

NOTTINGHAM AGITATOR

PAPER OF
NOTTINGHAM
ANARCHIST
SOCIALIST
GROUP



Poll Tax

Community Resistance

Benefit Changes

Cuts For The Poor

New Immigration
Controls

Fighting Racism
And Nationalism

The Alton Bill
And Beyond

Women Defy The Law

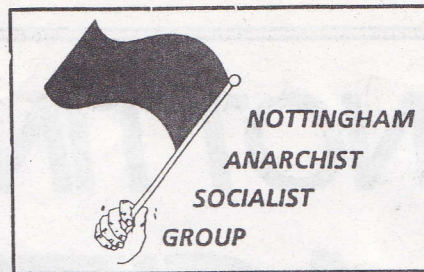
and more

inside...

THE RICH ARE ON THE ATTACK

THE POOR ARE FIGHTING BACK!

EDITORIAL



Hello and welcome

...to this, the second issue of the Nottingham Agitator, the paper of the Nottingham Anarchist Socialist Group (NASG). We are a locally based group which aims to campaign around issues which affect the people of Nottingham and the surrounding areas.

This month (April) sees the introduction by the Government of several nasty pieces of legislation, which further attack the poorer sections of the community, much to the benefit of the wealthy. As we all saw, the budget was a typical example of this, with generous handouts to those in the higher tax brackets, the people least in need of financial help.

MORE ATTACKS

The Social Security Act, which came into effect on April 11th replaces the present supplementary benefit and single payments system. The latter is replaced by a "social fund", to provide loans to those with emergency needs. But these loans will only be granted at the discretion of the adjudicating officer, and the idea that these loans must be repaid is in itself absurd. Surely to qualify for such a loan indicates that repayment would be next to impossible.

The Government claims that the introduction of income support will increase people's benefits, and on paper it may. But, coupled with the new housing benefit changes, one of the

aims of which is to force tenants to pay 20% of their rates only 1% of claimants will actually get a rise in benefit. What the Government gives with one hand it takes away with the other.

RACIST

In this issue we have an article on the immigration bill (to be introduced this summer) which is a blatantly racist attack on Commonwealth and black British citizens. It virtually abolishes their "right of appeal" against exclusion or deportation, as well as, "the right to family unity". It gives the Home Office unlimited powers, and introduces vast fees for its "services". It makes "overstaying" a "continuing criminal offence" to increase the possibility of deportations. This bill is designed to assist rich white people in Britain and to exclude or expel black and poor people.

CAN'T PAY, WONT PAY

The Poll Tax due to be introduced in Scotland in 1989 and in England and Wales in 1990, clearly reflects the continuing aims of the Government to financially "cushion the rich" whilst attacking the poor. The policy of taxing people instead of property will result in large savings for those who own several properties, while the rates bill for many people will dramatically increase, and in some cases may be double or treble.

As the Poll Tax is being

introduced a year earlier in Scotland, it is important that we learn from the ways that communities are fighting its implementation. The Labour Party's opposition to real action such as 'Can't pay, won't pay' not only reflects its downward slide into the watery versions of Toryism, but is in fact attacking the only way of defeating the new Tax.

Seen together, all these pieces of legislation are an obvious attack on the poorer, working class sections of the community. The failure of the Government to meet even the moderate demands of the Health workers for a £2 Billion injection into the NHS, and the cut in funds for the DHSS further demonstrates these attacks.

ORGANISE

It is too late now to fight the Government on the Social Security Act, which was passed by Parliament in 1986. But we have 2 years warning of the intentions of the Poll Tax, and we must organise in our communities, at our workplaces, and with other working class people to fight this attack on us. Only by standing together and taking the struggle into our own hands, and not relying on leadership from the parties of left and the Labour Party, can we defeat these attacks and gain some real control over our own lives.

If you wish to find out more about Nottingham Anarchist Socialist Group, or if you wish to raise any points about articles in this paper we can be contacted at -

Nottingham ASG, Box 1, Hiziki, 15 Goosegate, Nottingham.

British Coal shuts Mansfield pit

Promises made by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) that they would protect jobs and pits in the Nottinghamshire coalfield by "moderate negotiation" with British Coal once again lie in tatters.

'DUMBSTRUCK' UDM

The UDM sat dumbstruck as British Coal announced in early March the closure of Mansfield colliery which employed 950. The pit was to be shut within two weeks. The pit, in the



UDM miners are a target for British Coal too

"heartland" of UDM territory was not considered by UDM officials to be at risk in British Coal's closure programme.

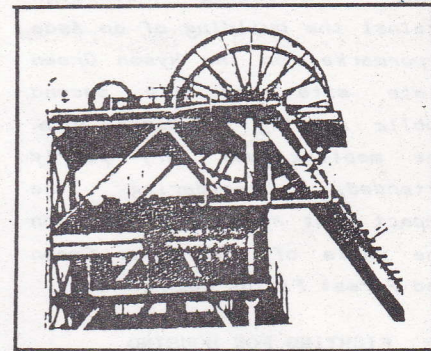
British Coal claimed that remaining reserves at the pit were too difficult to get at, and that mining subsidence damage claims in and around Mansfield cost them too much.

CLOSURE TIMETABLE TOO 'HASTY'

The UDM's David Prendergast (who admitted one week later that he was STILL dumbstruck) said that British Coal's two week timetable was "hasty" and that he would "investigate if the pit had a future".

A few days after the closure announcement, the 900 or so UDM members at the pit voted to accept the closure without a fight. Many took redundancies, others were "redeployed" at other pits.

The closure of another UDM controlled pit in Nottinghamshire clearly shows that the UDM's "special relationship" with British Coal is over. The UDM have, as far



as British Coal are concerned, served their purpose - to help undermine the strike, to divide the pits, and to weaken the power of the miners. But now that's been done, British Coal have no reason to "look after" the UDM. UDM leaders will NEVER accept that their cosy little friendship with British Coal is dead. They will continue to be "surprised" and "dumbstruck" when British Coal decides to decimate another community by shutting down its pit.

ROMANCE IS OVER

Some UDM miners though, as they stand in the dole queue, might just realise that the whirlwind romance with British Coal is over.

Council hires debt thugs

Private firms of bailiffs will be sent to the homes of council house tenants who fall behind with their rents, the City's Housing Department has announced. The bailiffs will be empowered to seize property "to help pay off any outstanding debt".

The private debt collection agencies employed by the council will work on a "commission basis". That means that the more front doors that they break down, the more belongings that they grab, the

more money that they will get paid.

The use of bailiffs is a new move by the Council who in the past have relied on other methods including court action.

Private debt collectors have an appalling reputation for intimidation, criminal damage, "excessive force", illegal entry and assault on people that they are sent to chase up. The fact that these new firms will work on commission only serves as an incentive to get "results" at any cost.

Housing Committee Chair, Rex Rolling, said of their new "get tough" policy: "...its better that a family loose their hi-fi and video than their home..!!"

On the council's own figures, one in every four council tenants are now falling behind with their rent. That means a quarter of them now face the added worry of debt collecting thugs knocking on the front door.

Let's hope the new teams of bailiffs get the reception that they deserve.

ASDA Campaign off on wrong track

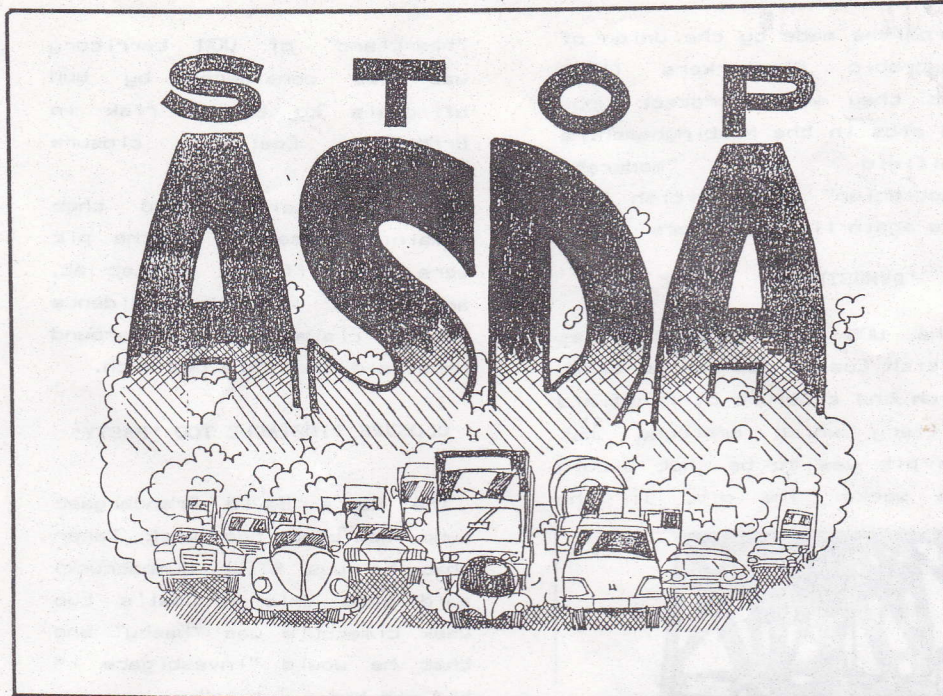
The continuing campaign against the building of an Asda hypermarket on the Hyson Green flats site had its second public meeting on March 30th. The meeting was very poorly attended, considering the impact that Asda will have on the whole of the Hyson Green and Forest Fields communities.

FIGHTING FOR HOUSING

When the plan to demolish the infamous Hyson Green flats was announced, residents of the area were promised badly needed housing. Yet at the meeting the idea of fighting FOR housing instead of AGAINST Asda wasn't even mentioned. With such a basic need as housing, there is no reason why we have to fight this on the defensive. The speaker at the meeting admitted that we stand little chance of swaying the council, and even less of swaying Asda. So why then is the 'Stop Asda' campaign concentrating on letter writing to the planning department of the council?

