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YORKSHIRE

Evening Pest

The paper of Leeds Class War

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FREE

Picketing Mushrooms

PICKETS

What better way to pass time on a Saturday morning than to get up early and join a picket? This picket started last November, when 89 part time women workers refused to let Middlebrook Mushroom bosses demand even more from them, and they've been there ever since.

We went over to show our solidarity, and as we approached the mushroom factory in the middle of nowhere, you could hear the women. There may not be much traffic or passers by, but the women aren't shouting to whip up public support, they're shouting because they're angry, angry that bosses are allowed to sack workers who will not accept compulsory overtime and less money for the privilege; angry at the new scab workers who have replaced them on the factory floor.

SCABS

Just before 8am, the police cordoned us in, helping the Middlebrook Mushroom bosses keep their factory going by protecting the new scab workers. As the Stockdale coach drove them in, everybody rushed forward



shouting "SCAB SCAB SCAB." In a small community like Whitley, this is the kind of dispute that splits families - and picketers were spotting out sister-in-laws and old friends amidst the other scab workers on the coach. Even the kids at school are splitting off into scab groups and non scab groups.

SOLIDARITY

It's a difficult situation. Even though jobs are hard to come by, solidarity amongst the working class is a better way of getting a decent income, than crossing a

picket line and becoming yet more cheap labour for the bosses to use and abuse as needed.

Middlebrook Mushrooms is owned by the Multinational Corporation "BOOKER" (sponsors of the Booker Prize). They are just one of the companies driving down wages and making conditions at work worse.

MIDDLEBROOK TACTICS

Meanwhile the Middlebrook Mushroom bosses are trying to break the fight back. Some of the

women have been offered their jobs back - at a lower rate of pay; others have had court summons and fines issued against them.

The day before I went to my first Middlebrook picket, the media reported an end of this dispute. I saw no end, neither did the 70 other picketers. This dispute is not over. We should ALL be angry. The bosses at Middlebrook Mushrooms are no different from bosses anywhere else, they want us on our knees and grovelling.

FIGHTING BACK

But like the TIMEX picketers, the Middlebrook Mushroom women are making a stand for the working class. They're no longer prepared to let bosses get away with it. They've had enough of crap wages and no say in how the shows being run.

Larger pickets are taking place once a month. The next one will be on Saturday October 23rd, at 6.30am. For more information, contact 0302 770568.

Stockdale coaches (who carry the scabs) can be contacted on, Selby (0757) 706311.



Comment

One and a half per cent of sweet FA is still sweet FA. But that's what the bosses expect us to swallow this year as a wage "increase". And while we're scrabbling around trying to make ends meet, they're never short of a bob or two.

Take Stuart Ingham, the boss of Leeds United Teaching Hospitals Trust. This rich bastard has wangled himself a salary increase of over £4,000, taking his annual pay packet up to a whacking £83,000. While he's pissing it up at our expense, he expects the *real* hospital workers - some on less than £3.20 an hour - to accept an "increase" of just 1.5%. Like we said, one and a half per cent of sweet FA is still sweet FA.

It's always the same. When things get tough, it's us who have to tighten our belts. Wages get cut, working conditions get worse, health and safety goes out the window. Some of us, like the YEB shopworkers, are expected to take temporary redundancy. Others, like the women at Middlebrook Mushrooms, get the sack for standing up to the boss. And we all get hit in the pocket by VAT on fuel, the threat of water meters and every other trick in the book. "Don't price yourself out of a job," the bosses cry, "the recovery is just around the corner." The only recovery they're interested in is from their champagne and brandy hangovers.

We say bollocks to all that. Boom or slump, it doesn't matter what state the economy's in, the bosses will always try to make us work for less.

Of course there is another way of doing things, a way of living without the rich and powerful. It's not something you'll read about in the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, but next time you hear someone prattling on about making economies, remember this: the only belt worth tightening is one around the bosses' necks.

You won't 'faucet'

FILTHY RICH

In the last financial year, 1991/2, Sir Gordon Jones, chairman of Yorkshire Water, received a 9.1 per cent pay rise taking his salary and bonus up from £143,000 to £156,000, a whacking three grand a week. The other eight directors received similar increases; overall Yorkshire Water's profits increased 11.9 per cent to £123 million.



