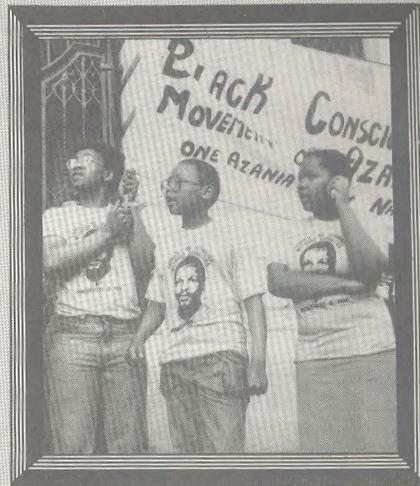
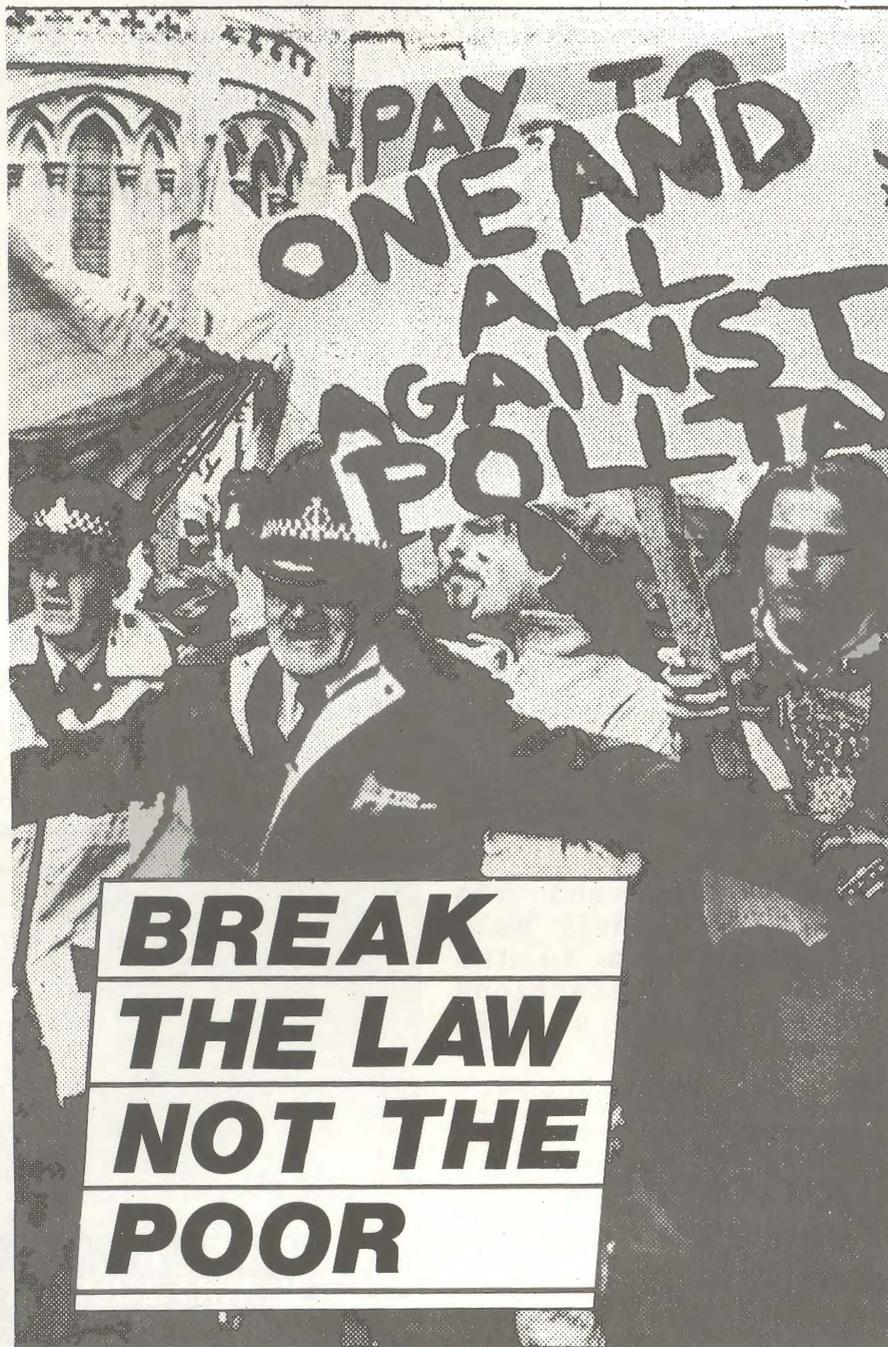


# CLASS STRUGGLE

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*BCM(A)-celebrating resistance, working for unity in the mass movement*

## INSIDE

*cashing in on women's work the fight for equal pay at work*

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*hunger strike commemoration*

**CAN'T PAY»»»WON'T PAY** government facing nationwide rebellion

# CLASS STRUGGLE

## EDITORIAL...EDITORIAL...EDITORIAL

The imposition of the poll tax has caused the biggest crisis so far for the government. They face opposition throughout England, with Scotland long having shown the way. The protests have come from urban and rural areas, from working people, from the unemployed, from black and white, young and old. One in four in Scotland have not paid their tax and there is widespread civil disobedience. There is rebellion even within the Tory party.

The government had not calculated on such widespread opposition. The plan was to shift the blame to Labour councils. But this has so far failed because most people see the poll tax as coming from central government and for many, it is a point on which they can focus their anger.

The poll tax is only one element in a general strategy being implemented by the Tory government to make the working class pay the cost of the crisis of British imperialism. It comes on top of high interest rates which have led to higher mortgage costs for the 70% that now own their own homes; increases in rents; increases in water, gas and electricity following privatisation; cuts in the welfare state, in particular the NHS. For many people, it has been difficult to pinpoint their opposition until the imposition of the poll tax.

The last eleven years have seen the Labour Party and the unions unable to provide any effective leadership. The Labour Party is noticeably absent from the campaign and unclear about what they would put in place of the poll tax.

The Labour Party has also stressed the importance of obeying the law. Their main concern is to sidetrack opposition to the tax into votes in the coming local elections in May and for the general election of 1991 or 1992.

But it is a difficult balancing act. While trying to convince ordinary people that they are opposed to the poll tax, they are also trying to convince business interests that they have a strategy for managing the crisis of British imperialism.

We cannot rely on Tory or Labour. The only way is to build from the grassroots upwards to fight for the independent interests of the working class, against all forms of oppression and exploitation.

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# Equal pay for work of equal value

Both Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury have recently given big pay rises to their women shop assistants, and it looks as though another major retailer, Tesco, is about to follow suit.

In the case of Marks and Spencer, women shop assistants had won a increase to their basic rate of £31.50 a week, to last until July 1993. Warehousemen will get a lump sum of £500, with no basic increase.

Although we should welcome the big increase for one of the lowest-paid and undervalued group of workers in the country, shop assistants, there are two problems with this settlement.

Firstly, although it is a big increase now, it will not look so good as the wage freeze continues until 1993. Shopwork is one of the areas still covered by a legal minimum wage. If we assume the legal minimum is not abolished as the government is threatening, and add a 8% increase for each year for inflation, the resulting basic amount is only a little less than the wage offered by Marks and Spencer.

Secondly, the way this pay increase has been settled is divisive. £150 is well below average wages and there is no reason why women's pay should be brought up at the expense of men's pay. We should demand an inflation increase at least for men and women, with an extra amount on top, in order to equalise pay.

