Blair and Major unite in bi-partisan moral hypocrisy

Criminal conspiracy

Tony Blair

The hypocrisy of the new ‘moral crusade’ and law and order hysteria whipped up by the Tory government is nothing new. John Major’s first dilated Back to Basics scam bit the dust a couple of years ago. But what is really disgusting is the way Tony Blair’s Labour Party has turned the issue into a bi-partisan exercise, in which each attempt to outbid the other’s reactionary proposals 17 years of Thatcherism have created the classic polarised society in which millions in the bottom third of the population have been stripped of dignity and hope, reduced to abject and hopeless poverty and alienation, and in the process triggered a crime wave.

Now the party of virtue are now eagerly mounting the reactionary law and order bandwagon, and joining the hypocritical, hyped-up calls for a ‘moral crusade’. Of course this is all aimed at the anti-social behaviour of big-time City swindlers and profiteers, but at individual explosions of violence and ill-discipline by deprived sections of working class youth.

The new preoccupation with morals dovetailed neatly into the stock, reactionary rhetoric of the Tory conference. Ministers pushed all the populist buttons, with calls for workers, crackdowns on social security fraud, new powers to sue strikers, and hints that the London Underground and Royal Mail could be privatised.

The subsequent Queen’s Speech embraced a more limited but again largely populist agenda, with gun controls and laws against easy targets like pedophiles, while Michael Howard pledged even longer jail sentences and a bottomless budget to build new prisons. Exploiting the media hype which propelled the Dunblane parents and Francis Lawrence to centre stage, all manner of brutal and reactionary nostrums have been promoted.

Gillian Shepherd apparently has wide Tory support for her belief that youth can be beaten into submission with a return to rationing. An opinion poll claims majoritity support for electronic tagging, to impose strict curfews on young people.

Parents will be required to sign contracts to get their children into school – while the NASUWT campaign have fallen numbers expelled.

But the backlash reaches beyond law and order. Catholic bishops castigate Tony Blair for not condemning abortion.

It has this has visibly shifted social policy to the right. But will it win the Tories the election? By harping on the moral discord after 17 years in power, the Tories are undermining any sense of a ‘feel good factor’ among key middle class supporters.

Opinion polls suggest that Tony Blair, by shamelessly matching and trumping Tory repressive proposals blow for blow, has actually increased his lead as a result of the moral crusade.

Blair may well get in, but who will win? While a growing reactionary consensus looks for ways to restrain and repress the growing frustrations of the most deprived layers of society, whether by beating them with canes or police batons, or boring them with two-faced sermons on abstract morality, the widening gulf created by Tory social engineering and economic policy can only be bridged by far-reaching socialist policies – precisely the policies which Tony Blair has most firmly rejected.

John Major

Dennis Healey – the former chancellor whose policies triggered massive demonstrations against the 1971 Labour government 20 years ago this month – is right. ‘If Labour wins and sticks for the cuts needed to implement Maastricht, there could be riots against Blair.’ And the left needs to ensure that is in a position to lead that revolt.
Postal workers should fight on

Brian Gardner

LAST WEEK postal workers delivered a powerful new mandate to continue strike action. Communication Workers Union members voted 64,919 to 40,581 for renewed industrial action against Royal Mail’s plans to restructure pay and introduce flexible working.

The overall “yes” vote — 61 per cent on a 78 per cent turnout — represents a significant victory for the union, which has been working to undermine industrial action since the summer and has won a series of key battles.

The majority of postal workers are in no mood to compromise.

However, CWU leader Alan Johnson has already held behind-the-scenes negotiations with Royal Mail. As we go to press it is likely that he will be putting an “as yet unqualified” package to the executive.

It is likely to involve offering the central issue of flexible team working to non-binding arbitration by ACAS and having off the discussions on pay restructuring into the annual pay negotiations.

Whether such a package can satisfy the membership and the executive remains to be seen. It will not be the first time that arch-blurter Johnson has attempted such a stitch-up. Previously his executive has sent him packing.

If this is the deal on the table it may only serve to put off the strike to another day. So far Johnson’s overall gambit has been to keep postponing the fight until such time as his members will grow so tired and demoralised that they either vote against any further action or obtain in large numbers.

The latest vote came about after earlier strike action was suspended when Royal Mail threatened legal action over an anomaly in the balloting procedure.

It is doubtful whether Royal Mail would even consider such a threat if they had, whether such a challenge would have been successful. Their case rested on the fact that in addition to a return of something like 100,000, 425 spoil papers were undelivered.

However, the real reason that CWU leader Alan Johnson decided to re-ballot was not the threats from the employer but the intervention of the Labour Party leadership.

