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Workers' Liberty

From the cradle to
the grave: rebuild
the Welfare State!

The fight against
education cuts!

The new
witchhunters

Animal rights
and private profit

Defending Clause
Four: Ken Coates
MEP on the battle
last time;
Diary of an activist

Northern Ireland:
the Orange
General Strike

Experiences
of the left: the
International
Socialists/Socialist
Worker

Northern Ireland:
will Major fix it?



I
will
not be
silenced

Taslima Nasrin
defies the
fundamentalists

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Editor: Sean Matgamna

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Workers' Liberty

A letter to our readers

TASLIMA NASRIN is a heroine of our time. A rebel woman in a profoundly Muslim underdeveloped country, she has refused to let the traditionalists and the religious fanatics intimidate her into silence. Death threats have not daunted her.

We are proud to publish a brief interview with Taslima, together with a survey of the conditions of women under Islam, by Clive Bradley.

The new London-Dublin "Framework" for peace in Northern Ireland is the political first fruit of the IRA cease-fire. Its fate will be determined by the reaction of Northern Ireland's Unionist majority. It may be timely, therefore, to recall what happened twenty years ago when an Orange general strike wrecked Britain's first big effort to create new political structures in Northern Ireland. In this issue we carry an extended account of that strike, which, despite its peculiar features, was one of the most successful general strikes in history.

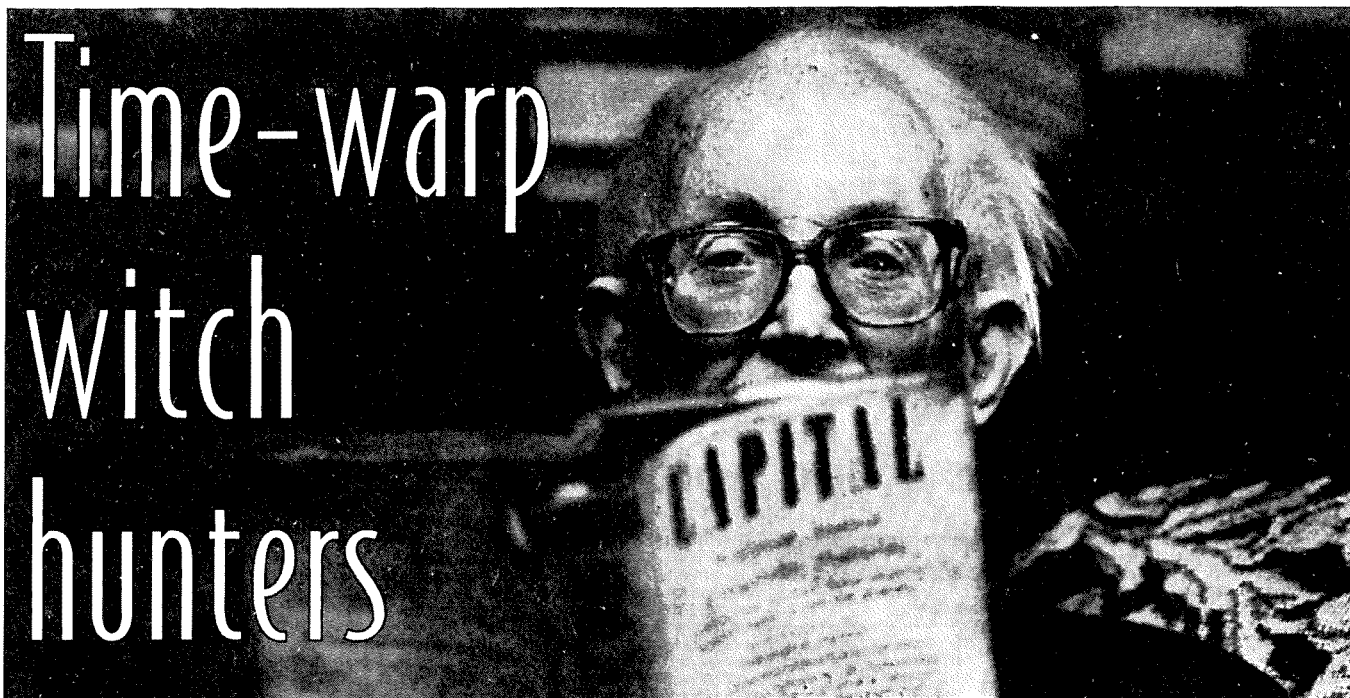
The battle for the soul of the Labour Party is intensifying in the build-up to the special conference in April. Ken Coates MEP presents a detailed account of the last great battle over Clause Four, when Hugh Gaitskell — who was a man of principle compared with Blair and his coterie of know-nothing, job-hungry little careerists — tried to scrap it after Labour lost the 1959 General Election.

Finally, we have a further collection of reminiscences and recriminations in our symposium on "the IS/SWP tradition". Jim Higgins, a one-time National Secretary of the organisation, describes the destruction of its working class base in the mid-'70s. Jimmy Young, the well known Scottish historian, recalls the 1950s. There will be more in the next Workers' Liberty.

These are discussion pieces. Participants say what they like. It would kill the spirit of free discussion if editorial footnotes were to be pinned to everything we disagree with, or think factually mistaken, or which raises intriguing questions. (Like for example: whatever happened to the other Ken Coates, the MEP's namesake, who was in the Mandelita organisation until the late '60s?) One point needs to be underlined here though: Workers' Liberty is published by political descendants of the "Trotskyist Tendency" of IS. Our publication of these articles should not necessarily be taken to mean that we accept the comments in some of them about the "Trotskyist Tendency" as either true or just. Our own account of the Trotskyist Tendency's experience will appear at some point.

The next Workers' Liberty will carry a survey of the state of the British trade unions by John MacIlroy; reflections on the decline of "revolutionary gay" politics by Clive Bradley; and an analysis of the Rowntree Report by Martin Thomas.

Have you taken out a sub to Workers' Liberty yet? Sold any extra? Shouldn't you?



Editorial 1

THE WEST won the cold war. The Stalinist Russian empire is dead. All the stranger then is the new campaign of the Murdoch press against its "agents." They do not target people who have been — or are said to have been — spies, or saboteurs for the Russian state, but people who are *said to have been regarded* by the Russian secret service as "agents of influence." Michael Foot is the latest example denounced on the front page of the *Sunday Times* as an agent of the KGB, the Stalinist secret service.

What is an "agent of influence"?

- Someone who would see certain things from a viewpoint paralleling that of the Russians
- or someone who would chat occasionally about public affairs in Britain to someone posing as a press attaché at the USSR embassy in London
- or anyone who believed dialogue with Russians on any level was better than the frozen incomprehensions of the cold war.

And *who says* that the Russian secret service regarded Michael Foot — or former Transport and General Workers' Union leader, Jack Jones — as their "agent of influence"? Oleg Gordievsky, who defected from the USSR to Britain in 1985 after having been a double agent. That means that *the British secret service*, which runs Mr Gordievsky, *says so*. What Mr Gordievsky says about Michael Foot must be very old news to these people. So why is it "released" now?

Surely the point is to discredit the Labour Party? Some of the loonies in the secret service see even the Tony Blair-led Labour Party as a threat! It is a very strange business. During the cold war real spies like Anthony Blunt were for many years shielded from exposure. Now that the Stalinist Russian empire is dead and rotten, people like Foot, Jack Jones and others are in retrospect being pilloried for

- their *opinions* on international affairs;
- for talking to people they knew not as KGB but as press attachés;
- for what Russian agents eager to talk up their own "successes", said about them in secret dispatches home, decades ago;
- for having tried to build private bridges across the frozen wastes of the cold war;
- for having been against potentially suicidal nuclear weapons.

This is true witch-hunting in the grand McCarthyite style. In the 50s, the McCarthyite witch-hunters in the USA identified people as "communists" or "agents", or "fellow travellers" on a points system — so many points against them if they were interested in "causes" the Stalinists manipulated then, like equality for black people, for example, or if they were against nuclear weapons, or had

been "premature anti-fascists"; supporting the Spanish republic against the fascists, for example, before, in 1941, anti-fascism became the official ideology of the American government. People were pilloried for *knowing* or talking to other people, for having attended a meeting, for refusing to report on their friends to the FBI.

Much of what is said against Michael Foot and others stinks of that system.

The trouble of course is that large layers of the left *were* "soft on Stalinism"; they sometimes felt it incumbent upon them to excuse or not make too much of a fuss about the crimes of Stalinism lest they "play into the hands of the warmongers in the USA"; they sometimes opposed what the right in this country was saying with a hear-no-evil-about-Russian-socialism policy. A large layer of the left, much of it influenced by the writings of the late Isaac Deutscher, accepted that, despite everything, the Stalinist system was progressive, and better than the bourgeois democracies. There were idiotic things like Tony Benn's Chesterfield CLP writing to Gorbachev, the reforming Stalinist dictator, as to a comrade. *Socialist Organiser* kept up a running criticism of such things over many years.

But if the sort of thing Michael Foot is pilloried for is to be used like this, then it cannot be confined to the Labour left, or to people like Foot, who plainly acted out of honest political conviction when, for example, he helped create the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. And he was right to back CND!

Large sections of the trade union right — people like Bill Sirs of the Iron and Steel Confederation, who were not in any sense left-wing — had connections with the institutions of the Stalinist states. The TUC had links with the Russian and East European police-state pseudo unions.

Perhaps the most grotesque example of what this meant occurred in August 1980 during the birth of Solidarnosc — by way of mass illegal strikes — in Poland. The TUC had arranged before August to send a delegation to visit the Polish "trade unions", which — backed by police terror — functioned like the unions in every Stalinist country did, as a worker-controlling agency of the police state.

What these unions were was startlingly shown when, in response to the 1980 strikes in the shipyards there, the official "union" leader in Gdansk told the strikers to go back to work or he'd call in the tanks and have them shot down — as workers in Gdansk had been shot down a decade before, in December 1970.

Even after Poland was paralysed by strikes, the TUC refused to call off its planned visit to its strike-breaking Polish "colleagues." The visit was finally cancelled by the Poles, who were busy just then. ▀

Nor was it popular then on the left to raise the demand in the British labour movement — as we did — that the British trade unions should break off all connections with the Stalinist police-state pseudo-unions and support the persecuted underground embryonic workers' movements in Russia and elsewhere.

This whole pro-Stalinist current of labour movement opinion, left and right, was always grievously wrong and harmful. It is too late now to do anything about it except learn the lessons. The secret service and its lying "agents of sensation and influence" like Oleg

Gordievsky, were never the right people to do anything about it! These long-time backers of the South African apartheid regime, to take only one example of their criminality, are not the right people now! If, with the help of their stooges in the press, they want to start a grand inquisition on the past opinions and attitudes to international affairs of honourable men like Michael Foot and Jack Jones, then their purpose can only be to discredit the Labour Party.

The labour movement must condemn these time-warp witch-hunters. ☐

Build a mass movement for the Welfare State!

Editorial 2

THIS IS the age, it seems, of the single issue campaign. People who are disillusioned with politics, or who can see little reason to expect much from the official politicians, have created powerful single issue campaigns. The campaign against "live exports" is the latest example, the anti-poll tax campaign another. There are many low-profile, small-octane campaigns up and down the country concerned with various issues of health and welfare, from nursery provision to hospital closures.

The proliferation of such campaigns is a symptom of the unravelling of mainstream Labour politics into its component parts. Around the core of the labour movement many issues of welfare, civil rights and general public policy were woven and integrated into a general enterprise of reform. One price we pay for the wretched quality of our present Labour leaders is that many elements that should be woven together into a powerful, labour

movement-led, anti-Tory crusade are not woven together at all.

The single most pressing issue neglected by the Labour leaders is, of course, the Health Service, and the welfare state in general. Opinion polls show that most people do not want the welfare state destroyed, and detest especially what the Tories are doing to the health service. Yet, because the leaders of the Labour Party do not fight the Tories and because they give every evidence of agreeing with the monstrous premise of Tory policy — that "we" cannot afford state-of-the-art health care for the poor — there is no effective nationwide campaign to *stop* the Tories doing what they are doing.

The creation of such a campaign is one of the great immediate tasks facing the left. We cannot let it happen that because we have such wretched Labour and trade union leaders, the Tories succeed in finally destroying the Health Service and the Welfare State!

What can be done? The thing to do is to create a great, mass, integrating "single issue" campaign for the health service and the welfare state. The left can do that and, doing it, rouse the labour movement. The Welfare State Network has begun to do it. And there is a model for what needs urgently to be done — the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Against the danger of nuclear war and in pursuit of the policy of unilateral British renunciation of the hydrogen bomb, people like Bertrand Russell, Michael Foot, Canon John Collins and Peggy Duff created a powerful single issue campaign. Hundreds of thousands of people took part in marches, rallies and meetings on the issue. A generation of youth was radicalised on this question, learning to see the threat of nuclear war in the context of imperialism and of the class societies which generated the threat of nuclear war.

Fifty thousand, then a hundred thousand, then a hundred-and-fifty thousand people took part in spectacular marches for nuclear disarmament each Easter weekend in the late 50s and early 60s.

Beginning as a single-issue campaign — and at the beginning CND were denounced as "ultra-left" by the biggest force on the left, the Communist Party — CND spread its influence into the labour movement, into the trade unions and into the Labour Party, becoming a great moral crusade against the inhuman, suicidal lunacy of nuclear weapons. In the early '80s, when the cold war reached freezing point again, CND organised enormous demonstrations once more.

The same sort of movement can be created in defence of the health service and the welfare state. Since the leaders of the labour movement won't do it, *the left must do it*.

We already have unorganised mass support in the form of millions who say they hate and oppose what the Tories are doing. Unfortunately, they do not know what to do about it. We can reach and organise such people. How can we do it? By petitions, marches, meetings, literature, circulars. A network already exists in many localities in the form of local campaigns on particular issues: these can be linked up nationally and each made more effective by asso-

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

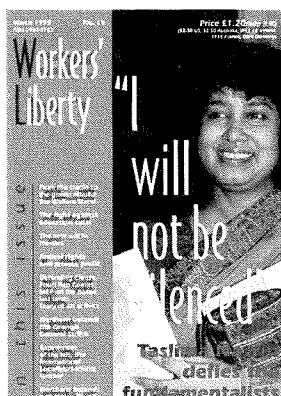
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ciation with the others.

We can reach the youth — not only in their capacity as people who may one day need a good health service, or who now need the right to benefit payments between the ages of 16 and 18, but in their capacity as caring idealistic human beings who want to live in a decent society, not in this pig-eat-pig society the Tories have created.

We can create a great moral crusade against the Tories and in support of the ideas of health, welfare and human solidarity.

For too long nothing has been done because too many people felt that nothing much could be done.

Yes it can!

The Welfare State Network — which held a successful conference in London in mid-February — has already proved that things on this front can be made to move, that "something" can be done. The circulation of its paper, *Action for Health and Welfare*, proves that there are many kinds of people willing to respond to even a minimal lead.

But a great deal more needs to be done — a much bigger, and more powerful, and more high-profile campaign needs to be built.

The main thing that stands between us and such a campaign is the inability of many on the left to *believe* it can be done. It is up to those of us who have started to do it to show them. We will! But the campaign needs every help it can get. Join the fight to stop the Tories destroying the NHS and the welfare state. Join the crusade for health, welfare and human solidarity! ■

Take Action!

Affiliate to the Welfare State Network!

The Welfare State Network aims to build a national movement to defend services, benefits, and public sector jobs. It publishes the newspaper *Action for Health and Welfare*.

- Affiliation is £25 for unions and Labour Parties, £10 for unemployed/pensioners groups
- Individual subscriptions £5 or £3 (unwaged)
- Affiliates receive 10 copies of *Action*

Write to WSN, c/o Southwark TUSU, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17.



Stop this legal lynching!

Editorial 3

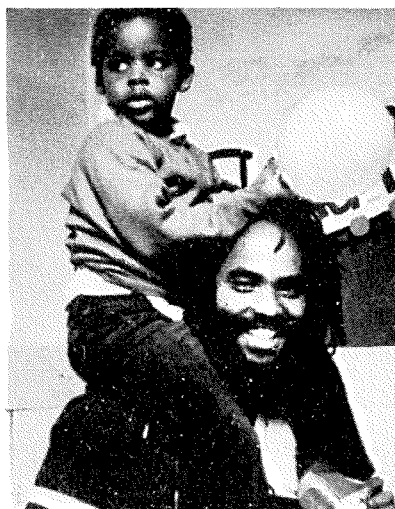
MUMIA ABU-JAMAL is on death row in Pennsylvania, USA, for a murder he did not commit. He has been there for the last thirteen years.

Jamal was framed for the killing of a police officer, Daniel Faulkner. He was convicted even though four witnesses said they saw someone else shoot Faulkner.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's life is now in imminent danger. In January 1995 Republican Tom Ridge won the state governorship of Pennsylvania and has pledged to sign the death warrants of those on death row.

There are currently 170 men and women on Pennsylvania's death row. This is a barbaric business for a so-called "civilised" state to be involved in. But what is worse is that "justice" is not dispensed evenly. Lethal "justice" is meted out disproportionately to the poor and to black people. Throughout the US, 40% of those on death row are black, although black people are only 12.6% of the population.

The planned state killing of Mumia Abu-Jamal is nothing more than an attempt at a legal lynching. Jamal was framed because he is a former Black Panther and currently a supporter of the black nationalist/religious organisation, MOVE.



MOVE became a well-known organisation nearly ten years ago, when in May 1985 the Philadelphia police department dropped a bomb on a MOVE commune, burning to death 11 MOVE members, including five black children. The bombing followed a 12 hour siege during which a police SWAT squad had fired 7,000 rounds of ammunition into the building. What "reason" did the police give for this full-scale war

confrontation? They had, they said, received complaints about loud music, and about litter scattered on the pavement outside.

The police were out to destroy MOVE. The powerful Pennsylvania police lobby has never stopped demanding the death of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Tom Ridge is likely to give them what they want.

● You can join the campaign to stop them killing Mumia Abu-Jamal. Contact the Partisan Defence Committee, BCM Box 4986, London, WC1 3XX.



Anti-imperialist?

Women and fundamentalism

By Clive Bradley

IN ITS STRICTEST versions, Islam demands that women be covered from head to foot. Why? The theory is that any part of a woman's body might inflame the passions of men: therefore women, every woman, and all parts of a woman must be kept strictly out of the sight of men!

In practice, most Muslim women do not cover their entire bodies. In the more secularised countries of the Middle East, completely veiled women are usually fundamentalists, and many women wear Western clothes. But the veil, even in its purely facial form, is a dramatic symbol of Islam's essential attitude to women.

Women are to be hidden away, cut off from the world of men. In Saudi Arabia, which claims to be governed by Islamic principles, women do not have the right even to drive.

Of course, many of these supposedly Islamic attitudes to women are not especially different to those of pre-capitalist European Christianity. There is in countries like Britain today an echo of the 'Islamic' argument for the veil in the claim that a raped woman 'asked for it' by the way she dressed.

And 'Islamic' society is no more uniform, either across countries or across time, than 'Christian' society. Most of the women

guerrillas in the Palestinian nationalist movement, or in the once-radical Mujaheddin in Iran (or for that matter 'Marxist' groups) were Muslims. There are elements even in the Islamic hierarchy who have more liberal attitudes on many issues, including women.

But just as there are things common to most Christians and a type of politics associated with Christian fundamentalism, so too with Islam. The fundamentalist groups want to see women wearing veils and returning to their proper role in society.

In Iran since the mullahs came to power in 1979, Islamic law on divorce has been used to semi-officially sanction prostitution. A man can divorce his wife simply by saying "I divorce you" three times. So men pick up women, marry them, have sex, and divorce them immediately.

Here too there are contradictions. Women played an important role in the revolution against the Shah.

Some on the left have argued — and argued at the time — that for women in Iran and elsewhere the veil is a symbol of the struggle against imperialism. Western forms of dress are typical of the middle class — in Iran of the Shah's wife, for example.

This is at best only a half truth, however. Many leftist Iranian women fought against wearing the veil. Indeed, the mullahs used this as one of their first weapons against the left, which in the early days was extremely

powerful.

Fundamentalists in many mainly-Islamic countries today are seeking to turn back the clock on decades of secular reform. From the fifties some countries — like Egypt and Algeria — saw a considerable weakening of the mosque, and far greater freedom for women. Across the 'Islamic world', large numbers of women joined the workforce, a trend which has continued despite the fundamentalists.

Challenging traditionalist attitudes to women was a feature of liberal and leftist opinion — even if the challenge wasn't very thorough feminism. In one of the novels of the controversial Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz — who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990 — a woman who is unable to find a husband turns to semi-prostitution and so brings shame on her family. The prevailing social attitudes are witheringly condemned.