## LABOUR SHORTAGE

The background to these moves on women's pay is the increasing demand for women workers because of the shortage of school-leavers on the labour market.

Both Marks and Spencer, and Sainsbury, say that the recent settlements are a result of job evaluation exercises which have shown that warehouse jobs have become less complex with centralised distribution and that sales work has become more complex with increased product ranges!

But they also admit that women workers are in short supply and that recruitment and retention of women is going to be the biggest employment issue of the 1990's. The same factor has led to the policies that some banks and insurance companies have introduced over the last few years, especially in the areas of maternity



leave, childcare and career breaks for women.

## PRESSURE FROM WOMEN

These changes are also the result of the long fight for equal pay by women. Sainsbury was being taken to court on an equal pay for work of equal value claim by the shopworkers' union, USDAW, acting on behalf of Geraldine O'Sullivan. Her argument was that the work of women cashiers was of equal value to that of men warehousemen who received higher pay. Clearly, it is the impact of this claim and the threat it poses to the pay structures in most retail companies that has brought about the recent settlements.

Sainsbury's recent settlement was for pay rises ranging from 8% to 20% with the greater increases going to the women in their 60,000 strong workforce. USDAW has now agreed not to pursue the claim for equal pay further.

A Marks and Spencer internal document explicitly advised holding back warehousemen's pay to avoid claims for equal pay for work of equal value in the future.

## OTHER CLAIMS

Recently Joan Todd and five other secretaries at Lloyds Bank won an important victory when they established their right to equal pay with male messengers. This ruling could affect thousands of women in similar jobs. Lloyds is appealing against the decision so the case is not over yet.

At the end of the day, it is the strength and perseverance of the individual women taking the claims which wins the fight. And it often takes years!

The first woman to win a claim for equal pay for work of equal value was Julie Haywood. It took her five years all the way through tribunals and courts, up to the House of Lords before she won her claim.

Another group of women speech therapists are claiming equal pay with male psychologists, both working in the NHS. So far their case has taken four hearings in four years and they have received little support from their union.

## HOW USEFUL THE LAW?

Encouraging though these victories are, it is certainly true that equal pay legislation has produced little overall change for women so far. Official figures show that women's average pay remains at 75% of men's. Official figures in fact overestimate average pay levels as they only include those who pay tax through the PAYE system. They exclude therefore thousands of women working part-time, at home or in casual, temporary jobs.

In the past, the major strategy of employers to get round the Equal Pay Act was to use re-grading to segregate men and women's work so that women could not win equal pay as they were not doing exactly the same work. Amendments to this act, brought as a result of the European Parliament in 1984, laid the basis for the claims for equal pay for work of equal value. Now that some of these claims are being successful, it looks as though the main strategy used by employers will be the increasing use of part-time work. Increasingly, women in shop work are being put on contracts of 9, 10 or 12 hours, in some cases even no-hours with a commitment to be on call.

For every small step forward, there are new battles to be fought. Women should be encouraged by the small steps in their favour and continue the battle on all fronts: taking on employers in the courts; agitating in their trade unions and making the most of the increasing need for womanpower. Most important, we need to encourage and support each other in our demands.

# WHAT CAN I DO



## WITH THE KIDS?

*by Joe Steel*

Childcare of a high standard and at a reasonable cost is a basic need for women, all parents or carers, and children themselves.

In this society, it is mainly women who have the responsibility for children and there is a growing number of single parents, the vast majority of whom are women. For these women, decent childcare is essential to their right to work. Without childcare, their right to work is limited in practice and women are forced to rely on men economically and socially, or on desperately low state benefits.

For most working class families, the wages earned by women are also essential to their survival. Most families simply cannot get by on one wage.

Equally, provision of facilities for pre-school children is good for the development of children. It helps them learn social skills and lessens the jolt of starting school.

Being stuck at home all the time with Mum (or Dad) is not good for either Mum (or Dad) or the child. Children enjoy being with other children and women need to be part of the world of adults. It is the quality of the time parents spend with children that matters, not the quantity.

### THE WORST IN EUROPE

At present, there are 120 workplace nurseries in the UK, mainly provided by hospitals,

local authorities and colleges. About 30% are in the private sector. They cater for 3,000 out of the three and a half million children of under five years old.

By far the biggest provider of pre-school childcare are childminders - self-employed women using their own homes. Even more relatives and friends probably care for children on an informal basis.

There are also numerous Playgroups or Mother and Toddler groups. But these only open for a couple of hours a day at the most and often require the attendance of parents, at least part of the time.

### TAX RELIEF ON NURSERIES

The recent Budget change to allow tax relief on workplace nursery costs was a small step in the right direction. However, it only benefits the small number of women who have access to workplace nurseries and are earning enough to have been taxed on this provision in the first place.

The change only means that this small number of women do not pay tax for childcare. But all forms of childcare costs, whether for nursery care, childminders or other forms, should count as essential expenses and not be taxed.

For many single parents on Income Support, the situation has recently got worse. Before the social security changes, they were able to

deduct childcare expenses against their benefit before beginning to lose money from their benefit because of money they earned. They can no longer do this and are penalised effectively for going out to work.

Although we welcome the change in the Budget, much more needs to be done. The change, at any rate, was more inspired by the shortage of skilled women in the labour market, than by any new found concern of the government for women's rights.

### A WIDER ISSUE

Proper facilities for children is a question that raises many issues:

\*\*\* Parents need democratic control over nurseries

\*\*\* Adequate staffing has to be established to give the children the care they deserve. Facilities have to be good and geared to children's needs.

\*\*\* Workplace nurseries have the advantage that one parent is nearby. But they tie that individual to that particular job. In addition, travel to work can be difficult without a car. In workplace nurseries, children mix with other children who may live at a distance, and who it is difficult for them to see out of the-workplace.

\*\*\* Community-based nurseries have advantages. Either parent can use them and they are not tied to a particular employer. A car is not essential. The children are with other children from the same neighbourhood so they can see their friends outside work times.

\*\*\* Basic attitudes to work need to be questioned. The basic 40-hour week (with additional overtime) needs to be brought down to a shorter week in order to equalise men and women's work. Men need more time with their children.

\*\*\* Once children go to school, problems are far from over because of school holidays, school hours etc. which also need catering for.

\*\*\* Pay and conditions for all childcarers are currently bad. There is no reason why the task of caring for children is so consistently undervalued.

\*\*\* The state will have to subsidise childcare in different forms. At present, most women are caught in a vicious circle in which they cannot afford to pay the childminders a decent wage.

\*\*\* Men's outlook and male-dominated institutions have to be challenged. Women must be treated as equal human beings. And children have rights, too!

# Mandy's Diary

**March 15th:** I'm on a diet. I'm going to Weight Watchers. And I'll give them their due. If you follow their instructions, you lose weight. But what an expensive business! Besides the extra food I have to buy because I now eat different meals from the rest of the family, it was £7 to register, then £2.90 every week. I thought that when I reached goal weight, I would stop paying. But no! "It's £2.90 for a further six weeks," they said. "Just to show that you can stay at the same weight!"

They closed down the class I was attending. Thirteen women at £2.90 each a week wasn't profitable enough. "There are plenty of others you could join," they said. "I could name four within a mile's radius of your home." All, presumably, with more than thirteen members, otherwise they would have closed down. I went to one of them. I had to queue for half an hour to be weighed. That's how many women are desperate to lose weight!

Why is it only women? That's the big question. Losing weight makes you fitter, healthier and makes you feel better. But if this were what it was all about, men would be there too! The real issue is how you look. And women are much more aware of their body image than men.

