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For socialist renewal!



For Workers' Liberty!

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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Sectarian attacks spiral

## IRELAND:

# Repression

# is

*The Birmingham Six, victims of British justice, celebrate their final release from prison this March. Internment will simply multiply such cases of injustice. It did no good last time, and much harm. The same will be true this time round.*



# no answer!

**Tories plan internment: see centre pages**



Fields and Nellist: support them against the witch-hunt but not against Labour candidates

## Youth conference restricts debate

By Angela Chorley

Labour's Youth Conference (15-17 Nov) closed with speeches from Party General Secretary Larry Whitty and newly-elected National Executive Youth representative, Claire Ward.

Larry Whitty said that some people say that there is not much difference between the Tories and Labour, but, he stressed, there is a lot of difference. It's a pity that we did not get to see it during the weekend conference, especially around the issues of the economy and the trade unions.

The Youth Conference has been restructured to give the major say to Kinnockite student Labour Clubs, and trade union youth reps, but the few Labour Party Young Socialists branches that still manage to exist despite ultra-obstructive rules still have a voice. The numbers, however, are far too small.

We must build up LPYS branches and get more delegates to next year's conference, when hopefully a Labour government will be in power. We also need to push for a greater amount of time to be spent on resolutions rather than on workshops, which are all very well but rather bland.

The Saturday afternoon session was the most lively part of the conference. Throughout the conference, there was talk of getting the youth voice heard more in the Labour Party, but resolutions were only given two hours.

Most of the resolutions were mellow in content, so there was little debate until the motions on the economy. Resolutions from Cardiff North CLP, University of Sussex Labour Club, Kingston Poly Labour Club and Bradford University Labour Club all put confidence in the market and closer links with the International Monetary Fund, using money from taxes paid by ordinary working class people to invest in factories and workplaces that are run by the bosses not by the workers.

All the resolutions were about making capitalism better. But speakers from the floor called for Labour to put the interests of the working class first, regardless of whether or not the bosses can afford it, and argued that working class people should not be made to pay for the bosses' mistakes.

It was proposed that we need a national minimum wage, repeal of the anti-trade union laws, and the charter for workers' rights.

The reply was that "not all bosses are bad". We were told that we had no right to be in the Labour Party and should be kicked out.

It was a great witch-hunt speech from Lorna Fitzsimmons; John Major would have been proud of her.

The left rallied at the Labour Party Socialists' fringe meeting, which was well-attended with a speaker from 'Searchlight'. There was a productive discussion about the growing racism and fascist attacks in Britain.

The Saturday morning workshops were supposed to be an opportunity to find out more about what Labour policies are about various issues. But in the workshop about trade unions, the issue of abolishing the anti-union laws was evaded.

Attitudes towards the block vote at Labour Party conference were also discussed. The general agreement was to keep the block vote, but how strong it should be relative to the CLP vote caused many different opinions to be expressed.

# Labour Party Socialists reject Militant breakaway

By Colin Foster

At its AGM on 17 November, "Labour Party Socialists" committed

itself firmly to fight for the maximum Labour vote in every constituency at the General Election.

The AGM was unanimous in rejecting Militant's turn to running "Real Labour" or "Militant Labour" candidates against Labour. It also overwhelmingly rejected an odd proposal from Socialist Outlook supporters, who wanted to slam the door on Militant's escapade but then open it again a little to allow a possibility of supporting Dave Nellist and Terry Fields against official Labour candidates.

LPS, they proposed, should campaign for wide labour movement backing for Nellist and Fields to stand, but then not vote for them if it should turn out that they ran as Militant candidates (as of course they would)! I think this is called slamming the door and catching your fingers in it.

LPS will give full backing to the "Socialists for Labour" campaign, which held its conference the previous day (16

November) and will be organising for a socialist voice within the official Labour election campaign, reaching out to trade unionists in particular.

Times are hard for the Labour left, and the AGM was small, with some 80 present; but LPS could look back on a year of playing a constructive and

realistic attitude in an often fractious Labour Left, and valuable initiatives against the Gulf War and against the witch-hunt. A committee was elected to continue that work.

LPS was an offshoot from the Socialist Movement, and the AGM was critical of the recent trend of the Socialist Movement

paper socialist, which has flatly ignored the Socialist Movement AGM decision that it should back a Labour vote in every constituency at the General Election. However, a motion from Briefing supporters which would have meant LPS immediately cutting ties with socialist was remitted.

## CP officially admits "Moscow gold"

### Time to open all the books!

Those who are burying the old British Communist Party, the Marxism Today faction, have announced that they have discovered evidence that their organisation used to get a hefty subsidy from the rulers of the USSR.

They say they are shocked by

this, but anybody who did not know — indeed, take for granted — that the British Stalinists got "money from Moscow" was not living in the real world. It was common knowledge that their daily paper, the Morning Star, depended for survival on its Russian and East European sales, over half the total!

But it was not only the Stalinists who had subsidies from richer friends. As the Stalinists

took "Moscow gold", the right wing took US and British government gold, and other services too. The CIA disbursed funds for use in overseas labour movements, often through the CIA-linked foreign department of the US trade unions.

Now that the Thatcherite-Stalinists are coming clean, is it not time that the right wing of the Labour Party and the trade unions came clean?

## Tories sack over-60s to pay for BT election fraud

By Maria Exall, NCU Westminster branch

The Tories are orchestrating the British Telecom sell-off in order to gain £6 billion of public revenue to spend in the run-up to the General Election.

Meanwhile, BT is sacking its workers over 60. £20 million is being spent on advertising and sweeteners for the share sale while BT is forcing its own workers on to the dole.

Workers aged 60 or over are

being told their employment has ceased. BT has decided that the normal retirement age should be 60. Many workers over 60 have planned for the extra five years' full pay, and find themselves staring at maybe twenty years of poverty.

Many of them have not a lot of years of service with BT, and consequently small pensions. And men sacked at age 60 do not get a state pension. They face five years on the dole.

Many NCU branches have several members over 60 who have had their appeals refused. The only way to save their jobs is for all Telecom workers to stand together in their defence.

The National Organisation of Unemployed Workers (NOUW) has organised a conference to discuss action to oppose unemployment in the period leading up to the General Election.

The conference is on 5th December at 5pm in the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons,

Westminster, London SW1A 0AA.

The NOUW exists to campaign for the right to work, proper training and maintenance and an end to unemployment. It calls on unemployed people and trade union organisations to struggle for this purpose.

Donations and requests for further information should be sent to Ernie Roberts, 13-15 High Street, St. Mary's Cray, Orpington, Kent BR5 1NU.



All Tuesday's tabloids (19 November) celebrated the release of Terry Waite. The Daily Mail's headline was "Freed from his chains at last"; the Daily Star used as its headline Waite's words of relief, "I'm OK".

Yes, but what about the four Iranian embassy staff held as hostages in Lebanon for longer than any of the Western hostages?

There is never any mention of these people in the British tabloids, or even the "serious" press.

Even here, where the bourgeois press expresses humanitarian sentiments with which socialists agree, in reality there are double standards.



Sally Morten faces deportation because she left her husband when he became violent. She works in Birmingham, with people who have mental illness and are drug users, and has a brother who also lives in Britain. She was born in what is now Pakistan and brought up in India; the Home Office says she must be deported because her marriage to a British citizen broke up within 12 months and therefore cannot have been genuine. Contact: West Midlands Anti Deportation Campaign, c/o 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham 19.

# The "Patient's Charter" is a Tory con-trick

With no expense spared, the Tories are currently delivering their "Patient's Charter" to every household.

In the same week, doctors in the Medway Health Authority protested publicly that patients may die because the cash-strapped authority has cancelled non-emergency operations for the rest of the financial year. A little girl died because her scheduled operation at Great Ormond Street Hospital had been postponed repeatedly. The Guys Hospital trust declared that it was planning for drastic job cuts in the next few years.

Tory health minister called the "Patient's Charter" "the Ten Commandments of the NHS". But what is happening now in the Health Service is more a macabre black comedy than a Biblical epic.

The Charter is an expensive con-trick. Seven of the ten "rights" declared in it are existing rights anyway. The three additional rights — to obtain quality and waiting list standards for local services, to wait no more than "two years" for virtually all treatment, and to get a written reply on any complaint made — add up to very little in today's NHS.

Some health authorities have already made it clear how they will deal with the promise to keep patients on waiting lists for no more than two years: they will refuse to put many patients on the waiting list at all!



The opted-out trusts are perfectly happy with the commercial language of "quality assurance" and "customer care". They have no responsibility for waiting lists, and from next April will have increasing freedom to refuse to treat certain cases if a local health authority does not give them extra payments.

The local health authorities, whose job is now to "purchase" health care for patients, will increasingly ration who gets what treatment.

As the Health Service ceases to be a comprehensive service, private medical insurance will boom. Medway's cuts include stopping all non-emergency abortions, thus pushing women

who need abortions into the private sector.

A two-tier health service is emerging: rationed pauper health care for the poor, and pay beds in trusts for the well-off. John Major assures us that we will all have the right to complain; but we need to fight to stop the break-up of the NHS now!

We should campaign for a General Election now, and then we'll see what people think about the Tories' NHS policy!

And at the same time we must fight to commit Labour to not only reversing the Tories' organisational changes in the NHS, but also restoring the cash cut from the Health Service by the Tories since 1979.

## Weekend school will restate socialist ideas

"The Future for Socialism" is a weekend school organised by youth and student supporters of Socialist Organiser for 30 November and 1 December, in Manchester.

The school is designed to clear away the increasingly fashionable nonsense that Marxism is outdated, and to present the basic elements that define modern revolutionary socialism.



Please send me more information about "The future for socialism" weekend school/ Please register me for the school and send me information on transport from my area. I enclose £4 (£2 if you have no grant: cheques payable to Socialist Organiser).

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."  
Karl Marx

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We will look at some of the key actors and incidents in the history of the working-class movement, explaining why Karl Marx is such an important figure, and why the Russian revolution ultimately failed.

Sessions on the rise of fascism in Germany, and on the national questions, will help clarify the socialist attitude to the growth of the far right internationally and to the spiralling national conflicts in Eastern Europe.

Workshops on the "Politics of Identity" and the history of black liberation movements will help

place the present-day struggles of the specially oppressed in the context of a class analysis.

We will be answering such questions as "Is the working class finished?" and "Will there be a third world war?"

In the socialist tradition of debate, we are inviting the Fabians to an exchange on "Is there a parliamentary road to socialism?", and the Kinnockites to argue about prospects for Labour in government.

A creche, food, and overnight accommodation will be available, and transport is being fixed from

all major cities. Registration is from 11.30 on Saturday.

For further information, or to register, tear out the form below and send to "Weekend School", SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name .....

Address .....

Phone .....

### Advisory Editorial Board

- Graham Bash
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- Dorothy Macedo
- Joe Marino
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Members of the Advisory Committee are drawn from a broad cross-section of the left who are opposed to the Labour Party's witch-hunt against Socialist Organiser. Views expressed in articles are the responsibility of the authors and not of the Advisory Editorial Board.

## Trades Council of despair?

I ran into the Chair of my local Trades Council recently. He always used to be one of those up-and-at-'em types, full of bright new ideas and boundless energy.

But now he seemed like a man in despair. "I do not know what has gone wrong", he whimpered. "No-one bothers to turn up any more, affiliations have fallen right off, we're almost bankrupt. I think the Trades Council is going down the tubes, to be honest".

Only ten years ago the Trades Council was the hub of the local trade union movement. Every halfway active, self-respecting union branch was affiliated. The monthly meetings attracted a regular 80 or 90 delegates. It was the first place that workers in dispute looked to for support. Resolutions were hard-fought, and the votes would be reported in the local press.

In short, it was the main forum of debate for the local labour movement, and a central focus for rank and file trade union organisation. Now, it seems, they are doing well if the meeting is quorate. There are few resolutions and fewer proposals for activity. So what has gone wrong?

Obviously, part of the answer is simply the clobbering that trade unionism as a whole has taken over the past decade. But there is more to it than that.

As late as 1984-5, the Trades Council was organising packed meetings in support of the miners, and was the cornerstone of a vigorous Miners' Support Committee, involving activists from every union and across the political spectrum from right-wing Labour to revolutionary left. The rot seems to have set in some time during the late 1980s.

In fact, I think that I can pinpoint the exact moment when the Trades Council ceased to be a serious representative trade union body. It was at a meeting in 1987 when a resolution calling for free abortion on demand was under discussion. All the speakers had been in favour, and it looked as though the resolution would go through on the nod.

Then, towards the end of the discussion, an EETPU delegate — a black person, as it happens, and an opponent of the Hammond regime — spoke up against the resolution. He stated that, apart from his personal reservations, his branch had never discussed the issue and that he could not, therefore, vote in favour of the resolution.

There was general outrage from the floor of the meeting. The delegate was heckled and eventually shouted down. It occurred to me at the time that this EETPU delegate undoubtedly represented a substantial body of opinion within the trade union movement as a whole. Something was badly wrong if he could not express a honestly held viewpoint without being shouted down.

What had happened was that the "left" (members and ex-members of groups like the SWP and the IMG) had come to regard the Trades Council as a kind of alternative party or extension of "the party", with an implicit "line" on a whole range of questions — from racism through abortion to Ireland — that in some cases had never been debated. And dissent from that "line" was beyond the pale.

Since then, delegates from industrial unions have gradually disappeared. Meetings have become dominated by NUT, NALGO, NATFHE, and the NUPE Social Services branch. The Trades Council has become the "property" of a clique of professional lefties. Where industrial branches bother to maintain their affiliation, either they do not appoint delegates or the delegates do not attend.

Maybe the tide will turn once the industrial struggle picks up again. But I for one find myself in the embarrassing position of wishing that more right wing delegates would attend. Then, at least, when the left won a vote on a "difficult" issue, it would count for something.

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# South Africa: workers' control for workers' power

The organised black working class has been at the forefront of the struggle against apartheid over the last decade.

Now, as the regime welcomes the ANC to the negotiating table, a major debate is opening up within the ranks of the workers' movement on what 'Post-Apartheid' South Africa will look like.

Salim Vally — an activist from the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) — argues for democratic workers' control through nationalisation as a vital part of the struggle for workers' rule. He was speaking at an economics workshop held by the 1 million-strong union federation COSATU

In our country, for reasons connected with the technical problems of diamond and gold mining, racism, racial discrimination, racial oppression, segregation became for the last quarter of the 19th century and for most of the 20th century, a necessary aspect of the production of profit and thus of the capitalist system. The main features of this system are:

1) At the top of the system is a powerful group of men and women, the white capitalist class. They own and control all the means of production, distribution and exchange e.g., mines, factories, farms, banks, building societies, shops, supermarkets etc. The main purpose is to produce profit.

2) At the bottom of this system are some millions of black workers who own nothing but their ability to work. Until the middle of the

'sixties, the vast majority of the black workers were unskilled labourers. Today this is no longer the case. A very large percentage of black workers are at the very least semi-skilled; many are highly skilled workers in all fields of the economy.

The overwhelming division in the system of racial capitalism between "white" and "black" has given rise to a situation where black workers see the reason for their exploitation and oppression in the fact that they are black rather than that they are workers. However, if our struggle is not directed at removing capitalism as such as well as racial oppression, the simple fact of the matter is that under the historical conditions of South Africa, where 95% of all productive wealth are owned by "white" people, is that "normal" social or class inequality which is produced and reproduced in every capitalist society, will continue to be reproduced as largely as racial inequality. That is to say that most black people will continue to be at the bottom of the pile.

South Africa has one of the highest concentrations of wealth in the hands of a small minority of any country in the world. It is well known that almost 80% of the economy is owned and controlled by a handful of large monopolies. Barely 0.1% of the population (or a mere 1,360 families) own and control a large part of this wealth. Leaving these monopolies untouched in a future society means not allowing control of the wealth of society by the majority — the working class.