COUNCIL CORRUPTION

The objections to Asda that were raised at the meeting mainly centred around the huge traffic problems that will be



caused by the estimated 10,000 visitors a week. This is of course important. But instead of saying that Asda could have done it better, we should be organising to stop the building of Asda and demanding better housing and play areas.

TRAFFIC AND PLAY AREAS

One point raised at the meeting was that when the decision was made by the council to sell the land, it was not put out to tender, as

is the legal requirement, but was sold straight to Asda. This is at present being taken up with the Department of Public Prosecutions. But we must not rely upon beating big business through the courts. We must fight along side this with leaflets, boycotts, pickets of Asda in West Bridgford, flyposting, blockading, harrasing construction traffic and generally throwing a spanner in the works. For news of the campaign please contact Margaret Munn on 785964 or Isann Ghazni on 482270

Labour attacks Poll Tax resistance

Leading Labour councillors in Nottingham are trying to stamp out effective action against the new Poll Tax - even before it starts.

Local Labour leader Betty Higgins and her colleagues have denounced those calling for a campaign of resistance to the Poll Tax and have claimed that mass refusal to pay the new tax

in Nottingham, combined with action by local council workers, would be "self defeating".

Labour bosses have also turned on one of their fellow Labour councillors - Issan Ul-Haque Ghazmi from Radford - who says that he supported a "won't pay" campaign.

Their attitude is sickeningly

predictable. But it proves once again that the only people of taking effective action against things like the Poll Tax are working class people outside of the control of Higgins, her cronies and her party.

(for the full story on the Poll Tax and resistance to it see page 7)

POWER TO THE PEOPLE? FAT CHANCE!!

East Midlands Electricity Board has apparently welcomed the government's proposals for the privatisation of the Electricity Supply Industry by 1991 - at least its chairman has! Under privatisation EMEB will become one of 12 independent distribution companies, and that's no doubt good news for him. He'd also have us believe that it's good news for electricity users. Certainly, they'll be the ones paying for it, as prices in the East Midlands have now been increased by 5% to cover the costs. And that's good news for the government, who stand to make between £15,000m and £18,000m on their biggest privatisation!

SPLIT UP

The new structure will mean that that Central Electricity Generating Board will be split into 2 generating companies and the ownership of the National Grid will be transferred to the distribution companies. New small generating companies are expected to emerge and the Local Boards will also be able to generate their own power.

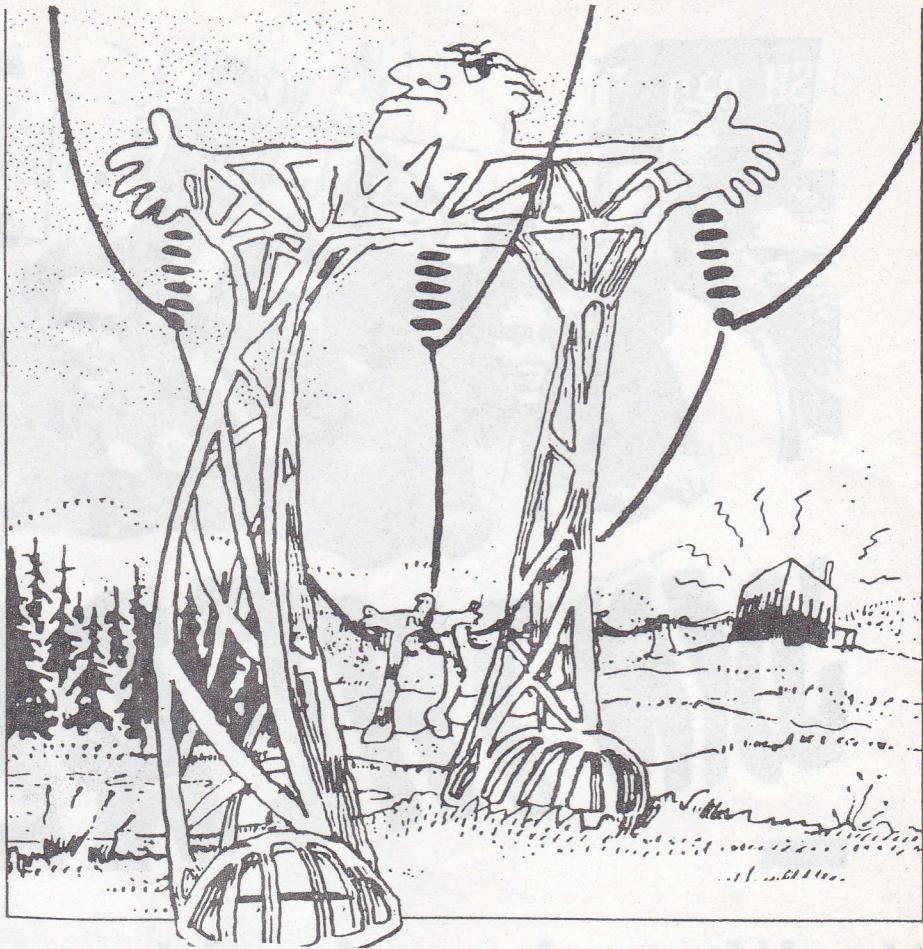
This was intended to introduce competition into electricity generation which will supposedly mean cheaper prices for the customer. Yet the Boards will be obliged to buy a proportion of nuclear generated power even though it is anything but cheap!

However, there will be no obligation, as there is now, to buy from British Coal. This is likely to lead to yet more pit closures as generating companies look elsewhere for cheaper coal.

If electricity can be produced more cheaply are we really expected to believe that this will mean cheaper electricity for the customer? More likely it will simply mean more profits for the capitalists. After all, the distribution companies will remain "national monopolies". If anyone is going to be better off it will be, as usual, the 'well-off'.

COMPETITION

The whole deal is based on the idea that introducing competition into the industry will be in the customer's interests. Strange then that legislation



will be required to ensure that those interests are served. Customers will supposedly be given "new rights, not just safeguards" - thanks a lot - the "right" to financial compensation if standards of service aren't met is just what we need! The fact is that competition never has, and never will, guarantee customers' interests; only co-operation can do that.

BIG DEAL

And what about those who work in the industry? They will be "offered" a direct stake in their future", in other words, they'll get cheaper shares. Big deal, but can they be sure they'll keep their jobs? Shadow energy secretary John Prescott predicts that privatisation will lead to up to 75,000 job losses.

Reducing "controllable costs" has already led to a policy of non-replacement of staff in E.M.E.B. and even if there are no redundancies, which I doubt, there will certainly be fewer jobs. That is until E.M.E.B. opens up its power stations which it will now be allowed to do. But new power stations in private hands is a worrying prospect, especially as the government white paper makes no mention of environmental controls.

In spite of all this we are being told that privatisation is

going to benefit us and that the industry will be more accountable to its customers. Are they serious? Selling shares to those who can pay for them will not achieve this. Obviously shareholders will be more eager that the company makes a profit than that it serves the customer.

Yet somehow selling off the industry is supposed to be "giving power to the people". Funny, because these are exactly the same claims that were made for nationalised industry. The truth is that whether it's government owned or privately owned, it isn't owned by the people, and it won't be until we take it for ourselves.

Only when industry is owned and controlled by those who work in it and those who use it - not for profit, but for mutual aid - will power truly be in the hands of the people.

REMINDER -
UNPAID BILL

£ 21.28

The above bill does not appear to have been paid. It
away.
Please ignore this reminder if you have paid your!
If you can't pay the bill in full please let us know at on
the top of this reminder.
You can get a leaflet from any Board Shop or Office
Practice for paying bills. This explains how you may
customer and can't pay your bill.



JOIN THE RESISTANCE

Healthworkers should dump Union bosses

Rivalry and hostility between two sets of union bosses is damaging strike and protest action by health workers in Nottingham. It's been revealed that NUPE leaders refused to spread word to their members about a day of action against cuts in the Health Service, simply "because Cohse had called it". Hundreds of NUPE workers didn't even know that a march in Nottingham on the eve of the recent budget was taking place.

UNION RIVALRY

In an earlier health workers march in the city Cohse and NUPE leaders put out publicity calling people to assemble at different times. As a result some groups of workers arrived after the march had left.

Of course, angry marches through Nottingham - important though they are - aren't going to stop health cuts. But if union leaders set out to mess up protest marches, what can workers expect from them when more militant action (like an all-out strike) is called?

Union leaders always claim to back our fights. The truth is that the Union leaders' number one priority is to protect their own cosy positions - and they won't hesitate to sabotage effective workers action if they fear it is getting somewhere.

A NUPE district nurse, at a recent public meeting in Nottingham said healthworkers were "dragging their union leaders along with them. It's the ordinary members who are

calling for the action against the crisis in the Health Service."

UNION LEADERS: A DEAD WEIGHT

That's dead right. It is rank and file health workers who are taking the initiative. But they could bypass their leaders' petty jealousies and power games all together. A new wave of action to defend the Health Service should erupt later this year. Workers could form their own strike action committees in every hospital now - bringing together Cohse and NUPE (and any rebel RCN) workers to run the struggle themselves, without the deadening weight of bureaucrats who want the fight called off anyway.

These committees could then appeal directly to other workers to take solidarity action - following the example of Notts fire fighters who joined the last Cohse action.

ORGANISE NOW

to smash the Poll Tax

Anger and resentment over the Tories plans to introduce a new Poll Tax to replace the domestic rates system is growing fast. In Scotland, active resistance to the changes is well underway. Such anger is more than well justified. The Poll Tax - or Community Charge - will mean that the poor will have to pay more and that the rich will have to pay less. It will mean fewer council services and more privatisation. It will mean even more power in the hands of central Government, and secret files being kept on every citizen. Below we look at what the Poll Tax will mean in practice and at the kind of campaign that we can build to smash the Poll Tax outright.