Jones - Yorks Water Boss

It's a similar story elsewhere in England and Wales, where since the water companies were privatised in 1989, water bosses have awarded themselves massive pay hikes, plus gained from some very cosy share options - e.g., Yorks Water chiefs have been able to buy shares worth £5 each on the stock exchange for less than £3. In just two years the value of water shares has doubled and the chairmen of the 10 private water companies have pocketed over £3 million.

SCAMS AND SALMONELLA

Capitalism only 'works' if companies are making a

profit, and to survive, capitalists must make ever larger profits, and accumulate even vaster sums of wealth: *accumulate or die!*, that is their law. The 'problem' for those capitalists who've bought the water companies is how to increase profits when the demand for water is fairly static and people pay a fixed rate for whatever quantity they use.

For starters they've put up the charges: on average water prices have soared by 50 per cent since privatisation, and some standing charges are now £370 a year. The threat of disconnection has increasingly been used by these unscrupulous bastards to try and force people to pay up: 55 thousand families have problems paying their bills and are being threatened with disconnection; and 21 thousand people already have been disconnected. In some parts of the country this has led to severe public health problems: in West Yorkshire the number of dysentery cases has grown. Environmental health officers are warning that diseases like gastroenteritis and salmonella, and pests like bedbugs and bodylice could return as people cut back on water use, or are disconnected.

The other scam these rich scum are using is the

introduction of water meters, so people can be billed for every last drop. They argue that this is necessary to prevent squandering of natural resources and to make us careful about how much water we all use. This is bollocks. Of course it will make us careful about how much water we will use: with some families in Leeds, for example, facing bills of £93 a quarter with water meters, whilst previously they paid £90 a year, this is not surprising.

NATURAL RESOURCES

It is important that we don't waste our natural resources, but water meters have nothing to do with conservation or 'ecology': they are about redistributing wealth from the poor to the rich. A few extra quid to water the lawn won't hit the wealthy, but poorer families are being forced to cut back on washing and using the toilet properly. Yorkshire Water is installing water meters in all new council houses. Tenants were not consulted and if a family refused a water meter they would be refused a house.

If water companies were really concerned about conserving water, they would spend money fixing the network of ancient and leaking water pipes. This is where most water is wasted. But there is no profit to be made

on us

here, so the water companies are not interested.

THE GREAT CON

The great con is that once water meters are installed in most homes, people will be using less water, and so the water companies will make less profit. And so, what will they do? Increase the price per litre, of course. We'll have to pay more for less.

The water companies in England and Wales between them own around half a million acres of land. Previously most of this land has been open for anyone to walk across. Now, with the private companies greedy for more profits, much of this land will be closed off and charges introduced for the privilege of using it. Already Yorkshire Water has tried to deny ramblers access to land in the Peak District, prompting a mass trespass there of 500 people in 1991.

FIGHTING BACK

The private water companies are attacking the working-class... they don't care about our needs, all they care about is profit... but the working-class is fighting back...

Last October residents in 5 estates in Carshalton, Surrey blocked roads to stop Thames Water contractors installing water meters and some water stopcocks have been completely sealed with cement! On 21 November 3,000 marched in the Hands



Off Our Water (HOW) demonstration in Glasgow (water is yet to be privatised in Scotland): speakers advocated non-payment of water bills; in January HOW activists cut off the water supply to the house of Scottish Secretary of State Ian Lang; and on 30 January, again in Glasgow, 8,000 took to the streets to oppose privatisation.

We can foil the water companies by:

- * physically preventing the installation of water meters, just as we stopped the bailiffs over the poll tax, this time using buckets, hoses and snowballs (with bricks in the middle);
- * joining together and stopping water disconnection by force of numbers. If we use the skills we gained from defeating the poll tax we can stop all disconnections;
- * collective non-payment of water bills;
- * mass turn-on campaigns to run the profiteering companies dry of their assets.

NEWSFILE

Nazis

The British National Party won an election victory in East London and the national press and 'respectable' politicians screamed blue murder. It's funny how Democrats never like democracy when it goes against them.

In Leeds, fascists calling themselves Combat 18 (signifying the first and eighth letter of the alphabet-Adolph Hitler OR AssHoles), the British Movement and Leeds Nazis have attacked the offices of *Northern Star*, as well as threatening other shops, groups, individuals and political organisations who speak out against them. Fascism is an attack on the Working Class as a whole; it is not *only* about racism, as some people would have us believe. At a time when we are coming under more and more attacks from the Government and the Bosses, the Nazis are helping them by trying to divide us. What we need is greater class solidarity and understanding, not allegiances with a bunch of stupid thugs.

