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socialist
OUTLOOK



**TIME TO CLEAR
OUT THE TORIES**

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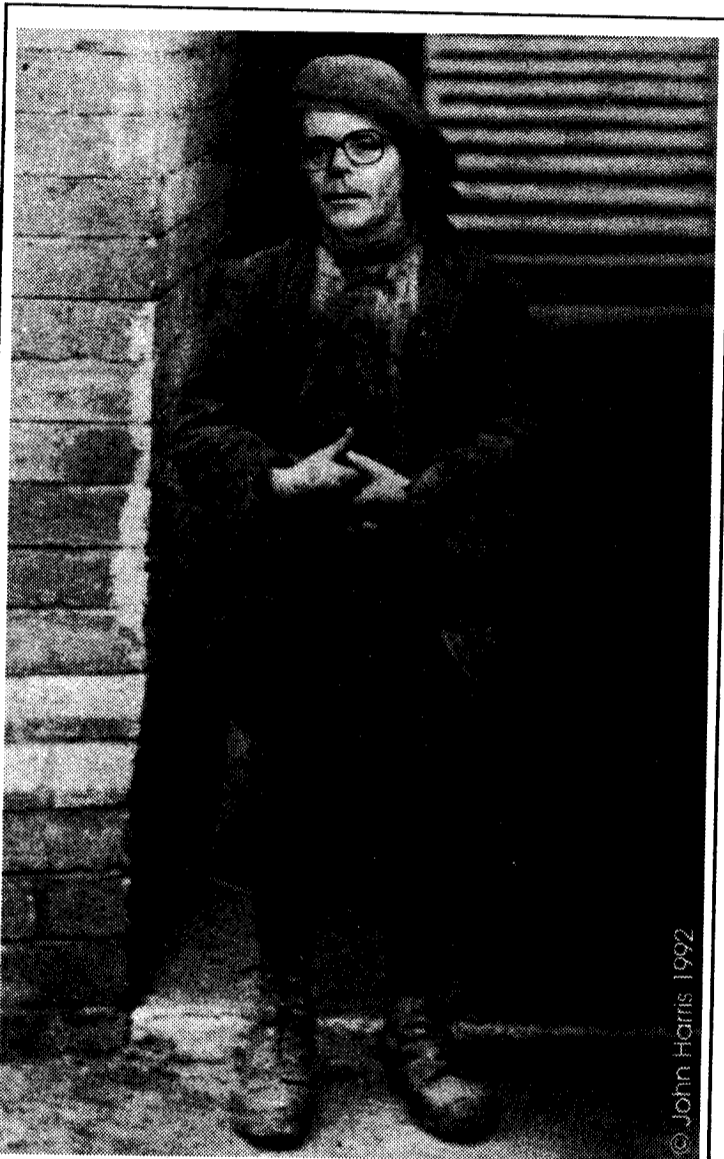
Labour

Left flies the flag

The grey face of the Labour leadership doesn't inspire much hope for socialist change. Every press conference features the latest attempt to move even further towards the 'middle ground' of respectable, do-nothing politics. And most of the new model candidates dance to the same uninspiring tune.

But not everywhere.

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK looks at a couple of areas, Islington North and Birmingham Edgbaston, where Labour candidates are going out to their communities with a firm, socialist message. And we take a look at Coventry South East, where Dave Nellist, selected to fight the seat for Labour, was ditched by the party leadership but is fighting on against the Kinnock lookalike.



© John Harris 1992

Poor little rich boy Major

Blue chip off the block

We're all the same these days. All that old lefty propaganda about social classes has gone down the drain in John Major's classless society. Hasn't it?

Well, not exactly. New research from *Labour Research* on election candidates demonstrates a rather clear class divide in their social background and current job.

More than half the Tories went to public school; only around one in ten of Labour's candidates did. And if you take old boys from Eton, Harrow and Rugby, those traditional training grounds for the British upper crust, the Tories have 64 compared to Labour's two.

But these are things of the past, your caring-sharing Tory might object. So what about occupations now? One in five Tories is a company director; only one in a hundred Labour candidates claimed the same. And manual workers? None among the Tories apparently; 51 among the Labour candidates.

Poor old John Major. He must feel so lonely as he reminisces about the wonders of Brixton market, while all his colleagues are off to sing the Eton Boating Song.

Stop Tyndall - Fight racism

Public meeting,

Sunday April 5, 5pm

The Davenant Centre, Whitechapel Road
between Whitechapel and Aldgate East tubes

Invited speakers include:

Mildred Gordon, Bernie Grant, Cllr Jalal Uddin



Expelled Labour MP Dave Nellist campaigning at factory gate meeting

Nellist defies witch hunters

Dave Nellist's campaign in Coventry South East has won strong support among labour movement activists in the city. But the big question is, will this be enough to win him the seat?

The highly-respected former

Labour MP - expelled last year for alleged *Militant* links and now standing as a Labour Independent - has won public backing from key shop stewards and even some regional union officials.

But Labour is now heavily pushing the line 'a vote for Nel-

list is as good as a vote for the Conservative candidate', and increasingly finding an echo among ordinary workers desperate to get shot of the Tories nationally.

Nellist's stated canvass returns put him on 44 per cent, with 23 per cent going to both official Labour candidate Jim Cunningham and Tory Martine Hyams. Supporters who claim to have seen Labour's returns say they give Nellist 31 per cent, Labour 25 per cent and the Tories 22 per cent.

But senior local trade unionists report the official Labour vote hardening markedly over the last fortnight, making the seat effectively a three-way marginal.

While *Militant* patently constitutes the backbone of the Nellist campaign, it encompasses many people not previously active politically. Local *Morning Star* supporters are also much in evidence.

Cunningham minders are pulling the Walton stunt of photographing Nellist supporters, with those identified as Labour party members certain to face expulsion proceedings.

Corbyn raises tempo

Jeremy Corbyn's adoption meeting was one of the most inspiring evenings for a long time. Not only was Dennis Skinner at the peak of his entertaining anti-Tory form, but the room was jam-packed with 350 activists.

They came not just from the Labour Party, but from every community and campaign in the constituency. And the meeting wasn't out of step with Corbyn's campaign.

Hard-hitting leaflets focusing on housing, health, women and pensioners go with commitments to remove all nuclear weapons and publicity explaining why the market cannot solve problems from homelessness to pollution.

Corbyn is maintaining a high profile locally, canvassing on a daily basis, visiting countless community groups



and debating other candidates. Working with Jeremy is a rewarding experience, not only because of his politics, but also because of the warmth and respect for him among local people.

Battling to win in Brum

JOHN WILTON is aiming to destroy a Tory majority of 8,000 in Birmingham Edgbaston. Labour has to win the seat if it's to get an overall majority.

And the sitting MP is definitely on the most odious wing of the party - Jill Knight, author of the anti-lesbian and gay Section 28, has been an outspoken supporter of anti-immigration legislation. John is optimistic.

In 1987 he increased the Labour vote by 30 per cent, one of the largest swings in the country. Now he needs

just 8 per cent. Edgbaston is a constituency ravaged by the destruction of manufacturing industry, with male unemployment doubling in the last year to 25 per cent.

After a rousing adoption meeting attended by over 200 supporters, John went out to one of the wards particularly hit by the jobs massacre with Tony Benn to argue the socialist case. As an engineering worker made redundant in the early 1980s, pledged to take only a skilled worker's wage if elected, he has rather more credibility than Dame Jill.

Next he was out on the streets with Jeremy Corbyn, visiting pensioners and campaigning against the opt-out of Birmingham Maternity Hospital. The choice of supporters is no accident.

John Wilton has been one of the leading left-wingers in the West Midlands for years. In 1990 he spoke out at the Labour conference against the witch hunt of *Socialist Organiser*. And his agent, Pauline Purnell, was on the left slate for the Women's section of the Labour Executive last year.

MCLACHLAN



We predict the Election result

A weak and crisis-ridden government

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK goes to press at the end of a week which has been dominated by the slanging match over Labour's NHS broadcast. The truth about that is obvious; the Tories did everything possible to cause a scandal because they didn't want to face the real issues about the NHS.

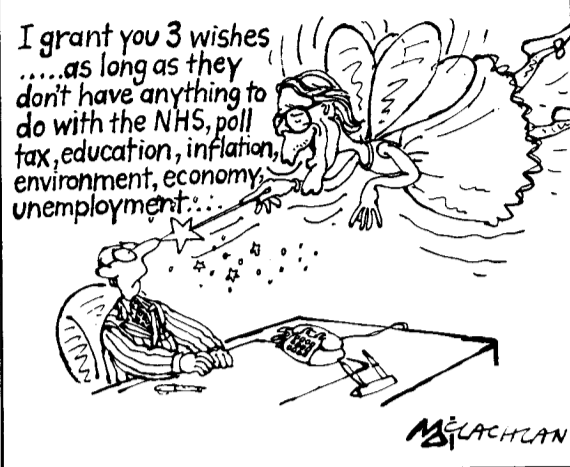
That manoeuvre has blown up in their faces. Nothing seems capable of reviving their flagging campaign, despite the weakness and antiseptic vagueness of Kinnock's effort.

But none of the toing and froing in the election campaign – photo opportunities, tabloid press scandal and gossip, incessant discussions on the TV – should detract socialists from the major underlying realities of the campaign.

First, after 13 years of the Tories, Britain faces an unparalleled economic crisis. Second, whatever the result of the election the Tories have been gravely weakened. Third, whichever government comes to power will be totally incapable of resolving the crisis. And this, given the likelihood of a minority government or one with a tiny majority, means a period of *weak government*.

Revelations in the *Guardian* have shown that this year's public borrowing figure of £28 billion is a fiction. In reality there is a government deficit of another £11.3 billion. This is the result of growing crisis.

The government's financial crisis stems from two things; the slump has drastically reduced the tax base, as taxable profits and earnings have fallen. Recession also means skyrocketing unemployment benefit and other welfare



payments.

Any incoming government will face the consequences of this financial catastrophe. Kinnock has totally failed to explain how taxes on the rich will be kept minimal, and Labour's welfare and NHS pledges upheld.

At the time of writing, it is still possible, though unlikely, that the Tories could form the government. In that event, they would be in a totally different position to Thatcher in 1983 and 1987. *It would be a very weak government staggering from crisis to crisis.*

The Tories sustained themselves in the 1980s through a programme of privatisation which brought in huge revenues to the Exchequer. Now there is little left to privatise. *The Tory programme has run out of steam.* It has failed economically and has nothing new left to try to carry through.

We are therefore headed, whatever the election outcome, for a period of combined politi-

cal and economic crisis. How should the left confront this period?

If the Tories win, the opportunity will present itself, whatever the disappointment at not having a Labour government, to push home the counter-attack on Toryism, to rebuild the fight against the anti-union laws and other anti-working class measures, under the slogan of kicking out the Tories and replacing them with a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

If Labour is the largest party, then the left must demand it forms the government with no deals with the Liberals. With Labour in government, whether it was a minority or majority government, the left would have to campaign around a programme of basic socialist demands, against the new realist programme of Kinnock.

It remains true that a Labour government will give the best conditions to rebuild struggles and the left. But Labour is gravely weakened by the cautiousness of its programme and the hesitancy of its campaign.

But Labour majority or not, the election shows the tide is turning. This is the culmination of the defeat of Thatcherism begun by the anti-poll tax campaign and the fall of Thatcher herself.

Socialist Outlook has for the last two years argued that we were in a *preparatory period*, and that with the election the political scene would shift decisively. That is hard upon us. A rapid recomposition of British politics is underway. The key task is to build a socialist alternative capable of challenging whichever government comes to power.

NHS waiting list scandal behind broadcast row

By Harry Sloan

WHO NAMED the little girl whose case was dramatised in Labour's Party Election Broadcast? *The Tory press*.

Who lied to the newspapers and radio, claiming her 11-month wait for ear surgery had nothing to do with cuts – despite having written to her father admitting that this was the case? *Tory consultant Alan Alouin*.

Who claimed the story was false, and compared Neil Kinnock to a Nazi propagandist for upholding it, despite every aspect of the case being shown to be true? *Tory Health Secretary William Waldegrave*.

Why were the Tories so desperate to up the stakes on this issue, to drag a 5-year old girl into the headlines, and falsely to smear Labour as the source of her name? *Because the case is not unique, and their record on NHS waiting lists will not stand public scrutiny.*

It was for the same reason that in 1987 the Tory press decided to hound Edna Healey, wife of Labour politician Denis, for having had a private hip operation in order to avoid a 3-year

wait for NHS treatment. Then, as now, the Tories tried to make the issue one of Labour hypocrisy rather than NHS waiting lists.

Since the row erupted the Labour Party and the *Daily Mirror* have been inundated with similar examples of lengthy waits for treatment. Yet the Tories have been trumpeting their 'success' in reducing the numbers of patients waiting over two years.

There is no real contradiction here. The Tories have cynically singled out this one, relatively small, sector of the waiting list for special attention. They have attacked on three fronts:

- Many of the numbers lopped off the list are not the result of operations being carried out, but the outcome of a clerical exercise known as 'validation', through which thousands of names have been crossed from waiting lists around the country.

- Others, like some 200 women waiting for varicose vein operations in the opting-out Waltham Forest health authority, have received letters saying that to save them waiting longer, the list has been closed and the treatment no longer available.

- Elsewhere judicious use of one-off special funding to finance certain



operations has succeeded in whittling down the 2-year queue. This is no surprise. Socialists have always said that the waiting lists could be eliminated if adequate funding were available: there is no waiting list in most western European countries, yet in England alone 926,000 people are currently in the queue.