The new Poll Tax starts to come into effect in England in 1990. The tax is not based on the value of your property, or on your ability to pay. The new Poll Tax is a flat rate this means that a bank manager living in a five bed roomed detached house in Wollaton will pay the same Poll Tax as a Raleigh factory worker living in a tiny flat in Radford. Shopworkers, student nurses, those on job training schemes will pay the same amount as company directors, accountants and businessmen living in the same town. That means that while the rich enjoy big cuts in their rates bill, our rates bills will soar (some doubling or trebling). To give one example on current figures a couple living in a four bedroom house in Lucknow Drive Mapperley would be £717 better

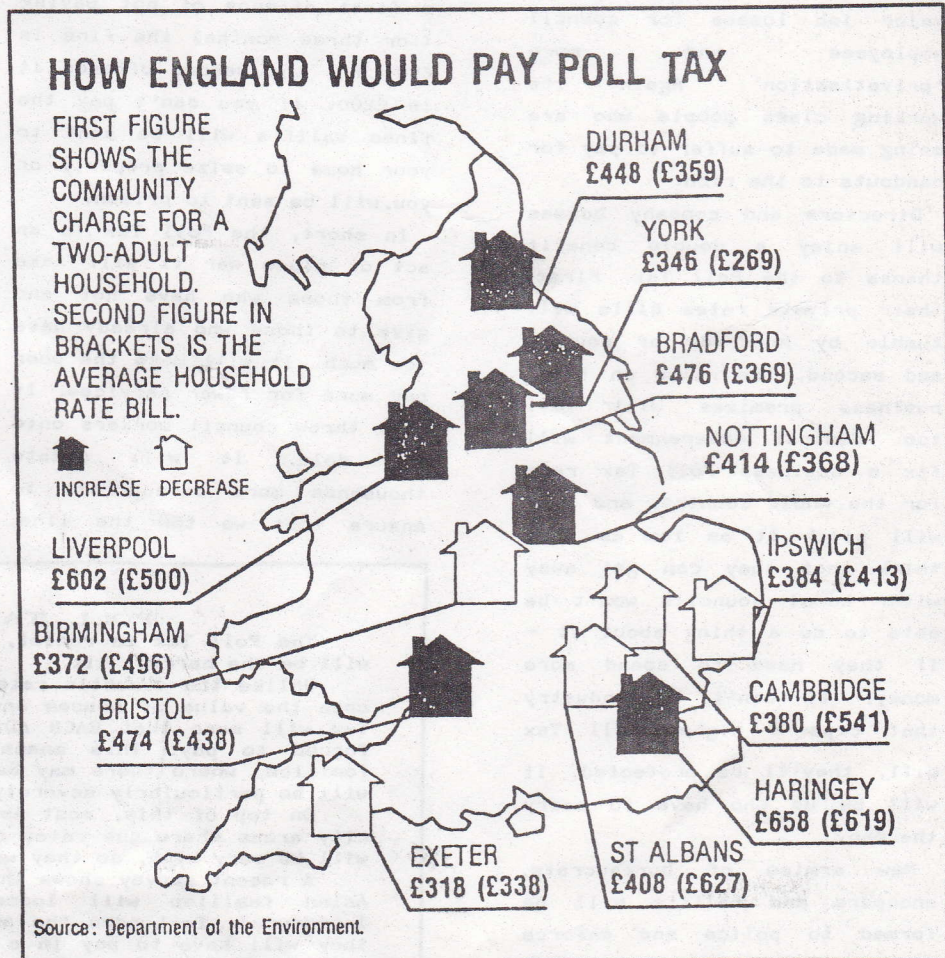
off, while a couple with an 18 year old son or daughter living in Joyce Avenue Sherwood would be £283.30 a year worse off.

It all means that in the leafy suburbs of Nottinghamshire they will be laughing all the way to the bank as they enjoy cash handouts of hundreds of pounds a year. While in Hyson Green, Radford, Lenton and many other city areas where poor and working class people live, hefty Poll Tax bills will bring extra burdens to already struggling families, and the bailiffs will be knocking at the front doors of non-payers.

But its not just in the pocket

that we will be hit by the Poll Tax. We'll end up losing loads of local council services too.

With the rich paying loads less to the council than before, the burden for paying for local services falls even more onto the poor. Working class people struggling to pay the Poll Tax will press the council to lower the tax level by cutting costs - that means cutting back on services. The people who can least afford to pay for libraries, home helps, council housing programmes, dial a rides, cheap bus passes, leisure services, or any of the dozens of other council services will lose out both





ways. Either they end up paying more than they can afford for services that they really need, or they lose those services altogether. It is a vicious additional poverty trap - and that's exactly how the Government wants it to be.

All these cut backs in local services will, of course, mean major job losses for council employees and more 'privatisation'. Again its working class people who are being made to suffer to pay for handouts to the rich.

Directors and company bosses will enjoy a double benefit thanks to the Poll Tax. First, their private rates bills will tumble by hundreds of pounds, and second, the rates on their business premises will fall too. Central Government will fix a business Poll Tax rate for the whole country, and they will pitch it as low as they think that they can get away with. Local councils won't be able to do a thing about it - if they need to spend more money, it won't be industry that cops a higher Poll Tax bill, they'll be protected. It will be us who have to carry the can.

New armies of bureaucrats, snoopers and bailiffs will be formed to police and enforce the Poll Tax. First,

Registration Officers will knock on your door and demand information on who is living there. Later snoopers will be employed by councils to make sure that everyone who is supposed to be paying up is doing so. In law, the Government can get your personal details from any existing files on you except police and social work files - without your knowledge or consent. They've already announced that they want all 600,000 full time students to carry a Poll Tax ID card to be shown on demand to Poll Tax registration officers a national compulsory identity card (to prove that you're paying the Poll Tax) can't be far behind. Without the card you won't be able to get help from social services, use a library etc.

ARMIES OF BUREACRATS

But there's worse news : if you can't pay the massive new bills, you will be fined. For a first offence of not paying (for three months) the fine is £50; for the second offence it is £200. If you can't pay the fines bailiffs will be sent to your home to seize property or you will be sent to prison.

In short, the Poll Tax is an act of class war it will take from those who have not and give to those who already have too much. It will make the poor pay more for fewer services. It will throw council workers onto the dole. It will create thousands more bureaucrats to ensure that we tow the line,

and threaten us with fines and jail if we don't.

The Poll Tax must be stopped. It must be smashed outright. And it can be, if we organize together to fight it in the right way. Some people in Scotland are already taking effective community action and we can learn lessons from them. First, let's look at how not to fight the Poll Tax - and that means at looking at what the Labour Party are saying.

KINNOCK - WHAT PLANET IS HE ON?

The Labour Party - though they say that they oppose the Poll Tax - have already shown exactly where they stand. Labour controlled regional councils in Scotland (such as Lothian and Strathclyde) have already agreed to implement the tax. They've already said that they will compile registers, cut jobs, axe services, employ snoopers and fine and imprison people. These people are our enemies. They have already admitted defeat - and they want us to do the same. Kinnock is already denouncing those calling on people to refuse to pay the Poll Tax. He wants us to sign petitions appealing to 'Thatcher's better nature' to try and persuade her to drop the Poll Tax. He wants us all to fill in our Poll Tax registration forms like good citizens, while he puts 'moral pressure' on the conscience of the cabinet. What planet is he living on? There is a growing tide of anger about the Poll

POLL TAX IS RACIST

The Poll Tax is racist, and Asian people living in cities will be the hardest hit.

Unlike the domestic rates system, where payments are based upon the value of houses and the local council area, the Poll Tax will mean that EACH ADULT living in a household will be forced to pay. This means that traditional Asian extended families, where there may be four or more adults in one house, will be particularly severely affected.

On top of this, most Asian and black people live in inner city areas where the rates are relatively low but the Poll Tax will be very high, so they will be doubly hit.

A recent survey shows that more than two-thirds of black or Asian families will lose money when the Poll Tax is introduced. In London the average increase in the amount that they will have to pay in a year is between £565 and £760. In Nottingham things are likely to be just as bad.

Tax which is frightening the Labour Party - because it can't control it or defuse it. The Tories won't be persuaded to end the Poll Tax because we ask them nicely. The Government will only withdraw the Poll Tax if we get together to make it unworkable. If we make it impossible for them to implement it.

MAKE IT UNWORKABLE

Already in Scotland 'registration' for the Poll Tax is underway - and is being met, in many areas by fierce opposition. Officials are having doors slammed in their faces as they try to compile lists of who lives where. Registration forms are being thrown into dustbins, set back blank, or full of wrong information. Malcolm Rifkind, the Scottish secretary, is already very worried about the level of opposition that exists. He's threatening to prosecute people who obstruct Poll Tax officials. But he's not just up against a few isolated individuals, he's up against whole communities of working class people who are taking collective action together. If he tries to pick on a few families of Poll Tax resisters to make an example of, he will

POLL TAX FACTS

- * Everyone over 18 must pay the Poll Tax except prisoners, residents of old peoples homes, severely handicapped people and long term hospital patients.
- * There are three types of Poll Tax. THE PERSONAL POLL TAX - the normal one set by local councils; THE STANDARD POLL TAX - for those rich scum with second homes; and THE COLLECTIVE POLL TAX - for those living in homeless hostels, etc.
- * The Poll Tax starts to come into effect in England on April 1st 1990 and will be fully in force by April 1994.
- * The AVERAGE rates bill PER HOUSEHOLD in Nottingham is now £368 per year. If Poll Tax was introduced in Nottingham now it would be around £207 PER PERSON. To work out, roughly, what your household's Poll Tax bill would be, add up £207 for each adult over 18 living in your house or flat. A couple will pay £414. A couple with two daughters over 18 will pay £828. If a grandparent lives in with them, their Poll Tax bill would be £1035.
- * People receiving Income Support (which has just replaced Supplementary Benefit) and/or Housing Benefit will get 80% of their Poll Tax paid for them, leaving them to find the remaining 20% out of their GIRO. The rebate will be 80% of the NATIONAL average Poll Tax, so if you live in an area with a higher than average level, tough! You'll have to find the extra cash yourself.
- * Unpaid Poll Tax can be deducted AT SOURCE from your wages, and soon from your Income Support too.

find himself up against whole estates who are sticking together in solidarity with one another. In areas of Edinburgh and Glasgow, groups of residents have come together to plan the next stage of their campaign of resistance - and in Leith, Newington, Gorgie, Wester Hailes they're already saying they'll refuse to pay. In a recent MORI opinion poll 42% of Scots said they'd support a campaign to withhold payment of

the Poll Tax - and that's bound to increase as next year's April deadline approaches.

