

Workers power

25p/10p strikers

Paper of the Workers Power group

DON'T LET THEM ISOLATE THE MINERS Miners' strike in danger

THE TORIES AND MacGregor have made it plain that they do not intend to budge one inch beyond the deal they made with the treacherous NACODS leaders. Thatcher told Parliament, "The NACODS settlement, reached after long negotiation, must be the basis of an agreement with the NUM, and that agreement must be substantially unchanged."

The Tories are putting their money on the spineless TUC leaders. They hope that Willis, Basnett and Co can either force the NUM into a rotten compromise or that the TUC will openly break with the miners.

They hope that by stealing the miners' funds they can starve the miners, cripple their union and scare the spineless TUC leaders into headlong flight from a brush with the law.

The Tories must be forced to surrender. The miners must not be isolated. We must not let the TUC leaders stab the miners in the back.

The NACODS deal betrayed the miners. For the NUM to accept the NACODS term would be to betray the energies and sacrifices of the miners over the last eight months. The five immediately threatened pits - Polmaise, Herrington, Bullscliffe Wood, Cortonwood and Snowdown - will be referred to a colliery review procedure in which an anonymous "third party" will give advice that the NCB is under no obligation to accept.

ENORMOUS LENGTHS

These are the humiliating terms the Tories want to force on the miners. And they're prepared to go to enormous lengths to win. Fat cat Chancellor Nigel Lawson has said the strike has already added £1.5 bn to the public borrowing requirement, but that this makes 'economic sense' 'however long it lasts'.

Their police have been launched against miners with unprecedented and concerted savagery. Yorkshire pit villages like Grimethorpe are under occupation by hit squads out to round up militants

and scare the communities into submission. Over 7,500 miners have been arrested already. Death and awful injuries have been meted out on their best fighters.

The list of injuries of the police and the miners show where the real brutality comes from. Once policeman has received a fractured skull but five miners have. One of Thatcher's cossacks has sustained a broken leg, but fourteen miners have. Two policemen have broken ankles as against twenty five miners. Above all five miners have been killed whilst picketing. No police have.

A clearer and clearer pattern is emerging of what a Tory victory would mean for the mining communities. Once again Arthur Scargill has been vindicated by more evidence of detailed NCB hit lists. If MacGregor were to win there would only be 4 collieries left in Northumberland and Durham in sixteen years' time.

PERFECTING THEIR PLANS

Despite the determination of the miners and the very considerable support they have received from other sections of workers the Tories think things are going their way at the moment. Why? Most importantly because the TUC has not kept its part of the deal it made to keep the miners quiet at the TUC's Brighton Congress. As long as things stay that way the Tories can keep stocking the power stations with oil and perfecting their plans to move pit head stocks. And the Tories are confident that the TUC won't keep its promises and that its leaders are increasingly restive about even its present pathetic level of verbal commitment to the miners.

Over two months ago the TUC vowed to "make the dispute more effective by,

a) not moving coal or coke, or oil substitute for coal or coke, across NUM official picket lines or using such materials taken across NUM official picket lines;

b) not using oil which is substitute for coal."

Fine words. But what has happened? Rank and file action has held the line for the miners in many cases. NUR men at Mantle Lane in Coalville, Leicestershire have withstood BR intimidation and sackings, refusing to shift coal in the heart of a scabbing coalfield. In Yorkshire, seven of the 8 power stations are refusing to handle extra oil. At West Thurrock stewards have said they will not handle new pumps that have been installed to use oil substitute for coal.

But the TUC and trade union leaders

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Gandhi's FILE COPY assassination

THE ASSASSINATION OF India's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her bodyguards has plunged major cities into an orgy of communal violence. The Sikh bodyguards were avenging Gandhi's order for the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar in June. More than 1,000 Sikh militants, including their leader Bhindranwale, died in the army's assault.

Gandhi's excuse for the carnage in Amritsar was the defence of India's national unity against the Sikh extremists' demands for a quasi-independent Sikh state - Khalistan - and their campaign of communal murders aimed at the minority Hindu population of Punjab.

In reality Gandhi's military occupation of the province and the attack on the temple had more to do with the fading fortunes of her "Indira Congress Party" and the forthcoming election.

A strange alliance of politicians from Thatcher and Reagan, through the worthies of the Socialist International (including our own Neil Kinnock) to Chernenko and the world Stalinist movement have all praised her as the savior and preserver of India's national unity and democracy.

Are they talking of the same Indira Gandhi who declared a state of emergency in 1975 and suspended India's constitution for two years? Are they describing the same Indira Gandhi who was once the financial backer of Bhindranwale and his extremists to help topple the "moderate" (but anti-Gandhi) Akali Dal government of the Punjab? Can this be the Indira Gandhi who fomented Hindu religious fanaticism in several of India's states where the Congress was threatened by local nationalist or left forces?

Behind all the rhetoric of anti-communalism, anti-imperialism and anti-landlordism Indira Gandhi was a thoroughly conservative bourgeois politician who bears a large share of the blame for the growing communal antagonisms.

The murderous strife that has cost up to 1,000 lives in the first days after her death is but a continuation of the terrible bloodlettings in Assam, Bombay and Punjab in the last years.

All the bourgeois parties have played with the fire of religious fanaticism and regional "nationalisms". The reason lies in the total failure of the timid Agrarian reforms, the "green revolution" and the "state capitalist" nationalisations and industrialisation to solve India's legacy of backwardness.

This legacy is one of two hundred years of British exploitation of India. British capitalism destroyed India's ancient village economy and its sophisticated handicraft industry, pauperising peasants and artisans. But the British

studiously preserved the feudal ruling classes as its co-rulers and agents. They added a ruthless capitalist exploitation to the miseries of the ancient forms of exploitation - landlordism and clerical parasitism.

In India capitalist exploitation did not bring with it the large scale industrial development it did in Europe. After the Second World War the bankrupt Raj thrust this unenviable legacy into the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie. This class have ruled with only a few years' interruption (between 1977 and 1979), through the Congress Party.

The Congress Party remained in the tight grip of what has become known as the Nehru dynasty. First of Nehru himself, then his daughter Indira and now her son Rajiv. India's "democracy" - like all bourgeois democracy - is a machine for deceiving the masses. In India parties aggregate their vote through a series of local, regional chieftains, linked to the predominant possessing classes, industrialists, merchants or landlords. At the lowest level the corruption and violence involved in "getting out the vote" is phenomenal.

Congress at the same time cynically trades on the hopes of the peasantry and the urban poor for relief from their misery. In the 60s and early 70s it promised them reforms. As these failed to materialise it has been obliged to resort to crude personality cultism - identifying Indira with Hindu deities, and fomenting Hindu chauvinism. The bitter fruits of these policies are now being harvested with the worst communalist atrocities since the post-independence period.

If India's economic longterm crisis and the chronic weakness of the Indian bourgeoisie are one root cause of the present situation, the other is the failure of the Indian Labour Movement. It has failed to lead the exploited masses towards the only solution - Agrarian revolution and a fully planned economy. The two main workers parties, the Communist Party of India and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) are both Stalinist reformist parties. Stalinism with its counterrevolutionary "theory of stages" has allotted a historically progressive role to the Congress Indira wing of the Indian bourgeoisie.

Thus with a few wavers they have supported Gandhi's measures over the last decade even when she broke strikes and arrested their leaders. Worse these parties have blocked the revolutionary road to the working class vanguard. Thus the super exploited and oppressed

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Fuel oil breaks miners picket lines and TUC guidelines.



INSIDE: WOMEN'S SPECIAL

Barking Hospital strike

NICARAGUA

VIOLENCE VS. DEMOCRACY?

THE TORIES ARE waging a remorseless campaign to isolate the miners from the sympathy, support and the solidarity action of their fellow workers.

This campaign has several faces. The visored helmets of Thatcher's calvary riding and clubbing down unarmed young men and women. The be-wigged face of the self-selected clique of upper class judges thirsting to get their hands on the funds of the NUM. They can mug and burgle at will and call it law. Their purpose is clear enough. They are out to break the spirit of the miners and their families and put the fear of God into the rest of the working class. They want to show workers what to expect if they get mixed up in all this. Yet without a further weapon these two would rapidly prove useless.

The reason the Tories are still on their feet and dealing blows at the NUM after eight months is that the majority of the working class are on-lookers in this fight to the death.

Ten years ago one incident from the catalogue of repression the miners have suffered would have set off a mass strike wave of solidarity if not a general strike. Why hasn't this happened in 1984? Partly because there are four million on the dole and four years of bitter and humiliating defeats for organised labour at the hands of the bosses and their Tory agents. Partly because a minority of miners are scabbing on their own strike. But fundamentally it is because of lack of fighting leadership in the labour movement. The long record of retreat and betrayal has taken its toll. It has left large sections of the movement vulnerable to the Tories third weapon - propaganda.

In Fleet Street, in the television studios a vast hate and lie machine churns ceaselessly on. It takes its cue from Number 10. From there the anti-miner advertising campaign jingles are sent out to be repeated with mind numbing regularity by every paper on every TV channel on every radio station.

Throughout the strike the Tories have had one constant theme: this is a battle of Democracy (them) versus Violence (the miners).

In a society like Britain it is easy to disguise the media's propaganda as reflection of public opinion. In fact it forms it. In skillful conjunction with the opinion polls the voices of dissent are turned into a permanent tiny minority, by implication extreme, undemocratic, even mad! Individuals who personify resistance - as Tony Benn did in the early 80s and as Arthur Scargill does now are treated as malicious lunatics. Thus Thatcher's propaganda war is conducted to a script which puts her in the role of Defender of Democracy and Arthur Scargill and the NUM as the evil forces of violence. The Tories are the democratically elected government. The Acts of Parliament and the judges' decisions hampering or forbidding effective strike action, as well as police roadblocks and harassment are all part of the rule of law. The miners should have had a ballot. This too is democracy.