The surprising thing is that even with all the fiddles and tricks, the overall waiting list is still going rapidly upwards.

Government figures show numbers waiting up to one year – the biggest category of patients – rose in February in ten out of 14 English re-

gions – by a massive 8.4% in NW Thames – with an overall increase of around 9,000 in one month. This is an annual rate of increase of over 100,000 a year!

It remains to be seen if the Tory ruse has succeeded in diverting attention from this monumental failure.

But with Thatcher's market reforms threatening chaos, community care proposals looming that will rob the elderly of their savings, and plans afoot to axe 2,000 beds and two teaching hospitals in London after the election, if Labour screw up the chance to make the NHS a vote winner we all stand to lose out.

Will London clinch it for Labour?

By Sam Inman

ELSEWHERE IN Britain, commentators talk of the importance of the 'C2' vote. With London's higher wages, it is the 'C1' vote they are looking at.

These are the people who earn more than £20,000 a year, and they are the most important social group in the eyes of the media. They are also the votes that Labour hope to swing to them. As we go to press, opinion polls show that they may be doing just that. 21 of the important Tory marginals are in London – winning these could win Labour the election.

London is now a crisis-ridden mess. 45 per cent of Londoners say that they want to move out of the city. 49 per cent think their standard of living is worse since the abolition of the GLC in 1986. With housing, transport, law and order, and education topping the list of important issues for London, the creation of a new authority for the whole of the capital is a major political issue.

It is not just ordinary Londoners who want this. Sections of the ruling class want it too. The tourism industry is a case in point. With the smashing of what little remained of London's manufacturing industry, tourism became a major earner for the city. A quarter of a million workers are found in a myriad of 'attractions'.

But it is in deep trouble now. For a healthy tourist industry you need good public transport, and London certainly does not have that. £10 billion a year is lost through congested roads – the nightmare gridlock scenario is rapidly near. Without public investment the future looks bleak.

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Election
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EUROPE

Time to end the Tory nightmare

AS WE GO to press the outcome of the election is undecided. But whatever the outcome, the Tories have been fatally weakened.

The election is a distorting lens, but it reveals something very basic. Thirteen years of Tory attacks, part of the world-wide capitalist restructuring offensive, have failed – failed grossly to restore the fortunes of British capitalism.

Thatcherism emerged in the 1970s as a 'new start' for British capitalism, as a way to crush the working class and pave the way for a new surge of capitalist growth.

The results of the Tory attacks are everywhere; a Labour Party shifted to the right, industries and social welfare destroyed, unions on the defensive, lives wrecked. But in the end it is petering out into fiasco. Tory Britain is bankrupt Britain.

In nine pages of analysis of the Tory decade, SOCIALIST OUTLOOK examines what happened and why it failed to revive capitalist fortunes.



Hollow echoes of Empire

By Paul Clarke

FOR THIRTEEN years of Conservative rule British capitalism has faced a central foreign policy dilemma.

As British capital has relied more and more on profits from foreign investment, the Tories have been racked by the contradiction between the rapid development of European unity, and the post-war stance of Britain as junior partner and loyal ally of the United States.

This dilemma has not been finally resolved; but overall, the Tories have been dragged screaming and kicking into the process of deeper European unity.

Central role

The problem stems from the fact that the US and NATO have provided Britain with its nuclear capacity and its central role in international politics – including its permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. This has been vital in promoting and securing British overseas investment.

On the other hand, only a small part of British capital is deeply involved in the US market. For the long-term future of the economy, as world capitalism divides between the three major blocs of North America, Europe and Japan, the EC is much more important.

Echoes of Empire have resounded through the Thatcherite years. The British



Argentinian demonstrators denounce Britain and military junta

ruling class may not be very good at much these days, but it is good at war.

General Galtieri's 1982 invasion of the Malvinas islands provided Thatcher with a golden opportunity to win cheap reelection in 1983, on the back of victory against a third-rate military power.

It was a close-run thing. Only a few unexploded Argentinian bombs stood between the sinking of British aircraft carriers and defeat, and the ultimate squalid victory. The calculating cynicism of the British ruling class was vividly shown in Thatcher's decision to sink the

Argentine warship *Belgrano*, which was sailing away from the British fleet, with the loss of 1,200 lives.

The international scene in the 1980s was dominated by Ronald Reagan's 'evil empire' crusade against the Eastern bloc. As the US unveiled Star Wars and waged counter-revolutionary war against the peoples of Nicaragua, El Salvador and Afghanistan, Thatcher played the role of star supporter.

Britain's subordination to the US was highlighted during the 1983 invasion of Grenada, a country formally under the

jurisdiction of the British crown. Thatcher and foreign secretary Howe were appalled by the high-handed action of the US in not consulting Britain, but acquiesced nonetheless.

British capitalism couldn't afford the vast rearmament programme undertaken by the US under Reagan, but Thatcher did her bit in commissioning the £15 billion Trident submarine programme.

The most dramatic demonstration of Tory prostration to the diktats of US foreign policy was the 1976 use of British airfields for F-111 bombers to attack Libya. Thatcher

fully participated in the growing international tirade against 'terrorism' – an easy way to scapegoat and criminalise radical third world regimes.

Stalwart

Britain under Thatcher and Major has remained a stalwart of international support for the apartheid regime in South Africa, blocking every attempt at effective sanctions.

Concern for human rights did not extend to the fate of workers and the left in Hong Kong; successive Tory foreign ministers negotiated the return of Hong Kong to China with no human rights guarantees. The rich of course will be allowed into Britain.

The key foreign policy episodes in the final years of the Tory regime were the Gulf war and the continuing saga of European unity. Moth-eaten and decrepit British imperialism was wheeled out again to play key supporting role while George Bush murdered 250,000 Iraqis.

But Gulf war glory couldn't hide the reality. Britain is a declining imperialism, more and more forced under the European umbrella to fight for economic survival. British foreign policy in the 1980s will be remembered for its militaristic hostility to the third world, fanatical anti-communism, and slavish following of the United States. A sorry and sordid record.



Industrial wasteland – the result of the Thatcherite economic catastrophe

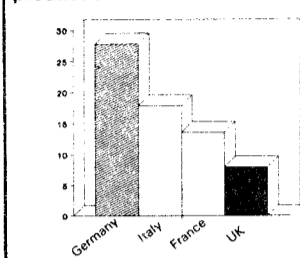
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ECONOMY

Increase in industrial
production 1980-91



influence industries directly, as in coal and steel before privatisation, productivity has risen dramatically.

But this has been on the basis of closing down most of the industry, not by creating profitable growth. In areas such as cars and shipbuilding, where international competition has been intense, we have seen the same result.

The policy of deregulating business has speeded the internationalisation of British capitalism and taken it out of government control. Increased foreign investment has made British firms vulnerable to recession in Europe or the USA.

Monetarist policies failed partly because control of the money supply is not possible in a world of highly integrated financial markets. Intervening in the labour market through anti-union laws has weakened resistance to closures in contracting industries.

But it has not yet led to sustained increases in productivity across the economy. Productivity has risen most in manufacturing, but is of decreasing importance for British capital. In 1989 only 16.8 per cent of business income came from manufacturing profits.

Speculation

The rise in profits under the Tories did not lead to renewed investment, but increased competition and financial speculation. This explains why the Tories cannot put forward a coherent economic programme for this election.

The process of European Monetary Union (EMU) is likely to rule out a boom such as 1987-88. Government projections put the deficit at almost 5 per cent of GDP for 1992-93. Even in recession the balance of payments deficit is still significant.

Tory policies no longer even pretend to lay the basis for renewed capitalist profitability in Britain. Instead they concentrate on limiting the labour movement's ability to challenge the initiatives of private capital.

This is the background for the current bosses' offensive.

Throwing the Tories out of office is not just important because of their mismanagement of the economy. It is also the first step in the fightback against this offensive – an offensive which has its roots in the failure to transform British capitalism in the last decade.

What happened to the economic 'miracle'?

By Andy Kilmister

Five years ago the Tories won the last election, claiming that an economic 'miracle' had taken place. Now the picture is very different. What has really happened to the British economy since 1979?

When the Thatcher government came to power they wanted above all to do two things. First, to defeat the labour movement and allow profits to be raised.

Second, to provide conditions for stable capitalist growth and realise those profits in the market. This was to be done through 'monetarism' – control of the money supply and public expenditure.

Monetarism was designed to attack the working class by signalling that wage rises would not be matched by printing money. Unprofitable firms would not be rescued.

Workers would have to adjust and accept wage cuts and worsening conditions. Through lower taxes and government withdrawal from the economy the conditions would be laid for renewed profitability and accumulation.

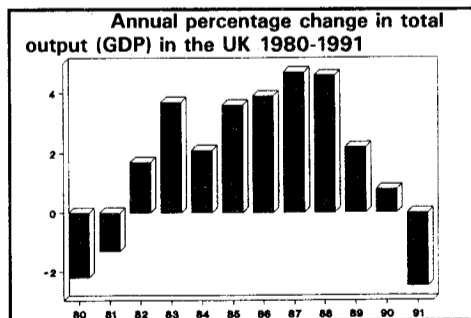
Failed strategy

The current economic crisis stems from the failure of this strategy.

The Tories have not succeeded in defeating the labour movement in the way they hoped. Real wages have risen since they came to power, by 2.8 per cent per year from 1980-88 as compared with 0.9 per cent from 1974-79. The share of profits in national income ac-



Fallen idol. Yesterday's upper class heroine has hit the dust



tually fell from 19.5 per cent in 1979 to 16.3 per cent in 1989.

This meant that any rises in profitability have been dependent on rises in productivity. This rose faster in the 1980s than in the 1970s.

But this is largely because productivity in manufacturing has risen as the number employed has fallen and the least profitable firms have shut down. It cannot be sustained in the long term.

So while the profit rate rose to a peak of 11.3 per cent in 1987, this was not significantly higher than in the late 1960s. From 1987 onwards the profit rate and productivity growth have fallen sharply. The Tories have not decisively changed the

conditions for creating profits in the workplace.

Neither have they created a stable environment for capital. The initial attempt to control the money supply, from 1979 to 1981, led to a collapse in profits as demand was cut while wages continued to rise.

Foreign currency flowed into the country to get the benefits of high interest rates, pushing the exchange rate up and hitting exporters. There was a huge recession, particularly in manufacturing. And the targets for controlling the money supply were not met.

Abandoned

Gradually the policy of targeting the money supply was abandoned. The way was open for the debt-fuelled boom of the late 1980s.

As interest rates fell and profits rose after 1981 there was no corresponding rise in investment. Real manufacturing investment in 1987 was 9.5 per cent lower than in 1979. The capital stock in industry and

agriculture grew by only 1.2 per cent per year from 1979 to 1987, less if North Sea oil and gas are excluded.

But investment in banking and finance rose by 122.1 per cent over this period and in business services the figure was 85.9 per cent. With manufacturing so weak, the boom of 1987-88 led to a large balance of payments deficit as imports were sucked in.

Interest rates

Increased demand began to raise inflation and wages began to follow. The Tories' answer was to put up interest rates, but with debt levels so high this has led to a massive slump.

The monetarist project failed either to destroy working class organisation or to provide for growth on firm foundations. By 1987, as the Tories swept back to power, monetarism as defined in 1979 was dead.

Their reaction was to look for another way to threaten the labour movement and stabilise the economy. Joining the European exchange rate mechanism (ERM) provides this alternative.

If sterling is tied to the German mark, it means that wage rises and productivity must keep up with German rates. If wages rise faster and productivity slower than in Germany, profits will fall and unemployment will rise.

But for a weak capitalism such as Britain, this policy is fraught with difficulties. It raises the possibility of increased foreign competition and a continued slump.

The central problem for the Tories since 1979 has been their inability to intervene decisively in the restructuring of British capitalism. Where they could

PHOTO: John Harris

Special
supplement

Election '92



WOMEN

What choice for women?

By Rebecca Flemming

CHOICE, A KEYWORD in the Tories' election campaign. Choice has also been a central theme in demands raised by the women's liberation movement.

In reality 13 years of Tory government - 11 of them under Britain's first woman Prime Minister - have systematically eliminated women's choices. The gulf between rich and poor has been sharply cut across and magnified by the gender divisions of society. Commentators now talk of the 'feminisation of poverty'.

Crushing

The crushing burden of holding families together, under the assaults of redundancy, repossessions, evictions, Poll Tax, and falling benefits, generally falls on women. And, contrary to pronouncements of Tory ministers, single mothers consistently appear at the bottom of poverty league tables.

Over the last decade, the proportion of women in waged work has increased. But deciding to work, is often not the positive choice that the women's movement envis-

aged, but the product of sheer economic necessity.

The average woman's wage - compared to the average man's - has fallen again. Furthermore, women are systematically denied rights as part-time workers and as the vast majority of the rapidly expanding population of home-workers.

The terms of women's employment have not been shaped by women themselves. They have been shaped by employers operating within the parameters of economic recession and

the crushing of militant trade unionism; under the twin weights of a government offensive and the capitulation of new realism. Women's cheapness and flexibility has recommended itself to the bosses - and they intend to keep it that way.

Exceptions

There are, of course, exceptions. Some women, like some men, have done well under the Tories. Pay differentials at the top of the scale have decreased, and women are finding promotion easier at managerial levels.

