

FIGHT THE TORIES FIGHT THE CUTS!

On July 22nd, Manchester City Labour Party voted by a two thirds majority that the Council make substantial cuts in services, jobs and facilities for the people of Manchester. Why?

The Tory government has reduced its grants to the city by nearly £500 million over the next 8 years. Next year's budget has a shortfall of about a quarter of the entire budget. Such drastic cuts are an attack on the living standards of working people in Manchester.

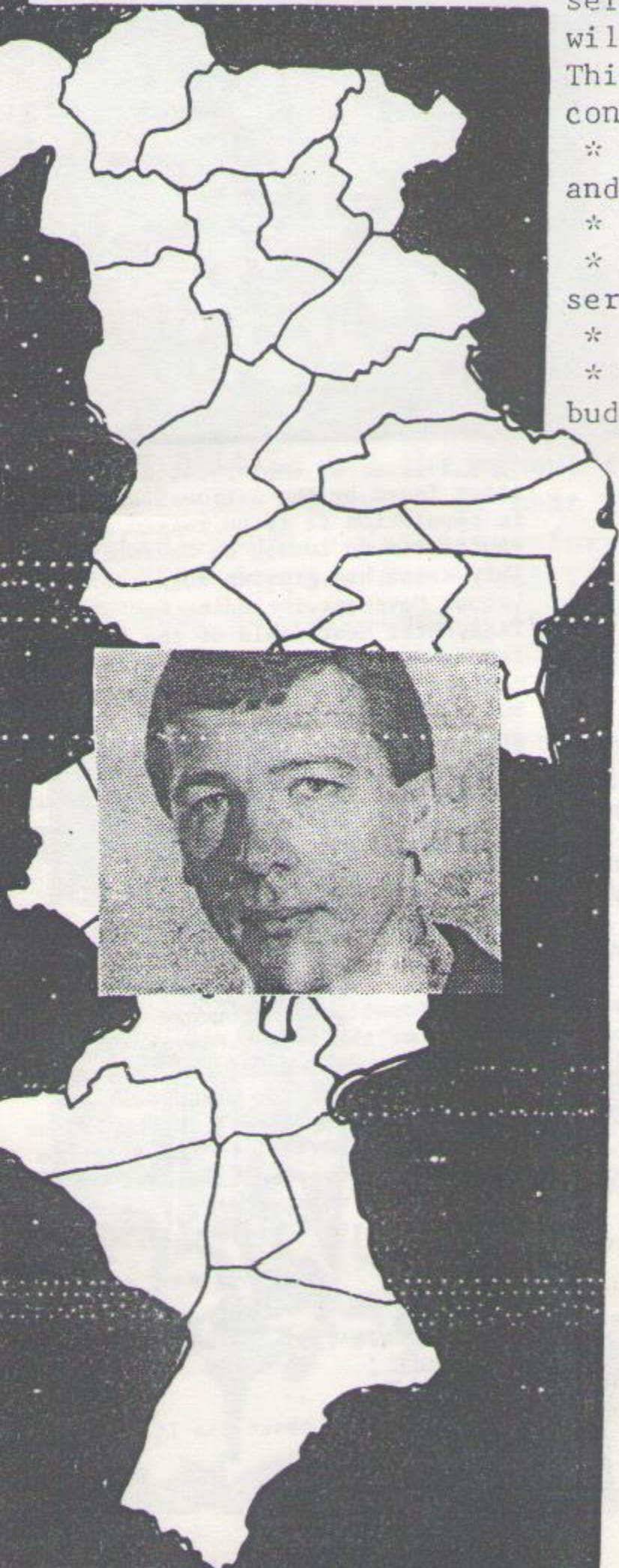
We are faced with higher unemployment, fewer and more expensive services from the Council, the rents will increase more than our wages etc. This whole package of cutbacks will concretely mean:

- * Rent increases of £2 this year and next, and substantial rate rises.
- * Shedding at least 4,000 jobs.
- * Direct cuts in running costs of services.
- * Increase in other charges.
- * Re-examination of the capital budget.

The Manchester City Labour Party and the Council leadership argue "We have no alternative but to make cuts." They argue that it is better that a Labour Council stays in office and makes cuts on behalf of the government, than to fight the government. They somehow expect people to believe that if Labour makes cuts, it is less damaging than if the government do it. They do not understand that cuts are cuts, no matter who makes them. The effect will be the same.

