

Wildcat

MANCHESTER FREE BULLETIN

NO. 5 PASS IT AROUND

OBJECTIVES

1. To report on, analyse and seek solidarity for important struggles amongst our fellow workers, especially in the Greater Manchester area.
2. To encourage independent working class activity outside of the control of the trade unions and in opposition to all political parties.
3. To aim at the revolutionary overthrow of all governments, bosses and leaders by a revolution in which the majority of people, who at the moment are just expected to follow orders, all play an equal part. And we would like to see the creation of a world without the wages/money/market system, where we can all have a say in how things are run, and where production is for human need not profit.

SABOTAGED BY THE UNIONS!

THE STRIKE AT PARKINSON COWAN

On Tuesday after Easter, 700 workers at Parkinson Cowan in Stretford went back to work after a seven week strike. The way the strike was ended shows how ruthless and cynical the trade unions can be in opposition to workers' struggles.

The 'final offer' put to the workers was a complicated package which no-one seemed to understand. But it is clear that there was no significant improvement on the 7.8% which had been rejected at previous meetings. The management was also offering a bribe to the strikers in the form of a £20 'cash bonus' and payment for the Easter bank holidays if they went back after Easter. No doubt this seemed attractive to many of the workers who were beginning to feel that 7.8% was the best they were going to get.

The unions eagerly seized on this chance to put the boot in. The AUEW district organiser who addressed the meeting urged acceptance of the same offer he had called on workers to reject the week before. When he was asked what would happen if the offer was rejected he replied that the unions had already decided to cut off strike pay whatever the outcome of the meeting.

Not surprisingly the meeting voted to end the strike by a majority of about 3 to 1. Afterwards the opinions expressed about the unions by workers who had voted to stay out were mostly unprintable. But many of them were not surprised by the way the unions had acted. The reputation of the AUEW in particular (the most influential of the seven unions involved) is already at rock-bottom in the Manchester area. The AUEW's treatment of the workers at Laurence Scott will not be forgotten for a long time. And the strikers at Parkinson Cowan had already been forced to picket AUEW HQ in London to get their strike pay.

All this shows how workers less and less see the unions as their own organisations. The struggle against union sabotage is accepted as just as 'normal' a part of going on strike as picketing. In other words, workers expect to be 'sold out' by their unions.

However the strike at Parkinson Cowan shows that workers now urgently need to challenge all the traditions and practices of trade unionism. This strike, like so many others, could only be broken in the way it was because, after seven weeks, it was already very weak. It was inevitably weak

because it was an isolated strike at a time when workers in general are accepting cuts in their living standards. Other sections of THORN/EMI (to which Parkinson Cowan belongs) had already settled, some for as low as 3%!

Workers at Parkinson Cowan explained this by saying that their factory was profitable, the others are not. It is easy to understand why workers in unprofitable parts of industry are hesitant about coming out on strike. But as long as we feel the need to justify our claims in terms of the profitability of our own particular plant, we're going to get split up into smaller and smaller units, and the weaker our movement will become.

We don't need any justification to defend our living standards. We don't need to accept the traditional trade-unionist idea of a strike where workers only struggle for their 'own' claim, and let other workers struggle for 'theirs'. We do need to take mass action in a struggle which unites workers regardless of what union or industry they are in.

If we do this, politicians, businessmen, and trade union leaders will attack us for threatening the stability of capitalism. And they will be right! But then that's their problem, isn't it?

LAW AND ORDER

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THE STATE PREPARES FOR WAR IN THE STREETS

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Before the Falkland Islands came to dominate the news we were subjected to a media deluge about law and order. Crime figures were released that, for the first time, were broken down by race. A false media image was created of black muggers beating up little old ladies, sounding at times like an editorial from a National Front newspaper. It was of course forgotten that, according to a recent report, national minorities were more likely to be the victims of violent attack than the white population.

Manchester's Chief Constable, James Anderton, in a speech released to the press attacked 'subversives' who he claimed were 'brainwashing' people into rioting, and complained that "basic issues in the field of law and order are increasingly submitted to a vote." He called for the police to be given even greater



independence and condemned attempts to make the police accountable.

The police federation launched an advertising campaign in support of capital punishment. Lord Scarman warned that troops may be used in the event of further rioting this summer. Ex-chief of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, Kenneth Newman, was appointed as the new Metropolitan Commissioner - a man with much bloody experience of putting down

urban unrest.