These women have directly benefitted from the impact of feminism, however much they might deny it. But the choices offered to the few cannot outweigh the choices denied to everybody else.

Changing childcare provision illustrates this. Overall, the number of nursery and creche places has fallen over the last decade. But the decline has been in the public sector, while the Midland Bank, for example, has been leading the way in the

provision of private, work-place nurseries.

Choices have dwindled in other areas too. While the Tories remain deeply divided over the question of abortion, reproductive rights have been further restricted.

Savage cuts

Savage cuts and structural changes in the NHS have exacerbated problems of regional variation in the availability of publicly-funded abortions. It has resulted in an increasing dependency on charities, themselves feeling the pinch.

The practical and ideological measures in the Embryology Act 1990, concerning access to donor insemination (DI), have led to the closure of one of the only two non-discriminatory services.

These latter moves were part of a central project of the Thatcher years - the strengthening and buttressing of the nuclear family. It runs like a thread through such diverse pieces of legislation as Section 28 and the abolition of benefit for 16 to 19 year olds. It shows itself in government propaganda around AIDS, and has frequently erupted in the speeches of Tory

leaders.

Women, as the rock on which the nuclear family rests, have particularly suffered under this offensive. Responsibility for caring has increasingly been shifted even further to the family - and this, essentially, means women.

Specific groups of women have also been singled out for more explicit attack - lesbians, young women and disabled women.

Division

A major exception to the general rule has been provided by the tightening of immigration laws. These divide black families, and further undermine the position of black communities.

The one victory - the decision of the European Court of Human Rights that Britain discriminated against women in its rules concerning bringing in wives - quickly turned to defeat. The Tory government simply applied the regulations to husbands as well.

The war in Ireland has also provided imperatives that override concerns for the integrity of the family. Women have provided a particular target for state terrorism - strip-searching being the most publicised example.

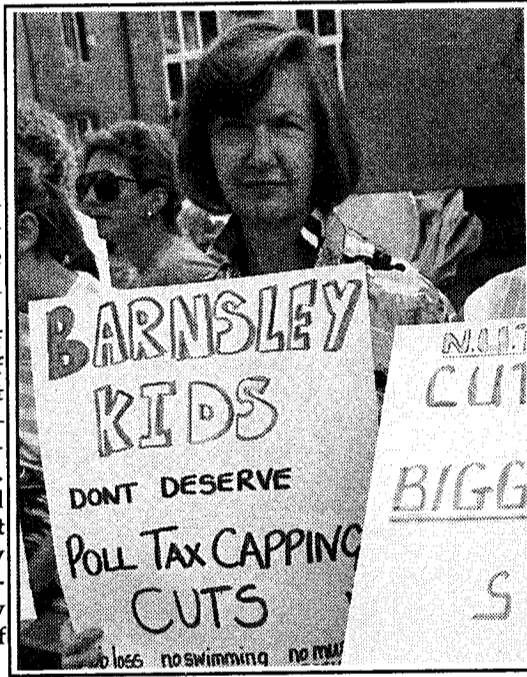
But all exceptions are double-edged. The racism fuelled by the Tories is one of the pressures on black communities that encourages fundamentalism and reinforces family structures - both to the detriment of black women.

Monument

Finally - Margaret Thatcher herself. Attacked by both right and left - including some feminists and the macho wings of anarchism, such as *Class War* - for being a woman. Occasionally her sex has been offered as her defence.

But she should be seen as a monument to the complexity of real life. Testament and proof to the fact that capitalist society is not only divided along one line - be it class, sex or whatever - but divided along many.

All constantly intersect, interact and form part of a unitary whole. The battle to be waged, not only to reverse the defeats of the Thatcher years but to start to make progress towards equality and liberation, has got to be fought on many fronts!

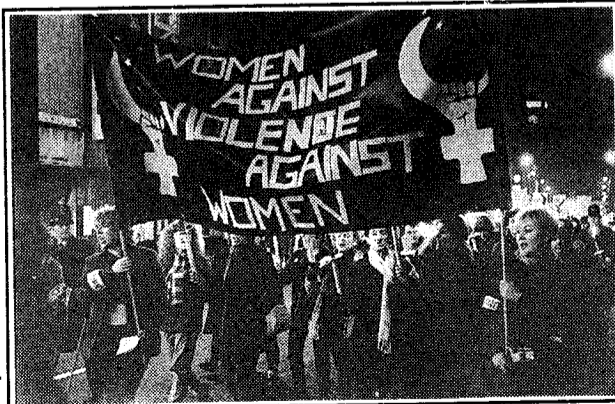


Self-defence - No offence!

THE RECENT release of June Scotland, acquitted of murdering her husband - who tortured and abused her for many years - has been welcomed as a victory by groups campaigning around violence against women.

The attitude of both the jury, who accepted her plea of manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility, and the judge, who sentenced her to a probation order, have undoubtedly been affected by the campaigning around Sara Thornton's case.

But many questions remain. For the plea of diminished responsibility upheld in this case is a plea



of 'temporary insanity', not of self-defence or provocation.

In the best legal tradition, the central issue has been avoided. A way round thorny questions has been found, which maintains the system, keeps the premises it is based on intact, but does not out-

rage public opinion. The legal detour taken is a long established one - labelling women who commit crimes, particularly ones involving violence, as mad not bad.

While welcoming June Scotland's release, the campaigning must continue. There are still women in prison for killing abusive husbands, and the law still refuses to recognise their actions as justified self-defence, rather than the aberrations of a deranged female mind.

JUSTICE FOR WOMEN, a group campaigning around domestic violence, can be contacted c/o 22, Finsbury Park Road, London, N4.

GENERAL ELECTION 1992
A Women's Manifesto for the 1990s
WOMEN FOR SOCIALISM

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Contact Women for Socialism c/o 57 Birnam Road, London, N4. Tel: 071 272 7649.

NHS: Sore Tories still trying to get even

By Harry Sloan

In 1946-48, Tory MPs following Winston Churchill's 3-line whip marched time and again through the lobbies to oppose the establishment of the National Health Service.

The NHS replaced the patchwork of private, charitable and municipal hospitals which had proved incapable of delivering adequate services in the war, and many of which were bankrupt. So popular was the new service that in its first two years it brought the collapse of the market in private health insurance, which plunged from over 10 million subscribers before the war to just 120,000 by 1950.

Many Tories still resent the NHS, and the Thatcher 'reforms' pushed through Parliament in 1990 - against almost unanimous public and professional opposition - give a framework in which a fourth term Tory government could attempt to roll back the wheel of history, moving towards an increasingly privatised system.

Until now, the Tory hostility to the NHS has taken the form of rearguard sniping exercises designed to erode from the edges rather than attack the fundamentals of the service.

Prescription charges

Despite the well-known 1950 rows and resignations in the Labour Party over the imposition of charges for NHS dental treatment and spectacles, it was the Tories under Churchill who first imposed prescription charges, beginning with a shilling (5p) per form in the early 1950s, rising rapidly to 10p per item in 1961.

After the Tories were turfed out by Wilson's Labour Party in 1964, the prescription charge was abolished for four years before reappearing as part of a crisis package in 1968.

Meanwhile in opposition Tory shadow Health minister Sir Bernard Braine floated in 1967 the idea of imposing charges for NHS treatment "which could be covered in part ... or wholly by health insurance. ... we might even look at the possibility of levying a hotel charge for a hospital stay."

When Ted Heath's Tory government took office, Chancellor Sir Anthony Barber lost no time in clobbering the NHS in a mini-budget which doubled prescription charges and jacked up dental and spectacle charges to help finance a 2.5p cut on basic



rate income tax - which gave an average industrial worker £7 per year and a top industrialist £20 per week.

Under Heath, Secretary of State Sir Keith Joseph dreamed up controversial NHS reforms which were pushed through to take effect in April 1974, just two months after the Tories had lost the election. The scheme was opposed by many NHS administrators and led to an increase of 17,000 admin staff and cost at least £9m to implement.

The incoming Labour government did not reverse the Tory measures, but set up a Royal Commission which eventually condemned them - but only after Thatcher had taken office in 1979.

Meanwhile with all Labour's policies effectively decided by the bankers and the International Monetary Fund, Chancellor Denis Healey imposed heavy cuts in NHS spending in 1976 which triggered a wave of hospital closures. The fightback against these coincided with rising wages militancy among newly-organised health unions and contributed to the 'winter of discontent' of 1978-79.

Pay increase

When Thatcher came to office she inherited a relatively generous 'comparability' pay deal for nurses which automatically implied a big increase in NHS spending if immediate cuts were to be avoided.

But the avowed Tory hostility to the NHS was visible from the outset when, despite denials before the election, prescription charges rocketed 125% within six months, another 55% in April 1980, and by December 1980 had risen five-fold in Thatcher's first 18 months.

Soaraway prescription charges have risen ever since, with the current charge of £3.60 a

massive 18 times the pre-Thatcher level. The total raised from this charge, from which 75% of patients are exempt, is derisory compared with the £30 billion NHS budget: but as a flat-rate charge it bites especially hard against the low-paid workers, many of whom are now unable to afford all the items they are prescribed.

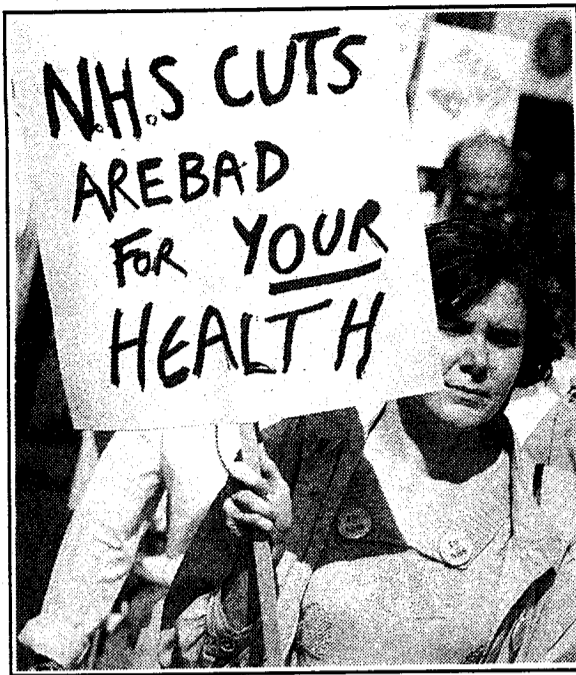
Thatcher's first Health Secretary Patrick Jenkin showed his contempt for the low-paid when he immediately suppressed the embarrassing findings of the Black Report on inequality and health, which showed that the palliative measures of the NHS had had little effect in stemming the tide of ill-health among poorer working class families.

Reforms

In 1982 the Tories again reorganised the NHS, scrapping some of Sir Keith's reforms, and establishing the present arrangement of District and Regional health authorities run - as always - by non-elected quango bodies of political appointees. To this in 1984 they added a new tier of bureaucracy by establishing 800 new regional and district general managers.

The second Thatcher victory, the landslide against Michael Foot, heralded a new wave of cash cuts, again causing hospital closures (the 'Lawson cuts'). Meanwhile cock-a-hoop Tories began fantasising on the market-style solutions that could begin privatising the NHS.

While Tory policies for five of the first six years screwed down NHS spending to below the 2% a year real terms increase needed to keep pace with new technology and an ageing population, right wing



Tory think tanks went into overdrive.

They churned out ideas for privatisation of ever-wider ranges of services; for 'hotel charges' on private beds; for compulsory private health insurance, voucher systems or 'medicards' to enable NHS money to be diverted and 'topped up' in payment for private treatment; for internal markets; and for charity funding or even a lottery to pay for the NHS.

Stave off cuts

Yet the 1987 election again saw Thatcher cynically claiming that the NHS was safe 'only in our hands', and vigorously denying any intention to privatise.

The government - as they are doing now - rushed around the country doling out one-off payments to stave off cuts and closures until after the election. Yet at the same time they agreed a 9% pay increase for nurses which they then refused fully to fund.

This was to create the huge 1987-88 winter crisis in which 5,000 NHS beds closed across the country.

This in turn helped trigger the 1988 nurses strikes over pay and cutbacks. With the election already in the bag, Thatcher was able to come out into the open and declare in January 1988 her intention to 'review' the NHS.

A back-room cabal of right wing fanatics dreamed up the new marketisation policies which appeared the January 1989 White Paper, which was then arrogantly pushed through Parliament by Health Secretary Kenneth Clarke.

Key features of the NHS Act are:

- the separation between 'purchasers' and 'providers' of health care, to create an 'internal market' in which hospitals compete against each other for patients;
- the opting out of hospitals

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HEALTH



from health authority control to become self-contained businesses (Trusts);

- the imposition of restrictions and cash limits on GPs as the stick to force larger practices into becoming independent 'fund-holders'.

Also included in the NHS Act but immediately shelved by the Tories until after the Election were sweeping changes in the system of community care, switching it from the NHS to local government, which will subject all long-stay elderly patients to means-tested charges, forcing many to sell their homes or raid their own savings to pay for their care.

Many health authorities have already begun closing all their long-stay elderly beds, leaving no choice but private nursing homes.

Though most of the NHS Act has yet to be implemented, unlike 1987 the Tories are no longer concealing a hidden agenda on the NHS. Their policies are clear for all to see. A fourth term would mean:

- More opt-outs
- More privatisation of care and more means-tested charges
- More privatisation of support services
- More bribes to take out private insurance
- The full fury of the internal market, triggering cuts and closures.