It is not only that Blair and the rest of the leadership see all forcing of union muscle as threatening their electoral prospects.

Labour’s industrial policy seems to be that parliamentary bullying on settlements reached under arbitration.

What a good idea then to insist that Johnson institutes his ballots on an offer made under the auspices of the arbitration service, ACAS.

The bureaucracy of the service can be the risk of seriously destabilising the dispute. The fact that in these circumstances the

Women defend welfare state

Terry Conway

A S WORKERS and as users, women depend on the welfare state to a huge degree. Whether it campaigns against closures of nurseries or fighting for our jobs like the Millington hospital strikers we have been at the forefront of campaigns to defend these services that we need so desperately.

We have also been not slow to see the flaws in existing services, even before today’s cuts began to bite so deep. In fields like health care, whether in terms of day care clinics for abortion or the extension of breast cancer screening — and education we have not been prepared to put up a second best, but have fought for a service that is responsive to the needs of all its workers and users.

Not only are women at the sharp end of job cuts and welfare provision but many of the recent attacks by the Tories have been specifically targeted at us. Raising women’s retirement age to 65 saved the government £5 million pounds which to hand out in the way of single parent benefits.

We have also, and the Mandy Allwood case, restricted our choices even further. For all these reasons and more, the Welfare State Network, together with the NUS Women’s Campaign is organising a conference ‘Foundations for Freedom: a women’s conference putting the case for defence and rebuilding of the welfare state’ at the University of London Union, on November 30.

This conference will provide an opportunity for women involved in existing to share and experiences and convince others that the fight to defend and improve welfare provision is a key task for all socialists and feminists.

Welfare State Network

Foundations for freedom

A women’s conference putting the case for defence and rebuilding of the welfare state

Saturday November 30

University of London Union, Malet Street London: Goodge Street tube. Creche and food available. Registration £5. For: WSN Women’s conference, 183 Queen’s Crescent, London NW1 4DS. Tel 0171 639 5068
Senior NHS managers are circulating the rumour to fellow senior managers that the Tories have abandoned any hope of winning the next General Election and are now embarked on a scorched earth policy to make life as hard as possible for a Labour government.

The conclusion they draw is that there will be no extra cash to bail out the health authorities and NHS Trusts which face an even more desperate winter than last, and which are staring down the barrel of unprecedented spending cuts from next April. The full impact of some of these cuts would be felt after a May general election, forcing Tony Blair to take early, tough decisions on public spending. The same could also be said of education, which in many areas faces another vicious squeeze, even while the media sounds with apogist debate about the collapse of discipline in school class rooms.

There are other nasty skeletons buried under the Tory Party: the massive levels of borrowing incurred by Tory governments since 1979 to finance their tax-cut bonanza for the rich and big business. For example, will they make themselves increasingly and painfully obvious as a Labour government faces a soaring bill for interest payments? (See page 6).

The growing impact of the Job Seekers Allowance will also begin to take an ever heavier toll from next spring, when those currently receiving JSA are told their 6-month entitlement is ended, and the tightening restrictions on social security benefits force growing numbers deeper into desperation. And, instead of all, and one possible reason why John Major might be less than desolate at the thought of losing the next election, is the immense problem of the MAastricht Treaty and the massive costs of meeting the criteria for a single European currency.

The sneaky trace drawn between the two rival wings of the Tory Party around a formula of postponing any decision would fly apart at once if Major were to win a fifth term: and it is most doubtful whether a Tory government could survive the strains of European Monetary Union.

Some Tories and some sections of big business who favour monetary union feel that their best approach is to allow Tony Blair’s party to suffer the backlash from imposing the combination of tax increases and huge cuts in public spending needed to bridge the £20 billion-plus gap between Britain’s current spending deficit and the allowable Maastricht deficit. With such hard political and economic questions lurking in the background, it is hardly surprising that the Tory campaign thrust has switched to an increasingly non-political ‘moral’ agenda. Back to Basics IL, coupled with a predictable if desperate attempt by Kenneth Clarke to line-up a vote-winning, tax-cutting budget.

The problem is that Blair’s team is happy to converse not only at the Tories’ cynical ‘moral crusade’, but also at the suppression of vital information on the economy, the implications of the MAastricht Treaty and the very future of the welfare state. While such silence may appear to offer short term electoral rewards, there are at the expense of storing up a massive crisis for the final few months of a Labour government. From their point of view the Tory tactics may not be to crazy after all.

But the postal ballot referendum on the manifesto did not produce the rush of enthusiasm the party leaders hoped for. They resorted to ‘reminding’ members to vote, both in writing and by phone. They can identify who has voted (and therefore how they voted) and can get to the CLP which gets the highest turnout. They offered to send a replacement to people who said they had lost their ballots.

