OK Bazaars chainstore, the CCAWUSA organiser told us. The OK strikers are in a militant mood. 'You would not get out of a meeting alive if you suggested the strikers go back to work,' said another strike organiser.

Despite conditions of violent repression under the current state of emergency, the shopworkers are determined to fight on.

A ruthless management has sacked 2000 workers over the past two years and torn up an agreement linking wage rises to increased profits. OK workers are poorly paid, often getting only half as much as workers at other major stores.

'Our demands include a R160 per month pay increase and a minimum wage of R450,' said the strike leader. 'We have already rejected an offer of R85 per month. We want comparable wages for men and women and similar wages for women on maternity leave. We are demanding the same treatment for migrant workers from the "homelands" and the abolition of the anniversary increase system, which divides us by promising each worker an annual increment in the month they started work.'

Management has sought to smash the strike, subjecting workers to strip-searches and luring strikers into the hands of the police. Arrested strikers have been warned not to picket company premises, but threats have not stopped them. Police armed with management personnel files have visited activists at home, and OK supervisors have turned up on doorsteps to threaten dismissal.

INTIMIDATION

OK management has been happy to use the murderous thugs of Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha organisation to break the strike. Two weeks ago Inkatha bused in hundreds of its supporters to cross-picket lines at the OK store in Ladysmith, Natal. The union condemned Inkatha for supporting 'capitalist exploiters against the working class — even on basic wage issues.'

This sort of crude intimidation has not worked, so management's new tactic is to smash union finances by landing CCAWUSA with huge legal bills. Recently police arrested 64 strikers on the same day and gave them each R1000 bail — a heavy burden on union funds. About 550 strikers have been sacked and at least 140 are in detention. The union spends a lot of money transporting activists between stores to keep solidarity strong. What little is left goes on food. Workers at other CCAWUSA-organised stores are giving R5-R10 a month to support the strike.

The union and its supporters have organised a broad and effective boycott

campaign: 'We have won effective boycott action with a high percentage of black customers and a significant number of white consumers are not shopping at OK. Unions in supply firms have been refusing to supply OK branches — Kellogg's, I&J, Coca Cola, Farmfare, Dairymaid and others. In fact, wherever the Food and Allied Workers' Union is strong, we are getting lots of support.' The company has been forced to resort to packaging its products in plain containers and even using bags bearing the names of rival stores. Even a campaign of drastic price cuts has been a dead loss, and already one large loss-making branch has been forced to shut its doors.

The strike has had an important politicising impact.

OK Bazaars is partly owned by the giant Anglo-American corporation, which has long boasted about its liberal, anti-apartheid stance. But OK workers have rapidly come to realise that 'anti-apartheid bosses' are not their friends. OK militants cite a recent strike on Vaal Reefs goldmine in which the company dismissed the entire workforce in an attempt to smash the National Union of Mineworkers. Anglo-American even has its own private army — complete with armoured riot vehicles — to maintain order in the mines.

IT'S WAR

The strikers trace management's hard line in the OK dispute back to Anglo-American's industrial relations policy, pointing to many strikes and protest stoppages in its mines and factories. Union leaders have agreed it is high time to take on the company as a whole. As one strike leader put it: 'We now realise that the battles are orchestrated from very high up. The hand that wields the weapons against the workers on the mines is also responsible for waging war against workers in the factories. Ultimately we have to challenge them at that level.'

The trade union movement has taken up the challenge against Anglo-American. Two hundred shop stewards from 54 Anglo-owned companies met recently under the umbrella of the Congress of South African Trade Unions to agree on widespread industrial action. Taking on a company the size of Anglo-American is no mean task for the youthful trade union movement, but delegates were defiant. As one militant put it: 'We don't care what happens, but OK must die!'

The OK Bazaar employers and their masters in the Anglo-American corporation know that the war is on. This week the union meets management again and the company looks like it will be giving in to the workers' demands.

Russell Osborne



PANDORA ANDERSON

EYES DOWN FOR DEIRDRE: WOOD WENT ALONG WITH KINNOCK'S LINE AND WENT DOWN TO DEFEAT

GREENWICH BY-ELECTION

ROTTEN FRUIT OF KINNOCK'S LABOUR

The Greenwich by-election has brought home the urgency of building **The Red Front** as a bloc of left wingers who won't sacrifice their socialism on the altar of Kinnock's election campaign

The SDP/Liberal Alliance claimed that their victory in the Greenwich by-election was 'a new dawn' in British politics. It should certainly serve as a rude awakening for those who have pinned their hopes on a Labour government coming to the rescue of the working class. Greenwich suggests that Neil Kinnock's party is incapable of winning a general election. More importantly, it indicates what we can expect before the election if we keep our heads down and allow Kinnock to speak for the labour movement.

Kinnock's rambling repetition of Tory/Alliance politics will help the authorities to consolidate a right-wing climate in which the only winners can be the supporters of British capitalism.

SDP candidate Rosie Barnes came from third to first and ran past the finishing line with a 6000 majority. She took thousands of votes from the Tories, whose share of the poll slumped from 35 to 11 per cent. This may have given us a glimpse of widespread dissatisfaction with Thatcher's government, and set back the prospects for an early general election. But, more significantly, Labour's collapse in Greenwich indicates the general lack of confidence in Kinnock's opposition. Labour candidate Deirdre Wood even managed to lose votes from the low starting point of her party's poor 1983 result, and was turned out of a seat Labour had held for 40 years. In these circumstances, the establishment has little cause for panicking about a dip in Tory support.

NOT CREDIBLE

Kinnock and Wood were quick to blame the media smear campaign for Labour's humiliating defeat. The gutter press certainly ran its fair share of scurrilous stories against Wood, and more respectable media figures like *Newsnight's* Vincent Hanna went overboard to get the Alliance bandwagon going. But does Kinnock seriously expect us

to believe that Greenwich people were so stupid that they believed whatever they read in the papers? The artificial media campaign only had an impact because it connected with a real uneasiness about the lack of credibility in the Labour Party's by-election campaign. Labour was caught between Kinnock's drive to present his party as a respectable force which moderate voters could trust, and the fact that Wood was identified as a member of the 'loony left'.

Most of the scare stories about Wood originated in the upper echelons of the Labour Party itself, put out by party notables to try to prevent her selection as candidate in the first place. When this failed, Kinnock was stuck with a left-wing candidate to fight an election campaign around his increasingly right-wing policies.

MODERATE MINDERS

The Labour leaders went through some tortuous twists and turns to deny that Wood was a radical and to make out that the campaign was another mainstream party effort, like the one which won Fulham for Mr Clean Nick Raynsford last year. Wood went along with Kinnock's line, clumsily trying to distance herself from her left-wing past. We were left with the pathetic spectacle of the Labour candidate mumbling at press conferences about how she disagreed with her leader's support for Nato, yet was 'happy' with the policy. In the last few days of the campaign, as the Alliance got closer in the opinion polls, the Labour MPs sent in as Wood's minders hardly allowed her to say a word in public.

Labour's desperation to appear as a moderate party which the middle classes could trust forced it to respond to every base accusation and piece of bloody-minded abuse it got from the Tories, the Alliance and the press. This meant that Labour spent the entire campaign on the defensive, denying any suggestion that it had anything to do with socialism. As a result the

reactionaries were able to dictate the basis on which the by-election was fought. The Alliance pulled together the anti-Labour vote, and Labour's incoherent attempt to be all things to all voters failed to inspire anybody. Wood was left with an unenthusiastic core of Labour support and little else.

Labour's campaign in Greenwich has shown that supporting Kinnock will get us nowhere.

It means standing by while the Labour leadership reduces politics to a media circus in which the babies get kissed, the busloads of celebrities get televised, and the working class gets ignored. It is not just a problem of putting our money on a party whose electoral prospects appear to be getting progressively worse. If we remain silent for fear of causing problems for Kinnock, we will allow the establishment to call the shots on every important political issue between now and the general election. Giving Labour a blank cheque amounts to handing over our interests to bureaucrats who treat us with contempt, take our votes for granted, and then accuse us of believing *Sun* editorials when things don't go their way.

SDP SWING

The Revolutionary Communist Party contested the Greenwich by-election to offer an alternative to Labour. While canvassing local estates, we met many Labour supporters who were unhappy about Kinnock's project of presenting his party as a harmless and inoffensive body. Others had seen enough of what Labour would do for working class people in the years they had suffered under a Labour council.

Many of these people agreed with our criticisms of Labour, and admitted that they were seriously considering denying Wood their support. But once the SDP bandwagon got rolling, things changed for the worse. Most left-wing people returned to the Labour fold, for no other reason than a

desire to keep out the openly pro-capitalist candidates. This last-minute pressure on traditional Labour supporters to deny the SDP a victory made a big difference to the RCP vote. Coupled with the damaging fact that we had never so much as sold a paper in the constituency before the campaign began, it meant that our total vote was cut back to a disappointing 91.

Those left wingers who switched back to Labour at the last minute now have to face up to the fact that they wasted their votes.

They have still been stuck with a right-wing MP, and have missed an opportunity to speak out for the working class. Their voices demanding that Labour does something for ordinary people have been lost in the clamour of criticisms from the Labour right, blaming the left for the loss of the seat. As the anti-left drive gets going inside the post-Greenwich Labour Party, socialists who still cling to a last shred of belief that Labour is the 'lesser evil' will be expected to endure further slaps in the face from Kinnock's crowd. This is their reward for swallowing their misgivings and backing Labour. It is time they said that enough is enough.

THE RED FRONT

Despite our low vote, there were some encouraging signs beneath the surface of the RCP campaign. The level of anti-Labour feeling among left-wing people was at a new high. This indicates the possibility of building support for *The Red Front*, as a bloc of left wingers who want to put fighting for the working class before supporting the Labour Party. The ominous signs of where the Labour Party is heading also makes the fight for *The Red Front* a more urgent task than ever. Our problem remains that of convincing people that there are no advantages at all to be had from backing Kinnock's campaign. Greenwich indicates that this is no easy task. But it is a far more realistic perspective than expecting Labour to achieve anything for ordinary people.

The hypocrisy of Tory democracy

The government's latest Green Paper on trade union reform is an attack on the working class dressed up as a defence of 'individual rights'

Scare stories about 'trade union power' have been a rich source of support for the Tories over the past eight years. They have produced an endless stream of anti-union propaganda and laws, focused on issues which conjure up images of working class thuggery in the minds of moderate voters: picketing, the closed shop, corruption/intimidation in union voting procedures. Last week's Green Paper proposing further union reform seeks to revive the campaign in an election year.

The Green Paper suggests a wide range of new rules, which would give legal protection to scabs, make union trustees obey court orders, virtually outlaw the closed shop, force union leaders to stand for election, introduce postal ballots for all union executive elections and political fund votes, and create a commissioner who could help members take their unions to court. But the details of what the proposals would mean in law don't matter much for the moment.

The important thing for the Tories is to keep the issue of trade union abuse in the public eye, and create an anti-union climate in the run-up to polling day.

The discussion document, *Trade Unions and Their Members*, is littered with two-faced promises to protect the 'essential liberties' and 'rights' of union members. The government has the gall to pose as the champion of individual liberty, at a time when it is snatching away our rights by the fistful.

LIARS' LAW

Tory politicians have passed public order legislation that makes it an offence to walk anywhere and say anything to which the police take exception. They have introduced immigration laws and procedures which pull black families apart. They have launched phoney job creation schemes which conscript unemployed youth into servitude. The Tories' record makes a nonsense of their claim that their past trade union laws and latest proposals are about preserving freedom. The 'individual freedom' which the Green Paper upholds is the freedom of employers to use everything from scabs to solicitors to undermine working class organisation.