On the other hand picketing - except perhaps half a dozen people under heavy police escort who are not allowed to speak to the strike breakers - constitutes violence, intimidation.

Thatcher has ably used the press and the television to make *this* rather than pit closures the issue. Arthur Scargill is a Marxist - ie he is against democracy, he is trying to overthrow parliament, bring down the government, the strike is political. The NUM is taking money from undemocratic dictatorships - from Russia, from Libya. Even totally unconnected events like the Brighton bombing and the assassination of Mrs Gandhi are made occasions for further sermons to the effect that democracy must not yield to violence. Tory MPs suggest in Parliament that perhaps the NUM is getting more than money from Gadaffi!

Whilst it is true that there is neither workers democracy nor independent trade unions in Libya and no one should prettify Gadaffi's regime the NUM would have been perfectly justified in taking money from the Libyan government itself. Why? Because Libya is a country exploited by the great oil monopolies and threatened by US and British imperialism. It seeks by various ways to offset this pressure for this reason. It has offered its support to various movement fighting US or British Imperialism on the principle that whoever is my enemy's enemy is my friend.

The NUM would be perfectly justified in accepting Libyan aid, with no strings on the same principle. So also it is justified in taking money from the Soviet trade unions, even though these do not have a scrap of independence from the state. These "enemies" of Thatcher are no friends to workers democracy. But they are defending something we too should defend. In the USSR's case that is its nationalised, planned economy. In the case of Libya we defend a country that has won a small measure of independence from imperialism. This does not mean that, as Sid Vincent has said, miners should take money from anywhere. It would be wrong to take money from the fascist National Front. That organisation seeks to divide the working class, persecute and oppress our black fellow workers and if it gained in strength or won power would seek to destroy the NUM and all trade unions.

Faced with this ceaseless barrage of propaganda what help does the NUM get from the "political wing" of the movement. After all the unions set up and paid for the Labour Party to defend it in Parliament against judges who seized union funds and governments who attacked the right to strike.

Has Kinnock weighed in on the miners side? Not on your life. In fact he has played a bit part in Thatcher's "Rule of Law" video nasty. At the TUC he condemned the stone throwers. At the Labour Conference he demanded submission to democracy. Over the Brighton bombing and Gandhi's death he sounded like His Mistress's Voice. He even tried to upstage her in condemning the NUM's Libyan visit.

Arthur Scargill has maintained an almost Christ-like patience in the face of this guttersnipe who throws Tory filth at the miners on every occasion that Thatcher gives him the cue. Should he dare to appear on an NUM platform he ought to be given some of his own medicine by rank and file miners.

What *should* a political leader of the working class movement have said to Thatcher's onslaught? What should every union and Labour Party publication have been saying? What should the MPs have been doing to counter the Tories propaganda?

They should have said that the workers movement will not let itself be hung with Thatcher's democratic noose. That we will not surrender the smallest gain of working people to the bosses' democracy mandate because it is a gigantic fraud. Whilst half a dozen millionaires own and control the press and half the TV companies, whilst the radio and TV are under the control of nominees of the ruling class the views of the electorate can be manipulated at will. Whilst governments are elected on the vaguest of promises, by a minority of the electorate, and cannot be removed till long after the damage is done democracy is not "the rule of the people". Whilst the judges, the police chiefs, the heads of the Civil Service, the Generals are neither elected nor subject to even the vestige of democratic control their decisions should not have the slightest moral hold over us. Above all whilst the jobs, livelihoods, future of working people are the plaything of a handful of industrialists, bankers or state managers like MacGregor *their* democracy is in fact the class rule of the bosses.

Of course we do have some democratic rights. These our forebears in the Labour and popular democratic movement won from the Tories of yesteryear. They too were jailed and cudgelled in order to win them. These rights - most centrally the right to strike - are under constant attack. The cause of democratic freedom, the fight to maintain and extend the liberties of the people is the cause of the NUM and those who support it. ■

DON'T LET THEM ISOLATE THE MINERS

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have connived in all kinds of covert and overt deals to scab on the miners. The 'left' TGWU dock leaders as well as the 'right' ISTC are ferrying scab coal to Ravenscraig. 60,000-70,000 tonnes of coal weekly is being shifted by lorries in Leicester, as elsewhere, without any serious resistance by the TGWU locally or nationally. Oil tankers are now going into Didcot power station again after it has been converted to oil burning.

Still nothing showed the mettle of the TUC more than their response to the sequestration of the NUM's funds. Just think of the importance of this attack both for the hard-pressed NUM and for the whole working class movement. Already the NUM's South Wales area has had its funds seized for organising unfortunately unsuccessful picketing of millionaire's coal lorries. Then a judge declares the entire strike to be illegal and unofficial. The case was part of a campaign orchestrated by the National Working Miners Committee, who meet with one time Thatcher adviser David Hart, plan their affairs on Longlands farm near Worcester and have the backing of Moral Rearmament the Freedom Association and the open cheque book of the Daily Mail. When the NUM quite rightly refuses to accept this verdict "Justice" Nicholls gave Price Waterhouse three weeks to report back to him on having successfully seized the NUM's funds. Scabs and scab herders are now queuing up in most areas to get the funding of the "illegal" strike frozen and to take the NUM executive to court for damages.

ARMS LENGTH

The scale of the offensive is enormous. It should have been the signal for an immediate call for all out strike action to defend the NUM and defend all unions by smashing the anti-union laws. Instead the TUC sat on its hands and then rushed to make a statement - condemning the NUM's meeting with the Libyans! At precisely the time the NUM needed the TUC's backing they got worse than nothing.

The TUC chiefs are desperate to avoid being drawn into a major conflict with the Tories and their laws. That's why they want to keep the miners strike at arms length. That's why they want to get it over and done with as soon as possible. An increasing number of the union chiefs are privately confiding to their Fleet Street confidants that they think the miners should have settled on the NACODS terms and might forfeit their "support" if they don't settle quickly. TUC chairman Eccles let the cat out of the bag when he told his interviewer that the TUC would have to reconsider its policy if the breakdown of talks was "in any part attributable to the rigidity of our colleagues in the NUM" Eccles is not just any old far right maverick dug up by Fleet Street hounds from Chapple and Hammond's school for scabs. He's the NW regional secretary of GMBATU and regular part of the TUC's inner cabinet, laughably called the wise men which includes Basnett, Willis and Buckton. The whole gang are trying to get off the hook now that their game of appearing in the role of arbitrators

and peacemakers has gone up in smoke. The NACODS Judases not only betrayed the NUM, they scuppered the TUC's plan for a sell-out. By taking the Tories' dud cheque - nothing so solid as thirty pieces of silver - they blew a hole in the TUC's negotiating position.

Now the TUC is in a put up or shut up situation. If they put up they come into head on confrontation with the law and this they fear above everything else. They are twisting and turning every which way but loose to get off the hook. Miners should not assume that they can't. The hook - the Brighton resolution that Arthur Scargill caught them on is not what he presented it as. Indeed it has had some pretty bad effects on the strike. Whilst it only committed the TUC leaders to act as minders for the NUM in the negotiations it committed the NUM to curtailing its direct appeals for solidarity to "official channels". Diplomacy between the leaders replaced appeals at mass rallies. Phone calls replaced marches. This was the meaning of the resolution's clause, "The NUM acknowledge that the practical implementation of these points will need detailed discussions with the General Council and agreement with unions who would be directly concerned." In practice it has meant that the NUM scaling down its own efforts to win backing in the power stations so as to not upset the deals with GMBATU, the TGWU and the AUEW. This can be seen in the scale of picketing at present. And it opened the door for the TUC to get their snouts in on the negotiations, to hold their own separate talks with the NCB and ACAS as well as Orme and Kinnock. The effect of stopping the mass mobilisations has undoubtedly lowered the previously high morale of the strikers and brought nothing in exchange.

MORALE BOOST

The NUM has responded to the break down of talks with a snap campaign to boost the strikers' morale. It hurriedly convened a re-call conference for November 5th. This was inadequate. It should have broadened the representation at the conference to allow the attendance of the new layer of militant organisers who have been key to this strike. It should have called for mass strike meetings to elect new delegates, discuss and propose resolutions.

A conference which more fully and directly represented the striking miners should have looked at the key questions facing the strike. Why do thousands of scabs, and their officials continue to hold NUM membership despite the existence of rule 51? Who should decide on any deal reached by NUM negotiators? Should further negotiations take place until the NCB announces its agreement to the NUM's terms on the closure plan?

The conference should have simultaneously made detailed demands that the TUC implement its backing, call a general strike when, and if, the Tories get the NUM's funds and at the same time appeal to the rest of the working class to send delegates to transform miners' support committees into bodies

really capable of action. The executive's campaign of rallies is similarly inadequate. The long drawn out process of secretive stop-go negotiation has taken its toll.

So too have the betrayals on the rail and docks and the TUC immobility. What is needed is a campaign to reaffirm the original aims of the strike and to set new terms for a settlement. **These must include the reinstatement of all men dismissed during the dispute, the guarantee of jobs for all NCB employees who have struck as a precondition of a deal. They must include the end of NCB contracts for all scab firms.**

These demands must be taken to strike meetings and voted on. They must be backed by a commitment from the executive to end secret negotiations and to fully publicise any future talks so that all miners can decide the issues.

This purpose will not be served by the five heartwarming rallies. Neither will they serve to break the miners out of their isolation, and make a direct appeal to the rest of the working class. Rather than evening rallies in Aberavon or Edinburgh the miners must take to the streets of the working class centres and signal to workers everywhere that Thatcher and the TUC will not succeed in isolating them.

HEARTS AND MINDS

The miners strike is at a crucial crossroads. NUM branches and strike committees must not leave the job of winning support to the TUC chiefs or their own leaders. That way isolation is inevitable. And at the end of that road lies the unthinkable - defeat.