One thing is certain, if cuts are made then Thatcher will be the winner. This will inevitably pave the way for the new onslaught the Tories have planned - the poll tax, privatisation of council estates, renewed attacks on trade union rights, increases in racist deportations etc. If we do not prepare a fight back now these new attacks will be all the more audacious, ambitious and ruthless.

cont. back page



EDITORIAL

Socialist Action supporters believe that the Labour government must stand in total opposition to the Tory government and the interests of the class it represents.

In Manchester this means that the cuts being implemented by the City Council must be opposed, not just because they are an attack on services and the living standards of working-class people, but they hinder a united fight against the Tories. For this reason, socialists who support cuts as the lesser of two evils, believing that socialist cuts or soft cuts are possible, should think again. The left must unite, but this unity can only be on the basis of the struggles, and in the interests of the working-class, oppressed and disadvantaged - locally nationally and internationally.

It means that we must stand firm behind the South African masses, and particularly now behind the struggle of the Black miners. We need to support the Anti-Apartheid movement and all its activities.

Finally it means that socialists should be clear that we have nothing in common with the interests of imperialism in the Middle East, or anywhere else, be it South Africa, Central America, the Far East, or on our own doorstep in Ireland.

The dispatch of Royal Navy minesweepers to the Gulf is an escalation of the conflict in the region. Clearing mines, is in reality, clearing ground for direct imperialist intervention and further slaughter.

We must be clear - Iran has the right to defend its national sovereignty, whatever we think of its government.



The issue of employment discrimination faced by the Nationalist/Catholic population is to be raised at a conference in London on November 28th. This event has growing support in the Labour Movement, including Ken Gill of TASS, Peter Heathfield of the NUM, the leadership of the NUR and several members of the NUT leadership; to name but a few. The LCI is building the conference nationally and locally; and all trade union bodies are encouraged to send delegates to discuss this important issue. It is a question which particularly affects British unions with members in the North of Ireland.

Socialist Action supports all these activities, and many of our supporters are active in the LCI both locally and nationally. We encourage all members of the Labour Movement to support the demands of the LCI, especially the demand for withdrawal. The LCI is promoting a call in the Labour Party for withdrawal in the lifetime of a Labour government. We call on all Labour Party delegates to support this demand at Party Conference. At the same time we say:

**TROOPS OUT NOW !
SELF DETERMINATION FOR THE IRISH PEOPLE
AS A WHOLE !**

For information about the LCI in Manchester,
Contact Paul Clarke, Tel. 061 963 3193.

Britain out of Ireland

It is time for the British Labour Movement to break with its past on Ireland; a past which includes Labour governments sending in troops in 1969, and introducing the mis-named Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974, not to mention the Labour Opposition refusing to support the demands of the H-Block Hunger Strikers in 1981.

The Labour Committee on Ireland, campaigning inside the Labour Party for the withdrawal of Britain from the North of Ireland, also campaigns around a series of other demands. Through the autonomous women's section, Labour Women for Ireland, it takes up the question of strip searching of women Republican prisoners - an act of gross political intimidation and sexual assault. It supports the campaign against

the use of plastic bullets which have killed and maimed many innocent people including children. It also takes up the cases of the people framed for the Guildford pub bombing - The Guildford Four and the McGuire family.

The LCI is very keen to give Sinn Fein a platform, particularly in the Labour Movement. In Manchester, it was central to organising the delegation to the Council from a group of Sinn Fein councillors, as part of a national tour. The local group has also made proposals to the Council regarding policy on the PTA, which is a continuing threat to the civil liberties of Irish people in Britain.

Labour and Ireland has a network of sellers. Supporters take magazines to sell at Labour Party and Union meetings, Irish clubs and demos, at work and to friends.

Write: **Labour and Ireland**
c/o LCI, BM Box 5355,
London

**LABOUR
AND
IRELAND**

For the first time since the triumph of the Nicaraguan Revolution in 1979, the governments of the other four Central American countries signed a peace treaty with Nicaragua on 7th August.

This has been achieved directly against the wishes of the American administration. It represents a victory for the Nicaraguan people in their attempt to stop the US-backed Contra war which has cost them so much.

The Irangate hearings exposed the illegal lengths to which the US was prepared to go. For seven years the US has attacked Nicaragua in many ways - militarily through the Contra, by economic blockade, by mining international waterways around the Nicaraguan coast, (the righteous indignation of US imperialism about mines in the international waters of the Gulf springs to mind here), and by attempts at diplomatic isolation.