It is not difficult to see why. Women get a lot more criticism, a lot more comments about their appearance, than men. Even when it's not asked for, even when it's not relevant. "You're too fat, too thin, too short, too ugly. You've got no figure. You stick out in the wrong places..." Too fat etc. for whom? And they come to believe it, and feel bad about it, and spend a lot of money trying to live up to someone else's ideal of how they should look.

It is not only the slimming clubs which make enormous profits out of women's insecurity about how they look. No less than six out of the top ten best-selling paperbacks this week are books about diet or exercise.

**March 22nd:** Once again, a small and noisy group of anti-abortionists are trying to stop women having babies they

desperately want and trying to force women to have babies they don't want.

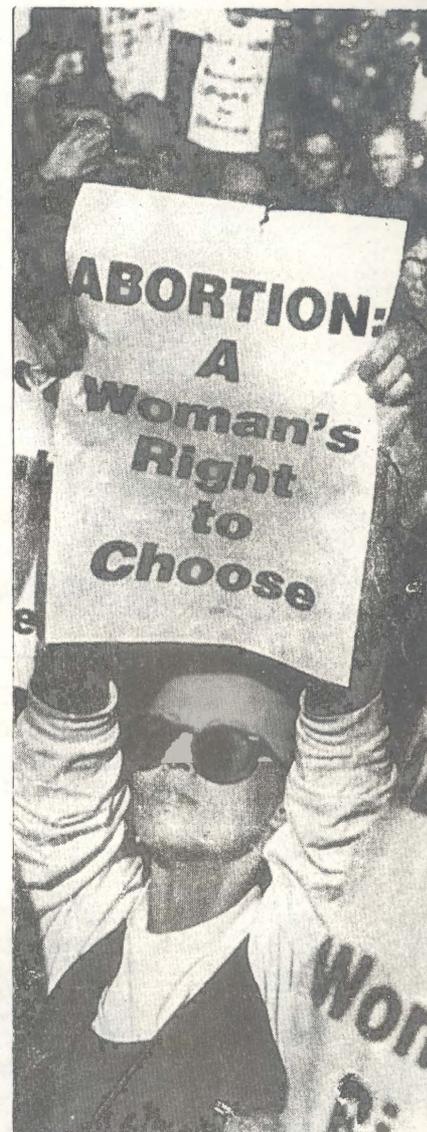
There are three issues at stake in the Embryology Bill which will be going through the Commons in April: they are aiming to ban research on pre-embryos; reduce time limits for abortion and prevent lesbians and single women from having access to Donor Insemination at clinics.

In all three respects, they act against the interests and wishes of women. Embryo research could lead to diagnosis of diseases or defects being possible at a much earlier stage of pregnancy, or better still, eventually wipe out some diseases or disabilities altogether. Opinion polls have shown that over half the population believes that research on pre-embryos is justified if it helps make progress on prevention and treatment of diseases like muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis (Marplan, April 1985), and to prevent congenital disability (Marplan, March 1985).

If they succeed in reducing the time limits for abortion, the most vulnerable women will be affected: the woman who is carrying a handicapped baby; the teenager who hides her pregnancy; the menopausal woman who did not know she was pregnant; the poor woman who cannot afford a private abortion and has been delayed by anti-abortion doctors or NHS cutbacks. No woman has an abortion at any time without serious consideration. Late abortions are more stressful and no woman would have one without good reason.

The amendments to restrict Donor Insemination attempt to label certain groups of women as 'unfit' mothers by law. They create and reinforce categories of second class citizenship and encourage prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and single mothers.

**March 29th:** About one million babies die each year in developing countries because they are bottle-fed rather than breast-fed, according to UNICEF and the World Health Organisation. Safe bottle-feeding requires clean water, which is in short supply in many parts of the world.



But the infant milk industry is not sentimental about babies. Babies spell profit. Sales of baby milk in Britain alone are worth £80 million a year, with millions of pounds spent on advertising. We in Britain have advantages which Third World women do not have - in particular, access to information about the advantages of breast milk for the baby. The aggressive marketing policies of one company, Nestle, ensure that many babies in developing countries are bottle-fed rather than breast-fed.

An international boycott of Nestle products has been launched, with support from 66 countries. Nestle products include Nescafe, Chambourcy yoghurts, Findus foods, Libby's drinks, Crosse and Blackwell foods, Sarsons vinegar and Rowntrees chocolate.

# GREEN NOTES

April Fool's Day saw the beginnings of electricity privatisation, with the CEBG changed overnight to sixteen public limited companies, all in so-called free competition to supply electricity to the national grid.

This autumn, the industry will be sold off bit by bit, in a most complicated way, apparently designed to make money for a few, confuse the public, increase electricity bills and still require us to subsidise the industry for producing expensive nuclear power that we do not want.

The privatisation will have a long-term effect on British coal and for the whole environment policy that we have not got. Is it just an accident that the industry is being privatised just when the power stations need expensive sulphur-emission controls installed to limit pollution?

\*\*\*\*\*

been flooded with radiation silt more than ten times the government safety limits.

How long has this constantly increasing danger, both to us and to future generations, got to continue before society rises up and says 'Never mind your vested interests! Nuclear technology must be dismantled!'

\*\*\*\*\*

## RAINFOREST DESTRUCTION

Mrs Thatcher pledging £100 million to halt rainforest destruction? Did you think it was unlikely?

You were right! A report on the said Tropical Forest Action Plan, just published by the Ecologist magazine and Friends of the Earth, concludes that the plans are dominated by the concerns of commercial forestry and fail to address the causes of deforestation, such as 'sluggardness among the poor.'

The farmer, Mr Edwards, will sell his electricity to the national grid for 6 pence per kilowatt, cheaper than nuclear power and he hopes to get back his £2.5 million investment in 15 years.

## AN ENERGY POLICY?

Britain needs an energy policy is what I conclude from all this. A policy which puts safety first, which promotes energy conservation and combined heat and power plants serving communities efficiently and cleanly. A policy which protects our environment from everyone who pollutes it in order to save money and which sees Britain as only a tiny part of a whole world ecological system to which we are responsible.

Impossible under a capitalist system? Certainly! Just one more reason for revolution.

\*\*\*\*\*

## AN INTERNATIONAL PROBLEM

The problem is, of course, not restricted to Britain. For example, in the Republic of Byelorussia, in the Soviet Union, one quarter of all the arable land has been destroyed by the fall-out from the Chernobyl disaster - contaminated with Caesium 137 which will last for decades to come.

Four hundred miles to the East of the Caspian Sea, the huge Aral Sea, once the world's fourth largest inland water, is now nothing more than two shrunken salt-poisoned pools in the desert, a result of the effects of massive and thoughtless irrigation schemes. It is believed the last fish died there around 1983 and child mortality around its shores is as high as one in ten because of poisoned drinking water from uncontrolled use of pesticides on the region's mono-culture cotton crop.

In fact, wherever one travels within the Soviet Union, evidence of environmental crisis is clear to see. From the Baltic Sea, where bathing has been banned because of the presence of chemical waste and raw sewage, down to the lower reaches of the Volga where sturgeon are being found floating belly up in shoals before they can spawn their precious caviar.

Indeed, in both East and West, it could be said that we have a Europe without borders. For pollution, in whatever shape it is produced, knows no man-made borders.



## CANCER RISKS

New cancer risks for nuclear industry workers are in the news every week. Remember a few years ago when nuclear power was safe and dissenting voices were loonies?