These apparently isolated events are part of a growing trend within British society. Last summer's riots were a profound shock to the state. For a while the police lay low as they were accused of over-reaction and excessive brutality. Lord Scarman tried to placate the urban centres with talk of 'community policing'. But now the 'law and order' brigade are preparing public opinion in case of more rioting this summer. The police have carefully prepared their weapons and tactics, learning from the experience of N. Ireland. If they can create the impression in the public mind of themselves as the 'thin blue line' preventing society's drift into chaos they can justify any amount of brutality, including, as Scarman has said, the use of troops. For the truth is that the inner cities, with rising unemployment and falling social expenditure, are becoming ungovernable by democratic means,

CONTINUED OVER

UNITY AGAINST THE CUTS?

COUNCIL CUTS

Following our report in the last issue of *Wildcat* on Council cut-backs, it has been confirmed that major redundancies among Manchester City Council workers have been avoided, although not without substantial job losses through early retirement and non-filling of vacancies. Undoubtedly the Labour Council has responded to the determination of Council workers to take 'indefinite strike action' should there be any compulsory redundancies.

Unfortunately this impressive display of unity amongst Council workers in all the main unions covering white-collar and manual workers has been marred in two specific areas.

At the last general meeting of Manchester NALGO, only a minority of people were willing to support 14 playground workers who, although not directly employed by the Council, were losing their jobs as a direct result of the City Council's decision to withdraw its financial support and close down the playgrounds. A direct appeal for support was made by the playground workers themselves and by supporters in NALGO, but the branch exec-

utive (through one of its members who is a leading light in the local Communist Party) managed to argue on formalities and technicalities (ie that no request had been received from the playground workers' union, and that they weren't directly employed by the Council) and to persuade the meeting to reject the appeal for support.

It seems likely that many workers regard this particular job as somehow non-essential, even though it is more directly useful and less bureaucratic than many Council services. Undoubtedly the low esteem in which much child care is held helped to undermine support for them.

Another chink in the armour of Council workers' unity has been the lack of support for short-term contract workers in education. Despite the NUT's continual moaning that more and more of these 'non-permanent' contracts are being used in education to cover regular teaching work, many such workers have lost their jobs during the recent cut-backs. Again the employers have managed successfully to divide one group of workers against another, this time along the lines of 'temporary' versus 'permanent'.

The outcome of these first two real tests of council workers' resolve to fight redundancies does not bode well for the future.

Come June or July this year following the Council elections there is likely to be further pressure for cut-backs and redundancies. The Tories and the Alliance are publicly committed to reducing the numbers of staff employed by the councils. Labour, although theoretically opposed to cut-backs, are just as committed to the economic system which has caused this crisis, and have shown by their record in office to be unwilling to fight back in any way that will risk their own position in control of the Council. In the last resort they will cut our throats to save their own necks!

In this situation we can only rely on ourselves. We must build on the unity we have achieved, so far, and go beyond the divisions of 'manual' and 'white collar', 'permanent' and 'temporary', 'essential' and 'non-essential'. More than this we must break with the divisions of the trade union mentality and trade union organisation, both to defend ourselves and move forward to a better world.

CND : NO RETURN TO THE SIXTIES!

First time round, in the sixties, CND failed miserably ... Then it based its tactics on polite marches, lobbying MPs, and trying to get the Labour Party to support unilateral disarmament. It got this support, only to find the Labour governments 'defence' policy no different from that of the Tories. The Ban the Bomb movement melted away like snow in the Sahara.

Recent popular revulsion with the new generation of nuclear weapons, and the realisation that war preparations are escalating in both super-power blocs has led to the rebirth of the anti-war movement. Phoenix-like, CND has re-emerged from the ashes of despair. The movement seems so strong that the US government has expressed fears that European 'neutralism' could destroy NATO.

CND's tactics are the same today as they were twenty years ago. Is there any reason to suppose they will be more successful the second around?