Hardly the way to run a democratic ballot, but indicative of how worried they were that not enough people would vote, thus undermining the whole exercise advertising. They expressed concern at the unexpectedly high number of members voting ‘no’ - but for Blair’s one indiscretion is one too many.

While those opposing the leadership will remain a small minority, their votes show there is a layer of people who believe that the leadership’s programme, and the ‘no’ to the referendum, is a lack of trust in the leadership and the manifesto. The programme now commits Labour to the further dismantling of the welfare state (the latest U-turn is on fund-holding for general practices, the anti-unions laws, support for a single European currency ‘if the conditions are right’ and a national minimum wage only after the employing employers have had their say. Neither the Jobseekers Allowance nor the Immigration and Asylum Bill will be repealed, only parts of them.

The Party’s programme is now encapsulated in ‘New Labour, New Life for Snow’. The conference was not allowed to amend this, and was not even permitted a debate before the vote.

Despite an increased vote for the manifesto, Labour will suffer a further diminu- tioing of the welfare state (the latest U-turn is on fund-holding for GPs), restoration of the anti-union laws, support for a single European currency ‘if the conditions are right’ and a national minimum wage only after the employees have had their say. Neither the Jobseekers Allowance nor the Immigration and Asylum Bill will be repealed, only parts of them.

While Blair may enjoy a certain honeymoon period in government, his policies will provoke a backlash from the working class. Even Denis Healey predicts that moves to a single currency will prompt a repeat of the strikes in France last December. The Left cannot simply await developments, it has to prepare now. It has to build a campaign around defence of the union link, preparing for next year’s union and party conferences.

Making Labour deliver conference

Saturday, November 9 1996
12:30-5 London Welsh Centre
120 Chiswick High Road London  
Eighth Box in the foot of Marinets at the Friday 4th December Nomenclature
Break the reactionary consensus

Sue Susan

WE WERE all stunned by Dunblane — sharing the grief of the parents and community that thousands could have died anywhere.

Adaptation of the standard responses to many of the desperate situations people find themselves in as life decays almost visibly around them.

The profession of liberalism is being experienced differently by different people, which produces different responses.

But hard as it may be to accept, most severe mobilizations of bad-acted evil of actions are themselves valueless.

Feelings of powerlessness and despair are increasing. Loss is not the right places from which to make a response.

The mass mobilizations of Dunblane have campaigned with quietly hating a very reverent tragedy. Thomas Hamilton, like others who have committed similar and ghastly massacre, killed himself at the end of the slaughter.

Failing to see the illegal weapon would not have been a barrier.

Both Tony and Labour politicians have acknowledged the need for the moratorium on the moratorium on a series of new measures.

For the skill of teaching 'collective' from those involved in layer upon layer of social structures.

The introduction of the national curriculum and other recent education reforms made it harder for teachers to discuss issues with young people that are relevant to their lives. Howard's political power base is much smaller than that of Labour and crime check on job Seekers must be vigorously opposed.

More prisoners and harsher sentences have not made people's lives or streets safer — why should we think it will work this time.

There is now more evidence that it is steps such as properly resource-savvy health provision which begin to tackle real social problems.

The idea that trade unions and labour parties take up the debate on these issues and begin to break through what is being presented as a consensus by all but the judiciary on these vital issues.

The situation that led to the recent developments is the same in Belgium recently where in many ways specific to that country and those particular circumstances.

An adaptation of the same idea of it is possible to turn fear and anger into powerful solidarity, that it is not inevitable that from bitter loss will come reactionary social demands.

Child abuse moral panic and the crisis of the family

The debate on morality — including child abuse, paedophilia, unruly school children — is all part of a 'moral panic' about children in our society.

Punishment not prevention is the cue. The people concerned are 'evil', 'infecting' our schools, 'polluting' our communities.

This is used in the pre-election bandwagon where it is increasingly difficult to tell the two major parties apart, and where the Liberal Democrats have a more radical social policy than either the Tories or Labour.

UNDER THATCHESTER of course, there was no soci- ety only families. The apparent 'newsworthiness' now is presented as anything but the result of gov- ernment policy.

The breakdown in schools is the 'wholesale failure of lack of parental control'. The fact that the Halif Man's school was built on the site of a Methodist Church and is now teaching with any relevance to children, that local parishes made the school's need to succeed paramount over the child's need to learn — all this goes unnoticed.

Similarly the perpetrators of child abuse are typecast as soli- citors, and unfortunat- ely this is the case. As the Irish News case in Canterbury, most child abusers tend to be middle class, physical, verbal or emotional, is carried out in the family

where Tony 'family values' are presently to be found. Even in the West case, while not all those abused were blood rela- tives of the perpetrators, there was abuse within the actually family and in some ways the other young women were treated almost as 'adopted' children.