This policy has become discredited throughout Latin America. The Latin American sponsored "Contradora" peace initiative was rejected by the US. In Honduras the peasants and Indians are increasingly hostile to their lands being used as a military base.

Unfortunately the 7 years of war has taken a massive toll - 20,000 dead, half the country's income being spent on defence, cancellation of many development projects - all of which add up to an enormous crisis for Nicaragua.

In Britain and throughout the world we have to make people aware of what is going on in Central America. Campaigns for political and material support are vital if peace is to be achieved and Nicaraguan self-determination defended.



If you want to join the campaign to defend Nicaragua, or just find out more, then contact Central America Solidarity Campaign. (Jane Tel. 061 477 7668)
or
Twin Sisters (Women's) Group (Kay, Tel. 061 861 8081)
or
Manchester-Puerto Cabezas Direct Links (Chris, Tel 061 226 4405)



S.A. MINERS

The biggest ever strike in South Africa began on Monday 10th August when 340,000 miners walked out of the mines. The Strike called by South Africa's largest non-racial Trade Union, the NUM, is aimed at six big mining houses owning about two thirds of South Africa's Gold and Coal Mines. The NUM is demanding a living wage, increased annual leave and increased death compensation.

Observers predicted it would pose a serious threat if the NUM succeeded in calling out 200,000 miners. In the event, even the Chamber of Mines, representing the mining houses had to admit that over 220,000 miners were on strike. Meanwhile, the NUM claimed that 340,000 miners were out, shutting 42 out of 46 targetted Pits, and another 2 mines where the Union isn't recognised.

The NUM accused management of using force and "all the dirty tricks in the book" in order to break the Strike. Large quantities of false pamphlets were circulated in the name of the Union, telling miners that the strike had been called off. In the first week of the strike, 240 miners were injured and another 200 arrested in clashes with mine Security forces. There were also reports of miners being forced underground at gunpoint, and of police raids on NUM offices. In an effort to counter this violence the NUM has told miners to leave the compounds and return to the homelands. This also reflects their view that there will be no quick solution to the dispute.

The message emblazoned across the front page of the NUM News Strike Special accurately reflects the reality of life for South African miners.

"The bosses get richer, the workers get poorer. Now is the hour!"

The mine owners are reaping huge profits which last year totalled £2,625 million from Gold, and £989 million from Coal. Meanwhile, the black workforce face some of the worst working conditions in South Africa, and falling real wage-rates. Independent sources estimated that in the first week of the Strike, three of the six mining houses, Gencor, Johannesburg Consolidated Investment and Anglo-American Corporation had lost about £27 million in potential profit - about 67% of the miners' wage claim. As well as appalling weekly wage rates of about £30 - £34, the miners suffer horrendous living and working conditions. The miners are employed hundred of miles away from their homes and rarely see their families who they are supporting. They are kept in compounds, more like concentration camps, often being housed 20 to a room. They work very deeply underground, in very high temperatures in a dirty and dangerous occupation, with very low safety standards. Last year almost 700 miners died in the Gold mines alone and another 1,000 suffered permanent disabilities.

liverpool dockers impose sanctions

Following their recent decision to block imports of Uranium from Namibia and South Africa, Liverpool Dockers have been engaged in a dispute with management.

The dockers are refusing to handle Uranium coming into the country even though there is no direct evidence linking it with apartheid. Much of the Uranium entering Britain originates from Namibia but this is carefully hidden by the South African government via an international laundering operation, in order to dodge the Sanctions issue.

Workers are therefore demanding that management provide conclusive proof that the Uranium is not of Namibian origins, before they consent to move it.

The action of the Liverpool Dockers is a model for us all.

national demo



Last year's National Demonstration attracted over 100,000 people with a quarter of a million attending the festival.

This year's demo has been called for Saturday 24th October and is around the theme SANCTIONS NOW. This year's event promises to be even bigger and more successful than the last and it already has the full backing of the TUC.

Plans should be being made now to ensure the widest possible mobilisation of Trade Unions, Black Organisations, Labour Parties etc. ALL OUT ON THE 24th.

For details/info. Contact Greater Manchester A.C., PO Box 21 (M1) Manchester 18.

ON THE MARCH

The IUM is not only the largest Union in South Africa, but probably the most politically influential. It played an important part in bringing about the formation of COSATU, the main T.U. federation. It has also lead the Unions into a more overtly political role in challenging apartheid. To this end, for instance, they recently adopted the Freedom Charter. This combined with increasing moves by the government towards war with the unions, and greater repression, promises to make this strike a major political battle between apartheid and the Union movement.

