

# RESISTANCE

No.5 Jun-July '97

# MAYDAY MAYHEM!

## Magnet furious as protesters stage rooftop demo

**SUPPORTERS OF THE SACKED MAGNET WORKERS** from Darlington had the company in a fury last month as they occupied the forecourt of their Newcastle showroom as others took to the roof. The protesters chose May Day to send a double whammy to the bosses at Magnet and to the New Labour government with the message that **Direct Action is here to stay.**

Around 50 people gathered, including a delegation of the sacked workers to celebrate May Day traditional style. While the roof group draped banners over the side of the building, others on the ground explained to motorists and passers by the reason for the action. It is now 10 months since 300 workers walked out of the plant in a pay dispute. Management refused to negotiate and added that anyone returning to work must break their ties with their respective unions. Defiantly, they stood together and last September, Magnet sacked the lot.

As the red faced boss at the store in George Street looked on helpless, the demonstrators chanted and sang, with those on the roof releasing red and black balloons onto the crowd below. TV and press reporters turned up to



find out what was happening, while a couple of musicians added to the fun.

### ISA

Later on that day, the group walked en masse into the main Job Centre at New Croft House in town in an action against the Job Seekers Allowance. Fearing a repeat of last years May Day office occupation of the managers office, the staff wasted no time in getting on the phone to the cops, who ran down to the dole office from nearby Market Street police station. Luckily (for them) the demonstrators left not long afterwards, not wanting to add to the hassle of claimants waiting to be seen at the office. The message had been taken though: We can and will take action whenever WE decide against attacks on our jobs or our

benefits be it from bosses or politicians.

### Common Struggles

The actions demonstrated the fact that ordinary people do have the power to change things themselves, even if the result of their efforts isn't immediately apparent. Dates such as May Day are important in claiming back the proud tradition of resistance by working people. But rather than purely celebrating our history, as important as that is, it is a day to unite our common struggles which are as important, if not more so, than those of previous generations. To everyone who took part in the day and continued this tradition we say nice one!

### OUT NOW...

**BEYOND RESISTANCE: A Revolutionary Manifesto for the Millenium** £2  
**Where There's Brass There's Muck. Ecology and Anarchism** £1  
Both available from address overleaf



## **GIT OF THE MONTH SCABBY SCUM**

There was no contest over this month's chosen scumbags, to receive the "Git" award. While on the picket line at the Magnet plant on Sunday 25th May, 7 shady looking characters pulled up in a taxi, jumped out and started to attack the few pickets who were assembled there.

The incident occurred at around 11.20pm (after the pubs had shut and presumably where these arseholes had just been). Not happy with attacking the strikers, they proceeded to turn over a portacabin and set fire to the furniture which the folks had been using to make 24 hour pickets a little more comfortable. They then jumped back into their taxi and scurried off.

Now call us cynical if you like, but this incident bears all the hallmarks of something more planned than a few pissed up yobs thinking they'd have a bit of fun. Tactics like this have been used in the past by those who have a bit more at stake by workers striking than most people, and it wouldn't surprise us if someone had paid them to intimidate the strikers off the picket line. At the very least the blame can be leveled at some of the scabs at the plant, who most people think are responsible.

The one thing which is certain is that this incident has only made the strikers more resolute than ever. If dirty tactics are starting to be used, then we have a few of our own. We're sure Magnet and their shady henchmen would be inflamed to discover what they are. Know what we mean?

## **Black Panther in Newcastle**

Former Black Panther and now community activist Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin came to Newcastle last month as part of his speaking tour of the UK and Europe. Lorenzo spent 15 years in prison for hijacking a plane to Cuba in 1969 in an attempt to escape the notorious US Counter Intelligence

Programme (Cointelpro) of the late 60s and an FBI "shoot to kill" order targeting Lorenzo and other militants of the Black Power movement.

Since his release he has worked in his home town of Chattanooga as a community organiser and has travelled extensively promoting the ideas of autonomous self organised communities predominantly in black working class areas of the states. As author of *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, Lorenzo spoke about his life and his activities to a public meeting at the unemployed centre in town. During the course of the day, Lorenzo exchanged experiences with activists in Newcastle which seemed to be useful for everyone concerned. A full transcript of an interview with Lorenzo can be obtained by sending an SAE to the address below.

## **CAMERA SHY**

It's not just the folks at *Resistance* who are wary of Closed Circuit TV Cameras (CCTV). It seems residents in Newcastle's west end have a few criticisms of their own. What's more theirs is an estate held up as an example of the effectiveness of CCTV schemes.

Scotswood was the first estate in the country to get this type of system at a cost of over £170,000, but although crime has dropped this doesn't give the full picture. What has been revealed is that crime has fallen in the areas monitored by cameras, only to be displaced to the other half of the estate. It appears plans are underway to install a CCTV system in the remaining half of the estate, pushing the total cost to over £300,000. No doubt crime will be pushed to surrounding areas which will then be lumbered with cameras. Before long every activity in the area will be recorded for use by cops and soft-cops.

Of course now that the decisions have been made and acted upon we hear that the residents in Scotswood don't even want the system. A Scotswood resident suggested "the £170,000 allocated to the other half would be better spent on re-lighting, because it would be a real benefit, in making people feel safe and reducing levels of crime".

This is just another example of people working out their own solutions to the problems facing them daily, in this case a less intrusive and cheaper option.

## **DSS get physical (again)**

Following up on our report in *Resistance* No.2 on how Benefits Agency tests had disabled a woman suffering from a spinal condition; it seems that staff have been ordered to get people off incapacity benefits: by killing them! (well nearly).

Last month 59 year old Ralph Melville was rushed to hospital after collapsing in front of staff at Arden House in Gosforth. He had been appealing against their decision to stop his Incapacity Benefit after they declared him fit for work despite having suffered minor heart attacks and suffering from angina and arthritis of the spine.

Staff were more concerned with asking if he could lift a bag of potatoes rather than if going back to work could kill him. As he got out his medication during the test, his interviewer started laughing! An ambulance was only called after Mr Melville appealed for one. If this is the shape of things to come then it is clear that we need to be organised to take action. On our own, we can be victimised, but together we stand a better chance of defending the precious little we have left of welfare rights. If you have been treated unfairly by the Benefits Agency contact the Unemployed Action Group on 0191 222 0299.

# **ORGANISE!**

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