We need to learn from the Scottish experiences so far and start work now to build campaigns in our own areas to smash the Poll Tax. Here are some ideas as to what we can do.

POLL TAX COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP

We can build these in our streets and estates. The most effective action we can take



The Poll Tax is a massive attack on the poor in Nottingham, and everywhere else: but it can be defeated, if we get together and take action.

against the Poll tax is the action we take together. A few people could get together to leaflet their area with news of the Poll Tax, then, after judging the level of opposition by door to door canvassing, call a public meeting in a local community centre to discuss building a coordinated "refusal to pay" campaign. Such community groups are bound to be sparked off more easily in some areas than others. But if the first few groups go out to seek support in neighbouring streets, they could help inspire the spread of such groups throughout whole areas, as people see that others are prepared to resist.

PREPARE TO FIGHT REGISTRATION

It probably won't be until spring of next year that Poll Tax Registration Officers begin knocking on doors in Nottingham. But we need to start planning our reception

Friday April 1 1988

Poll-tax ID card for students 'just first step'

David Gow

GOVERNMENT plans to impose poll-tax identity cards on students provoked warnings of a threat to civil liberties and of a breakdown in relations between college authorities and students.

The plans were revealed in a letter from Mr Michael Howard, local government minister, to Dr John Cunningham, secretary of the environmentalists' group.

end in identity cards being issued in Britain. It seems that students are to be the first among many.

Ms Vicky Phillips, National Union of Students president, said: "These new measures clearly show how far this Government is prepared to go down the road of authoritarianism in the face of overwhelming public opposition."

The committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Government

committees now. We must use every tactic possible to harrass, delay, obstruct and confuse the collection of this information on us. The simplest tactic is to refuse to give any information. Whatever we do, we

Women and the Poll Tax

There are various ways in which the Poll Tax will hit women particularly severely.

As the Tax is levied equally on everyone over 18, irrespective of their income or situation, it works very unfairly against the low paid or those unable to work - often women.

Much work that women do, for example housework or as carers looking after relatives, means that they receive no income of their own but they are equally liable to pay as men.

Although everyone will receive a separate bill, couples married or living together are jointly liable. This means that women must ask their husbands to pay their Poll Tax for them if they have no personal income. This makes women further dependent upon men and trapped financially in a relationship. Also, if a man leaves his wife but is still registered at her address, she becomes liable for his Poll Tax should he decide not to pay it. She becomes liable to imprisonment if she does not pay his tax, just as if she didn't pay her own. She could also have to find the money for any children over 18 living at home.

Registering for Poll Tax is also a great worry to many women who have left home out of fear of domestic violence. Women's refuges and housing associations will be forced to make public their lists of residents and so women's safety could be put at risk.

The Poll Tax means that women will become even more financially dependent upon men than they are at present, and become further exploited by doing unwaged work that traps them in the home.

must do it together, and not let them try to pick us off one by one. Important though this action is, it is only a delaying tactic. Even if you don't cooperate with Registration Officers, you will almost certainly still get a Poll Tax bill. Which is why we must plan the next stage...

REFUSE TO PAY THE POLL TAX

We can organise a blanket refusal to pay the Poll Tax. We can plan to resist the victimisation of individuals threatened with fines or prison. We can plan to repel the bailiffs if they come for our, or our neighbours' furniture. We must stand together and help one another. It's already happening in Scotland. We must organise to make it happen here.

BUILD SOLIDARITY WITH COUNCIL WORKERS

We can link our community struggle, with the fight against the Poll Tax inside the Council itself. While Union bureaucrats will readily

capitulate to the changes, many council workers in rents and rates offices may refuse to implement the Poll Tax - particularly if strong community resistance is growing. Many other council workers - in the Housing Department, Technical Services, Social Services - who will face renewed threats of job cuts and privatisation will be totally opposed to the Poll Tax. We can build a massive fight together on all fronts to wreck the Poll Tax once and for all.

We need to start planning action now so that we're ready for when "registration" begins. The first step is to discuss the Poll Tax with your friends, neighbours, in the dole office or with workmates, to spread the news about what the Poll Tax will mean for ordinary people.

We can defeat the Poll Tax. But it can only be beaten by militant, autonomous action by working class people. Let's say it loud and clear: "The Poll Tax? Can't Pay, Won't Pay!"

Interview with NOTTINGHAM VIRAJ MENDIS DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

Introduction to VMDC interview

As a result of Britain's highly restrictive immigration controls, a 'sanctuary' movement is developing here to protect people threatened with deportation. Many people have resorted to taking refuge in churches and temples to avoid deportation. Many have been successful, some not.

Sri Lankan born Viraj Mendis has not yet been successful in achieving a reversal of an order to deport him to his death in Sri Lanka. He is still in sanctuary in the church of the Ascension in Manchester. The priest of the church, Father John Methuen, has given him a great deal of support, and a Defence Campaign is also fighting for his protection. The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign (VMDC) is an attempt to build a wide sanctuary movement in Great Britain, and protect all those threatened with deportation. VMDC groups exist in many cities, including Nottingham.

Nottingham Anarchist-Socialist Group does not necessarily agree with the methods the VMDC suggest to fight immigration controls. However, we recognize the importance of the growing sanctuary movement. What follows is an interview with Nottingham VMDC. Read in their own words what the sanctuary movement is all about.



What is the background to Viraj's sanctuary?

Viraj has lived in Britain since 1973. After five years of fighting other people's Defence Campaigns, he received his own Deportation Order in 1984. The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign began working alongside other campaigns, and a whole range of legal procedures were followed through until he had no option left but to take Sanctuary in December 1986.



Why will Viraj be killed in Sri Lanka?

Since 1983, Amnesty International has recorded over 10,000 deaths in Sri Lanka by government forces. Right-wing groups like the J.U.P., who bombed the Sri Lankan parliament last August, kill an average of two government officials every day for being too 'soft' with the Tamils. As a Sinhala communist, a known opponent of the Jaywardene regime and life-long supporter of Tamil self-determination, Viraj faces instant death in Sri Lanka.



What is the Home Office view?

They still call Sri Lanka a 'democracy', although recently they described the situation as 'confused'. It didn't stop them deporting three Tamil refugees last February: continuing to protect Britain's economic and military interests in Sri Lanka. 30% of Sri Lanka's exports are tea, and 90% of packed tea passes through London. Britain also want to prevent Trincomalee harbour, a potential deep-water base, from falling under Tamil control.



The Home Office has another reason for deporting Viraj. What's that?

Under Home Office rules, Viraj has the right to stay because he has spent 15 years in Britain, but the Home Office say that his 'conduct' has to be considered. They refer to his campaign activities, which are perfectly legal. Obviously, the right to protest does not exist for a Black communist who is an activist in the anti-deportation movement.



What kind of support does the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign have?

VMDC supporters represent a wide cross-section of religious and political views: M.P.'s, Bishops, Trades Unions, anarchists, the Labour Party, Gay and Lesbian groups, the British Council of Churches, Peace groups, Amnesty, Sinn Fein, the RCG (Viraj's party) and about 15 VMDC support groups around the country. The local community in Manchester bring food, attend the Friday marches and provide round-the-clock security.

When did you set up Nottingham VMDC? How much support have you had and what activities have you organized?

We set up Nottingham VMDC last summer to re-establish anti-deportation work in Nottingham. People have supported VMDC by offering us printing and mailing facilities, publicising the campaign at meetings and through the media, and by collecting donations and names on petitions. Letters of support have been received from local priests and politicians, and at a VMDC Benefit and Public Meeting in February a new crop of VMDC activists emerged.



What is the role for such a group in Nottingham. Is it purely for publicity or can it do more?

Fifty people a week are being deported from Britain, and under the new Immigration Bill the right of appeal will virtually disappear. Sanctuary will become the only defence against instant deportation. As well as building support for VMDC, perhaps the most important part of our work is to lay the foundations for future sanctuary campaigns in Nottingham.



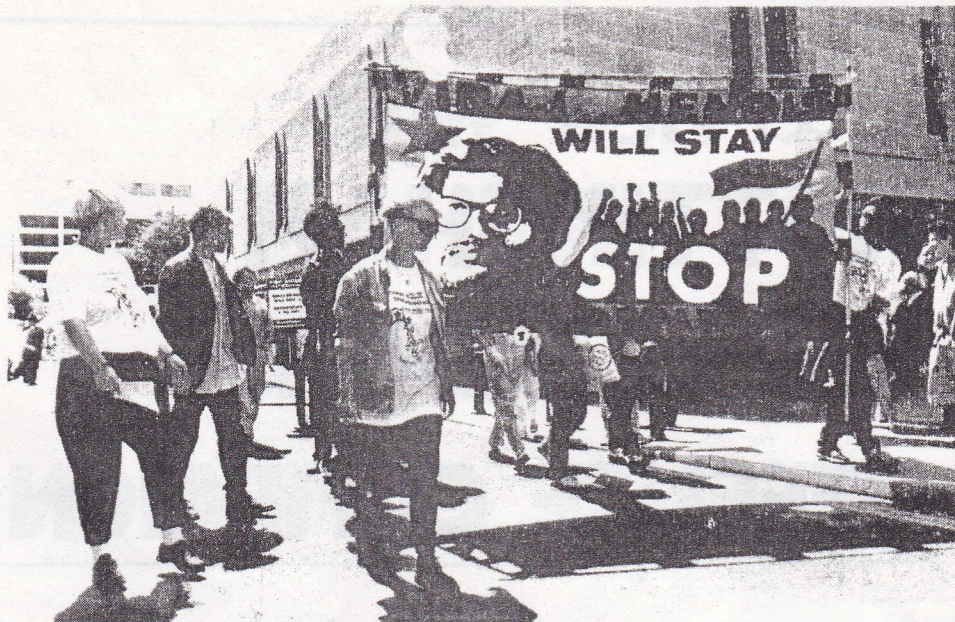
Have you linked up with other anti-deportation campaigns in the Midlands?