Every effort must be made to win rank and file workers - in the power stations in particular - to back the TUC guidelines. But there must be no holding back on organised and well defended mass picketing wherever that support is not forthcoming.

The branches must launch an all out campaign in the labour movement to alert fellow workers to the enormity of the test the entire labour movement faces.

In conjunction with miners support committees and the minority of militant activists there must be a new campaign of meetings in every workplace which miners must address.

They should distribute the Miner and other material describing and showing police violence. Leaflets and bulletins should counter every major blow from the Thatcher lie machine. The Miners Wives must graphically describe the sacrifices and sufferings of the mining communities in the fight for jobs. This task is not counterposed to collections. On the contrary only if the hearts and minds of the ordinary shop-floor workers are won will the funds pour in in sufficient quantities to keep the strike going. Most importantly only if these workers are won over heart and soul to the miners' cause will the labour movement be able to smash Thatcher's legal onslaught with a general strike. Only if these workers are won can all trade unionists organise to stop the TUC stabbing the miners, and the entire working class, in the back. ■



NUM negotiators: McGahey, Scargill and Heathfield

10p if sold separately

TORIES WAGE WAR ON WOMEN

ITS NOT ONLY miners wives who have felt the weight of the Tory government's attacks on women. Working class women everywhere are being forced to stand up and fight or face a major cut in the social and welfare services, job security and standard of living they have won for themselves over many years.

The Tories know full well what they are trying to do. Back in 1983 the Tory Family Policy Group outlined its plans for women. It aimed "...to encourage families to resume responsibilities taken on by the state, for example, responsibility for the disabled, the elderly and unemployed 16 year olds."

In other words they were saying that a woman's place is in the home doing, free of charge, work previously done by the welfare state. The Tories want to cut social spending and boost profits by cutting back the gains made by the working class in previous years.

The Tories do not just want women to stay at home however. They also want them to do low paid and insecure jobs. The bosses that Thatcher represents need more profits. Workers' wages and conditions won through trade union organisation are a barrier to their lining their pockets better. Employers hope women, because of their responsibilities in the home, will continue to prove to be less well organised, cheaper and more flexible workers. Alongside their attempts to weaken the traditionally militant miners and car workers, the bosses are happy to try to draw more women into part time and low paid work.

WOMEN AT WORK

60% of all women are in paid employment. That makes up 44% of the workforce! Yet 67% of these workers are concentrated in just three categories of low paid work: clerical (41%), catering, cleaning and hairdressing (10%), health, education and welfare (16%).

Nearly one million women are officially registered as unemployed. Many more are not on the books because there are no benefits for many married women. In 1983, Thatcher's "boom" year (no connection with her more recent one in Brighton!) a pathetic 50,000 new jobs were created by the bosses!

What this official figure hides is that there were 200,000 more part-time jobs available, mainly for married women, and there was an actual loss of 150,000 full time jobs.

WORKING PART-TIME

The last years have seen a massive expansion in part-time working. 44% of working women work part time. That makes up 4.1 million jobs in all. The *Economist* - one of the bosses weekly magazines - explained this increase in the following way: "part-time women workers in Britain are not just cheerful but cheap" they gloated. "Employers think they are more productive than full-timers. They are also in the lowest paid jobs... These are the women earning less than the national insurance threshold of £34 a week (so the bosses don't have to pay national insurance - WP). That would not buy many hours of a miner's time, but it would pay for nearly 19 hours of a shop assistant on the minimum set by the wages council." (*The Economist*, 29.9.84). They estimate that in the

THE SHIFT TOWARDS PART TIME WORK



service industry up to 70% of women part-timers are earning less than £34 per week.

For the greedy employers part-time working also means less rights for the women. Only 51% of part-timers get any sick pay, and 40% have no employment protection and can therefore be dismissed at a moment's notice.

It's easy to see why the bosses like part-timers, but women often have no alternative because of family commitments.

WOMEN'S PAY

Anyone who thought the Equal Pay Act introduced 10 years ago would really improve women's pay must be disappointed by now. In April 1984 the average gross pay for manual women workers was £92.98 only 61% of the average manual male workers wage of £151.90.

The real problem for women seeking equal pay is that jobs tend to be segregated. 63% of women have jobs where they only work with other women, so there are no men to become equal to, and the legislation has remained as useless as it was designed to be.

In real terms many women have very low wages. NHS ancillary workers doing a 40 hour week were awarded a pay rise of £3.15p a week this year, taking them up to £68.98. This settlement was amongst the lowest in the public sector at 4.8% - compare that to Police pay rises of 8.4% of a much higher basic rate! Part time workers don't get fat overtime bonuses for fighting the miners on the picket line!

FOR RICHER, FOR POORER

Under Thatcher the gap between those who have disgustingly high incomes and those on low pay has widened dramatically. A married man, with two children, earning £80,000 per annum in 1979 (poor thing!) has since had a real increase in take home pay of 54%. A male worker on £8,000 in 1979 has increased his real take home pay by 5.7%. The reality of these figures is that a parasite like Bernard Matthews (of Turkey farming fame) has had a pay rise of 37% this year to £668,457 a year. "Bootiful" indeed.

In comparison 14.4% of all households are now below the official poverty line. That is the sickening reality of Thatcher's Britain. The unemployed in this country are worse off than in the rest of W. Europe. Average unemployment benefit was only 70% of the EEC poverty standard in 1980, and had dropped to 53% by 1983. Many unemployed married women are not even eligible for those meagre benefits.

CUTS

Thatcher's commitment to profits means reducing public spending on such "luxuries" as health, housing, old people's homes, schools and nurseries. For women like her this doesn't make much difference. They can employ a nanny, buy their own house and pay for private hospital care.

Cuts in social services hit working women two ways. They hit them as workers in those industries where jobs are at risk. 80% of workers in old people's homes are women. So too are virtually all home helps and school meals staff. The planned cut of 40% in the school meals budget for 84/85 means a drastic loss of jobs for these women.

Secondly, cuts mean that the task of caring for children, sick relatives and elderly parents falls even more heavily onto women. Already more women are caring for sick, disabled or frail people at home than are looking after the under-16s!

Tory cuts in subsidies to local authorities have led to a virtual stop in all building of houses. Homeless families and those waiting to be rehoused face a prospect of no more houses being built until working class action defeats Thatcher.

Closures of schools and hospitals with transfer of services to other areas also affects women. They mean more travelling to take the children to school or visit hospitals. At the same time public transport costs have been increased and routes have been cut.

These "little matters" don't trouble the ministers taking decisions. But they have a big impact



Part timers: low pay and no rights

if you have to get 2 buses to go to the next antenatal clinic when your local hospital closes.

PRIVATISATION

Not satisfied with making welfare and the NHS a system of "poor relief" the Tories are now trying to make profits out of the services. In local authorities and the NHS this has meant government instructions to put services like cleaning, laundry and catering out to tender to the lowest cost bidder. This is the reality of "privatisation" which has given the green light to cowboy companies to pay starvation wages and cut corners in order to come in and undercut the present cost.

Strikers at Barking and Hammersmith Hospitals in London know what this means.

Privatisation means reduced hours, lower pay, shorter holidays and harder work for the women employed, and it means an inadequate service for the people using the NHS or Council amenities. At Barking, where scab labour is being employed to try and break the strike, the standards are so appalling that women with newly-born babies have been sent home early because their babies' cots were crawling with cockroaches.

It is no surprise that the government are attacking ancillary services in the NHS. All strikes and disputes in recent years over pay and cuts in the NHS have seen domestic staff, porters and catering workers in the forefront of action.

Privatisation plans aim to undermine union organisation in these areas. The Tories also have a special interest in these plans.

17 Tory MPs have direct financial links with the major companies taking over the services!

Women's health:

Still not satisfied with the impact of Tory policies on women's lives, Kenneth Clarke has decided that the direct approach to ruining women's health might be better. He has ordered doctors to only do routine cervical smear testing every 5 years in women under 35 years old.

This test is one of the few medical screening procedures which can detect a pre-cancer which can then be cured by simple treatment.

Cervical cancer kills 2,000 women each year, and screening is so inadequate that numbers are actually increasing especially amongst under-35 year old women.

Facts like that have not made Clarke change his decision, which could allow women to develop full-blown cancer of the cervix in between 5 yearly smears.

Contraception has been important in allowing women more control over their lives by deciding if and when to have a family. It has allowed sexual pleasure to be freer from fears of unplanned pregnancy.

The introduction of free contraception for everyone was an important gain, but again the Tories have got their eye on it. Funds are being withdrawn from family planning clinics and some are considering having to return to being private or charity organisations. Abortion, so necessary if women

are to have a choice when contraception fails or is not available, has never been easy to obtain on the NHS. Now it is becoming more difficult. Waiting lists grow which means the difference between a quick, simple and safe procedure and a traumatic late abortion.

BLACK WOMEN

78% of ancillary workers in London hospitals are black. They earn low wages and often work in the most run-down hospitals. Now these services are cut, black women will lose their jobs and find it difficult to get new ones given the racist employment policies of the NHS and private employers.

Black nurses are concentrated in grades such as S.E.N. and auxiliaries which have no promotion prospects and lower pay. Many Asian women work in sweatshop conditions for appalling wages as low as £35 for a 40 hour week. Other women work from home, earning from £15-20 for about 40 hours work on piece rates.

Black women are also facing increasing harassment from the police and state. The racist immigration laws make black women particularly vulnerable to deportation at the hands of the police.

If a husband dies or leaves them, black women often have no right to stay where they have lived for years and brought up children. These racist and sexist laws are barbaric in their effects on black families.

THEIR MORALS AND OURS

The Tories say that society is falling apart and that we need more law and order, more respect and discipline. They call for a return to the values of their Victorian forefathers. They argue that if only the family were stronger, if women did not leave their children roaming the streets whilst going out to work for pin-money, society would be a better place.