There is general agreement within the liberation movement, that the major monopolies which dominate the economy and our lives cannot remain untouched and that there should be some measure of nationalisation.

From the outset, we must be clear that nationalisation in itself will not guarantee the redistribution of wealth. Over the last 60-70 years in many countries around the world, for example in Britain, the Soviet Union, the countries of eastern Europe and even in South Africa, certain sectors of the economy have been owned by the state, yet wealth and control have remained in the hands of the few. In fact, nationalisation has, in some instances, been used as a form

of disciplining workers. (Remember Kaunda's famous dictum to the copperbelt miners, "Now that you own the mines, there is no need to strike against yourselves!")

Who controls the state?

But the really vital question for workers is, if the state controls the banks, industry and a wide range of social services, who controls the state?

Socialism is not just an economic change, but a political one as well. The capitalists hold power in two ways: not only (and most importantly) do they control the

**"The really vital question for workers is, if the state controls the banks, industry and a wide range of social services, who controls the state?"**

economy directly, but also they protect their interests politically through their influence and control of the state. Unless that state is smashed, and equally important something set up to replace it, the bourgeoisie will not really have its power taken away. As long as the capitalists control the state, then any industry which is nationalised will serve the interests of the bosses. No amount of nationalisation can bring socialism without workers' power.

It must be emphasised that nationalisation on the basis of a capitalist state means these enterprises will become state capitalist parts of a capitalist economy, not "havens of socialism" within it.

**Nationalisation under workers' power**

For WOSA, nationalisation is a vital first step which will allow us to develop towards a society where there is democratic control over

the planned production of social wealth, its distribution, exchange and consumption. This goal cannot be achieved without eliminating progressively the private ownership of wealth. Nationalisation, at least of the commanding heights of the economy, is absolutely essential.

Nationalisation is necessary in order for the new workers' state to have the capacity to plan production more effectively for the goals of economic growth and the satisfaction of need. It will allow the workers' state to have greater control over the development of industry, that is, decisions can be made as to which sectors are most important for economic growth. The new state can direct resources more efficiently, it can turn major industries to producing for the good of the population rather than just for profit.

Nationalisation is also necessary in order for society to produce goods at levels which can satisfy the fundamental social needs of the majority (a task which capitalism refuses to carry out). We are talking here of basic food and drink, clothing, shelter, running water, electricity, sanitation and standard comforts linked to it (bedding, furniture) as well as education and health provision, guaranteed transport to and from the workplace, and a level of recreation and leisure indispensable to the reproduction of labour power. (While we recognise these basic needs to be the priorities, they are only a starting point beyond which we will develop as circumstances permit).

What do we mean by the "commanding heights" of the economy?

We would prioritise nationalisation of the four main monopolies (which would include most of the mines as well as most of manufacturing industry), the land and the banks.

**Nationalisation of the banks**

The banks are centres of modern economic life, the principal nerve centres of the whole capitalist economic system. According to Lenin:



We must rebuild from the base



'Away with the chamber of mines'. This slogan raised during the '87 miners' strike by rank and file members of the NUM shows that the struggle for a co-operative commonwealth is far from dead.

"To talk about regulating economic life and yet evade the question of the nationalisation of the banks means either betraying the most profound ignorance or deceiving the 'common people' by florid words and grandiose promises with the deliberate intention of not fulfilling these promises".

In South Africa, the banks and mining finance houses have financed development according to the dictates of Apartheid-Capitalism. Nationalisation of these enterprises will give the state direct control over the surplus. We agree with the ANC and COSATU who say that if these enterprises remain privately-owned,

"They will invest their funds overseas, in financial speculation, in socially undesirable projects or in new mines, factories and agri-businesses using the old apartheid-based work processes".

**Nationalisation of the conglomerates and monopolies**

The reason for this is self-evident. We have seen that there are a small number of giant monopolies which, because of their huge economic power, (their abili-



DeKlerk: happy to tame the black workers' movement with the help of the ANC

ty to dispose of the surplus gained through the exploitation of labour power), are able to shape development and thus subvert a coherent plan.

We have heard the argument that the power of these conglomerates can be curbed only if we "break them up". But this only applies if your goal is limited to regulating capitalism, not challenging its rule. On its own, such a move does little to forward the struggle for socialism. To "break up" the monopolies assumes that the state does not own or effectively control them.

At a more fundamental level, we recognise that the laws of motion of capitalism move inexorably towards monopolisation, as firms always seek to reduce the effect of competition on the price of their own products. And while it is true that curbing the monopoly power of the big cartels and conglomerates may increase competition which may help to keep prices more stable through the checks and balances of "supply and demand", it has little or no impact on the exploitation of labour power. Indeed, as many workers have found to their cost, wages and conditions are often far worse in smaller firms in a highly competitive market situation.

In addition to these two vital areas, a nationalisation programme must also include Health, Education, Transport, Utilities, and Housing Services.

**Socialisation**

Of course, nationalising the commanding heights does not constitute a sort of magic formula which would ensure "automatically" a regular and harmonious growth of production, the adaptation of the latter to social needs and so on. As

we have already said, it is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. What is further needed, is to ensure, under concrete conditions, the effective socialisation of the means of production, which implies among other things, efficient accounting, allocation and management under the control of an incipient proletarian state.

Socialisation does not only mean a workers' state con-

**"We would prioritise nationalisation of the four main monopolies [Anglo-American, the Rembrandt Group, Sanlam and SA Mutual] the land and the banks."**

trolling the economy, but also workers controlling their workplaces. The term, "workers' control" can be used in a variety of ways. It can refer to workers establishing, through trade union action, some measure of control over their immediate working conditions. This is a step forward and should always be fought for, but in itself it does not change the capitalist system.

Workers' control can also refer to workers' participation in capitalist management through trade union representatives on the board of directors. This is generally a trap where unions are lured into collaboration with the bosses.

The sense in which we use "workers' control" signifies

workers' control of society as a whole. It is this and only this form of workers' control which is the foundation of the building of real socialism. Without workers' control of the state, workers' control at the level of the workplace will not be effective. Nor will it last because it is the state which guides and controls the interrelations between the economic establishments and has the power to enforce decisions.

On the other hand, workers' power at the level of the state which is not accompanied by workers' control of the workplace, will likewise fail. This is because a managerial layer or caste will persist in industry, which sooner or later will use its economic power to wrest political power from the workers.

**Workers' control**

It is not possible to provide a blueprint as to how such workers' power will come about. But we know enough from past workers' struggles to suggest a broad outline.

Mass workplace meetings can elect delegates to area workers' councils; which in turn can send delegates to the national or central workers' councils. This network of councils could constitute the core of the state. The workers' militia and all other bodies for the defence and administration of the state will be responsible and accountable to the workers' councils. Workplace meetings may also elect committees for the management of individual enterprises. These committees, in turn, send delegates to industrial and national boards for economic coordination and planning where they work with trade unions which also have a central role to play in industrial management.

Such structures, once working effectively, will lay the basis for a genuine transi-

tion to democratic socialism. To put it simply, it is out of this process that we will decide whether to make school desks for use or surfboards for profits.

How will workers' control manage the economy? For example, there could be regular congresses of workers and popular councils to determine the division of the national product. Of course, the choices must be clearly spelt out, i.e. the length of the working week, priority needs to be satisfied for all through guaranteed allocation of resources, volume of resources devoted to growth, money incomes, pricing of goods. The framework of the economic plan would therefore be established on the basis of conscious choices by a majority of those affected by it. A coherent plan would be drawn up indicating resources available to each separate branch of production (industry, transport, agriculture, distribution) and social life (health, education, communication, leisure, retirement etc.)

Self-managing bodies — for example, congresses of workers' councils in the food, electronic equipment, steel and energy industries — would divide up the workload flowing from the general plan among the existing producer units. The product mix would flow from previous consultations between the workers' councils and consumers' conferences elected by the mass of citizens. Administration would no longer be monopolised at the "central level", any more than self-management confined to plant level.

We don't expect workers to immediately be sufficiently skilled and have the necessary experience to run all facets of industry. Management will therefore temporarily have certain functions. But the important point is that these must be under the control of workers' committees who watch the managers' every step and who learn from the

management's experience. These workers' committees would not only have the right to appeal against the orders of management, but could also secure the removal of a manager if s/he engages in activities aimed at sabotaging production.

For these managers, the rule "he who does not work, neither shall he eat" applies.

**Workers' democracy**

For us, then, the class alternative to the anarchy and brutality of market capitalism is not command planning, nor welfare planning; the real alternative, indeed the only acceptable alternative for the working class is a workers' socialist democracy.

In a market economy, (in any of its forms, including a so-called "mixed economy") decisions about production and distribution cannot be taken by the producers. They are dictated behind their backs by the laws of motion of capitalism itself, of unbridled profit-making by the few.

A democratic planning process, although calling for a central plan to ensure that the overarching social needs are prioritised, is one which allows for decentralisation and devolution of decision-making. This extends down to the workplace and community, so that working class control over the means of production and distribution takes on real meaning.

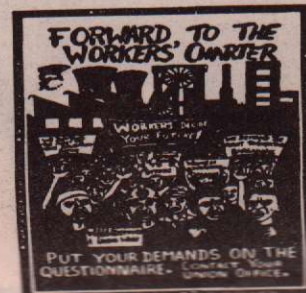
**The beginning of socialist transition**

To achieve this requires first that the working class lead its allies in an anti-capitalist revolution — one which goes far beyond the end of racial domination.

The working class must achieve a decisive victory against the capitalist class and bring the most important parts of the economy under the control of the workers' state.

We have no illusions that such a fundamental change can take place through negotiations. Indeed, we think it is unrealistic to believe that simply with black majority rule and a certain mix of plan and market can we reform a (capitalist) post-apartheid South Africa into a socialist society by gradual degrees. The whole recent history of southern Africa shows otherwise.

Those who speak of capitalism with a human face are sadly deluded. Capitalism is about the drive to accumulate, about profits and competition. It is not about liberating the working class from their misery. Our position is one of support for reforms but not in order to help capitalism be more efficient at exploiting workers. We support all reforms which strengthen the position, including the material situation, of the working class in our struggle against the rule of capital.



Reprinted from Workers Voice

# Heseltine's last laugh

## GRAFFITI

**M**ichael Heseltine's Council Tax might end up being just as unfair as the Poll Tax.

Michael and Anne Heseltine will be paying approximately £135 each a year on their £1.5 million Belgravia house. Meanwhile, that old stalwart, the single pensioner in Barrow-in-Furness, living in their £10,000, 1-bedroom, terraced house will be paying £360 — and that's after their 25% single person's discount.

Surely, when the Heseltines' country seat, the £2.5 million Thenford House is taken into account, they will pay more? Well, since it is a second home, they will only pay half the tax on it. That is likely to be £185 each.

The grand total is £310 each on their £4 million worth of property — some £50 short of the pensioner in Barrow-in-Furness.

The only question is: why are the Tories rushing to get the tax in before the next election?

**A**nother sherry, vicar? Well, maybe not. This Christmas, the cut-glass decanters could be standing empty up and down the country.

**A**nd why? Because of over-production.

The EC paid £8,000 a hectare to uproot vines. And now there is a shortage.

**T**his week's reactionary is Tony Mooney, a head-teacher writing in the *Independent*.

He suggests that the reason why girls achieve more in primary school is that there are more women teachers.

But, by age 16, boys have caught up and by age 18 they are averaging better exam grades than girls.

This, Mooney suggests, is because there are male teachers in secondary schools.

Setting aside any reservations about the soundness of this explanation, what should be done to reform an education system that benefits boys in terms of exam results?

"Shouldn't we therefore make the creation of a sexual balance among primary school staff an urgent priority?", asks Mooney.

Er... yes, that would obviously be much fairer.

**S**imon Pirani has just been appointed editor of the National Union of Mineworkers' paper, "The Miner".

But what is this skeleton rattling in the closet? Could this be the same Simon Pirani who for years was a hack for the *WRP's Newsline*?

The paper which on the eve of the miners' strike launched an

attack on Scargill by running a sensationalised account of his far-from-secret Stalinist views? Which deliberately provided fodder for a capitalist press witch-hunt? Which timed it to coincide with TUC Congress week, carefully choosing that time to "expose" as "hot news" letters that had been in the possession of Pirani and his associates for seven weeks at least?

Is this the same Pirani whose paper then went on to denounce Scargill as incapable of defending British workers?

No. It must be a different Simon Pirani.

**D**efeated ex-KKK Grand Wizard, David Duke has shown the real threat of the fascist right in the US — 700,000 votes, and not even Dan Quayle believes Duke's protests that his neo-Nazi days are over.

The most worrying thing is the level of the opposition to Duke. Incumbent Democrat governor, Edwin Edwards, used his libidinal against Duke's racism — "the only similarity between me and Duke", Edwards said, "is that we're both wizards under the sheets".

Come back, Ted Kennedy, all is forgiven.

**T**he peoples of the USSR, relieved from the crushing might of the Stalinist dictatorship, can now read the books that for decades people risked life and liberty to produce and circulate in Samizdat copies.

Hurray for the advances that free thought will bring — the Soviet workers tucking into Trotsky, Solzhenitsyn, and a vast array of others, as they queue for their free market sausage.

The presses that once turned out "Socialist Realist" novels are now producing more critical fare.

Even if all formerly-Soviet people don't immediately start learning the real history of the Stalin years, perhaps some of those fruits of the bourgeois culture denounced as decadent by the Stalinist censors will go down well.

In fact, according to an article in the latest *New Left Review*, what was red-hot underground literature now lies unread on the shelves.

The Soviet people have picked up on a slightly different side of bourgeois culture. The best-sellers are James Hadley Chase and Agatha Christie potboilers, and Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People", along with home-produced (typewritten and photocopied) pornographic novels.

Maybe even that is a step up from novels about improving the production norms at the tractor factory.

# Baa-baa blacksheep and flying pigs

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**Y**ounger readers may not remember the Black Bin-Bags scandal or the Baa-baa Blacksheep row. These were stories given great prominence for a while in the mid-eighties by papers like the *Mail*, the *Express*, and the *Sun*, proving that various London boroughs were in the grip of fanatical anti-racist bigots.

These humourless zealots were so extreme that they even attempted to substitute grey bin-bags for the traditional black ones and to ban an innocent nursery rhyme from infant schools.

Stories like these played a big part in the overall 'loony-Left' campaign mounted by the Tories in the run-up to the 1987 election. They also, incidentally, were of great value to Mr Kinnock in his campaign to tame the Labour left. Even people who were not predisposed to agreeing with (or even believing) the *Sun* and *Mail* reckoned that there was no smoke without fire and even if these stories were exaggerated, things had clearly gotten out of hand.

The stories were not exaggerations. They were downright lies, as has been conclusively proved since.

Over the last week or so, the same papers that peddled the black bin-bag/baa-baa blacksheep fantasies, have been getting equally worked up about a supposed Muslim



"P is for panda"? Just the sort of nonsense to make this National Front paperseller see red

plot to ban all references to, and images of, pigs from schools in Birmingham.

Once again, it seems, the British way of life is under threat from black fanatics and the namby-pamby anti-racist lobby. Once again, in fact, the tabloids are peddling a pack of lies.

The only grain of truth in the entire "Pigs Ban" story is that the headmaster in one school in Small Heath in Birmingham decided to substitute the word "panda" for the word "pig" in the alphabet taught to the children in his school. Pictures and models of pigs remain in the school.

The children see pigs in the flesh on school trips to urban farms.

Strangely enough, one of the few sensible comments on the whole affair came from Richard Littlejohn in his *Sun* column last Thursday: "I can't see what all the fuss is about, especially as 97% of the pupils at the Montgomery Primary School are Muslims.