Yes, with Renukabina Lakhani's sanctuary campaign in Leicester and Ferrida Bibi's campaign in Derby. Some organizations in Nottingham are keeping us informed about local people with immigration problems, but unfortunately, there was a case recently that we didn't hear about until it was too late. A man had taken sanctuary in a Mosque, but local politicians advised him to go back to Pakistan and stand in a queue. It's unlikely that he'll ever be allowed back into Britain.



What work needs to be done to oppose and defeat the new Immigration Bill?

The new Bill will only be defeated by sanctuary campaigns. The Campaign against Racist Laws



(CARL) which organizes demonstrations and lobbies M.P.'s, does nothing to practically fight deportations, the Labour Party only want to overturn 'certain parts' of the new Bill, and organizations that fight deportation through the law will become redundant when there is no right of appeal. The new Bill is not only an attack on Defence Campaigns (because the law can no longer be used as a delaying tactic), but also an attack on VMDC, because Viraj will be classed as a criminal. If Father John is arrested from the Sanctuary, it will make an uneasy comparison with Desmond Tutu's arrest in South Africa.

Viraj can't stay in Sanctuary for ever. What do the next few months hold in store for him and

are the Home Office likely to back down?

The Parish Church Council has voted overwhelmingly "never to force Viraj to leave the Sanctuary against his will." Father John always stands firm and Viraj says he is inspired by Nelson Mandela "who has spent 24 years in much worse conditions than I have." The Home Office are planning to smash into the Sanctuary after Viraj's forthcoming appeal, which we expect in the next three or four weeks. Let us know if you can travel to London for the appeal and take part in a vigil outside the Church. VMDC will be holding a National Demonstration in Manchester on May 28th. Assemble at 12 noon in Albert Square. CONTACT NOTTINGHAM VMDC at BOX A HIZIKI, 15 GOOSEGATE, HOCKLEY, NOTTINGHAM.

THE IMMIGRATION BILL More Racist Controls

This summer (probably July) will see the introduction of new immigration legislation. The government is describing their immigration Bill as a 'modest' measure to deal with 'loopholes' in the existing laws, which were introduced in 1971. They have the cheek to pretend that it is designed to build "better race relations". This is a lie. It is itself blatantly racist. The Bill's main target is British citizens of Bangladeshi origin, but its provision will effect all of us.

Under current legislation certain basic 'rights' exist for people settled in this country. These rights give us very limited freedoms and are inadequate. Nevertheless they do provide some safeguards. However, these rights will be virtually abolished by the new law. The home secretary and immigration officers are being given sweeping powers over our lives.

At the moment male British citizens and male Commonwealth citizens resident here have the automatic right to bring in their wives and children. This right will go. Government is using the excuse that the existing law is sexually discriminatory. So why don't they extend the right to women instead of taking it away from men? Because they want to stop the 'flow' of 'foreign' people (particularly Bangladeshi) to this country.

Two 'tests' will be used to exclude relatives of British and Commonwealth citizens - a 'support and accommodation test' and a 'primary purpose test'. The first will mean that no-one living in Britain who is unemployed or homeless will be allowed to bring in their spouse and children. Some local authorities rule that homeless men whose families are not yet here

do not qualify for council housing. But when the new accommodation test is introduced, homeless people will not be able to bring in their families - a classic catch 22 situation! After the summer it will be virtually impossible for any British or Commonwealth citizen to bring in and live with a non British-born spouse. This attack on the right to family unity is complete hypocrisy at a time when government is desperately trying to promote family values.

IF YOU HAVE A WIFE AND CHILDREN WHO ARE PLANNING TO COME TO BRITAIN, MAKE SURE THEY APPLY FOR ENTRY CLEARANCE BEFORE THE BILL IS INTRODUCED.

The second right to go will be the automatic right of appeal. The Home Secretary will be given unlimited powers of deportation. He will decide who can and cannot appeal against one of his own orders. 'Overstaying' (i.e. remaining in the UK after leave expires) will become a 'continuous' and criminal offence. This means the police and magistrates' court will be used to deport people, and can do so at any time. If a court recommends deportation for someone, that person will not be able to appeal - even if they have a family here and no roots overseas. Deportation doesn't just mean that you're expelled from the UK, it means you're prohibited from ever returning. In addition, people who apply to enter the UK claiming to be

British by descent will lose their right of appeal if refused entry. Refugee asylum seekers will also lose this right. Immigration Officers will have the power to retain passports and hold people for extended periods without making a decision. Exclusion and deportation decisions will increasingly depend on chance, and the moods of the police, magistrates, immigration officers and the Home Secretary - all of whom are notoriously racist.

Lastly, vast fees will be introduced for the granting of settlement in the UK, as well as other 'services'. This is designed to assist the rich, and to exclude or expel poorer people from Britain.

IF YOU'RE WHITE, YOU'RE ALRIGHT

Although the immigration Bill is so restrictive, it contains one clause that is not. Predictably this regards the movement of white people into Britain. The Bill confirms that EEC nationals can come to Britain with absolutely no restrictions. This is a good clause, but one that should be extended to all people. This clause highlights the racism behind the Bill. It contrasts strongly with the treatment of black Commonwealth citizens who are already settled in Britain. Under the new law, German and French people will have unlimited rights to come to and remain in Britain, while black British citizens already living here will lose virtually all theirs.

This Bill is being introduced because the government see other languages, religions and lifestyles as a threat to Britain's 'national identity'. When their new education Bill is introduced, our children won't even be able to learn about other cultures. This racist nationalism is exactly the sort of thing that South Africa's Apartheid is made of.

The government claim that this Bill is designed to 'improve race relations'. This couldn't be further from the truth. It is the nationalism that they are encouraging that creates racism in the first place.

Government exists to protect the rich and powerful, and these people benefit from racism because as long as we are divided they remain strong. As long as we blame someone other than them for our problems they are safe.

Tim Renton (Tory minister for immigration) has said that the public should not create a 'hullabaloo' over the Bill. That we should not produce 'knee-jerk cries of racism'. He has described criticisms of immigration control as 'poisonous'. So let's try and release enough 'poisons' to smash the racist state entirely!

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE BILL, CONTACT:

The Joint Council For The Welfare Of Immigrants
115 Old Street
London EC1V 9JR
Tel: 01-2518706



Abortion:

THE BATTLE BEYOND THE ALTON BILL

The prospect of the provisions of the 1967 Abortion Act being changed to suit the likes of David Alton is horrifying for women and working class families.

Alton's Bill, and other repressive legislation that will follow in its wake, reflect a strengthening climate of opinion against women's independence and for the sanctity of the family unit. Coupled with the fact that Government cut-backs, the poll tax, etc., put the financial responsibility of bringing up an unwanted child squarely back on the family, the prospects for working class women look pretty grim.

In order to understand why abortion rights are currently under attack, we need to look at the reasons why the 1967 Act was passed.

During the 60's there was a boom in the economy and the labour market expanded. Women were encouraged to go out and fill these jobs. The Abortion Act was called a liberal reform, but it had as much to do with encouraging women, particularly middle class women, into the labour market, as it had to do with women's rights.

Ironically it was also a form of social control. Although it undoubtedly saved the lives of many women from unscrupulous back street abortionists, the Act sought to control the abortions it recognized were already taking place. It sought to regulate and control women's access to abortion, as well as to make it safer.

Also, many women who campaigned for abortion to be legalized, say that the idea of 'social planning' was widespread in the 60's. Many doctors and politicians believed working class parents to be irresponsible and incapable of planning their families, so abortions were legalized to 'help' them.

But this so called 'liberal' climate of opinion has changed now. Capitalism uses a reactionary morality to distract us from the fact that we are economically deprived, and that we are not free to decide who we have children with, when, or if all.

HOW DO WE FIGHT ATTACKS ON ABORTION?

When fighting the Alton Bill we should remember that stopping

repressive legislation is only the first step towards freedom for women.

When issues come up like attacks on abortion rights, Victoria Gillick's attacks on the provision of contraception, Enoch Powell's embryo research bill and the Corrie bill, we always find ourselves on the defensive. The freedoms that we have are very limited, and as women we are continually being forced to fend off attacks on these freedoms. Organizations like the National Abortion Campaign are committed to fighting for free abortions on demand. But there are so many attacks on the minimal provisions that we have, that most energy has to go on purely defensive tactics like the 'Fight the Alton Bill' campaign. All this is vital, but it diverts us from the fact that substantive change can only come through mass activity and not through parliamentary legislation.

The real power in society lies with the ruling class (the banks, big business, etc.) Parliament exists in practice to serve the ruling class and to perpetuate its power. The only activity that can fundamentally change this state of affairs is autonomous, organized action by

oppressed groups. Initiatives by independent groups of women are far more of a threat to male dominated power structures than the actions of trades unions, the Labour Party, or centralized and bureaucratic left-wing groups.

Obviously legislation like the Alton Bill (and the legislation which will follow it) can only be overturned by parliament: as the are pieces of parliamentary legislation. But such Bills only stand a chance of becoming law because they serve the interests of capitalism to oppress women, and capitalists create the social climate and moral values which give rise to such legislation. So it is the way society views women that must be changed, and it can only be changed by widespread activity by women and men that support us, not by self-appointed political leaders, or political 'representatives' within the parliamentary system.