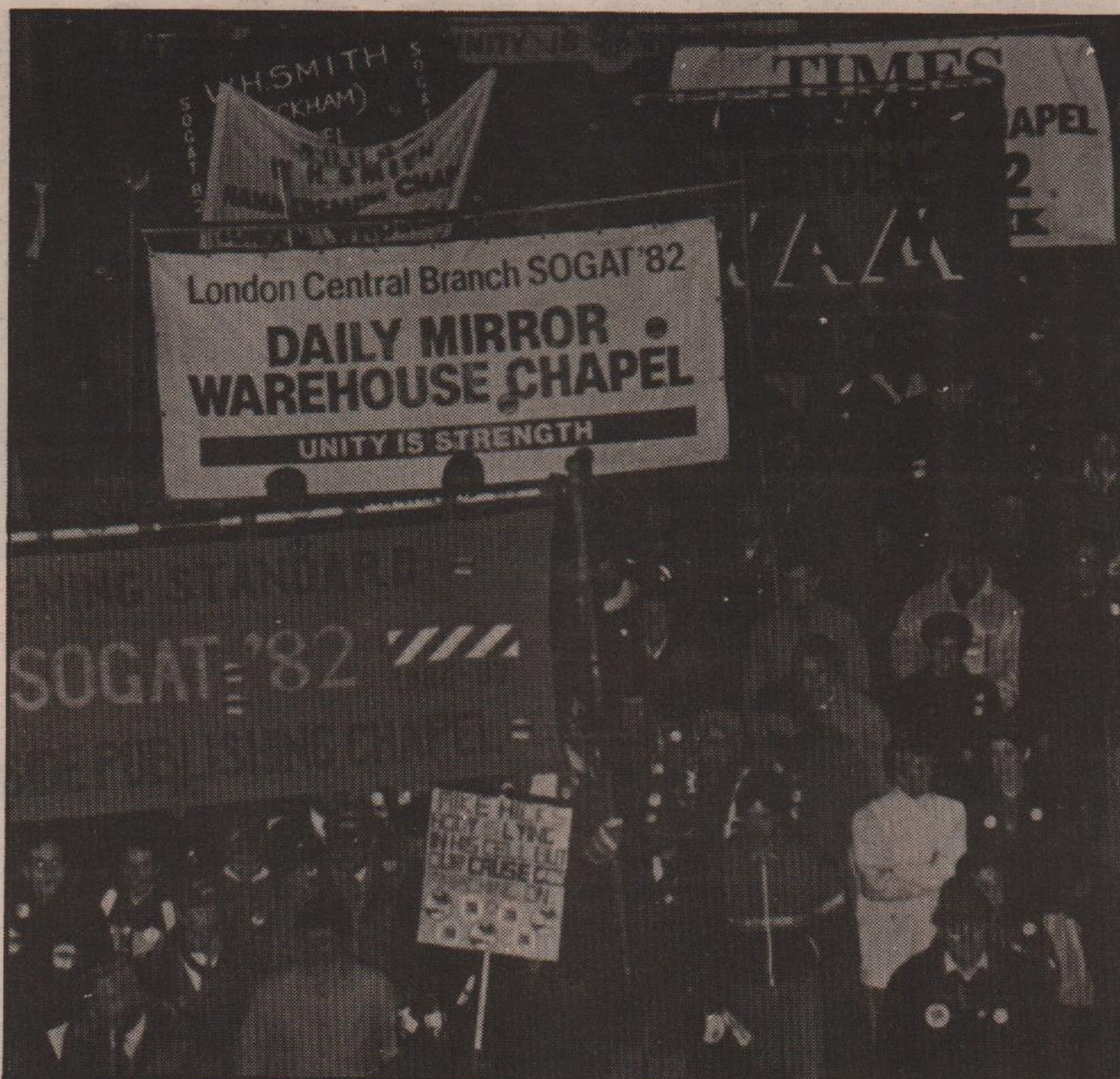
The Tories highlight the question of individual rights as an excuse for attacking the collective power of the working class. The only weapon our class has is its ability to come together and fight for its rights. By insisting that each trade unionist be treated as an individual under the law, the authorities seek to abolish our right to organise together to defend ourselves. This is a recipe for fragmenting our forces and giving the employers a free hand. In a world where it is every man or woman for his or her self, the 'individuals' who happen to own all the wealth and power in society can rule unchallenged.

The Green Paper's arguments on the 'right to work' and on secret ballots illustrate the Tories' hypocrisy.

SCABS' CHARTER

The Green Paper says that, as a principle, scabs should be protected against being punished by their union: 'The government believes that a decision to take industrial action should be a matter for the individual. Every union member should be free to decide for himself whether or not he wishes to break his contract of employment and run the risk of dismissal without compensation. No union member should be penalised by his trade union for exercising his right to cross a picket line and go to work.'

This 'right to work' amounts to the right to break strikes. It is the right of a few scabs to destroy the efforts of an entire workforce. In a modern dispute about job losses, like the miners' strike or the conflict at Wapping, an individual exercising his 'right to work'



UNION LEADERS WOULDN'T BREAK TORY LAWS THAT HELPED TO BREAK THE WAPPING STRIKE

would be assisting an employer in sacking thousands of workers. As individuals, our 'right to work' means nothing. The Green Paper says that each trade unionist must be 'free' to decide whether to 'run the risk of dismissal without compensation'. What isolated worker could hope to take on a boss threatening the sack if left to his own devices? The only way we can defend our jobs is by organising together to force the employer to back down — and to force scabs to obey the decisions of the majority.

The Green Paper also revives the theme of the need for secret postal ballots in union voting. It attacks 'the holding of strike votes

by show of hands in the intimidatory atmosphere of the mass meeting', insisting that workers should be allowed to vote 'free from pressure'. It points out that previous anti-union laws have made some progress, but suggests that postal ballots are the only real solution: 'Because of the scope for subtler forms of pressure in a workplace ballot, however, there is a real question whether such ballots can ever be totally free from suspicion.'

The Tories' fascination with postal ballots is certainly not free from suspicion. With the possible exception of hermits who live in the hills, nobody is ever 'free from pressure'

when voting on any political issue. The question is which pressures are to influence the individual voter. The Tories want to make sure that a worker is 'free' from the pressure of his workmates and the influence and arguments of union activists. Instead, they want to expose trade unionists to pressure from the employers, the media and from their family responsibilities.

FAMILY UNITS

Voting by post from the comfort of your home creates an 'intimidatory atmosphere' all of its own. Workers are faced with a barrage of abuse from the press and television, and with threatening letters from the employers. Cut off from their colleagues, they also have to contend with the 'subtler pressures' of family life — worries about where their next mortgage repayment is coming from, etc. This makes them far more likely to opt for moderation. Our interests lie in having all votes conducted in open at mass meetings after a full and frank debate of the issues among the workers concerned. This allows the more active trade unionists to influence their passive colleagues, and maximises the possibility of organising a determined response to aggressive employers.

The Tories' version of democracy is just an attempt to split us up into individual family units, each with its own problems to worry about, and to deny our common interest in uniting as a class.

OUR DEMOCRACY

The hypocrisy of Tory propaganda about trade unionism has never been starker. The only reason they get away with it is that the leaders of the official labour movement accept the standards which the government lays down (see below). We need to adopt a different approach, and expose the reality of exploitation and oppression which lies behind the Tories' talk of 'freedom'. Creating a fresh climate for debate, in which democracy is defined as that which represents the real interests of the majority of ordinary people, is the only way to deal with the latest pre-election propaganda offensive.

TUC bows to Tory laws

The trade union leaders' preliminary discussion of the Green Paper reveals why the Tories have had such success in whipping up anti-union sentiment. The employment policy and organisation committee of the TUC discussed the Tory proposals on 18 February, before they were published. The minutes record the union chiefs' pessimistic conclusions:

'The TUC should avoid making a high-profile response to the government's plans at this stage. It had to be recognised that the reported proposals were not likely to be electorally unpopular, and the TUC should not assist in heightening public awareness of them. The government clearly hoped to put unions on the defensive on issues on which it was difficult for unions to respond effectively.'

RESONANCE

The union leaders accept that they have no hope of challenging the Tories' case. They have opted to keep their heads down because attacks on them are 'not likely to be electorally unpopular' and they cannot 'respond effectively' to Tory propaganda. This reflects the real problems with our unions today.

Tory arguments have a resonance among many people, including trade unionists, who

recognise that union officials do not represent their members. Union leaders are willing to collaborate with employers and sacrifice their members' jobs and rights to preserve their own status as negotiators. They rely on the rule book rather than any contact with the rank and file. They prefer issuing diktats and disciplinary orders to organising campaigns among members. Their version of a closed shop is a sweetheart deal with an employer, which denies the rank and file any real representation.

BUREAUCRATIC

The bureaucratic and undemocratic character of trade union organisation gives credence to the Tory campaign. The union bureaucrats' inability to mobilise their members against the government has led them to bow down before every anti-union law. The willingness of the official labour movement to accept each fresh Tory insult, changing their rules and methods to suit the standards dictated by the ruling class, has helped to create the widespread belief that the Tories 'have a point'.

The approach of the election has made union officials even less willing to make a fuss about Tory attacks on our rights.

They are counting on the return of a

Labour government to give them back some of the prestige they have lost under Thatcher. They don't want to do anything which might scare moderate voters away from Kinnock. The TUC decision to keep quiet about the Green Paper shows how low our leaders will stoop to help Labour. Yet Kinnock has promised us laws defining the 'individual rights' of trade unionists, rather than the collective rights of the working class. He accepts the basic prejudices of the Tory proposals.

MACHINE-MEN

The dire state of our unions means that we should not respond to Tory attacks by merely defending what already exists. We must oppose every instance of state interference in the affairs of the labour movement. But we have no interest, for example, in upholding a closed shop system based on cosy collusion between the bosses and union bureaucrats. We want 100 per cent union membership enforced by an active workforce to defend its rights, not a phoney closed shop agreed in secret talks to preserve the position of the fat cats from union head office.

We need unions which exist to fight for their members. To act as combat organisations, our unions must be run by those they exist to serve. The way to put the Tories in their place and win some genuine union democracy is to campaign for rank and file control, and an end to the rule of the bureaucrats and machine-men.

AFTER THE MEDIA MORALISM...

The truth about the Aids panic

In a week when viewers have been subjected to a barrage of propaganda about Aids in a TV bonanza, *Gemma Forest* reviews a new pamphlet which tells the truth about the Aids panic

What a long way we've come! In the seventies, Ian Dury stumped on small pub stages to sing out for sex and drugs and rock and roll. Today, in a plea for 'safe sex' as the way to rid us all of Aids, he adjusts a condom on a model penis, sitting in a bright, designer television studio and watched by millions.

Dury may have been taken in. By urging a sheath on us all, he has added his voice to what Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and Don Milligan describe as an unjustified panic about the heterosexual spread of Aids. In a new pamphlet, *The Truth about the Aids Panic*, Fitzpatrick and Milligan, (respectively an East London GP and a longstanding campaigner for gay rights), argue that both the scale of the Aids epidemic and the danger of it spreading among heterosexuals have been greatly exaggerated. Contrasting the millions of government leaflets sent out to pensioners with a mass of scientific evidence on the difficulty of catching Aids by heterosexual contact, they accuse Norman Fowler and the government of encouraging groundless fears, as well as mass hostility against lesbians and gays.

PRIESTS & POP STARS

'You don't catch Aids,' observed Dury twice, with menace, 'you allow somebody else to give it to you.' That nobody is safe any more was also the main message of the two-channel and twice-aired Independent Broadcasting Authority extravaganza *First Aids*. Radio One disc jockey Mike Smith, together with a panel of medical 'experts', pop stars, and TV personalities, argued that Aids is a threat to us all. The *Saturday Live* sketch spelt it out: 'It's going to make the bubonic plague look like a runny nose.' Pop stars took the place of priests to issue pious platitudes about the virtues of stable relationships, safe sex and celibacy.

'One moment of passion — a lifetime of regret' was the moralistic message to the studio audience, a cross-section of British youth.

'I told my brother to cool it,' confessed a decidedly uncool Simon Le Bon. 'He's one of these people who thinks it couldn't possibly happen to him.' 'I think you've got no choice in this day and age,' said Siobhan of Bananarama, sounding like my grandmother sounding off about the sins of the flesh, 'you shouldn't take risks at all.' Peter Gabriel told us to 'think first'. After these sermons from self-appointed spokesmen for Britain's youth, Smith suggested that 'There's obviously a lot of agreement that it's up to us to keep Aids at bay.' The TV producers might have convinced the stars that chastity, condoms and celibacy are right on, but they had a harder job selling it to the more sensible studio audience.

Asked if they had been convinced that condoms were trendy — after being told that 'Frankie says use condoms' and 'Real men come in a jiffi' (a new designer condom) — most young people said no, to the chagrin of the compere and his guests. 'It appears that we have a long way to go,' sighed the patronising Smith. Asked if they had been scared into having less sex, most of the young men, and not a few women, argued that the scare was 'blown up out of

proportion' and the attempt to put a stop to sex was 'pathetic'. The panel turned the heat on the females in the audience, arguing that girls were naturally 'romantic' not 'randy' and should 'give a lead by sticking to a steady relationship and saying no to sex'.

