

M25 THREE - ON THE ROAD TO JUSTICE

On the night of the 15th - 16th December 1988 three masked men conducted a series of violent attacks just off the M25 in Surrey which left one man dead, another wounded, two houses robbed and four cars stolen. The tabloid press dubbed the perpetrators the "M25 Gang" and a £25,000 reward was offered for their capture. In March 1990 after a six week trial three black men Raphael Rowe, Michael Davis and Randolph Johnson were found guilty of these offences and sentenced to life imprisonment. However, they were convicted on the most tenuous of evidence. No direct, forensic, confessional, or identification evidence linked the three to the crimes, and what evidence did exist was not only circumstantial but unreliable, contradictory and inconsistent, with logic and common sense. To begin with according to the victims of the offences the perpetrators were two white men and only one black man, a fact reiterated in Police appeals for information about the crimes. Secondly, five independent witnesses, two of whom gave evidence for the prosecution, placed

Rowe and Davis being dropped off at their home at precisely the same time as other witnesses, 10 miles away, saw the gang's car in the vicinity of the murder scene. Moreover, the principal evidence against the three was given by another three men who had been arrested as suspects in the case. These men not only contradicted themselves and each other countless times while giving their evidence, but they fitted the descriptions given by the victims, their fingerprints were found on a car abandoned at the murder scene, and they admitted not only disposing of the cars and storing the property stolen during the robberies, but also stealing the car used by the gang to get to Surrey that night.

If this was not enough the integrity of the Police investigation and the conduct of the prosecution was seriously open to question. The only witness to the murder crucially changed his original version of events, supportive of the defence case, "did not fit" the timings they required. Another witness told how the Police had pressurised and threatened her into giving evidence which incriminated Rowe and Davis. Furthermore, the three suspects who became prosecution witnesses, did so only after unrecorded interviews with the investigating officers. The existence of these interviews was not only never made known to the defence, but the interviews themselves were a clear breach of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and led to a Police complaints investigation into the conduct of the officers concerned.

Other evidence only emerged after the trial was over. Unidentified fingerprints

found on the murder victim's car and at the scene of the two robberies were never disclosed to the defence and therefore never put before the Jury. More importantly despite repeated requests, the prosecution have refused to inform the defence of whether or not any of the prosecution witnesses requested or received some or all of the £25,000 reward money, in return for giving their evidence, while the Police Complaints report on the unrecorded interviews with the three original suspects has also been denied to lawyers for the defence.

The case of the M25 - Three, is one of serious concern. The three men have now spent more than seven years in prison. If you believe in justice then please support their case.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Affiliate and donate to the campaign
Invite a speaker from the campaign
Pass a model resolution at your branch etc
Write to your local MP and request that s/he take up the case

Send letters of support to the three men
Demand that the case be sent back to the Court of Appeal by writing to the Home Secretary.

ADDRESSES

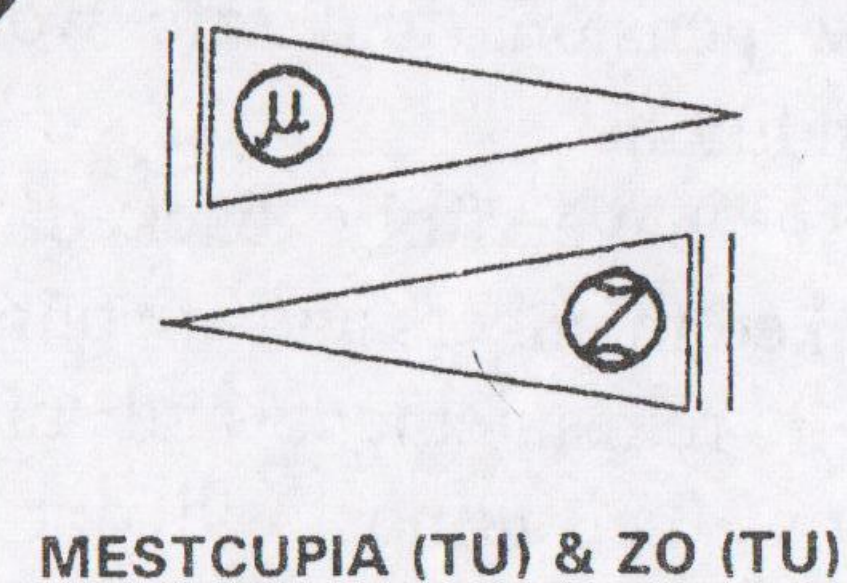
Home Secretary. The Home Office, 2 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1
M25 - Three Campaign, 28 Grimsel Path, London SE5 OTB. Tel 0171 735 2985
Raphael Rowe MP 3660, Maidstone Prison, 36 County Road, Maidstone, Kent ME 14 IJZ