'Fundamentalism' — or more accurately the political-Islamic groups — wants to roll back the changes. They hate feminism. Most prominent Algerian feminists are now refugees in France, their lives threatened by the fundamentalist FIS.

It must take immense courage and fortitude for a woman bred in the midst of such bigotry to rise to her full dignity as a human being and fight back. That is why socialists should give Taslima Nasrin every support possible. ■

Strong moves to a united Ireland?

By John O'Mahony

THE SO-CALLED "Framework for Peace" published by Britain and the Republic of Ireland on 22 February proposes in effect that the two communities in Northern Ireland agree to take major steps towards a United Ireland. This is to be done by way of what might be called "incremental", or "dynamic federalism". The Dublin Government and a new Belfast government, to be set up if the Protestant-Unionist and Catholic-Nationalist politicians in Northern Ireland can agree on it, would be linked together in an all-Ireland structure. Most importantly, this all-Ireland structure would mediate Ireland's connections with the European Union.

At the same time, as a necessary prop and corollary of such an internal Irish arrangement, the "Framework" proposes that Britain and the 26 Counties be tied much more closely together.

All these proposed relationships fit into each other — the internal Northern Ireland one into the all-Ireland framework, and that in turn into a British-Irish framework, like the famous nesting Russian dolls. The biggest "doll" is the European Union.

It is the existence of the EU 'above' both Britain and the 26 County state that makes possible these proposals and the approach they embody. The EU is the largest of the interlocking structures here; and the model for the approach contained in the "Framework" is the EU itself and the way it has developed over the last four decades, knitting previously antagonistic European states together.

That was the approach which lay behind the Anglo-Irish Agreement of November 1985, which gave Dublin a large say in the running of Northern Ireland — though Britain retains all executive power. This, nearly a decade later, is its second instalment. It is the Anglo-Irish Agreement Part Two.

The document says:

"A collective effort is needed to create through agreement and conciliation a new agreement founded on consent, for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands."

Both governments "strongly commend" the document "to the parties, the people in the island of Ireland and more widely."

"The two governments will work together with the parties to achieve a com-

prehensive accommodation, the implementation of which would include interlocking and mutually supportive institutions across the three states." (That is: Northern Ireland, the 26 Counties, and Britain).

A new approach is needed: "a balanced accommodation of the differing views of the two main traditions on the constitutional issues..."

"... the two governments agree that such an accommodation will involve an agreed new approach to the traditional constitutional doctrine on both sides."

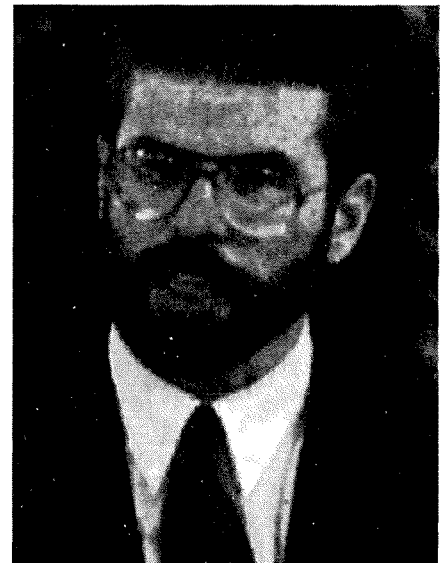
"In their approach to Northern Ireland they will apply the principle of self-determination by the people of Ireland... The British government recognises that it is for the people of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a United Ireland if that is their wish; the Irish government accept that the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with, and subject to the agreement and consent of, the majority of the people of Northern Ireland..."

"It would be wrong to make any change in the structure of Northern Ireland save with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland..." If a majority there in the future "wish for and formally consent to" a united Ireland, then the Dublin and London governments will legislate accordingly.

"...the governments acknowledge the need for new arrangements and structures — to reflect the reality of diverse aspirations, to reconcile as fully as possible the rights of both traditions and to promote co-operation between them, so as to foster the process of developing agreement and consensus between all the people of Ireland..."

They commit themselves to the principle that "institutions and arrangements in Northern Ireland and North/South institutions should afford both communities secure and satisfactory political, administrative and symbolic expression and protection..."

The underlying train of thought about what is happening is made plain on the next passage. The governments "commit themselves to entrenched provisions guaranteeing equitable and effective political



Gerry Adams



Ian Paisley

participation for *whichever community finds itself in a minority position* by reference to the Northern Irish framework, or the wider Irish framework" (emphasis added).

Britain "reaffirms" that it will uphold "the democratic wish" of the people of Northern Ireland "for union with Britain or a United Ireland". The British government 'reiterates' — and Dublin concurs — that they "have no selfish strategic or economic

interest in Northern Ireland."

As long as a majority in Northern Ireland want them to, the British Government will administer the Six Counties "even-handedly" vis-a-vis the two communities.

Institutions "should be created that cater adequately for present and future political, social and economic inter-connections on the island of Ireland, enabling representatives of the main traditions, north and south, to enter agreed dynamic, new, co-operative and constructive relationships... These institutions should include a north/south body involving Heads of Departments on both sides and duly established and maintained by legislation in both sovereign parliaments."

Linked thus would be the Irish Government and "new democratic institutions in

Northern Ireland, to discharge or oversee delegated executive, harmonising or consultative functions, as appropriate, over a range of matters which the two governments designate" in agreement with the Northern Irish parties.

This body would take on some of the function of an all-Ireland government from the start:

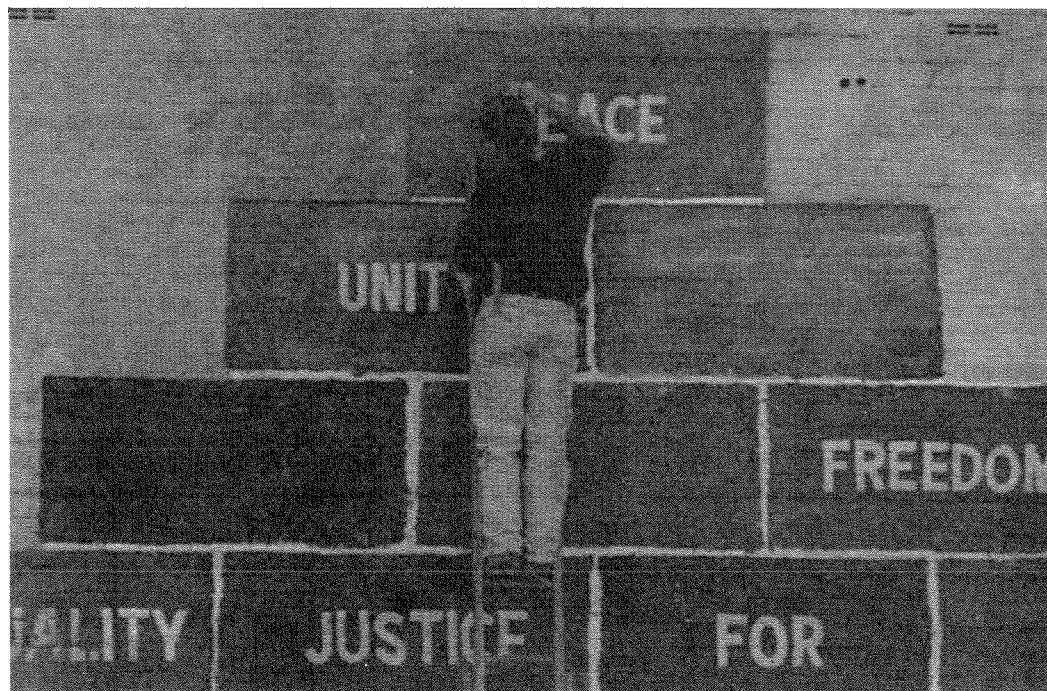
"Any EU matter relevant to the competence of either administration could be raised for consideration in the north/south body. Both Governments agree that the body will have an important role, with their support and co-operation and in consultation with them, in developing on a continuing basis an agreed approach for the whole island in respect of the challenges and opportunities of the EU..."

"Matters designated at the Executive level... would include all EU programmes and initiatives to be implemented on a cross-border or island-wide basis in Ireland, the body itself would be responsible... for the implementation and management of EU policies and proposals on a joint basis..."

You have only to remember how enormous is the weight of the EU in Irish affairs to see what this means.

The proposal is to knit the two parts of Ireland together as the states of Europe were, by way of a thickening web of joint responsibility spreading over the still distinct and separate structures. Britain, Northern Ireland and the 26 counties are, of course, already integrated in the EU structures. If the approach were to succeed then the issues blatantly fudged in the document — for example it talks of self-determination for 'the people of Ireland as a whole', but on the basis of two units, one of them grotesquely artificial and undemocratic — would cease to have explosive importance.

The new all-Ireland structure is thus intended to be a powerful, burgeoning, dynamic body, which will knit Ireland



Belfast: a miracle on the agenda?

together over time, leaving insoluble questions of sovereignty in abeyance — as they were left in abeyance in the early years of the EU.

After Northern Ireland broke down as a viable entity in 1969, ripped apart by the conflict between the two antagonistic communities within it, there were, logically, two possible ways of resolving the hopeless conflict. One was repartition, a more rational division of Ireland, ceding to the Republic large areas of the Six Counties, where Catholics are the majority.

The other logical possibility was that the Six Counties entity would be preserved and would act as the bolt that would eventually pin the UK and that part of Ireland which left it in 1921/22 much more closely together again.

The latter development was going on anyway. The Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement was signed as long ago as 1965. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 made Britain and Ireland formal partners, sharing overall responsibility for Northern Ireland. An Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Committee was then set up.

The Framework proposes to go further. "...A standing intergovernmental conference will be maintained, chaired by the designated Irish minister and by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. It would be supported by a permanent Secretariat of civil servants from both governments... The conference will provide a continuing institutional expression for the Irish government's recognised concern and role in relation to Northern Ireland... The Irish government will put forward views and proposals... Determined efforts will be made to resolve any differences between the two governments. The Conference will be the principal instrument for an intensification of the co-operation and partnership between the two governments."

Weaker commitments of this sort were

made in the 1985 Agreement. This is as close to joint rule as you can go without putting the 26 County army in Northern Ireland. It is ironic indeed that one of the big results of the Provisional IRA's 23 year war "for an all-Ireland independent Republic" is this ever closer drawing together of Britain and Ireland.

Whether these plans come to anything or, like so much in the past, create turmoil with no constructive outcome, will be determined by the response of the people of Northern Ireland. Catholics, even Sinn Féin supporters, are pleased with the Framework. Decisive will be the response of the Protestants.

All the leaders of all the Protestant parties denounced the "Framework". Yet, as this is being written, a Channel Four poll in Northern Ireland reports that a big majority of the sympathisers of all the Protestant parties want their leaders to use the document as a basis for discussion. This may indeed be the year of miracles in Northern Ireland! ☐

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Schools cuts spark nationwide fightback

By Colin Foster

FOR THE FIRST TIME since the abortive "rate-capping" battle at the tail-end of the miners' strike in 1985, a national movement is taking shape against social-spending cuts.

Over the last ten years there have been many important local campaigns, some of them successful, to save particular hospitals, schools, nurseries, or old people's homes. Groups of public service workers — fire-fighters, ambulances, local government workers — have taken industrial action to defend particular pay and conditions. There has been no concerted national movement.

It was to agitate, educate and organise for such a national movement that the Welfare State Network was launched last year. But a mass national movement was never going to emerge just from appeals and proclamations. It can only come from a strong network of activists linking up with an unplanned grass-roots upsurge.

We have a chance of that now, though maybe only a flickering one. The starting point has been schools cuts. They are still, overall, smaller than health service cuts; but this year, after many years of piecemeal erosion, they have sent a simultaneous shock-wave across a large proportion of Britain's 29,000 state schools. At each school, governors have to make budgets for April — and decide how many teachers

or helpers to sack, how many oversize classes to run, how much vital equipment to do without, how many essential repairs to cancel.

The Tories' "Local Management of Schools" has backfired on them. These governors, unpaid volunteers, are not like Labour councillors, broken-spirited after years of doing the Tories' dirty work and overwhelmed by a corps of permanent officials. Hundreds of them have done what Labour councils have long dismissed as impossibly ultra-left, and defied the government by refusing to cut and setting illegal unbalanced budgets instead.

As we go to press, about 90 schools in Warwickshire, and others in Oxfordshire, Dorset, Barnsley, and Manchester have drawn up such deficit budgets, and many others elsewhere are considering it.

Under this pressure, Gloucestershire, Shropshire, and Newcastle-on-Tyne are going for unbalanced council budgets. Their budgets are not illegal like the governors', but based on asking the government for "redetermination", that is, for permission to set a higher council tax.

There have been huge demonstrations and meetings in many areas. A national coordination called Fight Against Cuts in Education has been set up, based mainly on parents and governors though not excluding teachers. It has called a national demonstration for 25 March. Local FACE groups are being set up.

There will be many other protests around the end of March. The National Union of Teachers has — stupidly, divisively — refused to back the 25 March demonstration, but instead appealed for one parent, one governor, and one teacher from every school to lobby Parliament on 21 March. On 30 March it has yet another day of action, over Section 11 cuts.

The UNISON public-service union's National Executive voted on 23 February for a day of protest with industrial action, but has yet to set a date. UNISON already has a separate day of action planned for 30 March, over nurses' pay.

Local UNISON or NUT branches in several areas plan one-day strikes for the end of March.

Tory education minister Gillian Shephard has responded by saying that councils can expect no more money for the basic school system, and should instead cut back on plans for (very modest) increases in under-fives provision! (*Times Educational*

Supplement, 24 February)

She is also reported (*Independent*, 20 February) to have told the cabinet to expect a lot of "hell and fury", but only manageable real difficulties.

Unfortunately, the government does have openings to split up and dissipate this emerging anti-cuts movement. "Redetermination" is basically a re-run of the left-Labour councils' failed policy of the early 1980s, when they avoided cuts by raising local taxes (then property rates). The fact that central government has taken over the old business-rate part of council income makes things worse. Council tax is only a small part of councils' income, the rest being set by central government. To make good a five per cent cut in its overall budget, for example, a council is likely to have to increase its council tax by one-third.

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officials."*

That the councils have to demand the government allow them to raise council tax, rather than just doing it, gives the process a colour of defiance. That is important. It opens up possibilities. It is also fraught with weaknesses. The government will control the timing of the "redetermination" appeals. It can deal with councils one by one.

School governors have shown more backbone than the councils, but the councils can — and will be advised by their anxious lawyers that legally they must — override the governors to set a cuts budget.

Some councils may get a slightly higher council tax. Some may shift cuts from education to elsewhere. Some schools may

the magazine with bottle

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Shrewsbury parents and workers demonstrate against the cuts. Photo: John Harris

go through with budgets which are balanced on paper but which in reality will run into deficit (this is the official advice of the National Association of Head Teachers). In such developments, the whole movement could fragment.

The labour movement — the TUC, the public service unions like UNISON and the NUT, the Labour Party — is the only body with the strength and established organisation that could pull the movement together. It should be working closely and sensitively with parents, governors, and other community anti-cuts groups to create an escalating programme of protests, demonstrations and strikes, with the demand for more central government money for local services, to be taken out of the £9 or £10 billion a year which the top ten per cent have gained from tax cuts since 1978-9. Labour councils should join in by setting deficit budgets, declaring that they will refuse to remit PAYE and VAT money to the government until it pays up.

Activists should campaign for maximum coordination and defiance. However, Labour Party leader Tony Blair has already set his face against any battle. He has told Labour councillors not even to try "re-determination", let alone deficit budgets! "The Labour leadership is keen to show responsible government and is determined to avoid the 'loony left' tag being re-attached by the Tories to Labour local authorities". (*Independent*, 20 February). Leave the 'loony leftism' to conservative school governors, says Blair.

Alongside the brushfire movement against school cuts, an important initiative towards concerted labour-movement action

has been taken by Newcastle UNISON. They have done in Newcastle what the unions should do nationally — built close links with other unions, the Labour Party, and community groups, and campaigned systematically. Although Newcastle's cuts this year are actually small compared to other councils', UNISON initiated a huge one-day strike and demonstration on 1 February, and has pushed the council as far as going for "redetermination".

Newcastle UNISON has also campaigned inside the union for concerted national action at the end of March. And they have a perspective which goes beyond the next couple of months. They are making links with other branches and in other unions to advocate a rolling programme of action across the summer, building up to a huge protest round Budget Day in November, to demand the restoration of social spending.

The focus on Budget Day creates the possibility of a much wider movement. No longer will we be trying to fend off the implications in one school of council cuts, or in one council or hospital of central government cuts which have already been pushed through some months earlier. We will go for the root — the central government cuts.

Labour Parties previously battered into submission by the councillors' argument that they have no alternative but to implement cuts as humanely as possible, unless they can overthrow the government, can be rallied by this new perspective. Round unions and Labour Parties, hundreds of community groups can be drawn into protests.

The Tory government is weaker than

ever. This anti-cuts movement could be the beginning of its downfall. ■

● **Contact:** FACE, c/o Bob Jelley, St Giles Middle School, Exhall, Warwickshire, or 0203 453832; Newcastle UNISON, Newcastle Civic Centre, or 091-232 8520 x 6980; Welfare State Network, c/o Southwark TUSU, 42 Braganza St, London SE17, or 071-639 5068.

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The lesson of the animal rights protests:

"If the law is wrong, disobey it!"

By Wayne Nicholls

AT A MEETING in Liverpool about Clause Four of the Labour Party, miners' leader Arthur Scargill was asked: "What is the significance of Clause Four for animal welfare?"

At first glance this seems a strange question. The young animal-rights activists and blue-rinse pensioners blocking the path of veal transporters in Essex and Sussex seem a million miles away from the debate in the labour movement about renationalisation and common ownership. Indeed, many commentators on the veal protests (and a large proportion of those taking part) have made a virtue out of its cross-class appeal. "I see my animal rights campaigning as linked to, and part of, my ideas of socialism," one campaigner told me last week, "but there are lots of others who wouldn't agree with me."

This kind of Popular Front approach has made the veal protesters (initially) much more popular with the media — so much more approachable than striking miners or rail workers, so much more photogenic than anti-road activists. But the signs are that the tide is being turned against them.

Letters and articles are beginning to appear distancing the 'real' animal welfare people from the 'rent-a-mob' youth, accused of provoking trouble. Interestingly such views are not finding much support those who have seen at first-hand who the real "rent-a-mob thugs" are: baton-wielding riot police are a wholly new phenomenon for the residents of Brightlingsea.

But in its own way the police violence is an equal threat to the fragile alliance between young animal rights militants and the Tory-voting compassion brigade. Like the shifting media angles, it promises to open up unbridgeable divides in the campaign, as protesters are forced to confront questions about the rule of law, the role of the police, and the state.

And this is where Arthur Scargill's answer fits into the picture. In many ways, he said, the veal protesters should be an inspiration to the labour movement. "We must re-assert the principle, which they have carried into action, of defiance. If the law is wrong, we should not obey it!"

There is no doubt that the news of Scargill's support for them will distress some of the protesters. But it is fundamental for them to realise that if they are to win their battle they are going to have to confront, and face down, the state. That is a task in which, as the miners know only too well, it is crucial to have the right people on your side.

In this case, as in all others where con-



Popular Fronts won't beat the police. Photo: John Harris

fronting the state is concerned, the right people are not the mythical 'middle England' so lauded by the liberal press and so sought after by Tony Blair's New Labour. The right people are the workers themselves — in transport, in farming, in shipping. They are the only people who in defiance of the state, can halt the veal trade.

Which brings us back to Clause Four. The framework for such an alliance must be the principles of common ownership, popular administration and democratic control of industry — farming, freight and shipping. Both workers and protesters have plenty to gain from such common owner-

ship, as do the animals themselves, who I firmly believe would be treated much less cruelly if the profit-motive for cruelty were removed. The only ones to lose out will be those who make profits now — the exploiters of both animals and humans. Socialists in the labour movement should not ignore the demands of the animal rights campaigners. Rather we should be explaining to them that only socialism offers them the prospect of achieving their goal.

Capitalism is cruelty erected into a social system. To fight effectively for compassion for animals, we must first fight for compassion between people. ■

Mandela's government attacks the working class

By Bobby Navarro

THE SOUTH AFRICAN Parliament re-opened on 17 February amid heavy security. Nelson Mandela used his opening speech to spell out who he saw as the main threat to the ANC-led "Government of National Unity" — the black working class.

He accused a tiny minority of wanting to ferment unrest and instability in the country and he specifically referred to those parties who were involved in labour unrest as being responsible.