The South African government has already warned that it is ready to step in with legal moves to "redress the balance between employers and employees." Already, during the recent rail strike, legislation was introduced in an attempt to block vital international solidarity from reaching the strikers. In addition, security forces were responsible for bombing the COSATU headquarters.

The COSATU Central Executive Committee, meeting shortly before the Strike began, discussed solidarity action from its other affiliates, which it described as being crucial. Plans were being made to hold strike ballots amongst workers in other unions relating to the mining companies, and shop stewards were being urged to bring pressure to bear on the mining houses. Significantly, COSATU warned that any State intervention, or death of strikers would result in generalised strike action from all COSATU affiliates.

Within hours of the Strike starting Arthur Scargill was making moves to launch an international appeal. In Britain a special Strike Fund has been set up, channelled through the British NUI headquarters in Sheffield, and all NUI branches are being urged to organise Hit Collections. In the Manchester area, solidarity is being organised by the Anti-Apartheid movement via street collections. In addition, attempts are being made to establish contact with those who were active in the Miners' Support Committees.

One early focus for Solidarity Action will be the "Sanctions Against South African Coal Conference" on September 19th. This conference, organised jointly by the NUI and the AAF, was planned well before the Strike. Its main aim is to launch the campaign against South African coal imports to Britain and the EEC. Coming at such an opportune time the conference reflects the importance which Scargill and the NUI place on support for their South African counterparts.

It is hoped that Cyril Ramaphosa of the South African NUI will still be able to address the conference. Other speakers will include Peter Heathfield, Women Against Hit Closures, Mike Terry of the IUM and the Namibia Support Committee.



struggles continue despite repression

Its over 14 months since the SA regime imposed its latest State of Emergency on June 12th 1986. During this period well over 20,000 people have been thrown into prison, almost half of these being under 18, and some as young as 8. Many have been kept in solitary confinement, tortured and refused legal aid. Their only crime has been to fight apartheid.

The AAF in conjunction with a number of other organisations, has launched a national petition campaign to "Free all apartheid's detainees." The petition, aimed at the UN, Margaret Thatcher and the SA authorities, is to be handed in on December 10th, the UN Human Rights Day.

The intense level of repression brought about by the State of Emergency lead to a number of early setbacks for the liberation movement, especially around the People's Power project. None the less it is a testament to the courage and determination of the South African people that none of these setbacks have been permanent. On the contrary, over the last year the struggle has deepened and intensified, with new leaders coming to the fore and new organisations of struggle developing.

Most notably has been the recent formation of S.Y.O., an organisation of half a million youth, built around slogans such as "Freedom or Death!"; the dramatic growth in the Trade Union SARWU during the rail strike; and the details now emerging of a new organisation of South African women, organised in the ULP.

VIRAJ MENDIS MUST STAY !

It is 8 months since Viraj Mendis took sanctuary in the Church of Ascension in Hulme, in order to escape a deportation order from the Home Office. While the specific case rests on Viraj's own demand to be treated as a political refugee, at risk of arrest, torture and murder in Sri Lanka - contrary to the assertions of both the Sri Lankan and British governments - in reality the issue is at the heart of the struggle against the racism of the Tory government and of the British immigration laws. In fact, it is because of Viraj's own commitment to this struggle that the Home Office was so keen to deport him in the first place.