The Tory moralists want women to take on the role of pulling the family back together, with Mum caring for everyone who is ill, disabled or unemployed. She can have a job as well, providing it's not her main priority and can be given up if necessary. Women have to teach their children to respect their elders, the police the church and the Royal Family, and we must accept that our rights, are always secondary when it comes to anti-abortionists interfering with our lives and telling us what to do with our own bodies.

The morality of Thatcherism is truly "Victorian" - a return to sweated labour, enforced prostitution and domestic drudgery for working class women. Miners wives are now doing battle to break her government and everything it stands for. Now is the time for all workers to back the wives and the miners. Now is the time for miners wives to reach out to the millions of working class women who are suffering under the Tories and draw them into struggle against the filthy capitalist system Thatcher defends. □

Working class power and women's liberation

THE MINERS' STRIKE has seen many miners change their ideas about what is right and proper for women to do in a strike. Some have gone further and thought seriously about the whole question of women's liberation.

Yet ideas which were formed in our earliest years and which are confirmed in every newspaper and TV broadcast don't give way at the first push. On all sides women are presented as the caterers for male consumption. This is most obvious in our role as cook, house cleaner and nurse but extends to our bodies and personalities. Women are presented and expected to present themselves as glamorous objects of sexual pleasure for men.

In our society it is overwhelmingly women who must be attractive to men, who must conform to certain ideals and standards that stare out at us from every magazine, from the TV screen. In millions of images, and not just in what people recognise as pornography, women are degraded from full human beings into being objects at the disposal of men. This finds its worst expression in rape and sexual assault, but most women, at some time or another find themselves embarrassed, mocked, humiliated or "put in their place" because they are women. If they fight back they are accused of nagging and making themselves unattractive to men.

Most men, and many women, will object that there's another side to it. Aren't women also respected as mothers, wives, and the guardians of the domestic hearth?

Precisely this idealisation should draw our attention to the individual household for it is here that the basic roots of women's inequality in our society are to be found. It is deeply rooted in the nature of the economic and social system on which our society is based- capitalism.

In fact women perform an essential service in the home without which industrial production could not go on. When a miner comes in from a shift physically exhausted and hungry, he has to rebuild his energy so that he is fit to turn up for the next day's shift. He needs food prepared, clothes washed, a home maintained and kids looked after. Those tasks normally fall on the woman, so her labour in the home actually maintains his ability to work. It also helps produce the next generation of workers. This work is therefore absolutely essential for capitalism to continue production, but it is not wage labour, no payment is made for it.

As a result the housewife is forced to be financially dependent on her husband. On this fact rests the whole edifice of women's unequal position with regard to men. However "generous" and "reasonable" a man may be, he still has economic power over his wife. The wage, excluding the housekeeping, is his money. The crude exercise of this power may be offset by love, companionship, mutual concern for the children, but it is always there and even poisons these very relations. The social inequality between men and women fuels the men's feelings of superiority and women's feelings of subordination. The whole culture of our society expresses this.

■ POSITION AT WORK ■

But perhaps all this changes if women themselves have a paid job? Alas it doesn't. Our position in the home affects us when we go out to work.

All the features of these jobs- their low pay, their limitation to "women's occupations", their lack of security - presupposes that a woman's main job is still in the home. The propaganda that women are adding a "second income" or working for "pin money" is completely false when so many families need two incomes to survive, or when



Women's work in the home - unpaid and isolated the woman is the sole breadwinner because her husband is unemployed!

Because women can often work only part time or have to give up their jobs more frequently than men their work is much more low paid. It is less skilled in the traditional technical sense and women workers' bargaining power is less.

■ BACKWARDNESS ■

The so-called backwardness of women workers that male trade unionists often refer to is not "natural" but a product of their disadvantaged position in having two jobs. Partial or total isolation in the home also robs women of the experience and the "skills" of collective organisation and lays them open via the media to the bosses' propaganda.

In times of struggle like the present when whole communities mobilise, when canteens are set up, when men are prepared to help or at least not obstruct the self-organisation of women, we can get a glimpse of the real causes of women's oppression and some of the solutions.

We can see that the oppression of women in capitalist society has its roots not in the legal inequalities nor in a sort of conspiracy by men to keep them down but in the condemnation of women to domestic labour within the family. Feminists have always argued that women's oppression is due to men and that only a united struggle by women of all classes can alter this.

Against this revolutionary socialists argue that it is the capitalist system of production which leads to women's oppression in contemporary society. We argue that the condemnation to childbearing and domestic labour in the tiny family unit can only be overcome in a society that plans the economy for social need, not private profit. Only the working class, men and women together, have the numbers and the organisation and the power to put an end to capitalism. Therefore the road to women's liberation lies through the abolition of capitalism- a task that requires a united working class.

This unity can be forged only on the basis of women coming forward and playing an equal part in the struggle. This means women themselves placing all their demands for liberation firmly at the centre of the working class programme for change, for socialism.

Here the difference between the reformist and the revolutionary traditions in the Labour Movement is at its sharpest.

Just as the Labour Party does not seek to abolish capitalism and replace it with an economy planned by the working class itself, so it does not seek to abolish the domestic slavery of women.

In both cases it tries- at best- to offset the worst effects of capitalism. In fact the Labour Party tries to rival the Tories as the "party of the family". As a result it cannot and dare not come forward as the party of liberation for women. It cannot because to enable women (and men and children too) to escape the walled-in private cells of family life requires a massive allocation of resources to make an ever increasing proportion of the work now done within each household a pub-

barracks or a school canteen then families will stick to their own kitchens and women will prefer voluntary imprisonment there.

But if the necessary resources are provided, if the organisation is in the hands of the skilled and trained, if the consumers and workers are in close contact and if all can regularly take turns at work, then the drudgery of cooking every day can be removed. Needless to say no one would dream of forbidding people from cooking for themselves for pleasure. It is the tyranny of the necessity to do so that will be lifted.

Why can't we do all this in the here and now? The answer is that an enormous obstacle exists; production, for private profit. The blind laws of the market make any comprehensive planning impossible. The need of each enterprise to make the maximum profits to enable it to survive in competition with its rivals makes the whole class of capitalists resist all but the bare minimum of state expenditure on social welfare.

Yet none of this is inevitable. The present crisis is not a crisis of shortage. There is no shortage of raw materials or of human beings with the skills to extract and manufacture. Neither is there any shortage of need for the products of their labour. The millions of unemployed in countries like Britain as well as the starving peasants of Ethiopia desperately need the world economy to be planned to bring together these resources and this wasted human ingenuity. **So too do women if they are to be freed from their bondage.**

Capitalist crisis does not only inflict suffering. It also rouses people out of their slumbers. Millions of people- like the miners wives today, faced with the destruction of their communities "for economic reasons" - ask the great liberating question "Why?" Why should millions endure the misery of the dole for the profit of a few? Why should we women keep out of the struggle and leave it to the men? Why should we go back to isolation when this struggle is over? The energy, activity and intelligence roused by this strike shows what working class people are capable of. That's why the bosses, their politicians and their agents in the workers' movement hate it like sin. A famous reactionary in the last century remarked that behind every strike lurked the many-headed monster of revolution. For however brief a moment every strike shows working people their own strength, intelligence and powers of organisation.

The reformist and Labour Party leaders hate this power like the plague. Their cries of alarm are ceaseless. Leave it negotiations, to arbitration, to speeches in Parliament! Wait for the elections! Obey the law! Above all leave it to us! Yet every striker senses that these respectable representatives have got nothing from the boss class except when the working class itself took a hand, and even threatened to "get out of control."

■ WINNING GAINS ■

The winning of important gains like job security or protecting the health service under capitalism can only be done by the direct, mass involvement of the working class. The freeing of the working class from capitalist crisis, from unemployment, permanent insecurity and war needs an even greater scale of class mobilisation to destroy the capitalist class forever. Karl Marx knew this when he coined the slogan, "The emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself" We must add to this that the emancipation of women is likewise the task of the working class with working class women in the forefront of this struggle.

The great revolutions in France and Russia saw women erupting into public, political life and playing a mass role. The women of Paris and St. Petersburg brought down the tyrannies of the Bourbons and the Romanovs. How much more must working class women play a leading role in the revolution that leads to their own emancipation as a sex and as a class. □

by Carol Roberts

lic, social concern.

As long as the nursing and the earliest education of children falls almost entirely on the individual mother, women will remain oppressed. As long as the task of washing, cleaning, mending and household management falls mainly on the wife, women will remain oppressed. Nor is it any more than a makeshift solution for husband and wife to share these tasks more equally. Where the husband works and the wife does not this is an unlikely solution anyway. **These tasks must become the tasks of society as a whole.**

Over the last one hundred years the capitalist class (in its own interests) took over the education of the over fives. In the search for profit it has taken over the production of foodstuffs and cleaning materials which have replaced some of the backbreaking work of the housewife. **So too a socialist society can and must free women from their remaining chains.**

■ NEW SERVICES ■

Of course these new services must be of a high enough quality to encourage people to use them willingly. Nurseries must not be grim orphanages where children are dumped. They must be places where children go willingly because their toys, games and play are more fun than if they were shut up at home. Mothers and fathers should be able to share looking after their own and other people's children.

Likewise with cooking and cleaning. If social provision was unable to rise above the level of a *Strikers' canteens: socialising housework?*



Petrograd 1917: women in the Russian Revolution

Wives give lead to all women workers

THE BOSSES MAY think that women workers are easy to defeat. But throughout the seventies and the early eighties thousands of working class women have proved them wrong.

In 1976 women at Trico struck for 22 weeks demanding equal pay. They were scabbed on by male workers, led by the chairman of the shop stewards' committee. In the end their determination was rewarded. They won their claim.