A CLASS ISSUE

Women's liberation is a class issue, because by restricting women's access to abortion (for example) working class women are imprisoned in the home and in relationships with men they might not have chosen. They then have less freedom to work towards a change in their living and working environment and in their economic situation.

Patriarchy (the dominance of male culture) is evident in every aspect of capitalism, and women will not be free until capitalism is utterly destroyed. Similarly, unless capitalism is destroyed, any gains made to make



women more 'equal' with men, mean they will only be equal as slaves to the ruling class.

An example of the kind of initiative we should take, and one which can be contrasted to a reliance upon parliament, is the women's health clinics set up in Italy.

In 1976 in Turin, a group of local feminists set up a well women clinic on their estate. They couldn't carry out abortions because these were illegal and they were scared of getting closed down. After a few months they realised that the clinic was being used almost exclusively by middle class feminists from other areas of town. They leafleted the estate and publicised the contraceptive advice they were giving, but local women still didn't come. They realized that whilst no one locally was actually against them, they were viewed as dog-gooders and fairly useless because they didn't do abortions, which was what women really needed. Terminations were hard to come by, expensive and dangerous and, if the centre couldn't provide safe ones, local women had no need of it. Some Italian women had 3 or 4 abortions in a lifetime, so they really needed somewhere free and safe, whether legal or not.

So the centre was forced to defy the authorities and employ a midwife. They used the Karman method, where a tube is inserted into the womb and the contents sucked out. Because the centre was now relevant to local women, they began to use it and run it, and to use it to examine other issues affecting them, like rape and incest. The centre was operating completely illegally. Although the files were kept off the premises, every woman going there was running a risk.

However, the authorities kept their distance and never raided the centre out of fear of the certain reaction from the local community. This is an ideal example of ordinary people ignoring what is legal and not spending all their time and energy trying to change an unchangeable parliament but taking for themselves what they needed for their health and happiness. From what I've read of the clinic, if the authorities had tried to close it down, the resistance would have taken a more direct form than simply appealing to the Turin council to let them stay.

Currently in Dublin, women's clinics are facing severe problems from the authorities because of the abortion advice they are giving women. Even giving women a timetable of the ferries to Liverpool in order to help them get an abortion in England isn't allowed. But even



so, they are carrying on because the issue is too important to let the Irish government interfere.

It is this kind of direct activity, in defiance of what parliament tells us is best, that is most threatening to the politicians and bureaucrats. We can't just concentrate on fending off repressive legislation, or introducing positive legislation, we have to organize to take what we need, whether the ruling class wants us to have it or not.

Under capitalism (and Labour Party policies are as equally supportive of capitalism as those of the Tories) any 'rights' which parliament deigns to grant us in order to make us

equal' to men, simply mean equality in degradation and the equal right to be exploited.

Ultimately our initiatives have to aim towards completely changing the structure of society. Not only do we have to act in defiance of the State whenever we need to, but we have to overthrow it completely in order to create a society without a ruling elite.

Women can't achieve liberation while we have representatives running our lives for us. No one can be free unless they directly play a part in the structuring of society, and until society is not run in the interests of a ruling class, but organized by, and for, the communities of which it is comprised.



FIGHT BACK IN THE FOREST

It has come to our notice that Nottingham's Conservative Council has decided to undo centuries of lies and deceit and come clean on a matter of international importance.

In an age of cover up and Governmental pressure on the press it is reassuring for us, the public, to see that at last the truth is coming out. Names like Stalker, and Sampson, Peter Wright and Jeffery Archer are but yesterday's news in the light of the name of Robin Hood and his merry men. Robin Hood, we are told, did not exist and neither did the infamous merry men. This devastating truth has sent Labour Councillors into an uproar as they try, in vain, to defend Robin, Little John, Friar Tuck and Maid Marian. The Liberal SDP councillors are now preparing for the Conservatives next horrifying move to try to disprove the existence of Mary Poppins, Winnie the Pooh, and the Wombles.

The next round of the fight for the rights of fairy tale characters looms just around the next bend.

The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) are planning a demonstration (as yet to be announced) in order to mobilize the masses to fight for the Wizard of Oz, Worzel Gummidge, and My Little Pony, the idea being that they can lead them from their own liberation into places of power. This has frightened Robin's supporters, as the prospect of a My Little Pony state would mean every worker being painted a hideous colour and all being called Lickerty Split or Nutmeg.

We now await with baited breath for the next expose

this chain of frightening events. It would now seem that the truth surrounding Robin Hood will never lead to the exposure of truth such as the effect of the Poll Tax, the Education Bill, or the continuous pollution of the Irish Sea by Sellafield, but we wait in hope.

Meanwhile the RCP are now defending Peter Pan's right for recognition.



SHOOT TO KILL

- Col. Jones "Welcome Mr Smith"
- John Smith "Hello"
- Col. Jones "Could you just outline for me why it is you want to join the Army?"
- John Smith "Well, as a holder of a BSc in Civil Engineering, I want to build bridges, get my HGV1 licence and"
- Col. Jones "Could I stop you there, this is the Army, not Wimpeys"
- John Smith "Yes, I know, but I also want to learn how to absail down the side of buildings and wear a green uniform with mud on my face, and crawl through the jungle in pursuit of"
- Col. Jones "Sorry to interrupt you again, but may I ask you something?"
- John Smith "Yes"
- Col. Jones "How are you at killing people?"
- John Smith "Sorry"
- Col. Jones "You know, absailing down buildings and blowing people up, thrusting a knife into their belly and jiggling it around and shooting them in the head. How are you at killing?"
- John Smith "Well, I've never done it, but I think I could if I had to"
- Col. Jones "Trouble with you Civvies is that you've never shot anyone. What we need is to see what you are made of"
- John Smith "Sorry"
- Col. Jones "Let's shoot someone"
- John Smith "Now, this minute"
- Col. Jones "Yes, see that fellow over there, take this rifle and shoot him"
- John Smith "Which fellow, that one there"
- Col. Jones "Yes, that one, shoot him in the head - it's OK don't be nervous - take this rifle, just like that, point it at his head and squeeze the trigger"
- John Smith "I'm a bit worried about this, this could be murder"
- Col. Jones "Don't worry, he's only Irish - go on, squeeze the trigger"
- Bang, yell, fall
- John Smith "You sure everything will be OK"
- Col. Jones "You should get off scott free, but the most you'll get is a year"
- John Smith "OK"
- Col. Jones "Welcome to the Army"

WHOSE BENEFIT ?

This month the Social Security Act 1986 is to be implemented. With it the Government aims to 'combat the benefit dependency culture'.

John Moore in his first major speech as Secretary of State said his ambition was to encourage individual independence. The means to accomplish this end is the introduction of flat rates across the board in the new Income Support and Housing Benefit schemes which take no account of individual needs. The DHSS estimates 30% of claimants will lose, while the Benefits Research Unit (BRU) put the figure at 60%. The major losers will be pensioners, single parents, single people aged 18-24 currently on supplementary benefit, and 16-17 year olds. Any gains are substantially less in cash terms than the losses, for the gains rarely exceed £3 whilst the losses often exceed £5.

Supplementary benefit is at present claimed by at least 8 million people - this figure does not include dependants of claimants. The scheme has been restructured, renamed, and divided into two parts:
Income support - providing regular weekly income.
Social fund - providing specific additional needs.

INCOME SUPPORT

The major changes in the scheme are:

- * A flat rate of benefit with premiums for families, single parents, pensioners and disabled people.
- * The householder and non-householder rates of benefit have been abolished and replaced by a flat rate of benefit.
- * Ordinary and long term rates of benefit are gone.
- * Additional requirement benefits based on individual need for heating, special diets, laundry costs, etc. are gone.
- * Single people under 25 without dependants will receive a reduced rate of benefit.
- * Claimants no longer receive assistance towards water rates or residual housing costs. These must be paid from personal allowances.
- * 20% of general rates have to be met from personal allowances.
- * The Social Security Bill now before Parliament raises the minimum qualifying age for benefit from 16 to 18.
- * £5 per week of earnings will be disregarded rather than £4.
- * £15 per week will be disregarded for people who received disability premium, the higher pensioner premium, for single

parents, and claimants with families who have been unemployed for over 2 years. But work expenses such as fares and child care costs are no longer to be deducted.

- * The capital cut-off figure increases from £3,000 to £6,000 and for every £250, or part of £250 there is an assumed income of £1 per week.
- * Capital below £3,000 will be disregarded.

There are very few winners under this new scheme mainly because all claimants will have to pay 20% of their general rates. There are transitional payments but these will 'wither away' after April and there will be no compensation for this extra expenditure.

The government has included an average amount in benefits that it expects householders to pay as their minimum contribution to

domestic rates. This weekly amount is £1.30 for couples, single parents and single people 25 and over, and £1 for single people 18-24 years old. Yet the average 20% of rates figure is £1.80!

SOCIAL FUND

The Social Fund is to replace single payments for household equipment: beds, cookers, etc., and emergency payments. Grants and loans from the Social Fund will be available for:

- * Community care needs (to prevent the need for residential care).
- * One-off urgent needs payments (to people temporarily out of funds).
- * Unexpected bills and budgeting problems.
- * Replacing death and maternity grants.

In 1985 £300 million was paid out in single payments, in 1986 the figure was estimated to be around £400 million. But legal changes in August 1986 reduced expenditure considerably, so that the expected level of expenditure this year is £170 million. This has allowed John Moore to claim that the £203 million for the Social Fund is



Effects of Income Support

16-17 year olds. The government intends to provide 'training places for all 16-17 year olds and refusal will result in disqualification from benefit. In the absence of training places, benefit will be paid but at a much lower level than under supplementary benefit, losing in excess of £5 per week.

Single householders 18-24 old will lose in excess of £5 per week.

Single non-householders 18-24 old will only lose due to payment of 20% of rates.

Couples with children. The declared aim of the social security reform is to help those with children, yet BRU calculate that 81% of couples with children will lose.