Considering that a recent report showed that very few seven-year olds can even read their own names, I would have thought that anything which makes it easier for children to learn their ABC would be welcomed. What does it matter if they say "P is for panda" instead of "P is for pig", just so long as they don't think P is for television?"

Sanity at last? Well, not quite. Littlejohn went on to propose "a new alphabet tailored to the needs of Muslim pupils", that was clearly intended to convey the message that he was only being satirical. Just for a moment, though, I thought I saw pigs flying.

**T**he Cap'n Bob industry shows no signs of flagging. I may offer a small prize to the reader who sends in the most preposterous example of press speculation

about the exact circumstances of the Big Man's death.. or was it suicide/murder/abduction/escape.

The normally sober *Guardian* presently leads on points, with the suggestion that he didn't die at all, but was spirited away on another boat...

Meanwhile, the *Spectator's* Taki tells an all too believable story about the Cap'n gambling addiction (he thought nothing, it seems, of "dropping" a quarter of a million a night on the green felt tables): when another punter had the temerity to ask how he reconciled this extravagance with his socialism, "Cap'n Bob did not bat the proverbial eyelid. He only made one sign with his thumb and resumed gambling. The sign meant rather a rude exit for the inquisitive one, and a perfect answer to what Robert Maxwell really thought of socialism."

# The market price of peace

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Janet Burstall

**W**hat is the value of bubble gum, plastic trinkets and sweets, I asked myself. I was dying to think of a tactic to lure my two-year-old away from a bank of coin-operated dispensers of this stuff.

Is there anything in any of these machines that I wouldn't mind letting her have?

Plastic stick-flowers... boring. Tiny food-shaped rubbers... danger of choking. Big pieces of bubble-gum...

sticky, revolting and a ticket to the dentist. Sugar-coated peanuts... choking and the dentist.

I came up with an answer to my first question. The only value in this stuff is to those who get the money that goes into the dispensers. Who gets the money? The supermarket that put these machines on the exit side of the cash register.

I have come to terms with the dangers of the supermarket — chocolates, biscuits, sweets, ice-creams, crisps, toys, hundreds of thousands, puddings, juice-in-boxes (why do children love this form of packaging so much? The patent-holder must be making a mint).

I calculate when the adults of the house can forego chocolates and biscuits so we avoid that aisle, when to speed up the trolley so that

the contents of those shelves are a blur as we fly by, and when to concede a packet of smarties or balloons. Thankfully, not every checkout has a bank of chocolate bars, so I am spared being harrassed for a chocolate when standing in an interminable queue.

I can make shopping with Rosa enjoyable, as she helps, names items, unloads the trolley and hands over the money.

But I remember the previous week's incident, when Rosa refused to be parted from the coin-operated car-ride. Eventually, I dragged her biting and screaming, holding her under one arm as I manoeuvred a shopping trolley with my free hand. Maybe coin-operated rides are OK — but I wasn't going to repeat the biting and screaming performance for

this week's bunch of junk. I decided to ask the supermarket manager — very politely — to consider removing the dispensing machines. His answer: parents can always say 'No'.

It's only a small thing, but it represents something bigger — industries of junk food, junk trinkets, marketed by strategic placement to attract children — and addictions begin in childhood to sugary, salty, fatty foods with little nutritional value, and bad effects on health.

What is the value to adults who part with the money for this rubbish? The adults are buying peace from the harassment of their children — and in the process harming the health of their children.

But the law of the market says, if it sells, it's OK, the market is efficient. Garbage!



Poll tax? Council tax? It's smiles all the way for the Heseltines

Demonstrate on Wednesday 4 December!

# Stop Le Pen's visit to Britain!

The French fascist Front National has announced that its leader Jean-Marie Le Pen will be coming to Britain from 4 to 6 December. He is attending meetings of the Group of the European Right and of the Tory far-right grouping Western Goals.

Le Pen's fascists have risen to become a major electoral force in France, as recession and unemployment have turned workers against immigrants. They already control local government in Marseilles, and

are likely to get up to 20% of the vote in the regional elections next March.

The traditional right-wing parties have moved further right to attract the racist vote, and are now talking of an electoral alliance with Le Pen. Even the ruling Socialist Party has sought to compete with Le Pen for the racist vote, promising harsher measures against immigrants.

Le Pen's purpose in coming to Britain is to promote a network of fascists throughout Europe. All socialists, trade unionists, and anti-racists should oppose this visit! We must make it clear that

we are not willing to see in Britain the kind of racist upsurge that has already gained ground in many European countries. We will thereby also be making clear our intention to fight racism, and to drive the racists off the streets.

Le Pen's planned visit to the Conservative Party conference in 1987 was called off after Anti-Fascist Action called a big protest demonstration. By mass demonstrations we can perhaps prevent Le Pen's new visit, and at least discredit and expose him for the racist he is.

Join the demonstration outside the French Consulate, 21-23 Cromwell Road, London



Le Pen: a Hitler for the 1990s?

SW7, from 5pm to 7pm on Wednesday 4 December. Donations to, and information

from, Ad Hoc Committee to Stop Le Pen's Visit, 071-277 0817.

## Massacres in East Timor

By Tony Brown

Less than a week after Indonesian troops killed over 100 mourners at a funeral rally, 80 eye-witnesses to the massacre have been executed in Dili, the capital of East Timor.

Tens of thousands of East Timorese have now died as a result of the Indonesian invasion in 1975. Despite repeated claims by the Indonesian authorities that they have overcome any opposition the people of East Timor con-

tinue to resist the occupation and support the liberation movement, Fretilin.

Last week, soldiers opened fire on the unarmed funeral procession as it made its way to Dili cemetery. The funeral was for a young man who had been shot by soldiers a few days earlier. While many died immediately, others died when the troops refused ambulances permission to take the wounded to hospital.

Because this massacre has been well-publicised, unlike many other atrocities, the authorities have been forced to order an inquiry into the events.

The Australian govern-

ment has for the first time openly criticised Indonesia's actions and Prime Minister Hawke has even called for negotiations to be held between Indonesia and Fretilin.

While this is welcome and should be pursued it is perhaps too little too late. The occupation could never have succeeded without the support of all Australian governments since 1975.

In 1949, the western part of the island of Timor was given to Indonesia by the Dutch. The eastern half remained under the control of Portugal.

As Portugal began to abandon its colonies in the

mid-70s Fretilin — an anti-imperialist liberation group — came to the fore as the main East Timorese independence group. It had widespread support from the population.

In 1975, Indonesia invaded the island. Labor's Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, refused to oppose the invasion and tacitly endorsed Indonesia's claim. In July 1976 they announced they were annexing East Timor as Indonesia's 27th province, and immediately, Portugal recognised the annexation. Liberal Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser did likewise.

The similarities between Iraq and Kuwait stand out. But the response by Indonesia's powerful allies, the USA and Australia, is in stark contrast to their actions 12 months ago.

As with the Gulf, oil is again an essential ingredient to the dispute. Australia has gone along with Indonesia to ensure the progress of the bilateral treaty on the potentially rich oil reserves in the Timor Sea.

Not only are the straits between Timor and northern Australia a rich source of oil, but they are also crucial shipping lanes between Australia's mineral deposits and East Asia. As with the

Gulf, economic interests have been the decisive factor with little regard for the East Timorese national rights.

Labor, since 1983, has been happy to ditch the rights of the East Timorese in order to keep onside with the Indonesian generals.

So much for the grand rhetoric of the New World Order.

The size of the occupation force and the scale of repression eventually forced the Fretilin resistance into the mountains. While sporadic attacks have continued ever since, the Indonesian cordon and news blackouts have made it very difficult to ascertain just how strong Fretilin have remained.

A Portuguese delegation was to have been in Dili on the 12th of November to investigate human rights. The trip was abandoned, however, when Indonesia refused a visa for an Australian journalist who was one of the delegation.

International pressure now could force Indonesia to at least open up East Timor to independent monitoring and investigation. This should be a prelude to a genuine vote, under the auspices of the United Nations, by the East Timorese on self-determination.

## Student women protest at ban on anti-Tory slogan

By Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer (personal capacity)

Around 150 women activists from colleges throughout the country gathered for the National Union of Students' annual Women of Students' week. The event was addressed by speakers from Southall Black Sisters and the 'No Means No' campaign and heard reports from successful student actions in different colleges.

Around 40 delegates attended the lunchtime Left Unity fringe meeting and joined in a lively debate on socialist feminism.

In particular we discussed the degree to which men benefit from women's oppression, with the SWP strenuously denying that they benefit at all.

In the final session, delegates rallied to the support of the Women's Committee after National President, Stephen Twigg banned the use of the slogan "Kick out the Tories". Many left the event determined to see Twigg held to account for his actions at the forthcoming National NUS Conference.



The siege of Dubrovnik

## Yugoslavia: federal army wins Vukovar

By Stephen Holt

Croat radio has now admitted the fall of the strategic town Vukovar, in Slavonia (an area of mixed Croat, Serb and Hungarian population in eastern Croatia), to the forces of the Federal Army and Serb militia.

It seems that a few isolated pockets of resistance from Croat militia remain, but the Federal Army will now be

able to move its tanks and artillery west to the fighting around Osijek and Vinkovci, the two main Slavonian towns remaining under Croat control.

The fall of Vukovar, which Croat leader, Tudjman, had sworn to defend, will inevitably further weaken popular support for the elected Croat government and increase support for the fascist Party of the Right, whose militia is seen now as more effective than Tudjman's National Guard.

The growth of fascism in

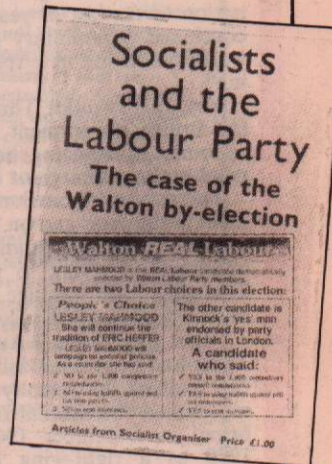
Croatia has meant that the Serbian population in Croatia feel that they have to fight, since they fear the consequences of a return to Croat control.

As the siege of Dubrovnik continues, Britain and other western European states seem closer to military intervention. This would initially be British, French and Italian warships, escorting ships evacuating refugees from, and delivering food to, Dubrovnik, but this could easily lead to involvement in the fighting.

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As the Tories and Unionists speak of repression

# Oppose internment

Britain has exercised direct rule in Northern Ireland for almost 20 years now, since the Belfast Home Rule parliament was abolished in March 1972. Yet, after 20 years of direct rule, Northern Ireland is once more experiencing a sickening eruption of sectarian slaughter — Catholic killing Protestant, Protestant killing Catholic, Catholic killing Protestant again and so on, and so on.

British direct rule — supplemented, as it has been since November 1985, by a measure of political power-sharing in Northern Ireland between Britain and the Dublin government — has been and is an abject and vicious failure.

Could there be a greater condemnation of the last 20 years than the continued paramilitary grass roots warfare and the new spiral of killing?

Yes, there could! The news that the British government is thinking seriously of bringing back internment without charge or trial!

The sudden discussion of internment in the press and on TV as "the answer" is the government testing opinion and trying to prepare it. This time, the message is, internment would work. Unlike last time.

"Last time" was 9 August 1971. There had been a few killings in the first half of the year by the newly established Provisional IRA, which began in December 1969-January 1970 as a right-wing breakaway from the then mainstream Republican Movement. Belfast still had its own parliament, with a Protestant government under Brian Faulkner.

In Britain, Edward Heath's Tory government was in power. Early on the morning of 9 August, in a tragic-comic parody of a South American coup, soldiers and RUC policemen descended on hundreds of Catholics all across the 6 Counties. Without charge or trial, men were arrested and in many cases horribly ill-treated.

Taken away half-dressed, Catholics were forced to walk on broken glass or stone under the blows of unleashed soldiers and policemen, and taken aloft in helicopters for "in depth" interrogation at police and army centres. Many of them were tortured.

All of those taken were Catholics. The pretext was that they were all paramilitaries, all members of the IRA. Probably a majority of them had nothing to do with the IRA.

The leaders of the student civil rights movement were arrested, ill-treated, and interned — Michael Farrell, for example, who was then politically a sympathiser of the British SWP (then called IS).

The hard-pressed Unionist government of Brian Faulkner and the sectarian RUC had drawn up lists of names designed to settle accounts with all their opponents, political as well as military, socialist as well as Republican.

That is what they had always done before. Internment had been normal in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland through the state's 50 year history. It had been used in the '20s, the '30s, the '40s, and the '50s. It was used in the South, too, in every decade except the '30s.

In 1971 internment seemed to be just business as usual for the RUC and the Unionist Establishment. But they were seriously mistaken.

In previous decades the Catholic minority were a beaten and partly cowed people. In the '60s they had come back on to their feet, inspired by such experiences as the black civil rights movement in the USA, asserting their right to equality and fair treatment.

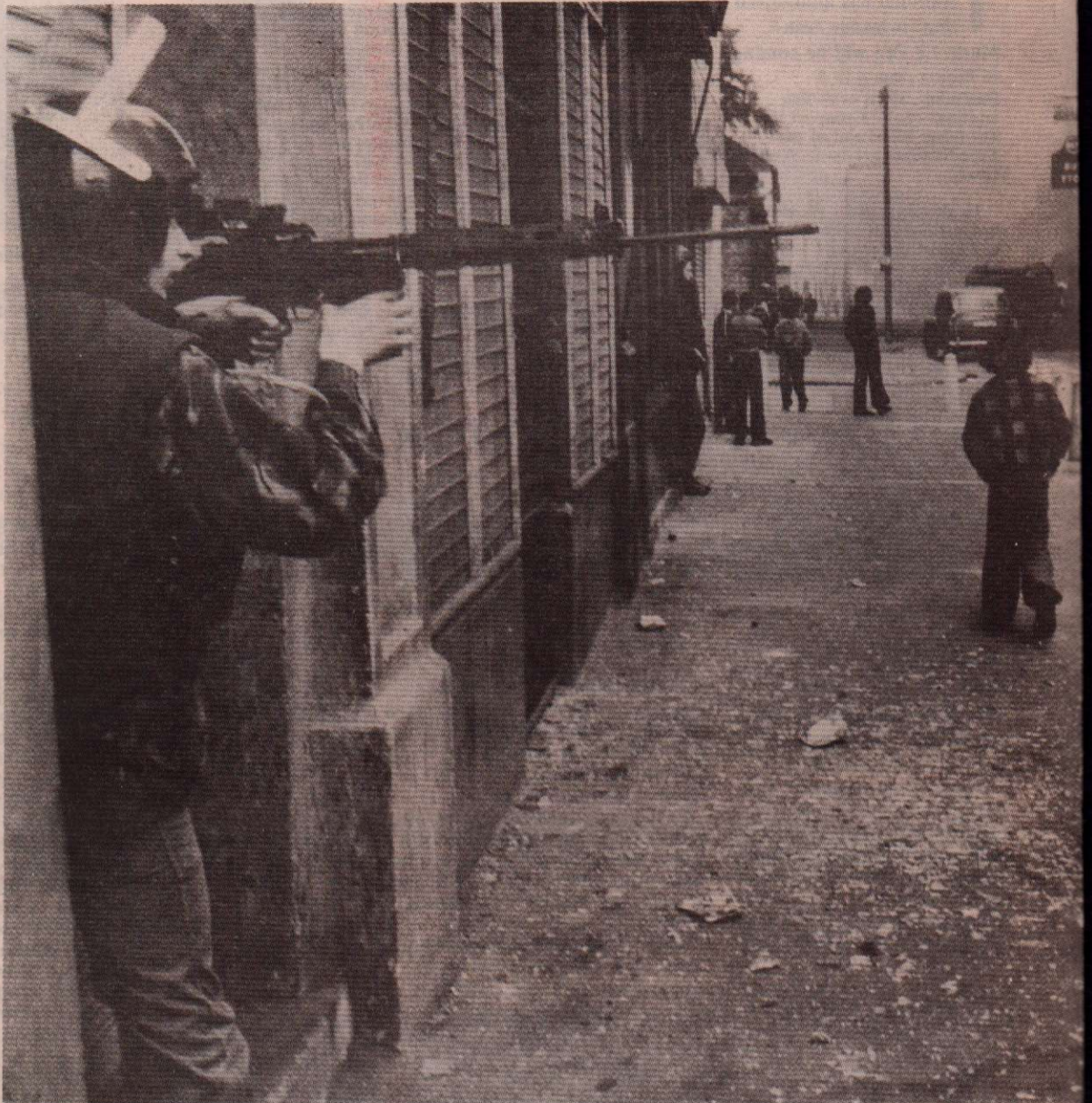
In 1969 they had driven the RUC out of Catholic Derry and out of parts of Catholic Belfast, and built walls of makeshift barricades to keep them out.