After 90 minutes of imploring, patronising, moralising and bludgeoning their audience the panel got the results they wanted. But the straw poll at the end of the programme was so contrived that it can't have convinced many people. The *First Aids* special and the series of sermons that followed it throughout the week revealed the real purpose of the Aids panic as a propaganda device to scare people into sticking to the sexual straight and narrow. Significantly, the programme didn't mention homosexuality once, except to say that Aids is not a 'gay plague' and anybody can catch it. But the broadcasters don't even need to say it anymore. The politicians, press propagandists and priests have already successfully spread the message that homosexuals are the source of the 'scourge'.

The Truth about the Aids Panic cuts through the cant and confusion about the disease and argues that the only answer to the Aids scare is to stand up for lesbian and gay rights.

Just 650 British cases of Aids over the period 1982 to 1986, say Fitzpatrick and Milligan, represents a slow rate of diffusion of the virus. On the basis of America's more substantial experience of Aids, it is likely that the current British rate of new cases — two a day — will fall from 1988 onwards. Above all, American evidence suggests that only four per cent of 'Western' Aids cases are not among the high-risk groups — homosexual men, intravenous drug users, haemophiliacs, recipients of infected blood products or the babies of infected mothers.

Hundreds of 'African' Aids cases among heterosexual women tell us little, the authors maintain, about the virus in the West. In central Africa, malnutrition and chronic parasitic infection suppress the immune system and the constant re-use of unsterilised needles and syringes is likely to widen the spread of Aids. These conditions do not obtain in Britain.

The authors do not deny that, in the West, women have caught Aids from vaginal intercourse with haemophiliacs and drug users. But they dispute whether men can catch the virus from women. A 1985 study found infected US servicemen singling out prostitutes as culprits. However, since both homosexuality and drug abuse are, in the US Army, grounds for dismissal, the reliability of soldier 'confessions' has come in for authoritative criticism from medical experts.

The heterosexual spread of Aids is possible, say Fitzpatrick and Milligan, but it appears very inefficient. San Francisco's six heterosexual cases among 2500 other types amounted to three who had had contact with bisexuals, and three who had slept with intravenous drug users. In Britain at the end of last year, the total of female cases stood at 17: it included two babies, two drug users, five women who had contracted the virus through heterosexual intercourse overseas and just three who had had the same misfortune in Britain.

Fitzpatrick and Milligan put forward a well-argued case to prove that Aids is largely confined to gay men.

They also provide hard-hitting evidence that the authorities are taking advantage of a fatal disease to persecute homosexuals. Given the restrained, scientific tone of 'Aids minister' Norman Fowler's offerings, it might seem unfair to bracket him with the *Sun* and other adherents of the 'gay plague' theory of Aids. But the authors argue that, by turning a blind eye to the *Sun* at the same time as making heterosexuals feel uneasy, Fowler has inflamed anti-gay prejudice. So much so, in fact, that lesbians and gays may be driven back into the closet conditions in which viruses such as Aids thrive.

RIGHTS AT RISK

For gay men who have 'come out', advice about safe sex is unnecessary: since 1983-4, when Aids first broke in Britain, most 'out' gays have taken sensible precautions. But for gays who have not come out things are different. Often harassed, they are frequently forced to have sex in circumstances which militate against precautions. For them, advice about safe sex is no help at all. And they account for the vast majority of gays.

If Aids flourishes beyond the established 'out' gay scene, say Fitzpatrick and Milligan it will be because the Tories have created a climate in which homosexual encounters must be furtive and quick. Legal and social discrimination against homosexuals accelerates the spread of Aids, and it is this discrimination, not 'safe sex', which must be taken up if the virus is to be checked.

The pamphlet puts up a strong case for defending the rights of homosexuals.

It aims to rally working class solidarity with the fight for lesbian and gay rights. The key theme is that if we want working class unity we have got to repudiate the Aids panic, whether it is promoted by pop stars or politicians, and put the case for exposing the scare — including the anti-sex drive that tries to present the morality of Mary Whitehouse as trendy, and the attack on homosexuality.

THE PROPAGANDA WAR

ELTON AND OSCAR

Last week pop star Elton John issued a writ for libel against the *Sun* over allegations of homosexual orgies at a friend's country mansion in Berkshire. Before proceeding further with this case, Elton would be well-advised to consider the fate of a showbusiness colleague who pursued a similar court action nearly 100 years ago.

Oscar Wilde, the celebrated playwright and author, launched a libel action against the Marquess of Queensbury, of boxing rules fame, in 1895. Determined to break up a homosexual affair between his son Lord Alfred Douglas, known to his friends as 'Bosie', and Wilde, the Marquess accused the playwright of 'posing as a sodomite' (sic). He might not have been able to spell it, but he knew that it had to be stamped out, and the establishment of Victorian England was firmly on his side.

Defending the Marquess, the barrister Edward Carson, later to become famous as the leader of Ulster Loyalist revolt against home rule, dragged out the full details of Wilde's homosexual lifestyle before an outraged court and a scandalised Victorian public. Wilde's case collapsed and he tried to withdraw the action. The judge however insisted that the jury clear the Marquess from any taint of libel. Wilde was arrested within hours of the close of the case and charged with 'acts of gross indecency' under the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act.

Over the succeeding months, Wilde endured a series of trials. The case was sensationalised in the popular press and used to make it clear to the public that homosexuality was a deviant and intolerable activity. The Wilde case served perfectly the needs of the social purity movement that was then in full cry against homosexuality and prostitution. This curious alliance of clerical reactionaries, feminists and radical campaigners sought to promote conventional morality against forms of sexual licence which were regarded as a threat to race and nation. At the time the British Empire was facing unrest in Ireland, Egypt, India and other colonies, as well as mounting competition from Germany and the USA and growing labour movement agitation at home. The social purity campaign played an important role in fostering a conservative consensus in British society.

British society in 1987 is ripe for a re-run of the Wilde trial and Elton John could be a promising victim for the enforcers of the new morality. There are some striking parallels. At the time of his disgrace, Wilde was at the peak of his success, with two plays in the West End. Elton John is an international rock superstar on good terms with royalty. Like Wilde too, Elton has offended by breaking the conventions of the elite social group to which he now belongs. 'What joy was it to you to entertain grooms and coachmen?' Carson inquired contemptuously of Wilde, referring to his taste for working class youths. Wilde described this passion as 'feasting with panthers'. Now the *Sun* sneers about Elton's affinity for young tattooed skinheads and spikey-haired punks, 'the rougher the better'.

Wilde finally received two years hard labour — the maximum sentence — and emerged from prison a broken man. He died in Paris a couple of years later, addicted to absinthe, at the age of 46. Things have changed for homosexuals over the past century. As a result of legislative reforms in the sixties, the maximum sentence that Elton John could face if he ever comes to court for homosexual offences is not two years but five.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE AIDS PANIC

Dr Michael Fitzpatrick
Don Milligan

£1.95 plus 40p p&p from
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London WC1N 3XX

When workers occupied the Caterpillar plant outside Glasgow last month, one British paper asked whether this militant gesture was the start of revolutionary action against the de-industrialisation of Scotland. But the *Guardian* was able to reassure its readers that everything was under control:

'If it ever was the start of a revolution, the combined pacifying forces of the trades unions, the under secretary of state for Scotland and the Labour, Tory and Alliance parties have quickly smothered it.' (30 January)

The Scottish National Party should not be left out: it too has played a part in smothering the revolutionary potential of the Scottish working class.

From the days of Red Clydeside around the First World War, through the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders' occupation of the early seventies up to today, the Scottish working class has generally been in advance of the working class in the rest of Britain. In numerous disputes in recent years — from the strikes in the shipyards and the coalfields to occupations of North Sea oil platforms and engineering plants, from the struggles of women workers at Lee Jeans to the continuing fight for jobs at the Ardrish plant at Ardrish — the Scottish working class has shown its willingness to take on the employers and the Tory government.

It is understandable that Scottish workers should often become impatient at the moderation and lack of militancy of their English brothers and sisters.

It is not surprising that many are sympathetic to the argument that the Scottish working class would be better off going it alone in an independent Scotland.

SOLO SUICIDE

Yet, on their own, Scottish workers would be no more successful than the English or Welsh working class fighting in isolation. The employers in Scotland do not fight alone: they have the backing of the bosses in England and the British state apparatus. Trying to take them on alone north of the border is simply suicidal.

Supporters of the call for an independent Scotland put their hopes for the future in the formation of some sort of devolved Scottish parliament or assembly. This is a striking symptom of a familiar English disease — the notion that state institutions can act as the agency of progress. Yet the experience of history shows that our own organisation and action is the only guarantee of success against the system. The class struggle is the only force that can defend the working class.

Parliamentary talking shops exist only to legitimise the rule of the capitalist class and to divert workers from the real struggle for power in society.

The call for some sort of Scottish assembly unites most political parties in Scotland to the left of the Tories. It is a striking indication of the central problem of Scottish politics. This is the fact that while Scottish workers are often more militant than those to the south, they suffer a leadership in the unions and in the anti-Tory political parties that is even more subservient to the employers and the establishment than the labour leaders in England and Wales.

CAP-IN-HAND

The characteristic response of rank and file workers in Scotland to the threat of job losses or closures is to come out on strike or to occupy. But the immediate response of union leaders and politicians is quite different.

Their aim is not to mobilise support for direct action to force the employers and the government to keep the plants open and maintain all jobs. Their approach is to get together with the employers and other local dignitaries to plead for mercy for Scotland from the parent company in England or further afield, and from the government at Westminster.

They try to channel the anti-capitalist instincts of Scottish workers in a narrowly anti-English and anti-Tory direction.

The campaign against the shutdown of the Gartcosh steelworks in 1985-86 was a typical official labour movement response to the threat of closure. Instead of trying to organise collective action by the workforce and sympathetic workers in other unions, the campaign assembled managers and shopkeepers, respectable politicians and clergymen to work along the lines of a moderate middle class pressure group. While trade union officials marched cap-in-hand to Westminster, campaign spokesmen from all the mainstream parties tried to persuade the government that closure would cause far-reaching damage to capitalism in Scotland.

NO SCOTTIS

Last week **Mike Freeman** debated the way forward of the Scottish National Party and Labour MP **Ron**

The central theme of the campaign was that it was necessary for all Scottish people to unite against a conspiracy launched in London to destroy Scottish industry. In fact the catastrophic impact of the recession on the Scottish economy is the consequence of the laws of capital, not of Thatcher's English prejudices. The Tories may well prefer to close a Scottish steelworks rather than one elsewhere in Britain where it might do even more electoral damage. But the shakeout of industry is determined above all by the priorities of British capital as a whole. The rationalisation of the pits has recognised only the borders of profitability. Redundancies in shipbuilding have hit the northeast as hard as Clydeside.

There is no English conspiracy against Scotland, simply a ruthless capitalist drive to restore profitability throughout Britain. The same dynamic drives British capitalists to invest in South Korea or South Africa rather than in Scotland or, indeed, in England. Scottish banks are as responsive to these pressures as English banks — that is why they invest overseas rather than in the decaying Scottish steel or shipbuilding industries. The weakness of the Scottish economy lies in its historic reliance on a few heavy industries and its slowness, in common with the rest of British industry, in adapting to a changing world market.