Childless couples. According to BRU:

- slightly under 20% of couples will lose approximately £3 per week.
- 40% will lose approximately £5 per week.
- 25% will lose approximately £7 per week.

Single parents. BRU estimates that 74% of single parents will lose out. The £15 per week disregarded takes no account of travel or child care costs which were previously off-set against earnings, therefore the majority of one parent families in part time employment will be worse off. The only gainers will be those whose travel and child care cost do not exceed £3 a week. This seriously undercuts work incentives for single parents, blatantly contradicting the governments' stated objective of encouraging financial independence through employment.

Pensioners. BRU estimates that nearly 90% will lose and those previously on supplementary benefit who stand to lose most are those receiving higher additional requirements, therefore the most needy.

'generous'. It is not. And in practice, of this £203 million, 70% is going to be in the form of recoverable loans. This is absurd, because only those that are credit worthy will receive loans and as the Social Fund is to be discretionary, there is danger of discrimination against claimants.

Nicholas Scott, the new Social Security Minister, described the Social Fund as a way of reducing dependency induced by being able to claim single payments for specific items, and that it will encourage claimants to save for major expenses themselves. But reducing access to state benefit leads to new forms of dependence - on families, friends, charities, money lenders, loan sharks.

CHARITIES

The DHSS will not give loans from the fund where another body has the responsibility for providing the service or item. This 'responsibility' falls on charities who are already hard pushed to meet with the needs of those in distress. Charity cash available is no more than £10-15 million, which is less than 10% of the short fall in the DHSS budget.

Nigel Lawson's scheme introduced last April allows employees to give up to £120 tax free to charities every year. This scheme has yielded practically nothing. Last June, Lawson said he hoped to give away £20 million tax relief this year and that charities would benefit by £100 million in donations. The idea that those with money will give to charities is unrealistic, but it illustrates how intricately linked recent legislation and the budget are.

HOUSING BENEFIT

The new Housing Benefit scheme is to be implemented this month with the declared aim of simplifying the present complex system. There is to be the introduction of a single scale of housing benefit applicable to all householders whether on income support or not, replacing the twin framework of 'certified' and 'standard' housing benefit. The new housing benefit system is based on the Income Support scheme and is to be assessed by calculating the difference between a household's income and its needs. While this creates a simpler system, the proposed cuts of £450-500 million in the housing benefit expenditure, coupled with the requirement for everyone to pay at least 20% of their rates (whatever their financial status), is going to mean hardship for many households.

The major changes to the system are:

* assessment for non income support claimants on the basis



of net, rather than gross, income - a large loss for those whose net income is equal to their gross income.

* special help with high fixed charges and inadequate heating for income support claimants is to be abolished.

* Housing benefit supplement, and high rent schemes is to be abolished.

* householders whose income exceeds income support level, will find their benefit on rent reduced by 60p for every £1 of net income over that level - this will cause extensive losses to tenants.

* as with Income Support, there will be a capital cut-off at £6,000.

* introduction of more restrictive powers to reduce eligible private rents and new powers to withhold benefit on unreasonable or too frequent rent increases.

* Local Authorities will lose the general power to run discretionary 'top-up' schemes.

* Local Authorities will be handling housing benefit claims with no assistance from the DHSS, therefore there will be longer delays in payment.

* No element for mortgage interest for owner occupiers.

LOSS IN HOUSING BENEFIT EXPENDITURE

The potential advantages of the new scheme are lost because of the government's decision that its introduction will be accompanied by cuts amounting to about 10% of housing benefit expenditure.

The government's justification for this is that expenditure on housing benefit has increased rapidly in recent years and that help extends too far up the income scale compared to other benefits.

Although spending on housing benefit has grown, the reason is

Effects of the Social Fund

Deposits and rent. Previously deposits and rent in advance have been met by DHSS single payments but people will now be unable to get these or urgent needs payments for the first few nights in board and lodging. Therefore problems will arise for people trying to find rented accommodation.

People with disabilities. There will no longer be single additions. Furthermore some people will no longer qualify. These are as follows:

* people who have been incapable of work for only a short time.
 * disabled children not getting attendance allowance or mobility allowance, or who are blind.
 * elderly infirm people.

The introduction of the higher severe disability payment takes no account of individual needs and many severely disabled people will be ineligible for it. This will effect those on lower rate attendance allowance and those who have a carer who receives, or is eligible for, invalid care allowance.

People caring for disabled people will lose the long term rate of benefit and will receive no premium to compensate.

It is worth noting here that the government's own Social Security Advisory Council has warned that the Social Fund as it stands will not work. And if they are saying that...

not that the scheme has become more generous. On the contrary, successive cuts have reduced the number of people eligible to receive housing benefit by about 1.3 million householders. Despite these cuts, benefit costs have continued to grow—this is directly attributable to the steep rise in local authority rents and the big increase of those unemployed and claiming supplementary benefit.

Help with average housing costs for a couple with one child currently runs about two-thirds of the average male manual wage. It is therefore a mistake to imagine that many housing benefit recipients are people with average, or above average, incomes. In fact, only 4% of housing benefit goes to people in work; the rest goes to the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities, and towards unemployment benefit and income support claimants.

There will be considerable losses due to the requirement to pay 20% of the rates. This will cause considerable hardship in high rated areas.

Structural alignment of housing benefit with income support



Income-related (means-tested) benefit rates from April 1988

Personal allowances for income support and housing benefit	
	£ per week
Single person or lone parent under 18	19.40
Single person aged 18-24	26.05
Single person 25 or over and lone parent 18 or over	33.40
Couple both aged under 18	38.80
Couple (at least one aged 18 or over)	51.45
Dependent children: under age 11	10.75
: aged 11-15	16.10
: aged 16-17	19.40
: aged 18	26.05
Premiums for income support and housing benefit	
Family (family premium is doubled if disabled child in family)	6.15
Lone parent (on income support) (on housing benefit)	3.70 8.60

Pensioner (single person) (couple)	10.65 16.25
Pensioner (higher premium) and disability premium	single person 13.05 couple 18.60
Severe disability (single person) (couple — one person disabled) (couple — both disabled)	24.75 24.75 49.50
Family credit rates	
Adult credit (for lone parent or couple)	32.10
Child credit: under age 11	6.05
: aged 11-15	11.40
: aged 16-17	14.70
: aged 18	21.35
Capital rules (for income support, housing benefit and family credit)	
Amount disregarded	3000.00
Upper limit	6000.00
(for every £250 or part thereof between £3000 and £6000, £1.00 is counted as income)	

means equal treatment between rent and rate payers of similar income levels, whether in work or not. For owner occupiers, however, there is no element for mortgage interest in the scheme. This means some people, mainly low earners, will fall below the Income Support level after paying their rates or poll tax.

It has also been proposed that the administrative and benefit subsidies for the first year of the scheme be cut as an 'incentive' to avoid back dating of benefit and payment of benefit on high rates.

There is a case for a comprehensive reform of housing assistance to achieve a more equal and unified system of housing subsidy. The structural changes should result in a worthwhile and genuine simplification of a very complex scheme. However, this important step forward is seriously undermined by a crude cost cutting approach, echoed in the Income Support/Social Fund scheme. The result will be losses and hardship for a very large number of people.

This new Social Security Act is now 'Law', so it is important to

make sure you getting what you are entitled to. The Nottingham DHSS workers are not taking any action against this new legislation and we must therefore look to ourselves and our own organizational abilities to fight for the right to housing and decent living conditions.

Further advice can be obtained from:

Housing Advice Centre, 100a Upper Parliament St. Tel: 470814
Shelter, 75 Raleigh St., Tel: 706662.
Unemployed Workers Centre, Houndsgate



Effects of the new Housing Benefit scheme

In the figures released by the DHSS, over 5 million householders will suffer financial losses, with over 1 million losing all benefit.

Single 16-17 year olds and 18-24 year olds will receive a lower amount of income support than those over 25 and will therefore lose housing benefit at a lower income level than others.

Single parent. Housing costs for single parents are similar to 2 parent families and therefore currently qualify for the couple

rate when assessed for housing benefit. But this will not apply under the new scheme. There will a premium for single parents, but benefit will be reduced.

Pensioners. One of the largest groups to lose out will be pensioners— numbering over 2.7 million households. Because possession of capital in excess of £6,000 disqualifies claimants from housing benefit, an estimated 350,000 households will lose all entitlements, the majority being elderly home owners and tenants.

Racists speak unchallenged

Three far right-wing speakers have been allowed to address public meetings at Nottingham University in recent months-undisturbed by pitiful student demonstrations against their visits.

The first speaker - racist ex-Bradford Headmaster Ray Honeyford - so incensed 'left-wing' students that they called for a 'boycott' of his meeting. Students were too exhausted after this sudden burst of anti-racist militancy to do anything to oppose the second speaker - Norris McWhirter, chairman of the ultra right-wing Freedom Association - who came the following week. By the time the third speaker - a consul from the South Africa Embassy - arrived a few weeks later, the Left's batteries were recharged. A large student group assembled obediently behind police barriers and boo-ed and hissed as his car sped past. The police were so concerned that they sent the mounted riot police home before the demo even started.

THE NEW RIGHT

Though in their own way each demonstration was as bad as each other, opposition to the visit by Ray Honeyford says more about the state of local student politics

Honeyford is one the 'respectable' figureheads of the new-right. His appalling racist behaviour and infamous article in the Salisbury Review while Headmaster of Drummond Middle School in Bradford made him a media hero. "A sensible straight-talker standing up to the loony-left bully boys and their shrieking accusations of 'racist'...", Honeyford repeatedly argues (when given a public platform) that multi-cultural education and anti-racist work is "divisive" and in itself "racist" because it oppresses and discriminates against white children. Such crap is a thin-disguise for his real and far more blunt message: that he thinks Black and Asian children are stupid, that multi-cultural education "holds white children back", and that he doesn't want Black and Asian parents telling him what to do.