All these policies are already under way. And from the new market system, with its expensive pricing and billing of each item of treatment, it would be relatively simple for a Tory government to introduce means-tested charges for patient care, forcing many more people to take out medical insurance.

Even the most incompetent Labour efforts at defending the NHS must be better than another Tory government determined to avenge Churchill's defeat and break it up!



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TUC UNIONS

How Tories worked

to bust union strength

By Angela Watson

TORY STRATEGY has been to destroy effective trade unionism through legislation and the creation of an atmosphere of fear in the workplace.

The economic driving force was the absolute necessity for lower wages, poorer working conditions and a savage reduction in health and safety standards. All this was aimed at maintaining profitability in a gathering world recession.

The American model of company unions or, ideally, union-free workplaces protected by employer-friendly legislation which had led to a sharp drop in unionisation since the 1960s was the Tories' aim.

In Britain in the '60s the Labour government's 'In Place of Strife' attempted to shackle the unions by forcing the leadership to control the activists and consequently industrial action.

It never reached the statute books and unofficial strikes were called by shop stewards, ensuring that trade union leaders could not fulfil their side of the bargain.

Draconian

The Tories' defeat followed on its heels – the draconian Industrial Relations Act was rendered inoperable by unions breaking it at every level. The AEU engineering union was threatened with sequestration and fined £250,000

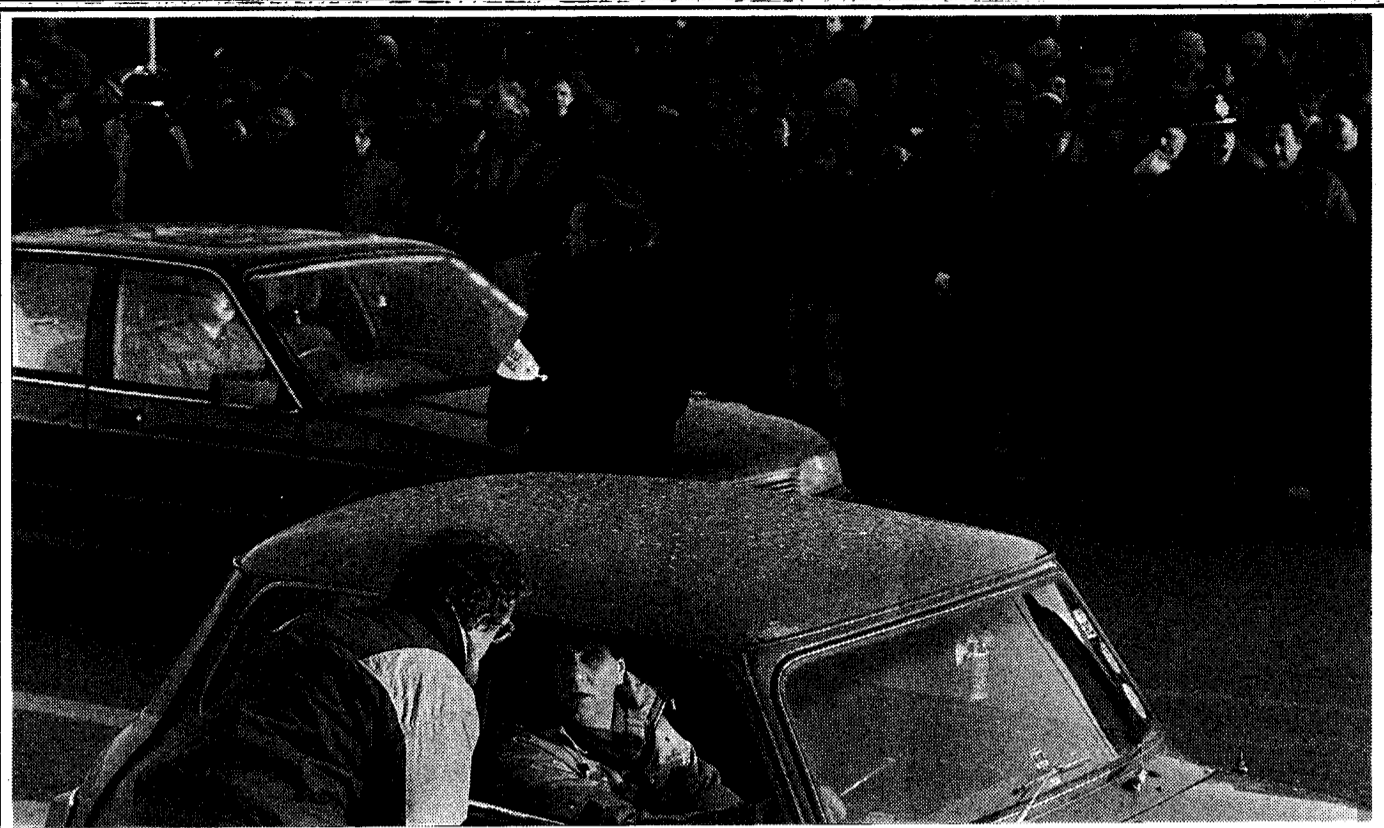


PHOTO: John Harris

for supporting unofficial action.

Then the 'Pentonville Five' flying pickets were thrown into gaol, only to emerge free, carried high on the shoulders of an enormous demonstration. The whole country saw the humiliating defeat of the law on their television sets.

This defeat was followed by the 1972 and 1974 miners' strikes, which finished off Heath's government. But the Tories learned the lesson and made their preparations.

The task that lay ahead was made easier by the 1974-9 Labour government – brought into power by trade unionists. It immediately repealed the Industrial Relations Act – but after a short period in office it turned on working people, through the 'social contract'.

Decisive

And, in turn, their job was eased by the unofficial leadership of the shop stewards who had defeated 'In Place of Strife' and the Industrial relations Act. At a conference against unemployment called by the Communist Party-dominated Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) in 1976, the platform argued that the government should not be challenged.

The idea that Labour must retain power at all costs was a decisive ingredient in the recipe that led to the situation today, with little cross-union coordination among activists and virtually no solidarity action.

Once back in power in 1979, the Tories gradually introduced legislation, exploiting the political weaknesses of the labour movement.

In 1982 union leaders met for the TUC's special conference in Wembley and declared that they would face gaol rather than accept the proposed anti-union laws. But when union members tried to implement the policy of defiance, it was another story.

Unions that tried to go it alone – ASLEF and the NGA – were cynically betrayed by



PHOTO: John Harris

Industrial struggles sabotaged by new realism

the TUC.

An explanation for the defeat of the Labour government developed and was eventually peddled by what became the Kinnock wing of the Labour party and by most trade union leaders. Apparently Labour had lost the 1979 election because strikes were unpopular, not because of Labour's austerity measures, social contract and government assault on the low paid.

They concluded that the legislation could not be defeated – the only solution was to wait for the next Labour government. Conveniently for any future Labour government, obeying the law has largely replaced any collective memory of the history of defiance of anti-union legislation.

Dominance

The dominance of new realism was cemented by crucial working class defeats crucially the 1984-85 miners' strike and subsequent defeats for the Wapping printers and dockers.

NUM leader Arthur Scargill points out in his 'New Realism – the politics of fear' that new realism is neither new nor realistic. The current situation has much in common with 'Mondism', the class collaborationism adopted by the TUC in 1927.

It was a response to the Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act passed in the aftermath of the defeat of the general

strike, in which secondary action was banned, picketing severely restricted, unions were prevented from disciplining scabs and their funds made liable for civil damage.

Just as TUC General Secretary Walter Citrine argued for a partnership between unions and capital, aiming at 'greater stability and harmony in industry', today AEU president Bill Jordan talks of a 'partnership of common interest' with employers.

Defeatism

Miners' leader AJ Cook wrote that the 'influence of the Labour party on defeatist trade union officials has been a decisive factor in fostering the growth of a Mondist policy in the trade union movement'. Citrine's 'industrial peace' meant the breaking of agreements, speed ups and a huge fall in living standards.

Then as now, a political response to the situation in the unions is necessary.

Another legacy of 13 years of Tory rule and the increasing grip of new realism is the growth of union mergers. Initially the left saw these as a bureaucratic answer to the financial crisis faced by many unions. In some cases they were seen as an opportunity for greater rank and file unity within industrial sectors.

But the emergence of the Amalgamated Engineers and Electricians Union, the AEEU, will form a company union block inside the movement. Employers have welcomed it as a 'force for change'. It is just what they need to drive home new management techniques.

In 1992, whatever the election outcome, trade unionists face the recession, the latest employers' offensive, anti-union laws and a combination of new realism and company unionism. This has effectively de-unionised many car plants and is now sweeping into the public sector.

Resistance is weak – as is reflected in strike figures – but still exists. And Britain remains relatively heavily unionised, with some 8 million union members. But the refusal to resist anti-union laws – and now, increasingly, new management techniques – has to be fought politically.

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PHOTO: John Harris



Describing the Militant that got away?

Kinnock, new realism and the Left's defeat

By Pete Firmin

NEIL KINNOCK said recently that Britain would have been better off if there had been a Labour government since 1983.

The Tories claimed that he still hankered after the left policies on which Labour fought the election that year. Kinnock, of course, meant no such thing. But it is worth taking a brief look at just how far the Labour Party has shifted.

Labour's 1983 manifesto was certainly 'left' by today's standards. It was committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament, repeal of the anti-union laws, renationalisation of privatised industry, and much more.

At that time the party was far more democratic than it is today; there had been a fight over party democracy going on since the mid-1970s. The 1983 manifesto was drawn up with much more party input than before. The leader could be elected by the whole party – not just the MPs. Mandatory re-selection resulted in a crop of new left MPs and candidates.

It was during the Labour governments of 1974-79 that the impetus came for changes in Labour's policies and party democracy. The Callaghan government's 'Social Contract' provoked escalating strikes, and was eventually defeated at both the TUC Congress and Labour Party conference.

Opposition to a key government policy overflowed into demands for greater accountability of the party's representatives. In the aftermath of the 'Winter of Discontent', provoked by its persistence with an incomes policy – forty times the current level of days lost through stoppages were seen – Labour lost the 1979 election.

Within eighteen months of the Tories being elected, mandatory re-selection and election of leader by party conference were passed. In October 1981, Tony Benn came within one per cent of beating Denis Healey for the deputy leadership.

Some ten years on and we are now in a position where resistance to redundancies and speed-up is low, MPs have been expelled, Labour Party Young Socialists has been smashed, Labour's policies look like wet Toryism, and conference democracy is on the verge of being abolished in favour of bureaucratic 'policy forums'.

From the early 1980s the right wing and the bureaucracy planned their fightback against the high tide of Bennism. After the defeat of Benn in the deputy leadership election, the SDP split and the 1983 election defeat, the right hit back with the election of Kinnock as leader, and the expulsion of the Militant editorial board.

Facing Thatcher's intransigence, the trade union leaderships were incapable of putting forward any policy other than retreat. A special TUC conference in 1982 had pledged outright opposition to the 1980 and 1982 anti-union laws – even if this meant unlawful action.

But during the first full test of the laws – the Stockport Messenger strike of mid-1983 – the TUC failed to give serious support. Verbal opposition was then dropped in favour of attempting to negotiate with the government. Ever

since then, individual unions have been left to fight alone, hamstrung by the law, and have been defeated.

The fate of the Labour left during most of the 1980s has been one of retreat and rearguard action. The marginalisation and defeat of the left has been closely linked to the major defeats suffered in the class struggle, especially the defeat of the miners' strike. The right wing has been able to consistently use the argument that struggle leads to defeats, and that only by moving right could Labour win another election.

Of course, it would have been a completely different story if the miners' strike and other major struggles had won. Thatcher would probably have been brought down. The left would have been dramatically strengthened in the Labour Party.

These massive class battles were lost because of the lack of solidarity action from the new realist leaders. But that to a certain extent begs the question, because of course the right wing leaders betray – there is nothing new or exceptional in that.

Two factors have to be taken into account when examining the failure of the Bennite left to overcome right wing and bureaucratic resistance. First, the alliance around the Bennites, for example the electoral bloc which brought Benn to within half a per cent of winning the deputy leadership battle, involved a very temporary bloc, which included left and not-so-left bureaucrats disgruntled with the Callaghan government. That alliance could not hold in the long term.

Second, the Bennite leaders were very late to organise the left, to form a powerful rank-and-file movement in the party and the unions. When they eventually formed the Socialist Movement, the defeat of the left was already sealed.

There is no guarantee that a strategy which involved strong rank-and-file organisation and an open challenge to the bureaucracy would have won. Even the best strategy can end in defeat, given a bad relationship of forces. But the possibility existed of a different outcome if a strategy based on mass action and a challenge to the bureaucracy had been adopted.

In the late 1970s there was widespread debate in the labour movement of a left policy for government – variations on the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' theme. What was lacking, though, was a programme that could relate to the struggles of the working class in a more direct way, linking their demands to what the Labour Party should do.

Far from united resistance, sections of the left have refused to defend Militant supporters, while Militant itself has, at best, set up 'front' campaigns, refusing to work with others in a broad campaign. At other times it has either put up no resistance at all, or has resorted to the courts.

The upshot of these failures is that the bureaucracy now feels confident to expel almost anyone who resists its policy directives, to impose candidates at will, and to expel two sitting MPs, Dave Nellist and Terry Fields.

Join the Campaign Against the Witch-hunt c/o 56 Ashby House, Loughborough Road, Brixton, London, SW9 7SL.