This was a direct reference to the Workers' List Party/WOSA.

Continued strikes and demonstrations amongst black workers over the summer are clearly putting pressure on the Government of National Unity (GNU). The recent split between Mandela and De Klerk however seems to have been forgotten. Mandela used rhetoric his predecessor would have been pleased with — referring to a "small minority in our midst which wears the mask of anarchy" seeking to "impose chaos on society". This drew warm applause from National Party members.

The failure of the GNU to deliver on its election pledges, preferring to protect the profits of big business, has been providing an audience for socialist groups like WOSA and seems set to be reflected in further unrest and protests. For instance many voters are not refusing to register for the projected October local elections.

As long as this situation continues, the GNU will attack the left. But Mandela is playing a dangerous game. Sleaze and corruption scandals are already undermining Mandela's claim that there "is no big bag of money" — it is just in the wrong hands.

The fight for Clause Four

By Gerry Bates

THE FIGHT to keep Clause Four of Labour's constitution received a major boost at the end of February when the London regional conference of the party voted by 59% to 41% to retain the clause which formally commits the party to "secure for the workers... the common ownership of the means of production..."

The London conference was the first representative party gathering since last year's national conference voted to re-affirm Clause Four, just 48 hours after Blair had announced his intention to abolish it.

This sets the scene for the other regional conferences, especially the Scottish gathering, where support for Clause Four is likely to be strong.

Blair's roadshow is visibly running out of steam. One recent Blair event in Bristol saw less than a third of the audience joining a standing ovation for wonderboy. The Birmingham consultation meeting attracted perhaps half the crowd who turned up recently to hear Arthur Scargill speak in defence of Clause Four.

Many prominent right wingers have spo-

ken out against the undemocratic way in which the so-called "consultation" is taking place. These include hard-line, old-fashioned right-wingers like Austin Mitchell MP and even some self-confessed 'modernisers' like Rosina Macrae, a sponsor of Blair's New Clause Four campaign and a member of the Scottish Labour Party executive, who declared: "I regard myself very much as a moderniser, but I'm very concerned by the leadership's handling of this. There has been no debate and the leaders of the party are trying to blackmail the membership into supporting them."

The left is winning the battle of ideas hands down. The right-wing motions at London Regional conference conspicuously contained no reference to Blair's "competitive, dynamic, market economy" but, instead promised a new Clause Four with "common ownership, including public ownership, co-ops... and other forms... held by the community and workforce".

This bodes well for the left because in the final stage of the argument it will be impossible for the right to duck the question that so far they have conspicuously avoided: "How do you make the capitalist market economy operate in the interests of work-

ing-class people?"

Unfortunately, battles in the workers' movement do not take place on a "level playing field". Blair has huge forces on his side from way beyond the labour movement.

The media, the parliamentary Labour Party elite, the upper echelons of the trade union apparatus, and the Labour Party's internal machine are all firmly in Blair's camp, and doing everything they can to ensure a victory "by any means necessary".

Victories for the pro-Clause Four campaign have been deliberately kept out of the media, even the so-called quality papers. For instance, Barry Clement, *Independent* labour editor, described the fact that the RMT had come out for Clause Four as "not a story". This is John Prescott's own union, and the organisation at the forefront of the battle to defeat rail privatisation, Labour's supposed number one campaigning priority!

Meanwhile the same paper made the launch of the "New Clause Four campaign", which has the backing of no CLPs and no trade unions, its front-page lead!

When Robin Cook made a statement backing Blair, all the papers reported it as a "conversion" although Cook had supported Blair all along.

The exclusion of pro-Clause-Four voices from the media makes the leadership's refusal to give pro-Clause-Four voices any real access to the party's own consultation process even more disgusting.

The cynicism of the union bureaucracy is best summed up by the prominent official in the public sector union UNISON who said that the decision on whether to send the 1994 or 1995 union delegation to the special conference on 29 April depended entirely on whether the 1995 elections produced more left wingers on the delegation than in 1994. As we have always said, the fight for Labour Party democracy and trade union democracy are inseparable.

The final stage of the Clause Four battle will see a fight to the finish in key unions like UNISON, CWU (the new communication union), MSF, the technicians' union, and the shopworkers' USDAW, as well as a battle in the constituencies. The left needs to defend the collective decision-making process of General Committees against the leadership's plans for loyalty ballots, and insist that any all-member ballot includes question like "Do you want to retain Clause Four as it stands?"

The result on 29 April is still too close to call. But what we do know is that a fight-back on the scale of that organised by the "Defend Clause Four Campaign" was never supposed to happen. ☐

● Contact: "Defend Clause Four" c/o the NUM, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley S70 2LS. Phone: 0171-708 0511.

Rail union backs Clause Four

By Alan Pottage, RMT National Executive Scottish Area

THE NATIONAL Executive of the rail workers and sea farers, RMT met on Friday 3 February to clarify the union's position regarding the Labour leadership's attempt to ditch Clause Four.

As a result of the resolution passed at our AGM last year, which called for a 'return to public ownership or control as appropriate' it was decided to add this wording to Clause Four. This was understandable given the lack of a strong and clear commitment from the Leader and Deputy Leader to take the rail industry back into common ownership if the Tories succeed in their pathetic privatisation attempt.

The RMT supports the 'Defend Clause Four, Defend Socialism' campaign and it is hoped that all of our active members will re-double their energies to defend Clause Four in the remaining weeks of the campaign. It really is a tragedy that our activists are having to concern themselves with ensuring that the Labour Party does not shunt its socialist principles into a dead-end siding instead of concentrating on the battle against privatisation.

RMT rail members are facing absolute

turmoil at the workplace due to the madness of privatisation. Given the massive public support for the rail industry to remain in public ownership one would have thought that a clear commitment from Tony Blair, in accordance with policy, to re-nationalise our industry if privatised, would be enough to deter the private vampires from sticking their fangs into the arteries of our industry. Such a declaration would undoubtedly deter even the greediest of private speculators from trying to make a fast buck on the backs of our lowly paid members. But instead of driving a socialist stake through this vampire's heart, the 'dump Clause Four' camp are attempting to bury our most effective campaign weapons alongside their own principles.

One thing for sure is that the 'Defend Clause Four' campaign has already achieved a notable victory regardless of the decision at the special conference: it has successfully united and inspired a large section of socialists who form the backbone of the Labour Party. I think it was Arthur Scargill who said at the fringe meeting in Blackpool, following Tony Blair's speech, that it was absolute nonsense to be organising several different meetings to defend Clause Four on the same night instead of uniting in a non-sectarian fashion and maximising the effectiveness of the one big campaign, a campaign with one common cause.

The diary of a Clause Four activist

By Roland Trenchet

THE "Defend Socialism, Defend Clause Four" campaign has organised rallies up and down the country attended by tens of thousands of people.

The level of commitment to the cause of the working class and the active, burning hatred of capitalism I have encountered among broad layers of party and trade union activists has been a revelation.

I've lost count of the number of times I've seen women old enough to be my grandma tear into pompous right-wing MPs and student politicians in a way that the posturing "r-r-r-revolutionaries" could never manage.

"I was born in the same year as Clause Four [1918] and I can tell you things haven't got better, they've got worse!... Capitalism was wrong then and it's wrong now". That is my favourite so far.

And that was from someone who in the internal battles of the early '80s would have been described as a "traditional Labour Party member", and thus as a right-winger.

This basic gut-socialism is not restricted to the older members though. It is particularly well developed in the trade unions, especially among the active shop stewards, workplace reps and branch officers, the women and men who, to most members, are "the union".

I was particularly struck by a debate in which joint general secretaries of the newly-formed Communications Workers' Union (CWU), Tony Young and Alan Johnson, took on Jeremy Corbyn MP and Tom Rigg from the Defend Clause Four Campaign. The meeting was hosted by the CWU's South London Political Committee.

Of the 60 people in the audience nearly half spoke. Not one single word was said in support of Blair! This was an audience of trade unionists who are socialists because they have experienced working in a privatised monopoly, BT or fighting a vicious anti-union management offensive in the Post Office.

What did their leaders have to say? Asked repeatedly if he could, Tony Young could not point us to one serious difference between the Blairite's "consultative" document and the "the Limehouse Declaration", the founding statement of the SDP. Young had One Big Idea: "Blair is the leader of the Labour Party. We support the Labour Party. Therefore we support Tony Blair."

Then Alan Johnson turned up, the sweetest smelling and best manicured trade union leader in Britain!

Making a dramatic entrance stage left, Johnson apologised for being late. He had, he told us, come straight from the High Court, where the CWU had been fined for an official walk out Johnson had tried to stop. The judge, he said, had asked him what

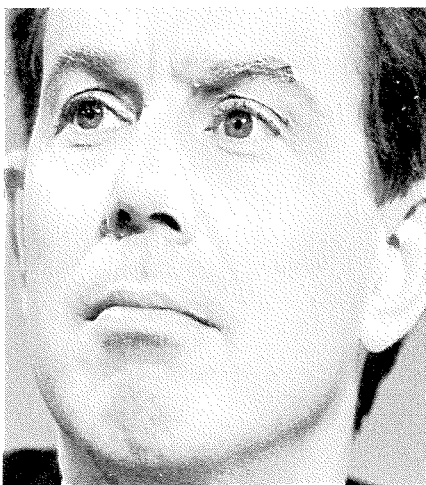
the total assets of the union were. A voice near me cracked: "It depends on whether you count your Armani suits!"

Johnson fared no better than Young.

Johnson's main "argument" was: "Clause Four doesn't mention social justice". If the claim to "secure for the workers... the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof on the basis of common ownership" is not a demand for social justice, what is?

The really interesting thing was that neither General Secretary even tried to convince the union activists. They simply told them that they (the people who hold the union together) were "dinosaurs", that the CWU was going to hold a postal ballot on Blair's proposal, and that Blair would win. The union members may give him a rude surprise!

Outside of a big strike I have never seen the gulf between the rank and file and the leadership of the unions thrown into such sharp relief.



Blair and his coterie do not know how to talk to the labour movement

This CWU meeting also provided one small example of the way the Labour Party and the unions are part of one organically-related, unitary labour movement. A postal worker explained how after speaking at a Labour ward on a local dispute he was convinced by the ward about Clause Four.

Back in the constituencies, I've also been impressed by the way many so-called "ordinary" party members have a far deeper and broader grasp of socialist ideas, and of the history of the labour movement, than many professional politicians. The right wing's ignorance of these matters impresses nobody.

My favourite is Harriet Harman's declaration that "I don't really know very much about the history of the labour movement", followed by a bizarre attack on the suffragettes. "Women's rights weren't really an issue in the first part of the century." So what *do* you know about, Harriet?

A large part of the Blairite case is made up of pseudo-radical, pretended concern for oppressed groups not mentioned in Clause Four! The argument usually goes something like this: Clause Four doesn't include blacks, women, pensioners, lesbians and gays, children, students, the disabled, the environment or — and I really have heard this — animals. It is, of course, all completely beside the point.

That's the big problem for the Blairites. They can't convince people with sound-bites and red herrings, so they rely on the "loyalty" argument. Some of them try to convince people that capitalism is a good thing!

I have heard lots of right-wingers aggressively ask the rhetorical question:

"Do you really want to nationalise Marks and Spencer?" only to be answered with a resounding "yes!" from the audience.

The "loyalty" issue is a problem for the left. "Loyalty" is important in the labour movement and Blair is Party leader. However, when we point out that Blair could simply add to Clause Four rather than abolishing it, people can see that Blair is demanding not only loyalty but the power of a political dictator over the Labour Party.

"Right" and "left" are not always what they seem in the Labour Party. A recent Fabian Society debate saw Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw reduced to heckling his audience — yes an audience of respectable Fabians! — when they refused to accept the idiocy that "common ownership" can only mean 1945 style bureaucratic nationalisation. Straw lost his rag, revealing another of the so-called modernisers' weaknesses.

They are so used to talking to media people who agree with them that they are not very good at arguing with real labour movement people who consider themselves socialists. The "modernisers" tend to underestimate the level of political sophistication amongst Labour Party members and to find their basic honesty and straightforwardness well nigh incomprehensible.

Take for instance Ken Loach's pro-Clause-Four video.

Walworth Road launched a nasty dirty tricks campaign against it.

Loach was "exposed" by Walworth Road. His Labour Party membership had lapsed. He therefore had "no right" to take part in the debate. The silly snobs at the Late Show joined in the rubbishing exercise. All to no avail.

An article by Loach in the next day's Guardian produced 400 inquiries from CLPs about the video — in just one day!

Win on lose on 29 April, Blair's problem is that despite the position of the leadership, the Labour Party and its affiliated unions still contain thousands of socialist activists. They may not yet be revolutionaries but, certainly they don't like capitalism. They don't like Blair very much either now. ☐

The Clause Four argument: 1959-60 and now

Losing the ideal of equality

CONSIDERING MATTERS in 1994, towards the end of a long and, alas, hitherto pointless, effort to make the Labour Party more "electable", people of a certain age become eerily aware of having heard it all before. It has taken Tony Blair's speech to the Labour Party Conference to drive us back to the archives to look at the musty pages of ancient recrimination, yellowed since 1960, and to realise that almost every word of it has now been on replay. Of course, the tone of those old arguments has not improved with age, but modern technology allows people to turn up the volume when the sense is low. In one respect the older men have the advantage, they normally spoke in sentences, since they lived before the age of sound bites and prepacked television gibberish.

"We are far enough away from the events of the earlier time to be able to see that the advice of pollsters was never very valuable, and sometimes positively harmful."

Then and now, politicians paid a tremendous amount of attention to the polls. Pollsters are normally ready with conventional opinions on a very wide range of matters. There is a developed art of opinion management, which can calculate the precise shape of questions needed to elicit the desired answer. If there is some reason why politicians should be advised to make use of polls, there is even stronger reason to warn that it is more common for polls to make use of politicians. Clearly this has been happening continuously since Labour's defeat in the Election of 1979. But it also happened systematically in the aftermath of the earlier Labour defeat in 1951.

We are far enough away from the events

of the earlier time to be able to see that the advice of pollsters was never very valuable, and sometimes positively harmful.

The war against public ownership began as soon as Mr Churchill strode back into Downing Street. There had been a very strident campaign against the nationalisation of the sugar industry, led by Tate and Lyle, the manufacturers. The press maintained a constant critical watch on the performance of the industries which had already been nationalised, and made sure that no sins of omission or commission were overlooked. Every bureaucratic excess was reported, and some were discussed at length and repetitiously.

All the propaganda culminated in 1959, when a very large survey was commissioned by Colin Hurry Associates to demonstrate in every possible way that public ownership was unpopular, damaging and lethal to the hopes of the Labour Party.¹ This survey was publicised with enthusiasm, and became a part of the political mythology of the times. It is not altogether surprising that it soon found echoes in the Labour Party leadership. They in turn found other pollsters who were willing to provide a great deal of "evidence" to the effect that various Labour policies were unappreciated, unpersuasive, even downright unpopular. *Socialist Commentary*,² the journal of a part of the right-wing establishment, which enjoyed a degree of patronage from the American Central Intelligence Agency,³ commissioned Mark Abrams to survey public opinion, in order to discover the roots of Labour's failure.

Abrams confronted 724 people with a series of sixteen statements, and asked which best expressed the spirit of the Labour Party. The five which were cited as being "outstandingly true" were these:

"Stands mainly for the working class."

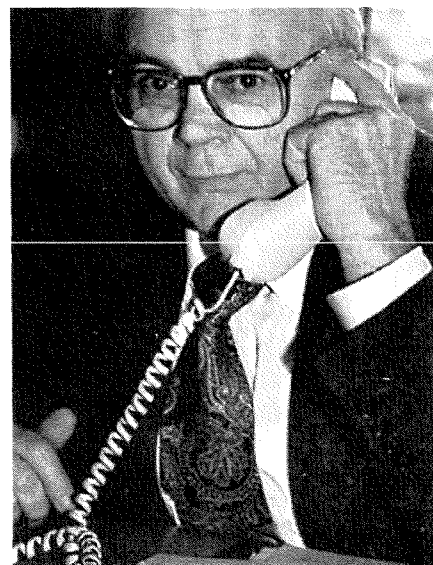
"Is out to help the underdog."

"Would extend the welfare services."

"Is out to raise the standard of living of ordinary people."

"Would try to abolish class differences."

Each of these statements, Abrams concluded, sees the Labour Party "essentially as a class party." There were many reasons, he concluded, "for believing that this image... is one unlikely to lead to a more successful future."⁴ A more successful future, it seemed, might attend a party which stood



Ken Coates

mainly for the middle order of people, called the underdog strictly to heel, would curtail welfare, depress the standards of the ordinary people, and seek to maintain and reinforce class divisions. Strangely, in 1960, few dared draw such conclusions. But in 1994, they were widely embraced and loudly proclaimed. The only thing that remains persistently elusive is... the more successful future.

The answer to the question "must Labour lose"⁵ was "probably yes." As Rita Hinden concluded, "Its class appeal is being undermined because the working class itself... is emerging from its earlier unhappy plight." The ethos of solidarity, she thought, "is beginning to crumble." More "promises to conquer economic distress and crises by planning based on public ownership mean little, now that the terrible economic depressions of the past appear to have been left behind."

Thoughts like this were often voiced in the months after the General Election of 1959. Hugh Gaitskell encouraged them when he convened an informal meeting at his house in Froggnal Gardens on Sunday 23 October.

Paul Johnson, at that time a scion of the left, opened the public hostilities in the *Evening Standard*. He reported that Froggnal Gardens were contemplating an alliance with the Liberal Party, a possible change in

the name of the Labour Party, and the total abandonment of public ownership. A new world had arrived, and the election results had proclaimed the need for these changes to all reasonable people. Socialist fundamentalists might object, but they "were negligible."

The next contender was Douglas Jay, MP, and he chose *Forward*, a journal at that time close to Labour Party officialdom, in which to scrawl his version of the writing on the wall. A new name for the Labour Party was necessary. Further nationalisation was not required, and the proposal to reintroduce public ownership of the steel industry must be dropped. The influence of the Parliamentary Labour Party must be enhanced in a more truly federal structure, but the trade unions and the Party Conference should be reined in. The working-class affiliates of the Party were holding it back and it was inappropriate to fight "under a label of a class that no longer exists."

This valediction was a little premature.

Labour Party members did not particularly wish to describe themselves as "radicals" and it was not so easy for them to come home from factories or offices, mines or schools and follow the reasoning of Mr Jay about the disappearing working class. Constituencies began to express concern, mounting to distinct unease.

Paradoxically, the same trade unions which had hitherto regarded him as a moderate man, a safe pair of hands, were shocked by Gaitskell's outbreak of radical iconoclasm. This was formally registered in a speech to the Labour Party Conference in Blackpool in November, an uncanny pre-echo of another Blackpool oration of 1994.

"I do think that we should clear our minds on these fundamental issues and then try to express in the most simple and comprehensive fashion what we stand for in the world today."

The only official document which embodies such an attempt is the Party Constitution written over 40 years ago [1918]. It seems to me that this needs to be brought up to date. For instance, can we really be satisfied today with a statement of fundamentals which makes no mention at all of colonial freedom, race relations, disarmament, full employment or planning? The only specific reference to our objectives at home is the well-known phrase:

"To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange..."

I hope, then, that the Executive will during the next few months try to work out and state the fundamental principles of British Democratic Socialism as we see and as we feel it today, in 1959, not 1918, and I hope that in due course another Conference will endorse what they propose."

Most trade unions had then, and still have, rules in their constitutions which

commit them to public ownership and/or workers' control.⁷ A change in the Party's constitution implied a change in their own. It soon became clear that for this and other reasons many unions would be unwilling to support a comprehensive reworking of the Labour Party's constitution. Many unions favoured public ownership in their own industries, and wished to extend it to new sectors. Thus, the miners could see no reason why coal distribution should not be brought under some form of public ownership, as well as the pits themselves. Intermittently calls were to be heard advocating the extension of public ownership to the manufacture of mining machinery. In many other trade unions, the extension of public ownership was at least thinkable.

But in addition, there was a very large group of people who had no desire whatever to extend nationalisation in the immediate future, but who were annoyed by the raising of a question which they regarded as quite irrelevant.

George Brown, soon to be Gaitskell's

*"Seeking to lead his
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of it."*

deputy, summed up the view of this group.