Michael Davis MP 3661, Swaleside Prison, Brabalon Road, Sheerness, Kent. ME12 4DZ

Randolph Johnson MP 3903, York Prison, Askham Grange, Askham Richard, York. YO2 3PT ★

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NOTTS TU NEWS

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LONG LIVE THE FIRST OF MAY

Over a century ago the decision made by the representatives of workers of the industrialised world to unite over the 8 hour day demand, and to withdraw their labour on the first of May 1890, was the most practical and tangible result of over a century of struggle by the most advanced workers around the slogan:

"Workers of the world unite
You have nothing to lose but your chains".

The need for unity in action amongst the advanced workers had become an established fact for almost half a century, and we can safely say that although the date chosen was to coincide with predetermined strikes in the USA, the need for universal revolutionary action against a universal reactionary system was a necessity. However no decision was made as to how long the first of May was to be celebrated and the labour withdrawn. As misery and poverty increased with capitalist expansion, May Day as a day when workers put forward their own demands and demonstrate the possibility of a much better world, clearly distinct and different from the capitalist world order, has continued to date. There is no doubt now that it will continue until the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and establishment of a Communist society, and it is only then that May Day will be celebrated as a festival of peace and happiness the world over.

May Day was never intended to be a fun fair, a piss up, or gathering of small petty traders and charitable

fund raisers, selling their home made jam tarts with a pinch of the pretence of leftiness, and listening to the annual moans and groans by a well known handful of Christian Liberal Socialites who talk a good fight, when their pathetic desire is for a capitalism with a human face. Such gatherings in a handful of places on a weekend before or after May 1st, will only help to prolong capitalism.

Only three years away from the dawning of a new Century, and despite more advances technologically in the second half of this century than the past 4000 years, millions all over the world have to suffer from the lack of the most basic needs.

All the promises of reform and the wishful thinking about a gradual, step by step evolution to the "Promised Land" has miserably failed. As a result working class consciousness is almost non-existent, with millions apathetic.

What the capitalists could not openly oppose or destroy, has been carried out nonetheless in the "name of" and for the benefit of "all". The one such "shining" example is the making of May Day into a Bank Holiday since mid 1970's! And that's not all - to rub salt into the wound, the capitalists and their lackeys are so confident of their power, that they have chosen the first of May 1997 as the election day, for those who might vote, to choose between two parties which are identical and only separated by the degree of cunning and treachery as to how and when they get the chance to become the Chief Executive of the ruling class. One thing is certain, that as we

began this century sadly with the grand illusion of "Taking Power" through Parliament, we will enter the new century with the firm conviction that the "Emancipation of the working class can only be accomplished by the workers themselves".

And it won't be long before an acute observer would write, "The English working class has joined up in the great international army, and that is an epoch-making fact. Its long winter sleep is broken at last. The grandchildren of the old Chartists are entering the line of battle".
Long live the first of May
Long live the working class
Anvil.