Unshackle the Unions

'We demand the complete repeal of all anti-union legislation and that the British Government comply with the Conventions and Principles of the United Nations International Labour Organisation for the full restoration of trade union rights.

We do not accept the criminalisation of trade union activity and the attacks on civil liberties.

We reject the argument that a trade union movement of 8 million members has no alternative but to comply with anti-union legislation.

We support trades unionists threatened by use of the laws and all those who challenge the laws to defend their interests.'

If you agree with this statement please write to the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee c/o Carolyn Sikorski 53a Geere Road, London E15 for more details.

A full list of supporters will be given to the media at a press conference on May Day. Arthur Scargill, Tony Benn and Joe Marino will be speaking at the press conference.

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LESBIANS
& GAY MEN

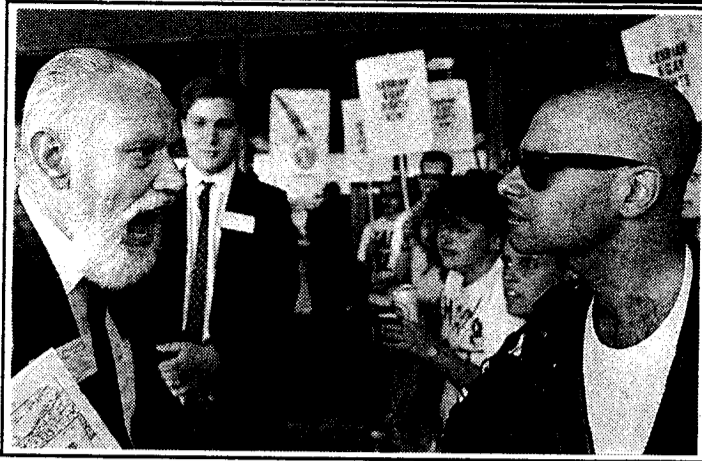


PHOTO: Paul Mattisson

'Family Rights' campaigner confronts Outrage! activist



PHOTO: Paul Mattisson

1980s - Tories make first move explicitly attacking lesbians through law

Will left learn in time?

By Peter Purton
**Labour Campaign for
Lesbian and Gay Rights**
TORY BACK-BENCHER Harry Greenway began his election campaign by announcing his support for the Asylum Bill in his local paper. He also claimed that a Labour government would mirror the policies of the last local Labour council - high rates and money for 'lesbians, gays and other deviant groups'.

While John Major might not follow Tebbit's 1987 course of stirring up homophobic prejudice against Labour's lesbian and gay equality policy, local campaigns have no such qualms. Defence of 'the family', assertion of 'traditional values', and attacks on 'deviance' are a central feature of Tory ideology.

They know that no Labour leader will court tabloid headlines by publicly coming to the defence of lesbian and gay communities. This has been a regular feature of the thirteen years of Tory rule and, if lesbians and gays had not fought back the situation would have been even worse.

State harassment has been continuous. Police victimisation of lesbians and gay men scarcely offsets the occasional gestures by liberal 'community' police officers. Nor do they offset police inaction in response

to queerbashing and murders. Prosecution of the 'Gays the Word' bookshop in 1984 has been followed by action against other bookshops and publications. Despite winning the backing of artists and liberals, these causes have failed to generate practical support from the labour movement.

Appalling silence

Where the defendants have been people like the sado-masochists sentenced to monstrous prison sentences in 'Operation Spanner' - for completely consensual adult sex - the silence of the labour movement has been appalling.

Since 1987, the state's attacks have been upstaged by legislative onslaught. Why? Because the gains made by lesbian and gay campaigners seemed to pose a real threat to Tory social order. Moves by some Labour councils to introduce *positive images* of lesbian and gay sexuality in schools triggered Section 28.

In outlawing the 'promotion of homosexuality' and the teaching of lesbian and gay relationships as 'pretended families' it was the first move which explicitly attacked lesbians through the law. It was also the first *legal* assault since the 1885 Labouchere amendment criminalised male homosexuality.

Success encouraged the right further in their crusade against the undermining of the family. Section 28 was followed by at-

tacking donor insemination - a second direct assault on lesbians - through clauses in the Human Fertilization and Embryology Act.

The notion that lesbians and gay men should not be allowed to parent also lay behind the attempt to exclude us from fostering or adopting children with the Paragraph 16 guidelines to the Childrens Act. The right also took this opportunity to strengthen the anti-gay provisions of the Criminal Justice Act with Section 25.

Obscene tabloids

Alongside the grim catalogue of Tory persecution were also the effects of the AIDS crisis. When it first became apparent that AIDS was becoming a serious health threat, and that gay men were the primary sufferers in Britain and the USA, the tabloid press ran what must rank as one of the most obscene press campaigns that even this degraded medium could manage.

Gay communities were scapegoated as 'plague-carriers' in the worst tradition of mediaeval witch-hunting. The Thatcher government's response, at the level of a *health* crisis, was criminally inadequate. Appeals for chastity are not an effective deterrent - but they were cheap!

Only in more recent years, when the real truth about HIV and AIDS translated into serious numbers of heterosexual cases, has there been a slight shift of approach. But the press continues to resurrect the terrifying image of the plague-carrier.

When the 1989 Labour Party conference reasserted its commitment to an equal age of consent, *The Sun* editorialised that this meant exposing children to AIDS. If a new Labour government acts on its commitment to a free vote on the issue, there will be a lot more of this.

Fightback

In 1979, lesbian and gay rights was a fringe issue. No political party even thought about it. Even the far left gave at best only token support to campaigns of the communities.

This changed dramatically over the following six years, as lesbians and gay men became

A bad example...

By Sam Inman

THE FAILURE of the labour movement to act *decisively* on its new policies and be seen to resist the Tory offensive, has helped create widespread disillusion in the lesbian and gay communities.

If this distrust could lead to self-organisation in order to win the labour movement to firm action it would be positive. Currently it leads to apathy, ultra-leftism or stunt politics - not connected with trying to build either a mass campaign or labour movement backing.

It is infuriating in the extreme for lesbian and gay activists *within* the labour movement to be constantly told through the media - left and mainstream - that *Outrage!*, and Peter Tatchell in particular, are the only spokespeople for lesbian and gay communities.

Stunts like the recent and much publicised 'Right to Marry' protest or-

ganised by *Outrage!*, are ambiguous if well-intentioned. Of course lesbians and gay men should have their relationships legally recognised. Death of a partner can result in lesbians and gay men losing their right to a home and can lead to horrific experiences with homophobic families.

But in celebrating an institution that has formed a cornerstone of women's oppression for centuries - legally tying women to the family - only serves to further depoliticise the issues at stake.

An example of this depoliticisation of the politics of sexuality was seen on a recent TV phone-in debate about the latest Royal separation. One woman called in to say how, as a lesbian, she thought the prospect of a Royal divorce was 'setting a bad example'. She was laughed at.

It just shows how you cannot fight heterosexism and homophobia by playing up to the straights. *Outrage!* should take careful note.

both active and organised across the labour movement. Trade union lesbian and gay groups began to force unions into better equality policies.

The miners' strike of 1984-85 was a turning point, providing the impetus to win the first clear policy votes at the TUC and Labour Party conferences in 1985. Within the labour movement, despite all the triumphs of new realism, LCLGR has succeeded in consolidating these policy gains. Even the 1987 and 1992 Labour manifestos retained commitments on equality policies.

Biggest ever

Section 28 generated the biggest political movement ever seen by Britain's lesbian and gay communities. Organised and run by lesbians and gay men, the campaign turned out tens of thousands in protest.

Aside from the national mobilisations, actions were organised in towns and cities which had never seen lesbian and gay protest before.

One gain from the unprecedented media debate was in public perception of the questions. A recent opinion poll revealed a big majority in favour of lesbian and gay equality - a useful reminder to anyone who assumes that steps towards equality will inevitably be unpopular.

The left could play a role in preparation for the bigger battles to come, by actively championing the struggles of lesbians and gay men against institutional, social and legislative oppression. There is no doubt that these struggles will continue. The question is - will the left and the labour movement learn their significance in time?

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Wales: Tory dream and workers' nightmare

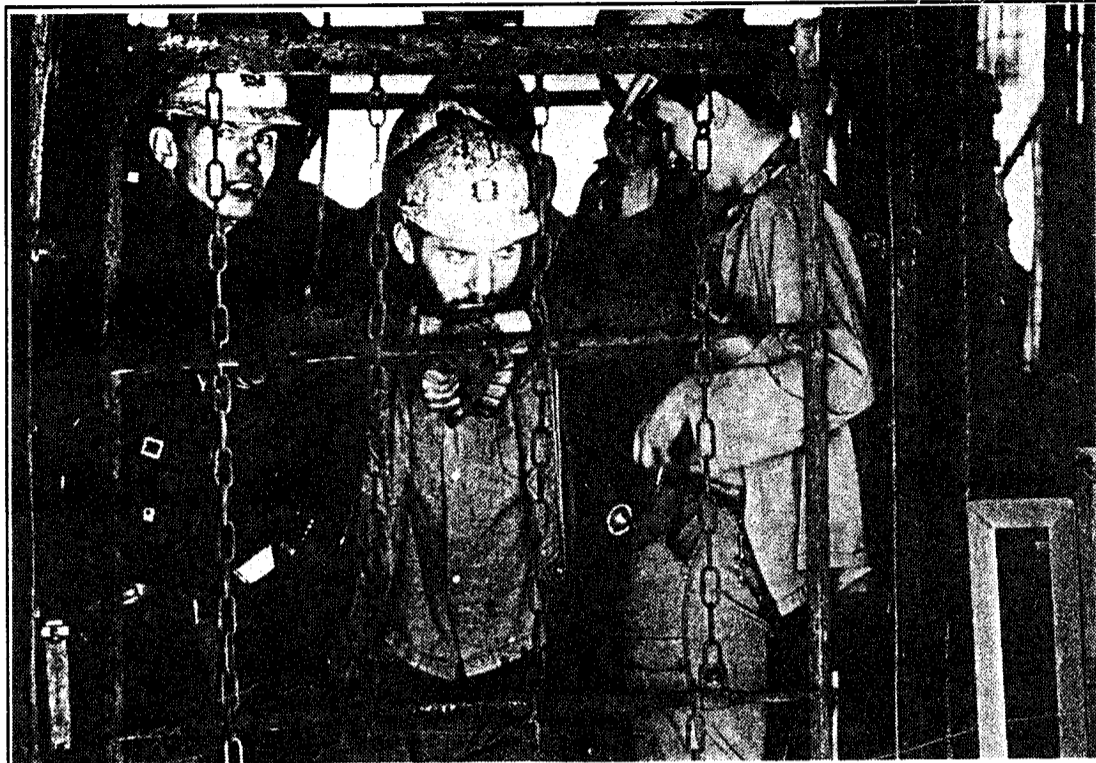
By Dafydd Rhys

The 1980s will be remembered as the years when the Welsh coal industry was finally destroyed. Wales entered the decade with over 30,000 people employed in coal and left it with less than a thousand. This butchery was made possible by the defeat of the 1984-85 miners' strike, a defeat with far-reaching political and economic consequences in Wales.

Additional job losses in steel and other manufacturing industries pushed unemployment above the UK average in the early eighties. It peaked at over 15 per cent in 1986 but then began to steadily decline and the gap between Wales and the UK average began to narrow.

Wales attracted a fifth of all foreign investment in the late '80s, despite containing only a twentieth of the UK workforce. Welsh secretary Peter Walker claimed a major success, and declared 'Wales entered the 1990s with remarkable economic prospects... the 1990s therefore do not contain the downside risk of the 1980s.'

A glance behind the rhetoric reveals another story. Welsh workers slipped to the bottom of the UK incomes table in the 1980s, earning only 88 per cent



of the UK average in 1990.

The Tories have been more successful in Wales than any other part of Britain in pushing down wages while increasing productivity. They have created a low waged, low skill economy based on the entry of large numbers of women into the workforce.

Two factors made this possible. First, the huge pool of unemployment made it relatively

easy to put the squeeze on wages. Second, the defeat of the miners' strike had a devastating impact. It destroyed the South Wales NUM, without doubt the union with the strongest traditions of militancy in Wales, and demoralised supporters of the strike.

The Wales TUC has enthusiastically supported the view that inward investment is the only answer. Affiliated

unions have pursued a policy of single-union deals and no strike agreements.

Many of the US and Japanese companies which have invested in Wales do not recognise unions in any of their other locations. But they are happy to accept a workforce disciplined by their own organisations.

Following a brief left wing flourish in the early eighties the Plaid Cymru leadership has

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UNITED KINGDOM?

also been moving steadily rightwards. Dafydd Ellis Thomas moved the writ for Bobby Sands MP in 1981, but by 1990 he was calling for a ban on a visit by Sinn Fein councillors! Plaid also opposed mass non-payment of the Poll Tax and so failed to capitalise on the issue in the way the SNP did in Scotland.

The challenge is to build a new left in the Welsh labour movement with an alternative to the inward investment line of the right wing leaders. We need a left which positively addresses the national question and defends the Welsh language.

These demands can be focused in a call for a Welsh Assembly with real powers to defend Welsh workers, which will only be won through struggle. In this process we will need to draw on the rich history of working class organisation in Wales. Significantly, 1992 marks the eightieth anniversary of the publication of the syndicalist *Miners' Next Step* in the Rhondda. One sentence remains as fresh and vital as the day it was written: 'The old policy of identity of interest between employers and ourselves be abolished, and a policy of open hostility be installed.'