In the last month alone, there have been several disturbing pieces of information. We have the Gardner Report into Sellafield workers, which suggested a link between childhood leukaemia and their fathers' radiation dose. 500 nuclear power station workers have been told that they have had over the allowed radiation doses. It has been revealed that Polaris submarine workers have been exposed to dangerous neutron radiation and that Townyn, in North Wales, has

The Tropical Forest Action Plan, supported by the United Nations as well as Mrs Thatcher, proposes a massive expansion of logging in primary forests.

\*\*\*\*\*

## GOOD NEWS FROM CORNWALL

Britain's first commercial wind farm, in Cornwall, has been given the go-ahead.

Ten 82-foot towers generating electricity for around 2,000 homes will be built on a 200-acre farm which will continue to grow organic oats and horse fodder. North Cornwall district council visited Denmark which has thousands of wind generators and came home to reverse its previously unfavourable position.

# Can't pay, Won't pay!

## Class Struggle correspondent

At the beginning of March, when most local councils were setting their poll tax rates, there were large demonstrations in many parts of England.

Even towns in traditionally conservative and relatively prosperous areas of southern England, such as Windsor, saw angry protests. It is estimated by some that 80% of the people will be worse off under the new poll tax and this was reflected in the protests: young and old, black and white, workers and unemployed showed their anger in different ways.

There were violent clashes at some of the protests in London, particularly in Lambeth, Haringey and Hackney, all of which have Labour councils. The newspapers carried headlines such as "Return of Rent-A-Mob", suggesting that the protesters were just a small group of leftists who were bussed about in their search for a fight with the police. This insinuation was supported with pictures of people holding Socialist Workers Party (SWP) placards.

Judging from what happened in Hackney, this was simply untrue. Some SWPers came



Woman protesting against poll tax outside the Dept of Environment.



along, and did their usual thing of handing out placards with fairly OK slogans on them, which people held because they agreed with the slogans, which made it look like the SWP had a lot of support there.

However, most of those who showed up were just local people who objected to the poll tax. Some probably had not done anything which they considered political before. But they turned out in front of the Town Hall because they had heard what they would have to pay and felt that they could not find that kind of money. They were angry with the government and the council.

In Hackney, the poll tax was set at £499. Later on in March, Lambeth set their poll tax at £530.

\*\*\*\*\*

Most people in England have found out over the last month exactly how much they are going to have to pay for the new poll tax. The scale of the opposition reflects the widespread anger.

This has been reflected inside the Tory party even. Local councillors in West Oxfordshire and at Beverley in East Yorkshire showed their feelings by resigning. The Tory mayor of St Austell in Cornwall, as well as councillors at Stroud, Kings Lynn and Brighton, disagreed strongly enough to resign as well. And at Morecambe, on the Lancashire coast, the

Conservative club has voted to deny the use of its rooms to the party.

### KINNOCK'S RESPONSE

More predictable was the response of the tabloids who described the thousands who took part in protests around the country as "Rent-A-Mobs" and that of Neil Kinnock, Labour Party leader. During the many varied forms of protest, there was trouble: some shop windows were smashed; a number of arrests were made and, in a couple of instances, looting. Kinnock was quick to condemn the violence and blame it on the protesters, along with those on the Tory benches, who were no doubt pleased to welcome this as a convenient diversion from the main issue. At the same time, he had a go at those few Labour MP's who have indicated that they will refuse to pay the poll tax.

### THE DOMESTIC RATES

Until now, local councils obtained their income from a combination of funds from central government and the domestic rates. The latter were levied on each household, based on an evaluation of property, but took no account of how many people were living together. The money collected paid for such local services as education, refuse collection, police, fire and social services. Although far from perfect, it did bear some

**continued**  
**overleaf**

# Fighting the poll tax....

continued from p 7

relation to a person's ability to pay as it was those with the biggest houses in the best areas who received the biggest bills.

The poll tax, however, officially called the community charge, is a flat rate charge which everyone of 18 or over, must pay regardless of their income, unless they are poor enough to qualify for a partial rebate. It is estimated that about a quarter of the population, over 9 million people, come

into this category. Even they, however, have to pay 20% of their poll tax.

The vast majority will be worse off. According to a survey carried out by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, average households will find themselves paying £674 this coming year, compared to the £507 they paid under the rates. Like all estimates based on averages, this underestimates the impact on the working class and other low-income groups.

An example shows the difference for some people. If we take the case of a four-person household - father and mother with two adult children both working, the rates for an average-sized terraced house in Leeds would have been about £300. Under the poll tax, they have to pay £350 each, a total of £1400!

## BUILDING A MASS CAMPAIGN

We have to build a campaign based as broadly as possible. The main organisation should be at the grassroots level, with an active presence on

council estates and in the working class districts of every town and city. Among its many tasks will be building unity between all sections of the community, whether they are council tenants or owner-occupiers.

Special attention must be paid to involving national minority people, who will be hard hit by the impact the poll tax will have on their relatively large households. Leaflets must be produced in national minority languages, meetings must be bi-lingual and good links have to be built with national minority organisations.

Equally no effort must be spared to ensure that women are fully involved in the campaign. During the 1984-85 miners' strike, women played a tremendous part through such organisations as Women Against Pit Closures, bringing a wider dimension to the traditional forms of class struggle. Their large-scale participation in this campaign will be crucial.

## TWO IMPORTANT ISSUES

There are two issues which the campaign will need to be very clear about. Encouraging non-payment will ultimately bring people up against the forces of law and order. A successful non-payment movement will have to deal with this issue head-on.

Secondly, there is the danger that the campaign will allow the Labour Party to move in and take it over. This does not mean that individual party members should not be encouraged to participate fully.

What it does mean is that at no stage must the campaign be sidetracked into identification with the Labour Party or into becoming voting fodder when the local elections come up at the beginning of May. It also means that typical Labour



Poll Tax Protest at Birmingham Town Hall

## IF YOU DON'T PAY ....

What happens to people who do not pay their poll tax will obviously depend on how many refuse to pay and the stand taken by local councils.

\*\*\* You are not breaking the criminal law. Non-payment is a civil offence. You cannot be fined for non-payment as for non-registration. Seizing your savings or adding a surcharge only applies in Scotland.

\*\*\* If you do not pay straight away, your right to pay in instalments can be taken away.

\*\*\* In order to enforce payment, the council has to get a "liability" order from the courts. You can be liable for costs.

\*\*\* Once the council has a liability order, they can take a certain amount of money out of your benefits, or through your employer, from your wages.

\*\*\* The council can get a warrant to take away your belongings to sell off. They cannot force their way into your house. You do not have to let them in.

\*\*\* In the end, the council can take you to court and there is a three-month prison sentence. If you pay up at any stage, proceedings are dropped.

Consult your local Anti-Poll Tax Campaign for details.



Occupation of Sheriff's Office - Glasgow

Party methods of doing things must be rejected. Away with all backroom deals, done out of sight of the mass of the people. The campaign must be seen to be democratic and independent of any political party.

#### WHAT ABOUT LABOUR COUNCILS?

Those councillors who sit on

### PROTESTS

On Saturday, 30th March, over 100,000 anti-poll tax demonstrators marched in London; 40,000 in Glasgow and over 3,000 in Cheltenham, where the Tory Party was meeting.

In London, the anger of the demonstrators led to clashes with the police and violent street scenes, bringing back scenes of clashes between the Hunger Marches of the 1920's and 1930's.