MAY DAY '97 SAT 3rd MAY

MARCH & RALLY

ASSEMBLE: 11 am The Forest (Goose Fair Site)
DEPART: 11.30 am
RALLY: 12.15 pm Old Market Square

Speakers:

Jon O'Neill
(Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre)
Women Of The Waterfront
(Liverpool Dockers Support Group)
Hillingdon Hospital Strikers
John Kinsella Campaign

LIVERPOOL DOCKERS' BENEFIT @ Le Metro

Bottom Trent Uni. Student's Union, Byron Buildings, Shakespeare Street
8 pm onwards. Sounds by:

DJ DEEP JOY

£3 WAGED/£2 UNWAGED

BE MODERATE

Some men, faint-hearted, ever seek
Our programme to retouch,
And will insist, whenever they speak,
That we demand too much.
Tis passing strange, yet I declare,
Such statements cause me mirth,
For our demands most modest are,
We only want THE EARTH.

By James Connolly.

SOCIALIST VISION

Politicians from each of the main parties have seized on the concept of Zero Tolerance in the so-called fight against crime. Some Police Chiefs have also given it their blessing, though others advise caution. As Trade Unionists we might like to draw up our own Zero Tolerance targets.

We could start with those employers, too many by far, who by flouting health and Safety laws are prepared to maim, poison and even kill their workers in the interest of profit. Alongside them we might place the magistrates and judges who impose derisory fines when one of these culprits are brought before them, but almost in the next case imprison a poverty stricken mother for stealing a loaf of bread for her kids. That level of hypocrisy deserves a Tolerance rating of Zero.

In January, the TUC commissioned a MORI survey on school age labour in England and Wales. It was discovered that children as young as eleven are employed, more than a third of them

before 7 a.m. It is illegal for under 13s to work and illegal for all children to work before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. 8% said they were often too tired to do their homework, while an amazing 20% had suffered injury in work. That is a target for Zero Tolerance before we start competing with the child labour problems of Pakistan (see page 24).

Or what about Zero Tolerance for tax fraudsters and avoiders? If only half the energy were devoted to collecting tax from wealthy dodgers as to benefit fiddles, our schools wouldn't need to keep holding jumble sales for books and paper.

Why should incompetent employers be subsidised by the state to pay starvation wages to their workers, or be allowed to sack people, if not on a whim, before they have completed the two years service threshold which provides minimum employment rights. That should be a Zero Tolerance objective - if they won't pay the rate for the job they shouldn't be in business!

Everybody who buys this programme

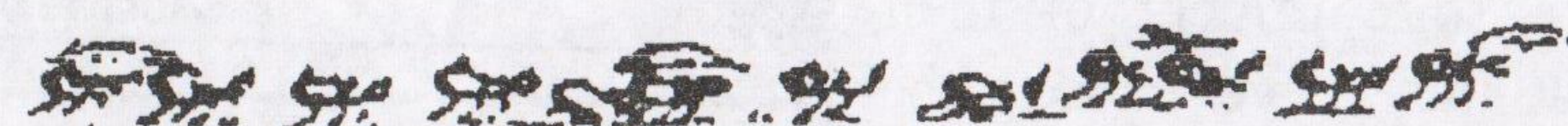
could create their own Zero Tolerance hit list. But drawing up a list is pointless unless we are prepared to do something about it, and we all know that no one person is going to have much effect. That it why Trade Unions are important, only a collective voice will be heard, only collective strength can end these and other iniquities. Sid Platt and John Monks touch on these issues in their articles.

There is, an overriding Zero Tolerance target - Competition. The pitting of worker against worker, employed against unemployed, British against Pakistani against Korean etc. - man against woman -each of these only plays into the hands of those few, who, by virtue of their ownership of the means of production, are able to ruthlessly exploit the rest of humanity. The Human Race can only survive by co-operation, competition and exploitation are ever faster reducing those chances of survival.

