

# COUNTER INFORMATION

MARCH/APRIL 1986

Issue No. 9

FREE.

Published by  
Counter-Information  
collective.



## MOVING THE GOALPOSTS

A Printer says Break the Rules !

The management at Rupert Murdoch's News International seems to have outclassed the print unions in skulduggery by maintaining production of their four papers, without the 6,000 striking workers they sacked a fortnight ago, and without the agreement of the unions.

Distribution of the *Sun*, *Times*, *Sunday Times* and *News of the World* is still patchy. It may be that the company's success or otherwise in getting their papers to the shops will turn out to be the real test of NI's strategy. True to their nature, the 'journalists' sold out at an early stage and agreed to work under the new regime, with the exception of a few at the *Times* who have now been sacked. Typesetting and printing of the papers at NI's two new, heavily defended factories in East London and Kinning Park, Glasgow, is going ahead.

The sacked strikers are concentrating on two things, stopping papers leaving the factories at Wapping and Kinning Park, and disrupting distribution to retailers. In the first objective they have not been successful so far. The picketing would need to be massive and violent beyond anything we are used to. In fact if it went this far, it would be possible to get into the plant and wreck the press lines.

After the papers leave the factories, things become much more open. At the moment,

distribution is rather *ad hoc*, but it's getting more organised every day. Another Murdoch company, TNT, is taking papers by road either direct to retailers or to wholesalers in the regions. The key workers are the lorry drivers, van drivers and workers at the wholesalers' depots around the country. TNT's drivers, if they've come this far, will need some very direct persuading indeed if they are going to stop scabbing at this stage. Members of SOGAT who work in the wholesalers and drive local delivery vans may feel they have little in common with their sacked comrades on Fleet Street, and where this is the case their branch officials will have little influence and may be reluctant to try since they are on dodgy legal ground. The sacked workers must make direct contact wherever possible. Finally, there are the newsagents, who would surely be swayed by their customers exercising consumers' rights both verbally and physically.

The strike and lockout are about NI's insistence on new terms of employment, both at their new factories and at the Fleet Street sites. They want, first, no strikes 'or any other industrial action for any reason whatever'. Second, no closed shop and total flexibility on the job. Third, an agreement on the absolute right of management to

manage, and to implement any decision it reaches, without consultation if it so chooses. Fourth, that all this be enshrined on a detailed and legally-binding contract.

It isn't clear whether this contract would apply to individual workers, making it possible for the company to sue an individual in the civil courts if they took any disruptive action up and including withdrawing their labour. Either way, it should be obvious that this is enough to turn the stomach of any self-respecting wage slave, let alone Fleet Street print workers, who have a reputation for respecting very little else. It goes way beyond the 'no-strike deals' the EEPTU has been signing over the last twenty years. Of course it would not mean the end of class struggle in News International's bright new sweatshops, it would just mean the fight going underground and becoming more individualised than ever. In fact, Murdoch has had trouble getting even some of his scabs in Wapping to Whistle as they Work, even though they were all vetted for symptoms of militancy before they were hired: the regime is hard. Company goons have the right to search anyone entering or leaving the factory; all workers carry ID and wear colour-coded work clothes so that they can be easily identified. They work four times as hard as workers in the old factories and earn a fraction of the wages. The atmosphere is said to be 'oppressive'.

The unions don't know what's hit them. There was SOGAT, ready to negotiate away any number of jobs (they agreed to 2,300 redundancies at the Mirror

group in December), and the NGA, ready to agree to guarantee continuous production and binding disputes and arbitration procedures, and then it turned out Murdoch didn't want them around on any terms. Now they're wingeing about how they tricked into calling a strike all along. Hemmed in by Murdoch on one side and the law on all three others, they can't get a foothold even if they promise to dump most of their members and make the rest eat shit for breakfast. When Brenda Dean, the SOGAT boss, and one of Murdoch's toerags 'confronted' each other on the telly, it was hard to choose between the slobbering arrogance of the one and the whining moralism of the other, except you could tell who expected to win.