DISASTER MODEL

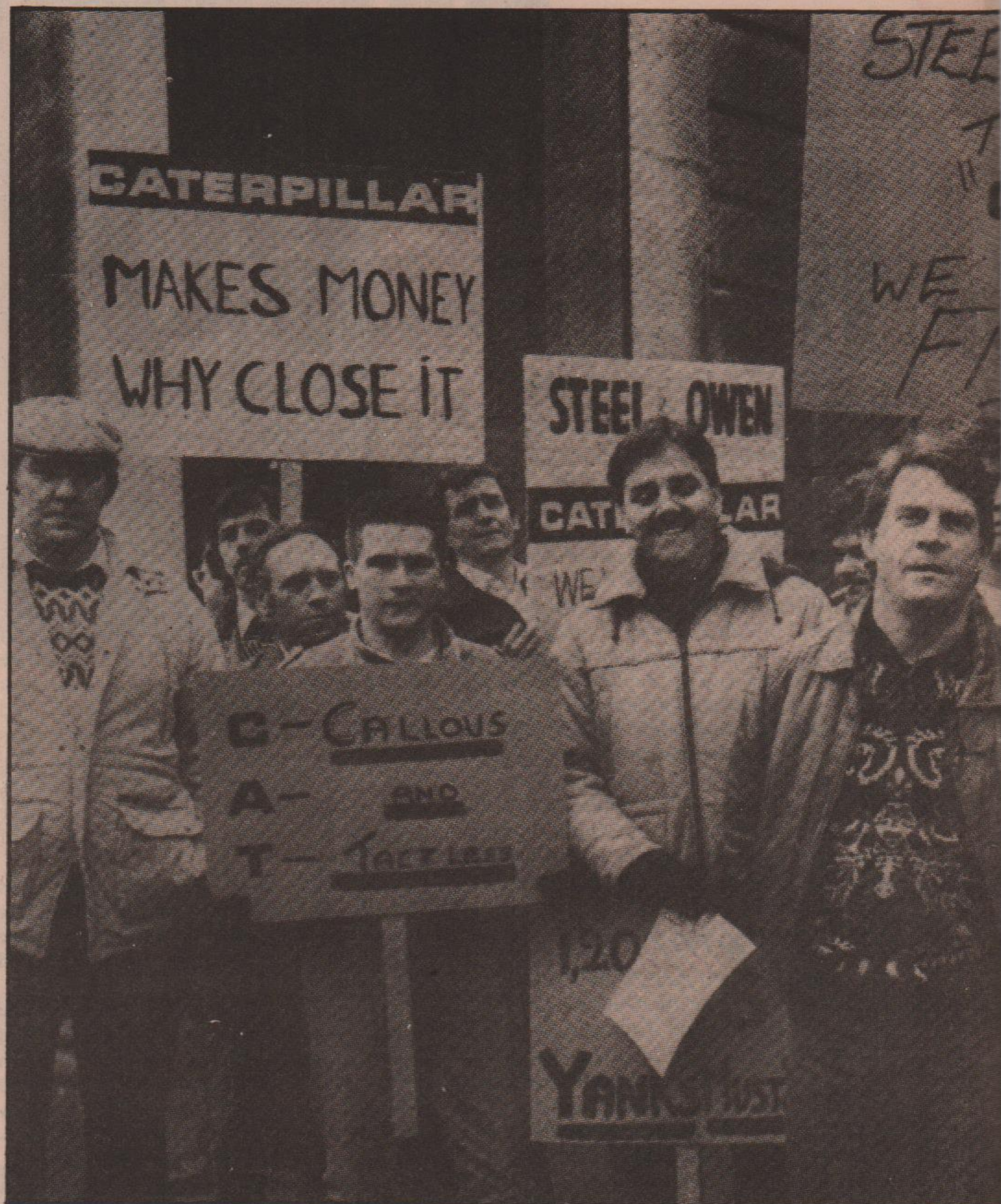
The problem confronting Scottish workers is the logic of British capital, not an irrational English Tory government.

The Tory government remained unmoved by the Gartcosh campaign. The Tories were concerned about the further electoral damage the closure would cause in Scotland, but accepted that making British Steel profitable must come first. The campaign put little pressure on the government. It ensured that protests were kept within the limits dictated by the quest for respectability and ruled out militant forms of action. As the process of lobbying and appealing proceeded, the workers became more and more demoralised. By the time closure was finally declared, it had long become accepted as inevitable.

Despite the confusion and catastrophe that resulted from the Gartcosh campaign, it has been widely accepted as a model response to the threat of closure. The formation of the Scottish Commission by the Scottish TUC last year is an attempt to institutionalise this approach. This body brings together representatives from the unions, the employers (the Scottish section of the Confederation of British Industry) and from the Church of Scotland (the Kirk). Its aim



SNP SPEAKER BILL MORRISON



POLITICIANS AND UNION LEADERS TRY TO CHANNEL INSTINCTS IN AN ANTI-TORY

is to encourage management and unions to work together to raise efficiency and improve the competitiveness of Scottish industry.

This approach can only intensify the exploitation of Scottish workers and raise the profitability of employers in Scotland, whether they come from Scotland, England, the USA or Japan. Following the Scottish unity approach, Caterpillar convenor John Brannan told the *Guardian* that 'We are trying to make ourselves the most flexible workforce anywhere.' As the paper cynically commented, 'It sounds as if he is simply following the Caterpillar recommended code of conduct.'

The view that workers should cooperate more closely with the employers to raise productivity and output is familiar enough to trade unionists south of the border. Politicians, journalists and union officials frequently exhort 'both sides of industry' to work together to make British industry more successful against its overseas rivals. Establishment figures are always stirring up British chauvinism — against Japanese imports, American investors or the EEC. This is a time-honoured method of encouraging British workers to accept redundancies, deteriorating working conditions and even lower wages, in the national interest of raising competitiveness.

Active workers recognise the class collaboration that follows from British chauvinism as one of the greatest barriers to defending and advancing the interests of the working class.

In Scotland the view that workers should

collaborate with their employers in the national interest has been strengthened by the way the official labour movement identifies with the distinctive national interest of Scotland. Scottish nationalism is sometimes seen as a challenge to British chauvinism. In fact it is merely a Scottish brand of British nationalism. Just as the cross of St Andrew is a constituent part of the Union Jack, Scottish nationalist sentiment is one element in British chauvinism.

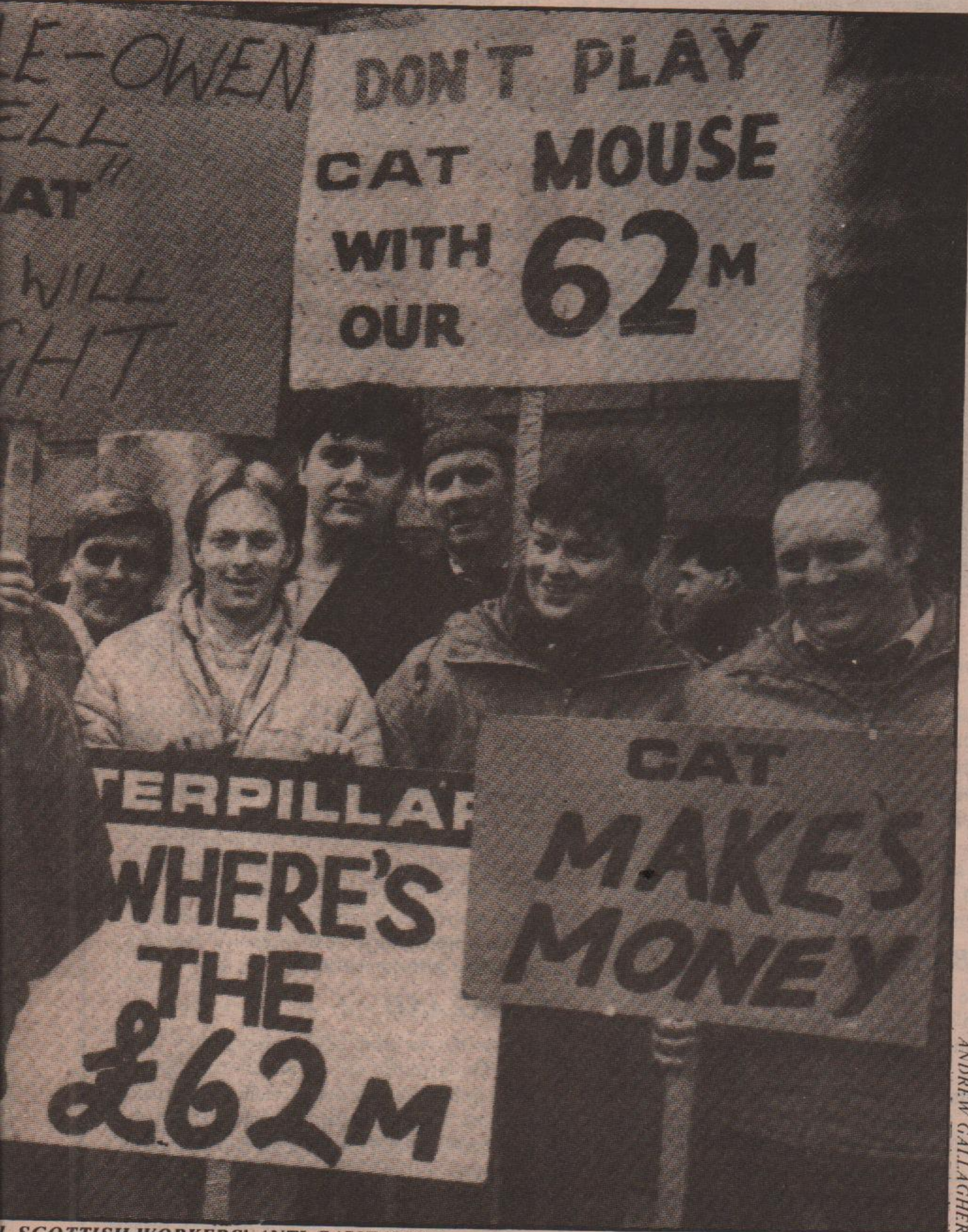
Scottish nationalists often speak of 'the Scottish tradition' and assert the historical continuity of a distinctively Scottish culture and of peculiarly Scottish institutions. Yet Scottish nationalism, while it makes use of ancient

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H SOLUTION

for the working class in Scotland with **Bill Morrison Brown**. Here is an edited version of his speech



SCOTTISH WORKERS' ANTI-CAPITALIST
ANTI-ENGLISH DIRECTION

...mes, is very much a modern phenomenon. It emerged in the seventies in response to the impact of the recession on modern Scotland. Its appeal to a prolonged experience of national domination of Scotland at the hands of English oppressors rests on a dubious interpretation of history.

The Union of Scotland with England in 1707 was not imposed; it was freely chosen by the emerging Scottish capitalist class. Removing tariffs on exports to England created favourable conditions for industrial development north of the border. Union opened up markets in England and the colonies, allowing trade to flourish. Scottish entrepreneurs opted for

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Union with Britain as the course which would guarantee their prosperity within the wider framework of British capitalism. Scottish institutions — the Kirk, the legal system, the mint, the schools — took shape in a climate devoid of Scottish nationalist sentiment.

The Scottish bourgeoisie was British through and through.

Romantic nationalists argue that the Jacobite risings in the first half of the eighteenth century expressed a Scottish revolt against English domination. In fact the conflict was between remnants of the feudal order — Highland peasants led by Catholic aristocrats and an alliance of Scottish and English capitalists and corrupted Highland chiefs. It was more a Scottish civil war than a war of national liberation against England. The final defeat of the clans at Culloden in 1746 was the deathblow to the pre-capitalist order which cleared the way for the emergence of modern Scotland.

Before Union Scotland, with its isolated centres of civilisation surrounded by vast areas of backwardness, could scarcely be regarded as an integrated nation. It was the development of the capitalist market that forged a wild and disparate country into a nation in the modern sense. Thus Scotland as a nation only came into existence as part of the wider British state after the act of Union.

Scottish capitalism developed in a close relationship with British capitalism. Indeed in the key spheres of enlightenment philosophy (Hume and Locke), political economy (Smith

and MacCulloch), scientific invention and engineering innovation (Watt, Neilson), Scots often played a pioneering role. In a later period many distinguished Scotsmen could be found leading British military forces raping and plundering their way around the world for the British Empire.

By the nineteenth century ties between Scottish and British capital were so intimate that there was little scope for the emergence of nationalist sentiment. At a time when nationalist revolts were raging throughout Europe, such movements were conspicuously absent in Scotland. Far from suffering national oppression, Scotland was heavily implicated in Britain's imperialist exploits abroad.

Nationalist sentiment only began to spread in Scotland in the late sixties, when the scale of the post-war decline of British capitalism became apparent.

The decay of Scotland's traditional industries — steel, shipbuilding and mining — seemed to be the result of discrimination against Scotland. The fact that this decline has accelerated over the past eight years of rule by a government which commands the support of only a small minority of Scottish people has fuelled pro-Scottish and anti-English feeling.

NOT EXTREME

Scottish nationalism today is an attempt to turn back the wheel of history and retrace the course of capitalist development, this time under the banner of an independent Scottish state financed by the dwindling revenues of North Sea oil. This is not just pie in the sky as a future goal. It is an outlook which can only undermine the struggle to protect jobs and living standards for the majority of Scottish people in the present.

The Scottish National Party is the best example of the defect of the nationalist project. Its goal of a self-sufficient Scotland is based on the traditional view of the small businessman that 'All contributions to the success of an enterprise, including capital, expertise and labour, should receive a fair reward and have an effective voice in policy-making' (*Industry*, SNP policy document).

But under the capitalist system — and the SNP 'has no objection in principle to either private or public enterprise' — it is impossible for labour to receive a 'fair reward' in its exchange with capital.