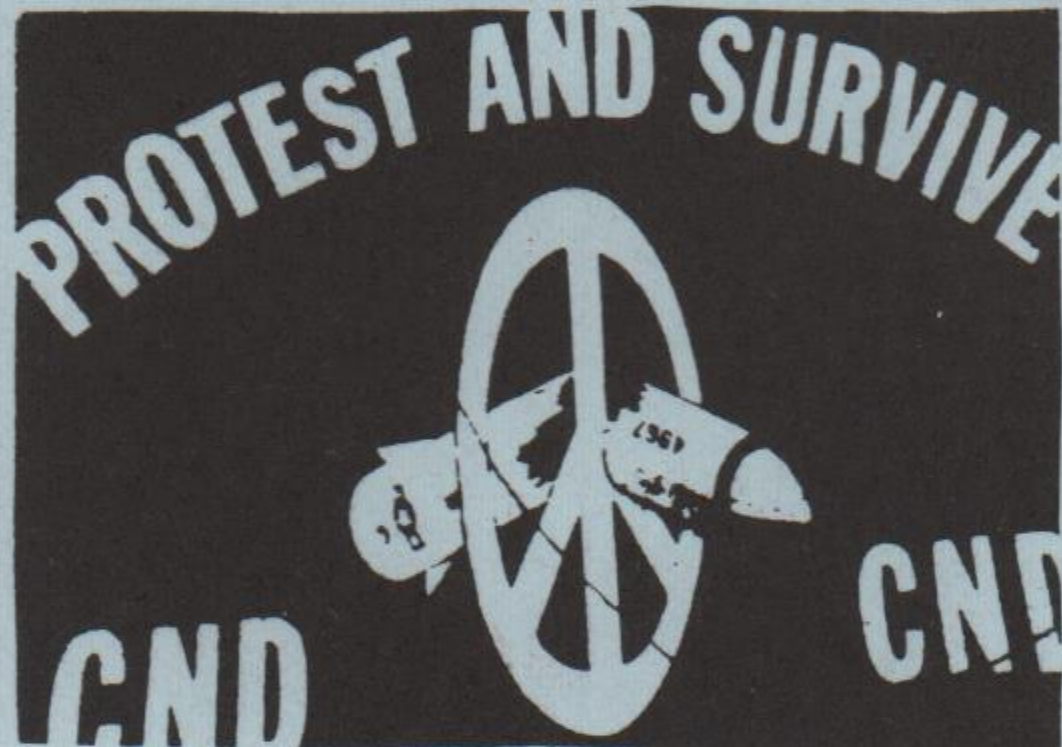
CND says it opposes nuclear weapons while supporting the need for 'national defence'. In the past 35 years 20 million people have died in wars of 'national defence' fought with conventional weapons.

LAW & ORDER cont.

and the state is preparing to use the paramilitary, or even military option.

As Anderton said in his speech:

"The next five years will be the testing ground and the pressures are already building up. Police performances in this coming trial period will determine ... the kind of society in which we will be required to live."



The Falkland Islands crisis shows that CND is prepared to support war fought with conventional weapons. But nuclear weapons can't be un-invented. As long as the threat of war remains, so does the threat of nuclear war.

According to CND, wars are caused by the evil actions of a few politicians and generals. In fact, wars are always fought over such basic issues as the control of markets, or, as in the case of the confrontation in the Falklands, the control of sources of raw materials and to secure boundaries. War is simply the natural extension of the commercial competition which is the basis of capitalism.

Just as governments prepare for war to defend markets and raw materials, they use unemployment and state repression to attack our living standards to preserve the profitability of industry. At the same time they use war to whip up national jingoism to distract our attention from the problems at home (in the case of the Falklands by both the Argentinian and the British governments).

E.P. Thompson has said that struggles over all other issues should take second place to the struggle against war. This is a very dangerous statement. The only hope of preventing war is by challenging the insane social system which creates war at every level.

Nuclear disarmament is much harder than CND claims. It requires a realisation that politely asking favours of governments never has and never will get anything. It requires direct action, decided upon and controlled by those participating. Every strike, occupation and act of resistance which challenges the logic of capitalism and the authority of the government should be seen as part of the movement against war.

Ultimately it's a question of confronting the reality of capitalist society, and all the organisations which support that reality - of making a choice between a libertarian communist revolution and a radioactive capitalist barbarism. And that's a choice we cannot refuse to make.

(Adapted from a leaflet given out by some members of 'Wildcat' at a recent CND demonstration.)

CONTACT *Wildcat*

We would like to hear from anyone who agrees with the ideas expressed in *Wildcat* and would like to help us or join our group. If you don't agree with us we'd like to hear from you to - we'll try to answer letters, either personally, or in *Wildcat*. We would also like to hear from people in other areas who are interested in what we are doing.

If you would us to mail you copies of *Wildcat* as they appear, please write enclosing £1 to cover postage (cash or stamps).

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