The strike and lockout are an important episode of the continuing struggle in print over new technology, redundancies and working conditions. As in other industries, the bosses are on the offensive. As in other industries, the printworkers have very little to win in the short term, and more than most to lose. Few of them have skills that could be transferred to another line of work, even if the work was there. There isn't any redundancy money on the table, because they were sacked while in technical breach of contract.

They also have a lot to lose in terms of self-confidence and fighting spirit. The 'selfishness' of Fleet Street print workers is legendary and notorious. It has stood them in good stead over the years when they were able to build up relatively high wages and easy conditions. But the bosses, as always, have the winning hand in the long run. At the moment they have the technology, the political climate and the economic incentive to line up for the attack behind a trio of spectacularly greedy, ruthless and personally repulsive entrepreneurs, Murdoch, Maxwell and Shah.

The prize in the competition to see who can screw the workers first and furthest is a decisive edge in the circulation war. If there is one thing that gives a newspaper boss more satisfaction than rubbing his workers' faces in the dirt, its doing the same to his competitors. Different strategies are being adopted to this end. Shah is starting from scratch. Murdoch is letting everyone know precisely how he did it, so that nobody can copy his strategy. There is no unified approach to dealing a hand to either the existing print unions, or to the futuristic EEPTU. It's a dirty fight, as the print workers know it always has been, and if they are to salvage anything from the situation, they will be relying as much on being able to exploit the greed of their exploiters as on their own inclination to see this as a desperate situation requiring desperate measures.

# CONTRACTS STRIKE

Since the last issue of C.I. (No. 8) the strike at Contracts Ltd., South Shields, Tyne and Wear, has continued. Nine workers remain sacked and their reinstatement has become a pre-condition for the end of the strike.

The National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers is still attempting to negotiate with management, despite their refusal to budge an inch towards the strikers' requests. Unfortunately, during this period (4th-6th Feb 1986) picketing at the factory and High St. customers has been reduced. This is a typical official union error, reducing the pressure as a peace gesture. Bosses always take this as a sign of weakness. The union has gone over the workers' heads before. In February 1985 a new bonus scheme was imposed which involved a 1 2% pay cut. This was rejected at a mass meeting but a union official still negotiated a 3 month trial period for the new scheme. The union remains determined to use official/ineffective methods while a spokeswoman for the strike committee said "there is not a snowball in Hell's chance of an agreement". (6.2.86).

The management of Contracts Ltd. have been attempting to negotiate a return to work by offering to set up a 'works

committee'. This would be made up of ten works representatives, two shop stewards and management. As the management would have a veto on all committee decisions this system is a total fraud. This plan would also give votes to the bosses and scabs who have no grievances against the company, thus removing any control from the strikers' hands. Fortunately, in a secret ballot the strikers voted by a majority of 3 to 1 to reject this con.

The workers have continued taking independent direct action. On January 16th 50 strikers occupied the factory for over an hour until police and management smashed their way in. The occupation was supported by an enlarged picket made up of miners, shipyard workers, unemployed people, trades council delegates and others. Action has been spread to the London office of Stephen Marks, which has been picketed by strikers from South Shields. The National Union of Seamen has continued to give support and they blacked a load of imports from Taiwan on January 14th.

The strike committee can be contacted at:  
c/o The National Union of Seamen Building,  
Coronation Street  
South Shields  
Tyne and Wear.

Tel: 091-456 1428

Thanks to 'The Syndicalist' No.2 for the information



# ROUND THE PITS

A woman from the mining village of Fitzwilliam writes:

"They are trying to close the pit down in our village, Kinsley Drift Mine, but we are fighting the closure. We had a great march and rally here last Saturday 25th January. There was 3,000 here. They came from Notts, Lancs, a London Support Group and several areas of Yorks with bands and banners".

The Kinsley miners have voted 4-1 to fight the closure. The Kinsley Drift Community Action Group has been formed to resist the Coal Board's plans. The active involvement of women and the whole community in all aspects of the fight, including the decision making, will be vital to its success. And, as the Action Group states, this is no local problem. For really successful resistance to the Coal Board's attacks the struggle will once again have to spread throughout and beyond the coalfields.