The basis of the relationship between employer (private or public) and worker under capitalism is exploitation, the extraction of surplus-value in the form of profit. Making the new Scottish nation viable in today's recession



LABOUR SPEAKER RON BROWN

demands a return to the rates of exploitation that made Scottish and British capitalism so successful from the eighteenth century.

Reflecting its truly national character the SNP includes both 'tartan Tories', Scottish yuppies disillusioned with the Thatcher government, and the descendants of the '79 Group, the radical nationalists who now appear on every picket line to denounce not only the Tories, but also the patriotic deficiencies of the Labour Party. Yet both the middle class and the proletarian wings of the SNP believe in working together for Scotland, in the interests of the independent Scottish capitalism of their dreams. Unfortunately they do not confine themselves to dreaming about the future. They devote their energies to promoting collaboration between Scottish workers and Scottish employers in the present — collaboration that can only have disastrous consequences for the working class.

The SNP cannot be accused of extremism. It campaigns for a Scottish parliament, but it respects the British monarchy and proposes that its devolved assembly continue 'under the Crown', that consummate symbol of the fusion of Scotland within the British state. Incapable of pursuing even its nationalist project consistently, the SNP expresses the limited ambitions of the frustrated Scottish middle classes. While its prospects are poor, the influence of its petit-bourgeois dreams is a danger to the working class.

MENACE

The danger of the SNP is apparent from its impact on the Labour Party. When the SNP first won substantial electoral support in the February 1974 general election, Labour's reaction was to adapt to Scottish nationalist sentiment by taking up the call for a Scottish assembly. Its support for this demand in the October 1974 election succeeded in winning back support from the SNP and led to the 1979 referendum. While the low vote — 33 per cent — in favour of the assembly brought the devolution debate to an end, it did not destroy the influence of Scottish nationalism. Indeed, through eight years of Tory rule Labour politicians in Scotland have used the lack of a Scottish assembly to explain their failure to mobilise resistance against the Tories.

For the Scottish working class, national solutions are a diversion and a menace.

Playing the Scottish card in the manner of the SNP, the Labour Party, the Scottish TUC and the Communist Party can only weaken the unity of the working class in Scotland and in Britain that is vital to protect jobs, rights and living standards. As long as Scottish workers are linking up with bosses, bishops and bureaucrats to pursue the cause of Scotland, the prospects for united action by workers to defend their interests are dim.

INTERNATIONALISM

The aim of *The Red Front* is to fight for working class unity in the run-up to the general election. We are planning to run a slate of candidates in Scotland and the rest of Britain on a joint platform of demands that put the working class first. *The Red Front* is not merely an electoral device, but a wider approach to the class struggle. It means building the unity of workers in Scotland in the fight for jobs — hence our active involvement in the Ardrish dispute in supporting picketing and organising blacking of the firm's products. Instead of appealing to the nationalist sentiments of the Scottish middle classes, we have gone out to win working class solidarity.

The Red Front stands for the unity of workers in Scotland with workers in England and Wales and the rest of the world. The best way to unite workers against the British state is through support for those fighting for their rights against oppression — hence our active support for the struggle against racism in all parts of Britain, our campaign in solidarity with the struggle for Irish freedom and our backing for resistance against British imperialism in the third world.

The Scottish working class has a militant tradition and it also has a revolutionary tradition. Radical nationalists often quote the Scottish revolutionary John Maclean, who lapsed into Scottish nationalism after the defeat of the working class upsurge of Red Clydeside. Yet at the peak of their class consciousness, when they formed the largest and most revolutionary element in the early British Communist Party, Scottish workers were scornful of Scottish nationalism. They stood for a proletarian internationalism which recognised that its first enemy was the British state and its only allies were the workers of Britain and the rest of the world. *The Red Front* aims to revive that tradition in Scotland.

THE IRANGATE CRISIS

REAGAN ON THE RUN

After Irangate, Ronald Reagan's America will never be quite the same, writes **Sabena Norton**

The Tower Commission report into the arms-for-Iran scandal may have covered up president Reagan's involvement in the affair, but it can't disguise the crisis of American foreign policy. The inquiry decided that the president and his staff were guilty of negligence, but not of corruption. It named White House manager Donald Regan as the chief culprit in the attempt to exchange arms for hostages and influence. He departed within hours of the report's publication. This may take some of the heat off Reagan, but it won't be a great comfort to a president who set out to 'make America great again', and who may now go down in history as a senile incompetent who couldn't control his staff.

The Irangate soap opera being played out in the media underestimates the scale of the crisis which the scandal has exposed. The American ruling class has been left with an administration dying on its feet, two years before the next elections. On top of serious challenges to its economic and political power at home and abroad, the USA now faces a crisis of authority which will further undermine its prestige and influence. America's Western rivals and its enemies are rubbing their eyes — some shocked, others delighted — at the mess in Washington.

Irangate strikes deeper than the Watergate scandal which unseated president Richard Nixon in 1974.

That was a dispute about the Republican government's petty sabotage campaign against the opposition Democratic Party. This is a row about America's authority in the world. Scandal-mongers may still be salivating over the details of 'who did/knew what when' about the schemes hatched in the White House basement. But the important question raised by the affair is why the most powerful nation on Earth has to resort to such eccentric methods in the first place.

BREAKDOWN

Colonel Oliver North's cloak and dagger operation, to sell Iran arms via Israel and then ship the proceeds to the US-backed Contra rebels in Nicaragua, has highlighted the problems of American imperialism in the eighties. American foreign policy is unstable because the White House is having trouble coping with the break-up of the established world order, which the USA shaped and dominated in its post-war prime. The senility of US capitalism, rather than the psyche of president Reagan, lies at the root of the Irangate scandal.

The international structures which kept America on top of the post-war world have been breaking down since the seventies. In



REAGAN RECKONS THESE CONTRA KILLERS ARE HEROES

the third world, the capitalist crisis has provoked upheavals which threaten to shatter the fragile government institutions which have preserved capitalism under US domination for 40 years. Since its defeat in Vietnam, the US establishment has suffered a series of demoralising setbacks as some of its most important third world client regimes collapsed — Iran and Nicaragua in 1979, Lebanon in 1982 and the Philippines in 1986.

The decline of US capitalism and the dynamism of its Japanese and West German rivals in the world economy has altered the balance of power within the Western alliance. Today America finds itself on the defensive in acrimonious disputes over who should control shrinking world markets. It has even been squeezed by industrial upstarts like South Korea and Brazil.

This shift in the economic balance has altered the character of political relations between the Western powers.

STRIDENT

Allied harmony has given way to more and more open criticisms of US policy on everything from the grain trade and microchips to the Reykjavik summit and Star Wars. The US umbrella under which Western leaders used to unite has been torn by their new conflicts of interest. While the USA remains the world's top power, these pressures threaten to force it down the Western pecking order.

Reagan took office in 1981 promising to restore US power and to end the uncertainty

which had dogged America after the Vietnam debacle. Reagan's assertive projection of US interests and his appeal for national unity against any threat to the American way of life has helped the American ruling class to keep its grip during the troublesome eighties. His strident and aggressive rhetoric distracted attention from America's weakness, silenced critics at home and swung public opinion behind US rearmament and military interventions abroad.

BARBARITY

In the international arena, however, Reagan's attempts to reassert US power have only papered over the cracks in the system. Indeed, they have often tended to exacerbate the problems they were meant to resolve. Reagan's foreign policy has revolved around the use of arms, dollars, bluff and terror to compensate for American weaknesses. The result has been to militarise international politics and to push barbarity in the third world to new levels. Six years of the 'Reagan revolution' have left the US ruling class with more blood on its hands and more conflicts than it can handle. But it has not halted America's decline.

Reagan's administration launched a big rearmament programme and shipped US arms, bases and military personnel into the Middle East and Central America. It has handed out billions in military and economic aid to prop up dictatorial pro-Western regimes from El Salvador to Pakistan. It set up hand-picked defenceless countries — Grenada and Libya — for carefully prepared and brutally executed military assaults, to show the world that America's capacity for terror remains undiminished.

BULLY-BOYS

Reagan rediscovered the anti-communist rhetoric of the fifties to endorse the old myth of the Soviet threat, so that America could reappear in its former glory as the guardian of the 'free world'. Central America has been the testing ground for this strategy, at a cost of more than 100 000 lives in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala over eight years of US-sponsored war and counter-insurgency.

Yet for all its military might and political power, the US government has not scored any significant foreign policy success.

The sole exception was its invasion of Grenada — the Caribbean equivalent of the Isle of Wight — which was conquered by 3000 US marines in October 1983. America can bully safe targets. But it has failed to

keep a grip on its key spheres of influence like Central America and the Middle East.

The conflict in Central America has become a running sore for Reagan. Six years ago Reagan promised to 'draw the line' against a 'Soviet-Cuban conspiracy' in Nicaragua, and set out to bring down the Sandinista government. But despite systematic economic sabotage and terror by America's Contra insurgents, the government in Managua remains in place. The US congress has begun to tire of the inconclusive conflict and the embarrassing Contras. Although at least \$500m has been funnelled, overtly and covertly, into Contra coffers, the group that Reagan calls the 'moral equivalent of America's founding fathers' remains a marauding gang of murdering bandits rather than a credible counter-revolutionary army.

CRUMBLING

Elsewhere, in the Middle East and even in its old colony of the Philippines, the US leadership has been unable to control events. The deal with Iran was a desperate attempt to re-establish American influence in the Gulf. This is a region which Washington could buy and sell in the days of its stooge, the Shah.

The fact that Reagan was reduced to trying to win the Ayatollah over by sending him bibles and cakes summed up the way in which America's global domination is crumbling.

Reagan's attempt to plug the gaps has helped keep the lid on third world upheaval. But it cannot solve the underlying problem. The conflicts bred by the world crisis are too complex and deeply rooted to be resolved by gunboat diplomacy, 'low-intensity' warfare or even by billions of dollars in aid.

BACKLASH

Irangate shows that US foreign policy is in a rut. The attempt to sustain its role as the world's policeman has overstretched America's capacities. America's top statesmen seriously considered colonel North's mad-cap operation as a viable option. This shows how unstable US foreign policy has become.

North's scheme was meant to solve three problems at a stroke: to restore diplomatic ties with Iran, free US hostages and launder funds for the Contras. It would not have required great statesmanship to recognise that this kind of gamble was destined to land the White House in a diplomatic and political minefield. But it appears that US leaders were prepared to throw caution to the wind in their eagerness to score a success in the international arena.

The irrational features of the episode indicate that American foreign policy will have to change.

Today the USA finds it harder than ever to manage the world order on behalf of all the imperialist powers. Irangate will speed up an overhaul of US strategy. In future, the American ruling class is more likely to concentrate its resources and firepower in those areas which are vital to the survival of US imperialism — and leave its rivals to look after themselves. As America struggles to stay on top, the infighting among the Western powers, which points the way towards another round of international warfare, is set to become more bitter. America will also have to lash out more wildly in the third world to maintain its authority.

It is always good to see a windbag of a warmonger like Reagan exposed as a liar and a fool by the problems of his decrepit system. But while his reputation may be in ruins, his promise of what we can expect from Washington still stands as a warning to us all: 'You ain't seen nothing yet.'



'IT WAS GOOD WHILE IT LASTED': REAGAN SAYS GOODBYE TO WHITE HOUSE FIXER, DONALD REGAN

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It is becoming clearer by the day that Neil Kinnock and his colleagues are prepared to put the boot into ordinary people if it will help to put the Labour Party back into power. The Labour leaders have taken their lead from the Tories on every issue from employment to education and picketing to policing. The Revolutionary Communist Party's new, updated programme — *The Red Front: A Platform for Working Class Unity* — puts the case for breaking with the Labour Party and the corrupt system over which it seeks to govern at our expense.

Our programme sets out our alternative to the capitalist system, but it also points to the need for an alliance of left-wing forces around a basic platform of demands which can defend the working class against the onslaught to come, whichever party is put in charge of managing the crisis. It argues for an electoral bloc of organisations and individuals — *The Red Front* — to champion the interests of ordinary people in the election. If we are to give the working class a voice on all the vital issues of the day we need to fight for the demands of *The Red Front* summarised below.

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.

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 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 oppose discrimination against women and campaign for free, all-day nurseries and free abortion and contraception on demand. We oppose discrimination against black people and all restrictions on immigration. We reject the Aids panic as a propaganda device designed to proscribe homosexual activity and bolster conventional morality.