"Gaitskell, quite reasonably, felt that this bit of old-fashioned dogma was part of Labour's out-of-date image, and that far from attracting adherents to the Party it probably put off many people who would otherwise vote Labour. I didn't think it really mattered a damn, one way or the other. But the proposal to amend Clause Four at once aroused all the hostility of those who were really opposed to Gaitskell on defence and all the other matters on which a practical approach to the problems of government contrasted with a doctrinaire approach."⁸

Considering outright opposition and surrounded by alienation, Gaitskell came, week by week, to seem more and more isolated. His new broom, far from sweeping clean, was soon to be locked back in the cupboard. By February 1960, *The Times* was able to report a remarkable change under the arresting headline: "Mr Gaitskell calls for more public ownership."

At a meeting in Nottingham, the Leader surprised his by now sceptical audience by saying:

"For my part, I have never been satisfied with the present frontiers between public and private enterprise. To me it is absurd to think, in the face of the huge capital gains now being made in the private sec-

tor, that we can achieve the degree of equality we want without an extension of public ownership."

It's absurd to think that we can overcome the present crisis in town and country planning without more public enterprise — we may even have to go back to some of our old ideas about the ownership of urban land."

It's absurd to think that we can solve our housing problem without more municipal ownership, or create an adequate counterweight to big business without an extension of co-operative ownership."

Above all we cannot be satisfied with the degree of control over the economy which we now possess. If we are to plan successfully for full employment, more investment and higher productivity, we shall need to extend the public sector, including more public ownership: most obviously, as we said in our election programme, in the fields of steel and road transport; certainly in water supplies, quite probably in the future, as other problems confront us and the case becomes clearer, in other fields as well."

The weight of dissent was gathering and was becoming the more intense with the growth of the campaign for nuclear disarmament, which threatened to isolate the Labour Party leadership from a very large majority of younger people, including those very members of middle classes to whom experiments in revisionism had been intended to appeal. A change was inevitable. It seems that Harold Wilson thought that he was responsible for finding the formula which settled this argument (according to his biographer, Ben Pimlott).¹⁰ But that was not the perception of George Brown.

"The ostensible dispute over Clause Four ended almost in a farce. I thought I saw a way of patching up the differences over Clause Four. I wrote an addition to the traditional Clause Four which I likened in the arguments then to adding the New Testament to the Old Testament. But no amendment was put formally to the Party and so none was ever written into the Party's constitution. Instead the Executive presented its statement to the next Conference and its statement on Labour's aims was accepted as "a valuable expression of the aims of the Labour Party in the second half of the twentieth century."¹¹

All this amounted to a rare form of leadership. Seeking to lead his followers away from public ownership, Hugh Gaitskell wound up inciting them to demand more of it. His new text even called for "community power over the commanding heights of the economy," after a judicious amendment by Jennie Lee, using her husband's famous phrase.

George Brown succeeded in one thing: the additional text was frequently referred to as "the new testament", in contra-distinction to the old, delivered by Moses in 1918. But in spite of the contemporary perceptions, the old testament has in fact outlived the new. Few today remember ▶

the proclamation of 1960, but all Labour members know that Clause Four is written on their membership cards.

Nonetheless, the 1960 statement was agreed, and might, in 1994, even seem quite advanced. This is how it read:

"The following statement adopted in 1960 reaffirms, amplifies and clarifies Party Objects in the light of post-war development and the historic achievements of the first majority Labour Government.

The British Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. Its central ideal is the brotherhood of man. Its purpose is to make this ideal a reality everywhere.

Accordingly:

a. It rejects discrimination on grounds of race, colour, or creed and holds that men should accord to one another equal consideration and status in recognition of the fundamental dignity of Man.

b. Believing that no nation, whatever its size or power, is justified in dictating to or ruling over other countries against their will, it stands for the right of all peoples to freedom, independence and self-government.

c. Recognising that international anarchy and the struggle for power between nations must lead to universal destruction, it seeks to build a world order within which all will live in peace. To this end is pledged to respect the United Nations Charter, to renounce the use of armed force except in self-defence and to work unceasingly for world disarmament, the abolition of all nuclear weapons, and the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

d. Rejecting the economic exploitation of one country by another it affirms the duty of richer nations to assist poorer nations and to do all in their power to abolish poverty throughout the world.

e. It stands for social justice, for a society in which the claims of those in hardship or distress come first; where the wealth produced by all is fairly shared among all; where differences in rewards depend not upon birth or inheritance but on the effort, skill and creative energy contributed to the common good; and where equal opportunities exist for all to live a full and varied life.

f. Regarding the pursuit of material wealth by and for itself as empty and barren, it rejects the selfish, acquisitive doctrines of capitalism, and strives to create instead a socialist community based on fellowship, co-operation and service in which all can share fully in our cultural heritage.

g. Its aim is a classless society from which all class barriers and false social values have been eliminated.

h. It holds that to ensure full employment, rising production, stable prices and steadily advancing living standards the nation's economy should be planned and all concentrations of power subordinated to the interests of the community as a whole.

i. It stands for democracy in industry and for the right of the workers both in the public and private sectors to full consultation in all the vital decisions of management, especially those affecting con-



What does common ownership mean?

ditions of work.

j. It is convinced that these social and economic objectives can be achieved only through an expansion of common ownership substantial enough to give the community power over the commanding heights of the economy. Common ownership takes varying forms, including state-owned industries and firms, producer and consumer co-operation, municipal ownership and public participation in private concerns. Recognising that both public and private enterprise have a place in the economy it believes that further extension of common ownership should be decided from time to time in the light of these objectives and according to circumstances with due regard for the views of the workers and consumers concerned.

k. It stands for the happiness and freedom of the individual against the glorification of the state — for the protection of workers, consumers and all citizens against any exercise of arbitrary power, whether by the state, by private or public authorities, and it will resist all forms of collective prejudice and intolerance.

l. As a democratic Party believing that there is no true Socialism without political freedom, it seeks to obtain and so hold power only through free democratic institutions whose existence it has resolved always to strengthen and defend against all threats from any quarter.¹²

As a commonsense statement of the prevailing consensus within the Labour Party, in 1960, this declaration is interesting. It tells us where people were at. Indeed, many Labour supporters in 1994 would find it quire remarkably advanced, and certainly less constrictive than subsequent leadership statements have commonly become.

But all the arguments about "full employ-

ment", welcome though they are in the desert which has spread across large areas of the British economy since 1979, also reveal the immense gap between the entire Labour Party of 1960 and its socialist forebears. When Webb wrote of "common ownership" this quite explicitly implied the abolition of "employment." If all of us shared in the ownership of our enterprise, thought the pioneers, then there would be no "employers" and no employees either.

The Webbs had a special reason to be familiar with this kind of thinking. When they had been writing their famous *History of Trade Unionism* in 1894, they began with an attempted definition.

"A trade union, as we understand the term, is a continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment."¹³

When they re-edited this classic work for students of the Workers' Educational Association, in 1920, they deleted the word "employment" and substituted the term "working lives". They made this change, they said, because they had been accused of assuming that unions had "always contemplated a perpetual continuance of the capitalist or wage-system". No such implication, they insisted, was intended.

It became unfashionable to speak or think of wage-slavery, or what the Guild Socialists called "the bondage of wavery". But this criticism, of the very nature of the employment contract, is a recurrent and insistent strand of the socialist commitment.

We have learnt that there are many perils which attend experiments in social ownership and democratic self-management. Bureaucracy has haunted the socialist movement since its earliest beginnings.

That is why it has become necessary to develop a whole panoply of democratic control mechanisms in order to establish and maintain the principle of democratic accountability.

But no such principle obtains in capitalist industry, even when it remains small in scale and restricted in influence. In the age when multinational corporations extend their reach around the globe, this lack of responsibility becomes a profound social malaise.

WE HAVE SEEN that there are many similarities between the patterns of argument which developed in 1959 and afterwards, and those of 1994.

But there are also very important differences.

What underpinned the effort to revise the Labour Party's programme, after the 1959 electoral defeat? The most consistent statement of the "revisionist" view was that of C.A.R. Crosland, in *The Future of Socialism*¹⁴. Crosland argued that the postwar Labour Government had achieved a major redistribution of personal incomes; a transfer of economic power following the nationalisation of the basic industries; and a transfer of power from management to labour.

The first of these three effects was the best understood, although the statistical evidence was not quite as clear as Crosland thought. His second effort concerned the shift of power occasioned by nationalisation. Here, he was realistic about the fact that the management of nationalised industries might even be less accountable than many private managements. But, he thought, the power of the state had increased, which, for him, was an undoubted plus.

The truth is that the power shift was in fact more complicated than Crosland believed. The nationalisation measures all involved substantial compensation for the original private owners. Since most of the industries concerned were unprofitable, and some were on the brink of actual bankruptcy, their compulsory purchase represented a veritable renewal of the dynamism of capital. Phoenix-like, capital was liberated to seek more profitable areas in which to grow, leaving behind the husks of the derelict industries upon which it had already preyed.

Crosland's third effect was concerned with the beneficial results of full employment.

*"...there has been a decisive movement of power within industry itself from management to labour. This is mainly a consequence of the seller's market for labour created by full employment."*¹⁵

Basing himself on the changes which had been registered in these three areas of social life, Crosland reached the opinion that the initial socialist project had been largely completed. Upon the foundations laid in the years after 1945, he thought, equality could now be established.

Throughout the early postwar years, there had been a barrage of propaganda

against equalitarian policies. A mythology arose, claiming that new social provision was redistributing resources to the poor, that full employment was eroding differentials and that the rentier was indeed withering away, as had been foreseen by J.M. Keynes.

If it is often dangerous to believe your own propaganda, it is even more perilous to believe your opponents'. In these sad later days, however, Crosland might not be blamed for doing so. It was only after the publication of his own work that Richard Titmuss published, in 1962, a magisterial dissection of the official statistics on inequality. He showed how the Inland Revenue had influenced the reporting of incomes, by persuading those who could to subdivide their own large incomes into several smaller ones in favour of all their dependents in order to minimise eligibility for higher rates of tax. He also traced the ploy of splitting large amounts payable in one year into smaller ones dispersed over longer times: this device was also economical of tax liability. Titmuss cast a sharp spotlight on fringe benefits, and showed how far the fashionable talk of a disappearing middle class was based on the uninquisitive interpretation of very imperfect statistics.¹⁶

The least that we can say about Crosland's evidence on this matter is that

"Crosland and some of his colleagues were desperately trying to remain loyal to what they saw as their most binding promise: the pursuit of equality. But effective control over the economy was slipping away, as the power of transnational capital grew and grew."

it looked better than it really was. There had been a beneficial but far from swingeing change in the distribution of incomes which would in fact require persistent governmental action to maintain it. But most subsequent governmental action was intended to reverse it.

His second major change concerned the impact of nationalisation on overall economic policy. We have already commented on this argument. It is obvious that the lack of accountability in nationalised industries implied a need for their democratisation, partly by improving their responsiveness to

consumers, and partly by the institution of direct worker involvement in the decision-making processes. Of course, there was also a case for improving the degree of Parliamentary accountability.

All of these actions would have been consonant with the strict spirit of Clause Four, but none of them were ever effectively proposed, leave alone implemented. It is true that there were some attempts to democratise the administration of the nationalised industries, more than a decade later on. These met with little enthusiasm among the Labour Party establishment.

We are left with the third major issue: full employment. It is perfectly clear today that the celebrations of this final defeat of unemployment were somewhat premature.

Almost twenty years after his classic statement, Crosland wrote a postscript, called *Socialism Now*.¹⁷ In it, he drew the balance sheet of the six years of Labour Government in which he participated, between 1964 and 1970. "Nobody disputes the central failure of economic policy," he said.

"In 1970, unemployment was higher, inflation more rapid and economic growth slower, than when the Conservatives left office in 1964. The growth performance in particular was lamentable. GDP in real terms rose by an average of only 2.3 per cent a year compared with 3.8 per cent in the previous six years. Growth was consistently sacrificed to the balance of payments, notably to the defence of a fixed and unrealistic rate of exchange."

*This central failure bedevilled all the efforts and good intentions of the Labour Government. It constrained public expenditure. It antagonized the Trade Unions and alienated huge groups of workers. It killed the National Plan and frustrated policies for improving the industrial structure (though too much was expected both of indicative planning and industrial policy, which are rather marginal influences on economic performance). And it has made it hard for Labour to claim in future — or, rather, it would have done but for the far worse mess which the Tories are making of the economy — that we can manage things more efficiently than they can."*¹⁸

It is not at all clear that the zealous application of Clause Four was responsible for any of these shortcomings. On the contrary, Crosland goes on to list a number of countervailing gains, all of which showed certain improvements in income distribution, and in equality of access to education and other services.

What was really going on during this painful experience was that Crosland and some of his colleagues were desperately trying to remain loyal to what they saw as their most binding promise: the pursuit of equality. But effective control over the economy was slipping away, as the power of transnational capital grew and grew. The old modes of economic control no longer functioned adequately. Changes in fiscal

Taslima Nasrin

"I will not be silenced"

IN HUGE areas of the world the bitter anger of people marginalised, impoverished and taunted by the workings of capitalism is curdling into reactionary religious-fundamentalist fervour.

As Workers' Liberty goes to press, Salamat Masih, a boy of 14, has only just escaped the death penalty in Pakistan — for allegedly scribbling on the wall of a mosque. Manzoor Masih, charged alongside Salamat Masih, was killed last year in an attack outside their lawyer's office which also seriously injured Salamat Masih.

To stand up against this sort of fundamentalist terror takes great courage. The Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin has that courage. Since June 1994 she has been driven into hiding by government legal action against her for "blasphemy", coupled with death threats from Islamic fundamentalists. Hundreds of thousands marched in Dhaka in the summer of 1994 demanding "death to Taslima."

She has not been silenced. In March she will visit Britain to continue her fight for reason and for human rights — a fight without which no one can even start to map out a way for the workers and peasants of countries like Bangladesh to win dignity, freedom and decent living conditions.



Taslima Nasrin

THERE WERE huge demonstrations in Dhaka following the order to arrest me. Every day thousands and thousands marched to demand my death. It was a terrible time and I did not believe that I would live through it. I thought that the fundamentalists would find me, and kill me.

I stayed in 15 different houses when I was in hiding, moving around only at midnight. I owe a lot to the people who helped me, some of whom I did not know, all of whom did so at great risk to themselves.

My family now faces a very difficult situation. My sister has lost her job and my father has been targeted by the fundamentalists. They are isolated and alone.

The Muslim fundamentalists are growing. They represent a terrible threat to Bangladeshi women. If they get big enough they will impose a system based on religious law and destroy the existing society.

They get help from the Bangladeshi government, which panders to them. The government wants to pacify the religious bigots in order to get votes, influence and to retain power.

The fundamentalists get money from other countries — from Iraq and Iran and others, too. They have a lot of rich backers; they are a very wealthy movement.

The young people have lost all trust in the mainstream politicians, and in the political parties who squabble and struggle for power. There is a widespread belief that they are all corrupt.

The young people have no jobs and live in terrible poverty. Bangladesh is so very poor.

The young accept religious ideas because they believe this will bring them better lives on earth, and heaven in the future. The religious leaders offer them a life in heaven that will be better than their life here.

But it is not only the fundamentalists

Taslima Nasrin speaks in London

Wednesday 15 March
at 7.30pm

at Conway Hall, Red Lion
Square, Holborn

Admission is by ticket only. These
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"Taslima Nasrin Meeting"

support me.

Those who are oppressed by society support me. Those who live a life of suffering, those women oppressed by their husbands — these are the people who support me.

Ironically, it is those women who live a good life in Bangladesh, who privately talk and act like men, who are critical of those who speak out against injustice; they want to keep their positions — and keeping their positions means keeping the support of men.

There is a weak women's movement in Bangladesh which is not yet strong enough to speak out with its own, clear voice. It is still dominated by the government and by the political parties.

Patriarchy is very strong in Bangladesh. By patriarchy I mean that men are able to control every aspect of women's lives. It is men who decide what women must do. Our society does not want female babies. Society and the conservative family do not allow female children to get an education. The conservatives demand that women wear veils.

After marriage the husbands decides what their wives can do — if they can study, and if they can work. The husband decides how many children the wife can have. Everything! It is always the husband, the father or the son who decides.

These traditions partly stem from religion and religious law. But I assert that women are human beings, and are entitled

to be treated like human beings.

Women continue to be persecuted in the name of *tradition*. One thing that feminists in Western countries should learn is to be critical about the traditions of Asia and Africa. I have heard Western women saying we should follow our traditions. Well, I like my food and I like my dress. These are the things I will keep. But why should I accept the tradition of oppression, too? Why should I accept a society that puts women in veils and allows men to dominate them?

*"I am alone, but no
one controls me. I
have my own voice.
And I will not be
silenced."*

In parts of Africa there is the "tradition" of mutilating female genitalia. Is this tradition? Call it by its proper name: it is *torture!*

Western women must not believe that freedom is only for them. Freedom is not just for you. Freedom is for me, too. I need my freedom. I believe we must all work for a world where everyone is free. This is our duty.

I am not a politician and I am not involved in a political party. But what is necessary now in Bangladesh is a programme of education. We need the separation of religious and political life. We need a society based on modern law, and on equality between men and women.

I am alone, but no one controls me. I have my own voice. And I will not be silenced.

* One of Taslima's books, *Shame*, is published by Penguin and is available in the UK. It tells the story of anti-Hindu chauvinism in Bangladesh, set against the background of the anti-Hindu riots of 1992. Taslima Nasrin was persecuted for writing this book. The Bangladeshi government banned *Shame* in 1993.



Nurses march through Dhaka demanding better pay and working conditions, February 1995



Hugh Gaitskell

policies commonly did not bite where they were supposed to bite, and even if they did, they failed to create the effects intended.

We shall return to this matter a little later.

At this point in our argument it seems reasonable to conclude that the effort to revise Clause Four of the Labour Party's Constitution in 1959 and 1960 rested on three main assumptions about the extent and success of post-war social reform, each of which was largely mistaken.

Of course, some of those who joined the "revisionist" lobby were not motivated by the high principles which animated C.A.R. Crosland. He sought a combination of liberty and equality. Some of the other lobbyists might have settled for something less, such as office or a pension. However, we must take the argument at its strongest, and there is a very great deal of evidence to attest to the sincerity of Crosland and an important group of his co-authors. Unfortunately, the price of equality is eternal vigilance.

What is the difference between this historical discussion, and the present argument? We have seen that inequalities in almost every social dimension have been rapidly increasing, and that unemployment has fundamentally undermined the power of trade unions and the choices of employees in a buyers' market for labour. To consult Richard Titmuss or his pupils in order to frame an effectively redistributive tax policy must, in today's Britain, appear to be a slightly unrealistic, indeed, Utopian effort. There are no good Samaritans on Labour's Front Bench. Public ownership could be restored in a number of services and industries. But the Front Bench is not only making no new promises, but actively rescinding all the old ones.

How, then, can anyone involved in this surrealist orgy of "realism", speak of "equality"? True, the Labour leadership has circulated a document in which it says it is not speaking of "arithmetic equality."

Amen to that. In every field we are being asked to adjust to discriminatory forms of treatment. We are told that trade unions should seek no special favours. That is to say, that employers are to retain the special favours which they have enjoyed since the beginning of the Thatcher regime. Heavy hints are given to the newspapers that Labour will pursue every possibility of cutting taxes, rather than deploy them to help the poor. The resultant equality will certainly not be arithmetic. It will be comprehensively Orwellian. All animals will be equal, but some will be considerably more equal than others. The animals will look "from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again." But already it will be impossible, or at any rate, politically incorrect, to say which is which.

Respect for C.A.R. Crosland demands that we recognise that this kind of equality is nothing whatever to do with that which motivated his political life. There is a real chasm between the two ideals of equality, and between the two constitutional debates.

How has it come about that a national Labour movement could be so comprehensively emptied of spirit and commitment?

One should not be tempted to recriminate about the low cultural level of some of the leading participants in this discussion. The question is not how did certain not very resonant arguments come to be advanced: it is, how did they come to the front in a Party representing a vast population suffering hardships and indeed miseries, and yet consisting of millions of people with high levels of education, skill and ability?

There is a very simple answer. Multinational capital has largely annulled national democracy. National parliaments may still squabble about the fruits of office, and they may still legislate on second order questions. But the vast macro-economic decisions cannot be taken in national chancelleries or monitored in

state parliaments, and indeed are normally not taken at all. Multinational capital has succeeded in establishing a free range over which it marauds with impunity. Much of this range is comprehensively deregulated. The Keynesian levers which enabled Crosland to aspire to the control of social policy through the British Government's machinery of redistribution will not be reconnected until we create levels of transnational democracy which can match and contend with the economic power centres.

Geological shifts in the real power structures were largely unremarked by Labour's policy makers throughout the 60s and most of the 70s. The result was increasing frustration, as the political machine began to malfunction in more and more tiresome and unpredictable ways.