For a copy of the Action Group's leaflet, send an SAE.

## VICTORY!

A spirited campaign involving the whole community has defeated the Coal Board's plan's to close Darfield Main pit. The Darfield Main and Community Action Group, fully supported though NOT controlled by the NUM, held weekly meetings and organised well attended demos and rallies to save the pit.

## FREE THE PRISONERS

There are still over 20 miners in prison, jailed for their part in the miners strike.

In November two Wakefield men get 3 year sentences. Eight miners were sent down to

Durham jail shortly before Christmas. On Christmas eve a vigil was held outside the prison in solidarity with the jailed men.

Called by the Durham Mechanics and miners support groups, the vigil was widely supported by trade unionists and unemployed from around north east England. Anne Sudwick (Durham Miners Support Group) said: "We will never rest until these men are released and the sacked men reinstated."

Info: *The Syndicalist*



## LOTHIANS

Miners at Monktonhall have not knuckled under to the Coal Board's dictatorial management.

On the 28,30-31 January there were strikes over working in wet conditions. The Manager, Kerr,

arbitrarily stopped the usual practice of extra payments and ending work half an hour early.

These measures, long fought for by the miners, provide some compensation for having to work in water that can come up to your knees, or even sometimes to the waist.

As we write, negotiations on this issue have got nowhere. In fact, management have cut the wages for the miners involved by about £4 per day. And they're even threatening to sack the 250 men concerned if production doesn't increase.

A local miner told us that this authoritarian attitude by the management had increased the feelings of militancy among the workforce. Production had fallen rapidly recently because of the miners support for the men involved in the 'wet conditions' dispute.

However, to the disappointment of militants, Monktonhall miners meeting on Feb 16th did not decide to take any further immediate further action. Discussions go on about what to do about management's continuing refusal to observe the usual wet conditions practices.

Pits on strike this year include Castlehill, Monktonhall and Bilston Glen (Scotland); Bevercotes (Notts) and Wistow, Wheldale and Prince of Wales (Yorks).

## SPAIN

In Tervel, Spain, 5 miners went on hunger strike and locked themselves into their local pit on 12 Dec 85 to protest at the proposed loss of 1,800 jobs. The action was to last until 31 December. At first, bosses

refused to negotiate, then on 27 December over 3,000 went to Madrid to state their case. Again they were refused an audience.

Angered by this, a national strike was called for 30 and 31 Dec. Support for this was total and on these days all roads to the mine were blockaded. A series of similar actions were planned for January. Faced with this increasing militancy, a meeting between the union and the government was arranged. Result - a guarantee that no jobs would be lost and a promise of substantial investment over the next 3 years.

Still in Spain, another national strike took place on 17 and 18 December. This aimed to expose the unsafe working conditions which caused the deaths of 73 mines in 1985.

Source *La Estiba*, paper of Barcelona dockers.

## SOUTHPORT RIOTS

The death of 19 year old Ray Moran led to 3 nights of rioting in Southport in January. Raymond Moran died in police custody after he had been arrested on suspicion of theft. The chief constable of Merseyside is being sued by one of his friends arrested with him for wrongful arrest, assault by police and false imprisonment. He also accused police officers of punching and kicking Mr Moran as he was being led to the station. Bridget Moran said she was told by police that her son had died of an epileptic fit. The family say he did not suffer from epilepsy.

At Southport football ground on the third night of rioting about 300 youths ran onto the pitch at half time as police vans entered the ground. The youths shouted 'Ray Moran' and 'murderers' and threw missiles at the police who arrived in full riot gear.

# Resistance Worldwide

Reports:  
Next Dead-  
line Mid  
April 1986

PHILNOR, the largest company dealing in the supply of 'small, beautiful, faithful, kind and mild' Filipino women for wealthy Norwegian men, by mail order has been exposed by Gabriela, the national coalition of women's organisations in the Philippines.

PHILNOR regularly arranges trips to the Philippines for Norwegian men who want to

marry a Filipino woman and at least twice a year arranges a party in Cebu city where the men are introduced to women.