The closest most reports get to recognition of this is to de- scribe such families as 'dis- functional', part of a cycle of abuse, not exactly genetic, but very difficult to break, and needs to be on with "normal" families.

So the publication of the NSPCC report on child abuse (National Society for the Prevention of cruelty to Children: Childcare Matters) which defines sexuality, physical, verbal and emotional abuse and which claims a mil- lion children a year abused in Britain, has not been wel- come. If lack of discipline at home and in school is the expla- nation for the Social breakdown, the remedy is for greater discipline, including the right of parents and teachers to spank and cane their children. The Tories who call for the return of the birch and capital punishment can be side- lined as "nasty extemists", by their own side, but Tony social policy in general, and on educa- tion in particular leads inevita- bly to pressure to reintroduce abusive measures to maintain control. Even the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Shephard, a teacher herself, is in favour of the return of corpo- ral punishment.

The contradictions between Tony policies and their rhetoric on education and the family are glaring. Tony Shephard asks, some form of physical punish- ment — a quick slap, a sharp smack — does no harm? The attack on such disciplinary ne- cessities in a report on child abuse — surely this is taking the liberalism of the 1960s too far.

The report is wrong to equate sensible discipline with abuse, to demand that the schools and Simon Burns is quoted as say- ing: The report claims that much abuse is committed by ordinary parents under extra- normal circumstances. Not violent, but misfits, but ordinary individ- uals.

While it is well known that abuse of children is no respecter of class or wealth, nonetheless it is now almost too easy to see the moral panic that has clearly exacerbated the problem for many.

But for a government which denies the very concept of pov- erty (ie the same time it is said that the three British people are them- selves all working class: British University Statisti- cal Monitoring Unit) the idea that they have produced a society which ill treat massive cutbacks in such large numbers is unbelievable indeed.

As for the solution, how much easier to exclude more children from schools, build more prisons (especially pri- vate ones so that the Tories' business friends can profit) and make life sentences mandatory for second-time serious sex and violent offenders. For the proper functioning of special needs, the introduction of coun- seling and treatment for children who can't cope, in a much more long-term, expensive affair and no way to make money? Switching fund from inves- tigation to prevention, as the Tory report proposes, will not en- sure all these new prisons are built, and the justice opposing the dra- matic increase in monol- ogous sentences introduced by the Labour government, is new Parliament of![Picture 1]

Pupils scapped to educate crisis

by Roy Leach NUT National Executive Member (Personal Capacity)

DESPITE THE highly publicised statement of NUT's General Secretary, Nigel de Gruchy, disruptive pupils are not the single biggest problem confronting teach- ing teachers. Pupils are not the cause of the moral panic experienced by teachers.

Unless a correct analysis of who is to blame, the conclusions which are arrived at are inevitably going to be wrong. By targeting individually identified pupils, the NUT/NUT are the real culprits — out of the box.

The case of the Ridings school in Halton is a case in point.

The introduction of opting out and the supposed subordination to the market has little to do with the number of pupil exclu- sions. Major observations 'a gram- mar school in every town' and a return to full-blown selection will, if not de- faulted, lead inexorably to under-re- sourced sink schools.

Local management of schools also contributes to the problem, as the re-quirement upon LEAs to delegate over- hand local school roles to indi- vidual schools leaves them unable to target resources where they are needed. Take Meanwood school in Not- tinghamshire.

Here a solution — one to one tuition for the boy at the centre of the dispute — has collapsed as the school's budget unable to support the £7000 per term
Ireland: the promise of socialism

Joe Craig, John McAnulty and Paul Flanagan

Reviewed by David Coen

This book is a timely intervention into the debate about the future of socialism in Ireland. It is the result of the efforts of three socialists who believe that the national question is the key to the development of a socialist class politics and with those who put their hopes for socialism in a faithful and reliable Ireland.

Wide-ranging in scope, it analyses the social and economic dimensions of the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, European integration and the continuing debate for socialism and women's liberation and the question of the national question.

It starts from the failure of both past efforts to build a socialist force and the material conditions of a massive international debt and the dependence on the US and the North, and the need for a new and viable strategy.

Neo-colonialism

Some, including the Dublin ruling class and John Hume of the Social Democratic Labour Party, believe that the solution to the problem of Northern Ireland is a socialist government within a federal Europe. Unfortunately, the Socialist Party and the Irish Republican Socialist Party do not share this view.

By 1960 the south changed its course of independence for Britain on dependence for the EU. The attempt at economic development between 1932 and 1958 had run into the sand by the late fifties. The Fianna Fail government had become tied to foreign capital and in the 1960s.