A May Day message from Barry Johnson, President of Chesterfield and District Trades Union Council. ★

If you want to be heard – speak in

UNISON



Regional Secretary
Nick Wright

Regional Convener
Vicky Easton

UNISON East Midlands Region
15 Castle Gate, Nottingham NG1 6BY. Tel. 0115 956 7200

MAGNET - THE DISPUTE CONTINUES

On September 3rd 1996, 350 skilled workers were sacked for taking legitimate action against Magnet Kitchens Ltd in Darlington. A below inflation pay rise had been offered to just 60% of the workforce, while the rest were offered a nil basic rate rise for the fourth year running.

The workers voted to reject the offer unless everyone was treated equally. After only 12 days in dispute, the workforce were sacked, some having 40 years service with the company. The company boasted that it had set aside £3,500,000 to cover the costs of the dispute, this has long gone. £360,000 was spent on unwarranted extra security measures in the first 17 weeks of the dispute. Magnet have continued to refuse any offers to negotiate, including refusing to use ACAS.

The strikers continue to demand a return to work for all those sacked on 3rd September, along with union recognition. They are urging all possible customers to boycott Magnet products.

In May, Mansfield and District TUC and Nottingham and District TUC are looking to invite a speaker from the dispute into the area for a week. If you can help with the arrangements, or you would like to invite a speaker to one of your meetings, contact Jon O'Neill on (01623) 424720 or Ian Juniper on (0115) 9582369.

Mansfield and District TUC will be organising leafleting of Magnet showrooms during May. For further info contact Jon O'Neill on (01623) 424720.

Finally, you can send donations to The Magnet Families Hardship Fund, c/o Ian Crammond, 108 Jedburgh Drive, Darlington, Co. Durham, DL3 9UP.

**DON'T SHOP AT MAGNET
UNTIL THE SACKED
WORKERS ARE
RE-INSTATED.**

MERSEYSIDE DOCKERS - STILL FIGHTING

500 Liverpool dockers have been locked out and sacked by their ruthless and bullying bosses since September 1995. The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company want to smash the union to boost their profits. They hope that they can starve the dockers into submission. So far they have failed due to the support of trade unionists from all over the world.

The Liverpool Dockers still need our support. They still need donations.

Make your cheques payable to 'Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeals Fund', and send them to Jimmy Davies, Secretary, Merseyside Shop Stewards Committee, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool, L6 4AS.

THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Launched by the Merseyside Dockers' Shop Stewards' Committee
WE, THE PEOPLE, demand social justice:

1. Immediate reinstatement with full trade union rights of the 500 sacked Liverpool dockers; the Hillingdon Hospital workers; the Magnet workers and all other unjustly sacked workers.
2. The right to join a trade union, to strike, to respect picket lines and to take solidarity action. Immediate repeal of all anti-union legislation.
3. The right to work, and to job security. Reversal of the policies of casualisation, privatisation and deregulation. Democratic planning to secure full employment. No compulsory overtime.
4. Acknowledgement of the value of low-waged and unwaged work: equal pay for work of equal value.
5. The right to recreation and assembly: repeal of the Criminal Justice Act.
6. Defence of the Welfare State. Abolition of the Job Seekers' Allowance. Free education including

nursery and university provision; free health care; adequate pensions and benefits for all. Equal rights and social provision for people with disabilities, the sick, and for all minority groups.

6. The right to a home. Emergency measures to house the homeless, including occupation of vacant or underused properties. Defence of the right of travellers.

7. Repeal of all discriminatory legislation. Defence of the right of asylum. Equal rights for all, regardless of ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexuality or creed. The right of community self-defence against racist, sexist or other violence.

8. The right to citizenship within a democracy. Abolition of the Monarchy and the House of Lords. Withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. Repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

9. The right to a future for our children. Emergency action to reverse national and global pollution and devastation of the planet's resources. Action to curb the private car and road lobbies and to reclaim our streets; implementation of an integrated public transport system. The right to clean air, water and food. Abolition of the nuclear power industry.