Asian women at the heart of the strike at Grunwicks in 1977 wanted union recognition. More recently young women at the Lee Jeans factory occupied to prevent its closure.

Women have been the backbone of fights to keep hospitals open at St. Benedicts, Elizabeth Garret Anderson and now Bradford's Thornton View. Hundreds of thousands of women have struck and demonstrated against health service cuts and for better pay. The miners wives' organisations have now taken their place in a long history of struggle that gives the lie to those who claim that women workers are necessarily passive and a push-over for the bosses.

■ SCOURGE OF BOSSES ■

The problem however is that the lessons each group of women has learnt in struggle have rarely been passed on from one battle to another. Many women are completely unaware of the long tradition of women's militancy and feel as though they are the first and only ones to have encountered the problems.

Unfortunately no lasting working class women's organisation has been built that could link up the best, most militant working class women across unions, industries and communities. Such a movement would draw together women's struggles in the unions, at work, in black women's organisations, on the estates and in unemployed groups. It would

'I never thought I could...'

"I NEVER THOUGHT I could..." How many times has that been said in Wives' Support Groups during the strike? "I never thought I could...organise large scale catering or finance, speak at meetings or go picketing. I never thought I could be so pushy."

Miners wives, through working together, have discovered in themselves a store of talent, ability and confidence. But why do so many women grow up underestimating their own capabilities? Why do women grow up thinking that certain parts of life are really men's concern - politics, the union, mending the car, being an engineer, being a doctor? Somehow, it seems that men are "naturally" better at those things.

But is it really natural? Teenage girls do much less well than boys in Science and Maths and overall they get less CSEs and O-levels. But if you look at Primary School children it's not the same story. The girls are ahead in reading and writing and just as good at numbers. They'd probably be better at those too, if they hadn't already started thinking that Maths was more of a boy's subject. What happens to the girls as they grow up?

What happens is that the girls learn to have a certain picture of themselves. The message gets across to them - at home, at school, on television advertisements - some jobs are men's jobs, some subjects are boy's subjects. Of course, a girl needs a job, but it needn't be very well paid, or secure, or challenging - because that's not going to be the main thing in her life. Her main role in life is being a wife and mother, being the centre of the family. And she'd better not be too bright and confident because boys don't like "pushy" girls!

Even when a young woman acquires a skill like shorthand or typing or delicate assembly work - somehow that job just isn't seen as skilled, and is certainly not paid the same as the skilled jobs that men tend to do. "I'm just a typist" says a young woman "I'm an engineer" says her brother proudly.

Even nurses who are spoken about with respect are low-paid - well, they're mostly women aren't they?

The truth is, women are brought up so that they have little chance of real independence. The jobs are poorly paid and if you are married and unemployed you have no right to benefit. You are likely to always have someone to look after: husband, children, parents. The amazing thing is that this is all presented as being fulfillment for women - caring for others and being the centre of the family.

Of course motherhood is fulfilling in its own way, but a home can be a prison when you can't get out of it. What's more, it's prison with hard labour.

Women's role in the family keeps them isolated from other working class women and the struggles of other workers. Even if they do have a job their domestic chores and the sense that a woman's place is really in the home will act against them getting fully involved in the unions. They do not have the same possibilities as men to play a full and active role in the struggles and organisation of the working class. □ by Sue Thomas



Civil service cleaners fight for their jobs

give confidence and solidarity to all women in struggle and would be the scourge of the bosses who want to use women as a source of cheap and unorganised labour. It would also be the scourge of trade union leaders who want women's membership dues, but won't back their struggles or the attempts of working class women to make the unions speak for them.

The experience and energy of the miners' wives can lay the basis for just such a movement. Many women involved see it that way. Carol from Hatfield Main, for example, told a miners' wives conference in the Midlands:

"I think the miners wives here today can be the basis of a movement that should link up with women at work, a movement that could really change things. For the last 5 years of Thatcherism we have been on the defensive, people have been frightened to fight back in case they lose their jobs, and because they have not fought back they have lost them anyway. Women have been hit hard by job losses, low pay and loss of services. The example of ordinary working class women fighting Thatcher's plans can be an inspiration for all women. We can help them overcome the idea that nothing can be done."

If this wish is to become reality and we are to build a working class women's organisation, then we must learn the lessons of the past and prepare to take on the enemies we face today.

■ FIGHTING MOVEMENT ■

The very oppression that women suffer and struggle against has itself served to make it difficult to organise working class women into a permanent fighting movement. It would be wrong to claim that women are always militant class fighters.

Being both workers and mothers means that many women are not active in unions and workplaces. Pressures of time and energy are made worse by the constant reinforcement of women's subservient role. It is hardly surprising that many women are susceptible to the anti-working class propaganda that surrounds us. Many are isolated at home with young children with only the media for information. Not talking to others in similar situations cuts women off from the struggles, the arguments and the traditions that makes them ready to fightback.

In struggle working class women can often see through the devices that have been used to keep them down. But once the struggles are over - be

Strikers at Grunwicks: forced to struggle with union leaders as well as the police



Andrew Ward (Report)

picket line for 690 days before they officially conceded defeat.

Similar experiences have occurred elsewhere. They reflect the politics and sexism of the union leaders. They also reflect the difficulty women have in getting involved fully in their unions. All unions have predominantly male executives despite the fact that some have overwhelmingly female membership.

In 1980 Apex had 56% women members but only one woman on the executive of 15! Meetings held after work, in pubs without creches etc make it very difficult for women to attend, so one of the first demands of militant women must be to get the union to meet at work, in bosses time and make the whole structure as accessible as possible to women with domestic responsibilities.

What about the women's liberation movement?

It won't be just the trade union officials who will attempt to prevent the building of a working class women's movement. The feminist "women's liberationists" will hold up their hands in horror at our insistence on the movement being based on the battles of the working class and on it being a class conscious women's movement.

The feminists see women's primary problem as being their inequality and oppression by men. But for working class women, basic problems of poverty, insecurity and lack of opportunity are things they share with male workers. The main enemy is not the men but the Tories and bosses who put the screws on us in order to make profits.

Within the working class there are obviously divisions due to sexism and inequality of women. This is why women must organise within the unions and labour movement. But the feminists argue that all women should unite together, regardless of class to win equal rights and liberation. This leads them to have different priorities when it comes to fighting.

Throughout the late 70s when working class women were facing harsh attacks on jobs, wages and services, the feminists monthly magazine *Spare Rib* - was full of articles concerned with individual women's problems and experiences. Their priority was the fight against pornography and violence against women. These issues are important but cannot form the basis for drawing the mass of working class women into struggle against the bosses.



Greenham Common: feminist tactics no help to working class women

Women's liberationists also have different ideas about tactics for winning battles, rejecting what they see as male-dominated forms of struggle like strikes and pickets. A woman from Greenham Common explained how she saw their actions at the gates: "When taking non-violent action, your very vulnerability is your strength. For example, having put yourself in a position of apparent weakness by lying in the road, you trust that the motorist in the City, or the truck drivers at Greenham will not run you over, and that the police will not beat you or kick you."

Unfortunately the police and scab drivers do not respect that vulnerability as many miners' wives know all too well. Greenham Common women may well be brave but their tactics designed to gain publicity and sympathy were supposed to change public opinion. For workers in struggle that is a hopeless approach in the face of the bosses, police, courts and the media. We have to depend on our united strength as a movement, which includes standing up to the police on picket lines, meeting their attacks with organised defence rather than an image of "vulnerability".

For working class women the fight for liberation and equality does not stop at achieving legal equality, ending sexual harassment and even equal pay alongside bourgeois women. The struggle to be fully free from the burden of domestic work and to be free to take an equal place in social life alongside men is first and foremost a fight against capitalism and the capitalist class that profits by it. Of course there will be hard battles with men in the labour movement and at home whenever sexist prejudices lead them to oppose or downgrade women's struggles. But this is not to say that men are the main enemy! It is essential that women unite in a movement fighting against Tory attacks but this cannot be based on the politics of feminism.

Building a militant working class women's movement should be started now, led by the women organised around the strike. By making links with other women in struggle, visiting hospital occupations, organising a national co-ordination of all the groups, the beginnings of such a movement can be made.

Such a movement would have to be built on the basis of a commitment to action in defence of women's rights, jobs and transforming the trade unions to fighting organisations of the class. □

Andrew Ward (Report)

by Helen Ward

"WE WANT OUR JOBS BACK!"

WORKERS POWER spoke to Susan Smith, a NUPE shop steward on strike at Barking Hospital.

WP: You've been out on strike almost as long as the miners?

SS: A week behind the miners.

WP: Why are you so determined?

SS: It's our jobs. We want them back. Crothalls, the private cleaning contractors at Barking, had the domestic service contract previously. They went out to competitive tender last September. They reduced the price by 41%. When the new contracts started in April they reduced two thirds of the staff to part time working. That dropped them below the Social Security payment threshold. Also one third of holiday entitlements were taken away and 876 cleaning hours per week were taken away from the domestic service at Barking. It meant a reduction in living standards of between 30 and 60%. That meant in some cases women who had previously worked full time were offered weekend working and it reduced their money to £17 per week. Plus, we knew the service could not be provided with that number of hours short so we decided to come out on strike. There were no negotiations. Crothalls just gave us this take it or leave it package deal. For most women it would have meant under 15 hours of work a week on very low pay. Only one third of the staff would be earning more than £17 per week and that would be on a three week rota basis where they would have to work different hours every week.

WP: How long has the domestic service been privatised at Barking?

SS: For about seventeen years now. Before last September though we were governed by Whitley Council rates of pay and conditions. Then the Fair Wages Policy went through Parliament and we had that taken from us. So you've got all these companies and cut throat firms that come in and just reduce the wages and get larger profits.

WP: What support have you had from the other NHS unions inside Barking?