PHILNOR covers it business behind a front of a respectable pen-pal club. Demonstrators against the trafficking of Filipino women (the most recent in December) have been held in Norway, organised by womens groups and the Filipino community there.

*Outwrite Feb 86*

Workers in Poland are resisting government plans to reintroduce the 6 day working week in some 1,00 large plants, including the coal mines.

November 25th was Latin-American 'No More Violence Against Women Day'. In Lima, Peru, women put boxes in different places in the city - women's centres, women's organisations, in shanty towns, unions etc. - where women could leave statements denouncing men who had been violent to them. On Sunday 24th Nov. a public trial was held in one of the squares. Men who had been violent to women were publicly denounced, and individual women gave personal testimonies, followed by music, theatre and speeches - a great success.

*Outwrite, Jan 86*

In Melilla (pop. 70,000) in North Africa 700 Arab women held an unofficial demonstration against the new 'aliens law', which will enforce expulsions from the country. The women ignored police orders to disperse and leave the square. Police moved in with tear gas and plastic bullets and beat the demonstrators with truncheons.

## NORWEGIAN DOCKERS BOYCOTT

Norwegian dockers have been boycotting South African goods since October 20th. The dockers are organised in a National Transport Workers Unions along with lorry drivers and drivers in private bus companies.

The boycott is not only of goods from South Africa but also goods from Norway to South Africa. It also includes goods distributed by road or rail and there is no doubt that some goods which were to be sent by ship are rerouted in this way.

This action was originally meant to last until February 1st but the union decided recently to continue the boycott 'until further notice'.

There are also boycotts of SA by Danish, Swedish, Finish and dockers in Iceland.

There were also actions by another group of workers against SA in Norway, namely the postal workers. All post to SA goes through the main postal terminal in Oslo, and the workers here refused to handle the post. This action started in the middle of November and lasted until Dec 31st. It is considered illegal by the state and is also against the Norwegian industrial laws.

reports of the unrest or the content of school texts. Outside speakers were attracted to satisfy a groundswell of interest in real education directly related to the collective identity and pride in resisting State oppression.

The mass assemblies of school students contributed most of all to the great resilience, determination and radicalised consciousness that has characterised hundreds of townships. Not for them representatives who are unanswerable to the wishes of the assembly or who can be co-opted by cosmetic talk of 'power-sharing'.

DUNNES  
STRIKE  
WELCOME



DUNNES  
DISPUTE

The dispute at Dunnes Stores in Dublin seems to be grinding to a halt.

The dispute started when two workers were suspended for refusing to handle S. African goods, this was on July 1984.

In December the union (IDATU) decided to lift picketing. This was against the strikers wishes, but the union executive went over their heads and imposed the lifting of picketing anyway.

The union said they would look into fruit and vegetable production in S. Africa to see if 'prison conditions' existed (!?), promising to end shipment of S. African fruit in 3 months if this could be proved! Considering 'prison conditions' exist all over S. Africa in the form of pass laws 'home lands' and that the majority of S. Africans can't move about freely, it seems S. Africa is one big prison.

If the Irish Govt. does impose sanctions then ONLY fruit and vegetables will be affected, things such as tinned fruit, wines and coal won't be.

Meanwhile, the Dunnes strikers all through the strike had to have permission from the union executive to attend meetings about apartheid or Dunnes, and were told not to talk to the press. Strike pay was cut by the amount they got in donations and they also had to close down their bank accounts in order to receive strike pay and support groups were instructed to 'suspend' themselves.

With friends like the IDATU, workers don't need any enemies.

## WE ARE BEING RULED BY THE CHILDREN

The school students have returned to the class room in January. For some townships it is the first formal education since June 1984. The Government will no doubt sieze on the resumption as an indicator of a 'return to normality'. But how long will this last, not long given the State's capacity to face both ways: to intern and terrorise, while promoting an image of reform.

Already, Botha's proposals for a mandatory nationwide Identity Card are seen as a way reinstating 'Pass Laws' in a more subtle form. The aspirations of those struggling for equality will not be met, but even the business leaders are uncertain as to whether the limited changes will in any way restabilise the economy and lead to their liberal demands to remove obstacles to non-white workers 'selling their labour on the job market' or gaining a material stake in the normal functioning of the system.