Spy

Britain's new top spy is a woman from Leeds, Pauline Neville-Jones, also known as 'Lazer Brain', while she was at Leeds Girls' High School. Our very own 'Miss Moneypenny' joins several other Oxbridge graduates on the Joint Intelligence Committee, where she'll be responsible for 'internal intelligence' such as spying on anybody from trade unionists to football fans. The rest of her job will be taken up with coming up with dirty tricks and spreading lies about anyone the bosses want her to. The sooner someone puts a lazer to her brain the better.

God-botherer

The Right Rev. David Konstant, Bishop of Leeds, claimed recently that Religious Education was being reduced in schools to fit in with the rest of the National Curriculum. This is bad, he said, because "religion is the natural amphitheatre for reflection on moral values and behaviour". The Pest agrees! We think that children would be better off if they knew more about the church, for example, the danger of sexual abuse by vicars and priests.

It would also be useful for children to be taught about the misery and bloodshed caused by religious fools, and the horrors usually skirted over in the Bible (such as the rape and pillage of non-Hebrew tribes - on "God's" command). Moral values could be "reflected on" in discussion about illegitimate offspring of Catholic Priests. In fact a whole lot of lessons could be learned from more attention to RE.

Seriously though, does this god-botherer really think that trying to brainwash kids about pie in the sky will do them any good?

Bastard Bosses

Among the Leeds bosses that are being more bastardly than usual is N.D. Marston's in Armley. Workers who have not had a pay rise in 3 years are taking industrial action in pursuit of a 12 percent increase. Rates have fallen due to inflation to the extent that even top skilled workers have to rely on income support to get by. Bosses are threatening to sack workers who do not drop the action, taken in the form of an overtime ban and one day strikes. The union, which has followed the letter of the law in holding a ballot before calling the strike, warns of another 'Timex'-style dispute.

This is what the Tories mean when they talk about the end of the recession:

basically, workers are forced to work for ever decreasing wages while bosses just get more and more. Like the bosses at Yorkshire Electricity Board, who are cashing in on a massive shares giveaway, while 500 staff at the YEB shop have been told to accept an £80 a week pay cut or lose their jobs. YEB have recently announced increased profits of 10 percent to £156.3 million this year. Union leaders are said to be 'furious', but refuse to do anything. In fact, they negotiated the package, which includes reduced holidays and worse working conditions. If the staff don't accept the deal, YEB say the shop will shut.

Or the Yorkshire Water

bosses: Chairman, Sir Gordon 'the Gofer' Jones has awarded himself a £13,000 a year rise; Yorks Water boast of £15,000 profit every hour. Yet, workers have been offered only 1.6 percent, well below the rate of inflation - in effect, a pay cut. It's no wonder Yorks Water workers are threatening to strike. If they do it will be bad news for us, but remember who caused it, the bosses, NOT THE WORKERS!

More and more bosses seem to think they can ride roughshod over their workers, sacking anyone who doesn't accept the treatment they dish out. But more and more of us will fight back...