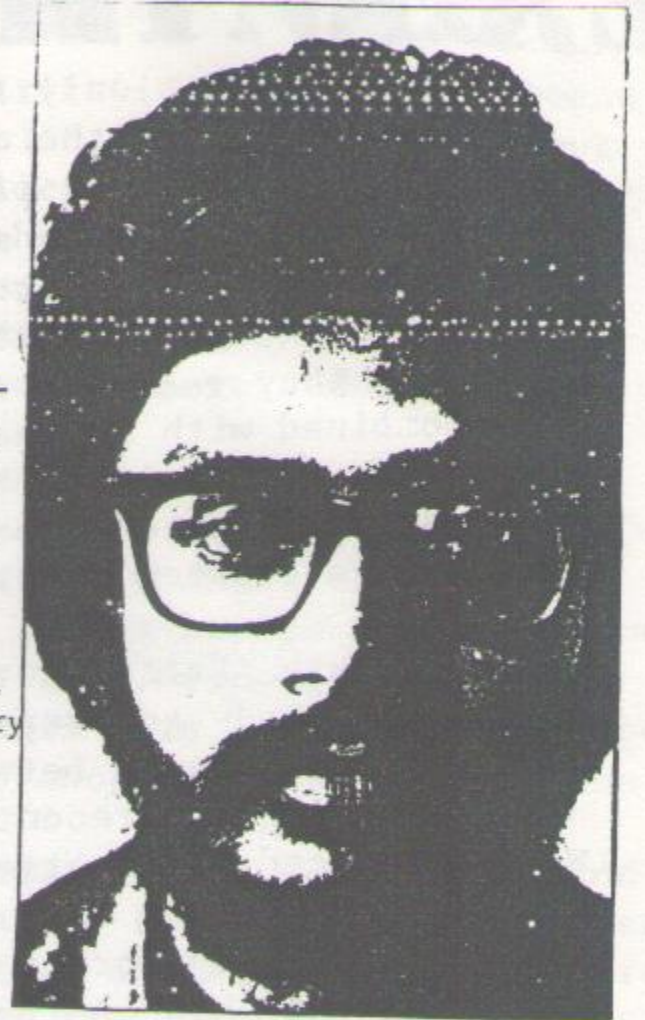
Racist opposition to the campaign has taken different forms: there have been well publicised attacks by fascist gangs, at least two resulting in serious wounding, and necessitating a round-the-clock guard rota. There has also been a fairly heavy stream of poisonous reporting and comment in the bourgeois press. The local Manchester Evening News has tended to vacillate between vicious hostility and cautious sympathy, probably reflecting the extreme polarisation in Manchester on the issue. It is clear that the attacks are not entirely unrelated to hostile press-coverage. Manchester City Council, particularly concerned about the local elections, gave in to such racist pressure, by failing to give Viraj the job which they had offered him. Contrary to popular myth, this was a real job, not created for his benefit, and for which he had been interviewed twice.

The recent High Court decision to uphold the Home Office ruling was another setback for the campaign. However, support is extremely strong, and still growing. Trade Unionists, including several national unions support the campaign, as does the NEC of the Labour Party, the leader of the Liberals, and large sections of the Church; along with many other individuals and organisations. The level of support was demonstrated by the march in Manchester on July 11th, when thousands of people marched in defence of Viraj's right to stay. At the same time, the march was a useful focus for many other Immigration Campaigns, such as those of Barbara Ahmed and Syed Rahman. This has always been an important feature of the campaign.