SS: Not very good support at all. Some of our own NUPE members are crossing the picket line.

They tend to think that if they keep their heads down low enough that it's not going to hit them. Porter services have been hit now and in the catering service they are bringing in vending machines to reduce staff. So it is hitting even this hospital. But our strike has stopped other privatisation plans in this district. The laundry service in one of the other local hospitals should have gone out to competitive tender in November. But this has now been put back.

WP: Because of your strike?

SS: While Barking is out on strike they cannot push that through. It is unfortunate that the other workers in this district cannot see that to stop privatisation means to support the Barking women. Then we could make sure that there will be no privatisation plans for this district.

WP: So there has been no support from COHSE or NUPE in any of the other local hospitals either?

SS: At the very beginning of the strike the laundry in our group took industrial action for a week. But they were COHSE not NUPE members. They went back after a week. At the beginning porters, catering staff and the sewing room came out for two weeks, but they went back to work. Then we only had them out for days of action after that.

WP: What about NUPE nationally?

SS: NUPE nationally, there's been one national day of action and one London wide day of action where other NUPE members have been encouraged to participate in rallies and lobbies.

WP: Was there a good response to these days of action?

SS: Yes, a good response, especially to the London day of action. There were more people on strike in London supporting the Barking women than were on strike during the 1982 pay dispute. Nationally we had coaches come from Wales, Belfast and Scotland to participate in the rally.

WP: Isn't it the same problem as in the 1982 pay dispute in that you have a day of action and then everybody goes home, like the big one on Sep-

tember 22nd in 1982. It did not win the dispute. Do you think more is needed to win?

SS: I think so. We don't ever seem to learn anything do we? Days of action do nothing except somebody goes back and cleans up two days work. It has to be a sustained campaign. I'd like to see our union as a whole taking privatisation on. We've had four disputes in London running at the same time. There has been no co-ordinated response to them. No co-ordination between the occupations at St. Leonards and the South London Women's hospital and the strikes by domestics at Hammersmith and Barking. If you're not going to have a co-ordinated campaign then you're not going to get anywhere.

WP: You think a national strike against privatisation is the way?

SS: I wouldn't like to say exactly if a national strike against privatisation is the way, but something along those sort of lines where it is constantly in the public eye. We want something that can really get to grips with it and not just say we recommend that you support this rally but we instruct you that it's strike action. You know, something that really proves they are backing this fight against privatisation and not just worrying about if they ask their members to come out on strike then they'll rip up their membership cards.

WP: Has the NUPE leadership, Bickerstaffe and Co. been campaigning for action to support Barking and the other struggles or have they been giving only moral support?

SS: Just moral support.

WP: And that isn't enough.

SS: Well, moral support means that we are still here on the picket line seven months later. We want our jobs back. We do not want to go to an industrial tribunal and have a pay off. We wouldn't have stood here for seven months if we'd wanted a bloody pay off. We want our jobs back!

WP: Have you had any connections with the miners struggle?

SS: We've had miners from Kent, South Wales, Lancashire and Nottinghamshire strikers down. They've all come down and supported our picket and it's been really great. Some of them are just as poor as us. Because of the length of time we've both been out and the common experiences we've had there is a connection.

WP: You've both faced police harassment.

SS: Yes, we've had 22 arrests. You're guilty anyway. It doesn't matter what evidence you give you're bloody guilty. We had the same conditions of bail as the miners- you can't come within half a mile of the Barking picket line. There were four court cases last Thursday. One got adjourned because the police officer giving evidence had hurt his back on a miner's picket line. The other three all got found guilty.



Barking women lead struggle against Tory plans for the NHS

WP: Have you had any links with the striking miners' wives?

SS: Yes, we went down to Betteshanger and spoke at a miners' wives support group there. They've come up and supported our picket line as well.

WP: Can these links be made more permanent after the strike?

SS: Definitely, by keeping in touch, organising regular visits to the pits and social clubs. Something like that should be done on a regular basis.

WP: What about a working class women's organisation?

SS: Why not? We're the ones that are determined. We're the ones that can organise. There's lots of things an organisation could go on to fight.

AND THEN CAME THE SCAB BUS AND THE INTERVIEW WAS TERMINATED.

WHERE TO NEXT?

THE MINERS STRIKE could not have lasted this long if it hadn't had the wholehearted backing of wives' support groups. Groups have been built in every coalfield providing food parcels, hot meals and moral support. Not all of the original drive of the groups have been maintained however.

Kay Sutcliffe from Kent said as much when she told *Socialist Action* recently that "over the summer things have gone quiet and each group has been doing its own thing- the regional meetings have broken down. So we want to get them going again. We are determined to carry on after the strike."

Whilst the groups are continuing their activity around kitchens and fund raising it isn't only Kent that has noticed a fall off in other activity. Since the big London demonstration in August there has been no such focus to build for. This hasn't been helped by the reduction in the NUM's picketing and in rank and file attempts to win blacking and solidarity. A great deal of work is being done to raise money and keep the strike going, but ways of spreading the strike have been left to deals between the TUC and the NUM executive.

■ PICKETS & KITCHENS ■

Individual women's support groups face their own problems. One group has had to cut back on the food kitchen from five to three days a week due to lack of money. Faced with extreme financial hardship others have started to close in on themselves and look after their own welfare rather than building links with others outside their village.

In several groups there have been tensions between those women in the groups who see them-

selves as only concerned with welfare and others who are trying to build political support by going on pickets, speaking to trade unionists and linking up with other workers in struggle. In Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures for example, some women were opposed to the idea of sending a delegation to join the Cammell Laird picket.

Of course picketing and "political" activity has continued among women who see the importance of building links with other workers. Delegations from many groups including Keresley have been to the Barking Hospital picket line in London. Women from Hatfield Main in Doncaster and others from Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures went to Cammell Lairds. Midlands groups organised a women's picket at Florence colliery last month and plan more in the future. Mardy wives usually go to the Midlands when the strikers are raising funds there. But there have not been anything like enough attempts to use the fact that women are supporting the strike to build solidarity action amongst other women workers.

Without this kind of work it may seem easier for the groups to become totally involved in local survival and to cut the wives off from the rest of the working class. That kind of direction may sustain the strike for a spell but it will not take it to victory.

Regional and national networks do exist between the many groups and have been supportive at local level. Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures co-ordinates and distributes funds to local pits. The Midlands and South Wales co-ordinating meetings have provided opportunities for discussion, the exchange of ideas and mutual support.

The national organisation has been far less useful so far. Apart from organising the London demonstration and the farcical petition to the Queen it has given no lead to the groups. It has just

organised a delegate conference for 10/11th November but has restricted the number of delegates to 39. As Pat from Dinnington told us in an interview (see WP No.64): "It's totally inadequate the way they've organised it. Supposing I was one of two South Yorkshire delegates, how can I speak for 17 pits? It's impossible, I don't know their circumstances."

It still remains necessary to build a national wives organisation that is open, democratic and represents every group that is backing the strike. That means fighting the plans of those like Betty Heathfield and Anne Scargill who want to keep the national organisation in the hands of a selected few.

■ SOLIDARITY VITAL ■

The wives organisations must obviously help in the essential tasks of organising food kitchens, Christmas plans and fund raising. None of this is to say that men shouldn't also be working in the kitchens! Many of them could do with some lessons in cooking skills! Raising money and providing food will not unfortunately win the dispute. Nor will it allow the wives to play an active role in pushing the struggle forward.

A number of women's groups have started regularly discussing what's going on in the strike. This is very important. Any settlement or outcome directly affects all the wives. It is in these discussions that some of the divisions are raised between women who see themselves as mainly "canteen" workers and those who have become more politically involved.

This division can prove very dangerous for the groups. In order to maintain and support the strike every effort must be made to ensure that all the wives know what's going on and discuss the way forward for the strike.

If some women are simply left to do cooking in the welfare and don't discuss the strike they could easily become demoralised. They will be the most frustrated every time the talks break down. Some of the more politically aware women have realised the restrictive aspects of "women's work" like cooking and decided that they would rather be on the picket line. This is a tremendous step forward but should not allow them to leave their

fellows women stuck in the kitchen whilst they go off picketing! These women must patiently argue with all the wives explaining the importance of building the strike, and spreading solidarity action if the miners are to win.

If more women are to be got out to address other workers- working class women in particular- and if they are to be drawn into political discussion and picketing then this will mean a far wider allocation of kitchen work. It will mean drawing up a rota involving more women and men!

The recent rotten deal with NACODS, and the failure of the ACAS talks mean there's a lot more work to do in order to win this strike. Predictably the TUC has failed to deliver the goods they promised the miners at Brighton. Solidarity strike action remains as crucial as ever if the miners are not to be left isolated.

Women have a vital role to play in building this support from other workers. That is still the most important task of the wives groups. It is not only important for bringing the strike to victory. It also provides the best basis for building a working class women's movement which can defeat the Tories and resist their vicious assaults on women.

The next step in building such action is for wives groups at local, regional and national level to organise visits to all major women's factories and workplaces. Regular leaflets should be put out to these women arguing why they should come out alongside the miners in opposition to the Tory laws and plans, and urging them to join with us in building a mass women's organisation.

These bulletins should be given out at factory gates and taken into canteens where miners' wives can address the workers and call directly for support.

Solidarity action is the burning need of the miners' strike. Women have a central role in appealing directly to women workers, organising and agitating for solidarity strikes. In doing so they will be laying the basis for the mass working class women's movement necessary to defeat the Tories and bosses' attacks. □

This is what we think is the present situation in the groups and the next steps, but it is meant for discussion, please write in or contact us if you disagree!



Militant wives demonstrate against Thatcher

NICARAGUA: Appeasement no answer to Reagan's offensive

ON THE NIGHT of Reagan's election in November 1980 fireworks and gunshots resounded in the wealthy suburbs of the capital of El Salvador-San Salvador. The following morning one of the many corpses mutilated at the hands of right wing death squads had the following sign pinned to it: "With Reagan we will eliminate all miscreants and subversives in El Salvador and Central America."