In the schools, the latest mass resistance, coming on the heels of 1976/77 and 1980/81, was by far the most significant and will have long term effects. Hundreds of schools in townships on the Eastern and Western Cape and Transvaal especially, were emptied for 12-18 months. The schools were transformed into centres of resistance and were often closed (as in the case of all the Cape Coloured Schools) by the authorities. Student-Teacher-Parent Associations were set up, amid complaints that 'we are being ruled by the children'. Students passed on skills of practical street fighting and evading capture, necessary in the face of the state of seige that hundreds of townships have been exposed to.

The paradox is that in expanding greatly the number of better-educated children, the seeds of discontent have been strengthened. Even more so than



their less well-educated (often rural) counterparts, black and coloured graduates are likely to be unemployed and severely discriminated against in the skilled job market, and the downturn in the economy has accelerated this.

To shore up the system and divert mass anger, the authorities have attempted to revive traditional tribal divisions, such as Zulus and Pondos in Natal. The revolt against Apartheid will be at its most challenging when the growing organisational strengths of workers and school students combine to mount a concerted attack generalised simultaneously to the maximum effect.

The occupations and similar initiatives in community centres, also witnessed a great growth in awareness through films, theatre of resistance, modern studies geared to discussions of the press

Counter Information is put together from news, information and personal accounts of resistance to this rotten system. At present it is put together by people in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Grangemouth. We would like to encourage the widest possible distribution and participation in the project, and regular communication between people with a revolutionary desire to get rid of all that impoverishes our daily lives.

The more material we receive, the more able we will be to produce the broadsheet regularly and ensure its distribution as widely as possible. Donations towards costs are much needed and very welcome. We encourage all those who want information and/or bundles of the broadsheet to distribute to contact us.

COUNTER INFORMATION, BOX 81, C/O 43  
CANDLEMAKER ROW, EDINBURGH.

A group in Dunfermline are running a squatting action - those interested to contact:

Alternative, 43 Pittencrief Street,  
Dunfermline.

# SCHOOL STUDENTS REVOLT A FIRST HAND REPORT FROM ITALY

A MASSIVE WAVE of school students protests has been sweeping Italy.

Everything started in Milan with a demonstration which was the culmination of struggles against the 'double shifts' in the schools (whereby some students attend in the morning, and others in the afternoon, due to shortages of space and facilities). The movement spread throughout the whole of Italy, in opposition to the bosses' education system and the budget.

The two most recent demonstrations were enormous. On 9th November a million people throughout Italy took part in demonstrations. There were over 200,000 students, along with delegations of workers and unemployed, at the national demonstration in Rome on 16th November.

During the national week of mobilisation from 1-8th December students took over 80% of the schools in Rome. Discussions on such themes as nuclear power, the position of women and state repression were organised by the students in the occupied schools.

The movement desires to spread and grow roots in Italian society. But the politicians and the media analyse the recent events dishonestly, claiming that the 'youth of 85' are very peaceful, want only a few legitimate reforms, and in fact are more interested in fashion than in class struggle.

## REPRESSION

To understand what is happening and what kind of movement this is, we must analyse the political contradictions which have given birth to this movement; Italian reality in the light of the authoritarian restructuring of Italian capitalism and of its way of producing goods and services; the years of repression of struggles against the system and of revolutionary militancy.

In Italy, as in all the West, restructuring has imposed a great worsening in living conditions on the proletariat. The expulsion of labour from the factories has coincided with the introduction of new technologies.

Unemployment has reached very high levels. The unique feature of Italy compared with several western countries lies in the deep rooted and real force of the working class, of the students, of the unemployed, who at the beginning of the seventies fought together and resisted the process of restructuring. The trade unions and police repression tried to put a stop to this. This united front against restructuring has been broken through developments such as:

- trade union concessions to the bosses and therefore acceptance of the new model of development of capitalism;
- the growth of division within the working class;
- the use of special laws, prisons and torture when the most combative sections of the class haven't accepted these new developments.