10. The right of workers to organise internationally to resist injustice and oppression, to reclaim the planet and to put an end to war. Abolition of the nuclear weapons industry. An end to all trade in arms and instruments of torture.

JOBS! HOMES! A FUTURE!
Merseyside Port Shop Stewards Committee, 19 Scorton Street, Liverpool L6 4AS.
Tel. 0151 207 3388. Fax 0151 207 0696.

To add your union or organisation to the list of sponsors, contact the Shop Stewards as above, or phone the London Dockers Support Group on 0181 367 0021.

This charter will be presented at 10 Downing Street on 12 April from the March for Social Justice.

Following 12 April, there will be further discussions on the development of the Charter and its implementation.

TV NATION

Michael Moore is probably better known in this country for his series TV Nation which was featured on BBC 2. In it, he held up to ridicule elements of the United States. In particular he targeted corporate America.

It is as an enemy of corporate America, and as a film-maker, that he is better known in the States. On Saturday night, BBC 2 carried a 1½ hour documentary made by Michael Moore about his recent (last November) book signing tour of 47 second tier US Cities. The book is called 'Downsizing America - random threats from an unarmed American', in which he aims at two specific targets, corporate America and politicians.

Why if US companies are making such record profits are they continuing to downsize - i.e. shed jobs. At Proctor and Gamble, he asked the question, why if you have made \$6 billion profit have you had to make 30,000 workers redundant? Surely less profit and people still having jobs would be better for everybody? And why do you need such big profits? The corporations PR people would not even confirm that the Head of Proctor and Gamble had earned over \$3,000,000 the previous year. He had.

Parts of his book signing tour were cancelled by the Borders chain when he publicly came out in support of employees who were fighting for union recognition. In the end the workers won union recognition.

There were segments with a strong local interest for us in Notts. On a regular basis, researchers compile lists of the best places to live in the UK. Almost as regularly, Nottinghamshire is near the bottom of these lists, and described as one

of the worst places to live. Well they do the same in the good old US of A, and coming in at 294 out of 300 was Mansfield, Ohio. Now as well as the name, we share something else in common.

Also featured in the programme were Johnsons Controls, who are the last major manufacturer left in Milwaukee, or were. The factory was to be closed and production moved to Mexico where the top wage was 80 cents per hour. This when Johnsons Controls had made ½ billion dollars in profits the previous year.

As always with Michael Moore, he



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Brian Crossland
DISTRICT SECRETARY

Transport & General Workers' Union
Transport House, Victoria Court, Kent Street, Nottingham NG1 3LZ

treated the logic behind the decisions of corporate America with ridicule; in each city he presented Downsizer of the Year certificates to the local arms of American big business.

Some of the most telling comments in the programme came from redundant workers in Centralia, Ohio. If none of us have jobs, or can only get work at the US legal minimum wage of \$4.75 per hour, who will buy the houses, the cars, the electrical goods etc. which the corporations need to sell to continue to make profits. No-one. It is the economics of the mad house. One business man told Moore that the shareholders need profits, and that free enterprise, shareholders and profits were what the American Way was all about. Moore, in the interests of accuracy, checked the

US Constitution. He found plenty of references to 'we the people', and 'by the people'

, but no mention of 'we the shareholders'. As he put it, 'in the interests of democracy and the people, we should abolish profits and shareholders'.

As a final point to the programme, Moore wondered out loud why politicians continue to attack the Welfare spending bill as too high, and are all saying that the Taxpayer cannot afford to continue subsidising benefits. Yet the state in America pays \$170 billion of taxpayers money to businesses in the USA through grants, subsidies and tax breaks, which is far more than they spend on Welfare. On this the politicians are strangely quiet.

The same questions that Michael Moore is asking in the USA apply equally to the UK. The same answers also apply.

All of the parties in this election are pledged to reduce welfare spending in the UK. There is no mention of how much the DTI, TECs or local authorities spend on business support. No standing ovations at party conferences for pointing out the contradiction, that where free enterprise is god, the first in the queue for state handouts are businesses, those pushed to the back are their victims, their ex-employees.