The most important lessons of these experiences were drawn by Stuart Holland, who had been a personal assistant to Harold Wilson in the traumatic years of his first administration. In an important book, *The Socialist Challenge*,¹⁹ Holland developed the fundamental analysis which lay at the base of the alternative economic strategy, which was to be embraced by the whole of the left, throughout the 1970s, and even later.

Holland showed that the failure of Keynesian management techniques to deliver controlled growth in Britain was part of a wider change which resulted from the

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THE BOLSHEVIKS AGAINST THE WORKING CLASS?

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growth of multinational corporations, able individually to circumvent and together to block national governmental policies over a wide range of matters. Between the macro and micro levels of economic analyses, Holland argued, we needed to see that there had arisen a meso-level represented by the giant corporations, which could subvert or nullify many of the decisions taken by macro-economic planners. Since giant companies accounted for a greater and greater proportion of world trade, and since much of that trade was now internal to specific corporations, devices like that of transfer pricing enabled corporations to avoid national taxation rules at will. The prices of transferred components could be charged at wholly fictional levels, in order to remove company resources from one area to another, without hindrance. Transnational subsidiaries would be favoured for straightforward company reasons, even when national trade balances were running adversely.

What was then left of the democratic socialist project? With great skill and imagination, parts of it could still be recuperated at the national level, provided the new conditions were understood. However, the main weight of economic decision-making had evaded direct national controls, and could only be met and matched at an appropriate transnational level. At the same time, of course, transnational political powers were far too weak to afford a readymade framework to a modern Crosland, seeking to manage the world of giant multinationals on broad Keynesian principles. National powers were eroding, and national institutions were crumbling with them.

True, a beginning of recuperation could be envisaged with the developing institutions of the European Community, and as those institutions evolved towards full-fledged European Union, it became at least thinkable that a co-ordinated policy of redistribution and social intervention might once again render renewed welfare policies viable for the medium term. But the new economy is increasingly global, so that even the European Union cannot match the economic institutions point by point, and evolve all the counterpart mechanisms of macro-economic control which had

become so indispensable to the Crosland generation.

The evolution of a single currency might in time put European institutions at the fulcrum in negotiations to recreate a new international economic and monetary order. Social considerations might then recover some of their older priority.

But in the meantime, socialists in different countries would need greatly improved forms of co-operation among themselves. Without these, there would be no valid long-term national strategies, no honest joint actions, and no realisable combined and convergent policies to advance the interests of our constituency: the working population, the unemployed, the poor, and the forgotten people of Europe. Separately, the national roads diverged in one direction into sterile dogmas, and in the other to a sickeningly conformist opportunism.

But the real choice, which is to work together, to transcend frontiers and barriers, leads to new possibilities of advance, towards that long-delayed world in which "the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all."

● *This is an abridged excerpt from Ken Coates's new book, Clause Four, Common Ownership, and the Labour Party.*

Notes

- 1 Colin Hurry Associates: *Nationalisation: That Surrey*, London, 1959. Polling was organised in 129 marginal constituencies, and 41.7 per cent of Labour voters were reported to want "no more nationalisation".
- 2 Originally a journal of the leftist emigration from Germany, *Socialist Commentary* was reorganised in 1947 by C.A.R. Crosland, Allan Flanders, and Rita Hinden of the Fabian Society
- 3 See Richard Fletcher: *Who Were they Travelling With?* in *CIA and the Labour Movement*, Spokesman, 1977.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Michael Foot: *Aneurin Bevan, 1945-1960*, Davis Poynter, 1973, p.630 *et seq.*
- 6 Labour Party: *Annual Conference Report*, 1959
- 7 Thus, the TGWU rules include as a main membership commitment the need "to endeavour by all means in their power to control the industries in which their members are engaged," whilst the first aim of the AEEU is "the control of industry in the interests of the community". The Foundryworkers' constitution speaks of "developing and extending the co-operative system until a co-operative commonwealth is established which shall labour and produce for the good of all." The NUR sees these perspectives more doctrinally as requiring "the supersession of the capitalist system by a socialist order of society".
- 8 George Brown: *In My Way*, Gollancz, 1970.
- 9 Cited in *Tribune*, 19th February, 1960, p.1
- 10 Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, Harper Collins, 1992, p.238
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Clause Four, Common Ownership and the Labour Party

By Ken Coates

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Choose: the working class or sect building! By Frederick Engels

Frederick Engels died 100 years ago, on 5 August 1895.

The friend and comrade of Karl Marx, and his closest associate in the development of a new socialist theory, Engels advised the new mass labour movements which emerged in the 1880s and 1890s, after Marx's death. His advice then speaks to socialists now too.

We print here some excerpts from his letters to American socialists.

OUR THEORY is a theory of evolution, not a dogma to be learnt by heart and to be repeated mechanically. The less it is drilled into the Americans from the outside and the more they test it through their own experience — with the help of the Germans — the deeper will it pass into their flesh and blood.

When we returned to Germany, in Spring 1848, we joined the Democratic Party as the only possible means of gaining the ear of the working class; we were the most advanced wing of that party, but still a wing of it. When Marx founded the International, he drew up the General Rules in such a way that all working-class socialists of that period could join it — Proudhonists, Pierre Lerouxists, and even the most advanced section of the English trade unions: and it was only through this latitude that the International became what it was, the means of gradually dissolving and absorbing all these minor sects, with the exception of the anarchists.

Had we from 1864 to 1873 insisted on working together only with those who openly adopted our platform, where should we be today? I think all our practice has shown that it is possible to work along with the general movement of the working class at every one of its stages without giving up or hiding our own distinct position and even organisation.

THE GREAT thing is to get the working class to move as a class; that once obtained, they will soon find the right direction, and all who resist, will be left out in the cold with small sects of their own. Therefore I think also the Knights of Labor a most important factor in the movement which ought not to be pooh-poohed from without but to be revolutionised from within, and I consider that many of the Germans there have made a grievous mistake when they tried, in the face of a mighty and glorious movement not of their own creation, to make of their imported and not always understood theory a kind of *alleinseligmachendes* [it alone bringing salvation]

dogma, and to keep aloof from any movement which did not accept that dogma.

Our theory is not a dogma but the exposition of a process of evolution, and that process involves successive phases. To expect that the Americans will start with the full consciousness of the theory worked out in older industrial countries is to expect the impossible. What the Germans ought to do is to act up to their own theory — if they understand it, as we did in 1845 and 1848 — to go in for any real general working-class movement, accept its actual starting point as such and work it gradually up to the theoretical level by pointing out how every mistake made, every reverse suffered, was a necessary consequence of mistaken theoretical ideas in the original programme; they ought, in the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, to represent the future of the movement in the movement of the present.



OVER HERE [in Great Britain] it is being proved that a great nation simply cannot be tutored in a doctrinaire and dogmatic fashion, even if one has the best of theories, evolved out of their own conditions of life. The movement is under way now at last and, I believe, for good. But it is not directly Socialist, and those among the English who have understood our theory best remain outside it: Hyndman because he is incurably jealous and intriguing, Bax because he is a bookworm. Formally, the movement [the new unions of unskilled labour] is first of all a trade-union movement, but utterly different from that of the old trade unions: the skilled labourers, the labour aristocracy.

The people are now putting their shoulders to the wheel in quite a different way, they are drawing far greater masses into the struggle, shaking up society far more profoundly, and putting forward much more far-reaching demands: the eight-hour day, a general federation of all organisations, and complete solidarity. Through Tussy

[Eleanor Marx], the Gas-Workers' and General Labourers' Union has women's branches *for the first time*. Moreover, the people look on their immediate demands themselves as only provisional, although they themselves do not yet know toward what final goal they are working. But this vague idea is strongly enough rooted in them to make them elect as leaders only openly declared Socialists. Like everyone else, they must learn from their own experiences by drawing the conclusions from their own mistakes.

IN A country with such an old political and labour movement there is always a colossal heap of traditionally transmitted rubbish which has to be got rid of by degrees. There are the prejudices of the skilled unions — Engineers, Bricklayers, Carpenters and Joiners, Type Compositors, etc. — all of which have to be broken down; the petty jealousies of the various trades, the clashing ambitions and intrigues of the leaders.

Among them the Socialist League, which looks down on everything that is not directly revolutionary (which, here in England, as with you, means: everything which does not confine itself to coining phrases and otherwise doing nothing); and the [Social Democratic] Federation, which still behaves as if everyone but itself were an ass and a bungler, although it is only the new progress of the movement that has enabled it itself to get some following again.

In short, anyone who sees only the surface would say it was all confusion and personal squabbles. But under the surface the movement is going on; it is seizing ever wider sections, and for the most part precisely among the hitherto stagnant lowest masses; and the day is no longer far off when this mass will suddenly find itself, when it dawns upon it that it is this colossal moving mass; and when that day comes short work will be made of all the rascality and squabbling. ■

The excerpts are from letters to Florence Kelley Wischnewetzky, 27 January 1887 and 28 December 1886, and to Adolph Sorge, 7 December 1889 and 19 April 1890.

Spring 1848: at the beginning of a wave of democratic revolutions across Europe.

"The International": the First International, an international association of socialists and trade unionists founded in 1864. It effectively collapsed in 1872.

Knights of Labor: a quasi-populist, quasi-trade union movement important in America at that time.

Hyndman and Bax: leaders of the Social Democratic Federation, the first Marxist group in Britain.

Socialist League: a split-off from the SDF. Its members included William Morris and Eleanor Marx.

The life and death of a sharecropper

Formal equality before the law is relatively new for black people in the USA. Until the 1960s they suffered under a "Jim Crow" system not far from apartheid. The story of Odell Waller shows how monstrous it was. The case of Mumia Abu-Jamal (see page 5), the victim of an imminent legal racist lynching, shows how monstrous US racism still is.

ODELL WALLER'S execution rated only a few lines in the capitalist press. The most liberal of them buried the news in tiny scraps on the inside pages.

For two years the Waller case was fought through the courts. Waller didn't have a chance before the prejudice-ridden juries of the South. The metropolitan dailies knew it. The politicians, North and South, knew it. The Supreme Court, which refused to review his case, knew it. And so did President Roosevelt.

They were, some of them, perhaps a little embarrassed by the Waller case. There it was, sticking out like a sore thumb — challenging the hypocritical structure of "class unity", and presidential pleas against race discrimination... in the interests of better prosecuting the war.

When it was all over, when Waller — railroaded by the due process of Jim Crow law — went to his death in an electric chair on July 2, they breathed a sign of relief. For them the Waller case was over — and good riddance!

But they are mistaken, greatly mistaken!

Who was Waller? A Negro sharecropper, working sun-up to sun-down under the lash of Jim Crow-rule. Denied even those few fragments of privileges allowed fellow workers of a different race, and different occupation. That's all — just a sharecropper. That's his life story: he worked, got into trouble, worked some more, lived meagrely from moment to moment and finally died by decree of a Virginia court.

Two years ago he shot his landlord. Yes, he shot his landlord — and never denied it. He shot when he thought his landlord was reaching for a gun — shot him during a quarrel over Waller's share of a jointly tended wheat crop. Oscar Davis, his white landlord, had refused to surrender Waller's share.

In any court Waller's defense would have stood up — if Waller weren't Negro, if his landlord weren't white. There are legal arguments enough: self-defense, extenuating circumstances. Had the roles and colours been reversed, it would have been simple enough, merely a matter of procedure. Lynchers are never convicted in the South.

Waller didn't have a chance.

Who tried him? His peers? Workers, sharecroppers, Negroes, the oppressed and exploited? That's what the law provides — a jury of peers. But not for a Negro, hence not for Waller. Waller was tried by a white, poll tax jury, upholding the Jim Crow tyranny of Southern justice.

Waller did not have a fair trial, as constitutionally provided. It was up to the Supreme Court to intervene, order a new trial. But the Supreme Court turned its head, refused to acknowledge the glaring injustice.

Governor Darden of Virginia could have saved him. President Roosevelt, by public repudiation of the injustice, might have saved him. Neither of them did.

The Waller case may have ended for the New York Times or the "liberal" New York Post but it hasn't ended, and *never will* so long as one negro remains the victim of race discrimination.

Waller cases, some of them cruder, some of them less crude, repeat themselves in a multiplicity of ways every day.

Every time a Negro is denied the right to a job, the Waller case is repeated.

Every time a Negro is barred from a restaurant, the Waller case is repeated.

Every time a Negro is lynched, the Waller case is repeated. And a Negro was lynched in Tuskegee, Alabama, the very week that Waller was legally murdered!

There isn't a Negro in this country who won't bear the scar of Waller's death so long as capitalist class and race injustice continues. There ought not to be a white



"Have you ever thought about some people are allowed a chance over and over again, then there are others allowed little chance, some no chance at all..."

"I accident(ally) fell and some good people tried to help me. Others did everything they could against me so the governor and the coats (courts) don't no (know) the true facts.

"In my case I worked hard from sun-up until sun-down trying to make a living for my family and it ended in death for me.

"You take big people as the President, governors, judge, their children don't never have to suffer. They has plenty money. Born in a mention (mansion) nothing ever to worry about. I am glad some people are that lucky.

"The penitentiary all over the United States are full of people bo (who) was pore tried to work and have something, couldn't, so that maid them steel and rob."

Odell Waller (from his last statement)

worker who forgets this new victim on the long list of class injustice.

Victimized as he was by "whites", Waller knew the source of his persecution. In his statement there is no reference to "whites" against "blacks." In the two years of his incarceration and defense, Waller learned that — if he didn't know it before.

It wasn't the "whites" who sent Waller to his death. It was that tiny group of "whites" who live off the exploitation of the millions, black and white alike. They executed Waller, the way others of them executed Sacco and Vanzetti, who were white.

There are white sharecroppers and there are Negro sharecroppers, and the one is little better off than the other. There are white workers and Negro workers, and the one is fundamentally little better off than the other. The boss system which thrives on the double exploitation of the Negro worker, which seeks to divide him from his *only* ally — the white worker — is the enemy of that white worker as much as of the Negro worker.

The Waller case will end only when that boss system is replaced by a workers' system. By a workers' government, organized by Negro and white workers. By a workers' socialist government under which all men will truly be free and equal! ■

● From *Labor Action*, New York 13 July 1942



The "IS-SWP tradition" 2

The experience of the left

THE SWP is, despite everything, the biggest self-styled revolutionary Marxist organisation in Britain today. More than that: there are a lot of ex-members of the SWP (called IS before 1977) around.

It is now what the Healy organisation was in the late 50s and through the 60s — "a machine for maiming militants."

Politically, it has assumed the traditional role of anarchism. It is a movement of incoherent militant protest living politically from moment to moment, with no strategy and not much in the way of stable politics. It has one goal only — to "build the party": the party conceived as a fetish outside of politics and history, cut off from the real working class and its movement.

As an organisation it is a rigidly authoritarian variant of the Stalinist model of a party. It is organised around a pope, Tony Cliff, who has the power to loose, bind and eject. In terms of the

organisation of its intellectual life it is pre-bourgeois, in fact medieval.

Like the Healy organisation before it, the SWP leaves most of its ex-members politically bewildered and disoriented.

To help traumatised ex-members of the IS-SWP get their political bearings and to establish before younger readers its real history, we publish the symposium that follows. There will be other contributions in subsequent issues. We invite contributions. The discussion is completely free. Should representatives of the SWP wish to participate, they will be welcome.

Some of those who participate in this symposium have moved a long way from the politics they had in the IS/SWP, and from the politics of *Workers' Liberty* now. Nonetheless, at the end of this discussion we — and the thinking left in general — will be better equipped to formulate the lessons of the IS-SWP experience.

activity was derived from Cliff's intuition on how best he could add to the membership. As Kidron said at one time: "Cliff is a peasant, a very talented peasant, but a peasant." The internal regime was extremely tolerant. The only person I recall we expelled was Sid Bidwell and that was for advocating street quotas for Asian immigrants in Southall. Part of this liberal spirit I think was a reaction to the draconian regime that Healy had run and also because a liberal face to the group made it most attractive to the Labour Party, CND, and Labour Party Young Socialist people who were the focus of recruitment.

Of course, in many ways a lax attitude to organisation and discipline is ideal for someone like Cliff, who can do more or less what he fancies. Certainly there was a fair amount of that going on, and it was a powerful reason why some of us supported the move to democratic centralism in the late 1960s, so that, we thought, we could submit Cliff to some collective responsibility.

There is some kind of notion that the organisation was consciously Luxemburgist in its libertarian phase. This seems to be a confusion. Luxemburg and Jogiches were not libertarian in party matters and the prevailing view in the SRG was that in the Luxemburg-Lenin disputes, Lenin had the better of the arguments. I recall writing a review of Netti's book on Luxemburg, which came to just those conclusions and I am sure that this would have been discussed with Cliff.

State capitalism was the theory that was the most consistent part of IS theory. Like all those theories — workers' state and bureaucratic collectivism — its main use is to argue against the others and it is best left to internal bulletin hobbyists. It did play a role, however, and for those who reasonably felt that Stalinism was an abomination, state capitalism was an attractive theory. Regardless of the theory's overall validity, it certainly enshrined the workers, their condition and their relationship to others in society, as the centre of any serious Marxist analysis. This factor, together with a similar emphasis in Luxemburg, was important in setting a long-term agenda dedicated to recruiting workers into the group as a prelude to forming the party. This, I think, is what people talk about when they refer to the IS tradition. The attitude differed from the orthodox Fourth Internationalists, who whatever they said, saw the FI as the Party, small but impeccably formed, that just needed to get bigger through fusion, entrisism and campaigning. In this sense, the IS group was in transition but it was not centrist (that is, oscillating between reform and revolution) as Workers' Fight charged.

Work in the Labour Party Young Socialists and among students brought recruits who formed the basis for an organisation

The end of the "Rank and File"

By Jim Higgins*

SOME TIME in 1959 I attended an aggregate meeting of the Socialist Review Group (SRG). The atmosphere was relaxed and easy-going and Cliff, if excitable, appeared modest and had a sense of humour. I recall



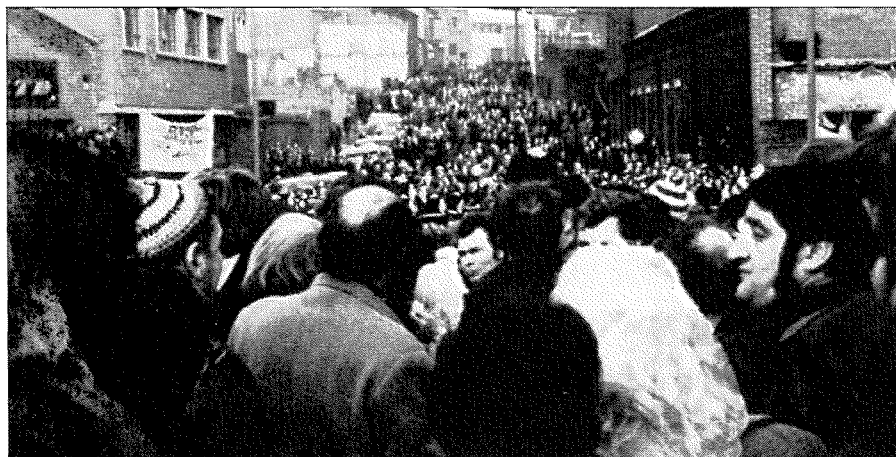
Red Rosa: the IS were not really "Luxemburgists"

that his main exhortation at the time was: "The comrades have got to start pulling their socks." I liked this and the atmosphere, so I joined. I was a member for the next sixteen years and the National Secretary from 1971 to 1973. In 1975 I was expelled. By this time modesty was at a premium and the only humour of the gallows variety.

In 1959 the membership was measured in tens, certainly less than 100. There were a very few industrial workers. Most notable was Geoff Carlsson, ex Revolutionary Communist Party and a convenor at an engineering works, ENV. Another was Karl Dunbar. I suppose I was part of the leadership of the group for most of my membership. In the beginning this was because with so few people to do anything, anyone who turned up and showed willing could take on any task he looked halfway able to perform.

The IS's politics were essentially Cliff's version of state capitalism and Kidron's "permanent arms economy." Day-to-day

*Jim Higgins was National Secretary of the IS (SWP) in 1971-3



Saltley Gates 1974. The SWP betrayed the industrial militants it recruited in the 1970s.

that could contemplate modest attempts to approach workers on strike and in various union disputes. At the same time we began to develop our ideas about the experience of the Minority Movement in the 1920s. The idea of the rank and file movement as the bridge to the party was an attractive one. At this time there were 250,000 engineering shop stewards and many thousands more lay trade union bodies. There is no space to detail all the reasons why the development of the Rank and File Movement was considered appropriate, suffice it to say that there was a general agreement at all levels in the International Socialists, not least in the mind of Tony Cliff, that this was the perspective.