Internment did not cow the Catholics. It roused them — one third of Northern Ireland's population — into a general outraged revolt.

Before internment the Provisional IRA was a weak and faltering movement. Afterwards it had the active or passive support of perhaps a majority of Northern Ireland Catholics, and much sympathy in the South and outside Ireland.

Strengthened by the effects of internment on the Catholic people, the Provisional IRA was now able to go on a large-scale offensive. Northern Ireland became ungovernable. Bombings and killings multiplied tenfold in the next year.

Catholic areas barricaded



Police state repression in Northern Ireland. In the background, hi-jacked military vehicles are set alight to mark the anniversary of internment

themselves off once more, and then the British Army smashed the barricades. In the next two years, following up the British Army terror against the Catholics, hundreds of people — mostly Catholics — were murdered in often random sectarian killings by Protestant paramilitaries.

Internment in 1971 was one of the great disasters of modern Irish history — except for the Provisional IRA, against which it was directed, and the Protestant Ulster Defence Association, which grew in response to the Catholic mobilisation. It continued in use for some years, until it was phased out at the end of the '70s; its effects are still identifiable now.

But this time, so they say in the newspapers flying kites to test the political wind for the Government, it will be different. In 1971 "intelligence" was defective. Not only were many people picked up who were not militants, but many militarists got clean away. And internment then was not even-handed, but used exclusively against Catholics, with the RUC and Faulkner drawing up the lists of those to be arrested.

This time, they say, "intelligence" is better and internment would be used even-handedly. Protestant paramilitaries, too, would be arrested.

Exasperated as they are in both communities by the killings, people would accept internment now —

especially if it were to be introduced in the South simultaneously. (And it might well be: the last time they had internment in the South, after 1957, it was introduced by Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail, "the Republican party").

The short answer is that nobody knows what effect internment would have, whether it would prove to be sand or petrol on the fires that have proved unquenchable in the last 20 years. It would be a giant gamble at the very least.

For example, nobody knows what the reaction would be in the Protestant community to a large-scale attempt to round up the UDA.

The assumption that the IRA is "a few hundred men" is classic British policeman's blindness. It makes it impossible to understand where the present IRA — which mushroomed from almost nothing to mass support in a matter of months — came from in the first place. It came from the ingrained Republican tradition in the Northern Ireland Catholic communities, and from their need for self-defence.

On that, certainly, were superimposed the concerns and the militarist strategies of a comparatively small para-military sect. But variants of that para-military sect had existed for all the 50 years of the Northern Ireland state. What was new 20 years ago was the mass revolt of the Catholics.

That has not gone away, nor is it artificially kept in being by the Catholic para-militaries.

Either the internees would act according to the plainly false belief that the problem is a few hundred Provisionals, pick up some or most of them, and then find the militarist organisation replenished manifold as in 1971 by the scale of the reaction to the internment — or else they would recognise that the paramilitaries are not a thin crust to be skimmed off, and once more they would go in for wholesale terrorisation of the Catholic ghettos.

Such wholesale terror was British policy — under the Labour governments especially — throughout the later 1970s. It would bring no more progress now than it brought then. It would inevitably build up the para-militaries.

Either way, internment is unlikely to "work" in its own terms. It is only a new police gimmick, a recipe for increased repression to tackle a situation characterised above all by the failure of a policy of repression, and a situation which is implicitly a condemnation of the longstanding British policy of reliance on repression, supplemented only by political initiatives of a cripplingly limited sort such as the 1985 Dublin-London treaty.

There is a more basic reason why Labour movement activists in Britain should oppose internment. Police-state repression can not possibly solve what ails Northern Ireland.

It is not police power, military power, or the will and expertise to

## Troops Out — and what?

Britain plays a bad role in Ireland. It preserves the untenable Six Counties unit within which Catholics and Protestants are murderously locked into an artificially narrow framework.

The British Army has used savage repression against the Catholics whenever it has "needed" to. In January 1972 the Army shot dead 13 unarmed civilians in Derry, and a 14th died later.

The cry "Troops Out!" is a natural response to what Britain has done in Ireland. And yes, British troops must leave Ireland. But if British troops were to be pulled out without a prior political settlement, what then?

There would not be a united Ireland. There would be all-out Catholic-Protestant civil war and repartition.

It would be like Yugoslavia now, or Lebanon, or Palestine in 1947-8, when British power suddenly buckled.

People in both communities would be driven from their homes and many would be massacred. At the end you would have a Protestant/Orange state smaller than the present Six Counties — and hatreds and divisions that would last for generations.

The only other possibility would be a united Ireland, after the whole of the rest of Ireland had conquered the Northern Protestants. But that is virtually ruled out. The 26 Counties Catholics would not want to try such a conquest, and they probably could not succeed even if they did try.

No-one would benefit from such developments.

The demand "Troops Out!" should be raised in the form of demands for "a political settlement along the lines of a federal united Ireland, and troops out".



on, why we say:

# ment!



se them, that the British state in Northern Ireland lacks. It has no courts, shoot-to-kill squads, mass surveillance, and it has had internment. What it lacks is willingness to see the reality that the Northern Ireland unit is untenable, and in the longer term unviable. No amount of police-military action will make it viable. Without a political solution, the Catholic-Protestant slaughter will continue, and may escalate.

For that reason arguments such as the idea that internment is bad are better than sectarian slaughter are radically false. Internment will not be an alternative to slaughter. It will probably lead to a massive

escalation of slaughter.

The only way it would not fuel the revolt would be for the British state to use a Stalinist or fascist level of police-state repression against either the Catholics or the whole Northern Ireland population for the next decade or more. And even then — even if internment “worked” — eventually the basic problems would resurface, in 10, 20 or 50 years’ time, and the conflict would be reopened.

Labour must oppose internment. It did no good and much harm 20 years ago. It will solve nothing now. Northern Ireland needs political solutions, not more state violence against the people.

## Labour's record on Ireland

In Ireland, the record of the Labour Party stinks. In many ways it is worse than the Tories’.

Labour passed the 1949 Act which entrenched and buttressed partition.

After 1976, the Labour Government decided over a savage attempt to beat down the Catholic community. For years the Army went round systematically wrecking Catholic homes while reputedly “searching” for weapons.

In 1972 the Tories had recognised that Republican prisoners were not

criminals, but the politically-motivated representatives of the long-oppressed Catholic people. They allowed them a status in jail different from that of the criminals there.

Labour's Northern Ireland secretary, Roy Mason, tried to criminalise the Republican prisoners, and provoked a years-long conflict which culminated in 1981 — after Labour had given way to a Tory government — in the deaths of ten young men on hunger strike against such treatment.

Labour Party activists should demand that a Kinnock Labour government actively seek a political settlement and British withdrawal from Ireland.

## Briefing

# The roots of the Troubles

**T**he basic political problems in Northern Ireland can be understood only in the perspective of Irish and Irish-British history.

In the 12th century England occupied Ireland, a country with an archaic culture and political system more akin to pre-Roman Britain than to then-contemporary Europe. Feudal ownership and English enclaves were established.

In the 16th and early 17th centuries, England and Scotland, now Protestant, thoroughly conquered Ireland, but the Irish people remained Catholic. In that age religion was inseparable from politics, and for English rulers the Catholic Irish represented a permanent potential “fifth column” for Catholic powers in Europe.

In north-east Ulster, Scots and English colonists were established as the dominant population. Everywhere the Catholic Irish were robbed of their land. English landlords took over, and Catholics became oppressed tenants.

After the last wars of conquest at the end of the 17th century, the Catholic Irish experienced a hundred years under a system very like South African apartheid. They were not allowed to own property in certain places, or above certain values, nor allowed freedom of religion, nor allowed to run schools or to practise professions.

This system, the “Penal Laws”, fell into decay towards the end of the 18th century.

In response to the French Revolution of 1789-99, Protestant and Catholic Ireland demanded an independent Irish Republic. French troops landed to support them. There was a defeated rebellion in 1798. Savage repression followed.

In 1800 the British government abolished the Dublin parliament, and united Britain and Ireland. British prime minister Pitt intended to link the Union with full rights for the Catholics. The idiot king George III vetoed Catholic rights. Catholics remained second-class citizens.

Early 19th century Irish history was dominated by the struggle for Catholic equality. “Catholic emancipation” — the right of Catholics to become MPs — was won in 1829.

Then the Catholic middle class began to demand a restoration of the Dublin parliament. Northern Irish Protestants had opposed Union in 1800, but now, fearful of being a minority in a new Irish parliament dominated by the aroused Catholic middle class, they became pro-Unionist.

In the last third of the 19th century, the Catholic tenants organised against the still predominant power of the Anglo-Irish landlords. Eventually they forced British governments to enact a series of measures to curtail the landlords’ power and then buy them

out. A system of alliances grew up in the British Parliament, in which Catholic Irish MPs looked to the Liberals (then the main party of the industrial bourgeoisie) and Protestants to the Tory party (then closely linked with landlord interests).

The Tories bitterly opposed even a Dublin parliament with limited powers (“Home Rule”), which the Liberals under Gladstone advocated from 1886. In the months before World War 1, when the Liberals were about to enact Home Rule, the Tories and the Northern Ireland Protestants prepared for armed rebellion, importing guns from Germany up to the eve of the outbreak of war.

The Liberal Government surrendered. They decided to partition Ireland. They betrayed their Irish Home Rule allies.

The victory for Tory-Protestant rebellion reinforced the idea that “force was the only way” in Catholic Ireland. At Easter 1916 there was an armed rising in Dublin, bloodily repressed.

In the November 1918 general election, the Irish nationalist party Sinn Fein stood on a pledge to secede from Westminster and set up a Dublin parliament. They won 75 per cent of the seats, on 50-odd per cent of the vote, and in January 1919 set up their parliament in Dublin, “Dail Eireann”. War followed, in which, after 1920, Britain used large-scale terror, including the burning of small towns and the centre of Cork City.

The war ended in 1921. Ireland was partitioned, with Home Rule governments in both Belfast and Dublin.

The Southern “Home Rule” state soon gained real independence. In the Northern state, the Six Counties, there was a one-third Catholic minority. The Protestants of all Ireland would have been a lesser minority in a united Ireland.

The Northern Catholics were for a united Ireland; the Six County state saw them as a threat, and they saw that state as an alien imposition on them.

They were “kept down” by special laws and special constables. They were discriminated against in employment, in housing, and in voting.

In the South, the Catholic majority enacted Catholic laws obnoxious to the Protestant minority there, abolishing divorce for example.

For fifty years there were only sporadic stirrings from the Northern Catholics. Then in the late 1960s they started a vigorous civil rights movement. This triggered a Protestant backlash and repression by the Six County state.

Full-scale fighting erupted in mid-1969. For almost 50 years British governments had largely ignored Northern Ireland. Now they sent the British Army on to the streets to take direct control.

Movements dedicated to achieving an independent united Ireland by military conspiracy had existed since the mid 19th century, but by the 1960s were feeble. Now the “Provisional IRA” split off and began to build towards a military campaign against the British Army. Internment in August 1971 transformed the situation into one of all-out war between the Catholics and the British state.

In March 1972, the Belfast parliament was abolished. Britain tried to create a Catholic-Protestant “power-sharing” government in Belfast in 1973-4, but was defeated by a Protestant general strike. British direct rule has been the system ever since.

Northern Ireland was set up to give Protestants “democracy” against the Catholic majority of all Ireland. But for 20 years the Protestants have not been allowed to exercise that democracy because it would most likely be used, as in the past, against the Northern minority.

There has been a system of interlocking vetoes, both backed by the threat or the use of force. The Protestants have a veto on any moves to a united Ireland; the Catholics a veto on any restoration of Protestant majority government in Belfast.

In 1985 an Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, setting up joint London-Dublin political control in Northern Ireland, with direct physical control remaining in the hands of Britain. It has been one more way of freezing the situation.

Northern Ireland — as it existed when it could exist without British troops on the streets — broke down irretrievably 20 years ago. What exists now is the political debris, and in that debris the people live and struggle.

Only a radical political rearrangement can end the Catholic-Protestant confrontation and the killing.

No solution that keeps the Northern Ireland Catholics trapped in an artificial Protestant-dominated unit can be stable or democratic. “Self-determination for the Protestants” is impossible without bloody civil war and repartition; but the distinct identity and allegiance of the Protestant community must be accommodated as far as is compatible with the democratic rights of the majority of the people of Ireland as a whole.

The only way of reconciling the rights of both communities is through a federal united Ireland, with regional autonomy for the Protestant-majority area in the north-east, maximum local autonomy for all local communities, and free confederal ties with Britain.

Such a policy can be the basis for uniting workers from both Catholic and Protestant communities, and both North and South, and thus for creating the united working-class movement which alone can create a free and democratic Ireland.



Full-scale fighting between Catholics and Protestants erupted in mid 1969. By 1972 the situation became one of war between the Catholics and the British state.

# Socialist planning versus free market

At the "Stand Up For Real Socialism" event on 2 November, Martin Thomas of Socialist Organiser debated Professor David Marsland on "Free market versus socialist planning"

By Martin Thomas

The free market is a cruel and unequal system. In a whole epoch of human history, nonetheless, it played a progressive role. Now it is possible to do better.

I shall also look at the relevance of the experience of Stalinism to the question of socialist planning.

The free market is a system of inequality fundamentally because of one exchange which takes place within it, the exchange between worker and employer.

On the face of it, this is a free and equal exchange. Selling your labour power is much like selling a sack of potatoes.

The difference is that when you sell your labour power, the employer then controls the bulk of your life. He decides what you do with your skills, your energy, and a large part of your time.

He has the power to destroy your health, even sometimes to destroy your life. In Japan, they now have a new word for death from overwork, because it is so common.

That is not a particularly backward capitalist country. That is the most dynamic capitalist economy in the world today.

The sale of labour power is not like just exchanging one good for another. It is a fundamentally unequal exchange, and the root of that inequality is that the means of production are in the hands of a small minority.

The free market is also a system of inequality because, built into it, is a varying, but always substantial, level of unemployment — that is, a number of workers who cannot even become wage slaves. Unemployment means poverty for those who cannot sell their labour power and insecurity for those who can — for the moment.

It means that the idea of the free market being the best way of enabling individuals to plan their lives is nonsense. All your plans can be destroyed from one week to the next. If you lose your job, you can lose your home. You can lose everything.

The inequality of the free market goes wider than that. The free market system also generates huge inequalities between countries and regions. In the free market system, investment goes where it is most profitable, and that is a place where there is already a good infrastructure of communications, a healthy, educated workforce, good relations with suppliers, ample markets and so on, i.e. a place which is relatively developed economically already.

Thus, in the world today, and for the last 200 years, most investment has gone to the advanced capitalist countries and a few selected areas in

the underdeveloped countries. We get huge inequalities at an international level.