'Resolute' stand fails in Ireland

By David Coen

The 1985 Anglo Irish Agreement must have stuck in the gullet of 'the most Unionist Prime Minister since the War.'

Margaret Thatcher had to concede the involvement of a 'foreign

government' - Dublin - in order to counter the rise of Sinn Fein. The 'resolute approach' was seen to wobble. Looking back, the Agreement's only success was as 'presentational cover' for a Government embarrassed by world-wide censure of its policy in Ireland, particularly during the 1980-81

Hunger Strikes.

Thatcher had personal as well as political reasons for her hatred of Irish Republicans. Her political mentor Airey Neave was killed by an INLA bomb in 1979. Five years later her whole cabinet was almost wiped out in the IRA attack on the Grand Hotel in

Brighton.

The 'resolute approach' had many attractions for the British ruling class when Thatcher became Tory leader in 1975. The economic crisis combined with Heath's defeat by the miners the year before led some sections of the ruling class, according to Peter Wright of 'Spycatcher' fame, to consider a coup.

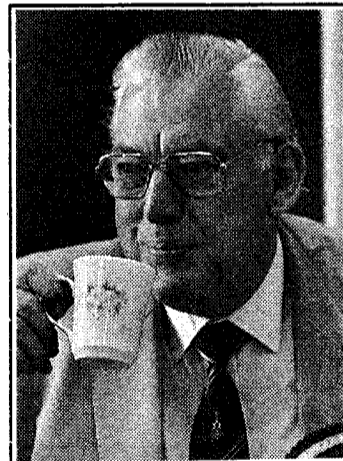
But the dirty tricks were not solely directed against the Wilson Government, but also Heath. Colin Wallace and Fred Holroyd have both told how the Northern Ireland situation was used for destabilisation purposes. Airey Neave was himself closely linked with the 'security' services.

Tory policy on Northern Ireland after 1979 was at first little different from that of Roy Mason under Labour. There were no concessions on political status during the Hunger Strikes, though the demands were later granted in all but name.

Throughout the 1980s Thatcher's refusal to talk to 'the men of violence' ran parallel to a stepping up of the covert war. An Amnesty International Report in June 1988 detailed 49 killings by the security forces in Northern Ireland during the previous six years. Most were Catholics - Nationalists - and the victims were generally unarmed.

Alongside this was the return to a strategy employed by Brigadier Frank Kitson in the early 1970s of setting Loyalists and Nationalists against each other in a series of tit-for-tat killings.

The new model involves using Loyalist death squads to target Republicans using information from the Army and the RUC. As well as keeping British hands clean, it has the



Paisley and the Loyalists: calling the shots?

added benefit of showing them in the role of peacekeepers.

Overall the strategy has failed, epitomised by the Brooke talks. After 20 years of 'benign' direct rule from Westminster, a British settlement is as far away as ever. Which is a surprise only to those who believed that the sectarian statelet could be reformed or that Britain is actually the peacemaker.

The Labour Party now favours 'unity by consent' but supports the Brooke talks excluding Republicans. The question for those who see the Anglo Irish Agreement as the vehicle for harmonisation, ultimately leading to Irish unity, is this:

What happens when the Unionists refuse consent, not only to unity but to any steps towards harmonisation? The last 23 years suggests that another internal 6-county settlement will be tried, combined of course with vigorous prosecution of the war against the Nationalists.

Scottish crisis looming

By Patrick Baker

LATEST opinion polls in Scotland indicate a swing to Labour, and a slight fall in support for the SNP from around 30 per cent to about 27 per cent.

But despite that the SNP vote will be nearly double that in 1987. A swing to Labour was probably inevitable as the election got closer and the desire to vote effectively to get rid of the Tories hardened.

But whatever the precise vote of the SNP, the national question will not go away.

Whichever party wins out on 9 April, it is sure to face the biggest threat to the 'United Kingdom' in decades. Out of step with the Westminster majority in the 1980s, the people of Scotland are now increasingly turning to independence.

There is no doubt that many don't just see the Tories as the problem, but the whole system. If Labour is elected and a Scottish assembly set up, the demand for it to assume sovereign

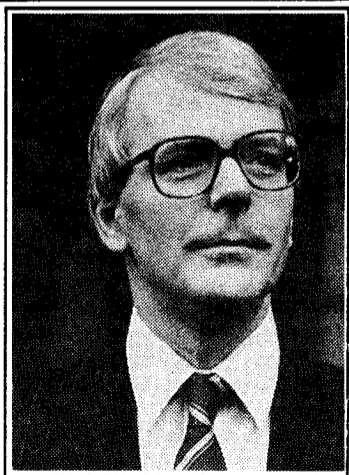
powers will be very powerful.

Scotland was devastated in the 1980s. The industrial backbone of Scotland, the steel and mining industries, were all but destroyed. The closure of the Ravenscraig steel plant was the last straw.

The Tories will be reduced to a tiny rump at the elections. They only have nine seats out of 72 now, but they'll be lucky to emerge with five after April 9. But Scotland could still be governed by the Tories, if Labour is defeated on an all-UK basis.

The logic for many Scots is clear - we've never voted Tory, and with our own parliament we wouldn't have a Tory government. By the same token, of course, an independent Scotland would almost guarantee a Tory majority in England and Wales.

John Major has pointed this out. 'Look' he says 'our policy isn't out of self-interest. It's our high political principles.' This is absolute nonsense. The reason for Tory unionism is precisely naked self-interest: for the British ruling class, the idea of an independent Scotland, with its own



laws, finances, and foreign policy, is anathema. An independent Scotland going in a totally different political direction would have an enormous impact on the rest of the UK.

But the tide has turned against Major, as he well knows. Whether through a Scottish Assembly or independence, independent representation for Scotland is inescapable. And a token assembly with a 'cultural' brief won't be enough.

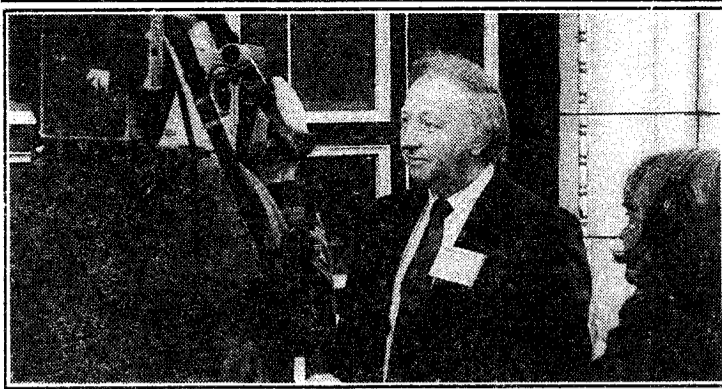
Until Scotland has at least an assembly with the teeth to reverse the ravages of the Thatcher years, Britain's constitutional crisis will not go away.

Special
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Election
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STATE &
LAW



Victim of high court rulings: NUM leader Arthur Scargill

Law and order: the silence is deafening

By Piers Mostyn

With the skill of experienced ballet dancers, the Tories have deftly avoided any serious criticism on the issue of 'law and order'. And yet they ought to stand most exposed on this question.

From beginning to end, they made it a centrepiece of their policy. But long term statistics over the period show that, despite massive increases in spending, reported crime has doubled since the Tories came to power. On top of this there have been years of growing crisis in the criminal justice system.

The police are increasingly seen as a law unto themselves – literally. Only recently the official inquiry into the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad described it as being 'out of control'. And North London police officers are being investigated for selling cocaine and framing people up.

Recent jury acquittals in political trials – Irish men Kevin O'Donnell, Dessie Ellis and William McKane; Randle and Pottle; and numerous Poll Tax riot defendants – do not reflect

a cleaning up of the system but massive public cynicism in it.

There have been waves of prison riots and strikes. Deaths in custody – whether black people in East London police stations or young offenders committing suicide on remand – have become a major issue. So has police violence, again particularly against black people.

Ironically, 13 years of monetarist Tory law and order policy are no better symbolised than by the Metropolitan Police having an annual budget of hundreds of thousands of pounds for paying out settlements for claims for wrongful arrests, assaults and malicious prosecutions.

Privatising the police would never work. Given coppers' soaring wage demands and the money that needs doling out to keep their victims quiet, it could never be made profitable.

Then there are the courts – a major wing of the British state that remains entirely unaccountable, elitist and tied to highly conservative values. It too faces increasing criticism for its unquestioning reverence towards the police and its refusal to accept that it can be

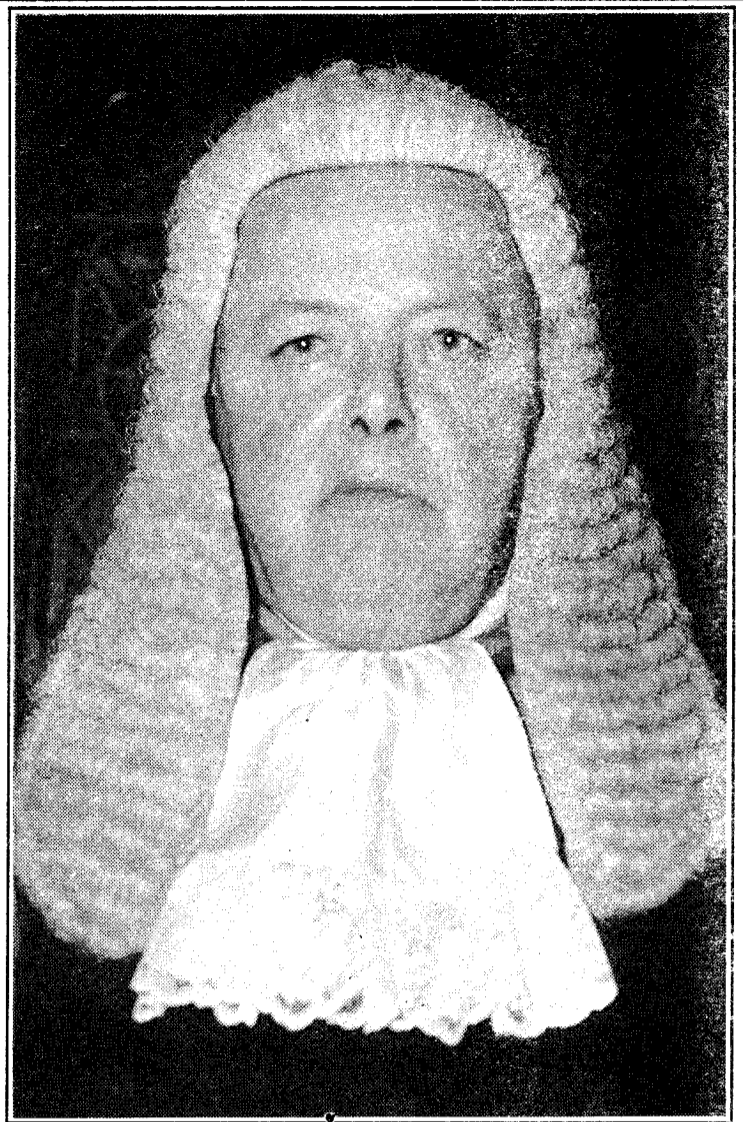
wrong. The early and unlamented departure of Lord Chief Justice Lane – who's reign substantially overlapped that of Thatcher and Major – has symbolised that lack of confidence.

After holding the line for decades on the anachronism that crime is created by 'bad people', the Tories had to buckle when the police were officially describing it as caused by socio-economic factors. Of course the police would. They wanted to deflect the blame.

But for the Tories it involved a U-turn on a question of fundamental ideology. It was also an implicit admission that the more or less continuous social disintegration since they came to power is linked precisely to the persistent economic crises they helped to create.

But the U-turn was necessary and it served its function. The political debate on the causes and remedies of crime could not be won.

So the solution was to stop the debate by agreeing with the opposition. At the same time they were able to rely on Labour's bipartisanism on the issue to degenerate into a head-long slide into Tory-style



policies.

Roy Hattersley has studiously courted the reactionary Police Federation. Labour local authorities are now promoting police-council-business partnerships in place of the demand for accountability and support for oppressed groups that found limited favour ten years ago. Police pay and numbers would increase under Labour.

Labour's commitment to civil liberties will likewise stretch little beyond cosmetic law reform. Gone is the opposition to the 1986 Public Order Act or parts of the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

There has been silence on the large-scale police operations followed by criminal prosecutions to harass and convict gay men on 'gross indecency' and

other charges. Even Labour's commitment to scrap the Prevention of Terrorism Act has been diluted to a promise to 'replace' it.

And so the escalating crime wave (from which the working class suffers most: both as victims and perpetrators) has gone undebated. The concept of 'law and order' loses its meaning when the party that championed it has presided over 13 years of inner city riots, mass law-breaking over the Poll Tax, the discrediting of the police force and the phenomenal social cost of the highest prison population per capita in Europe.

It's time for socialists to challenge the underlying consensus by fighting for ideas of social solidarity and democratic control.

The crushing of municipal socialism

By Paul Lawson

LOCAL GOVERNMENT was at the heart of the Tories' attacks on the 'nanny state'. When Thatcher came to power in 1979 local councils wielded considerable financial clout.

By definition, they were bastions of non-Tory local power in many areas. But what set the Tories on their crusade against local jobs and services was the growth of the local government left – 'municipal socialism'.

In the early '80s, the GLC under Ken Livingstone and other metropolitan councils like Sheffield, putting forward progressive policies aimed at helping working class communities, occupied centre stage.