For years the 'peace of the bosses' has reigned on the political scene. But the activity of the revolutionary movement continued throughout this period, although the movement was severely tested by five years of harsh repression, and wasn't able to regain the strength of previous years.

To this situation, a new demand for sacrifices by proletarians is now added. Everywhere the ruling class has the aim of introducing privatisation, of destroying welfare services, of making corporative agreements with the newly reunified trade union

federations (who split up in February '84 over the 'scala mobile'). These agreements involve the abolition of mechanisms which protected workers' wages from rises in the cost of living (the 'scala mobile'); the working day, rather than being reduced, either staying the same or even being lengthened. In addition last Autumn the 'financial law' (similar to the budget) was presented to parliament - it has been a heavy blow to the incomes of workers and the poor.

The new students movement, like all movements, has many different tendencies. Its true that this movement, unlike those which preceded it in Italy (1968-1977) has only timidly approached the problems and ideas which could unite in the total refusal of this society.

This situation is related to the emptiness caused by the criminalisation of an entire political generation. But nevertheless the characteristics of this movement fully enable it to impose itself on the political scene as a real movement. From the superficial demand for 'the right to study', the movement has advanced enormously, beginning to contest the values of this education system. The government has completely distorted the rules of the 'democratic way of life' by using the police to forcibly impose its control on the streets, rather than using the youth organisation of the institutional parties to keep things under control.

The movement is organising around the aim of abolishing the 'financial law', instead of reforming it, as the youth organisations of the reformist parties want to do (Communist Party etc). The movement is opening itself up to all sectors of the class, thus creating the conditions for a reunification of the class through a strategic alliance with the workers and the unemployed against the state.

The reformists of the Communist Party are playing dirty. Fulfilling the role that the ruling class wants them to play they try to keep everything within the rules of conventional political activity. They sabotage the mass assemblies, they appoint themselves as representatives of this movement to the authorities, they organise squads to beat up revolutionaries.

The government proposes amendments to the 'financial law', it allocates funds for the education under the headings: 'school buildings and desks'. It declares that it supports the youth and discovers unemployment with astonishment.

The Home Secretary acts like all his predecessors. He calls a summit on public order. He orders the police to attack the demonstrations and evict the schools which the students have occupied. He shouts about the renewed violence of Autonomia Operaia every time that an egg or a coin flies through the air towards one of the seats of power, or some fascist who has infiltrated into a demonstration 'injures himself'.

So this a movement of proletarians in struggle, with some weaknesses because it has little experience of previous struggles, such as the anti-nuclear and anti-imperialist struggles to the struggles for proletarian international solidarity, by the side of the South African, Nicaraguan and Palestinian peoples. This is a movement which once again finds itself fighting against the usual enemies and against various models of society, all of which however leave unchanged the existing class structure, the length of the working week, which reduce wages, and which don't give any vision of a different future.

*This report is by a comrade from Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy) in Rome.*



After the game youths masked in scarves overturned and set alight a caravan and stoned police vehicles.

On Feb 7th around 100 youths overturned and set fire to a police car in St. Paul's, Bristol.

## THE PIGS CAN'T RUN THE FARM!

After the uprising in Broadwater Farm, which took place after the death of Cynthia Jarrett caused by a police 'search' of her home, police repression has increased with even more viciousness than ever before.

Police have broken down doors with sledgehammers, or gained entry to homes using a 'pass key'. Phones have been tapped and police claim that they have photographs of everyone living on the estate. They have a constant occupation force of between 200/400 officers equipped with riot shields, guns, live ammunitions, mounted police and helicopters used for surveillance, on an estate of roughly 3,000 residents.

Juveniles have been questioned and taken into custody without parents being informed and access to them has been made difficult since they have been held outside the area. Police have also been questioning three year old children.

Those unlucky enough to be in police custody have suffered racial and sexual abuse, have their clothes taken from them and left naked in their cells, are denied washing facilities and strip searches have been attempted. Any confessions given to the police under these conditions must be regarded as highly suspect.

The people of Broadwater Farm have every right to defend themselves against all police harassment. As the Broadwater Farm Defence Committee say "Don't Mourn, Organise".