The free market system is not just an unequal system. It is an inhuman system. I do not think that anybody, given a choice, would say that the millionaires of western Europe and the USA having that little bit extra is more important than feeding the millions of people in the world who live constantly in danger of starvation.

In the free market, money buys everything — and human need buys nothing. If you're hungry, in a free market system, that is no entitlement at all to food. If on the other hand, you are quite well-fed and have lots of money, you can buy lots of food on a whim. Your whim is more important, in the free market system, than the desperate needs of the poor.

Further, the free market system counts or recognises as important economic considerations only what can be packaged as commodities for individual consumption.

If you have the money, you can buy a house, a car, all sorts of gadgets. You cannot buy a healthy environment. You cannot buy the preservation of the world in a state where it will be safe for our children or grandchildren.

You can buy hospitals full of high-tech equipment, you cannot buy preventive healthcare. You can't even buy decent drains.

The free market system is inherently unequal and inhuman. It systematically rejects what is social in favour of commodities for individual consumption. That is a good reason for looking to see if something better is possible.

David Marsland argues that most of the evils of the free market system exist in other known systems, and generally in worse forms. That is true.

But if it is true that poverty on a great scale existed in all previous cultures, I do not think that is good reason for saying that we must stick with what we have today. Poverty has not been eradicated. The living standards of the poor have been going down.

In the US, the average level of real wages has been going down since the 1970s. In many parts of the Third World, real wages have gone down by 25-30% since the debt crisis of the early 1980s. In Eastern Europe and the USSR there is a mass pauperisation.

Poverty today is not a marginal consideration. Even if you think it will decrease, how many generations are you prepared to see live out their lives in these conditions?

Why did this poverty and this inhumanity exist in previous systems? Until quite recently, the level of human industry and technology was not sufficient to meet the needs of the entire population. If you took what was produced and shared out equally, it would not provide a comfortable life for all. That was true for thousands of years.

If there is not enough, then either you have an overlord deciding who gets enough and who does not; or you have a more impersonal system such as the market.

Historically, the market was the mechanism which produced progress. It was more progressive than

having an overlord decide.

However, the pre-condition does not hold now. If you took the total production of the world now, and divided it up equally you would get an average amount per head roughly equivalent to the average national income of Portugal. The average better-off worker in Portugal is not starving. They are not living in splendour, but they have the basics. There is enough produced to give everybody the basic necessities of comfortable life. That is true now. It was not true before.

Now the market system was shaped by the struggle for the basic necessities of life. And food and clothing lend themselves well to the use of market mechanisms.

They can be divided into discrete units consumed by individuals. They can be dealt with well by independent market transactions.

The market begins to break down even for housing. It breaks down even more if we look at things that make life more than just physical survival.

In the developed capitalist countries today, the proportion of the labour time of society needed to produce basic food and clothing is very small. That basic production used to take almost all the labour time of society. With modern technology, it takes very little.

It is no longer necessary for our lives as human beings to be dominated by an unequal system shaped by the struggle for the basics of food and clothing. A more equal system, based on democratic planning, is possible.

*"In the free market, the whims of the rich are more important than the desperate needs of the poor."*

That new system will require other things apart from productive capacity. It demands that people have formed a habit of working together in cooperative units. It demands that we have a relatively high level of literacy and good provision of information, so that people know what is going on sufficiently to plan.

It requires a certain level of culture and civilisation. It is not possible to plan an economy democratically where the majority of the people are illiterate and do not know what's going on outside their own village — or even if they did know, they would not have the level of education and knowledge to make any useful judgements on it.

It requires a certain level of information and education. It requires also, the will to make society different.

Those preconditions are all created by capitalism, or are functions of capitalism.

I have argued that the free market system is an unequal and cruel system. For a whole epoch of human history,

however, it was progressive in terms of what was possible then, but conditions have been created now where something better is possible.

The obvious objection is that the better system has been tried, in the Stalinist states, and those states show the failure of socialist planning.

I would argue that, whatever it was called, Stalinism was not even an attempt at socialist planning. To argue this is not a matter of saying "it went wrong" after the event.

If we look back at the criteria and conditions that Marx saw as necessary for the development of socialism, we see that the practices and models of Stalinism were denounced by socialists long before they were ever put into practice.

If we go back a century to the beginning of the mass Marxist movement, one of its main arguments and polemics was against what they called "state socialism". They argued against people who thought that socialism meant control by the state, bureaucratic manipulation of the economy and bureaucratic nationalisation like that being carried out by Bismarck in Germany.

Marxists argued, not after seeing what would happen under Stalin, but in the 1880s and 1890s, that "state socialism" had nothing to do with their socialism.

Socialism, they said, was about democratic planning controlled by the working class. Bureaucratic planning, contrary to the interests of the workers, was anti-socialist. They did not even give qualified support to Bismarckian nationalisations, let alone see them as socialism.

Marxists further argued that the idea of developing socialism in a single country, particularly in a backward country, such as Russia was in 1917, was out of the question. Socialism could be developed only on the basis of the achievements of the most advanced capitalism, and in a much broader framework than a single country.

Again, that argument was not a get out after the experience of Stalinism. It was argued before anybody in the socialist movement had ever heard of Stalin or Stalinism.

Finally, when Stalin launched into his Stalinist economic policy — and at the start, not after seeing the results — Trotsky and other Marxists condemned the policy as bureaucratic, over-centralised, and foolish in its attempt to do away with market mechanisms far too quickly.

Socialist planning does not mean that we want to do away with free markets straight away. We recognise that the free markets have played a huge role in human development, and cannot be dispensed with overnight.

After a socialist revolution we will have to use markets quite considerably. It will take generations to eliminate them.

On the basis of the evidence, Stalinism was not an attempt at socialist planning. It was bureaucratic planning. It was a form of economic organisation which — Marxists had argued long before — represented no advance over capitalism.

Moreover, Stalinism was shaped not by socialist ideas, but much more by economic competition with

and emulation of the capitalist West. Stalinism was trying to develop the industry of the Soviet Union in competition with that of the West.

If we want to give credit or discredit for shaping the Stalinist system to socialism or to capitalism then the discredit must go to capitalism.

If socialist planning is nothing to do with Stalinism, how then do I define it? What would socialist planning be, if not 'state socialism'?

From a socialist point of view, the main purpose of socialist planning is quite different. Socialist planning was about industrial development in competition with the capitalist world. Socialist planning is not primarily about faster economic growth. It is not even primarily about increasing control over the economy.

It is primarily about decreasing the control of the economy over human lives.

Up to now, economic affairs have dominated human life. For a whole epoch, the low level of technology and industry meant that the struggle to get the essentials of life had to dominate human life. Under capitalism the level of technology has made it possible that we could produce the essentials of life without being dominated by the need to do that. But under capitalism we are still dominated by economic drives, because capitalist production is organised for profit.

Under capitalism it doesn't matter if enough of this or that is produced. There is always a drive for more profit, for this or that profitable new line of production, for increased pressure on the worker to work more.

In Japan, they have the most tremendous technology, and they could produce the basics of life with a relatively small effort. It would be possible for people to have a relatively leisured and dignified life.

Despite that, something like 70% of Japanese workers say that they constantly feel physically exhausted and mentally exhausted. That is their lives. Their lives are dominated by being exhausted for the sake of profit.

Socialist planning is aimed at ending the dominance of economic concerns over human life. How is that to be done?

The first thing is to cut the working week to a level which enables everybody to have free activity, not to have their lives dominated by what an employer tells them all to do — still less by what the state tells them to do!

We must reduce the drudgery necessary to produce the basics of life. We cannot do away with that drudgery but by mechanisation and automation we can continue the process already developed by capitalism, of reducing the necessary drudgery to a small amount.

We should share that drudgery out equally, so that we don't have some people overworked, some people in idleness and rich, and other people in idleness and poor as under capitalism.

The organisation of that drudgery is the area where planning operates. Socialist planning is not about state planning of people's whole lives.

And even in the area of basic production, we will not be able to plan



Africa: nature brings drought, the market brings starvation

social needs straight away. It will take generations before the level of technology, the degree of information and culture, and the spirit of co-operation have developed enough to make the planning of basic economic essentials just an administrative question.

Under socialist planning everybody would be expected to do their share of the drudgery. When they have done that they have free time. That free time would not be just like the enforced idleness of many under capitalism. It would be free time on the basis of having the essentials of life and on the basis of access to education, culture and so on.

It would be free time we could use for study, for sport, for handicrafts, for conversation, for friendship, or if we like just for idling.

Free time — time which is not dominated by economic considerations — is the core of socialism. It would release the time for people to plan their lives decently.

They would not have their lives decided by the free market, where your life can be ruined from one week to the next, and not even by your own fault — not because you are an inefficient worker or an idle worker, but simply because of some shift in demand for your employer's products.

That is how I see socialist planning. It is utopian? That question really comes down to: is human nature sufficiently elastic that it can develop the spirit of co-operation and solidarity necessary for such re-organisation?

It is impossible to say yes or no for sure because it has not been tried yet. We will find out whether or not it is possible by trying.

Then the question is, is there a force which will try?

Yes, there is. One of the most important and progressive things about capitalism is that it generates the desire to improve society. It does not just generate that desire in general, it generates it in particular among a particular class, the working class.

The working class in capitalist society is the basic class, similar to the toiling classes in other forms of society. But it is also different. It is the only basic labouring class in human history which has developed permanent organisations based on the principle of

solidarity.

We are well aware of the deficiencies with which those developments have been marked — the deficiencies of the existing working class movements, the way in which they are moulded by the society in which they exist. But in a broad historical view, the remarkable thing is that capitalism generates a class which has this capacity to organise, and consciously to set itself the tasks of firstly changing its conditions within the old society and eventually substituting a new society.

The working class is a class which

finds itself all the time, like it or not, in class struggle with the owners of the means of production. It finds itself in that struggle irrespective of what we, or anybody else, wishes.

That class struggle is going to continue, whatever people say about socialism being condemned by the experience of Stalinism. In that class struggle, there is the force which is going to try — at least — to reorganise society on a basis which is not as unequal and as cruel as the free market.

And it is well worth a try.

***"The market is a productive institution, evolved over generations, with which we should interfere as little as can be managed"***

By David Marsland

There is nothing wrong in principle or in general with planning. It depends who is doing the planning, what for, and how.

Individuals and families absolutely need to plan the personal project of their lives carefully and long-term. It is a primary function of the capitalist ethos and an enterprise culture to encourage this.

Many do, but, alas, too many of us have been discouraged from the need for it by the Welfare State, which pretends to make it unnecessary.

Big Brother does people's planning — for their children's education, for the family's health care, for pensions, and so on — very ineffectively. Only the people whose project it is can plan properly for themselves, since no one else can know or understand their wishes, needs, and situation.

Organisations also need to plan if they are to carry out their proper tasks effectively. The larger the organisation the more difficult it is to plan well, so it should be devolved as far as possible, with the centre handling only strategic planning.

Even then there are difficulties due to the inaccessibility,

unreliability, and fluctuating state of relevant planning information. Hence the key role of markets, as a source of information — about demand and consumers' preferences — to assist organisations in their planning.

The crucial importance of the market as a handmaiden to organisational planning is demonstrated by the general inadequacy of planning in organisations operating outside any sort of market. A major reason for the gross inadequacy of planning in health care or in education in Britain is their protection within a top-down, command-mode, state-centralist cocoon which insulates them from the information they need and blunts the awareness of managers of the need to plan.

Thus, quite contrary to the socialist analysis, a market is necessary to encourage long-term, strategic thinking. Only when power is devolved to relevant operational levels — schools, hospital trusts, etcetera — and when at least a quasi-market is established, is rational planning at the level of the organisation feasible.

Planning, then, is necessary for individuals, groups, and organisations, and beneficial provided that relevant sorts of information in terms of which to ground planning decisions are available.

Planning beyond those limited spheres — in state and society — is where the serious difficulties and the key theoretical and political arguments appear.

Both at local state and especially at central state levels grave problems about planning are inevitable, for three distinct reasons. First the scale of activities involved. The larger the context of action, the more problematical planning becomes. Secondly the nature and range of tasks for which the state is responsible.

Generally speaking, the less appropriate for state capacities the tasks taken on by the state, and the wider the range of such tasks, the less effective does planning become. Thirdly, the infeasibility of states operating in a market. State capitalism is a contradiction in terms.

In general terms, wherever states take over tasks better handled by other agencies and a wider rather than a narrower range of tasks, in these conditions the essential planning tasks of the state — and of course there are such, for the internal and external protection of citizens, for relations with the governments of other states, and for the management of the law and money — are likely to be handled badly.

Thus at state level too planning is essential and needed, but only provided that it is done in a minimal state context, and even then only if it is modest and cautious in the extreme.

In general, subsidiarity requires that state planning should be restricted to tasks in relation to which individuals and groups cannot plan for themselves, and which cannot be handled by organisations independent of the state and operating in markets, preferably real markets.

The grounds for this restriction of the state's planning role are two-fold. First economic: the state in general plans badly, lacking both the personal involvement and understanding of individuals and groups, and the task specificity and market-driven efficiency of independent, profit-oriented organisations.

Secondly political: if the state, even a democratic state, is allowed control of planning outside its proper sphere, liberty is bound to be dangerously threatened.

Thus there is a perfectly proper

and very important role for planning in a free society, by individuals, by groups, by organisations, and by the state as well. However, planning should be located appropriately, and at state level limited to essential modest tasks. The economy narrowly defined should be left largely to independent organisations and the market.

So too should much of the economy broadly defined — the production and distribution of goods and services, which of course includes much of what we have been schooled by socialists to call welfare.

## The socialist challenge

This analysis leaves the state with an important but restricted planning role. The importance of planning by the state, within its proper sphere, is unapologetically acknowledged.

A free society needs a strong, confident state capable of carrying out on behalf of its citizens its vital role — including the planning required by that role — effectively and efficiently in a world of unpredictable challenges and dangers.

Despite this, socialists will read it as an expression of an extreme and intolerable market-orientated ideology. Certainly it goes beyond the level of marketisation achieved even by a decade of Thatcherism. It challenges absolutely the concept of the "mixed economy" of the Butskellite era, which postulated considerable state control and planning. And of course it must seem absolutely unacceptable to real socialists of whatever specific persuasion, as a contradiction of their basic principles.

Yet it is, I suggest, a modest proposition. The supporters of capitalism have never suggested that the market should replace planning entirely, or denied the importance of planning by the state in pursuit of its proper objectives. "Unfettered capitalism" is a socialist concept intended to subvert liberal capitalist societies, not a liberal concept at all.

By contrast, socialists can never in principle be satisfied with controlling or managing the market. The principled aim of socialism is to supersede the market with alternative mechanisms, expropriate it entirely, and install a planned economy within a planned society. Capitalism requires modest but effective "fettering" of the market: socialism relies on "unfettered command", that is to say the replacement of the market by planning.

And of course we know why socialists want this. Their analysis exposes markets as inherently inefficient and unjust. It reveals profit as inevitably exploitative. It condemns competition as wasteful and as destructive of the character of those involved in it. It condemns capitalism, defined essentially by profit-driven competitive markets, as incapable of serving people's real needs, as requiring and reproducing intolerable inequality, and in short as a morally repugnant system serving the real interests of no one save capitalists.

My answer to this socialist challenge to capitalism, and to the demand for comprehensive planning deduced from and justified by it, is two-fold. First a response in terms of theory and principle concerning the feasibility of planning. Secondly a pragmatic and practical response in terms of the demonstrated benefits of markets and the consumer sovereignty on which they rely.

However, there is one logically prior point. There is no need to justify markets in principle or in practice if the socialist critique of capitalism is fallacious or substantially exaggerated. I suggest that, despite the continuing popularity among intellectuals here and in other free societies of socialist ideas, the analysis of capitalism which provides their only justification is erroneous.