Harry Gration Looks North with Leeds Class War



Harry on Countdown's Conundrum

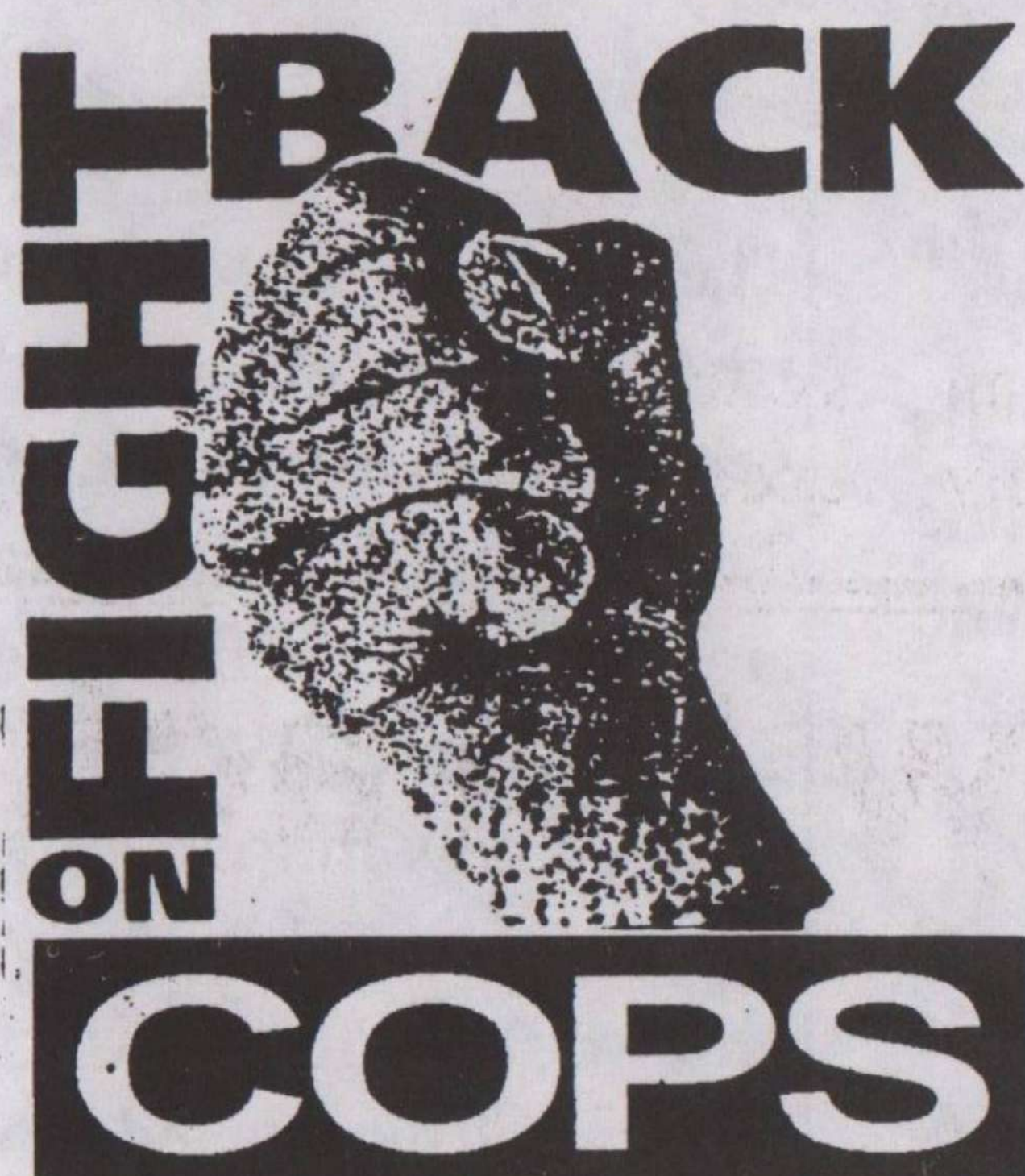
Nobody could call me a vindictive man but if there's one person I hate it's Richard Whitely. Believe me, standards aren't high in local television, but that Whitely really takes the biscuit. Let's face it, the only way that talentless tosspot gets on the screen is because he owns half of Yorkshire Television.

Talking about dickheads, me and my ex-colleague Judith Stamper were having a quiet drink in the "OSTLERS" recently when we noticed a vacant faced youth putting up Nazi style stickers. Never one to take attacks on working class unity lightly, Judith went in fists first and needless to say she soon had him eating pavement. You see, there's nothing that gets my goat more than these people with a jackboot fetish trying to blame other working-class people for the shit the bosses throw at us.

Leeds Class War wants to know what you think. So, if you have anything to say, or if you have any dirt on your boss or any of the other people running Leeds, or any stories of how people are fighting back, drop us a line and we'll publish it.

Write to:

The Pest,
c/o Leeds CW,
Box JAG,
52 Call Lane,
Leeds LS1 6DT



Lord Merlyn-Rees, the former Labour MP for South Leeds, recently visited the cells at the new Gipton "hi-tech" police station.

Unfortunately the cops let him out again in true Group 4 style. They should've thrown away the key.

Gipton nick hasn't got the reputation for strangling prisoners that the Bridewell has, but if they'd given us a call we'd have performed this one for free - and provided the trousers to do it with.

And no one would know it wasn't suicide...

Poison pen letters have been sent to a Leeds councillor and the *Yorkshire Evening Post* containing "serious allegations" about "certain people and departments". The *Yorkshire Evening Post* would be interested to see these "allegations", which have been "proved to be untrue".