TOTAL CONFUSION

On the day we arrive to a scene of total confusion. No demonstration outside, no posters calling people to turn out. Nowt. Around twenty minutes before he is due to speak, a few people begin to turn. The Labour Students Society has prepared a

leaflet to give out, but the art-work for it is locked in a room no one has the key for. The "Left" on the campus has clearly not discussed what they are going to do. Some seem to think there is a demo, others that they are going to go in and heckle. Still others plan to go in and engage in debate that will "defeat Honeyford's arguments". A Socialist Workers Student Society member tries to sell Socialist Worker to people trying to plan what we should do now. It's then that one of them comes up with the brainwave of "boycotting the meeting". Brilliant. Remind me to "boycott" the next fascist rally in Nottingham will you? SWSS members ramble on about "tactics" before finally admitting that they aren't going to disrupt the meeting because if they do, their group will be banned on the campus.

SELF-POLICING

This is called self-policing. "We'd better not do anything, in case they stop us doing anything". Brilliant. And of course, we can't endanger the Party, eh comrade, what would the masses do without you?

In the end a few dozen leaflets are run-off somehow and we all huddle around the entrance to the debating hall watching Honeyford engage in polite public debate with 70-odd students.

The meeting breaks up on time in orderly fashion and the students file out through a column of SWP sellers and LSS members sloganising and thrusting their papers and leaflets at them. When they've given out a few, and most people have left, they all march off en masse - Party

differences put aside - for a well deserved cup of coffee, congratulating themselves that once again racism has been well and truly opposed.

DEAD SHEEP

Honeyford was still left in the hall, security guards itchy to get him away and off their hands. I don't know why they were so nervous, being harassed by "socialist students" opposed to racism is seemingly about as threatening as being savaged by a dead sheep.

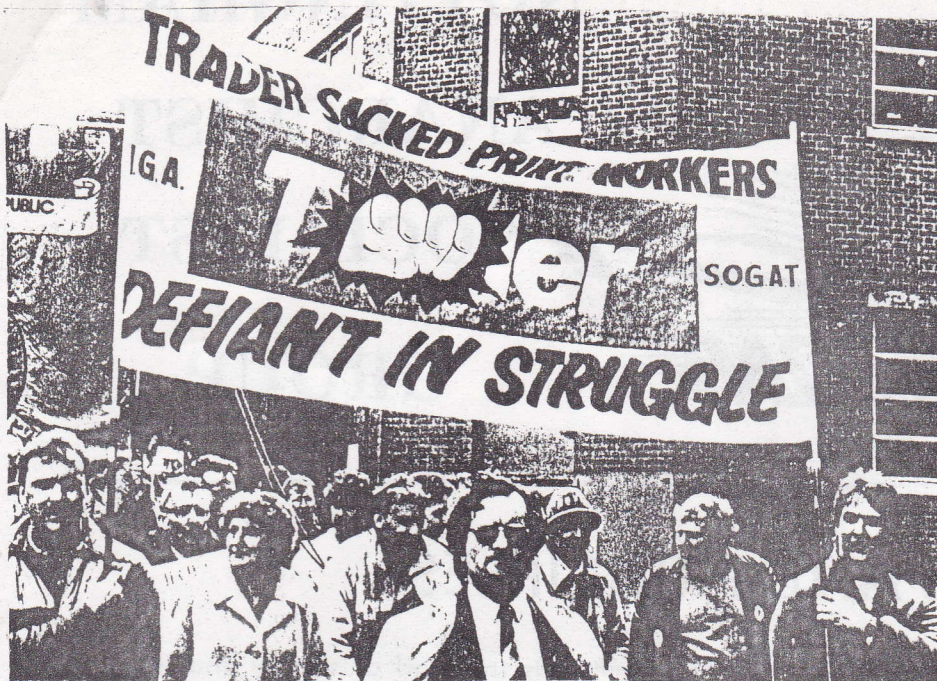
Of course the University of Nottingham is a conservative, right-wing campus. Of course it's difficult to mobilise them for anything (except to protect their own grants). And, yes, the Students Union does have a "Free Speech for Bigots" policy. No one's saying it's easy. But students have invited a racist right-wing shitbag onto a platform in their University and so-called socialist students have a responsibility to do more than try and flog their papers or produce a leaflet that ends in the slogan "Labour -- Fighting Racism" (Yeah, by booting Sharon Atkins as a local Labour candidate, and by banning Black Sections, amongst other "anti-racist" acts).

RACIST FRONT MAN

So on a chill winter afternoon, Ray Honeyford, racist front man, stepped quietly out of the Lecture Hall main entrance and calmly got into his taxi. At a time when the New Right is growing in power and influence, when racist attacks in the Midlands are on the increase, and as the new Immigration Bill moves its way through Parliament, Ray Honeyford drove off the University of Nottingham campus without so much as a murmur of opposition...



Local printworkers fighting to get their jobs back on last year's May Day march in Nottingham.



REMEMBER MAY DAY!

May day has, since 1978, been a bank holiday in Britain. What's so special about this bank holiday compared with the others?

It's origins lie in the late nineteenth century when working people were struggling against their employers for an 8-hour day. At the time this was a very important struggle. The arrangements they were trying to change meant that workers were allotted tasks which they had to complete, however long it took, in a day. A sort of piece work system. The change that was campaigned for was that people should be paid for how long it took them to do tasks, and the maximum day's work should be eight hours.

Strike!

This of course was not a revolutionary change itself, but important as it meant working people reclaiming some time for themselves. Some socialists thought that parliamentary action would bring about change, anarchists - who put no faith in such a process - favoured direct action: in this case the withdrawal of labour: the strike. Strikes and demonstrations were the tactics successfully used to gain the 8-hour day.

A Holiday

In commemoration thereafter workers took a day's holiday on May Day. From 1890 onwards it was proposed that this become international. Long before then,

governments in Canada, New Zealand, the United States and Australia, had tried to incorporate action by working people to make it seem as if it was something given by the State: they made it a State holiday.

Why are anarchists so interested in a concession won so long ago: one that is now sanctioned by the State? Not because we now want a 6-hour, 4-hour, or whatever day. Ideally, we'd like no work - in the commercial sense; that is, work for the profit of the ruling class. May

Day is a time to reflect a moment, to see that the struggle to reclaim our lives continues.

What Freedom! What Choice!

"Wait a minute! - you may say - we can choose how to spend our holidays and weekends, how to spend our wages or benefits. Anyway, look how much better off we are to-day compared to the nineteenth century." So it may seem. But, what real choices do you have? Do you decide what you produce at work? Do you decide when and how your work is organized? For some the only choice is to work on a production line churning out weapons used to oppress others.

Women's work.

The male organization of work means little or no childcare facilities. So for women there is the added difficulty of getting to work and organizing everything, let alone the low pay and poor jobs on offer. Then, after finishing one job, it's off home to the 24 hour-a-day task of bringing up children and keeping the place tidy. A real 8-hour day for women would be a holiday.

What a waste! And how ridiculous that we all continue to contribute to others people's misery in order to eek out our survival.

We can, and will, change things.

May Day reminds us of other more recent events too. The 1926 General Strike began that day. The workers and students revolt in Paris in 1968 happened in May, as did the overthrow of the fascists in Portugal in 1974. So, despite the State controlled holiday, the real memories and inspiration lives on. Importantly, it reminds us that we don't have to accept things as they are, but together we can change things, and we will.

MAYDAY EVENTS

The Mayday 88 festival will last from the 28th of April to the 1st of May. It will consist of a series of concerts, films, theatre, meetings, workshops, exhibitions and a picnic. The concerts will feature music from as far away as China, Hungary and Africa, but also music from local groups such as FIELDWORK and PATTI O' DOORS. The styles of music stretch from folk to pop, from world dance music to hip hop.

There will also be the traditional march and rally to celebrate International Workers Day, organised by Nottingham and District Trades Council.

On thursday the 28th and friday the 29th there will be live music at the Old Vic Tavern and the Yorker. On the saturday, after the march and rally, there are videos and films, theatre and workshops at the International Community Centre (ICC) on Mansfield Road. Admission is free and there will be a free creche too.

On saturday evening there is a festival of music and theatre at the Hyson Green Boys Club, and at the Green Community Centre.

Mayday itself starts with 'greeting the dawn' at 5.30 am on the forest, and then a picnic in the afternoon in the Arboretum. The festival ends with theatre and cabaret at the ICC and the Old Vic Tavern.

Full details are available from Mayday 88 on 782463.



NOTTINGHAM

ANARCHIST

SOCIALIST

GROUP

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

Our goal is the creation of a free, equal, and classless society.

At present the State and capitalism ensure that wealth and power remain in the hands of a few. The workers produce the wealth that the bosses enjoy. The power of the State is controlled by a ruling elite.

This creates a class of people who are deprived of the power to direct their own lives and to shape their own environment.

Movements of reform have never fundamentally changed the nature of the capitalist system: power has continually remained with successive elites.

Consequently, our goal can only be achieved through an anarchist social revolution. This revolution will not replace one set of rulers with another but will destroy both capitalism and the state worldwide.

Rulers and leaders have always taken power from the people they have claimed to act for. We must organise for our own liberation. No leaders can do this for us.

The system based on hierarchy and centralised power must be replaced with a society that is run by, and for, the people.

Because this is the kind of society anarchists want, we structure our group in the same way.

We actively support struggles in the work place and community (eg. against deportation, against discrimination and for better health care.). Whilst these may not be revolutionary in themselves, the common experience of struggle inspires revolutionary action.

We will participate in these struggles as anarchists.

We oppose racism and sexism, acknowledging that all white people benefit from racism and all men benefit from sexism. We must fight against all forms of oppression on a personal as well as class level.

Because organisation is necessary for effective political action, and a formal structure allows for greater responsibility and accountability, Nottingham ASG is a membership group.

Nottingham ASG is:

- *A class struggle group
- *Committed to organisation
- *Opposed to racism and sexism
- *A membership group