The socialist critique manages — despite the patent contradiction involved — to condemn capitalism for sustaining and aggravating poverty, and at the same time for maintaining its illegitimate power by bribing and corrupting the people with the fruits of economic progress.

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# SOCIALISTS ANSWER THE NEW RIGHT



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Perfectly absurdly, as it seems to me, accusations of creating poverty comprise today, as they have for more than a hundred and fifty years, one of the main lines of critique of capitalism.

Yet no civilisation throughout history, no other type of society, past or present — among modern societies neither self-proclaimed socialist societies, nor fascist societies, nor military dictatorships, nor dynastic despotisms, nor revolutionary theocracies, nor any others — have succeeded in providing and sustaining such wealth as the tiny minority of capitalist societies have entirely reliably produced. None of these alternative systems has raised the general standard of living of whole populations to the high and continually improving levels which even the so-called poor in Britain take entirely for granted. Only capitalism destroys poverty.

Whether measured in terms of life expectancy, real incomes, distribution of property, leisure spending, or whatever, the material condition of the British population — even in general recession — is good and continually improving.

“Trickle down” is altogether too modest a characterisation of recent improvements in standards of living. Capitalism has produced in Britain a veritable cornucopia of wealth, which has cascaded right across society. This has transformed the standard of living and the quality of life in material terms beyond what was even conceivable except by a tiny minority as recently as 1945.

None of this is contradicted in the slightest by the persistence of economic inequalities, or even by their increase from time to time. Inequalities are required as the engine of the economic progress which increases living standards all round and destroys poverty. They are a major source of incentive, aspiration, and ambition. They are also widely accepted, in moral terms, and they are in a strict philosophical sense natural, being liberated by capitalism, as Hayek has shown, most notably in *The Fatal Conceit*, as a key component of the market which defines it. Challenge the shifting inequalities of capitalism, and economic progress is destroyed.

Of course this is miscomprehended by capitalism's critics, and even by some of its more luke-warm supporters. The Poverty Lobby's spurious identification of economic inequality with poverty, and its dogmatic determination to eliminate by socialistic measures and mechanisms the very dynamic which has rendered real poverty obsolete, are an index of the poverty of socialist analysis and of the timidity of the pro-capitalist intellectuals who are their supposed opponents. Certainly their efforts provide not the slightest justification for believing other than that, as George Gilder has demonstrated in *The Capitalist Revolution*, on the material front at least, capitalism has succeeded and is succeeding triumphantly.

The second line of socialist critique is what I call the “materialist slander”. It comes in many distinct versions, but they share a common inclination to

find in the styles of life, in the forms of character, and in the values required by capitalism for its success, a gross underestimate and a hideous deformation of human potential.

It is the charge that capitalist culture is altogether and merely materialistic; the claim that competition is inherently destructive; the charge that property divides and subjugates; the accusation that individualism, or at least capitalism's possessive individualism, inhibits co-operation; the critical presumption that economic inequality precludes citizenship and even fraternity; the belief that pursuit of profit inhibits altruism and prevents genuine service; the widespread view even among moderate critics of capitalism that markets destroy community.

Yet most even of the worst features are even worse by a big margin in pre-capitalist and post-capitalist societies. The scope for effective reform and improvement without structural change is patently enormous. Empirical studies of people's lives — as reported, for example, by Gilder and by Michael Novak in *The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism* — clearly and definitely suggest high levels of satisfaction at work, at leisure, and holistically; improving levels of education, sophistication, and civilisation; and consistent movement overall towards a far greater degree of personal and interactional expression and development than we have any right — given a realistic view of the past and of man's infinite capacity for evil — to expect.

Moreover, the supposedly destructive features of capitalism which it is alleged are responsible for all the problems — property, profit, competition, inequality, and the rest — turn out to be precisely the mechanisms which directly, in and of themselves, and indirectly through their sustenance of freedom, are making positive human development possible.

Immigrants flood, where they can manage it, away from all sorts of primitive and evil societies, into capitalist societies, pursuing an escape from poverty certainly, but also and equally freedom, and the dream, which is no mere phantasy, of a good life for themselves and their families in the broadest and deepest sense of the concept of good so far available.

Thus, in material and moral terms alike, even those capitalist societies such as Britain which have been most gravely weakened by socialist intrusions, including especially excessive planning and regulation, are succeeding to a degree which makes the proposal for substituting the plan for the market unnecessary and implausible.

Moreover, on both the economic and the moral front, those central features of capitalism which socialists would displace by installing a planning regime — competition, profit, enterprise, and consumer choice — are demonstrably playing a key role in securing this success.

### The failed theory of planning

Planning is unnecessary then; but in any case it can't work.

This seems to me to have been adequately demonstrated in Hayek's refutation of Oskar Lange's thesis of the possibility of socialist calculation.

Lange claims that all the information available to capitalist entrepreneurs

which is necessary for them to make optimal decisions about resource allocation is available in practice to socialist planners. Given this data, they can then plan the socialist economy rationally.

Or as Heilbroner, following Lange, puts it: “A central planning board would receive exactly the same information from a socialist economic system as did the entrepreneurs under the market system”. This assumption — strengthened in some quarters recently by developments in information science and technology which speed up the flow of any sort of information and make it potentially much more comprehensive — is required by even the most modest sorts of planning, and is absolutely essential to systematic detailed planning such as would be required to replace the market. Hayek's response is as follows:

“I am afraid this is a blatant untruth, an assertion so absurd that it is difficult to understand how an intelligent person could ever honestly make it. It asserts a sheer impossibility which only a miracle could realise.

In the first instance: most of the information which the capitalist entrepreneurs have consists of prices determined on a competitive market. This knowledge would not be available to anyone in a socialist economy where prices are not provided by the market.

So far as the particular case of the production function is concerned, the relevant production functions which guide the competitive market are, of course, not (as the theoretical models simplifyingly assume) relations between general, generic categories of commodities, but very specific relations showing how, in a particular plant under the specific local conditions, changes in the combinations of the particular goods and services employed will affect the size of the output”.

(Journal of Economic Affairs Vol.2 No.3, 1982).

Moreover, even if the information were available — which by definition it cannot be in a socialist society — there is still no way it could be collated and analysed by a planning unit or by a single person or by any other means than the infinite complexity of the market itself. Dispersed market knowledge simply cannot be mobilised centrally.

Even on more modest and substantially oversimplified assumptions about the range and particularity of the knowledge required, such that a kind of “accountancy planning” could be possible, it couldn't work in practice. As Hayek says:

“The mere idea that the planning authority could ever possess a complete inventory of the amounts and qualities of all the different materials and instruments of production of which the manager of a particular plant will know or be able to find out makes the whole proposal a somewhat comic fiction. Once this is recognised it becomes obvious that what prices ought to be can never be determined without relying on competitive markets.

The suggestion that the planning authority could enable the managers of particular plants to make use of their specific knowledge by fixing uniform prices for certain classes of goods that will then have to remain in force until the planning authority learns whether at these prices inventories generally increase or decrease is just the crowning foolery of the whole farce”.

(Ibid.) This is why all planning systems —

but only some markets — fail. A competitive market system capitalises naturally on a complex interaction of individual decisions which cannot be adequately recorded, let alone reproduced in the abstract by any artificial means. This is why Central Europe, and now Russia and the Ukraine, are simply having to marketise fully.

Without a market, economic decisions are bound to be guesswork and commonly — and cumulatively — mistaken. This is also why rational planning within the Welfare State is so difficult, why state functions which cannot be privatised such as defence are so expensive and inefficient, and why it is at those boundaries between national economies which are not made transparent by free trade that major dislocations of economic efficiency and dynamism occur.

In the absence of a market, there is simply no rational basis available for resource allocation decisions. If a plan, of whatever sort, is used instead, systematic resource mis-allocation is inevitable. Moreover reactions to the consequences of these errors will multiply them still further, resulting sooner or later in complete economic collapse — in an economic crisis such as socialists have long expected in capitalist societies but actually occurs only in socialist societies, or at least in those societies which have defined the competitive market as the essential characteristic of capitalism and replaced it by the plan.

Even the much more modest and commonsensical notions of planning typically recommended by socialists in Britain — for example organising the health service either nationally, or even regionally, in terms of prescriptions derived other than from a market, or distorting the natural flow of regional investment in order to supposedly protect economically weaker regions — are subject to the same fundamental errors. Socialist planning, however desirable it might seem to be, is simply not on.

### Practical problems with planning

In addition to these problems of principle about planning, there are also grave practical difficulties.

I can best make what I mean clear by spelling out the reasons why market systems — that is to say, modes of organising the production and distribution of goods and services which are responsive via prices and profits to consumer sovereignty — are generally effective.

All the eight advantages of competitive markets I will spell out are matched by correlative disadvantages in any non-market planning system. Similar disadvantages would also of course appear as a result of private monopoly, though these are worsened by state monopoly, and worsened further again by the comprehensive state monopoly of a planned socialist society.

“Only consumer sovereignty within a competitive market prevents the need for excessive and dangerous political controls, ramifying bureaucracy...”

Sooner or later private monopolies are defeated by innovative competitors. A state monopoly, by contrast, will persist — and grow progressively more inefficient — until the state can no longer afford it either economically or politically. A socialist society — a planned monopoly of planned monopolies — will simply go on and on, getting worse and worse at everything, until it collapses.

- In the absence of free markets:
- Prices go up or fail to reduce;
- Supply is reduced and shortages follow.
- Innovation is blocked.
- The quality of service is reduced.
- The state incurs costs — for running nationalised industries or for subsidies — instead of benefits from taxes.

Why does this happen? The main reason is because the only alternative to a competitive market — the only other way of organising the production and distribution of goods and services — is a command system. The central planning essential to a command economy simply cannot, in its nature, answer consumers' needs effectively as a competitive market system in most cases can.

There are eight reasons why this is so. 1. Consumer tastes and needs vary over a wide range and unpredictably. Only markets, that is to say mechanisms

specifically answerable to consumer demand, can address this variety effectively.

2. Consumer tastes and needs are subject to rapid unpredictable change. Only markets can adjust with reliable rapidity to such change.

3. Entrepreneurs and technologists tend — unless they are prevented — to produce innovations and improvements. Only a market answerable to consumer preferences allows reliably for effective testing and implementation of such improvements.

4. Only those forms of organisation of the production of goods and services which are oriented to consumer preferences and subject to consumer sovereignty are likely, through competition, to minimise costs and prices.

5. Only those forms of organisation of the production of goods and services which are oriented to consumer preferences and subject to consumer sovereignty are likely, again through competition and the effects of prices, to reduce waste and more generally to maximise efficiency.

6. Only consumer sovereignty is capable of determining optimum levels of investment and expenditure. In its absence investment and other expenditure is likely to be artificially and damagingly either held down or exaggerated.

7. Only consumer sovereignty within a competitive market prevents the need for excessive and dangerous political controls, ramifying bureaucracy, and rationing in one form or another.

8. Only organisations which are answerable to competitive markets and consumer choice are capable of resisting exaggerated trade union demands.

For all these reasons, a market, involving real competition between a number of producers and suppliers of goods and services, is likely in most cases to be superior to any command or planned economy in delivering the quantity and the quality of what people want.

### Conclusion: the fatal conceit

The states belonging to free societies need to plan if they are to do their proper work effectively. However, this should be modest in scope and scale, cautiously handled, and limited to the decisively restricted sphere of operations which are appropriate to the state in free societies.

Any extension of state planning beyond these limits is bound to be both ineffective and counter-productive. Extension of state planning as a counterweight to or a substitute for the normal and natural operation of the free market cannot in any circumstances be other than gravely damaging to the real interests of the whole population.

When liberal capitalist societies like Britain are faced by recession, or challenged over the longer term by successful competition from other nations, there is a powerful temptation to believe that state planning and state intervention can provide an antidote. All our experience in Britain since the War refutes this optimistic notion. Interference with the market, however modest and well-intentioned, simply makes things worse.

The real answer is not more planning, but less, not an increase in state intervention, but a radical reduction. The success of the British economy depends entirely on the capacities of entrepreneurs, managers and workers to invent, produce and sell products and services at a profit on the global market.

I have argued here that, beyond very modest parameters, planning is unnecessary, infeasible in principle, and ineffective in practice. It may seem that the progressive application of human intelligence to social affairs must inevitably counsel adoption of a comprehensive planning mode in relation to every sort of human problem. This is how it is being argued currently, for example, in relation to environmental problems and “green” issues. But in this important instance and generally this conception is mistaken.

Human intelligence and advancing knowledge ought, on the contrary, to advise us that the market is a powerfully productive institution, evolved naturally over generations, with which we should interfere as little as can be managed.

The better part of intelligence is to marvel at the market's gifts to mankind, to protect and facilitate its operations, and to resist the impatient clamour of the planners' tooth and nail. The commitment of socialists and others to planning is indeed, in Hayek's memorably precise phrase, a “fatal conceit”.

Our tape-recording of the summary speeches at the end of the session was not good enough for them to be transcribed accurately. John O'Mahony's series on the Labour youth movement in the early 1960s will be continued next week.

# How the ridiculous becomes deadly

Kvetch, sex and civilisation

Theatre

Matt Cooper reviews Steven Berkoff's *Kvetch*, now showing at the Garrick Theatre in London

Steven Berkoff, who wrote, directed and stars in *Kvetch* has a reputation as being one of Britain's foremost serious dramatists.

It is then a little surprising that it has picked up a clutch of West End awards — the *Evening Standard* award for Best Comedy is more suggestive of a "Hello vicar, where are my trousers?" farce. Like Orton before him, Berkoff has taken farce and tried to use it as a vehicle for something more serious.

*Kvetch* is Yiddish for anxiety, an inward scream, and all the characters in the play have kvetch by the bucket-load.

Caricatures would be more apt. Caricatures not only in their lower-middle-class worries and materialism, caricatures in their Jewishness, but also in the image of neurotic gargoyles.

The bulk of the play consists of Frank (caricature of a materialistic salesman) taking Hal, the closest thing he has to a friend, home to share dinner with his wife (caricature of neurosis) and mother-in-law (caricature of... well, mother-in-law).

It may sound clichéd and cheap but it works. The "real time" action is staccato, it is stopped by long monologues by the characters explaining themselves to the audience, their thoughts, worries, and above all, their inward turmoil.

Frank and Donna while projecting the image of happy middle-aged couple hate each other. Hal, while saying that he relishes his freedom as a divorcee, is jealous of the stability he perceives.

Not only are the results hilarious — when Hal contemplates inviting Frank and Donna to dinner at his flat and finally comes to the conclusion that suicide is the only option — but also a bitter condemnation of the family, duplicity, and the sub-human way that people relate to each other while genuinely wanting something better.

The first act ends with Frank and Donna having perfunctory sex — and explaining the fantasies which keep each other from ever actually knowing the other.

If the play ended here, it would have been better. But Berkoff, having presented "the facts", starts trying to explain them.

In the second act the play loses its way. All this anxiety, he seems to suggest, is the result of sexual frustration. The characters seek what they want and are happier for it. But the answers are trite and unsatisfactory — you are never sure if Berkoff believes in his characters any more, or if he is just stuck for an ending.

See this play for its brilliant farce and its wickedly accurate description of our "civilised lives", but don't expect too many answers.



Theatre

Jean Lane reviews "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui", now playing at the National Theatre in London

When someone you know laughs at a skinhead and calls him 'thick', it is tempting just to join in the ridicule rather than point out the very serious threat that fascism represents.

In his play, "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui", Bertolt Brecht managed to combine ridicule with a serious message in a delightful analogy about the rise of Hitler.

The play is currently showing at the National Theatre in London, with Antony Sher in the lead.