The failure of foreign capital led to a rapid growth in the number of jobs, and the establishment of a national and the market. The lack of investment in industry, the lack of manufacturing productivity in both parts of Ireland is about 15% of that in Britain and the North, and the dependent on the EU.

The National Question and the armed struggle

Consisting of a Southern neo-colonial colony, Ireland's national question remains unresolved. Britain rules this way with the majority of its people and Britain can only maintain this rule through repression.

For socialists there is only one response – immediate withdrawal and dismantlement of the repressive forces which has brought them in.

Workers in Britain have a responsibility to international solidarity and the struggle against imperialist war. Britain's war against the Palestinian people is aimed at preventing them from declaring their dream of its own nation.

The struggle for national self-determination is not a diversion from the socialist programme but is a necessary part of it.

Socialism is the only viable alternative to imperialist war.

We on Britain have a responsibility to international solidarity and the struggle against imperialist war. The build the foundations for the struggle for socialism, the two things are in no way synonymous.

The book defends republicans who fight against imperialism and their right to use armed force.

The pressure of the Ulsterist ruling class which bases itself on segregationism. The trade union leadership in the South is prepared to confront the backward, bigoted and reactionary ruling class on the question of women's rights.

Never having challenged the role of women in the trade unions, republicans have been silenced by women against violence against women, abuse of children and the hypocrisy of many priests who preached celibacy but acted otherwise, having emerged from behind the facade of the Irish Catholic Church.

A key political requirement in the South is to break the working class out of its support for the Labour Party. One of the major obstacles to the breakdown of the Labour Party is the lack of a clear political programme. The Labour Party cannot be reformed but calling for a vote for it is a necessary step towards the creation of a genuine workers party. It is to the building of such a party that the authors commit themselves.

Ireland: the promise of socialism

We are offering a special price of just £4.50. Send a postal order or cheque payable to Socialist Outlook Fund

PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU

Two years in the making!

Democracy's founding document Ireland: the promise of socialism is the most extensive Marxist analysis of Ireland since the revolution.
US election walkover

Clintond is the chosen candidate of US big business to run the country on their terms. Terry Conway looks at the non-Republican Republican

THE 1996 U.S. presidential election campaign has been the quietest ever—despite attempting the closing minutes of a campaign with news of supposedly falling support for Clinton. Prior to that all attention had switched away from the presidential contest to the more close call battle for Congress. While a Democratic victory in either the House or the Senate is anything but assured during the dramatic fall from popularity of Newt Gingrich and the death of his Contract with America, this is not an election where news of Clinton. The president had a tougher time in the first two years of his presidency when his own party controlled Congress than in the latter two years when the Republicans held sway.

Of course, the one who is almost certainly to be re-elected president did not carry out his campaign pledges. His inauguration was four years coming after twelve years of Republican rule was greeted with high hopes by those who believed his promises to rebuild the country's infrastructure and defend health care. Instead, he secured passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, despite a large margin of opposition, and slashed government spending—particularly for the military budget. The trillion-dollar increase in the $4.25 per hour minimum wage, which had been in effect for many years, was to the priory sum of $4.60. Next year it will go to $5.15.

This is hardly a living wage even for a single person. None of the anti-inflation legislation from the Reagan-Bush era including a bill which meant strikers could be "injured" was replaced by Clinton. Now escape over abortion, the Republican challenger, Bob Dole, has trouble distinguishing his positions from Clinton.

One of the Republicans' biggest criticisms of Clinton is that he has stolen their campaign themes. Be it crime, welfare reform, reducing the deficit, Clinton has embraced the Republican position.

The areas of agreement between Clinton and Dole include:

- The assault on the living standards of women and children by cutting their rights and benefits. Clinton has not raised the issue of women's rights since 1993.
- Cuts in Medicare and Medicaid and introduction of the market dominance of the pharmaceutical industry.
- Attacks on Mexican immigrants, the construction of a wire fence at the border, deportations back to a "homeland" which, in most cases, the Mexican immigrants have never seen.
- Legal immigrants excluded from social service benefits.
- Reduction in controls on visas which protect either the health of the employer or the environment in the interests of profit.
- In foreign policy Clinton and Dole are also on the same wave length. They support bills such as the Helms-Burton bill, which attempt to punish any nation that does business with Cuba.

Clinton promises the historic launch of the American Labor Party at a convention of 100,000 union delegates in Cleveland this summer, the new party is not standing candidates in these elections has indeed agreed not to do so.

While there are positive arguments for such a decision such as the need to concentrate on building a real base for the new party or keeping the right wing of the Labour party from winning elections, it is the perception that the new party would be a "token" union party which will not realise or eventually, like earlier attempts at an inde- pendent political party, work class will it eventually end up as a union appendage or a social democratic machine remains undecided.