The contradictions and madness of the capitalist system can be seen in our everyday life, they are obvious, probably too obvious. That is why we need people like Michael Moore to continually expose this wasteful and exploitative system. If BBC 2 ever repeat this programme, 'The Big One' watch it, and insist that others watch it.

Jon O'Neill.



FULL TIME TRADE UNION DISABILITY OFFICERS - ARE THEY NEEDED?

Few trade unions have full-time officers working solely on disability equality issues. Even fewer have such officers who are themselves Disabled people. MSF - the Manufacturing, Science and Finance union, with around 400,000 members in total - is one of those few. In this article Ken Orme considers why his job is so necessary. Six years ago the National Executive Council (NEC) of MSF formally agreed to setting up a Disability and Employment Rights National Advisory Committee (DERNAC). Late in 1995 - influenced in no small way by the TUDA meeting and AGM in November 1995 - the union decided that a full-time resource would be needed if it was to be really serious about disability equality issues. I was appointed to my post of Disability Officer in February 1996. So what does this role involve?

It was never the intention that the post would be one where paper was pushed around, benefits advice given and sloganising and making noises in the right quarters. Apart from that, I more or less started day one with a blank sheet of paper. The first task, after setting up the office, was to let as many members of MSF as possible know that they now had a Disability Officer and how they could easily contact me.

DERNAC already knew it existed. It comprised lay representatives from each of the fourteen Regions of the union (including Ireland), plus co-options. There was also a mailing list of known Disabled members - and very little else. Mailings were sent to Groups, Branches and Regional Councils and



MSF is the union for skilled and professional people. Our 500,000 members represent the key to Britain's future, and are found in every facet of the economy, from aerospace and pharmaceuticals to the health service and voluntary sector.

MSF has led the way in defending the rights of its members and in protecting and enhancing the status and security of their jobs.

For more information contact:

MSF East Midlands Region
1 Pelham Court
Pelham Road
NOTTINGHAM
NG5 1AP

Tel: 0115 960 9100

many internal union publications carried announcements and/or articles. Press releases were also sent to media contacts. This was a comprehensive, but time-consuming exercise, and it proved to be vital. Overnight there was a massive increase in the Disabled members mailing list, and responses from non-MSF sources added important contacts to my database.

A 24 hour Disability Helpline for members was set up;

Disability Bulletins began to be produced once a month, with an MSF Disability Update Newsletter supplementing these three or four times a year. During

this period the second MSF Disabled Members Conference took place, with speakers from the Employers Forum on Disability, the TUC and the Labour Shadow Cabinet being invited.

Code of Practice

With the publication of the first two Codes of Practice to the Disability Act (DDA), further interest in disability equality issues was stimulated within the union as a whole.

MSF'S FULL TIME DISABILITY OFFICER CONSIDERS HIS ROLE.

One of my major tasks, that of raising awareness, has inevitably moved up a gear with all this activity taking place. Contacts with many union members, Disabled and non-Disabled, and with other trade unions have continued to increase. These initial activities have now gained their own momentum. In future I will be spending more time advising members on a whole range of disability matters and attending MSF meetings at all levels.

There will also be work outside the union, using the DDA - with all its faults - as an opportunity to increase support for full anti discrimination legislation. I am not complacent - there's still much to be done!

A colleague at TUDA's 1995 conference stated forcibly that all major trade unions should have full-time Disability Equality Officers - my experience in this post has proved to me how right he was.

Ken Orme MSF.



Actually, I'm an
acupuncturist



YOU MUST TAKE ANY
JOB FOR WHICH YOU ARE
SUITABLE

Extracts from The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists by Robert Tressell (Number 62 in the Waterstone's 100 best books of the 20th Century)

PART IV The causes of poverty - The Great Money Trick

Owen began,

In some of my previous lectures I have endeavoured to convince you that money is in itself of no value and of no real use whatever. In this I am afraid I have been rather unsuccessful.

