

In our society, black people are doubly oppressed. They are exploited at work, and in addition they have to put up with racial prejudice and racial discrimination, which means that they often end up working in the worst paid jobs, living in the worst houses, black kids being segregated in the lowest classes of the worst schools.

The presence of black people in this country is due to Britain's position as an imperialist power. Britain has drained the raw materials and resources of the third world to build herself up as an industrial power; the result is that these countries, robbed of their natural riches, have remained underdeveloped; providing little employment for people there. So people have come to Britain from the third world in search of work, and this immigration has been encouraged by successive governments since the war, since these immigrants could be used as a source of cheap labour by the British bosses to do jobs which white workers were no longer prepared to do for those wages, and at the same time this supply of cheap labour would help to keep down the wages of British workers. At the same time, if the working class was racially divided, it would be easier to control, and the ruling class would have an instant scapegoat for its failures to provide adequate housing, health, and welfare facilities.

These strategies have not been altogether successful. The black workers have been as militant as the white workers in fighting for higher wages, sometimes more militant. And they have often been the first to challenge the inadequacy of housing and welfare provisions. But racism in the white working class has meant that the black workers' struggle has often had to develop separately.

The trades unions, which traditionally protected the wages and privileges of skilled organised workers, were alarmed by this flood of unskilled labour, which they saw as a threat to the gains they had fought for over the years. Rejected by the union bureaucracies, and rejecting their bureaucratic and limited strategies, the immigrant workers began to forge new weapons of struggle, at once more autonomous, and embracing wider areas of social experience. The immigrant communities, with their close kinship networks, could provide formidable support in strike situations, and introduce social issues into the struggles; having less tradition of control by remote hierarchies, their organisations had great cohesion and solidarity. An example is the recent strike by Asian workers at the Imperial Typewriters factory in Leicester.

Because they have no historic attachment to the 'British way of life' or the institutions of the British Labour movement, the immigrant workers have dispensed with the old capitalist bogeys of 'the national interest', the ethic of a fair days work for a fair days pay, and the moral value attached to work by large sections of the labour movement; they have substituted the stark confrontation of capital and labour - the bosses' interests against theirs. They have introduced a new internationalism to the class struggle in this country, an awareness of the importance of anti-imperialist struggles in former colonies, and at the same time, black militants reared in the ghettos of Europe and America have become involved in these struggles.

Immigrant workers have come to Britain, the Irish between the wars, the West Indians in the post-war boom years, and the Indians and Pakistanis in the sixties, bringing with them ~~xxxxxx~~ different and specific traditions of organisation and struggle, and they have totally changed the nature of the working class in Britain. By organizing together independently, black people can find the collective strength to confront racist oppression, and by exposing its ~~worxxx~~ anti-working class roots, to truly unite the working class, changing themselves, their oppressors, and the nature and breadth of the class struggle in the process.

The ruling class will try to use black people's struggles, by encouraging them to participate in administering and policing their own oppression. Already, especially in the USA, the black struggle has been used to ~~xxxx~~

accelerate the growth of a black elite in social work, business, and the professions - an elite that the white ruling class hopes will win the leadership of black people, and thus defuse the struggle for liberation. We have seen that many black struggles do not aim for a spurious equality under capitalism, but have an autonomous anti-capitalist direction; these are the black people's struggles which Big Flame seeks to promote and develop.