It is the outcome of this battle that will tell us whether our dis- cussion which will definitely shape the future of the Labour party for many years to come.

Whose economic miracle?

TORY POSTERS have started to boast about the state of the British economy, something which would have seemed impossible a year ago. The Guardian editorial of October 10 backs up Tory claims in stating that "Mr Clarke has hardly put a foot wrong in macroeconomic management" since 1992. The truth is a bit different.

Andy Kilminster

COMMENTATORS have begun to argue that if Labour wins the next election it will be despite the government's eco- nomic success, rather than because of their failure. What is behind all this? Are these simple pre-election slogans, or do they point to something more substan- tial?

Since 1979 the Tories have tried to do two things with the economy: to raise profits by attacking the working class through high unemployment and an offensive against trade unions, and to enable those profits to be realised by ensuring growth and a stable economic environment. Their central problem has been that, because of the nature of Brit- ish capitalism, it has been very difficult to achieve these two objectives to- gether.

The Lawson boom of the 1980s brought some growth, but inflation rose and wage claims followed suit. The ex- periment with the ERU reduced inflation, but only at the cost of recession. Now, in Tory terms, such a "Victory" was won again.

A central issue is the continued weakness of investment in the UK. 1995 invest- ment was still 11 per cent below the peak level of 1989. Manufacturing in- vestment fell back even further in this first half of 1996. In the early stages of "recovery" weakness in investment was made up for by high export levels. The global linkages of British capital, especially in the financial sector, provided advantages in competition with the rest of Europe. But these ad- vantages have been temporary. British ex- ports are now just rising in step with world trade growth. In 1995 Britain depen- ded on a record surplus on invest- ment income of around £5 billion, to avoid an even larger balance of pay- ments deficit. That is good news for increasingly mobile multinational firms, but does nothing for employment or growth at home.

With exports slowing and invest- ment weak it is increasingly becoming accepted that any growth will come from consumer spending.

The Financial Times talks of a "two- speed" economy: one for export goods and production preceding ahead of manufactur- ing. But the employers' offensive cre- ates inflationary limits to the process. While real wages hardly rising any big increase in consumer spending will have to come either from increased debt or from cuts in tax rates.

Cut rates are the answer, but if the Tories are desperate to cut taxes and have a pre- election boom.

The problem here is that, despite cuts in public expenditure, the govern- ment budget deficit continues to rise stubornly because of the massive rise in tax evasion by companies. This was shown dramatically earlier this summer when it turned out that VAT receipts were £6 billion lower than expected. In the short run the Tories are in a difficult situation. They are caught in the double bind of the current economic situation of Economic and Social Research Organisation predicts higher growth in the future but commentators usually that "despite this government's policies, it is not clear that growth is picking up significantly.

But in the long run output is even worse. Poor investment is now affecting productivity growth and manufacturing productivity fell to grow in 1995. It is true that the rates of investment are still far below the previous peak in 1988 and that companies have been pushed to a point where they are just lagging behind each other in productivity. Still, the Tory government's failure to remind us that growth is lower and unemployment higher elsewhere in the G-7 is something of a reflection of British economic success.

Tory pressure on the pound, which is now trading close to its parity with the European Union and the effects of the Maastricht Treaty process. Perhaps at some point they will engineer a mini-boom just before the election. But the chances of any growth long enough to affect the result remain much less.

The Labour party has been much more consistent in its demands for a Nation-wide strategy for growth and make up for the policies of the past. The Tories may not want to fear, but they have been no less prone to any re- form of the economic policies from 1979.

But when he got there

The cupboard was bare.
And so the poor workers
got none.

17 YEARS of Tory government has cut and profiteered and cleaned up the national kitty, according to official figures released in September.

Interest payments on staggering lev- els of government borrowing are now the fourth biggest category of public expenses—above defence, and below only social security, health and education. The indebtelsldness of the British state has piled up; indeed the national debt has doubled to £385 billion since John Major took over, while bil- ions of pounds have been added to the very rich list in Tory tax cuts.

The Tories have squandered £77 billion in North Sea oil revenue and a mas- sive £64 billion from privatisation, as well as borrowing an extra £223 billion since 1979. So serious is the imbalance — with the economy on track for a budget deficit equivalent to 5% of GDP by the end of the year 2000 — that most objective analysts predict that the next government will have to raise taxes sharply or savage the remnants of the welfare state to control spending. Simply to cut the deficit to 2.5% would require an increase of a 7% increase in income tax.