Infuriated at the ability of local authorities to buck the Westminster monetarist directives, Thatcher devised two major proposals which would ditch the municipal socialists – rate capping to curb local financial power, and the abolition of the Metropolitan councils, which would

conveniently scrap the GLC.

Abolition of the Metropolitan councils was difficult to resist. But rate capping could, potentially, be resisted by refusing to set rate-capped budget levels, and by mobilising workers and the local communities in defence of social needs.

The struggle over rate capping emerged simultaneously with the miners' strike in 1984-5. To be effective it required co-ordinated resistance of a swathe of Labour councils, prepared to go into illegality and face disqualification.

Brave words however did not bring forth such brave actions as council by council the determination of the local government Labour left was tested. A crunch point came with the GLC.

Livingstone's decision to fold up the rate capping struggle, against the resistance of John McDonnell and others, gave the green light to dozens of Labour councils to shoulder arms. In the end, half way through 1985, the Camdens, Greenwicks and Islington had fallen by the wayside. But the struggle was valiantly fought by Liver-

pool, under Militant leadership and by Lambeth.

But in the end resistance could not be sustained by just two councils. After the imposition of abolition and rate capping the Tories stormed forward to hit local government with privatisation – 'compulsory competitive tendering'.

The local government unions, willingly in the case of NUPE and the GMB, issuing unmet threats of resistance by NALGO, largely conceded – at least at national level. As the tide of redundancies grew in the late 1980s, local branches were generally left to fight off cuts and redundancies piecemeal, suffering numerous defeats. And then came the poll tax.

The poll tax was a bridge too far for Thatcher. It ran into trouble because of its blatant injustice and because it hit too broad a section of the population, including Tory supporters. And it ran into trouble because a resistance campaign was constructed which did not rely on the support of national unions, elected authorities or Labour leaders.



Poll tax non-payment and the mass campaign it engendered escaped the control of the Labour and union bureaucracy; unusually, it could build mass support without winning inside the official labour movement structures. That was the key to its success. The bureaucracy could not derail it.

In March 1990 200,000 people marched against the tax. The calculated police assault on the demonstration failed to discredit opposition to the

poll tax; rather it just highlighted and reinforced that opposition.

The poll tax is gone but Thatcher's local government legacy lives on. Underfunding is still leading to massive cuts and job losses. And municipal socialism is all but dead and buried, its partisans largely having ceased council activity or moved sharply to the right. Whoever wins the elections a massive fight to defend and rebuild local services will be needed.

De Klerk's landslide victory shores up white power

By Charlie van Gelderen

'A white referendum is the most insulting and most unacceptable of all the political structures of apartheid - a betrayal of the political policy and practice of our movement.' This is how WOSA, South Africa's Workers Organisation for Socialist Action, described the recent vote.

De Klerk's huge majority in his white referendum surprised nearly every commentator, and probably even De Klerk himself. But how will this vote of the white minority affect the black majority of the population and the progress towards a democratic constitution?

Although the ANC and the Communist Party (SACP) reneged on their previous promises to have no truck with the institutionalised racism of

the state and urged whites to vote 'yes' to De Klerk's reforms, this outcome will rebound on them.

Whites did not vote for the surrender of their economic and social privileges. They knew that a return to apartheid, advocated by the Conservative Party and the openly fascist AWB, was not feasible.

Such a retrograde move would still further cripple the already enfeebled economy, bringing with it renewed demands for sanctions which even the British Tories would find difficult to oppose. So they gave De Klerk his landslide victory to strengthen his hand in his negotiations with the ANC and others in the liberation movement.

The National Party is now openly talking of an interim government, including the ANC, 'for the next decade'.

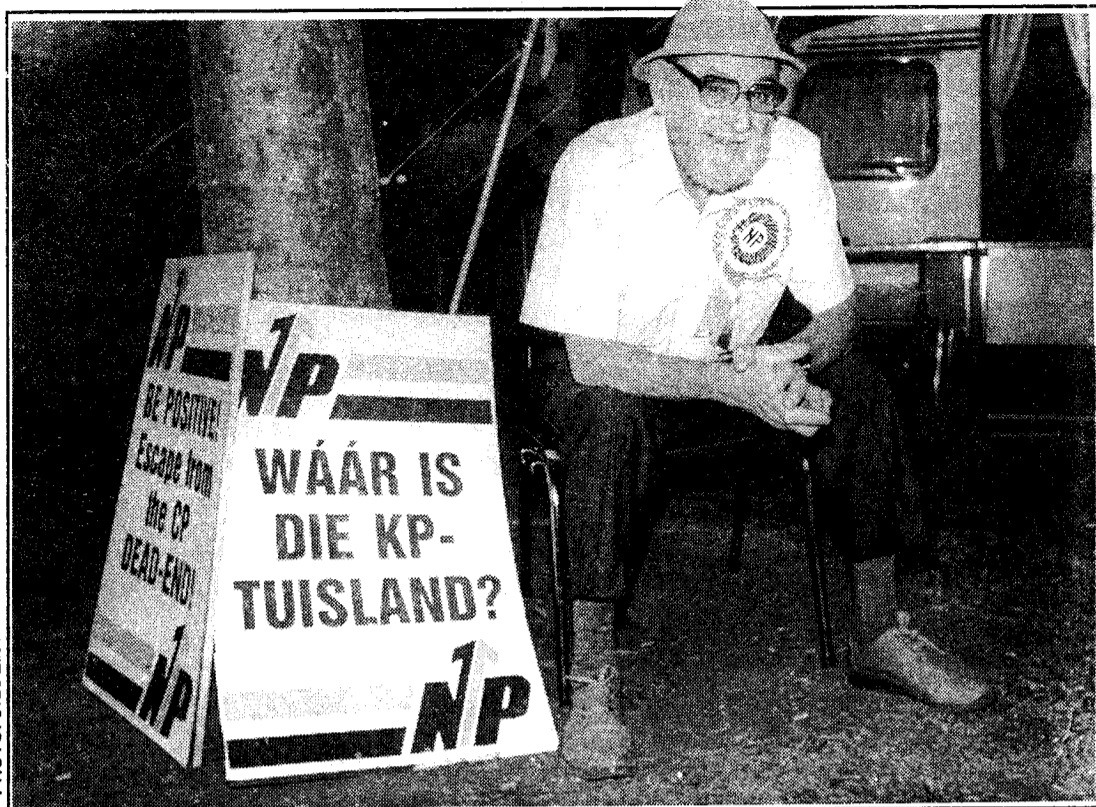


PHOTO: Orde Eliason/Link

National Party campaigner backs De Klerk's reforms

They now feel strong enough to defy the call for a Constituent Assembly, unless it is backed up by militant mass action, drawing in organised workers, youth and the landless rural people.

De Klerk knows this. This is why his first demand after the referendum results were announced was to demand the

disbanding of the ANC's armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe.

WOSA concludes 'negotiations for power sharing are a death trap for the oppressed and exploited people. We have to continue the liberation struggle by means of mass action and mass mobilisation for fundamental social reforms around the issues of employ-

ment, housing, electrification, health, sport, culture and recreation.

Only by organising the urban and rural poor in such mass campaigns will we be able to alter the balance of forces in favour of the oppressed people in order to achieve full democratic rights by means of a Constituent Assembly...'

French local elections

Cresson ready for the chop

By Patrick Baker

'There will be, some day, a change of Prime Minister. What day? I cannot tell you...'. Edith Cresson knows very well that her days are numbered, after winning less than one in every five votes in recent local elections.

And no wonder. Beaten by the Front Nationale in areas of Paris as well as Nice, the Socialist Party needs

something close to a miracle to save it. They have lost half their vote in four years.

According to *Le Monde*, it is not the issue of immigration, picked on by Le Pen, that is making Socialist voters desert in droves. Rather it is their handling of the economy, and the corruption that has plagued the party. Whether a reshuffle inserting EC commission president Jacques Delors in Cresson's place will fit the bill is doubtful.

Delors might be more popular - most people are - but whether he can salvage the Socialists' fortunes after a decade of austerity and broken promises is something else.

Victor

There is no doubt, on the other hand, as to who emerged the victor from the March 22 elections.

Jean-Marie Le Pen did not outscore the traditional right Union for France (UPF) in the Nice/ Marseille region as he had hoped.

But he beat the Socialists, and saw his vote climb to nearly 30 per cent in the area. On a national level, the number of FN councillors increased by three quarters.

As for the left, the Communist Party vote held up fairly well with around 8 per cent. Communist dissidents, such as the 'reconstructeurs', generally did better where they stood.

The only national far left campaign, presented by Lutte Ouvriere (Workers' Struggle), won around 2 per cent.

Exceptions to the rule included candidates supported by the Revolutionary Communist League



'Mr Europe' - architect of capitalist Europe, Jacques Delors

(LCR) in the Vosges and Seine Saint Denis, winning 5.5 and 10 per cent respectively.

But these results are small comfort. The combined left vote, at around 25 per cent, has taken a nose-dive.

Far-right coalition

The danger of a coalition between the 'orthodox' right and the Front Nationale is there, having been openly canvassed by former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing. It would command nearly half the vote, judging by the local election figures.

Such a threat needs two answers: first and foremost, a united mobilisa-

tion against the Front Nationale. Having brought 100,000 onto the streets on January 25, the anti-racist movement must build the planned May Day demonstration into the biggest rejection of the far right that France has ever seen on its streets.

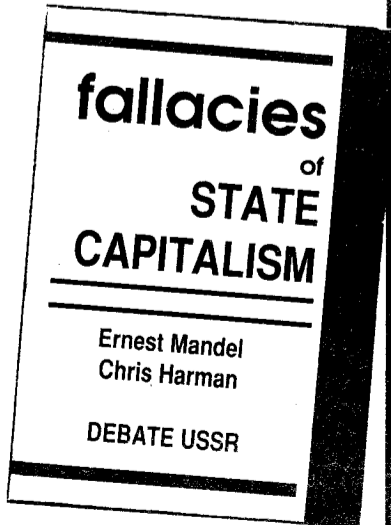
Second, the rotten leadership that has alienated the Socialist Party electorate must be thrown out. Jacques Delors might be more of a diplomat than Edith Cresson, but he has exactly the same politics.

Without a party that will fight for the interests of French workers, the door is open to the likes of Jean Marie Le Pen.

Fallacies of State Capitalism

A debate between Ernest Mandel and Chris Harman

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The ruins of the left intelligentsia

By Will McMahon

ROBIN BLACKBURN'S editorial 'The ruins of Westminster', in the latest New Left Review (NLR), centres on three issues: constitutional reform and Charter '88, the left agenda and Europe, and a demand for PR.

Amongst these Blackburn views PR as 'the strategic imperative' - giving space for a new left party - and so calls for a liberal-Labour coalition in preference to a Labour majority government. If this sounds familiar, it is because it was the litany of the thankfully deceased *Marxism Today*.

That it should appear on the eve of the election in NLR is evidence of the intellectual collapse of a section of the left intelligentsia which previously had some association with revolutionary marxism.

Blackburn's support for Charter '88 is a reflection of the lack of class interest in his position. Not only is Charter

'88 itself undemocratic, but it makes no mention of the democratic right of working people to have a voice in the running of the economy.

And his mistaken, and almost unconscious, conflation of Europe with the west European Community is only overshadowed by his strategy for eastern Europe - its gradual, but wholesale, integration into the west European capitalist economy.

Finally, there is the call for coalition government to force the issue of PR, and in turn make space for a new left party. This puts the desire of these intellectuals for their project above the crucial need for a majority Labour government, creating space for class struggle. It is all too reminiscent of the ultra left politics of the RCP, but with an additional facade of 'pragmatism' and 'reason'.

So why has the layer of intellectuals represented by Blackburn gone for political necrophilia with the corpse of

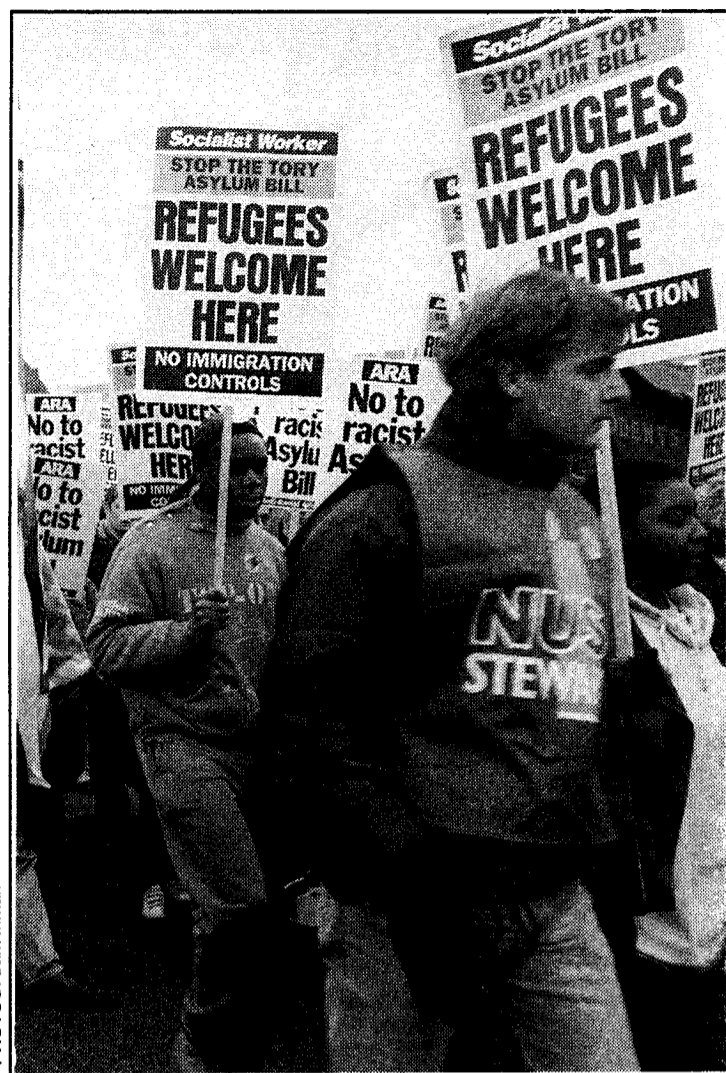
eurocommunism?