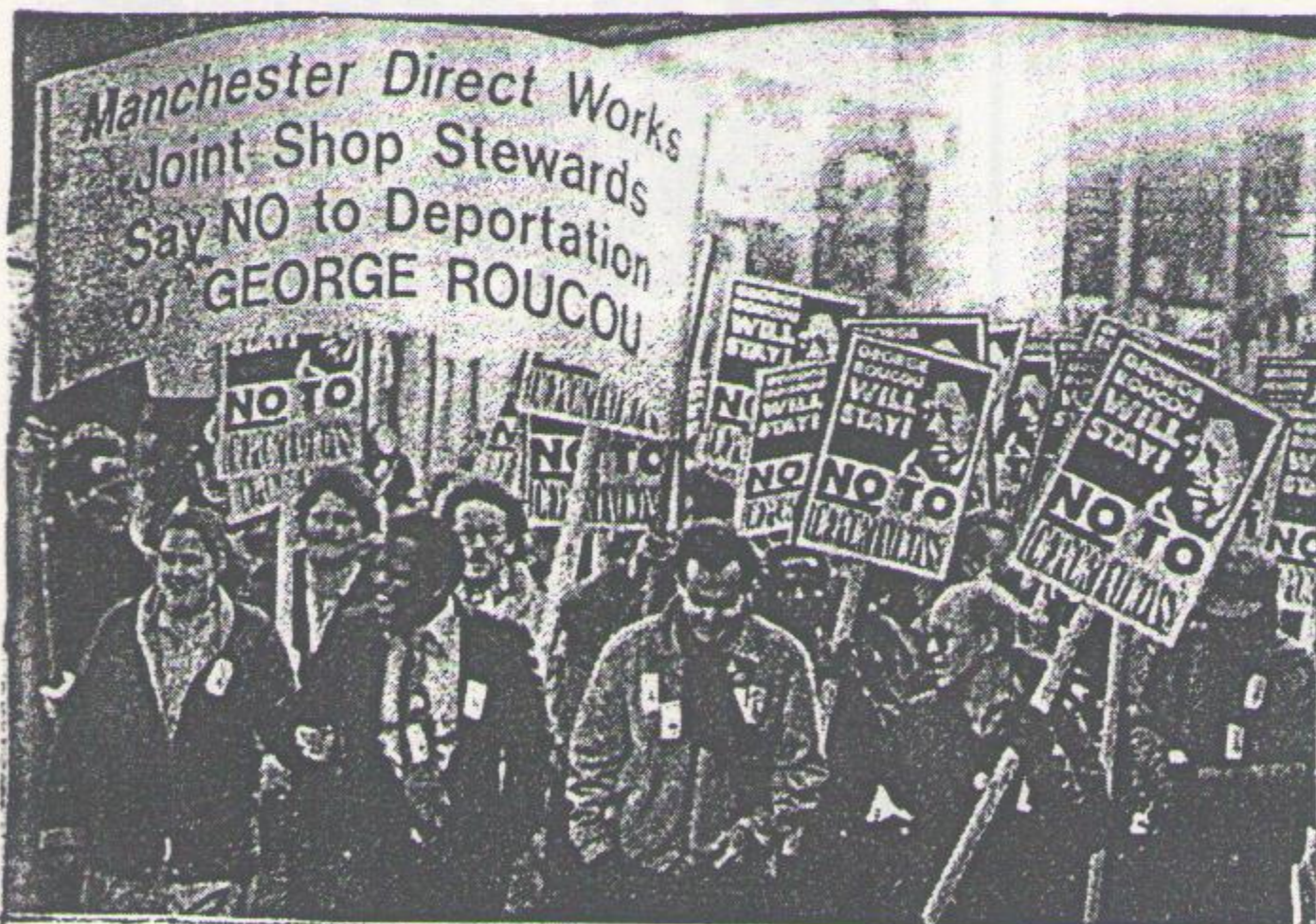
Socialist Action calls on the Labour Movement in Manchester to step up support for Viraj, and we appeal to all individuals to help in the following ways:-

- * Get speakers to your meetings from the campaign.
- * Write to the Home Office, newspapers, MPs etc. in support of Viraj.
- * Get donations of money to the campaign.
- * Offer to go on the rota at the sanctuary preferably on a regular basis, and get others to do the same.
- * Attend the regular marches in support of Viraj.

For further information: Contact VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester. Tel. 061 234 3168.



Defend the immigration aid unit



George Roucou was the latest in a long line of Black people who have successfully fought against deportations in Manchester.

The Immigration Aid Unit is to be set up in order that present and future campaigns can benefit from the experience of successful cases, as well as having a place to meet.

The funding promised by the Council is an example of the progressive role it has generally played in the fight against the racist immigration laws. However, if the cuts go ahead such funding is threatened. We have to ensure that the unit is defended against any such threat, as well as fighting for further initiatives from the Labour and Trade Union movement.

Barbara Ahmed, callously separated for 2 years from her husband, who has never even seen his daughter, - and hundreds of other cases - should be a constant reminder of how important the struggle is.

The fight goes on

On 21st January 1987, 97 men and women were sacked from Senior Colman, a small engineering plant in Sale, for withdrawing their labour in support of four colleagues who had been dismissed for failing to fill in new detailed time sheets, which the management had refused to negotiate with the union.

8 months into the strike, Graham Whyatt, AEU Convener, spoke to Socialist Action...

We won the union in 1983. Before that it was a non-union shop with different rates of pay - and if you weren't a blue eyed boy things were hard. Management never liked the union as they were used to complete power, not to a workforce that was organised and negotiating. Then in July 1986 the Engineering Group bought the factory. The vast majority of the Group's plants are non-unionised; and war was declared against us!

Management planned and engineered the dispute and every dirty trick in the book has been thrown against us - from scabs to injunctions and intimidation; but we have not wavered in our legitimate demands - re-instatement with compensation for all sacked workers. We have learnt the lessons of the Silent Night dispute and other struggles; the importance of the picket line, the importance of going out to campaign for support, the importance of publicity; and that money is the key. Through blacking, we have hit the company where it hurts. We have exposed Roland Smith; Chair of our Group, Ex-Board member of Silent Night, Deputy Chair of British Rail and Chair-Elect of British Aerospace. He addressed the National Joint Shop Steward Committee of British Aerospace and they'll now be meeting with Roland Smith. Their plant donated £1,000 to our strike fund this week.