Ui (Hitler) is the leader of a small gang in Chicago (Germany) during the 1930s Depression. Virtually bankrupt and hounded by the police for robbery and murder, Ui and his thugs manage to get a foothold in the city by blackmailing Old Dogsborough of the City Hall (President Hindenburg, the old Field Marshall who eventually called Hitler to power) and getting himself a place on the board of the Town's Vegetable Traders' Trust (the Junkers, the right-wing landlord class).

He forces the small vegetable traders into a very successful protection racket — protection from his own violence — and at the same time, appeals to them with promises of bringing the striking workers and unions under control.

Burning down a warehouse and blaming it on the Communists (the Reichstag fire) he manages to increase his hold on the city.

A power struggle between members of the gang, however, culminates in Roma (Ernst Roehm) and his boys, who did all Ui's dirty work, being bumped off by Givola's (Goebbels') men, (the Night of the Long Knives).

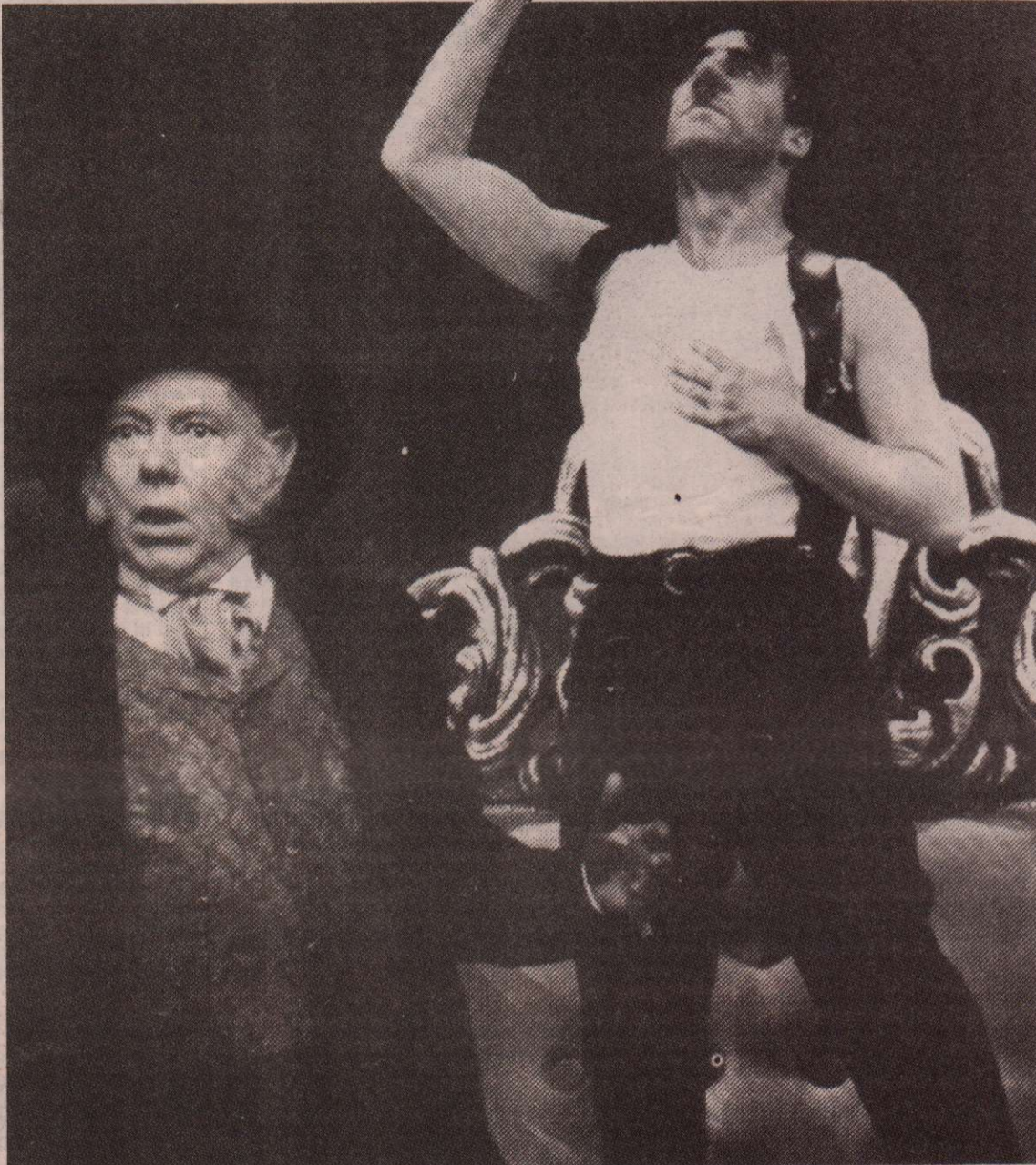
When Old Dogsborough dies, Ui takes control of the city and then, after murdering Dullfeet of the neighbouring town, Cicero, (Chancellor Dolfuss of Austria) he extends his power (the annexation of Austria in 1938).

Forcing the people of Chicago and Cicero to vote for him, Ui consolidates his power and outlines his plans to take over all other American cities and even New York. (Hitler, after Austria, invaded Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Yugoslavia, Greece and Russia. For "even New York", read "the World").

The analogy with gangsterism falls down somewhat as more emphasis is put on extortion and racketeering enabling Ui to come to power. Hitler had appealed to very real problems faced by the big business class threatened by a severe economic crisis and a militant working class.

Ui's protection is against his own violence. Hitler promised to deal with the workers and the communists. Ui comes to power by threats and ballot-rigging. Hitler's votes were real.

However, the play is brilliant, and Antony Sher as Ui is hilarious. In one scene, this backstreet, inarticulate thug, poised for power and stardom, calls upon a has-been Shakespearean actor to teach him



Antony Sher as Arturo Ui takes lessons in how to be a dictator from a has-been Shakespearean actor

how to walk and speak.

During the lesson, the goose step, the raised hand salute, the hairstyle and moustache and the bombastic style of public speaking all come out, quite by accident transforming a vain, pathetic and laughable little man into a ridiculous monster who, by the end of the play is quite terri-

ble.

The play's main message is quite clear. Despite the Nazis having been a clear minority in the 1932 elections, by 1933, they had taken control. There is no room for complacency while those animals are about; and we should remember that while celebrating the defeat of

David Duke in Louisiana's elections.

The other message is in the title — the *resistible* rise. In the play, everyone is waiting for someone else to sort Ui out. We must not make the same mistake.

The Nazis can and must be beaten.

## Urban jungle conflict

Television

By Mick Ackersley

"Children of the North" is an "entertainment", a thriller about the triangular conflict in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland between, at the base, Catholic Irish and Protestant Irish (represented here only by the Royal Ulster Constabulary), and, at the apex, the British who have overall control.

Its nearest equivalent is, I suppose, the Ken Loach film *Hidden Agenda*, which packaged overt political propaganda inside a thriller format.

*Children of the North* is not only full of politics, as the subject dictates, but full of radical politics. Much of it concerns the operations of a secret British Army murder squad which recklessly shoots peo-

ple and blows up a house full of children in its pursuit of the IRA.

The hard-nosed RUC man and the IRA collaborate to thwart them, in alliance with a decent British officer who has been forced to retire early (Patrick Malahide, unrecognisable from his *Minder* days).

The picture presented is that of an intense urban jungle conflict in which the British are the outsiders. No side is prettified, but the British, most of them callous technicians, come off worst.

The "good" officer stands out simply because he has a streak of humanity and develops a real concern with the people of Northern Ireland.

Civil servants and high-ranking soldiers are shown talking about the value of Northern Ireland to Britain as "the best training ground in the world" for learning to use and refine the techniques of repression, surveillance, and underground gang warfare. It is done casually, but it is

there.

It is concentrated melodrama. One weird character, "Mr Apple", a religious mystic whose body is covered in old, long-healed whiplash cuts which bleed in certain situations, could be a refugee from *Odd Man Out*.

The IRA is shown shooting its own men at a rate that would soon solve the British state's "security" problem. Yet the Republican leader who runs the "punishment squad", played by the splendid John Kavanagh, is a highly moral man, instinctively humane, a suffering human being in a terrible trade — a sort of Republican Felix Dzerzhinsky.

The politics are less explicit, and the "message" less ambitious and narrower in focus, than those attempted in *Hidden Agenda*. For helping people to realise what is going on in Northern Ireland, *Children of the North* is probably more effective. And it is a lot more gripping and exciting.

# Hillel Ticktin on the nature of the USSR 'The Stalinist bureaucracy was a potential ruling class and an actual ruling group'

In the discussion over the mode of production in the USSR, I cannot but agree with the use of Marx's famous statement on the importance of the form of the surplus product. Tom Rigby does not follow it up.

What is the form of the surplus product in the USSR? I have tried to answer that by saying that it is the 'defective product surplus' or the 'Soviet surplus product'. More clearly stated: the contradiction in the USSR lies not between use-value and exchange-value, but between the potential (intended) product and the actual product. The surplus product therefore takes on this special form of a product which is internally contradictory.

That means that the ruling group have a surplus product which is different from what it seems to be. They may have produced more machine tools than anyone else in the world, but they actually have a shortage of machine tools because of the low quality, poor technique etc of their products. So the surplus product is a surplus product and is not a surplus product.

Differently put, they have only a limited degree of control over the surplus product. For that reason, they do not constitute a class.

Why? Because the workers continue to have a negative control over their own labour process. As a result the ruling group could not 'plan' the system. As a further result, they were and remain an unstable grouping, which could only stay in power through the atomisation of the population.

Such atomisation reduced

**"Unlike capitalism, there was no fundamental economic law regulating the system".**

the level of productivity to the point where innovation was below the level of capitalism. Indeed, it was extremely difficult to introduce any new technique into an ex-



The Baikal-Amur railway line. A monument to the Brezhnevite stagnation. Billions of roubles have been spent trying to complete it.

isting plant in the USSR. The system had no integrating mechanism other than its own command over surplus labour time and once that dried up, the system went into free fall.

In other words, Chris Arthur is surely right that the USSR was never a new mode of production. Its short life was a pointer to the more profound inability of the system to establish itself as a mode of production. The reason lay in the fact that unlike capitalism, there was no fundamental economic law motivating the system. Its laws were conflictual and disintegrative.

Even the usual argument, which Tom Rigby is adducing along with Mandel and others, that the system grew is dubious. Its growth was so marred that Gorbachev could

claim that there was no growth except in vodka and oil in the Brezhnev period.

In converting to capitalism, practically all machinery will have to be replaced with market-type

**"It [Stalinism] is not even a parallel road to capitalism. It is not even a footpath".**

machinery. Hence it is not even a parallel road to capitalism. It is not even a footpath. I have tried to argue the case in much more detail in my book on the origins of the disintegration

of the USSR.

The increased production of semi-useful goods is an indication that there was a non-integrative conflictual social relationship within production held together by temporary forces. One can, of course, call such a relationship by any name one wants, even a mode of production, but one must live with the consequence that there would be hundreds of modes of production in human history and not the few Marx adduces.

During periods of world transition such as the present there are bound to come into being temporary formations or systems which are like defective embryos in not having vital ingredients for life. The founder of "Against the Current" — the late Steve Zeluck — compared the USSR to Neanderthal Man in not having an evolutionary future.

The great advantage of this approach as against the bureaucratic collectivist approach, is that it permitted me to predict the disintegration of the USSR from 1975 onwards. It provided a dynamic to that system, one of disintegration, and allowed one to understand that the ruling group desperately wanted to be a class, and indeed always preferred to go to capitalism, but could not make it.

Just as the products of the system are potential use-values as well as actual use-values, so the ruling group was a potential class as well as an actual ruling group. Today they see their potentiality in converting to capitalism.

## The smallest mass party in the world takes stock

### EYE ON THE LEFT

Tom Rigby has been taking a look at the internal life of the SWP

**W**e can now reveal the real Socialist Workers Party.

Documents smuggled out of the organisation and now in the hands of Socialist Organiser provide a very interesting picture of the state of affairs inside the "smallest mass party in the world" as it gathered for its recent conference.

The documents depict a shockingly low level of political discussion and understanding, and virtually no internal democracy.

Let us see first how the Central Committee "perspectives" document deals with the coming General Election — an election in which millions of class conscious workers will be willing Labour to win with every fibre of their being, an election in which the future of our class is at stake, with a choice between five more years of Tory attacks or a Labour government under which the working class movement can again flex its muscles and have at least a fighting chance of forcing some concessions.

SO will be fighting for a Labour government and a Labour vote in every constituency, and at the same time saying to workers: prepare to fight against Kinnock for every small improvement and reform! What of Socialist Worker?

They see things differently. They do have the slogan "Kick the Tories out!", but their real attitude is best expressed in this half-thought from the Central Committee: "Since the end of the Gulf War, we have been faced with a new political situation characterised by the lack of a national political focus for the bitterness at the base of society".

Abracadabra! Now you see the election, now you don't!

Of course there is a national political focus for all those who hate the Tories. It is the General Election! Just because the SWP does not know how to intervene in it, that doesn't mean it does not exist.

**Socialist Workers Party Pre-conference Bulletin 1991**



But which is more unstable... capitalism, Stalinism, or the SWP?

On the contrary, it is the SWP which does not exist as a serious political tendency, since it is unable to relate to the election except in the most passive way. While mouthing the slogan "Don't wait for Labour!", they have done nothing positively to hasten the election, or to challenge Kinnock's election agenda. The SWP lets the Labour right wing define the issues in national politics.

Such sectarian passivity is bound to disorientate the membership, and there is plenty of evidence of that in the internal documents. For instance, take this confession from two Cardiff comrades in a document modestly entitled *Our Time Has Come*:

"The absence of a big nice focus for our activity is certainly confusing, but in any confusing political period we should return to the principles that bring us into the party in the first place... the critical role of a revolutionary party". What kind of revolutionaries forget that millions of workers desperately need a

**"What kind of party has as its central principle... the need to be a party?"**

Labour government just because the reality of Kinnockite control of the Labour Party is not very "nice"? What kind of party has as its central principle... the need to be a party?

Any class-conscious worker will be inclined to consider such people dilettantes; and "Pre-Conference Document No.2" certainly confirms that view when it assesses the Walton by-election.

"The argument [within the Liverpool SWP] centred on should we go 'on the knocker' for Mahmood... the argument had been won formally but when we came to go out on the first Sunday only four comrades turned up".

The SWP claims 6000 members. They said the Walton by-election was the key test for the left. SO supporters were denounced as right-wingers because we opposed Lesley Mahmood's candidacy as a stupid stunt. The SWP produced an Open Letter to the left ("Time to take sides") on exactly this theme. And then these super-tough Bolsheviks mobilised just 0.067% of their membership for the task at hand!

Nowhere does the document mention that the SWP were excluded from canvassing by the *Militant* organisers of the Mahmood campaign, or explain why the SWP silently and meekly accepted its exclusion.

Next week: the SWP's internal democracy, a new understanding of the Labour Party, and the debate on their programme.

## WHAT'S ON

**Thursday 21 November**  
"Behind the Middle East peace conference". Glasgow SO meeting. 7.30, Partick Burgh Halls. Speaker: Steve Macleod.  
"The fight against racism". Northampton SO meeting. 12.30, Nene College.  
**Friday 22 November**  
Richmond College SO meeting. 1.00. "Is There a God?" Speaker: Paul McGarry.  
**Saturday 23 November**  
"Women in the Unions" conference, 10 to 5 at Wesley House, Wild Street, London

WC1. Organised by Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee. Registration £5.  
**Sunday 24 November**  
"Sara Thornton: the issues". North London SO meeting. 7.30, Red Rose Club, 129 Seven Sisters Road, London N7. Speaker: Liz Dickinson.  
**Tuesday 26 November**  
"Ireland: the socialist answer". Manchester University SO meeting. 1.00. Speaker: Tony Dale.  
"Is Socialism Dead?" Sheffield University. 1.00. Debate between the Tory PPC for Hillsborough and Rob Dawber from SO.  
**Wednesday 27 November**  
"The fight against racism".