Not a bit of it. We all agree with you

Hear hear. If a bloke was to come in here now and offer me a quid - I'd refuse it!

Well, whether you agree or not, the fact remains. A man might possess so much money that in England, he would be comparatively rich and yet if he were in some other country, where the cost of living is high, he would find himself in a condition of poverty. Or, one might conceivably be in a place where the necessities of life could no be bought for money at all. Therefore, it is more conducive to say that to be rich consists not necessarily in having money, but in being able to enjoy and abundance of the things that are made by work; and that poverty merely consists of not merely being without money, but in being short of the necessities and comforts of life.

If all the money were shared out equal today according to Owen's ideas - in six months' time we would all be back again in the same situation as we are now and what are you going to do then? Share again, of course.

This answer came derisively from several places at the same time, and then they all began speaking at once, vying with each other in ridiculing the foolishness of 'them there Socialists', whom they called 'The Sharers Out'.

I never said anything about 'sharing out all the money', said Owen during a lull in the storm, and I don't know any Socialist who advocates anything of the kind.

It's a well known fact,

said several of them

Come to think of it, I've got a little cutting here that I was going to read out to you.

PROVE YOUR PRINCIPLES: OR LOOK AT BOTH SIDES

I wish I could open your eyes to the true misery of our condition: injustice, tyranny and oppression! said a discontented hack to a weary-looking cob as t they stood side by side in unhired cabs. I'd rather have them opened to something pleasant, thank you, replied the cob.

I am sorry for you. If you could enter into noble aspirations - the hack began. Talk plain. What would you have? said the cob interrupting him. What would I have? Why, equality, and share and share alike all over the world, said the hack.

You mean that? said the cob.

Of course I do. What right have those sleek, pampered hunters and racers to their warm stables and high feed, their grooms and jockey? it is really heart-sickening to think of it, replied the hack. I don't know but you may be right, said the cob, and to show I'm in earnest, as no doubt you are, let me have half the good beans you have in your bag, and you shall have half the musty oats and chaff I have in mine. There's nothing like proving one's principles

Original Parables. By Mrs Prosser

There you are, said several voices

What does that mean. Why don't you go and share your wages with the chaps that are out of work?

What does it mean? replied Owen contemptuously. It means that if the Editor put that in his paper, as an argument against Socialism, either he is of feeble intellect himself or else he thinks that the majority of his readers are. That isn't an argument against Socialism - it's an argument against the hypocrites who pretend to be Christians - the people who profess 'Love thy neighbours as themselves' - who pretend to believe in Universal Brotherhood, and that they do not love the world or the things of the world and say that they are merely 'Pilgrims on their way to a better land'. As for why I don't do it - why should I? I don't

pretend to be a Christian. But you're all 'Christians' - why don't you do it?

In this matter the difference between so-called 'Christians' and Socialists is this: Christ taught the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Men. Those who today pretend to be Christ's followers hypocritically profess to carry out those teachings now. But they don't. They have arranged 'The Battle of Life' system instead.

The Socialist - very much against his will - finds himself in the midst of this horrible battle, and he appeals to the other combatants to cease from fighting and to establish a system of Brotherly Love and Mutual Helpfulness, but he does not hypocritically pretend to practise brotherly love towards those who will not agree to his appeal, and who compel him to fight with them for his very life. He knows that in this battle he must either fight or go under. Therefore, in self defence, he fights; but all the time he continues his appeal for the cessation of the slaughter. He pleads for the changing system. He advocates Cooperation instead of Competition: but how can he co-operate with people who insist on competing with him? No individual can practise cooperation by himself! Socialism can only be practised by the Community - that is the meaning of the word. At present, the other members of the community - the 'Christians' - deride and oppose Socialist's appeal.