Despite this agreement on a course that must inevitably involve a long haul, Cliff could not always suppress his "peasant" instinct. One such was the unity campaign of 1968. The hope was to acquire the Revolutionary Socialist League [forerunner of the Militant] or the International Marxist Group, or at least a large lump of their cadre, and in the event we got Workers' Fight. The mechanics of this "fusion" was that Cliff met Sean Matgamna in a back room somewhere and the job was done. Nobody in IS, not the EC nor the National Committee, knew anything about it until we woke one day to find we had acquired a fully fledged tendency, all geared up for an extended faction fight. Sean must have thought it was Christmas. Three years later an augmented WF was defused to seek fresh fields to conquer. If there had been a proper pre-fusion discussion, it probably would not have happened and certainly there would have been a running-in period significantly shorter than three years. Certainly, part of the subsequently illiberal regime in IS was due to the desire not to suffer another long and debilitating faction fight.

The early 1970s were years of increasing militancy. My personal view was that this new wave was of particular importance. For the first time since the war there seemed to be the chance that militancy might go beyond trade demands. It was a period when we might be able to build something significant, along the lines of our rank and file perspective. Cliff agreed

that there was something new taking place.

We resolved to prepare for a conference to set up a rank and file movement in November 1973. It is worth saying that at this time IS had some 3,000 members, nearly half of them manual workers. The group produced a number of rank and file papers, with a combined circulation of 30,000. There were operational Rank and File Groups in the teachers, miners, engineering, post office unions and in the T&GWU, ASTMS and TASS and others I cannot recall off-hand. Modest though these achievements were they were better than anything we had before. Not only that, there was the responsibility that, if Rank and File organisation was not developed, then the Communist Party would play its traditional role of delivering the rank and file into the hands of the trade union leadership.

*"The shop stewards
and trade unionists
whom we had for
years sought to
influence and recruit
were rejected in
favour of the young
and traditionless."*

IS then had:

- A working-class base.
- A framework of rank and file activity.
- A number of Rank and File publications.
- A duty to supplant the CP.
- A rising tide of working-class militancy.

That was the plus side of the equation. On the other side we had Cliff.

Cliff was convinced by two northern organisers that they could not get anyone to the proposed Rank and File Conference. These were Roger Rosewell (at the time a particular favourite of Cliff: when last heard of this loathsome creature was adviser to Lady Porter) and John Charlton (there is nothing interesting to say about

him, absolutely nothing). But they did think they could get coachloads of the young and enthusiastic to a rally.

At the next meeting of the IS Executive Committee, Cliff proposed replacing the conference with a rally. After the vote Cliff and one of his satraps, I think Harman, were in a minority of two. Cliff immediately demanded three months' leave of absence so that he could go off to Nigel Harris's cottage to finish volume one of his book on Lenin. Duncan Hallas, who was deputy National Secretary, and I knew what this meant. Cliff would spend three months organising a counter coup and in the course of it run up such a phone bill as to ruin Nigel Harris. We proposed to the National Committee that we should hold the rally and the Rank and File Conference. We would prove the validity of the differing views in life.

Both the rally and the Conference were a success in terms of attendance, but in the long term neither worked. Cliff was now seized with the notion that mature shop stewards and lay trade union officials were bent, rotted by years of reformism. Those people we had for years sought to influence and recruit were rejected in favour of the young and traditionless. Free from all taint of reformism they would take on the shop stewardships and the role of the leadership. For them we needed rallies and excitement and stunts. Recruitment became the be-all and end-all of activity. More organisers were appointed and league tables published showing who made the most members each month. Funnily enough, a more significant table would have been, how many remained members at the end of the following month, because the answer was not many.

This cult of the young worker obviously required further changes. A day-to-day leadership of mature adults, with experience in the movement and in the trade unions, were not suitable for this new field of endeavour. The EC was recast. Such elements as Duncan Hallas, Nigel Harris, and Roger Protz etc. were removed to be replaced with ace recruiters from the provinces. Roger Kline, Roger Rosewell, John Charlton were among those who turned up occasionally to fulfil this new activist leadership role. Cliff, as the man who thought up this idiocy, was a fixture.

I remained for a while as National Secretary, until I became tired of meetings starting half an hour late so that Cliff and his young leaders could caucus and make all the decisions that were then presented to me at the formal session. Such childish destructive behaviour was absurd and I resigned, taking up a job on *Socialist Worker*.

Together with Duncan Hallas, Roger Protz (editor of *Socialist Worker*), Granville Williams, John Palmer and others we formed an IS Opposition. From the point of view of continuing employment this was an error, but not one I regret. Not too much time passed before Cliff and Harman had sufficiently wound up two of the journalists on *Socialist Worker*, Paul Foot and Laurie Flynn, neither of whom were noted for ♦

intestinal fortitude or political independence, to press for the sacking of myself and Roger Protz. As the EC had initiated the move, they did not waste too much time in debate before acceding to this request.

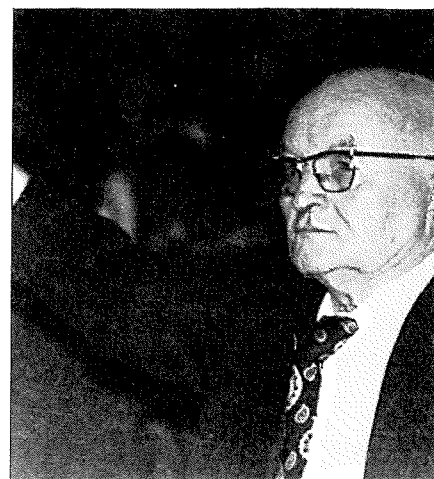
The opposition debated the questions with Cliff at a number of regional aggregates and were hopeful of getting a substantial number of delegacies to the conference. These hopes came to nothing when the constitution was illegally changed making it impossible for us to achieve any more than a handful of delegacies.

As part of the same ultra-leftism, a group of some 20 AUEW members were expelled in Birmingham. Their crime was twofold: support for the IS Opposition platform and disagreement with the running of an IS candidate in an AUEW election (I think for President). As experienced trade unionists of some service and standing they had worked in the broad left and the question of the candidate to support had been agreed long before IS thought to run its own man. Finding themselves unable to renege on

commitments freely made, they were all expelled. The whole episode provides an object lesson that Cliff's famously intuitive nose and some energetic young organisers, are really no substitute for knowledge of the working-class movement. But then as Stan Newens wrote in the last issue of *Workers' Liberty*, "Cliff never really understood the British labour movement." Actually I would go further than Stan, I do not think he understands the workers anywhere, he has met hardly any. His oft repeated dedication to the working class is in practice making much of those who happened to agree with him at any given time and then dropping them with a sickening thud as soon as they disagree.

The IS Opposition was expelled and all in all some 250 people left with them.

The years since then do not seem to have changed the nature of the group, except that it is now allegedly a party and it is somewhat further from success than it was 20 years ago. Do I blame Cliff for most of this? Well actually I do. ☐



Gerry Healy. Cliff's recruits in the '50s and '60s thought that his group was the antithesis of Healy's thuggishness and toy-town Bolshevism.

me up before a meeting of the national committee for taking his daughter to a football match. Arguing that no one who was 'a serious socialist' could even think about going to football matches, he was ridiculed by other members of the 'leadership'. And the younger socialists in the Group were, in fact, very proud that Cliff could not boss us about as Gerry Healy bossed and bullied his members. Moreover, on perhaps the only occasion when I won the vote against Cliff and Kidron, the so-called 'ultra-left tendency' to which I belonged persuaded the Group to participate in the first Aldermaston march against the Bomb.

I was already quite well-known in the Labour Party and Labour League of Youth (LLOY) in Scotland, anyway, and worked in the LLOY and in the NCLC without any sense of being an 'outsider', though I was one of the few non-Jews among the London membership of the Socialist Review group. The Holocaust still figured very largely in our discussions; and in those years Cliff and Kidron were anti-Leninist and very critical of the whole Bolshevik heritage.

Differentiating himself from Gerry Healy, Isaac Deutscher, Bolshevism, 'state socialism', and 'orthodox Trotskyism', Cliff surprised me in those years by being very sympathetic towards University education. Although Cliff and Kidron took their state capitalist analysis of Russia and Eastern Europe very seriously, most of the members including myself found Shachtman's concept of bureaucratic collectivism a more convincing explanation of what had gone wrong with the Russian revolution of 1917. What kept the Group together and allowed the young members to recruit new members was the emphasis on libertarian Marxism in the concrete shape of workers' control, workers' democracy and the egalitarianism seen in Paris Commune of 1871 and in the early stages of the Russian revolution.

Cliff, Kidron and the small group of relatives around him in the leadership made it clear again and again that they simply wanted to keep the Group together. Keep-

Socialist Review and libertarian Marxism

James D Young*

WHEN I WAS a twenty-four year old student at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1955, I met and formed a friendship with Michael Kidron, the editor of *Socialist Review*. As a student who opted to specialise in British working-class history, I had eight years of socialist activity as an unskilled industrial worker behind me. Indeed, I was elected as the secretary of the Trades and Labour Council in my home town of Grangemouth when I was an inexperienced nineteen year old youngster. Although I came into the labour movement as 'a man of independent mind' my parents and grandfather had identified with the Independent Labour Party and later on the Labour Party. To understand why I was always critically supportive of the Trotskyist tradition from 1955 onwards, I never felt myself to be an 'outsider'. 'Entry work' and 'entrism' always seemed to be an expression of a mentality utterly alien to me.

During my penultimate term at Ruskin in the spring of 1955, when I was chairing a public meeting of the Oxford University branch of the Communist Party of Great Britain, John Gollan, assistant editor of the *Daily Worker*, denounced Kidron as a 'Trotskyist.' I simply had not heard of Leon Trotsky or 'Trotskyism' at that time; but when I defended Kidron's right to free speech inside the labour movement, he

must have known that I was a potential recruit. (Incidentally, the only book by Trotsky in the Ruskin library was his *History of the Russian Revolution*; and it made a big impact on my thinking). Meanwhile Kidron told me about Tony Cliff and gave me a copy of Cliff's book *Stalinist Russia: A State Capitalist Analysis*. Having read Leon Trotsky's *Revolution Betrayed* by then, Kidron never removed all of my doubts about Cliff's analysis of the class nature of modern Russia. But I joined the Socialist Review group towards the end of 1955, and I began to write for the paper before settling in London for a few years. I returned to Scotland in the autumn of 1962.

Until my last two years in London, when I worked as the publishing manager of the *New Statesman*, I was employed by the Oxford University Press. Already a part-time lecturer for the National Council of Labour Colleges, I soon met and formed close friendships with Seymour and Donna Pappert, David Prynn and other members of the Young Socialist section of the Socialist Review group. What struck me about Trotskyism and the Trotskyist groups in Britain at that time was their utter cultural alienation from everything 'British' or Scottish or Irish.

Contemplating those years now, it strikes me as odd that on the one occasion when I raised the question of us doing more systematic work within the NCLC, Cliff said that those of us who thought we had time to work for the NCLC could do so as individuals. At the same time, Cliff tried to pull

*James D Young was a member of the Socialist Review Group in the 1950s, and is a writer active in Scottish socialist politics.

ing the Group together seemed to be more important than doctrinal questions including state capitalism, though Cliff and Kidron in the revulsion against 'Leninist excesses' in crushing Parliamentary institutions and trade union democracy in Russia in the very early 1920s and the Holocaust, seemed to have an emotional need for a Biblical Ark. At the same time, they fostered the idea of socialism through Parliamentary politics and contact with Labour MPs.

At a time when Ygaël Gluckstein/Cliff had produced *Mao's China* and *Stalin's Satellites in Eastern Europe* and right wing Social Democracy in Europe was in the ascendancy, Cliff in particular was very pessimistic about 'the future of socialism.' Even the attempt to resurrect Rosa Luxemburg as a figure of anti-state socialism was an expression of despair, not optimism. The survival of the group for the day when the revolution would surely come in 'the next or the next again century' was very important. It was an expression of the cultural traditions that Cliff and Kidron had inherited elsewhere.

Already repelled by Stalinist immoralism, I saw the same anti-socialist-humanist phenomena in the Socialist Review group. Distorting Kant's view of the 'crooked timber' of existing humanity by conceiving of working people as history's instruments or the 'imperfect human material' to be manipulated, used and, if need be, discarded by the 'superior' vanguard Party, members of the Group were also seen in this light. Although I was already half-aware of this at the time, I and others persevered because we had a much more optimistic perspective.

In defence of the Socialist Review group in those years, I was given space to express my own views. Against the orthodoxy of the time, I wrote about such Scottish socialist novelists as James Barke, Grassie Gibbon as well as the Scottish national question from a Marxist standpoint. Moreover, although Seymour and Donna Papert, David Prynn, myself and others were hostile to the

then potential Parliamentarians in our ranks with their thinly disguised racist views, we studied hard, sought inspiration in the writings of the young Marx etc., etc.

Again we worked with men and women in Gerry Healy's group and when the Socialist Labour League (SLL) was formed we worked with their younger members who remained in the Labour League of Youth. Contributing to the *Labour Review* under the fine editorship of the admirable Peter Fryer before and after the SLL was formed, we had all been inspired by the workers' councils thrown up by the Hungarian revolution. Seymour was our link with Cornelius Castoriadis's *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group in Paris and we spent considerable time in correspondence and sharing ideas with members of that group. Bessie Dunayevskaya visited me in London and I wrote one of the first British reviews of Raya's *Marxism and Freedom*.

It was a heady time; but we learned the hard way that democratic, class-struggle socialism must be a do-it-yourself movement, anyway. What strikes me as so depressing about almost all the 'Marxist' groups in 1995 is that they are stuck in various emotional and time warps. They seem to be incapable of asking such simple and important questions as: "where did Marxism come from?" Of course, everyone who allows the 'superior' vanguard group/Party to do his/her thinking for them will predictably respond, according to Kautsky/Lenin, by saying 'out of the heads of the bourgeois intellectuals.'

But until young people entering the gigantic class struggles of the next century are made familiar with Antonio Labriola's observation that Marxism itself was 'born in the soul of the oppressed' socialism will not escape from the trap of a delayed totalitarian-1984-ism. As I have battled during the last five years against cancer and heart disease to complete my history of *Socialist Martyrs*, I have become increasingly grateful to some of the 'cultural capital' that I acquired during those fruitful years in the

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Socialist Review group. I am also grateful that I had come out of a tradition of Scottish radicalism that is much older — and more disaffected and *carpathic* — than the Marxism I still regard as potentially liberating. And in contrast to Eric J Hobsbawm, who depicts 'the short twentieth century' between 1914 and 1991 as an "age of extremes" I think it has been an age of One-Sided Class Warfare against the Poor.

In helping to keep the idea of resistance to injustice and inequality alive during the second half of the decade of the 1950s, those of us on the Left of the Socialist Review group made a modest contribution to socialist ideas. They remain relevant in 1995 and I for one still subscribe to the noble idea express by Bernard Rosenberg in his article 'Marxism: Criticism and/or Action':

"The weapon of criticism is undoubtedly inadequate. Who on that account would choose to surrender it?" ☐

A rebellion of trade unionists

By Mike McGrath*

I JOINED THE International Socialists in 1966 and left the SWP in 1982.

In 1966 there were about 300 of us in a very lively, activist organisation.

I had been an anarchist before 66 and I saw IS distinguishing itself from the Communist Party and that tradition in the USSR. I also liked its orientation to the trade union rank and file.

By 1966 they had already had some discussion about involvement in the Labour Party's youth section. And earlier in the 1960s they had been more involved.

I suppose IS just drifted out, in that well known empirical way. Certainly no one

ever said to me: "you really should join the Labour Party".

In 1966 IS was not a highly centralised group. It was federalist. Nevertheless, that is not to say there was not a group of people running the organisation — perhaps in a more covert, rather than overt, way. Perhaps they even had more power over the organisation than under a clear, democratic-centralist structure.

Although the organisation was not particularly democratic, before the major factional fighting of the early 1970s there was not actually much conflict, and the actual nature of the regime was not exposed. Without conflict the issue is not actually very prominent and the matter is

submerged beneath how to build, how to extend our influence.

Steve Jeffries and myself were involved in the "Micro Faction" of the late '60s, which raised the centralised-decentralised organisation issue. But this was a small matter and the issue only blew up properly in the 1970s.

It is true that the Trotskyist Tendency was expelled in late 1971, but that group was regarded as very much a group of outsiders. I voted to get rid of this Tendency as a group which was "not reformable". The older, consensual group united

*Mike McGrath was an active IS-SWP trade unionist in the 1970s, and secretary of the "Faction for Revolutionary Democracy".

against what was perceived as an outside threat. With hindsight the consensual group was, itself, developing tensions.

The original faction which opposed the leadership's proposals on democratic centralism in the early '70s was a very significant opposition, Jim Higgins, Granville Williams, Roger Protz and a large number of second ranking cadres — like me (at the time I was branch secretary of the large Stoke Newington branch).

There was a fundamental dispute and as a result of our defeat a number of people were expelled for persisting in what was called "overt factionalising". A lot of others just left IS.

At the next conference there was a re-run of the previous year's argument. We set up FRED, the Faction for Revolutionary Democracy, with 130 or 140 signatories. Mainly, by this time, those involved were second ranking people — myself, Mike Heym and Ross Pritchard. We were not so much opposed to the leadership itself, just the way the organisation was restructuring. Some of the issues were detail — the size of the National Committee, the power of the Central Committee, the introduction of election from District Committees as distinct from branches — and the fundamental question had already been fought out, and decided, in the previous year.

We had quite a bit of backing, but only got two delegates to conference.

We got absolutely obliterated — completely wiped out. By this time most of the key oppositionists had left IS — one way or another.

In retrospect it was just a last gasp.

Much of the opposition came from people like me who were active in the unions, building up rank and file organisations. In that year I instigated a paper called *Redder Tape* in the civil service.

There was a certain "syndicalist" element running through our opposition. We were bound up in rank and file groups in the unions and, day-to-day, we fought the Stalinists and the bureaucrats and we did not like the new democratic centralism in our organisation, IS. I was working so hard in the union it was difficult to compete with a full-time leadership who had time on their

Some key dates

1944-9: Almost all British Trotskyists are united in one group, the RCP.

Among its main leaders is Ted Grant. Gerry Healy leads a minority who favour working in the Labour Party. Tony Cliff argues that the USSR is "state capitalist" (the others believe it is a "degenerated workers' state").

1949: The RCP, isolated and dwindling, disbands. Grant and Cliff join the Labour Party and have to submit to Healy's leadership. Healy soon expels them.

1950: Cliff and his co-thinkers — expelled by Healy for failing to side with North Korea in the Korean war — form the Socialist Review Group.

This group is at first "orthodox Trotskyist" except in its "state-capitalist" analysis of the USSR, but over time it becomes opposed to Leninist organisation and develops other distinctive views (e.g. that Trotskyist "transitional demands" are irrelevant, and that imperialism is ended).

Early 1960s: The Socialist Review Group (which now renames itself International Socialism) revives (after decline to about 20 members in the late 1950s) through work in Labour's youth movement and the nuclear disarmament campaign.

Healy's group (now called SLL) is still, however, much stronger.

Late 1960s: As thousands of students and

youth are radicalised, the SLL spirals off into ultra-sectarian madness.

IS grows rapidly (to nearly 1,000 in 1968, maybe 2,000 in 1971-2, and 4,000 by 1974). It drifts out of the Labour Party; its paper, *Labour Worker*, is renamed *Socialist Worker* in 1968.

1968: Cliff pushes through a "return to Leninism" and centralised organisation.

1971: IS expels the *Workers' Fight* tendency with which it had fused in 1968 (a forerunner of the AWL), and tightens up its previously liberal regime.

1973: Another minority expelled: the "Right Opposition", which will develop into today's RCP and RCG.

1975: IS in crisis because its expectations of mass growth if it "steers to the left" in response to the Labour government fall flat.

Two more minorities expelled: the "Left Faction" (which joins with *Workers' Fight*; part of it then splits off again to form *Workers' Power*), and the "IS Opposition" (which includes a large part of IS's old leadership; it soon disintegrates, but some of its leaders are active today around *Red Pepper*).

1977: IS renames itself the "Socialist Workers Party." Around this time, too, it develops the thesis of the "downturn" in class struggle which serves to rationalise its sectarian tactics.

hands. The fact they had more time than us was actually a major source of their power.