Stop the war drive

We oppose all forms of militarism, both conventional and nuclear, and all alliances among imperialist powers. We condemn Western military interference in the third world and support countries such as Argentina or Libya against imperialist aggression. We support all anti-imperialist struggles and put priority on supporting the fight for freedom in Northern Ireland.

BLACK WORKERS IN BRITAIN

Here to stay

Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain*, Gower, £35.00

Ken Pryce, *Endless Pressure*, Bristol Classical Press

Madge Dresser, *Black and White on the Buses*, Bristol Broadside (Co-op) Ltd, £1.95

The literature of the black working class or indeed of black communities in Britain is sparse and superficial. There is quite a bit on specific aspects of the black experience, and Ken Pryce's and Madge Dresser's books are useful additions of this sort. There is a good history

in Peter Fryer's *Staying Power* of black people in Britain over the centuries, but overall there is nothing that draws together the experience of black people in post-war Britain. Ron Ramdin could have filled this gap.

The Making of the Black Working Class is an unqualified disappointment. Lacking any introduction or structure, its 626 pages will be incomprehensible to the new reader especially. The content is either anecdotal or derivative. The discussion of important strands in black politics such as the Indian Workers Association and the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination repeats the few existing sources. His conclusion, about a page long, that the black working class has and needs

autonomous organisation, is an assertion with the character of an afterthought. Perhaps this disappointment will encourage others to write the book that the black working class deserves.

Endless Pressure is the result of the 'participant observation' of a West Indian student who lived in St Paul's from 1939 to 1974. It is a sociological study of West Indian lifestyles in Bristol's inner city, just before the first major riot erupted there in 1980. In spite of some idiosyncratic categorisation and a surfeit of detail, it displays a good grasp of the forces which exert endless pressure on this community. The conclusion to this second edition should be read by the quangoes of St Paul's today. 'The current policy of the state to help integrate dissident black youths with a host of black self-help groups, black youth clubs and black supplementary schools, cultural centres, homes and hostels, should therefore be viewed as a strategy of containment.'

Black and White on the Buses

reviews the Bristol bus dispute in 1963. According to a local curate, 'The TGWU in the city had said that if one black man steps on the platform as a conductor, every wheel will stop.' The union denied it was enforcing a colour bar, but few of Bristol's blacks believed it — not one driver or conductor was black, at a time of staff shortage.

Inspired by Martin Luther King, a small group of black activists launched a campaign which included a boycott of the buses. The issue flared briefly on the national stage with Harold Wilson jumping on the bandwagon. The company and the union backed down, in theory at least, and a quota (thank you very much) of black workers was eventually taken on. Madge Dresser could have been more critical of the moral basis of the campaign, but she reminds us of this moment in the failure of the labour movement to fight racism. Supporters of Workers Against Racism should read it.

Adam Eastman

EXPOSING THE POLICE

Stitch up

Martin Walker, *With Extreme Prejudice*, Canary Press, £3.50

Paul Foot, *Murder at the Farm: Who Killed Carl Bridgewater?*, Sidgwick & Jackson, £12.95

From *Dixon of Dock Green* to *Rockliffe's Babies*, from *Police Five* to *Crimewatch UK* it is relentlessly insinuated that the British police exist only to tell you the time, help old ladies across the road and sympathetically investigate rape cases. The discrepancy between the image and the reality, always beyond a joke, is now grotesque. Today, the police execute their role as enforcers of a rotten system with an arrogance and vigour beyond the call of duty. These books document two celebrated cases of recent years, in which the police blighted the lives of several people with a quite casual malice.

BRUTAL

Two years ago this week, on 1 March 1985, Leon Brittan, then home secretary, went to speak at Manchester university students' union. The police

obligingly battered a path for him through some mildly revolting students, projecting the minister up the steps, in Martin Walker's phrase, 'like a lump of lard'. In a short, sharp operation of calculated brutality the police arrested 38 of the protesters, occupied the union building until Brittan had spoken and then scuttled him out again. In their wake they left many injured and one of the students, Sarah Hollis, unconscious. Another, Steven Shaw, who was writing a thesis on police technology and surveillance, became involved in a protest campaign over the affair.

BEATEN

Two inquiries were set up, one by Manchester city council and the other under the Avon and Somerset police, later taken over by the police complaints authority. If the students thought that the police had finished with them they were mistaken. Shaw's thesis was stolen from his flat: he was arrested, beaten, strip-searched and anally examined at Bootle police station: he was beaten up on the street and burned on the face with cigarettes by the same

officers; he was frequently and obviously followed, and four times hauled up for traffic offences. Hollis had her flat burgled, was assaulted, threatened with rape, followed and repeatedly stopped and intimidated by the police. Many others had similar treatment.

VINDICTIVE

Last week the police complaints authority finally reported on the Brittan visit. The DPP will be prosecuting two officers for perjury, and one for assault. Oh yes, he will also be prosecuting Steve Shaw for trying to pervert the course of justice. Shaw fled to the USA months ago. Martin Walker's book communicates well the paranoia which descended on Manchester students and those who helped them, but on the whole it is a frustrating mixture of intelligent insight and cluttered theorising about 'the pervasive reality of a police-defined society'. Just when it seems as if he's quite clear about the state, he says all officers should not be tarred with the same brush, as if the nastiness of the police is an individual matter. This is a pity because he's generally heading in the right direction and doesn't have far to go.

By a grim irony, senior officers from Manchester police were called in to conduct an inquiry into the Carl Bridgewater case. In November 1979 Pat Molloy,

Jimmy Robinson, Vincent Hickey and his cousin Michael were convicted of the murder of the 13-year old newspaper boy. They didn't do it, but they were local villains who were handy, so that saved on police overtime. The judge, and later the court of appeal, waved the thinnest of cases through with almost vindictive insouciance. Paul Foot does a more thorough and professional job than Walker in reconstructing the horror story, as you might expect from the journalist who wrote *Who Killed Hanratty?* and *The Helen Smith Story*.

PROTEST

If Walker fails to get clear the full implications of the institutionalised violence of the police, it isn't part of Foot's project here even to try. Like the recent books from Chris Mullin and Robert Kee on the Birmingham and Guildford cases this is a painstaking attempt to have a case of 'monstrous injustice' re-opened by the authorities. Michael Hickey's extraordinary roof-top protest at Gartree prison and the unwavering struggle of his mother, Ann Whelan, to get her son out would inspire anybody to want this campaign to succeed. Given the record of the judiciary and the home secretary in backing up the police I wouldn't hold out too much hope for their sense of fair play.

Pam Lawrence

BILLIE HOLIDAY

'Jazz is like talking'

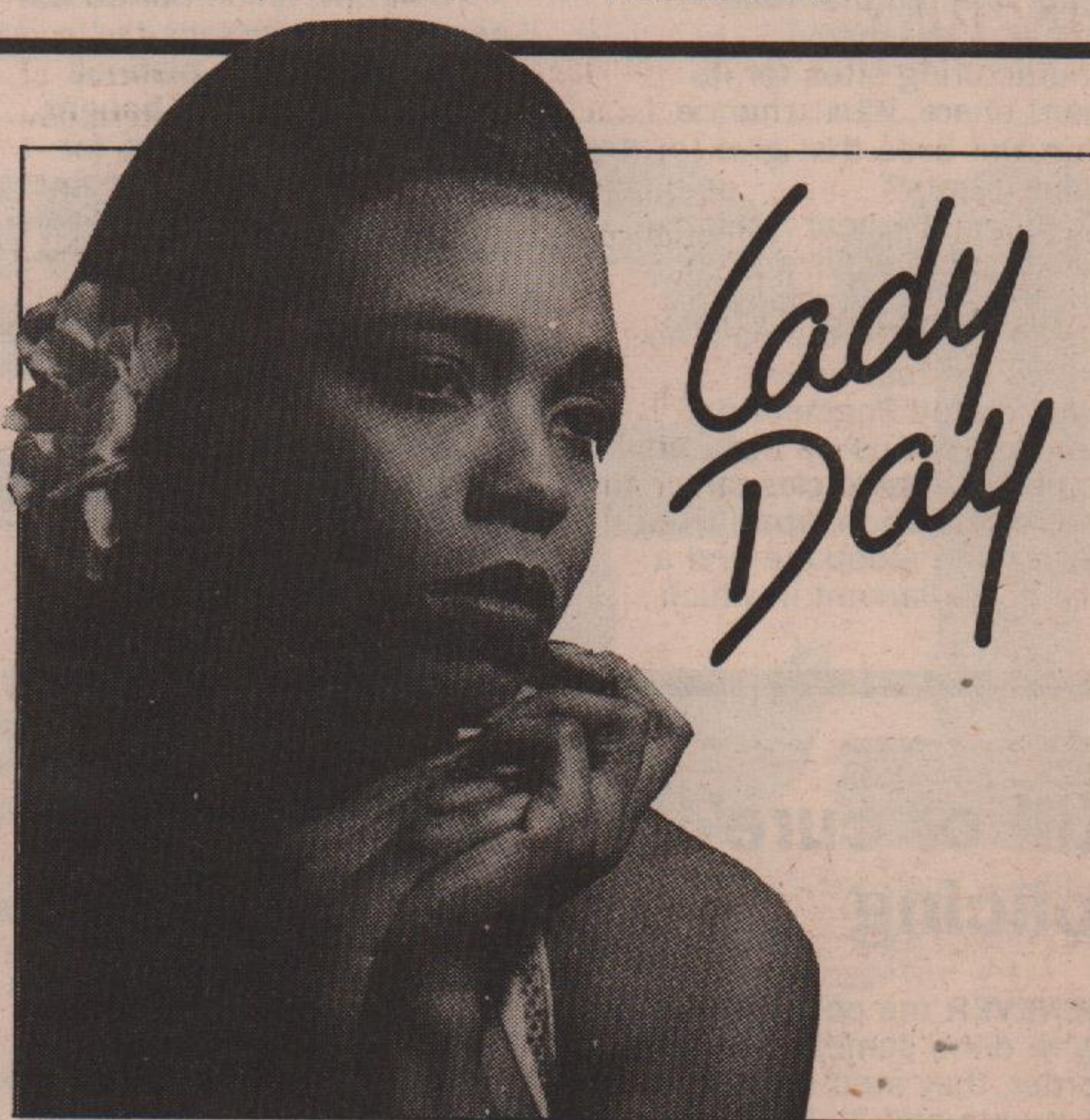
Lady Day, Stephen Stahl (writer and director), Donmar Warehouse Theatre

Billie Holiday is the epitome of the popular conception of a jazz musician. From the tough end of Baltimore, deserted as a child by her parents, she learnt her music listening to the Victrola recordings of Bessie Smith and Louis Armstrong at the window of a brothel. While still a girl she was sexually abused and went on the road as a professional singer when only 13. Her own haunted song 'Strange Fruit' is testimony to the horror and degradation of being black in a racist society. In her personal search for solace she picked up the drug habit that both killed her and immured her from the pimps, punks and rats who fed off her talent. She died in the summer of 1959 aged 35 with the police hovering like vultures over her hospital bed waiting to issue another warrant for her arrest.

It was a wreck of a life and that's how the voyeurs like it. In the audience near me someone proclaimed that the point about Billie's singing was the suffering.

No, the point was her control. She didn't have the greatest range, her voice was untrained, but as Dee Dee Bridgewater who plays her says: 'The way she heard the music was fascinating. The way she sang behind the beat was totally advanced.' In the great days with Basie, Teddy Wilson and especially with the full, melancholic and lyrical saxophone of Lester Young she transformed the vocalist's art. Her use of the microphone enabled her subtle understatement and nuances of phrasing to carry a heavy emotional charge.