No Socialist suggests 'Sharing Out' money or anything else in the manner you say. This stock 'argument' of yours is really an argument against the present system, inasmuch as it proves that money is in itself of no use whatsoever. supposing all the money was shared out equally; and suppose there were enough of it for everyone to have ten thousand pounds; and suppose they then all thought they were rich and none of them would work. What would they live on? Their money? could the eat it or drink it or wear it? It only proves that while the present money system remains it will be impossible to do away with poverty, for heaps in some places mean little or nothing in other places. Therefore while the money system lasts we are bound to have poverty and all the evils it brings in its train. ★

PROJECT AEROSPACE SACKINGS

STRIKE FUND APPEAL

In December 1996, two weeks before Christmas, 41 highly skilled Sheet Metal Workers, members of the manufacturing union, MSF, were locked out and then dismissed by their employer, Project Aerospace Limited in Coventry, in a dispute over their annual pay and conditions claim and dangerous working conditions.

The Company employs 120 people overall, designing and making mainly specialised sheet metal panels and body shells principally for the motor care industry, largely prototype work for a number of manufacturers.

Our members' claim was for basic, decent conditions of employment, including the establishment of a sick pay scheme at the company and a request for the setting up of a company pension plan, together with a request for a reasonable increase in wages.

They were also extremely concerned about various dangerous working conditions including a badly damaged/broken asbestos roof in the factory, water cascading onto electrical machinery, diesel fork lift trucks being used in confined areas, and safety guards missing from presses.

The company's response to all these issues was an offer to increase wages by 3% and an outright flat refusal to discuss anything else. The company directors and management at Project Aerospace have pension schemes and are, we understand, entitled to sick pay. Our members

were only asking for access to the same basic rights.

Since November 1996, the Sheet Metal Workers had been engaged in taking limited industrial action against the company, namely an overtime ban and a one-day per week stoppage of work. This action only took place after exhausting all domestic procedures with the company and carrying out the normal requirements of an industrial action ballot.

The dismissals took place on the very morning of the day discussions were scheduled to take place between MSF officials and the company. Some 2½ hours before the meeting was due to start, our members were locked out and then dismissed. Management's actions in sacking our members just before Christmas was a calculated action to cause the maximum amount of distress and hardship to our members and their families.

Since the dismissals the Company, over the last few weeks, have flatly refused approaches from ACAS who attempted to arrange discussions and negotiations with a view to reinstating the sacked workers and resolving the issues of sick pay, pensions and safe working conditions.

MSF have fully backed their sacked members and are pursuing their reinstatement and dispute with the utmost vigour and urgency. This dispute, over decent basic conditions of employment, is not going to go away.

The sheet metal workers and their union, MSF, are now engaged in a campaign calling for solidarity and support from other unions and the wider Labour Movement.

What isn't clear is how Project Aerospace think they can run the Company without their skilled workforce! It appears Project Aerospace may now be in some economic difficulties as they struggle to carry out orders and deliver work to various large car companies. We are given to understand that certain of these contracts may be at risk or already lost. Project Aerospace have found extreme difficulties in trying to sub-contract this work out to other companies, whose own unions and workforces know of the dismissal and dispute. The vast majority of these other companies, when lobbied by their own workforces asking for sympathy for the sacked sheet metal workers, have refused to take on the work.

Although apparently in trouble Project Aerospace management remain intransigent and continue to refuse to re-open talks.

For us it is clear that the dispute will be a long one, although we are confident that we will win it if we can continue to gain support from other trade unionists. We will not allow the Company to get away with sacking our members for simply asking for basic decent conditions of employment, such as sick pay, access to pensions and safe working conditions free from asbestos.

We are asking for donations to our strike fund from other trade unionists. The address to send donations is:

"Project Aerospace Dispute Fund"

c/o Colin Lindsey
Coventry Trades Council
Unit 15, The Arches Industrial Estate
Spon End, Coventry CV1 3JQ.