Four years on the Salvadorean military and the Reagan Administration are relentlessly pursuing this task. Reagan has never hidden his determination to "roll back" the revolutionary struggles in Central America which led to the overthrow of the hated Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua in 1979 and threatened the same in El Salvador.

For decades US imperialism held the masses of workers and peasants in Central America - in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala - in the grip of super-exploitation and poverty, courtesy of stooge dictatorships completely dependent on Washington. The overthrow of the Somoza regime in July 1979 threatened to end the untrammelled "right" of US capitalism to exploit the people and natural resources of "America's Backyard", not just in Nicaragua but throughout central America.

At the forefront of US policy in Central America is the determination to overthrow the Sandinista Regime. The US knows that if it could destroy the present government in Nicaragua and install a more pliant regime it would throw back the whole anti-imperialist struggle in Central America.

The invasion of Grenada had the same object in relation to the Caribbean. By cutting off aid and organising the "Contra" bands the US hopes to cripple the Nicaraguan economy and thus undermine popular support for the Government. Already

damage to the economy over the last two years of counterrevolutionary activity is running at over 200 million dollars. The 1984 coffee crop - a vital export earner for the country - is estimated to be 40% down on previous years.

The US has been openly stepping up aid to its counter revolutionary allies inside Nicaragua. It has been encouraging the private capitalists who still dominate the Nicaraguan economy to continue their economic sabotage and has been aiding the reactionary Catholic hierarchy to mobilise against the government.

At the same time Reagan's administration has been trying to isolate Nicaragua from its greatest source of support and strength - the other oppressed masses of Central America struggling to free themselves from the US yoke.

This is why the US government has poured such enormous military and economic aid into El Salvador in order to crush the guerilla movement there.

A victory for the FMLN/FDR would be a crushing blow to the US plans for Nicaragua. It would greatly strengthen the Sandinista's and threaten the remaining US puppet governments in Honduras and Guatemala. A defeat for the FMLN/FDR or any compromise which weakens the struggle in El Salvador - would come as an enormous blow to Nicaragua.

Events of the last few months - the signing of the Contadora Treaty by Nicaragua, negotiations between the FMLN/FDR and the Duarte regime - represent significant advances for US imperialism in Central America. They pose acute dangers to the struggle of the workers and peasants of Central America against exploitation and oppression. In the first of two articles on Nicaragua and El Salvador we look at the developments in Nicaragua.

IN THE MIDST of the growing war against the CIA backed "contras" Nicaragua has had its first elections for half a century.

These elections were not of the Sandinista's choosing. For several years after the overthrow of the dictator Somoza, the leadership of the FSLN denounced "bourgeois" elections. They extolled the virtues of "popular power" organisations such as the Sandinista Defence Committees and Sandinista Unions, bodies which in reality had little power over the Government and FSLN leadership.

Originally the government which replaced the hated Somoza was an alliance between the Sandinista FSLN (itself a coalition of petit-bourgeois nationalists, social democrats and proto-stalinists) and the major bourgeois parties in Nicaragua. This Popular Front government committed itself to the preservation of capitalism in Nicaragua through the mixed economy. It aimed at a greater degree of independence from US imperialism by diversifying its trading and investment links to Europe, the "third world" and the Soviet Union.

ALONE IN GOVERNMENT

Today the FSLN is virtually alone in government but remains committed to the same political programme. With the backing of the US its previous allies have either defected to the "contras" or are mobilising internally to bring down the government. The reason is simple. There is no way that the US government is going to allow the Nicaraguans to escape the clutches of US imperialism. It will not allow Nicaragua to stand as an example of "independence" and "revolution" to the rest of Latin America. It must destroy a regime that has sought Cuban and Soviet aid in order to escape the clutches of US imperialism.

The economic blockade, the contra backed invasions, the economic sabotage and the campaign

to isolate Nicaragua internationally as a pro-Soviet "Marxist" regime has had the desired effect on Nicaragua's bourgeois parties. They are demanding capitulation to the US demands, by driving the Sandinistas from office.

The Reagan administration posed the FSLN government with a clear choice. The only way to defend the gains of the Nicaraguan masses against the tightening grip of imperialism was to mobilise the workers and peasants. This would mean expropriating the capitalists who were sabotaging the economy and mobilising the peasants to take over the private estates and form co-operatives. It would mean taking over food distribution and placing it under workers and peasants control. Above all it would mean internationalising the revolution by increasing military and economic assistance to the struggle of the guerillas in El Salvador. Such a policy, combined with the formation of genuine organs of workers and peasants power - soviets, could have thrown back the US offensive and opened up the possibility of a major revolutionary upsurge throughout central America.

The FSLN chose a different course. It remained committed to defending capitalism and instead of appealing to the workers and peasants it preferred to rely on what it saw as the "progressive" capitalist governments of Mexico, Columbia, Venezuela and Panama - the Contradora group. It looked to them to defend it against Washington by achieving a compromise. The Contadora group actively backed by the Socialist and Social Democratic parties of Spain and Germany as well as the Socialist International as a whole - have proceeded to play the same role as the TUC and Labour Party are doing in the miners' strike. First they put themselves forward as "honest brokers". Then they set out to demand compromises from the Nicaraguan government which would put the entire central American struggle at risk.

Firstly the Contadora countries have successfully pressured the FSLN to virtually stop all aid to the FMLN guerillas in order to appease the US. The Sandinista's claim to have halted all arms shipments to the guerillas by 1981. Not even the CIA has been able to trace any significant aid since then. Two years later the FMLN's headquarters were asked to move from Managua.

HYPOCRISY

The Nicaraguan government has recently agreed to sign the Contadora treaty which makes another series of concessions to Washington. It specifically forbids any government to give support to "organisations seeking to destabilise the governments of central America" and goes on to agree to the withdrawal of all foreign advisors. This last point is clearly designed to offer an end to Cuban military aid, one of the major demands of Reagan.

These compromises elicited the normal response from Washington. The US demanded even more! Only the week before Nicaragua's agreement Shultz had told EEC ministers that the US supported the treaty but that Nicaragua would not sign it. The week after Nicaragua signed Reagan and the State department described it as "inadequate" and Costa Rica dutifully drew up a new list of conditions which would have to be met before the other central American countries would sign.



Celebrations earlier this year of the fifth anniversary of the overthrow of Somoza

The same Reaganite hypocrisy greeted the calling of elections. In order to appease the Contadora group and European imperialism, the Sandinistas agreed to hold elections for a Presidency and Legislative Assembly. Again Washington's agents inside Nicaragua used the opportunity to demand further concessions from the government. Arturo Cruz, ex-banker and ex-Sandinista Ambassador to the US quickly put himself at the head of the Nicaragua Democratic Coordinator (CDN). This included three bourgeois parties as well as the employers' Association. The CDN demanded, among other things, that an immediate general amnesty to be granted for the CIA contras and that a "National Dialogue" be entered into with them. **Having spent three days in Nicaragua this US stooge proceeded to set off on a tour to central America and Europe pressing his demands.**

PYRRHIC VICTORY

The US has been demanding elections ever since the overthrow of Somoza. This is a demand that they never placed on their blood stained puppet. Once the Sandinistas called elections, Reagan quickly declared, "No person committed to democracy will be taken in by Soviet style sham elections". Having signalled Washington's preference sure enough virtually all the bourgeois parties "discovered" that "real" democracy did not exist in Nicaragua and withdrew from the elections. Doubtless they were compensated by the massive "American style" bribery payments made to them via the US embassy.

Having spent many months trying to appease US and European imperialism, and many weeks trying to persuade the bourgeois parties to run, the FSLN has achieved only a pyrrhic victory in the elections. Its programme offers only more of the same strategy: - preservation of the "mixed economy framework", guarantees of credit and bank financing to all industrialists "who wish to produce patriotically" and guarantees to "remain responsible" to payments on the foreign debt.

The working class receives less fulsome promises. Amidst general commitments to improving conditions there are little specific guarantees of trade union rights. Indeed this is not surprising as the right to strike was withdrawn in 1982 and only restored in July of this year. A member of the junta, Jaime Wheelock, estimated that real wages had fallen by 40% in this period. Little wonder then that the electoral platform of the FSLN emphasises that the Sandinista Front promotes the "unity of the working class... in a constant struggle against divisionism, opportunism low productivity, indiscipline and work inefficiency". Within the framework of

maintaining capitalism this can only mean more attacks on workers for the benefit of the employers.

The elections in Nicaragua will not alter US imperialism's determination to crush the Sandinista regime. If the US succeeds the gains which the masses won by taking up arms against the Somoza dictatorship will be swept away and the workers and peasants pushed back into the direct exploitation by imperialism. Socialists must stand four square behind the gains of the Nicaraguan revolution and in defence of it against attacks by imperialism. But in the end the only sure defence of these gains lies in taking the struggle against imperialism through to the finish - by expropriating the capitalists in Nicaragua, establishing a real workers and peasants government and spreading the revolution to the rest of central and South America. □

by Stuart King

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Sandinista candidate for Presidency, Ortega

NO LEAD IN CARS FIGHT

THE DISPUTES IN Jaguar and Austin Rover are poised to open a second front against the Tories and their backers. But, as we go to press, a question mark hangs over both strikes. It has been put there by the union leaders at local and national level.

Instead of open determination to add the weight of the car workers to that of the miners so that major victories for the whole working class can be won, union leaders are thinking only terms of a few percentage points. Like Knapp and Buckton they want improvements for "their" section on the backs of the miners. They want to avoid a showdown at all costs. On the eve of the strike date set for Austin Rover AUEW motor executive chief declared the company's offer to be "not unreasonable" saying that "We've had exhaustive negotiations. I believe we have gone as far as we can, and that a strike will not improve the offer."