Millions have been victims but only a few like Billie Holiday have the pride, courage and talent to be consummate artists. Stephen Stahl has attempted the difficult task of making just this point with Dee Dee Bridgewater as Billie. Bridgewater is too intelligent and too good a singer to try to imitate Holiday. At times she hints at a phrase which is enough to set the mood. In the first act Billie is rehearsing for a big London concert. She is restless, in difficulty, just about holding on and cajoling the band 'to slide away with it' and not just plod along. The rehearsal is

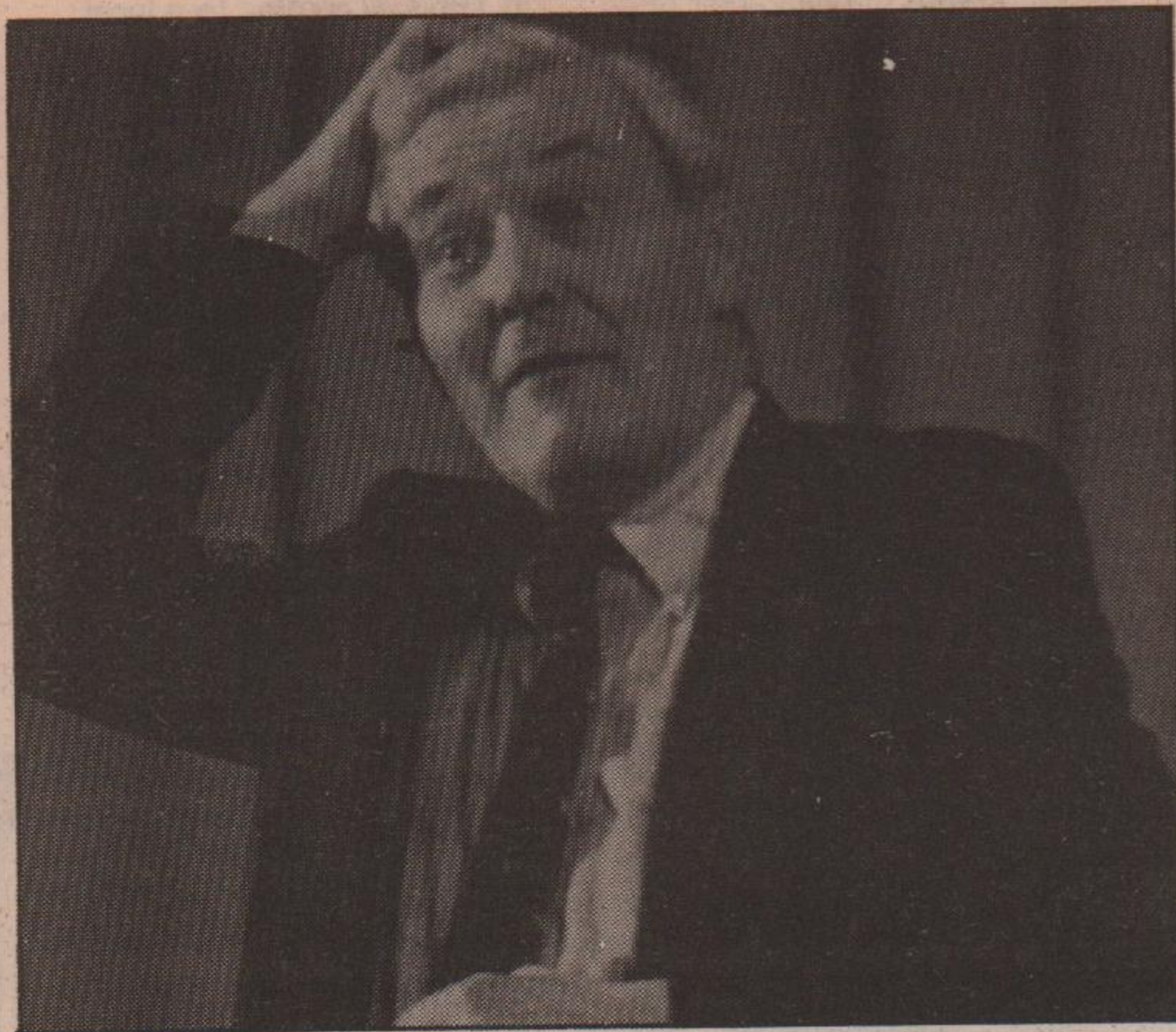


interrupted by her reveries in which she recalls her past. Bridgewater handles the shifts well but she is forced to pack too much in to get the life story over.

The second act gives us the concert performance and it's good. Bridgewater is first pathetic and lost, then more confident and sassy. Her asides and broadsides to the audience are episodes from her life

delivered with the comic frankness of a Lenny Bruce. I'm glad to say the audience forgot the proprieties of the theatre and clapped and cheered every song. It made me think that we would all be better off listening to a good set from Dee Dee in a club at a fever top whack, not hemmed in for up to £11.50. Then we would have got some encores too!

Alan Harding



DAVID ROURKE

Greenwich: where was the left?

DESPITE all the press stories about 'loony lefts' running the Labour Party, I was struck by the complete absence of the left from the Greenwich by-election campaign. The Labour Party leaders now treat anybody with a bit of socialism in their blood like the Tories want to treat Aids victims — locking them away so that they can't embarrass or infect anybody. No left-wing MPs were allowed anywhere near the press conferences, and rumour had it that the Militant supporters who turned up to canvass were sent packing up to the

super-rich suburb of Blackheath, where Labour had no chance of getting votes anyway.

Meanwhile, all the old leaders of the Labour left — Benn, Scargill, Heffer, the lot — held a big rally in the middle of the election campaign. But they made sure that it was in Lambeth, miles away from the week's action and safely out of earshot of Greenwich voters. It looks like they are prepared to do whatever Kinnock says to get a Labour government, even if it means disappearing off the face of the Earth during highpoints of political conflict. 'Loony' may not be such a bad label for some of these 'speak-no-evil' socialists, after all.

Harry Woolwich

Rolls Royce rip-off

IF British Aerospace was the icing on Thatcher's sell-off cake, Rolls Royce must be the cherry. The chairman has already warned that Rolls Royce has too many manufacturing sites for its market share. What chance of survival does that give to smaller plants?

At Hillingdon near Glasgow, 2300 workers survive from more than 6000 employed there in 1979. In the past six months, the ineffective Amalgamated Engineering Union has put up no defence against threats of closure after privatisation, apart from a 48-minute stoppage and a lobby of parliament in which

Labour promised to re-nationalise the company if it was sold off. At an all-site meeting, there was no decision on joint action to defend jobs. Even a suggestion to put anti-privatisation adverts in a newspaper was dismissed as too expensive.

While the union buried its head in bureaucracy, management has planned the sell-off. They've bought the first new machines for years, in anticipation of an increased market-price at the sell-off date. Workers throughout the combine should unite in defence of all jobs at Rolls Royce, even when this means going above the heads of right-wing AEU officials.

**Hugh Cameron
Rolls Royce shop steward
(personal capacity)**

'Kill or cure' policing

WHENEVER the police know they've done something out of order, they stop walking the streets and go back inside their cars and vans — like little hamsters. After the murder of Clinton McCurbin, that's what they're doing in the Lozells Road area near Handsworth. You can feel the tension going up and down, as the police make their presence felt in anticipation of a possible backlash.

Walking the beat in threes or fours is the 'ordinary' level of policing round here — it

has been since the disturbances in 1985. The next stage is when they start parking up in squad cars in all the side roads. After that, they drive around in wagons. That's the stage they're in now. They try to be subtle by taking the grids off the front. But that kind of 'camouflage' doesn't fool anyone — they might as well scatter a few leaves on top of the roof.

Walking, squad cars and wagons are all part of what I call 'kill or cure' policing — they can't cure the problems, so they'll kill the people. Today's high-profile tactics are a warning of more deaths to come.

Diane Birmingham

Why a Labour councillor voted RCP

AS a left winger in the Labour Party, I watched other left wingers shift gradually behind Kinnock and his crew. This was never more obvious than during the Greenwich by-election. A previously left-wing member of the Labour Party became a parliamentary candidate and simultaneously sold out and humbly followed the party's rightward shift. Therefore, there was only one candidate I could support and that was the RCP's Kate Marshall.

This was made public by the SDP, after I replied to the load of personally addressed garbage they sent me. Not only did I have a go at Kinnock, I also pledged my vote to the RCP.

In retrospect it was a pretty crazy thing to do, as the SDP made it public that a Labour councillor had turned against his party. But I stand by what I said. The Labour Party should remember who started it, who funds it, and who it is supposed to represent. Instead, it has totally abandoned even social reformism in its desperation to meet the needs of the establishment.

I believe it is time for all those who consider themselves on the left, whatever grouping they are in, to come together and organise a fightback. Obviously, there are still going to be differences on tactics, etc, but we all know who the enemy is, and that capitalism and the ruling class have to be defeated. As long as we remain in our own factions the ruling class is going to continue to walk all over us.

**Trevor Allman
Labour councillor
Greenwich**

Blacks should back homosexuals

YOU could have counted the number of black people on the Wombourne 12 victory march on one hand and still had fingers left over. You can get black people to be anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-nuclear, anti-imperialist and even to some extent anti-

sexist. Yet when it comes to sharing solidarity with lesbian and gay people, we tend to run for the hills, hands protectively over our private parts.

Anti-lesbian and gay prejudice is very strong in the black community (as it is among the white working class). The more politicised sections of the black working class have constantly ducked the issue. Despite this, the lesbian and gay community has backed us in our

struggle against state attacks.

I was very glad to be on the demonstration, as a black heterosexual supporting lesbian and gay rights. However, I thought my presence was a kind of involuntary tokenism. This has got to be changed. Black and Asian readers, I urge you to get organised in support of lesbians and gays.

**Floyd
South-east London**

Aids: 'modesty kills'

I CAME across issue six of your newspaper (13 February) and I read with deep concern the centre page spread on Aids. I found 14 (!) items which I thought were if not actually wrong then outdated, incomplete or misleadingly expressed. You do your readers a dangerous disservice by writing about Aids in this way. The article left me with the impression that as long as you weren't shooting someone else's blood into your veins or semen into your backside, you had little to worry about. How wrong can you get?

Take for example the section on the relative dangers of anal versus

vaginal intercourse. A statistical comparison is useless and deceptive in the individual context. Even if vaginal intercourse is somewhat less dangerous (and this is arguable), there are more people doing it — you tell me what this adds up to!

Instead of delving into epidemiological uncertainties, you should consider and publish information on condoms (and perhaps investigate the economic and political issues involved?). Few non-gay sources mention the fact that there is only one condom which most experts consider 'safe'. It's called Red Stripe and — guess what? — it's not on sale at Boots. Also, only water-based lubricants are safe to use. All other forms of oils, greases and fats melt the material condoms are made of. Get down to the real facts now,

and save the ideology till later, or you will have fewer readers to argue the toss. Don't wait till your friends are dying, as mine are. Complacency is deadly — modesty kills. You don't have to return to 'Victorian values', but you do need a small attitude-adjustment, a bit of imagination and the willpower to insist your partner(s) cooperate. I leave the decision on 'fidelity' versus 'promiscuity' to the individual.

If you need to dig into gay health matters, try finding out why the hepatitis B vaccine isn't available to gays but is if anyone else goes on holiday to North Africa. Is someone waiting for hepatitis B, plus its lethal 'piggyback' vector two virus, to be the next 'gay plague'?

**JD Collins
London**

Police vs teachers

THE Inner London Teachers' Association has refused to cooperate with showing a video made by the police and the Inner London Education Authority. For many years we have had a policy of not allowing the police into schools. This policy has been taken up by some schools in outer London, and in other areas where the black community is under siege.

We take the view that students who are the children of trade unionists, Asians, West Indians and other minorities, would not trust their teachers if they allowed the forces of repression into schools. Abuse of interviews, and the use of information from teachers' files would make the teacher an agent of social control in the students' eyes. Teachers

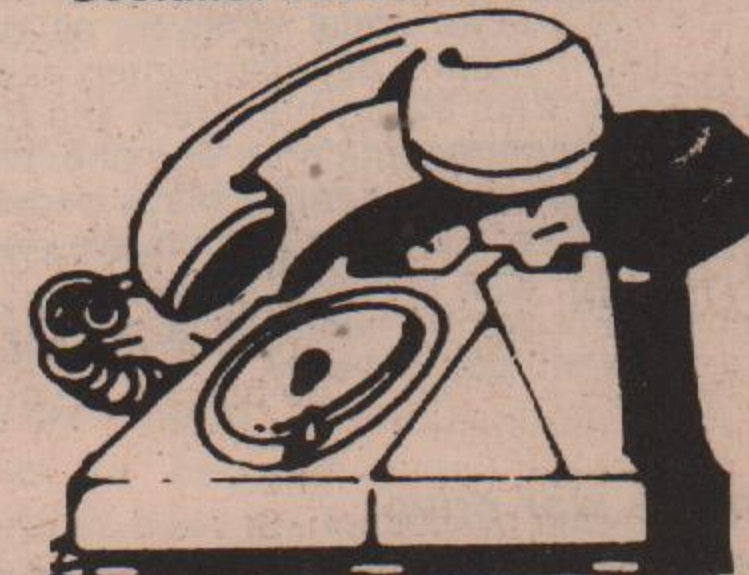
have seen trade union rights taken away at GCHQ, and our unions' bargaining rights removed under Baker's Bill. We've seen whole mining communities terrorised by police occupation, increased use of mounted police against trade unionists struggling for their livelihoods, and a shoot-first policy. This right-wing authoritarian state has put the police against the people in just about every sphere that matters.