The answer lies partly in the obsession of the British left intelligentsia with western Europe and the supposed backwardness of the British political system. But the recent *Pristine Culture of Capitalism*, by Ellen Meiksins Wood, effectively debunks the mythology of British backwardness. Rather than being peculiarly backward, it argues, it is a particularly capitalist social formation.

But for Blackburn and friends, the working class has let down the generation of '68. The defeat of the 1984-85 Miners' Strike was the signal for the intellectuals' retreat from class and the slide towards the more comfortable politics of constitutional reform.

Is this an aberration? I hope so. It is with sadness rather than anger that we see the editor of collections such as *Revolution and Class Struggle* tread the path to the morass of eurocommunism.

PHOTOS: Sam Inman



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Learning the lessons of history?

Killing the Nazi Menace: how to stop the fascists

Written by Chris Bambery
Published by SWP £1.50

Reviewed by Pete MacDonald

THIS PAMPHLET starts off with a general if staid round up of Trotsky's analysis of fascism. This is probably the most convincing portion of the text, partly because by definition it is the least self-serving. It accurately traces the petit-bourgeois roots of fascism that are turned into 'a battering ram against the working class.'

What Bambery then fails to do however, is to link the current threat of fascism in Britain to those petit-bourgeois elements which thrived under the deregulation of Thatcherism, and which are now facing a recession.

In fact the role of Thatcherism is completely ignored by the pamphlet - there is no mention made of her 'swamping' speech of 1979 and the effect this had on taking votes away from the National Front.

No, we are told that the only thing that stopped the

fascist threat in its tracks was (predictably) the ANL. Bambery goes further, stating 'The ANL was a model of how to organise against the Nazis' - admitting to no regrets, no mistakes, no corrections and therefore needing no alteration despite over a decade of cold storage.

Given this, it is only logical that in any other country

dent and more organised than they were 20 years ago' no conclusions are drawn.

The examples of mobilisations against the fascists are Cable Street and Lewisham. These are important dates, but do the long term struggles of the black community in Newham, Southall and Bradford count for so little in the author's eyes that they do not even merit a mention?

Whilst the pamphlet acknowledges that it was racist police actions such as an operation entitled PNH ('Police Nigger Hunt') upon which the NF built in the 1970s the fight against fascism is entirely abstracted from the fight against racism.

The fact is self-organisation increased throughout the '80s. When the black community has fought back it has been criminalised by the police - hence the entire basis of the slogan 'Self-defence is no offence'. Yet such struggles are considered unworthy of inclusion in the pamphlet since they do not form part of a single-issue 'anti-fascist' campaign.

Finally the SWP seem to have failed to learn those very lessons they would seek to preach to others. We are lectured that Trotsky's 'strategy centred on the need to build unity against the Nazi's - unity in action' and a chapter is headed 'Germany defeat through division.' By their own definitions it seems Britain's current movement has a long way to go.



where there is a problem, the SWP has the 'answer'. Hence those fighting Le Pen in France are told 'They could follow the model of the ANL in Britain!'

The fact that the struggle has moved on since the 1970s does not seem to be a matter with which the author is over happy to grapple. Whilst it is fleetingly mentioned that 'black people are more confi-

Feedback

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Productivity key to Stalinist failure

Harry Sloan spoils an otherwise very good account of the state under Stalinism with a false claim regarding the criterion for success of socialist construction in the USSR.

The real comparison that counts, said Trotsky, is between living standards in the USSR and those in the advanced capitalist countries.

This is not true. Trotsky said that '...above all, the productivity of human labour' was what counted (Revolution Betrayed, chapter 1 section 2)

Trotsky held Lenin's theory that in the advanced capitalist countries there exists a labour aristocracy that is effectively bought-off by means of imperialist super-profits and upon which rests a labour bureaucracy. Trotsky gives a superb illustration of this theory in an article of 10 October 1938.

The various layers of the labour aristocracy and a bureaucracy enjoy either above average wages; better working conditions and shorter hours etc; or a combination of both.

It is, for instance, no mere coincidence that, associated with the labour movement, there are a number of academic marxists who either reject Lenin's theory of labour aristocracy (eg Eric Hobsbawm), cast doubts about its validity, or simply ignore it.



These marxists are unwittingly part of today's labour aristocracy and unconsciously they avoid biting the hand that feeds them.

The labour aristocracy is the chief social prop of imperialism and, together with the labour bureaucracy is particularly privileged compared to the exploited workers in the so-called 'developing' capitalist countries.

Workers in former East Germany enviously observed the living standards of fellow workers across the border where the productivity of labour was undoubtedly higher.

But many of them failed to also see the numerous invisible channels by which part of the wealth created in the 'third world' is syphoned off to support a large but limited labour aristocracy and bureaucracy in a handful of rich capitalist countries including former West Germany.

By simply comparing living standards East and West, imperialism has always tried to hide the fact that the affluence within its showcase countries, the democracies, is largely paid for by the misery and impoverishment of the exploited masses of Africa, Latin America, the Indian sub-continent etc.

Roy Rudditt
NW London

Get back to the real issue

Rather than enter the debate about unconditional critical support for Irish socialist republicanism I'd like to encourage SO to get on with our main job here - building and maintaining anti-imperialism.

This could include discussions of the Labour Party's position on Ireland and what is being done to change this, coverage of anti-imperialist initiatives which SO may or may

not be involved in and reviews of the many TV programmes, articles and books (some from left publishers) that put the blame squarely on the 'unruly', 'sectarian' Irish.

Above all, more emphasis on how we in the heart of the beast can stop this last Great British colonial 'intervention' (823 years young).

Mike Belbin
SW London



View from Long Kesh

IN RESPONSE to Liam Mac Uaid's letter in SO 18, in which he responds to criticisms of a previous article written by him about Ireland, may I make a few comments.

Firstly on reading the article by Liam, I too had criticisms which I'd considered forwarding to your paper but didn't, mainly because I'm a relatively new addition to you readership and am not (as Liam assumes of your readers) sufficiently familiar with your history of 'involvement in virtually every serious anti-imperialist initiative of recent years' or of your theoretical positions.

I remember thinking when I'd read the article 'they've taken a series of current happenings/events in the six counties, put them together and included them in their paper as if to say - and now, an article on Ireland'. I felt confused by it and wondered what readers from outside Ireland might make of it.

I can't recall everything that was in it now, but do remember being a bit disturbed by the use of the term 'tit-for-tat' because what it implies is so far removed from what is actually happening here. Also, it is a term more often found in pro-British/anti-republican publications or tabloid type reporting.

It is true that the IPLO have carried out a number of blatantly sectarian attacks on Protestants, and while I personally feel that these attacks were/were wrong morally, politically, militarily, tactically and every other wrong you can think of, a dozen or more Catholics were probably killed or wounded during this period.

The point being, every time a Catholic is shot it's said to be in retaliation for a previous killing, when more often than not, the previous killings have in fact been similar random attacks on Catholics by loyalists.

The use of the term apart from being factually incorrect is, in my opinion, dangerous, in that it can lead to people being confused about the conflict here.

While possibly agreeing with

Liam that 'in a revolutionary situation it may be necessary to deal harshly with collaborators, but political considerations come before moral and military ones.'

I fail to see how anything in his article 'continued to be borne out by subsequent events'. His assertion that 'the IRA would not have killed the Protestant building workers at Trebane if they had been Catholics' is misleading, in that it insinuates that the IRA would not kill collaborators if they were Catholic and ignores the fact that you simply would not get a van load of Catholic workers returning from work on a British Army installation.

The killing of UDR and RUC members by the IRA has been portrayed as sectarian by loyalist politicians and British Government ministers (or as

'genocide against the Protestant community' by Ken Maginness) and whether or not you agree with the killings and Teebane, or any other killings carried out by the IRA, it is not these deaths that make a Protestant worker a loyalist.

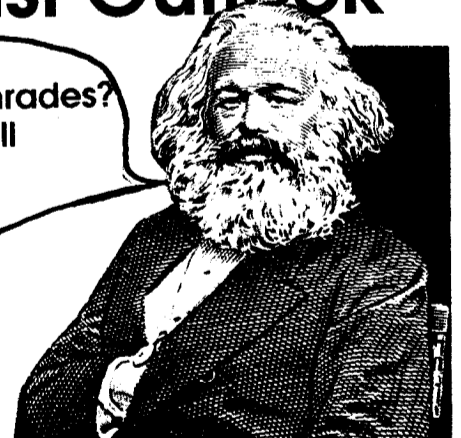
It may be the case in theory, that all members of the working class are potential socialists and by extension that all members of the Irish working class are potential supporters of an independent Ireland.

The reality however, and historically proven to be the case, is that the British presence militarily, economically, and otherwise, is an obstacle which until removed, will never see the uniting of the working class in Ireland.

P. Devenny
Long Kesh Prison

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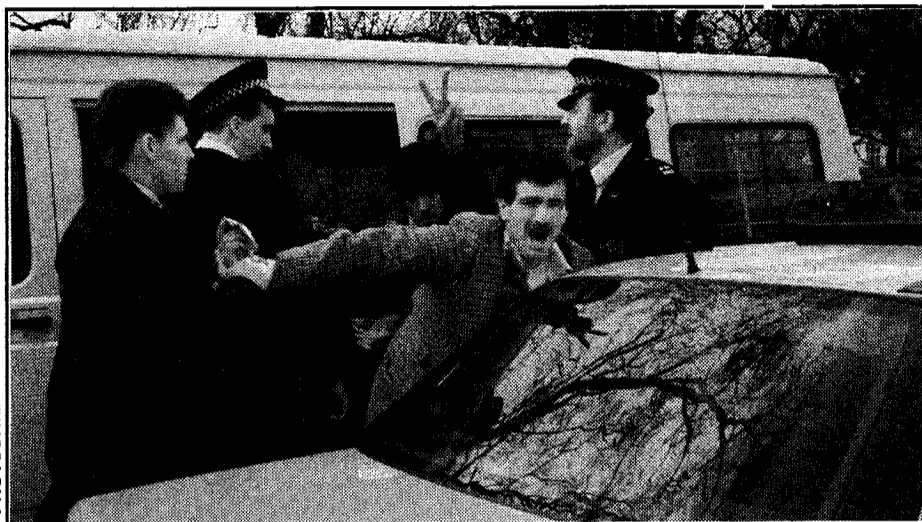
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socialist OUTLOOK

Violence in London

Cops beat Kurdish protestors



PHOTOS: Mihrisah Safa/ Zaba



ONE HUNDRED police attacked a Kurdish demonstration outside the Turkish embassy last Tuesday. The attack with truncheons and dogs left many Kurds with head injuries, including one man, Kadir Koskocon, who had his skull smashed.

Koskocon was left unconscious on the ground for one hour before police, fearing that he would die, airlifted him to hospital. After two days unconscious in hospital he was removed by police into custody. It is not known whether he will suffer permanent affects from his beating.

The Kurdish demonstrators were protesting against continued Turkish repression against Kurdistan, including the bombing of Kurdish areas. Since the Gulf war Saddam Hussein has been prevented by the West from using fixed-wing planes against the Kurds, but Turkey has bombed Kurdish civilians and supporters of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in both northern Iraq and Turkey.

Twenty demonstrators were arrested and face serious criminal damage and public order charges. They will appear in court again on 19 April.

New year massacre

Turkey's brutal war on the Kurdish people escalated on March 21, the Kurdish new Year 'Newroz', with a massacre centred on the towns of Sirnak and Cizre, a stronghold of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK).

The Newroz celebrations, traditionally a focus for Kurdish demonstrations, developed into a near-insurrectionary rising in North West Kurdistan, South Eastern Turkey. Mass demonstrations were attacked by Turkish troops near the Syrian and Iraqi borders. In the following days warplanes, tanks and artillery bombarded the region around Sirnak, supposedly focusing on guerilla bases run by the PKK.

But Kurdish and Turkish intellectuals and MPs have gone on hunger strike, claiming that the operation is a campaign of genocide against the Kurdish people. Reports indicate that more than a hundred civilians had been killed in the first three days of the assault.

The final figure is certain to be considerably higher, with Turkish warplanes flying bombing sorties into Iraq. After sealing the 170-mile border with Iraq, Turkish Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel claimed 'not even a bird could get through'.

The barbaric attacks have reached such a level that now Germany, a fellow-NATO member, has halted all military supplies, describing the Demirel government's actions as 'in total contravention of the Helsinki Final Act'.

But Nechervan Barzani, a leader of the Iraqi-based Kurdish Democratic party, said in a side-swipe at the PKK 'I do not believe that the Kurdish problem in Turkey can be solved by force'.

The KDP has recently had open talks with Turkish president Turgut Ozal, and relations with the PKK have always been hostile. This intervention is likely to bring relations to new depths.

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