Tony Blair's team are not like Old Mother Hubbard. They know already that the Tories have left the cupboard quite bare. Yet instead of examining ways in which the rich, the banks and big business can be made to pay the cost of the crisis created by the Tories they have joined in the conspiracy of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat class vote, claiming to be the party of free-market policies.

Ian Simpson MP has pointed out that of just one of eight percent of a £20 billion state of the Northern Ireland public spending—above defence, and below only social security, health and education. The indebtelsldness of the British state has piled up; indeed the national debt has doubled to £385 billion since John Major took over, while bil- ions of pounds have been added to the very rich list in Tory tax cuts.

The Tories have squandered £77 billion in North Sea oil revenue and a mas- sive £64 billion from privatisation, as well as borrowing an extra £223 billion since 1979. So serious is the imbalance — with the economy on track for a budget deficit equivalent to 5% of GDP by the end of the year 2000 — that most objective analysts predict that the next government will have to raise taxes sharply or savage the remnants of the welfare state to control spending. Simply to cut the deficit to 2.5% would require an increase of a 7% increase in income tax.

Tony Blair's team are not like Old Mother Hubbard. They know already that the Tories have left the cupboard quite bare. Yet instead of examining ways in which the rich, the banks and big business can be made to pay the cost of the crisis created by the Tories they have joined in the conspiracy of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat class vote, claiming to be the party of free-market policies.

Ian Simpson MP has pointed out that of just one of eight percent of a £20 billion state of the Northern Ireland public spending—above defence, and below only social security, health and education. The indebtelsldness of the British state has piled up; indeed the national debt has doubled to £385 billion since John Major took over, while bil- ions of pounds have been added to the very rich list in Tory tax cuts.
Bob Pennington: revolutionary militant

By John Lister

FOURTEEN years ago this month, on November 4, 1956, Nikita Khurshchov ordered Soviet tanks to open fire on the Hungarian working class of Budapest. The bombardment left 20,000 dead and eventually crushed the revolutionary upheaval which had gripped the city, but it also delivered a decisive blow to the prestige and authority of the Kremlin leadership. In the eyes of countless thousands of members of Communist Parties around the world, who were appalled at the brutality of that expression of a workers' struggle, the British Communist Party — with over 100,000 members as a result of its unflinching defence of the attack.

Confidence in the 'progressive' role of Moscow's Stalinist leadership had already been severely shaken earlier in 1956 by Khurshchov's automatic Secret Speech to the Soviet CP's 20th Congress, in which he revealed a monstrous list of crimes committed by the previously idolised Joseph Stalin.

Hungary 1956

Turning point for Stalinism

By Jan Kelly

SADLY, Bob Pennington died of a stroke in a Brisbane hospital in mid-April this year. Although for the last nine years he had been involved in revolutionary politics, his involvement had been in the form of a full-time organiser for the Communist Party of Australia. For the previous nine years, when he was still on the editorial board of Socialist Outlook, Bob had been a Senior Researcher at the Robert Fisk Centre for International Research, now known as the Robert Fisk Centre for International Politics.

Bob Pennington was Director of the Robert Fisk Centre for International Research, now known as the Robert Fisk Centre for International Politics. The Robert Fisk Centre for International Research was established in 1983 and is an independent think tank that provides research and analysis on international politics, with a particular focus on the Middle East and North Africa.

The Robert Fisk Centre for International Research is named after the late Australian journalist and author Robert Fisk, who was a long-time critic of the United States and its policies in the Middle East. The Centre publishes a quarterly journal, The Robert Fisk Review, and is based in Sydney, Australia.

Bob Pennington was a leading figure in the Australian left-wing movement and was a member of the Socialist Party, which was later renamed the Communist Party of Australia. He was a prominent writer and commentator on international politics, and was known for his advocacy of radical solutions to the problems of the Middle East and North Africa.

Bob Pennington's work focused on the analysis of the role of the United States and its allies in the region, and on the need for a more equitable distribution of power and resources in the Middle East. His writings and research were widely respected, and he was considered to be one of the leading figures in the Australian left-wing movement.

Bob Pennington was also a committed trade unionist and an active member of the Trades Union Congress. He was a long-time member of the Australian Federation of Labor, and was a strong advocate of trade union rights and the need for a more equitable distribution of wealth in society.

Bob Pennington's death was a great loss to the left-wing movement in Australia, and to the broader international community. He will be remembered for his dedication to the cause of social justice, his commitment to international solidarity, and his unwavering commitment to the fight against the forces of imperialism and reaction.

The Robert Fisk Centre for International Research will continue to publish and promote Bob Pennington's work, and to carry on his legacy of fight for a more equitable and just world.
Euromarch campaign on the road

Pete Cooper

A 50 STRONG meeting on October 5th in Manchester came together to formally launch the British campaign as part of the European march against Unemployment, Job insecurity and Social exclusion planned for next spring.