What the hell is Ilea leader Frances Morrell doing promoting the police in London schools? A number of agencies clearly have students' interests in mind, and could be allowed into schools. But the idea of policemen attempting to teach and wanting our cooperation is just not on.

Social workers, community health nurses and family counsellors could have made a much better video on child abduction than Ilea. But

they've all had their budgets cut to ribbons. The police, however, were more than willing to provide the cash and the nice crime prevention officers, with community policemen licking their lips at getting a 'positive image' to assuage mounting concern about police murders, brutality and racism.

**Rodney Kay-Kreizman
Socialist Teachers' Alliance**



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.

THE PARTY PAGE

TAKING ON THE MORALISTS

The class struggle is not simply about going on strike and standing on picket lines. It is also a contest of contending ideas. The question of whose view of the world will prevail confronts us every day. The ideas of the establishment are on top today. The biggest success of Thatcher and her class has been in the battle of ideas. The labour movement has taken in the ideas of the ruling class to such an extent that the Tories have won every crucial debate hands down.

CLAMPDOWN

The establishment has been making the running on issues of sex and morality. It has gone on the offensive against 'permissiveness', 'deviancy' and any kind of behaviour that diverges from the sexual straight and narrow. The panic created by the Aids scare, the new campaign against abortion rights and the clampdown on sex education are all designed to bolster the

family and legitimise repression.

These developments can only intensify the oppression of lesbians, gay men and women. But the whole working class will suffer the consequences. If the standard bearers of the new morality succeed in spreading their reactionary ideas among ordinary people, they will have created the conditions for more law and order measures against the working class. Unless we can counter this offensive by fostering a climate of openness and experimentation, it will become much more difficult to popularise the radical alternatives that our class so desperately needs.

IN RETREAT

RCP supporters must get a good grasp of the issues so that we have the authority to challenge the hypocrisy of the moralists. We have a responsibility to give a lead because this is the issue on which the left has always been in retreat.

Take abortion rights. Slowly but surely the right has succeeded in putting many pro-abortionists on the defensive. Many feminists have taken to campaigning on the issue of reproductive rights instead of fighting for free and safe abortion. Recently the anti-abortionists have stepped up their attacks. The elder statesmen in the house of lords have discussed measures to restrict existing abortion rights. Last week's media sensation about the 'poor' Oxford student who could not stop his ex-girlfriend 'killing' his baby was a classic media hype which is part of a much broader campaign to make abortion taboo. In student circles the pro-life lobby is becoming increasingly strident and confident.

OFFENSIVE

Last week the anti-abortionists mobilised for a huge union meeting at Sheffield university and succeeded in throwing out the existing policy which

recognised women's right to have abortions. The pro-life brigade appealed to liberal sentiments and argued that the union should have no policy on this issue. The Sheffield case is nothing special — it is being repeated across the country. Anti-abortionists have produced a new video to tout around on a national speaking tour.

DEMYSTIFY

Supporters should follow the example of our comrades at Sheffield university and organise joint action with women's groups and the left to put the pro-lifers on the defensive. It is vital that we address the issue from a working class point of view and expose the anti-women character of the pro-life position. We should organise public debates with the anti-abortionists and put them on the spot in front of a wide audience.

In the past left wingers have criticised our party for taking the same platform as the anti-abortionists. But

this only shows that the left lacks confidence in its arguments. We cannot afford to ignore our opponents if we are to defeat their ideas.

This week we are publishing a new pamphlet on Aids to demystify this issue and put the case for a Marxist analysis. It will be controversial, because it takes issue with the dominant liberal argument that Aids is a threat to us all. The pamphlet proves that Aids primarily affects homosexual men and that the campaign around it aims to victimise lesbians and gays.

SETBACKS

The authors argue that it is wrong to deny the facts in order to present the disease as a threat to heterosexuals. Rather than give into the scare, revolutionaries have to tackle anti-gay prejudices and go on the offensive. Since this pamphlet is an advance on our previous analysis supporters should study it carefully and

familiarise themselves with the arguments.

The left's failure to take a clear stand against the moral offensive has already led to setbacks. The Tories and the gutter press have succeeded in mobilising opinion against lesbians and gays within the black community and among sections of the working class. There are signs that the Labour Party has sent out instructions to its representatives in local councils to downplay lesbian and gay issues in the run-up to a general election. Birmingham Labour councillors have censored lesbian groups from a handbook of women's groups which has just been published.

CHALLENGE

As our opponents step up their propaganda war our supporters must set an example of how to challenge prejudice against lesbians and gays wherever it appears.

Frank Richards

BACK THE RED FRONT!

Join our campaign for *The Red Front*, a bloc of left-wing organisations and individuals who refuse to bow to the dictates of the system or the demands of the Labour leadership, and are willing to fight for our class now. Get the arguments for *The Red Front* in the new RCP programme, out now.

I/We support *The Red Front* — a platform for working class unity

Name

Address

Telephone

Organisation

I would like ... copies of the RCP programme *The Red Front* (£1 plus 40p p&p).

Send to BM RCP, London WC1N 3XX

NO TO DEPORTATIONS! NATIONAL LOBBY

At The Immigration Appeals Office,
Aldine House, New Bailey Street, Manchester 3

13 MARCH 12.00-2.00 PM

GEORGE ROUCOU DEFENCE CAMPAIGN, ROOM 3005, TOWN HALL, ALBERT SQUARE, MANCHESTER M60 2LB. 061-234 4751

GEORGE ROUCOU
DEFENCE
CAMPAIGN



JOINT TRADES
UNION CAMPAIGN

DIARY

BIRMINGHAM: Thursday 5 March, 7.30pm. Workers Against Racism public meeting: Stop police attacks on black youth. Shakespeare Pub, Summer Row, City Centre
COVENTRY: Thursday 5 March, 7.30pm. Workers Against Racism public meeting: Stop police attacks on black youth. West Indian Centre, Spon St
LEEDS: Tuesday 10 March, 7.30pm. Public meeting: Defend Turkish workers — No more deportations! Leeds Trades Club, Savile Mount
LONDON: Thursday 5 March, 7.30pm. All-London supporters' meeting to discuss the police killing of Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton, and the Greenwich by-election. St Matthew's meeting place, Brixton Hill (opposite Lambeth Town Hall)
MANCHESTER: Thursday 5 March, 12.30pm. Public meeting: Fight back against racist attacks. Speakers:

George Roucou and eye-witness of the police killing of Clinton McCurbin in Wolverhampton. Manchester University Students Union
NEWCASTLE: Thursday 12 March, 7.30pm. Debate: Abortion — child murder or a woman's right? Speakers from the RCP, SPUC, Newcastle University Pro-Life Group. Committee Room A, Newcastle University Students Union
Wednesday 18 March, 7.30pm. Forum on Aids. Bridge Hotel, Castle Square
NOTTINGHAM: Thursday 5 March, 7.30pm. WAR public meeting: Stop police attacks on black youth. International Community Centre, Mansfield Road
SOUTH KIRKBY: Saturday 14 March, 10.30am. Third annual memorial march for David Jones (striking miner killed on picket line). Assemble The Green, South Kirkby, West Yorks

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WOLVERHAMPTON STRANGLING, BROADWATER FARM SHOWTRIALS

tms

A RIOT OF POLICE RACISM



DATE MACRAY

If you want to protest about police violence against black people, join the demonstration in Wolverhampton this Saturday

CLINTON McCURBIN'S MOTHER PLACES A WREATH WHERE POLICE KILLED HER SON

Workers Against Racism supporters are going all out to make Saturday's march against the police murder of 24-year old Clinton McCurbin an impressive show of anti-racist strength against the police killers and their apologists. The police response to the killing of McCurbin in Wolverhampton a fortnight ago, and last week's acquittal of two juveniles charged with the murder of PC Blakelock during the Broadwater Farm disturbances in 1985, reveal how the authorities twist the truth. They tell us that the police who perpetrate anti-black violence are really the innocent victims of a criminal conspiracy by black youth.

We are marching on Saturday to make sure that they do not get away with it.

The fact that police felt free to strangle Clinton McCurbin in broad daylight in front of bystanders on a busy shopping street says a lot about modern policing. The law now hands out public beatings to the black community with impunity. Local people who witnessed the killing have told *tms* what happened next. First the police tried to conceal their crime inside the clothing shop where they killed him, locking the crowd outside and blocking their view. Then they arrested eye-witnesses and others who protested about their brutal treatment of the black youth. The police battered them, threatened them with worse, and charged them with assault and breach of the peace.

POLICE LIARS

When news of the killing and the protests became public knowledge police told the press that McCurbin died from a heart attack aggravated by drug abuse. But the official post-mortem concluded that McCurbin died from 'asphyxia consistent with restraint during a violent struggle'. The home office pathologist found no trace of drugs and the police were forced to make a feeble apology. Then the police claimed that protests against the killing were due to 'a general feeling of mischief'. The racists tried to pretend that an outburst of anger against

an act of police terror was a random display of violence by black 'mischief-makers' with a 'natural' disrespect for the law.

It has been the same story throughout the showtrial of youth framed for the killing of PC Blakelock on Broadwater Farm in October 1985. The point of the exercise is not merely to get convictions, but to convince the nation that black youth are the criminals and the police are the good guys. The cause of the anti-police action — the death of black mother of five, Cynthia Jarrett, during a violent police raid on her home and the provocative behaviour of the police afterwards — has hardly had a mention amid the outcry about Blakelock's death.

Last week the prosecution case against two youths accused of the murder was exposed as a lie and the court had to drop the charges. But the judge made it clear that this was no slur on the good name of one of the

constables involved, whom he recommended as 'the best type of police officer'. What had he done to earn this accolade? He held a 13-year old boy for three days without access to his parents or a solicitor to extract a confession that fitted the police version of events. He interrogated the boy to the point where he broke down when questioned wearing only his underpants and a blanket. He helped frame another 13-year old by bribing another youth (with money, accommodation and a job) to implicate the juvenile in the murder. This is the sort of stuff 'the best type of police officer' is made of.

Yet if we are to believe the police, black youth are terrorising the poor policemen who are only trying to do their job. In his last public statements before announcing his retirement as Britain's top cop, Kenneth Newman spoke of streets of fear where policemen dare not tread in case they are

attacked by marauding hordes of young black people. He highlighted inner-city areas 'where crime is at its worst, where drug dealing is intolerably overt, and where the racial ingredient is at its most potent'. Newman complained about the 'open disrespect for the police' among black youth everywhere. His successor, Peter Imbert — who claims he can't be called a racist because his brother-in-law is black — says that he will soon put a stop to that.

But the police will never earn the respect of black youth.

Their racist credentials have got nothing to do with who their relatives are. Racism is stamped on police officers' job descriptions by their political paymasters. The people who run Britain rely on the police to regiment black youth under a regime that denies them their rights. The police are at the sharp end of a system that discriminates against black people throughout their lives. They are on the beat to keep black anger off the streets. Their brutal treatment of the black community is backed by every state institution from the courts to the house of commons. Now it seems that the police have been given a licence to kill.

BUILD RESISTANCE

State racism and police terror against black people have reached new levels of barbarism that demand a vigorous counter-offensive from the anti-racist movement. Unless we teach the hired thugs and killers of the establishment that we will not stomach their attacks on black people they will continue with their campaign of violence. There has never been a more important time to build Workers Against Racism.

Workers Against Racism campaigns for working class resistance to every act of official British racism. We want to take the power away from the police racists and invest it in the hands of ordinary people, black and white. Saturday's march against the killing of Clinton McCurbin is a chance to start a movement to stop the police getting away with murder, by standing side by side with black youth.

DEMONSTRATION

MARCH AGAINST POLICE MURDERERS

**SATURDAY 7 MARCH
WOLVERHAMPTON
ASSEMBLE 11am WEST PARK
PARK ROAD**

CALLED BY THE BLACK COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

TRANSPORT FROM: NEWCASTLE, MIDDLESBROUGH,
MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL, BRADFORD, LEEDS, PONTEFRAC, T
SHEFFIELD, NOTTINGHAM, BIRMINGHAM, BRISTOL, OXFORD,
COVENTRY, BRIGHTON, LONDON - PHONE
(01) 729 0414 FOR DETAILS

**JOIN WORKERS AGAINST RACISM — RING KEITH TOMPSON ON
(01) 729 0414**