We've already won a great battle. Colman's managing director and financial director have both been sacked by the Group Board - but we're still here.

Under massive pressure, some of us have taken increased money offers, but the 31 of us that are carrying on are the activists and nothing management can do will have affect on us. We've learnt a lesson - stand up for principles, work hard and fight hard - and when you get a break - go for the jugular!

Our fight is everyone's fight. We're fighting for trade union rights. Someone has to fight and when we've won, it'll be a beacon for the Labour Movement.

Our firm is a multi-national, with a company in South Africa, which is based on cheap labour; but the South African miners are paving the way, and if they stand firm they will win victory. Apartheid is taking on the big guns first - just as Thatcher took on the British miners. The miners' strike was engineered just as Wapping and our own dispute was. We have no choice. We will fight for as long as it takes!

**DON'T BUY
FROM:
SENIOR
COLMAN**



support group in action

A Senior Colman Support Group, set up on a Manchester area basis, and under the leadership of the Strike Committee, works to co-ordinate city-wide support for the strike; and where possible to seek solidarity from elsewhere in the country.

Activities have ranged from encouraging solidarity visits to the picket line, street collections, helping to arrange factory tours and solidarity exchanges, taking speakers to Labour Movement bodies, and arranging welfare assistance for the strikers and their families.

Financial support is especially important now, after 8 months on strike. Tory policy, alongside attacking trade union rights, - is "Starve them back to work", or in the case of the Colman strikers "Starve them into accepting they'll never get their jobs back."

To consolidate and step-up support throughout the Labour Movement in Manchester, the Support Group is currently arranging contacts in all Labour Party Constituencies with a view to Wards setting up local street collections, adopting a family and sending delegates to the Support Group meetings.

Links with Silent Night have proved invaluable for setting up the Adopt - a - Family scheme, which is a priority for L.P. and Trade union branches to take up. Another scheme under discussion, is a planned Benefit night for which Mike Harding has already offered his services. The Support Group would be glad to hear of any bands or performers who would be willing to take part in support.

After 8 months, both management and the Labour movement realise that the dispute is not going to go away - it is vital, however that the dispute continues to victory. That is our responsibility. This means in every Labour Party Ward, Trade Union branch and workplace, every opportunity is taken to raise moral, political and crucially, financial support for the strikers.

To discuss ways of helping the strikers win their struggle / For donations to the Strike Fund; Contact Tony Lowe, c/o AEU, 43 The Crescent, Salford. Tel. 736 5206



FIGHT THE TORIES~FIGHT THE CUTS!

We need to establish a united campaign of all people willing to fight against the cuts, redundancies or rent/rate increases. We have to organise and coordinate actions that can weld people together under a single banner against the cuts. We need to support industrial actions, rent boycotts, demonstrations any other form of mass actions or mobilisations, if and when they occur.

We do not pretend that there is an atmosphere of defiance, or that thousands will take to the streets at the drop of a hat. In the wake of the defeat of the Miners' Strike, as well as Labour's failure at the General Election, the morale of working people is low. However, we have no choice, faced with another five years of Tory rule.

It is time to make a stand. It is time for Manchester people to show the Tories what we think of their policies.

If we can mobilise trade unionists, tenants, black communities, women's organisations, youth and other oppressed and disadvantaged groups; then it would be possible to exert great pressure on the government. Of course, there is no guarantee that in the end the Labour movement would win such an all-out confrontation with the government. However, the chances would be vastly improved if leaders of the Labour movement would organise such a campaign. But more importantly, we have to win all Labour movement members as well as all those who will suffer the effects of cuts, to a perspective of action.

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The legacy of Antonio Gramsci

SAVE ANCOATS CASUALTY!!

MARCH TO LOBBY NORTH MANCHESTER HEALTH AUTHORITY.
MONDAY SEPTEMBER 7TH.

Contact Ancoats Action Committee, Casualty Dept., Ancoats Hospital, Old Mill Street, Manchester.

SUPPORT THE SIT IN!!

SUPPORT SENIOR COLLEGE STRIKERS!

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS, THURSDAYS, 7.30, TOWN HALL, MANCHESTER.

Further details/info.

Tony Lowe, c/o VEU, 41 The Crescent, Salford. Tel. 061 736 5206.

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