If the miners are left to fight alone once again the chances of a swift and conclusive victory will worsen. Anything less than complete victory for the miners will strengthen the hands of all bosses. Any concessions the car bosses may pay to avoid a really damaging strike will be withdrawn again. Both Austin Rover and Jaguar could afford to give concessions at the present time. Both are operating at a profit, Jaguar made £41 million just in the first half of this year. Neither management, however, is likely to back off just at the prospect of a strike. Too much is at stake for that. The gigantic productivity gains of the last five years - 130% increase in output from 10,000 fewer workers at Longbridge, for example, still leaves Austin Rover trailing behind the likes of General Motors and Nissan. Even Jaguar's new found success is primarily a reflection of the pre-election boom in the US and the high value of the dollar.

Cowley body plant vote to strike

At the same time neither company wants a long drawn out strike. They recognise a degree of responsibility to the rest of their class to keep the miners isolated. At the present time, for both sides of every industry in Britain, the miners are the measure of everything. To break the strikes management have resorted to a mixture of concessions, such as on sick pay at Austin Rover, and the legal powers recently given them by the 1984 Employment Act. The Act allows the courts to award damages to a company which loses money as the result of a strike called without a secret ballot.

This combination is aimed directly at the weakness of the union negotiators - a minor concession to show that they have won something plus a prospect of state seizure of the union funds if they try to fight for more. Their intention is to stop the strike before it can get into a full scale stoppage. Harold Musgrove, Austin Rover boss, underlined this by threatening to withdraw even the offers already made if the strike went ahead.

Taking their lead from the NCB, Austin Rover are attempting to present their use of the state as really a defence of the democratic rights of their employees. They engineered a 'spontaneous' mass meeting against the strike call at Cowley to give substance to this claim. This collapsed when workers, encouraged to leave the track with no loss of pay by supervisors, found themselves being addressed by management, not stewards.

However, the tactics of the negotiators at both Jaguar and Austin Rover have played into management's hands. Instead of preparing the ground for a decisive and effective strike in the weeks since management made their initial offers, they called only for rejection of those offers to, "strengthen the nego-

tiators' positions". At Longbridge, for example, convenor Jack Adams did not mention the word strike when calling for rejection of the offer. At Brown's Lane, the Coventry Jaguar Assembly plant, an 80% majority against acceptance was whittled down to a majority of three for strike action two weeks later.

The most effective counter to the bosses' strategy is to beat them at their own game. If they want to declare their now invalid offers then the workers' claims are also open to revision! Throw out the Slaves' Charter introduced by Edwardes throughout the old BL combine! For trade union control over hiring and firing! Open the books of the car firms and their suppliers!

The answer to the bosses' accusation of manipulation by a minority is the open involvement of all workers in the organising of the strike. At Brown's Lane the picketing rota is based on a one day in six cycle, that is not enough - at Longbridge a rota has not yet been established. In order to completely seal up the plants pickets must be sent to all component suppliers, all major dealers and to the docks. That means mobilising every striker on a permanent basis. It means regular section and mass meetings to organise the pickets and to counter the propaganda that will be provided free for the bosses by the mass media.

Above all we must focus on the bosses' greatest fear - the creation of a common front with the miners. The major car plants are all close to, or actually within, coalfields. Joint pickets, joint demonstrations and common demands for the repeal of the anti-union law as well as victory on sectional demands - that is the formula for throwing back all the gains that the bosses have made at our expense in the last five years. ■

WORKERS IN ACTION

SHEFFIELD NALGO

STANDING OVATIONS GREETED David Blunkett, unofficial leader of the 'Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire' at this year's Labour Party conference.

However Sheffield bus workers and now NALGO council workers have good reason to doubt the socialist credentials of Blunkett and Sheffield City Council.

In August, Sheffield City Council unilaterally tore up their previous agreement with the Sheffield local authority workers over the use of new technology and imposed a document called "Responding to Change". This gives the Council the right to sack workers who refuse (often for safety reasons) to use new technology and allows the Council not to fill any vacancies.

The strike began 10 weeks ago when 600 workers in the Housing Department refused to accept the new document. The Council removed them from the pay-roll, as they did the Area Managers who refused to break the strike. Support for the strike has grown amongst white collar workers since, with rent collectors and clerks now on strike. There has been a call for the Family and Community Services Dept. to join the strike following the suspension of one of their members for carrying out their policy of non-cooperation with the Councilors. NALGO's strike demands are a return to the previous agreement until a new one is reached with the union and that all those suspended should be re-employed.

The Council has responded, like any employer, by asserting its "right to manage". Throughout the strike it has used the local press to mount a campaign against the strikers, blaming them for creating misery for those who use local authority services, in a way reminiscent of the Tories during the Health Service strike. The Council has continually tried to divide NALGO from the council's manual workers by threatening the latter with redundancy. It has also resorted to using private firms like 'Armaguard' to scab on the strike.

NALGO militants are clear as to

why the Council has chosen to attack the union now. In the face of the Tories' attacks on local authorities through rate-capping, Sheffield City Council wants to clear the way to make cuts in the workforce and services. "Responding to Change" is a clear breach of the Council's policy of "no redundancies, no job losses". Sheffield City Council are not alone in this. Other 'left' Labour controlled councils like Islington, Hackney, Camden and Glasgow are also creating a climate for cuts by attacking their own workforce rather than organising to resist the Tories' attacks through industrial action.

The strikers, however, seem determined to win. A recent Day of Action was well-supported, daily strike bulletins are produced by the strike committee and report-backs of negotiations are given to well-attended, bi-weekly mass meetings. Most local Labour Party wards have pledged their support, as has the Trades Council and 2 Tenants Associations representing many of those who NALGO are accused of being "callous" towards. Some Labour Councilors themselves support the strike but have so far refused to openly declare it and thus break with the anti-NALGO majority on the Council.

One of the problems of the strike has been the attitude of the NALGO national leadership who have tried to keep control of the strike by threatening to cut the 60% gross strike pay to £22 per week if the action is spread. This has led to a hesitancy in calling for all-out strike action amongst NALGO council workers. But as one striker explained, "We can't buy people out on strike, we have to win the political arguments with them". An all-out strike of council workers could win this dispute in weeks and create the confidence for strike action against the rate-capping attacks.

Messages of support/donations to: Housing/Treasury Strike Cttee., C/o NALGO Branch Office, 48-62 Pinstone St., Sheffield S1 2HN



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GANDHI'S ASSASSINATION

peasants and urban slum dwellers, the school and college students who can't find a job - burning with hatred of the system under which their lives are ruined - do not find a revolutionary proletarian party to take a lead from. Thus they fall victim to religious fanatics like Bhindranwale and his Hindu equivalents.

The Sikh movement is not that of a socially oppressed nationality or minority community. In the Punjab they constitute some 60% of the population. In the rest of India they form tiny numbers - less than 5% in all but the adjacent state of Haryana. The Sikh Jat landowners, the predominant force in the community, are prosperous exploiters of Sikh and Hindu labourers. Their demands are not for "national self-determination" for the compact Sikh areas of Punjab but for a series of expansionary and clerical demands.

Continued from front page

These wouldn't be liberatory for Sikhs. And they would be extremely oppressive for Moslem, Hindu and non-religious people from Sikh backgrounds. The "extremists" Khalistan would be a clerical tyranny and a prison house of other communities. Moreover Bhindranwale's followers resort to terrorism has simply made the Sikhs the victims of Hindu pogromists across India.

Communal privilege and revanchism offer only a bloody blind alley to India's multi-millioned poor. The Indian proletariat has shown its potential force in tremendous strikes. It is destined to play a mighty historic role but to do so it will need to shake off its Stalinist misleaders. This task is urgent. If it is to save India from the horrors of inter-communal bloodshed, religious hysteria and renewed Imperialist exploitation.

French solidarity

THIS WEEK TWO French workers and their family were the guests of striking miners at Coventry Colliery and members of Coventry Workers Power. They brought messages of solidarity from rank and file French workers in the Rouen area, who have been organising collections in support of the British miners.

They brought £329 with them, with more funds promised. A group of Chilean political exiles in France also sent a message of solidarity to the miners and their wives in struggle against the police, courts and bosses. A return visit of a British miner and wife is being organised.

Rank and file workers in France have been given very little information about what is going on here, in spite of many assurances by top union offi-

cialists that "everything is being done." The French workers went collecting, picketing, lobbying Labour councillors, attended wives' meetings and strike committee meetings. They were also able to see British "justice" done as a miner's wife was fined £166 in Nuneaton magistrate's court for biting a policeman's hand in self-defence as he manhandled her! Four of her teeth were knocked out by police.

As strikes began in Coventry car factories this week, the French visitors also took part in pickets at Jaguar.

One told the Coventry Colliery strike committee meeting "You are fighting for the whole of the working class - the trouble is, the whole of the working class is not fighting with you!"

Gay rights attacked

In Workers Power 64 we reported the decision of Rugby's Tory-controlled council to activate a policy of discrimination against gay people in employment. Such vicious ignorance is not, sadly, confined to boneheaded Tory backwoodsmen.

On October 25th the personnel committee of Sandwell in the West Midlands, which has one of the largest Labour majorities in the country, passed a motion, "Job applicants and employees will not receive less favourable treatment on grounds of their sexual orientation

except where it is justified in the terms of the job." (Our emphasis)

Condemnations of this, and of the Committee chairperson, Evelyn Matthews, have since come thick and fast, (along with support from the Tories) including a threat from Eric Faux, Nalگو branch secretary, to take legal action under the Sexual Discrimination Act if the plan becomes council policy.

This is not sufficient. Nalگو, NUPE and the teaching unions (who are likely to be the first affected) must prepare for direct strike action if this monstrous proposal is adopted by the council as a whole.