

UNION CITY NEWS

BULLETIN OF NOTTINGHAM TRADES COUNCIL

ISSUE 4

ORGREAVE REVISITED

The recent payout by the South Yorkshire police to 39 miners wrongly arrested and beaten at Orgreave is good news to those of us who experience first hand the brutality of the police during the pit strike.

From an early stage both Arthur Scargill and the Yorkshire pickets realised that they would have to close down the power stations. By late May 1984 the focus for picketing had switched from the Nottingham pits to a small coking plant at Orgreave in S. Yorkshire.

The Government realised that Orgreave was the turning point of the strike. If the pickets succeeded in closing down Orgreave it would be a massive victory for the miners. The Tories were terrified of another Saltley Gate. They were determined this wouldn't happen. Hence the biggest paramilitary police operation in recent history. Pickets who arrived at Orgreave on June 18th were ill prepared for

what was to happen. Police in full riot gear with shields, dogs and horses faced pickets in t-shirts and shorts. Horses were systematically used to scatter pickets who were picknicking in a field. They were followed by short shield carrying units who truncheoned anyone unlucky enough to get in their way.

In full view of TV cameras one picket was repeatedly batoned by a policeman who was obviously out of control. The beating was so severe that the truncheon broke in half. Yet the officer wasn't even disciplined but the picket was arrested!

It was to the shame of our movement that the likes of Willis and Kinnock refused to condemn police brutality. "This is so un-British and untypical" bleated Kinnock, referring not to the police's attack on working class people, but to unarmed pickets trying to defend themselves.

The media and police would have us believe that what happened at Orgreave was because a few officers were out of control. The whole operation was organised to physically smash the pickets and was backed all the way by Thatcher.

The compensation to the pickets is long overdue but is nowhere near enough for what they went through. Not one single police officer was ever brought to account for the rampage at Orgreave. In fact during the entire dispute no police were ever charged.

The police tactics used on the miners at Orgreave were subsequently to be used against printworkers at Wapping and against poll tax protesters at Trafalgar Square. We need to learn the lessons for our movement.

Pergamon Strikers tour Nottingham

Strikers from the NUJ dispute at Pergamon Press in Oxford will be in Nottingham week commencing 15th July to raise support for their 2 year old dispute.

The strikers, sacked by Robert Maxwell for taking part in a one day official strike, have tirelessly campaigned for their reinstatement. A recent TUC/Labour Party enquiry fully backed the strikers demands - however Maxwells response was only to offer 11 out of the 23 reinstatement and this explicitly excluded the FoC and Deputy FoC (Senior Shop Stewards). The strikers rejected the 'deal'. Maxwell has now sold the company to Elsevier, a Dutch publishing company.

If you have a TU or LP branch meeting during w/c 15th July contact: Ian Juniper 582369 (daytime) or Steve Battlemuch 705788 (evenings) to arrange to have a Pergamon striker at your meeting. They need our support!

'UNION YES' CAMPAIGN PLANNED

The Trades Council in conjunction with the Regional TUC is planning a week of activities to promote trade unionism in Nottingham. This will take place in the 1st or 2nd week of November.

Initial plans include a focus on low pay and Health & Safety as well as general promotion of trade unionism. Hopefully the weeks activities will include major displays in public places, libraries etc., leafletting & liason with the press & radio.

We need assistance with this project and would welcome all offers of help and especially any ideas for other activities during the 'Union Yes' week. Phone Steve Battlemuch 9705788) or write to 191 Burford Rd., Forest Fields, Nottingham. NG7 6AY

Remembering Jabu - friend, sister, comrade

Jabu Ndlovu became well known to some of us in Nottingham as the most senior member of the 'Sisters of the Long March' which toured Britain in 1988 in support of the sacked BTR-Sarmcol workers. Jabu, a shop steward at the Prestige factory in Pietermaritzburg, played a key role in training and organising the rest of the sisters. Shortly after her return to South Africa she was murdered in a fire bomb attack by Inkatha vigilantes on her house. A three day general strike took place throughout Natal in response to her murder.

The Natal Worker History Project has written a biography of Jabu. The book has been produced in close consultation with her union NUMSA and her family and friends.

All profits from sales of the book will go into a trust fund for Jabu's remaining children as her husband and one of her children were also killed in the attack.

Nottingham Trades Council are selling the books at £4.95. To order your copy send a cheque made payable to Nottingham Trades Council to Leo Keely, 204 Noel Street, Forest Fields, Nottingham.

Trades Councils Fight TUC Cuts

Unions must fight attempts by the General Council to weaken an important part of our movement, the Trades Councils. In October 1990 they voted to abolish County Associations of Trades Councils, Annual Conferences and the Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee. The contracts with the part time co-ordinators of Unemployed Centres was also ended. Ostensibly to save money, with no consultation whatsoever, these deep cuts into our democratic movement have been made.

The Trades Council has a unique and important function: at local level its the only body that brings unions together, and takes Unions/campaigns to the community/streets, it can run health & safety at work campaigns and highlight unemployment by co-ordinating town committees to organise Peoples March for Jobs. Unions must ask themselves was it the intention of the General Council to start an irreversable process of weakening the Trades Council movement, and if so will the Trade Union movement be stronger or weaker in the future if Trades Councils are gone? We have a chance in September to stop this process; raise the issues in your Union, mandate your delegates to Congress.

BRING IRISH PRISONERS HOME FROM ENGLAND

The Birmingham 6 have finally been released from their 16 years of false imprisonment, serious ill treatment & degradation in jails in England.

The families of the Birmingham 6 have suffered greatly over the years. For 16 years they have suffered the experience of visiting their loved ones in maximum security jails all over England. Those

families based in Ireland have suffered the additional hardship of long, expensive & harrowing journeys.

Finance, illness & the threat of the Prevention of Terrorism Act with its draconian powers to stop, search, detain, exclude & intimidate all add to the stress.

The visiting is finally over for the Birmingham 6 but continues for

relatives of other Irish political prisoners in English jails. Applications for transfer to jails in N. Ireland are systematically refused by the Home Office.

At this time of happiness at the release of the Birmingham 6 we must not forget the plight of countless families suffering the same frightening & degrading experience of visiting maximum

security jails in England.

The Committee for the Transfer of Irish Prisoners (CTIP) calls on the British government to stop deliberately punishing the families of Irish political prisoners & grant transfers to N. Ireland for those who request.

More info. from: CTIP, PO Box 303 Tomb St., Belfast.

AFFILIATE NOW

Is your Branch affiliated? If yes have you paid your 1991 affiliation? Send your cheque to 204 Noel St., Forest Fields, Nottm. If you aren't affiliated - why not? We need all the support we can get. We currently have 110 branches affiliated. Join us today. For details of costs ring Leo on 703135 (evenings).

Deadline for articles for next issue **SEPTEMBER 2ND.** Send to 191 Burford Road, Forest Fields, Nottingham. Typeset & printed by Eric McNaughton (SOGAT)

ATTEND

We meet every month at the International Community Centre at 7.30. Does your Branch delegate attend & report back to your branch? Make sure you're in on the act - get involved with the Trades Council. Future meetings: 17th July/21st August/ 18th September.