The strength of the campaign lies in the mass base that is being built in different areas. As the example of Scotland has shown, this is an issue which can mobilise thousands if patient mass work is carried out.

In Leeds for example, the Anti-Poll Tax Federation has built 25 local groups. Although some activists have been working on the issue for a long time, the last month has seen hundreds of ordinary working class people being mobilised, in spite of the antics of some left-wing groups. The striking thing is the complete absence of the Labour Party in the campaign.

Labour-controlled councils are faced with a simple choice. They can stand up against the poll tax, identify with the campaign against it and help mobilise public opinion and resistance. On the other hand, they can decide to do

what they usually do, and carry out the government's dirty work for it.

Because of the damage that domination of the campaign by the Labour Party can do, it is instructive to look at what Kinnock said to the Scottish Labour Party at Dunoon on March 10th. He stated: "The million too poor to pay need help. They do not deserve to be exploited by toy town revolutionaries who pretend that the tax can be stopped and the government toppled simply by non-payment."

There are a couple of points to be made in response to this outburst about the growing popular protest. Firstly, the idea ought to be popularised that within the framework of the campaign, the poor should be encouraged to help themselves, by getting organised in order to fight collectively against the very system that has made so many poor and a few extremely rich. Governments and political parties are always promising to help the poor. But they are still there and in increasing numbers.

Secondly, every emphasis should be placed on the possibility of victory, spreading the idea that if hundreds of thousands refuse to pay, the government cannot put them all in prison. Kinnock's approach only spreads pessimism from the word go.

After all, resistance to the poll tax has already caused two quick aboutturns from the government: on the level of savings before a rebate is given and on backdating this to Scotland. We know from experience, that if there is enough opposition to an unjust law, that law will be quickly changed.

#### THE POLL TAX IN SCOTLAND

The poll tax was introduced in Scotland a year ago. (It seems that the government does not dare to introduce it in the North of Ireland!) The campaign against the poll tax in Scotland has been highly successful and given a lead to campaigners in England and Wales.

In Strathclyde, the largest local authority in Scotland, over 280,000 have either paid nothing or are more than three months in arrears. In Glasgow, the level of non-payment is around 30%. In Edinburgh, another strong centre of resistance, even the city's First Citizen, the Lord Provost, Eleanor McLaughlin, is now faced with court action.

Altogether, over 350,000 summary warrants have been issued by the Sheriff's Office throughout the whole of Scotland and there is every indication that the mass resistance is growing while, at the same time, the authorities are finding it a nightmare to operate what is widely seen as this English tax.

### WOMEN & POLL TAX

At a time when the government is making a lot of noise about giving women equal rights under the taxation system, it is not saying so much about how women are treated under the new poll tax.

The Budget established the principle of separate taxation for women, married or single. Under these measures, every woman signs their own tax form whereas previously many women had to get their husband's signature. Apart from establishing the principle of independent rights, the changes seem to make little difference to most women as they have largely benefited those who can now claim a tax allowance on unearned income. Hardly a major gain for the majority of women.

At the same time, the poll tax legislation completely undermines the principle of women's independence. A married woman or a woman co-habiting with a man is treated as part of a couple. The woman has to pay the tax, or the man has to pay it on her behalf, whether she is unemployed, claiming benefit or earning a wage of her own, of whatever level. So much for women's economic independence!

# FREEDOM, UNITY & SELF-

While some sections of the media in Britain go along with the view that the future of Azania (South Africa) will be determined by private telephone conversations between Thatcher and de Klerk, other more serious reporters still present a distorted picture of what is happening there.

In particular, we are presented with a view that the future of the Azanian people depends on the result of negotiations between De Klerk and the African National Congress (ANC), sometimes reduced to the personal skills of Nelson Mandela.

Although there is no doubt that for many people in Azania, Nelson Mandela is a symbol of their fight for freedom and that the ANC commands much support in the mass movements, this is only one side of the picture.

The three main liberation organisations in Azania are the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCMA). All three work through a variety of mass organisations. There are important differences between the organisations and the debate

between them and the struggle for a common unity in the struggle is an important theme at the present time - a theme that has not only been taken up by Nelson Mandela. The struggle for unity, in mass action if not in their detailed programmes, is particularly important at the present time when one motive of the "reforms" of the De Klerk government is to split off sections of the liberation movements prepared to compromise for less than the people demand.

## JOINT CONFERENCE

In November of last year, the BCMA made clear their stand on negotiations:

"We doubt the existence of a real desire on the part of De Klerk to engage in genuine negotiations with the oppressed black majority at this point in time. All the De Klerk-Malan junta wants now is to ward off the imposition of further economic sanctions on Suid-Afrika, regain the confidence of the international financial institutions, attract investment and rescue their economy from further decline and ruin. There is no desire on their part to see true

democracy in Azania. They may tinker with their oppressive machinery here and there, but they can never, on their own, abolish oppression in our country. Their tinkering could mean something if our struggle was for civil rights, which, probably, could be well served by marches. But our struggle is for self-determination and the reconquest of our land....

"We must not relax believing that De Klerk will give us freedom. Freedom is never GIVEN by an oppressor, it is SEIZED by the oppressed...."

At the same time, the BCMA made clear their support for the proposed joint conference - Conference for a Democratic Future - to be held in December and the formation of a United Front.

This conference, jointly organised by the BCMA and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) was successfully held on 9th December, 1989. The BCMA reported:

"About 6,000 delegates attended the gathering at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. There were roughly equal numbers of BCMA and MDM supporters. They came to exchange views on

## PAC COMMEMORATES SHARPEVILLE

On March 21st, the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) remembered those shot down 30 years ago at the Sharpeville massacre, when they gathered to protest against the pass-laws as part of a nation-wide campaign.

This year, it is estimated that 15,000 attended a rally at Sharpeville, addressed by Jafta Masemola, recently released after spending 26 years in jail.

Jafta Masemola made clear that the PAC did not expect the racist regime to reform itself. He pointed out that the settler regime that held power in 1960 still held power today. "How can we expect them to negotiate to relinquish power?" he asked.

In Soweto, Letsatsi Mosala, co-ordinator of the Steve Biko Foundation, addressed a rally organised by AZAPO. He appealed for unity:

"If you are true revolutionaries, you do not take your axes, knives, panga and hack your own people. No organisation can rule South Africa alone. It is crucial that we strive for unity."

Meanwhile, throughout South Africa, thousands of Azanians marked the anniversary of Sharpeville by refusal to go to work.



# DETERMINATION

sanctions, the cultural boycott, mass action against the settler-colonial regime, health matters, Black education and negotiations. Even where there were disagreements on some issues, they were openly discussed. The important thing is that different organisations of the oppressed came together to share their views. In the past, Black organisations have fought against each other instead of discussing and finding common ground."

## AZAPO CONGRESS HELD

Another important event took place recently when the first Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) Congress since 1987 was held. The BCMA commented: "Members in many parts of Azania met and prepared for the National Congress. ... The Congress was well attended, with the turnstile at Shareworld, where it was held,

registering 7,200.... AZAPO is a leading organisation in the BCMA. Now that it has chosen its leadership and decided on how to continue the struggle, all other BCMA structures must get organised. Students who support AZAPO and have no branch of AZASM must get together in every school, in every town and in every village and choose a committee for their branch.... The youth who are not in school must form branches of the Azanian Youth Organisation (AZAYO)..." If we are genuine about our support for the struggle of the Azanian people for freedom and self-determination, it is clear that we must give our support to all the liberation organisations. It is for the Azanian people to determine who they choose for their leaders, not the Western media or political parties, of the right or of the so-called left.

## BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT OF AZANIA TENTH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

On Saturday 7th April, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCMA) will mark its tenth anniversary in a conference in Manchester, jointly organised with the Revolutionary Education Movement.

In a press release announcing the conference, the background was explained: "During the late 1960s, Black Consciousness emerged as one of the most vital ideological and mobilising forces amongst black people in South Africa. This period had seen the banning of both the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC). The black masses were badly intimidated by the repression of the Pretoria government, and apartheid appeared more entrenched than ever. Under the dynamic leadership of Steve Bantu Biko, Black Consciousness emphasised the importance of self-reliance within the South African liberation movement and successfully built up widespread support throughout the country at grassroots level.

"Black Consciousness organisations played a leading role in the June 1976 uprisings of students in Soweto and other townships. After the brutal suppression of these protests by the regime - including the killing of tens of thousands, and the death in detention of Biko - all the Black Consciousness organisations were banned, and thousands of political activists were driven into exile.

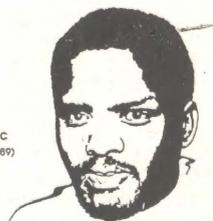
## SOUTH AFRICA

*LIBERATION OR COMPROMISE?*

Speakers:  
MOLEFE PHETO  
MOICHOPIARI SEGWAI

Video:  
"Conference for a Democratic Future" (South Africa - December 1989)

plus  
Discussion • Bookstall •  
Solidarity Messages



Steve Bantu Biko  
Founder of Black Consciousness Movement

SATURDAY 7 APRIL 1990 at 1.30 p.m

Venue: All Saints Centre, City College of Community Education  
(formerly College of Adult Education)  
Oxford Road, Manchester

Organised by: Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (UK region) and Revolutionary Education Development (R.E.D.) in conjunction with City College of Community Education

"In order to maintain the momentum of the liberation struggle, Black Consciousness exiles convened a conference to determine the future direction for the movement. This conference - held in London in April 1980 - founded and established the Black Consciousness Movement of Azania (BCMA) as a unitary liberation movement....."

The conference will look at the development of the liberation struggle over the last ten years and at the current situation in South Africa. It will include a screening of a video on the Conference for a Democratic Future, held in South Africa in December of last year.



## NAMIBIA

## INDEPENDENT

On 21st March, Namibia finally won its independence after over a hundred years of colonial rule, first by Britain, then by Germany and finally by South Africa, who tried to incorporate it into its own territory.

SWAPO - The South West African People's Organisation - has been fighting an armed struggle against the South African occupiers since 1966.

The UN and other international organisations had for many years condemned South African occupation of Namibia but it was not until 1988 that South Africa was finally forced to agree to withdraw.

The armed struggle, led by SWAPO within Namibia, had increasing support internationally and the victories of the liberation struggles in the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola in 1974 gave further strength to the Namibian struggle.

From April 1st of last year, the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) had been supervising the transition to independence, including the elections held last November 1989, in which SWAPO won a majority.

Now SWAPO faces the difficult task of building a more equal society and improving the standard of living of its people. Half of Namibia's export earnings come from Rio Tinto Zinc's uranium mines and De Beers diamond fields. Such powerful companies may have been forced to recognise Namibia's political independence but they will not easily relinquish their economic wealth.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

# Govind Kelkar: WOMEN AND ECOLOGY



The article below continues the interview we printed in the last issue of 'Class Struggle' with Govind Kelkar, a woman political activist from India. In this part of her talk, Govind gives her views on the ecology movement in India.

There is a group in India which would be defined in terms of the radical feminist trend, and their analysis is close to the Eco-feminist analysis which is very popular in the West. I am not questioning here either ecology or feminism. I subscribe to both.

What I mean by eco-feminism, particularly the Chipko Movement, is an analysis which says that women are the nurturers, and that is why they cling to trees and they want to save the trees. Women are soft. They cannot be involved in commercial activities or in cutting the trees. They are close to nature.

Secondly, they think that Western technology and science is all exploitative. Thirdly, they say that original Indian society - indigenous people's society - is quite affluent, in that they can meet their basic survival needs. Fourthly, that if we had the traditional society without the Western technological development, our problem would be solved. And women are the future saviours of the

society. This is the eco-feminist analysis.

I am in agreement in that the imperialists have exploited the Third World and India. But my disagreement is that all traditional society is not ideal. We do not want a return to sati, or to a caste system, which have been very oppressive to the poor in general, and to women in particular. We want a society where these ills, either of the feudal society, or of the capitalist society, are not there.

Secondly, the indigenous communities are not an affluent society. They lack energy and nutrition and education and health care. What is the European definition of basic needs? Is it having only minimum food and bare clothes - not even basic clothes - or is it more?

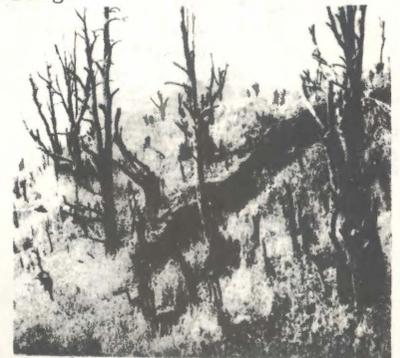
Then when they say that Western science and technology and patriarchy came together, that is also wrong. Patriarchy is a historical process. It was there in the feudal mode of social relations. Maybe it got worse and rigidified with Western science and technology, which was definitely exploitative. They define patriarchy as one short affair not as a historical process, and this is wrong.

One has to make the distinction between pro-people science and technology and anti-people science and technology. Ten years ago in China, when China had a good socialist character, they were able to take the best out of the traditional system and from the developed technology. It was a pro-people's science, a science "walking on two legs". If we have a technology which supports only the big bourgeoisie, the ruling class and state, then that does not mean we cannot develop a technology which can be for the benefit of the people. We need science and technology. But it has to be for the benefit of the masses of the people.

My other disagreement with them is that they say that women are the nurturers. This is a very dangerous thing to propagate. It supports the interests of capitalist development to say that women are nurturers and soft, and they should take care of children. Women know that the

subsistence of the family depends on trees. That is why they defend the trees.

When it states that women cannot be involved in commercial activity, this is also wrong. We have produced Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher. And if you do not have the class and caste in mind, then see what kind of women you can produce. This kind of analysis is mechanistic. That you are born as a woman or you are born as a man, and that is why you become like this. This is wrong.



The Chipko Movement also says that Indian society has been close to forest economy. This is also wrong. There are two main streams among others. One is the Gangetic Plain in Punjab, which is the seat of the Green Revolution and also the seat of the caste system. The other stream you find in the Chipko area, in the Jharkhand Movement in Bihar, and West Bengal where I have worked - these are the forest dwellers. Now India's caste system has been built upon the subjugation of the forest dwellers. If you read the Hindu religious and cultural books, there are godlike people and demon-like people, and the demon-like people are the forest-dwellers. They have been subjugated and the land has been cleared.

With regard to the analysis that women are the saviours of the future: we want a stake in the future, in feminist issues. We definitely want more women in political parties and in decision-making, in science and technological groups. We can't compromise on any of these issues. But we cannot leave out issues of class, caste and race and ethnic issues. We have to see how women are placed in these categories, and women are subjugated. This is what the analysis is.

# The Sleeping Giant Awakens

Miners in South West Virginia, in the USA, have just won a great victory over the Pittston Corporation after a strike lasting ten months. Their new four-year contract provides full health coverage for working miners, including annual payments of \$1,000 a year to cover deductibles. It also forces the company to maintain health and pension benefits for retired miners and protects union jobs that were in danger of being contracted out to non-union subsidiaries. The deal has raised wages in such a way to achieve parity with average national standards by 1994.