Essex University SO meeting. 6.00. Speaker: Paul Ramsamooj.  
**Thursday 28 November**  
"The left and the election". Nottingham SO meeting. 7.30, ICC, Mansfield Road. Speaker: Mark Serwotka.  
"Race hatred and the Asylum Bill". Manchester SO meeting. 8.00, Bridge Street Tavern. Speakers: Jeni Bailey and Steve Cohen.  
**30 November and 1 December**  
"The future for socialism", weekend school organised by youth and student SO supporters. Starts 11.30 Saturday, Manchester Poly Students Union.

## INDUSTRIAL

# Ballot setback for the NUM

By Jean Millar

The Scottish NUM leaders' moves for a change in the national union's stance on British Coal's 'majority-minority' bargaining code got a boost from the results of the ballot on an overtime ban without safety cover. But it is likely that the NUM leadership will see off any moves to change their bargaining stance.

Members voted 18,806 to 11,106 against the ban, a significant fall from the 43% in favour in last year's ballot for an overtime ban with safety cover. Yorkshire, usually a pillar of support for industrial action voted against, 7,343 to 6,062. Only Nottinghamshire voted for (400 to 239).

Scottish area officials have been pushing for a ballot on whether or not the NUM should support the 'majority-minority' principle. Accepting this would mean allowing the Union of Democratic Mineworkers to negotiate on behalf of NUM

members in pits where the UDM is a majority.

For six years the NUM has refused to sit down at the negotiating table with the UDM. Rates for miners have hence been negotiated between British Coal and the UDM.

Even though the NUM leadership's advice to take industrial action was rejected they will still receive strong support against moves to change the NUM's negotiating stance. Members in the larger areas like Yorkshire and the North East are unlikely to support recognition of the UDM. So the Scottish NUM of-

official's campaign looks set to be stymied.

But it is still necessary to be clear why members voted 'no' to action in the ballot. Arthur Scargill has put it down to demoralisation after years of seeing jobs butchered, pits closed and communities destroyed. This is true in part, but it is not the whole picture.

Dave Cliff, then of Hem Heath NUM argued in SO 467, after the 'no' vote in last year's ballot on an overtime ban with safety cover, there were other problems involved, relating to the nature of the industrial ac-

tion being considered.

The last time an overtime ban with safety cover was operated many miners worked overtime citing safety as an excuse. To operate an overtime ban without safety cover also has drawbacks. With shafts not being inspected regularly, many miners who never work overtime may lose whole shifts and hence incentive

payments.

Such a situation is worse than being on strike when nobody expects to get paid — if you are working everyone wants paying.

The NUM needs to adopt more sophisticated tactics. Perhaps it is time to learn from the railworkers and adopt their tactics of days of action and area strikes of short duration.

## Civil Servants:

### Build a united fight on pay

By a Civil Service worker

The NUCPS National Executive Committee has called a one-day special pay conference for February 6. This presents NUCPS members with a great opportunity to debate the Tory attack in the branches, determine a way forward and push the leadership into a serious defence of national bargaining.

The coming months must be used by the NUCPS Broad Left to agitate as widely as possible amongst the membership, acting on last weekend's Broad Left conference decision to make this fight the number one priority over the coming period.

The NUCPS's decision should spur on CPSA activists to step up the pressure on their right-wing National Executive, which is terrified of the members' anger finding full voice in a special pay conference.

In a further step forward in the fight against the Tories, the CPSA have agreed to ballot alongside the NUCPS for an all-out, one-day strike of London members in support of the joint 1991 London Weighting claim. The ballot will take place early next year with the likely strike date being 31st January. The General Secretaries of IRSF,

IPMS and Prison Officers will recommend similar ballots to their next National Council meetings and it seems that even the First Division Association, representing the very highest civil servants, might ballot.

The CPSA's decision, and the possible involvement of the other unions, has given a great boost to the morale of the London activists. Rather than bemoaning the decision of the NUCPS leadership to call off the ballot for a one-day London Weighting strike on 29 November, militants should therefore seize the chance of winning the ballots for the first civil service-wide day of action in years.

The chances (and effects) of the strike being carried after Christmas and on a united basis, are far greater than those of the NUCPS going it alone. Moreover, the timing of the strike, if seriously built for, provides a real opportunity to kick-

start the fight for national pay-bargaining and the national rate for the job.

The significance of the latter point cannot be underestimated: the union leaders' response to the Tories' declaration of war on national bargaining and members' living standards, has been woeful.

Without a serious demonstration of rank and file anger and

**"The union leaders' response to the Tories declaration of war... has been woeful."**

strength, the different union leaderships will collapse in the face of Tory hostility, no doubt scapegoating each other in the process. The Broad Lefts must throw themselves into the pay

campaigns, focussing on national bargaining, the national rate for the job and a serious 1992 pay claim. Coordination across the Broad Lefts will be vital.

The 7 December pay conference being called by the CPSA Broad Left (on the initiative of *Socialist Organiser* supporters) must be turned into a working conference jointly organised by all the civil service union Broad Lefts. It would be a disaster if the Militant majority in CPSA Broad Left seized this excellent idea only to transmute it into a Militant rally (as they always do with conferences they are able to control).

The NUCPS Broad Left in particular, must be quite firm in insisting on the democratic and working character of the conference as the best way to prepare for the official conference. The fight on pay and London Weighting presents a real opportunity to build the left as a serious non-sectarian force in the civil service unions. That opportunity must be seized with both hands.

## Manchester victimisations

By a Manchester City Council housing worker

Manchester City Council have sacked 2 NUPE members, and given a NALGO member a final written warning in two separate incidents in the Housing Department.

The two NUPE members have been suspended for a number of months and received their dismissal notices on 8 November. Their crime was to have rent arrears on a council tenancy which they recently moved out of.

Housing Department management are using their case to claim that rent arrears is tantamount to unprofessional conduct and deserving a gross misconduct charge.

This decision is an outrageous attack on the personal affairs of council employees. It is an echo of earlier years when white-collar employees were held accountable by management for every aspect of their personal lives.

NUPE met but unfortunately decided not to take industrial ac-

tion over the sackings.

In the other incident, a rehousing officer and NALGO member had been suspended over an anonymous leaflet criticising a senior rehousing officer for his involvement in a suspect council offer to two owner-occupiers moving from London.

Initially, management were looking at a sacking. Following the threat of strike action they backed off and reduced the disciplinary action to a final written warning.

The final written warning was acceptable to the branch officials and under pressure the suspended worker accepted the reduced

**Beatson and Clarke's**

### "A matter of principle"

By an AEU member

Trade union members at Beatson and Clarke's plants at Stairfoot (Barnsley), and Rotherham look set to strike unless management use last minute

disciplinary charge.

A final written warning for distributing a leaflet is over the top and vindictive. Even so, the fact that the worker was not sacked is due solely to the strike threat by NALGO members in the Department.

The common strand to these cases is that those disciplined were active trade unionists who were willing to criticise the management. In Housing Department management's drive for a disciplined and docile workforce, they are now targeting union activists for victimisation.

talks to reverse their decision on improved bonus payments.

Both AEU and TGWU members voted overwhelmingly on indefinite action in last week's ballot, however, the EETPU members rejected the strike call and voted to carry on working.

The threatened dispute stems from this year's wage negotiations where management refused to implement a 7% increase on bonus payments.

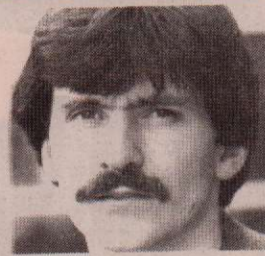
The impetus gained by the AEU's successful shorter working week campaign at the plants has had a large bearing on the ballot result, and the members have used this success as a springboard and are pressing home their new found confidence to improve pay and conditions.

An AEU member at Stairfoot commented: "I know it's only a minimal amount of money, but our tails are up and it's a matter of principle".

The Barnsley AEU District Committee, who met this week, are expected to recommend endorsement of the dispute at the Stairfoot plant.

## Make your workplace safe

### STEWARDS CORNER



By Alan Fraser

In 1990 there were over 760 deaths and almost 200,000 injuries related to employment.

According to estimates by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), ill-health at work gives rise to at least 3,000 premature deaths each year and contributes to a further 8,000 whilst at least 80,000 new cases of work-related disease occur each year.

The HSE states that its accounts of accidents and ill-health can never be comprehensive for two main reasons.

The under-reporting of accidents and the difficulty in identifying ill-health due to industrial causes.

The number of inspectors responsible for enforcing health and safety law is grossly inadequate. Even when employers are found to have broken the law, the penalties are paltry.

Basically, the enforcement of Health and Safety in the workplace by the HSE is minimal. So the role of the union safety rep. in ensuring that the H&S of workers is protected is central and more important than ever.

Most H&S issues arise at local level and safety reps are key in being able to deal with them. However, some unions don't take them seriously enough.

In lots of cases, union safety reps receive little support. There is a lack of training and education. And sometimes, they are left to their own devices.

Another part of the problem is a lack of understanding on the part of unions as to what is a H&S problem.

It is an issue which covers a wide range of problems at work. Some are more obvious than others.

For example, unguarded machines, bad lighting, obstructions, heavy loads, fire risks. Others are hidden such as the long-term damage from noise, dust, chemicals and stress.

In most workplaces it is easier to identify safety problems but trade union action on health is essential. Recent estimates indicate many of the aforementioned are harmful and dangerous to your health.

H&S is therefore a central issue. It is closely linked with bonus schemes, staffing levels, new machinery, work organisa-

tion, discipline and overtime. All these affect H&S. What is important is that safety reps right across the unions need to work closely with each other and not accept the idea that H&S is different from other issues and negotiations. It is also not just a matter of union reps knowing the problems.

A lot of workers are simply unaware of the hazards. They need information, training and education of the dangers and should be involved in any attempt by the union to tackle the problems.

Good, effective safety reps who do their job tackling the issues in a serious way will usually get the back-up they need from members.

The important thing is focussing on management and unsafe work systems as the main source of hazards. Most employers would have us believe that it is careless workers who cause accidents. We must dispel that myth. Tiredness, bad conditions, stress all mean more accidents. Workers are human, not machines. We make mistakes and cannot be 100% alert all the time. We have to be clear that the problem is the hazard, not the worker. So hazards should be removed at source or at least minimised.

Our focus has to be on creating safe work systems and not accepting the careless worker syndrome.

What about identifying a problem? This is not always easy. For example, when are washing facilities adequate, a noise too loud, what are the dangers from VDUs? How should we deal with violence, poor lighting, bad ventilation, asbestos, shift-work, skin hazards, dust, heavy loads, electrical safety...? The list is endless.

The short answer is union organisation, training, education for reps and members.

Unions need continuous research, collecting and processing information and a serious approach in tackling the issues.

Other key principles for union action should always be:

- remove or reduce hazards at source. Don't expect workers to adapt to them.
- examine health problems as well as the more obvious safety problems.
- involve and educate members and encourage them to support a union approach.
- work closely with other unions and reps. A united front must be built to ensure that H&S is not separated off from other union issues.
- negotiate directly with management. And be prepared to take strike action.
- Health and Safety legislation can be a useful tool... but don't rely on it!

At the end of the day, it is the organised safety rep and union action which are decisive.

Health and safety is an issue which can unite workers, build confidence and solidarity in our efforts to transform the labour movement. Don't let your union let it slip off the agenda!

Alan Fraser has worked in the building industry and the Post Office where he was victimised in 1983. He is now a TUC tutor.

## UBO strikes

The strikes for the reintroduction of screens in Unemployment Benefit Offices in various areas of the country continue.

In London, where workers at three offices received letters asking them to report for work away from their own offices, management have made a very partial concession by redefining the letters at one office as "temporary transfer orders", the threat of the sack still remains, and the union leaders' response has been very weak indeed.

## A load of old Bullocks

By Neil Cobbett

Current 'enthusiasm' for the creation of Works' Councils on the German model may be dampened by the recent events at Thomson CSF, the French state-owned electronics firm.

The Thomson CSF European workers council had been held up as a model for 'informing' and 'consulting' with employees' representatives in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK.

However, the works council was only 'informed' about the closure of the Gosport Hants plant when it was an established policy — at the same time as the company made the announcement to the 740 staff at the plant.

The company completely ignored a clause in the works council agreement that it would be informed 'in advance of major structural and industrial changes' and be able to make its own proposals.

All the 'employees' representatives' on the council have been able to do is to make a formal complaint via the staff

side chairman.

The European Commission has drafted a directive on mandatory works councils along the lines of the one at Thomson. Trades unionists shouldn't fall for such forms of participation or see them as a positive way of making gains because of the current low level of industrial struggle.

Events at Thomson once again show the pitfalls of participation schemes whether as peddled by the state and the bosses (the 1970's Bullock report) or more fatuously within the trade union movement itself.

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

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**S**ocialist Organiser's fund drive for £10,000 towards the cost of new equipment continued this week with £320 in donations and

fund-raising. We have received £3914.42 so far — or 39 per cent of our target. Thanks this week to supporters in Kent, £60; Cardiff, £30; York, £35; and Merseyside, £30. Donations

also included £100 from a comrade in Manchester.

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## STUDENT OCCUPATION

# Lancaster shows how to fight

By Janine Booth, NUS Women's Officer (personal capacity)

Lancaster University students have thrown down the gauntlet to the Tories and their policy of education cuts.

Over a thousand students voted today, Tuesday 19 November, to continue their six day long occupation of the University administration building. The occupation is an escalation of a six week rent strike against a 13 per cent rise in rents.

The University administration has replied with a threat effectively to close down the Students' Union and to impose hefty fines.

Students marched into University House (now renamed Student House) after a Union General Meeting last Thursday, 14th. The occupation, which has involved hundreds of students, has won the official backing of the National Union of Students' national executive.

Messages of support have come from student unions around the country, and Labour Youth Conference voted unanimously to back the action.

The administration has issued a writ against eleven named students; refused to negotiate on the rent rise; frozen money due to go to the Student Union; withdrawn student representation on university committees; and threatened disciplinary action against the students involved. The campaign has now become a fight over the right of the Student Union to exist.

If the Lancaster students lose, it will be the green light to every union-bashing college administration to go on the attack. Left Unity supporters on the National Union of Students national executive will be calling for a national demonstration in Lancaster to support the students.

Rush messages of support to the occupation on 0524 65201 x 2008, or by fax to 0524 35211 or 0524 843087.



Lancaster students occupy to fight the Tory cuts

## What the Lancaster students are saying

"The jugglers fully support the occupation, and will be juggling throughout. We are juggling for entertainment and occupying for the principles involved. A 50 per cent rent increase over three years is unacceptable and unjustified, as has been the response from University management. It is now a question of the strength of the Student Union. If the Student Union is to fulfill its activities, we must continue to support the action".

Lonsdale college juggler

"The vote this afternoon gave the

lie to the University administration. They said it was just a small bunch of left-wing activists. Over 1200 students voted to fight on. I don't think even the Vice-Chancellor can convince people that there are 1200 agitators on campus".

Gary Fox, Union general secretary

"I think this shows that students can be mobilised in defence of union rights. Students are not apathetic, and they can be radicalised when they are involved in campaigns".

Will Patterson, Labour Club member and one of the 11

students facing court summonses

"The campaign is a validation of direct action. It was against the law not to pay the poll tax, and we stuffed that. It's against the law to occupy, but we'll win this too".

Gail Moore, Labour Club

"I'm going to stay here until it finishes. Everyone has got to stay here and stick together. I'm in favour of the occupation continuing in the face of the court order".

Student from Pendle College, Lancaster

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