IS then moved on to gimmick-style politics in the mid-70s with the Right To Work Campaign. This was very much forced upon us. It was the sort of front politics that we spent our lives in the unions confronting.

For an oppositionist I was still comparatively influential. A few of us had bases in the unions and they did not really want to kick us out. I suppose if we had been very awkward they would have got rid of us. But we were no longer an organised threat, so they had us on board and threw us a few crumbs. We ran Central London District at the time.

Later I was the only person on the National Council to oppose declaring the

Socialist Workers Party. I appeared to be the only person on that body who could see what was going to happen. They actually developed the delusion that the SWP was a Party in the European Marxist — Leninist — sense. They came to believe that the party was genuinely representative of the advanced workers. It manifestly was not! The "Party" tried to substitute itself for the class.

One of the political consequences of that delusion was an ossifying of the organisation, internally.

I was going to say that the declaration of the SWP was an important decision — but perhaps it was not so important. After all the basic decision had already been made earlier in the '70s. Declaring the SWP just took the process further and was one of the false political consequences of the previous fight.

In the early '80s the rank-and-file union organisations and *Redder Tape* were shut down. And so was *Women's Voice*. They went through a lunatic period where they said that to be a shop steward was to be corrupt.

But by this time there was no internal dissension of significance, just isolated individuals. Why did I stay until 1982? If you want to be political there is not a lot of choice. I have never been an Orthodox Trotskyist, buying the *Transitional Programme* and the workers' states theory. The Communist Party is out of the question. I would only join the Labour Party if there was a serious entryist movement.

Then there is the wilderness, so I stayed as long as I could. ☐

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Canon to the right?



Shelley: yes, his verse is "greater" than the latest commercial lyrics

By Jim Denham

TEN OR twenty years ago a book of learned essays on 26 indisputably great authors by a Yale professor would hardly have been considered "controversial" — let alone have earned its author a reported \$600,000 advance from the publishers. But Harold Bloom is clearly spoiling for a fight and his publishers (Harcourt Brace) must be well pleased with the jolly little row that *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* has so far stirred up.

Unlike precious literary punch-ups (those great Leavis v. Snow bouts, for example) this one isn't about the interpretation to be put on great authors, or even who is and who isn't "great." It's about whether or not such a concept as "greatness" exists at all in literature. And Bloom's chosen opponent isn't another individual critic or academic: it is a whole current he perceives

as running through American (and, to a lesser extent, European) academe, "The School of Resentment" made up of feminists, Afrocentrists and Marxists ("a rabblement of lemmings") who have, he claims, taken over literary study and are bent on destroying the entire Western canon.

But first, what is this canon? The word comes from the Greek, *kanon*, meaning a straight measuring rod. It came to have religious connotations, denoting the sacred texts.

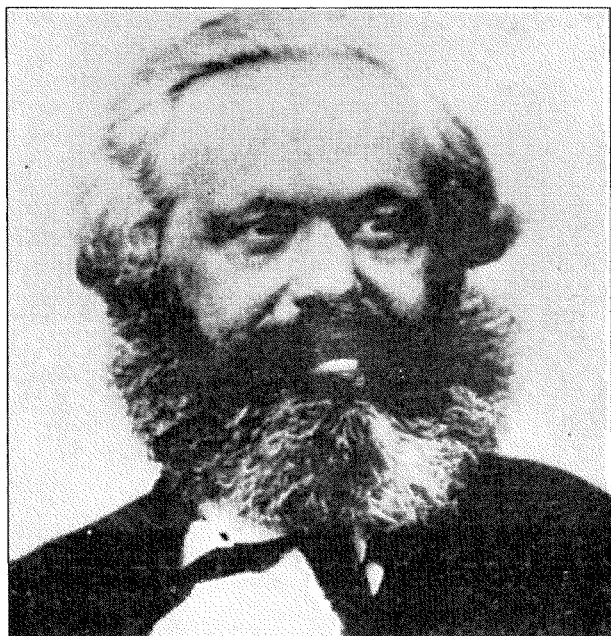
For literary study and criticism the implication is clear: there is an accumulated body of work whose status as "classic" or "great" should be acknowledged by all right-thinking folk. The squabbles of the old days were about precisely which writers deserved to be in the canon. According to Bloom, the battle is now to save the very concept of a canon and, indeed, the idea that literature is of importance in and of itself: "Precisely why students of literature have become amateur political scientists, uninformed sociologists, incompetent anthropologists, mediocre philosophers and over-determined cultural historians, while a puzzling matter, is not beyond all conjecture", wails Bloom. In other words, the barbarians are at the gate. Bloom has staked out his own ground, much to the delight of most of the right-wing intelligentsia. He is unashamedly elitist and Eurocentric (although his *Desert Island* books list — the weakest and least necessary section of *The Western Canon* — contains some token Hispanics

and, more surprisingly, Jeanette Winter-son). This is, in fact, the continuation by other means of the Politically Correct set-piece row. But it seems to me that Bloom is wrong to include Marxists in his "School of Resentment" rogues' gallery of canon-busters. For a start, old Karl himself is, apparently, now fashionably denounced as a DWEM (Dead White European Male).

All the evidence is that Marx would have been on the side of "the canon", against the PC relativists. Bloom's real polemic is (or should be) against the structuralists, deconstructionists and "post-Marxists" like Lacan, Foucault, Paul de Man and their babbling followers. When he leaves off posturing, Bloom even shows some signs of slight sympathy with Marxism: "All my passionate proclamations of the isolate selfhood's aesthetic value are necessarily qualified by the reminder that the leisure for meditation must be purchased from the community."

Nevertheless, Bloom is an elitist and a self-contradictory one at that. If it is true that true literary appreciation has always been the prerogative of a gifted few and that "you cannot teach someone to love great poetry, if they come to you without such love", then what does it matter if literature departments are to be "renamed departments of 'Cultural Studies' where *Batman* comics, Mormon theme parks, television movies and rock will replace Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Wallace Stevens"?

Socialists should defend the idea that some books are innately superior to others and that there is such a thing as a canon. We should champion an education system that makes great literature available and accessible to all. We should reject PC nonsense and its attendant relativism, but we don't need Professor Bloom's over-hyped ramblings to do that. More useful is Ralph Ellison's observation that "Human anguish is human anguish, love, love; the difference between Shakespeare and lesser artists is eloquence." ■



Marx: a Dead White European Male?

The Orange strike which defeated Britain

By Thomas Carolan

BRITAIN ABOLISHED Home Rule in Northern Ireland in March 1972, after 50 years during which the Six Counties had been governed from Stormont Castle outside Belfast. For the 23 years since then Northern Ireland has been under British direct rule. Through all its 50 years "Stormont" had been a Tory-Unionist government of one-party Protestant rule and an organiser of sectarian discrimination against Catholics. Catholics were never less than one third of the population of the Six Counties: they are 45% now.

The destruction of "Protestant home rule" was worked by the Provisional IRA, whose shooting and bombing campaign was almost exactly a year old when "Stormont" fell. Stormont's abolition — that is, the abolition of Protestant majority rule — was the single major achievement of the Provisional IRA's 23 year war. A quick and deceptive success. Yet, if it was the Catholic Provos who brought down the old Stormont, it was the Protestant majority who stopped London setting up a new, non-sectarian Belfast government of its choice to replace it. Their weapon was a 14-day general strike.

Despite its peculiar features, the Northern Ireland general strike of May 1974 was perhaps the most, certainly one of the most, successful general strikes in history. It shaped everything that came after it for 20 years, up to the ceasefire of 1994. How did

that happen?

In 1972 Britain had no intention of assuming indefinite direct rule. The Heath government wanted to replace the old "Protestant" Stormont with a government in which Protestant-Catholic powersharing would be normal, and constitutionally guaranteed. So, after abolishing Stormont, the Tories set out, and with some vigour, to remould and reshape Northern Ireland's political institutions.

In March 1973 they held a referendum. Predictably, a Northern Ireland majority opted to stay in the UK. In June, elections were held on a basis of proportional representation for a 78 seat Six County Assembly: under the terms of the 1973 Constitutional Act, it would be allowed to form a government only if enough of its members could agree on Catholic-Protestant powersharing. Control of "security" would remain with London.

At Sunningdale in November 1973 an extensive agreement was reached between Protestant politicians led by Brian Faulkner, Stormont's last Prime Minister, and the constitutional nationalists of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), representing about two-thirds of the Catholics. Both "London" and "Dublin", whose representatives had taken part in the Sunningdale negotiations, guaranteed the agreement. A new powersharing government at Stormont would be set up; so, after a few months, would a cross-border Council of Ireland. This would have an "Advisory Assembly" and a 14 member council of ministers; but the ministers could act only by unanimous decision. A "Council of Ireland" had been part of the British-Irish Agreement of 1921, under which 26 of Ire-

land's 32 counties achieved effective independence. It never came into existence. In 1973 it was intended as a concession to Six Counties Catholic aspirations for a united Ireland. Thus, the politicians' thoughts, would the conditions and the memories that bred and sustained the Provos be eliminated, while the legitimate concerns of the Protestant majority were protected. Peace would be restored.

The problem was that most Protestants — sections of the Protestant middle class were the exception — did not want any of it. They wanted "majority rule", that is the Protestant rule Britain no longer felt it could allow to them, the majority population whose rights the sub-state had been set up to guarantee.

Democratic logic lay with the Protestant and Unionist demand for "majority self-rule", but for London to concede it was simultaneously to concede the Protestants' right to rule over the big Catholic and nationalist minority, some of whom had been driven to take up arms against such rule and against the partition of Ireland which enshrined it. In the Six County entity, "democratic logic" was also sectarian logic.

In this way the fundamental contradiction of the "Protestant" state was exposed like jutting rock from which the soil has been stripped away: because of the size of the anti-Unionist minority — and they were the majority in about half of the Six County territory — a state based on the Six Counties could only be a sectarian cockpit. That was the lesson of 50 years of Northern Ireland Home Rule, but London refused to face it. Instead, London — with the agreement of Dublin's then Fine Gael/Labour coalition government — tried to graft on to the Six County state institutions from an altogether different sort of society: amicable powersharing, where there was savage, underlying, communal/national conflict; and a Council of Ireland where there was convulsive fear in the Unionist majority that Britain was beginning to force them into an all-Ireland state under Catholic majority rule.

Still, by January 1974, they had managed to get powersharing in place. How? By combining pieces of the old Unionist Party, which had fragmented under British pressure and Catholic revolt, with the main Catholic organisation, the Social Democratic and Labour Party. Ulster Unionism, which had from the '20s been one great monolithic party, had begun to break up in the early '70s. Large sections of the working class had broken loose from allegiance to the bourgeois and pseudo-aristocratic old Unionist Party leaders — but only to go

"14 May Days" By Don Anderson (Gill & Macmillan, £7.99).





The strike co-ordinating committee: Bob Pagels, Bill Hannigan, Lt Col. Edward Bush, Hugu Petrie, Ken Gibson.

to Ian Paisley, who combined "lower orders" populist demagoguery with shameless sectarianism and Unionist chauvinism. Middle-class, anti-sectarian Unionists had formed the Alliance Party. And the fragmentation was not over yet.

Led by Brian Faulkner, who had been Northern Ireland Prime Minister at the abolition of Stormont, it was an Official Unionist Party being shaken apart which contested the 1973 elections for a new Northern Ireland "Assembly".

Faulkner had introduced internment without trial for Catholics in August 1971. But he was a pragmatic professional politician who tried to make the best of the hand dealt him by London. Where, during the 1973 elections, did the Faulkner-led Official Unionists stand on "powersharing"? They seemed to be against it. Some, like Faulkner, used ambivalent forms of words to falsely present themselves as opponents of powersharing. They won 32 seats. Then, once elected, Brian Faulkner negotiated an agreement at Sunningdale to share power with the SDLP (which had 19 seats), and the Alliance; he agreed to the setting up of a Council of Ireland. On 4 January 1974 a conference of Faulkner's Official Unionist Party voted 427 to 374 to reject the Sunningdale Agreement. The Unionist Party split, but Faulknerites numbered 20 out of 32 of the party's Stormont representatives. Together with their coalition partners, they commanded a majority in the Assembly.

The powersharing coalition government set up on 1 January 1974, whose main stable base was now the middle-class constitutional nationalist SDLP, remained in being. Two thirds of the Unionists in the Assembly were bitterly, loudly and sometimes violently in opposition. There was much shouting and abuse and fist fights broke out. The anti-Sunningdale majority of Faulkner's old party, the Official Unionist Party, joined with the Paisleyites and William Craig's Vanguard Unionists to form an opposition bloc, the United Ulster Unionist Council (UUUC).

The powersharing executive was a government that represented only a minority

of the Six County population. The Faulkner Unionists did not even represent those who had elected them. The powersharing executive was a minority government. Yet the Protestant majority was, in parliamentary terms, reduced to impotence; effectively they had been disenfranchised. Still, the powersharing executive was in place, for as long as the Stormont parliamentary majority held. British money would be forthcoming. Faulkner could hope over time to win back a sizeable Protestant base of support.

Now industrial action made a decisive appearance in Northern Ireland affairs — the British miners' strike brought down the Heath government. The miners struck and Prime Minister Heath appealed to the electorate against the miners in a snap general election. It proved disastrous for Heath, and for the Northern Ireland "settlement": the boxed-in, disenfranchised Protestants had an unexpected, unscheduled chance to register their opposition. In the 28 February election, anti-Sunningdale Unionists won 11 of the 12 Northern Ireland Westminster seats (Northern Ireland now has 17 seats at Westminster). The moral and political authority of the powersharing government had received an open crippling blow.

Though the two main parties were always uneasy partners, buffeted by pressure from their constituencies, they soldiered on — until the general strike gave the executive the *coup de grace*.

Industrial action for political purposes had been an intermittent feature of the Northern Ireland Catholic-Protestant conflict since 1971 when, in response to the first months of Provisional IRA bombing, shipyard workers led by shop steward Billy Hull — a one-time Northern Ireland Labour Party member — marched through Belfast demanding the introduction of internment. There had been strikes when Stormont was abolished in March 1972. An attempt at a one-day general strike was made in February 1973, ending in sectarian violence and fiasco — and exchanges of shots between Protestant paramilitaries and British troops.

Half a dozen people died. By 1974, the Loyalist Association of Workers (LAW), which had organised these industrial actions, did not have too much credit left. It was too closely linked to the Protestant paramilitary organisations. (The main one, the UDA, since outlawed, was then a legal organisation.)

At this point the "Ulster Workers' Council" (UWC) came into being and immediately began planning for a general strike to win a restoration of "democratic government" — that is, majority rule, with all it implied. The UWC's central organiser at the start was Harry Murray, a shipyard shop steward who had once had connections with the Northern Ireland Labour Party (NILP). Murray was determined to create a working-class Unionist centre of action independent of both Unionist politicians and — unlike LAW — of the Protestant paramilitaries.

He failed in that objective: without the Unionist paramilitaries there would have been no general strike. In fact, it seems, the UWC was always a very weak organisation. Its 21 member executive, which was supposed to bring representatives from the whole Six Counties together, existed only on paper. Yet within six months of coming into a flickering shadow of an existence, the "UWC", which was never other than a flimsy structure, had organised a general strike, brought down the Belfast powersharing executive and torn up the British government's strategy for the Six Counties. How did this happen?

Two things allowed it to happen: the extensive network of Protestant paramilitary organisations stepped in behind the UWC and kickstarted the strike in the first days; and, once it got going, the majority of Protestants realised that they had found the weapon they needed. The strike, which begun with much UDA coercion and bully-boy stuff then became a powerful, self-powered movement of the Ulster Protestants.

After a number of dates for strike were set and then cancelled — the earliest was 8 February 1974 — the real date, 14 May, was finally set at a meeting at UDA HQ on the Shankill Road. Despite Harry Murray's initial intentions, the UWC had become a facade for the paramilitaries. The Unionist politicians, however, kept out of it at the beginning, dismissive of the strike call.

The call for a political protest strike that finally went out on the evening of Tuesday 14 May was linked to a debate in the Assembly about the Constitution — that is about compulsory powersharing.

The following morning, 15 May, all the signs of failure greeted the "UWC." Most people went to work. Then Andy Tyrie, central leader of the UDA, called his "brigade staff" together and told them: "It's going to be up to us to do the dirty work again." Instructions were sent out that it was to be "non-violent" — overt violence had proved counter-productive in 1973 — but that was loosely interpreted. There was a lot of low-level street violence.

The UDA set to work setting up

road-blocks; it sent m]2

en in military fatigues armed with big clubs to persuade shopkeepers to close up.

A dinnertime mass meeting at Harland and Woolf's shipyard had a motion put that the workers there were opposed to "Sunningdale" and when, inevitably, it was passed, the workers were then told, "Right, you're out." Chief shop steward Sandy Scott was at that stage hostile to the whole enterprise: like many tens of thousands of others he would change his mind once the strike had taken hold. 1974 was in the middle of the three-year wave of sectarian killings in which hundreds of Catholics picked at random were butchered: the paramilitaries must have found it easy to inspire real terror even in many of "their own", easy to exert the massive intimidation that got the strike going.

Yet, even at the beginning, it was not only intimidation. The strength of the strike lay in the strong support it had amongst power workers right from the start. It meant that they could at will escalate the strike and, if they chose to, shut down pretty much everything in the Six Counties. Playing their strongest "card" subtly, they kept electricity production at around 60% of capacity.

There was nothing the British authorities could do about it. The British army believed that if they went into the power stations and attempted to run them, this would cause an all-out strike by power workers and the result would be to wipe out electricity production entirely: the army did not have men capable of doing the most skilled power station jobs. The support of the Protestant power workers gave the UWC a commanding position throughout the strike.

Further complications arose at a power station near Derry where half the workers were Catholic and would, naturally, have worked with the army to frustrate their striking Protestant colleagues: the Provisional IRA, men and women of principle, told them that they might face Provisional IRA retaliation if they worked side by side with the army!

After the first day most factories were shut.

At first the strike was run by an unwieldy 60-strong co-ordinating committee of UWC and paramilitary leaders — which met at the headquarters of the Unionist splinter group Vanguard — but then the number was reduced to 15. Over the two weeks of the strike this committee assumed many of the functions of a government: it regulated the production of electricity, decided what were and were not "essential services"; it issued — and refused — travel permits. By the end it effectively controlled commerce, transport, industry and farming. Glen Barr, the personable UDA man who fronted for the UWC as its Chair, talked publicly at one point — though not seriously it seems — of setting up a provisional government.

Massive intimidation had, as we have seen, got the strike going. It would not have got going without the paramilitaries. It might, even with the paramilitaries, have



Glen Barr and Ian Paisley celebrate victory

been nipped in the bud by resolute police and army action on the first day. But, once started, it took on a momentum of its own: the strike that finally tied up all of Northern Ireland, and allowed the UWC to act like the real government, did not depend on coercion to keep it going. The Protestant majority, outraged and embittered at their effective disenfranchisement, and gripped by fear for their future, had found and recognised their weapon — a way to make good what their vote on 28 February had been impotent to decree.

From the beginning, the power-sharing executive had been sidelined. Control of "security" rested solely with the British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Merlyn Rees. The executive led by Faulkner wanted to crack down hard on the paramilitaries but they had no power to do so. Rees hesitated, perhaps at first using the strike to put pressure on the executive to "implement" Sunningdale — that is, activate the Council of Ireland provision.

Yet the Council of Ireland — seen as a "first instalment" of a United Ireland — even more than powersharing, was what stirred up Unionists. The Faulknerites who had reluctantly conceded it in bargaining

with the SDLP now, under pressure of the strike, and trying to use the strike to put pressure on their SDLP partners, proposed to "reschedule" it — the full Council of Ireland should not come into operation for three or four years. They urged SDLP leaders Gerry Fitt, John Hume and Paddy Devlin to agree that it should be "phased in", provoking a crisis in the executive. The SDLP almost resigned in the middle of the strike and almost brought down the executive a week earlier than it fell. Under pressure, the SDLP agreed finally to "phasing in" the Council of Ireland.

Once the strike took hold, the executive hung in a void, without Protestant support and without the active backing of the British state. Their appeals to the British government to act against the strikers led to nothing. Why, is one of the continuing mysteries. The idea that the army brass refused to act, out of Unionist Protestant sympathy, has currency and belief. It may be so, but you don't need it to explain army inaction. A general strike is, after all, a potent thing. The army could not run industry; it could not, they discovered, even run the power stations. They were loathe to clash with the UDA and thus provoke a shooting war

on two fronts, with the Protestant paramilitaries as well as with the Provisional IRA.