The call for the European action was initiated by the French organisation ACT (act together against unemployment) who organised successful marches on the issues in France in 1994. Meetings in Paris and Brussels attended by representatives from unemployed and trade union organisations from most European countries have endorsed the call for marcha across the European Union. The Amsterdam Government Conference with a 30,000 strong demonstration on June 14 1997. Marches are currently planned in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and Holland.

The marches are in opposition to the implementation of the Maastricht convergence criteria for the creation of the European single currency. The requirements that budget deficits are reduced to 3% and overall debt to 60% of Gross Domestic Product is leading to slashed budgets for the governments are unwilling to raise taxes. This is further exacerbating already chronic unemployment - implementing cuts could create an additional 10 million unemployed on top of already existing unemployment. Cuts in British required are 3900 to 3500 equivalent to the whole of NHS budget.

The Manchester meeting was chaired by Mike Hindley MEP for Lancashire South. He explained the devastating effect attempts to meet the convergence criteria are having on the UK and the problems such cuts will lead to. The Manchester meeting was attended by the Welcome to Britain network, the Blackpool march as evidence of what could be achieved. Over half in the TUC marchers had already pledged to march to Amsterdam.

Organisations such as Reclaim the Future who mobilised in support of the dockers' campaign and Greenpeace were amongst the chair people who marched along the way and a major demonstration in London on June 7. The marchers would then cross to Belgium and march with the other contagions to Amsterdam. The British march should have its own slogans for full employment, defend the welfare state across the 100.

The National Unemployed Workers' Centre was represented by Kevin Pynn and Martin Carter proposed on the other hand a Rolling Roadshow with regional TUC's organising marches rallies and concerts at each stop to take place over a 30 day period before going on to the Amsterdam demonstrations.

They argued that full blown marches were not only ambitious but were not actually desirable. Their position, they stated, was in line with the view of the TUC and STUC, while the other proposals could end up being anti-trade union and anti-labour.

They received little support for their view. Delegate after delegate spoke in favour of the political logic and practical viability of full blown marches. Skepticism was expressed that regional TUC's would do nothing, that even the modest proposals of the Combinaison would not be carried through. Given the fact that the TUC itself is in favour of monetary union the likelihood of any action from these quarters is minimal.

After a long debate the STUH's proposals were adopted unaniously on the suggestion of Kevin Pynn, with the Combinaison reserving its position.

A committee was elected with a place reserved for the Combinaison they should decide to support the decision.

German car workers demonstrate against cuts in welfare. Their banner reads: "noting sick pay spins up poverty".

The meeting was confident to set ambitious tasks at both a political and organisational level. Every local will need to follow the lead of Birmingham where the local Community Conference, which has a proud record of fighting cuts locally, agreed on Nov 1 not only to back the march but to call a local meeting to start serious local organisation.

Begning to challenge the supposed truth that European monetary union is in all our interest in no small job. Raising £50,000 in less than a year and planning marches and meetings in every corner of the land is hard work too. But it can and must be done!

Dutch left prepares for Euro-protests

ON JANUARY 1 the Netherlands antipoverty coalition, the Dutch left are launching a five-month campaign of protest. The goal of the week of the 2577 Dutch marked the opening of the campaign. These included the Green Left, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, Defenc of the Environment (the Netherlands equivalent of Friends of the Earth, the former Movement of Workers' Party and the Socialist Party), Dutch sections of the Fourth International as well as international guests from France, Belgium, Mexico and Denmark. The debate in the Netherlands, one of the countries at the heart of the European Union, is not whether it should be in or out of Europe, but what kind of Europe. The meeting drafted a Dutch platform for a different Europe: for a socialist, ecological, feminist and democratic Europe, and intends to stimulate debate on how to get there.

A counter-summit is planned just before the meeting of the heads of government meeting in June, and at the meeting workshops discussed different aspects of an alternative. These groups are intended to be the embryos of future working groups during the Dutch presidency and the counter-summit.

An enthusiastic meeting declared support for the European march for jobs, although the campaign around this is semi-autonomous from the platform, given that it will be possible to win wider support from the labour movement. Protests are being prepared for the meeting of European transport ministers in January, and a Europe-wide anti-racist conference will take place during the counter-summit.

The Zapatistas ambassador to Europe was also present at the meeting and pointed out that the Mexican government is preparing various deals with the European Union. He said he would ask the Zapatistas to send delegations to the counter-summit.

ISSN 0957-8657. PUBLISHED BY AURORA LTD. © 1996 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED BY EASTWAY OFFSET LTD. (TU ALL DEPTS).