## SOLIDARITY

The key to this historic victory was the solidarity that the 1,900 miners built up among themselves, within their community and from the American and international labour movement. Solidarity and mass support were what enabled them to win against the largest US producer of export coal, backed by 400 state troopers, the state and federal courts, as well as an armed "asset protection" team.

## LIVING HISTORY

South West Virginia is an area where most people stay all their lives. Their roots are strong and their memories clear. Stories of the days before the union - when the coal companies owned everything including the town - are learned and repeated. They are passed from generation to generation until a kind of living history evolves.

The understanding that comes from such a deep knowledge of their own past helped to keep the community vigilant against attempts by the Pittston Corporation to return to the ways of the past. And also because history is such an important part of a people's culture, the elderly are highly valued and respected.

For most of the people, their union, the UMWA, means the difference between a decent living and a return to the horrors of the past. What helped further strengthen their links and fuelled their determination is to be found in the conditions of their working lives, starting with the nature of coal mining itself.

## THE WOMEN

One key factor in the strike was the support and involvement of the women in the community, organised as a chapter (branch) of the Daughters of Mother Jones.



Gail Gentry had his back broken in a Pittston mine in 1978. After the strike started, the company cancelled his health insurance, along with 1,500 other former miners. During the strike he steered his wheelchair into the middle of the road in front of Pittston Moss No.3 processing plant straight into the path of the oncoming coal truck. He was not thinking about what that truck could do to him if it did not stop. He was thinking about what Pittston did to him.

Right at the start of the campaign, the wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of the miners, sat in for thirty hours at the company headquarters at Lebanon, in Virginia. Outside a crowd of supporters pitched tents and demonstrated their full support. During the next ten months, the women were strengthened by their collective action. Now that

the strike is over, they are still together and working to help others.

## THE BOLD 99

Another big event was the three-day occupation of the Moss No.3 Coal Processing Plant by the "Bold 99" in September. Again, the action was well supported by the community. Hundreds showed their support outside the plant.

## MEDIA BLACKOUT

All through the dispute, the union leaders, learning from past failures, realised the importance of winning maximum support and participation from the community. The establishment of Camp Solidarity to house visiting supporters, the use of non-violent civil disobedience and countering the virtual media blackout, ensured that thousands outside South West Virginia knew what was going on.

## COMMUNITY UNDER ATTACK

During the course of the strike, the community of Pittston and not just the working miners were under attack. As one laid-off coal miner told reporters: "Pittston didn't realise when they cut the pensioners' healthcare - pensioners, disabled and widows - that they were cutting into us, whether or not we worked for Pittston. They were cutting right into what we families believed in. We can't just let our pensioners and disabled people be left out there alone."

People in South West Virginia and further afield are now seeing the UMWA victory as a shot in the arm for the whole American labour movement. As the local paper, 'The Richmond Times', put it: "The industrial corporations of the world can blame Pittston for waking the sleeping giant."



The information in this article is taken from 'Unity', the fortnightly paper of the League of Revolutionary Struggle, USA. Photos by courtesy of Mildred Deel and 'Unity'.

# FREEDOM FOR IRELAND

# Another Country

Despite the intransigence of successive governments, the struggle for national liberation in Ireland continues to develop under its own momentum, addressing the consequences of Britain's occupation on all fronts. In this country, there exists broad sentiment in favour of taking the troops out. Unfortunately though, the actual withdrawal movement itself remains tiny and in disarray.

To understand why this is we need to look at the make-up of public opinion. Whilst there is a consistent majority in favour of "withdrawal", beyond that opinion remains divided. What happens next - direct rule or devolution with responsibility for security transferred to the RUC; or some form of federal structure; or a united Ireland within NATO; or an independent, united republic - is far from settled.

One reason for the lack of clarity on this question is the deep-seated belief that what happens after British withdrawal has got anything to do with Britain. And at the bottom of this, of course, is the continuing assumption that the North of Ireland is itself a part of Britain and not part of another country under occupation by a foreign power. For this reason, it is useful to remind ourselves - and others, when arguing the case - of the constitutional position of "Northern Ireland".

**"Parliament hereby declares that Northern Ireland remains part of His Majesty's Dominions and of the United Kingdom and affirms that in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's Dominions without the consent of the Parliament of Northern Ireland."** Ireland Act, 1949, put through under a majority Labour government.

North, South or as a whole, Ireland has never been part of Britain. Even after partition, the North was not absorbed into the British state. Instead, it became a dominion (self-governing) territory within the United Kingdom. Stormont, and not Westminster, became the seat of government. When it was finally dissolved in 1974,



loyalist politicians were at the forefront of protest against the introduction of direct rule.

Constitutional arguments may sound like hairsplitting. But they give the lie to claims by the likes of Ian Paisley and Peter Robinson that the loyalist people of the North are British rather than Irish. Enoch Powell, a great supporter of the unionist cause, is quite clear in his opinion that the ambiguous constitutional position of the North lies at the heart of the present conflict. To resolve it, he argues for the full integration of the "province" into the British state.

What this seems to indicate is that so long as people in Britain fail to face up to the fact that Ireland is another country and British troops an army of occupation, then there can be no serious objection to their presence. At best, none which takes the situation forward in any serious way. Aren't they simply - and rightly - maintaining stability in one of the "provinc'ss"?

In the face of this logic, straightforward demands for "troops out" just will not do and sections of the withdrawal movement have understood this

Even a brief and superficial acquaintance with Irish history makes one see an inescapable truth: Britain has, and always had, an imperialist relationship with Ireland. If the power-structure of Britain is today still identifiable by the concept of imperialism, the Irish struggle inevitably faces a scenario where anti-imperialism is central. And anti-imperialism is not about calling for the withdrawal of British troops to be replaced by troops in a (neo-colonial) Green or UN uniform. Anti-imperialism for the Irish people means regaining control over all that is important in their lives, land and seas. It means control over all the resources and efforts through which they produce value and on which their material well-being and spiritual validation depends.

Therefore, central to the demand for Troops Out Now must be the demand for National Self-Determination for the Irish People, as a whole.

Spare Rib



"The loyalists are Irish and the notion that they have of being exclusively British is a comparatively recent one. They are Irish people who wish to remain subjects of the British crown for so long as that crown protects the Orange ascendancy." - Gerry Adams, in *The Politics of Irish Freedom*.

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for quite some time. That is why the Troops Out Movement (TOM), for example, has two demands: 'Troops Out' and 'Self-Determination for the Irish People as a Whole'. Others, however, have been unclear about this issue, the most recent case being the

much-vaunted **Time To Go** campaign. Sponsored by MPs, showbiz celebrities and academics, it was originally hoped that the **Time To Go** charter and campaign would do for Ireland (at the level of consciousness-raising) something like what Bob Geldof and Band Aid were supposed to have done for Ethiopia. In more practical terms, it was thought that **Time To Go** might provide a basis for widening and building broader unity within the withdrawal movement.

As it turned out, the **Time To Go** show was a bit of a flop and the broader unity failed to materialise. This happened for various reasons but mainly because the "troops out" position put forward by the **Time To Go** leadership saw this demand as a way of starting debate on the future of Ireland rather than ending Britain's involvement in another country's affairs.