Those left wingers who say that the army could at will, if not for conspiracies, have crushed the strike sound curiously like the right when it discusses working-class action of a more normal sort. It is to seek for echoes of the "Curragh Mutiny" of 1914 — when officers at the Curragh military base in Kildare announced that they would resign from the army rather than coerce Ulster should the Liberal government in London order them to. But the situations were radically different.

In 1914 the British ruling class was split down the middle on Ireland, and so, inevitably, was the officer corps of the army. The Tory Party led the revolt against the Liberal government. In 1974 the ruling class was united. None of them had much time for the Northern Ireland Unionists. It was a Tory government which had abolished Stormont and legislated for powersharing. Right-wing Tories in the secret service may indeed have been — and probably were — plotting. But you don't need such an explanation. After the first day, or two days, the army could not have crushed this movement without massive bloodshed. The fact that the army could not have smashed that strike, once it got going, without massive levels of brutality and coercion — on a fascist or Chilean Junta level, at worst — is sufficient explanation.

And what about the official Northern Ireland labour movement, which was, on the face of things, quite powerful? It denounced the strike and called on workers to return to work. On 21 May they attempted to organise a "back to work march." Len Murray, General Secretary of the British TUC, a university-educated career trade union bureaucrat, did the bravest deed of an inglorious trade union life by turning up to lead the march. Two hundred people joined him, the majority not workers at all. Flanked by Andy Barr, Chair of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, and Jimmy Graham, AUEW General Secretary in Northern Ireland, both of them Communist Party of Northern Ireland men, Len Murray and the brave 200 faced jeers and catcalls from the workers for whom they tried to substitute themselves, as if by sympathetic magic to conjure up a different Northern Ireland working-class movement.

That the Northern Ireland trade union movement was far from healthy was thus demonstrated to those who hadn't already known it. Unity of Catholic and Protestant existed in those trade unions, but it was a unity maintained by tacit agreement over many years to ignore the job discrimination, and the other discriminations, against Catholics which were a central fact of Northern Ireland's social and political life.

More than that, a number of Stalinists, like Barr, Graham and Betty Sinclair of the Belfast Trades Council, were prominent leaders of Northern Irish labour. They could ensure that "progressive" and even pro-nationalist resolutions were passed, and

they did. But they worked as bureaucrats manipulating the membership, not as serious socialists work, by trying to re-educate those needing it, confronting them when necessary on day to day issues. They settled for a facade, a sham, and it proved worthless. It was the same with the Communist Party in British industry: for example, the London dockers who in 1968 marched for Enoch Powell after he made a notorious racist speech, had CP leaders in day-to-day trade union affairs. In Northern Ireland the Stalinists played little games of bureaucratic manipulation, fooling themselves in the first place. On 21 May the truth came out, spitting. The official Northern Ireland labour movement counted for nothing.

Neither did the British government, unwilling or unable to use massive coercion. Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson went on TV to denounce the strikers as "spongers" — and the feeble abuse expressed his impotence. That is how it was taken on both sides in Northern Ireland. Next day, the Northern Ireland Protestants went around proudly wearing bits of sponge in their lapels!

*"In May 1974 the
Protestant men and
women of no property
erupted onto the stage
of Irish history."*

The end came with the collapse of the Executive on 28 May, 14 days into the strike. While the Unionists proposed to open talks with the strikers Secretary of State Merlyn Rees said he would not negotiate "under duress." The executive then resigned. The UWC was victorious. Northern Ireland went back to work the following day.

Without the paramilitaries it would not have happened. They, in the first place the UDA, acted like an armed political party. But that alone could not have created the strike — all they did or could do was channel the mass Protestant discontent into an activity: their ultimate success depended on that activity making sense, once it had started, to the Protestant working class. It did. It is a myth — usually a myth of the right — that political parties, even armed political parties, can at will create great social movements, that "agitators" create strikes. An account of the UWC strike based on a "left" variant of this myth is not useful.

Lenin described the Tories who resisted the Liberals on Home Rule in 1914, threatening civil war, as "revolutionaries of the right." Were Murray, Tyrie and the others "syndicalists of the right"? Yes, but "right" and "left" here lose their meanings. This was a movement of the working class of a peo-

ple who espouse an identity distinct from that of the rest of the Irish. It was a movement against forced powersharing and a Council of Ireland, things which were seen as the beginning of an attempt to push the Protestant-Unionists into a United Ireland, where they would be a powerless minority, their identity submerged.

Since the days of Wolfe Tone in the 1790s, the idea has been raised again and again by left-wing republicans abandoned and betrayed by the bourgeoisie: rely only on "the men of no property." Tone's words were repeated by the left-wing republican, Liam Mellows, writing from what proved to be his death-cell in Mountjoy jail in 1922. Trying to work out why the Republic proclaimed in 1916 and again, after Sinn Féin's victory in the 1918 election, in 1919 — had collapsed, and concluding that the "stake in the country" people sold out, Mellows wrote: "We are back to the men of no property." In May 1974 the Protestant men and women of no property erupted onto the stage of Irish history. It was decisive evidence for those who still needed it that the "Irish question" is now fundamentally a matter of internal relations between the peoples of Ireland.

What happened after the strike? In effect, from now on Britain ruled within the parameters of two vetoes: the Protestants exercised a veto on powersharing and on a United Ireland, or any approximation or steps toward it, and the Catholics exercised a veto on Protestant majority rule in Belfast. Twenty years would pass before that "balance" broke down. They were not uneventful years.

British governments remained — and remain — committed to powersharing. In 1975 a "constitutional" assembly was elected in Northern Ireland, charged by the British government to meet as a Parliament and work out a constitutional arrangement for Northern Ireland be acceptable to both Protestants and Catholics. Governmental powersharing had to be part of it, they insisted. All through 1975 and into early 1976 the constitutional parliament met at Stormont — against the background of a prolonged IRA ceasefire — but they could not reach an agreement. "Majority rule or nothing", the Protestant Unionists said. Vanguard leader William Craig was a Unionist hero, the Northern Ireland Home Secretary who had ordered the police to baton peaceful demonstrators in Derry in October 1968 in the incident that inaugurated the "Troubles." When he came out for conditional powersharing in 1975, he was cut down by his own organisation, his political credibility destroyed. The constitutional parliament was prorogued early in 1976. The IRA resumed its campaign.

The destruction of the Sunningdale Agreement and the powersharing executive that grew out of it by the Protestant general strike of May 1974 reverberated down the years for two decades, until the Provisional IRA ceasefire of 31 August 1994. It was, indeed, one of the most effective general strikes in history. ☐

The class struggle is the decisive thing

Against the stream

By Sean Matgamna

"Is it necessary to recall that Marxism not only interprets the world but also teaches how to change it? The will is the motor force in the domain of knowledge too. The moment Marxism loses its will to transform in a revolutionary way political reality, at that moment it loses the ability to correctly understand political reality. A Marxist who, for one secondary consideration or another, does not draw his conclusions to the end betrays Marxism." Leon Trotsky

THE STATE OF THE world as we rush towards the 21st century testifies to the truth that socialism is not only a good idea, but a stark necessity for humankind. Yet, the ideas of socialism are everywhere under attack. They are at the nadir of influence and prestige. Socialism is reduced to a vague word. Most people haven't a clue what real socialism is about or what it would look like. Worse. The credibility of socialism is buried under the debris of Stalinism, that savage and malign pseudo-socialism. Many who accepted Stalinism at its own Big Lie evaluation, now say that Stalinism was "the socialism that failed". It is the conventional wisdom.

The reformist counterfeit of socialism is also in a bad way. In Britain, the best fruits of reform socialism, the Health Service and the Welfare State, are in ruins after 15 years of sustained Tory social war against the working class. The labour movement itself has been ravaged; it bears the scars and mutilations of a decade and a half of defeat, and of structural changes in industry forced through on the bosses' terms in conditions of working-class weakness and defeat.

And yet despite all that, the collapse of Stalinism has, objectively, opened the road for a mass rebirth of genuine socialism. How quickly it comes depends on us. What can we do?

Nothing is more obvious than that the duty of socialists — those who are worth anything — now is to go to the working class and into the working-class movement to organise and reorganise it, and to plant the seeds of unfalsified socialism once more, especially amongst the youth. Yet this work is scarcely being done.

The space that should be occupied by

serious Marxist socialists doing this work is filled instead by a raucous tribe of middle-class semi-anarchists impotently shouting about "revolution". A socialism that bases itself on the working class and on working-class immediate concerns and, while advocating revolutionary socialist politics and perspectives, avoids becoming a toy-town Bolshevik sect — that today is the property of only a minority of the socialists. Because that is so, great objective possibilities for socialist renewal are being let go by unfructified.

It is against this background that one observes a strange phenomenon on the British left — the mushrooming of a sizeable number of sects and chapels, and of socialist journals and study groups, concerned not immediately with the class struggle or the tasks described above, or even with clearing some of the Stalinist spittle, blood

"They accept no discipline greater than the discipline of their circle of friends. People come together who could not stay together five minutes if they tried to do some political work that required them to define their politics."

and encrusted mud off the face of genuine socialism, so that it is again visible to the untutored eye. They are concerned primarily with the study of aspects of the history of our movement, or with past great struggles, or with dead individuals once prominent in the movement, or with their own experiences in one or other of the bigger "Trotskyist" organisations!

Much of their activity is that of a sort of fringe academia, or pseudo-academia. Some of it overlaps with official academia, forming a sort of "ectoplasmic pregnancy" between academia and politics. Even when

some of these individuals are in the trade unions or the Labour Party, their political concerns tend to have more the character of a hobby, than that of people Trotsky would have recognised as revolutionary militants.

Perspectives and the discipline incumbent on people determined to do something in the working class — these they eschew. They accept no discipline or activity greater than the discipline and 'activity' of their circle of friends. People come together to kibbitz and grouse and reminisce and maybe to publish something, who could not stay together five minutes if they tried to do political work that required them to define their politics. They are tolerant and uncritical of each other to a fault — indeed, beyond a fault. They tend to be people who have recoiled from an existing organisation like the SWP or Militant or AWL and not to have drawn their recoil out to any political conclusion beyond negativism. Often they have recoiled against things which are necessary to any serious organisation dedicated to the great cause of working-class emancipation — commitment, selflessness, discipline, intellectual rigour, strict political book-keeping. No one's going to tell *them* what to do!

These groupuscules sometimes have names, the most memorable of which was a group in one Midlands town called "The Dead Trots Society" (after the movie, The Dead Poets Society). Most are far less self-knowing.

I know, or once knew, quite a few of the individuals in this spectrum. To tell the truth, what they are doing now is the best thing some of them could do for socialism short of leaving people less subjective than themselves to get on with it! Others are capable of better things.

Above, so to speak, those groups are academic and semi-academic journals with loose groups around them, which sometimes call conferences — Critique, Red Pepper, Revolutionary History, New Interventions, etc. You can get the most weird and wonderful discussions — so I'm told — at a Critique conference! Recently, for example, they had a learned discussion about the Welfare State: should socialists defend it? After all, wasn't it the wrong model? So bureaucratic! Many of the 70 people there seemed to think it funny that Workers' Liberty supporters should want to defend the Welfare State.

As a rule, these individuals and groupuscules tend to be sectarian — either in the

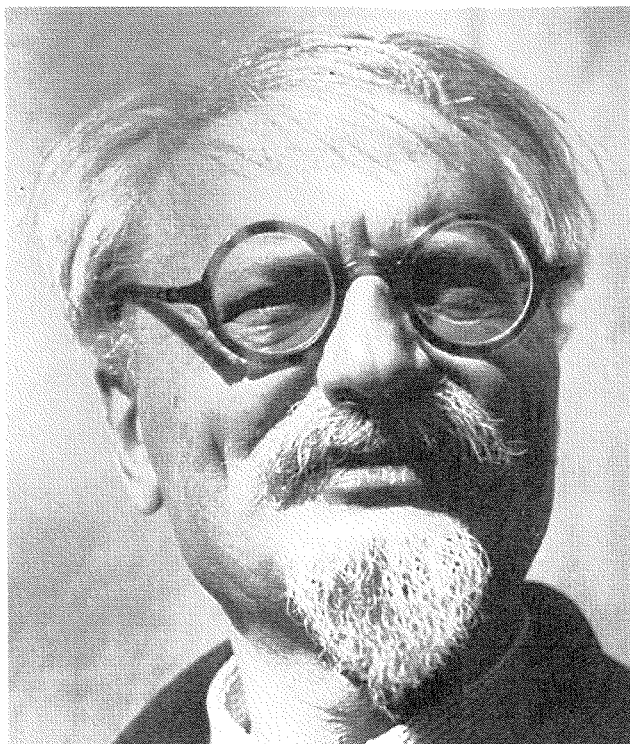
sense of ultra-leftism, dismissing the Labour Party and the unions and refusing to work in them — or, more commonly, in the basic sense of just tilling their own patch of ground without concern with broader perspectives or with the fundamental work of socialists described above.

All of them are more or less cut adrift from the disciplines, rhythms and concerns of the class struggle: their business is prattle and word processing, not practice. This is the single most arresting thing about the citizens of these atolls and islands jutting up in the flood tide of anti-socialist reaction: Marxist to a snobbery, they do not accept any obligation on themselves to go to work and test their ideas in "revolutionary practice" in the labour movement, and in the working class.

Devotees of the memory of this or that revolutionary, and fascinated by old factional struggles — whose protagonists thought they were quarrelling over issues of consequence in the class struggle — they are largely uninterested in integrating themselves in the class struggle now. They don't even accept that the class struggle — at however low a level it may exist — should define their 'political' activity, still less that they should organise their lives around it.

"Revolutionary tradition" for them is books and articles and genning up about the past, not something alive — something that can only be kept alive and growing by being developed and elaborated in revolutionary practice here and now. Thus they dismiss the central tenet that separates Marxism — the only real Marxism — from academia or academic sociology: practice, the centrality of the class struggle, the *revolutionary* Marxist determination to learn from experience and bring it to conclusions that can be used by our class.

Some tend to console themselves with



Trotsky: "It is not enough to preach the benefits of technology; it is necessary to build bridges."

smug and idiotic — but essentially self-exposing — little half truths, like that contained in the rhetorical question: was Marx theorising or "practising" when he wrote Capital? Me, I'd revise my opinion of some of these people for a rigorous 'engaged' article or two. Even David Ryazanov did not disdain the class struggle!

Not everything they do is useless. Useful articles are sometimes produced; *Revolutionary History* is, on the whole, a worthwhile publication; so sometimes is *Critique*. But in the present climate of working class defeat and socialist retreat into sectarianism they are helping to shape a whole sub-culture in which the central Marxist commitment to the class struggle and to practical work for socialism is gone, as is the proper Marxist sense of shame at its absence.

Thinking of this strange, sectarian pseudo-academia that is mushrooming in the Tory-blitzed bomb sites of the labour movement, I dug out an article Leon Trotsky wrote in 1932 in the form of an open letter to the American journalist VF Calverton. Some of it is quoted at the beginning of this piece. Here is more of this important article.

"Proletarian politics has a great theoretical tradition and that is one of the sources of its power. A trained Marxist studies the differences between Engels and

Lassalle with regard to the European war of 1859. This is necessary. But if he is not a pedant of Marxist historiography, not a bookworm, but a proletarian revolutionist, it is a thousand times more important and urgent for him to elaborate for himself an independent judgement about the revolutionary strategy in China from 1925 to 1932.

It was precisely on that question that the struggle within Bolshevism sharpened for the first time to the point of split.

It is very useful to study, let us say, the old differences among Russian Marxists on the character of the future Russian revolution; a study, naturally, from the original sources and not from the ignorant and unconscionable compilations of the epigones. But it is far more important to elaborate for oneself a clear understanding of the theory and practice of the Anglo-Russian Committee, of the "third period" of "social fascism," of the "democratic dictatorship" in Spain, and the policy of the united front. The study of the past is in the last

analysis justified by this, that it helps one to orient oneself in the present.

It is impermissible for a Marxist theoretician to pass by the congresses of the First International. But a thousand times more urgent is the study of the living differences over the Amsterdam "antiwar" congress of 1932. Is there today a subject more important for a revolutionist, more

gripping, more burning, than the struggle and the fate of the German proletariat? Is it possible, on the other hand, to define one's attitude to the problems of the German revolution while passing by the differences in the camp of German and international communism?

A revolutionist who has no opinion on the policies of Stalin-Thaelmann is not a Marxist. A Marx-

ist who has an opinion but remains silent is not a revolutionist.

It is not enough to preach the benefits of technology; it is necessary to build bridges. How would a young doctor be judged who, instead of practising as an intern, would be satisfied with reading biographies of great surgeons of the past? What would Marx have said about a theory which, instead of deepening revolutionary practice, serves to separate one from it? Most probably he would repeat his sarcastic statement: 'No, I am not a Marxist'."

WM

Diary date

**Workers' Liberty '95
will take place on
Friday 30 June —
Sunday 2 July at
Caxton House,
Archway, north
London.**

Workers' Liberty '95 is three days of socialist debate hosted by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Their Europe and ours



CAUSE FOR GLEE: the Tories are deeply split over Europe. Our glee could be purer if the left had something clear and worthwhile to say on Europe. It has not.

From 1961, when Britain first abortively applied to join the European Community, up to the early 1980s, most trade-union leaders, and the mainstream left of the Labour Party, were against British entry into the EC, then for withdrawal. They felt cosy in Britain's circles of power, and feared that they would get fewer sops from the remote bureaucrats of Europe.

Margaret Thatcher's assault on the trade unions changed that. Now the GMBU general union, for example, campaigns for full employment by appealing for support for the economic plans of outgoing EU chief Jacques Delors.

The Labour Party front bench cautiously echo the more "pro-European" Tories.

And the various Marxist groups? All initially responded, in the early 1960s, by saying that workers should back neither "pro-European" nor "anti-European" bosses. As agitation increased, almost all swung behind the mainstream left's call for "Britain Out!", marking themselves off only by being more vehement and "revolutionary" about it.

Over the last ten or fifteen years they have subsided into silence. Some groups made a brief outcry when they thought they had a bandwagon going against the Maastricht Treaty, but even then they no longer dared call for "Britain Out!"

British big business has long been mostly "pro-European". In a recent poll of 100 finance directors from big companies for BBC TV's *Money Programme*, 60 per cent said that a single European currency would be "good" for their companies, and only

12% that it would be "bad" (*Financial Times*, 13 February).

A *Financial Times* survey (17 February) of 21 leading bosses found six enthusiastic about rapid moves to a single Euro-money and a few hostile ("it might involve a layer of bureaucracy which would be stultifying"). The majority favoured a single Euro-money in principle, but said that going for it "in a hurry" would probably fail or produce a botched, unstable system.

"Eurosceptic" Tories like Portillo, Thatcher, and Tebbit thus reflect a sizeable minority of the capitalist class. They are not against the EU root-and-branch, but they are suspicious of closer integration. To them, schemes like a single Euro-money look too much like bureaucratic utopia-mongering, with heavy adjustment costs.

The left should oppose both Tory factions — by extending to the European arena the same battle for workers' rights, improved conditions, and democracy that we wage within nation-states. These are some guidelines:

- Against the Euro-bosses' blueprint for a capitalist, racist, and imperialist Western Europe.
- Against the nationalist alternatives, of frontiers tightly policed behind higher barriers.
- For a Republican United States of Europe! For an immediate fight for democracy in the EU — full control by the elected EU parliament over all EU affairs.
- For workers' unity across the EU and across Europe! For common campaigns for a legal 35 hour week, and for levelling-up of workers' rights and conditions across Europe so that every country is brought up to the best standard. For

Europe-wide shop stewards' committees in all the big multinationals, and all major industries.

- For a Europe-wide programme of public works, and public ownership with workers' control of the big multinationals, to steer production towards need and to guarantee every worker the right to a decent job.
- For Europe-wide public ownership of all the big banks, and democratic control of credit and monetary policy.
- For a European Women's Charter, based on levelling-up women's rights and conditions across Europe.
- For the replacement of the Common Agricultural Policy with a plan worked out by workers' and small farmers' organisations, based on public ownership of land, conversion of big farms into public enterprises, aid for small farmers to develop cooperatives and food production geared to the needs of the world's hungry people.
- For the abolition of VAT and the financing of all EU budgets by progressive direct taxation.
- For a Europe open to the world! Free movement of people into the EU; free access for Third World exports to EU markets; a big EU aid programme, without strings, to Third World countries.
- For the right to vote of all residents of EU countries. (In some EU countries, even long-settled immigrant workers have no right to vote).
- Against the development of any "EU army", and for the replacement of all the EU states' existing military hierarchies by people's militias. For a Europe free of nuclear weapons!
- For a Workers' United States of Europe! ■