Essentially, this represented a rightist position which saw the military presence in isolation from the overall strategic objectives and machinery of British imperialism in Ireland. That is to say, it fails to understand what the troops and the British presence more generally are there to do - namely, to prop up a sectarian state which would otherwise disintegrate.

If **Time To Go** represented a rightist position within the withdrawal movement, the other (leftist) side of the coin is represented in slogans such as 'Victory to the IRA'. Ultra-left slogans of this kind assume that the Irish can liberate themselves by purely military force, rather than by addressing their social, economic and cultural situation as a whole. But if the Irish themselves do not make this assumption, then why should we?

There are, of course, different strands within "the withdrawal movement", as it is called, and the experience of the last few years demonstrates a need to differentiate between these strands. It was no accident, for example, that **Time To Go** could focus on the civil rights aspect of Britain's occupation of Ireland - Stalker, Gibraltar and shoot-to-kill, links between loyalist paramilitaries and the so-called security forces, etc. - without questioning the more fundamental nature of Britain's relationship to Ireland. Similarly, there is a distinction to be made between positions represented by the Troops Out Movement and more explicitly pro-republican demands for "unconditional

support". Although they share certain objectives, there is a difference, probably a necessary one, between a **withdrawal movement** and a **solidarity movement**. Where a solidarity movement would automatically give support and assistance to republican prisoners and their families, a more immediate priority for a withdrawal movement might, for example, be to campaign round army recruitment. But all three strands - those focussing on civil rights issues, a withdrawal movement and a pro-republican solidarity movement, could unite, in say, a campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

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Bookstall at London Irish Festival.

Those most likely to understand all of these issues are the Irish themselves. And that's why those who have been most consistent and committed in their efforts to build principled withdrawal and solidarity movements have come from the substantial Irish national minority in this country. Support for the Fenian and Home Rule movements in the nineteenth centuries, the Irish Self-Determination League of 1919-1921 and the Anti-Internment League in the early 1970's, was based overwhelmingly on the Irish community in Britain. It did not come from showbiz personalities. Neither did it come from the British labour or trade union movements. The British establishment knows this and that is why successive governments have upheld the PTA and why it is used against the likes of Maire O'Shea, not Glenda Jackson or Claire Short.



## I nDil Chuimhne

Michael Gaughan, Frank Stagg, Bobby Sands, Francis Hughes, Ray McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Docherty, Tom McElwee, Mickey Devine.

### IRISH HUNGER STRIKE

#### COMMEMORATION MARCH & RALLY

Saturday 12th May, 1990, Assembling 12 noon, Sparkhill Park, Birmingham 11. Rally at Central Library Exhibition Hall.

The Irish Hunger Strike Commemoration Committee (Birmingham) will hold the annual march and rally in honour of the Twelve Irish Hunger Strike Martyrs who gave their lives during this final phase of Ireland's 800 year old freedom struggle.

Michael Gaughan and Frank Stagg died in Parkhurst (June 1974) and Wakefield (February 1976) respectively fighting for the just demand - the right to repatriation to a prison in Ireland. Michael Gaughan's death was caused by brutal force feeding.

The Ten H-Block Hunger Strikers gave their lives in 1981 resisting British attempts to criminalise Irish political prisoners and the cause they represent. Their heroic sacrifice criminalised Britain in the eyes of the world.

The martyrdom of these twelve Irish heroes inspires all who fight for national liberation and against oppression. A fitting tribute to the Hunger Strikers is to strive towards the goal for which they died:

Irish unity and self-determination.

We urge you to support the Commemoration, and add your voice to the demand for British withdrawal and Irish self-determination. Financial sponsorship is urgently requested.

## Tiocfaidh Ar La!

**Irish Hunger Strike Commemoration**

# WHERE WE STAND

Mao Zedong made many contributions to the theory and practice of revolution. Although he always stressed the need to apply the general lessons of Marxism-Leninism to Chinese conditions, many of his developments of theory and practice are relevant to us, working in different conditions today.

One of the most important policies that Mao Zedong developed was that of the mass line. He taught that communists are always in a minority and however strong and developed the party is, it is the masses of people who are the real heroes and the makers of history. Our theories are empty talk unless we can link them with the concrete day-to-day experience of working people; good leadership depends on close links with the people and taking people forward at their own pace.

Mao Zedong summed this up: "Take the ideas of the masses and concentrate them, then go to the masses, persevere in the ideas and carry them through, so as to form correct ideals of leadership - such is the basic method of leadership."

The anti-poll tax campaign is a good example to illustrate this. Essentially, the poll tax is an attack on the working class and many other people who earn their living, as part of a strategy by the British state to make us pay for their crisis, cut public spending and reduce our standard of living.

Thousands of people up and down England and Scotland understand this and have shown their opposition in different ways. But the movement needs a leadership which applies the mass line to be successful. This involves patient, long-term work which takes as its starting point the level of consciousness that exists at present and is not sidetracked to the right or the left.

At present, the main danger from the right is that opposition to the poll tax will be sidetracked into votes for the Labour Party and reliance on them to change things for the

better. On the poll tax, as on other issues, the Labour Party position is to deny the class nature of the law and to insist that the law, however unjust is not broken. They want people to rely on the bourgeois state and its parliamentary system rather than organise for themselves to fight for change, whether for reforms in the short-term or revolutionary change.

At this point in time, the Labour Party is lagging far behind most people on the question of the poll tax. But there is a danger that incorrect tactics from the left will push people back to the Labour Party.

Some of those on the left have no understanding of the mass line and will not be able to mobilise mass opposition, except in the very short-term, and even worse, may cause divisions and disruption in the movement.

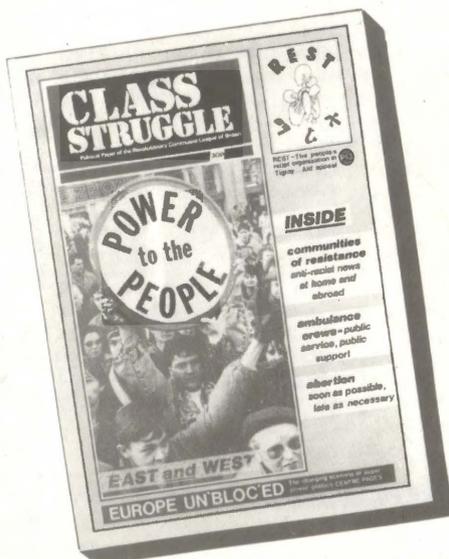
These people concentrate on work in organising committees, set up meetings with too many speakers, usually all white and all men, and allow the people who come to these meetings, no time to express their views or talk through doubts or questions they may have. They stand up at every opportunity to make speeches of the most militant kind, drowning out and driving away ordinary people.

The strength of the anti-poll tax campaign lies in its base, with the potential for mobilising on a wide basis, involving many different people, on a street by street basis. People are ready with different ideas about how to spread the message, organise resistance and draw more people in. These ideas should be listened to seriously and built upon, not dismissed. We should also get rid of all manipulating for positions of leadership and encourage new people to come forward.

It is only in this way that a true mass campaign can be built to show that it is the strength of the masses that can bring about change not voting in elections.

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We would like to thank all our readers who contributed to the appeal for money for new equipment for the production of 'Class Struggle'. We are happy to report that we achieved our target and have bought a new word-processor which should improve the look of the paper as well as make its production more efficient. We always welcome further donations as the production and distribution of the paper needs constant fund-raising.

### OCTOBER

The latest issue of October, which contains an analysis of the Dublin lockout of 1913, among other items, is still available from New Era Books. Price: £1.75 + 39p P&P