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APPEAL

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

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Labour Party - TUC Conference Special

Is Mr Churchill There?

"He spoke the truth. He should not apologise." -Sir Edward Heath on Major's 'bastards' comment.

It was not so long ago the Tory leaders were boasting - after their four election victories in a row - that they were going to rule Britain well into the 21st century. They maintained they had become the natural government of Britain. Today they are weeping in their cock-tails. There has been a fundamental shift in the political landscape. In an article by Ted Grant back in June 1992, Socialist Appeal wrote: "We will predict now that the Tories' electoral success will prove to be their undoing. In the coming period, the Tory Party will be reduced to a rump in the South of England as they have been reduced to a rump in Wales and Scotland."

Major has entered the Guinness Book of Records as the most unpopular prime minister since records began. The Tories won the general election due to illusions that they would bring back prosperity, and the lack of a bold campaign by the Labour leaders.

Market Testing

Now they are reaping the whirl wind. The Tories have succeeded in alienating nearly every section of society, including the doctors, dentists, teachers, nurses and even the police. The Sheehy report threatens to introduce 'market testing' into the police force and caused 23,000 rank and file police officers to demonstrate their opposition at Wembley. Richard Coyles, chair-elect of the Police Federation, said "it had managed to unite all ranks of the service in a manner not seen for 75 years" - an ominous reference to the police strike of August 1918.

The Tory party is ravaged by internal splits, divisions and plots. Lord Parkinson in a newsletter for the right wing 'Conservative Way Forward' group, accused the Government of betraying its natural supporters. "We must face the harsh truth: they feel let down, even betrayed." Major's authority has been utterly undermined, with the bookies taking bets on whether he will last. A fatal blow was struck when he was forced to call a vote of confidence in Parliament over Maastricht, after doing a deal with the Ulster Unionists. It showed how desperate things had become following their electoral debacle in the local elections and the catastrophe at Newbury. It was their worst performance in the local elections for over 100 years, losing control of places like Kent

- the first time since the inception of the county in 1889.

The Christchurch by-election was a complete calamity, where the Tory vote fell by a record 32%. According to Ivor Crewe, "Christchurch goes off the Richter Scale of by-election earthquakes.. It was the largest swing against any government since Britain's modern political system was established in 1918." (Independent,31 July). Nationally, the Tories are trailing third in the opinion polls, with only 24% share of the vote.

Recession

With the longest post war recession, the 'feel good factor' has disappeared. Mass unemployment has eaten into the once 'prosperous' South East of England where there has been record redundancies, particularly in the service sector. Housing repossessions amounted to 32,000 in the first half of this year, more than four times the pre-recession level. Again in June, there were nearly 350,000 more than six months behind with their mortgage payments and 158,000 more than 12 months - a rise of nearly 7.5%. The £50 billion government budget deficit has been met with calls for drastic cuts in unnecessary, ie. welfare, spending. Capitalism can no longer afford the welfare state, so the Tories are forced to cut costs, introduce so-called targeting and privatisation. Clarke, the Chancellor, intends to introduce cuts and increases in indirect taxation in the November budget. This will also have the effect of cutting the market and further weakening the recovery. However even this strategy has resulted in open conflict in the Tory ranks. Trotsky once wrote that the British ruling class was the most far sighted in the world. They mapped out their perspectives not only

in decades but in centuries. Today the strategists of capital, and especially their political representatives, cannot see further than their own nose.

The Major government represents the height of blindness, stumbling from one crisis to another. From the ERM debacle to a spate of embarrassing ministerial resignations, from the Maastricht civil war to the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. In a relatively short space of time they have been forced to carry through humiliating U-turns over coal, school testing and the ERM. They are heading for a storm over cuts.

Can the Tories survive? That will depend largely on the actions of the Labour leadership. The Government is on the rocks; it is hanging by a thread. If the Labour leaders dropped their Me-too policies, adopted bold socialist policies, and campaigned for them throughout the country, the Tories could be driven from office.

Thatcher

However, Major will attempt to hang on for as long as possible. The right wing have ruled out a challenge to his leadership for the moment as it could open the door for the pro-European Clarke. The Tories who are still bitter at the "assassination" of Thatcher by Clarke and Co., dream of her return but accept it is not possible. "It would be like Churchill coming back, but it won't happen," one said sadly. But let us remember, even when Churchill did return he was smashed at the polls. With a bold socialist Labour leadership the Tories could be confined to the dust bin of history.



The legacy of the Thatcherite right continues to dog Major

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Hypocrites!

"For me it is a show and I don't like it. Children are not animals in a zoo".

The words of Dr. Patrick Peillod express the indignation of UN aid and Bosnian hospital workers faced with the full force of a media campaign.

The following day under pressure from a TV reporter who accused him of opposing the rescue operation, he partially retracted his comments. Dr. Patrick said that he was not referring to the operation as a whole but the press who were clamouring for photos of Irma.

In fact he is one of many UN aid workers who have criticised the media and Western governments. They find themselves pushed and pulled by the interests they are supposed to rise above.

Western Media

Medical workers on the ground confronted every day with the maimed and suffering are rightly fed up by the Western media and governments self-glorification. But they cannot afford to refuse any assistance.

The proof that the airlift owes more to publicity than humanity is given by the governments insistence on taking children, regardless of medical need. Emotions are more easily stirred by pictures of injured children and the publicity value of such cases is rising. The British and Swedish governments fought over a particularly photogenic child, as another UN spokesperson said "It was 'You get the little girl with the spinal tumour and we get the boy with one eye'". Another said "Sarejevo is not a supermarket where governments can come and pick the cases they want." In reality the aid workers cannot afford to

refuse help no matter how manipulative it is. The media gave all the credit for Irma's rescue to John Major and made out that Britain was leading the humanitarian effort even though Britain was one of the last to offer its hospital facilities. But Major's real motives are obvious, he is rescuing his own desperately flagging popularity. This cynical stunt reflects the desperation of the government. As Labour MP Michael Meacher put it, Major is "trying to extract the last crumbs of political advantage out of a PR bonanza."

Economic Interests

Western governments give humanitarian aid to absolve themselves from a crisis of their own making. They make sure that they are able to extract the maximum popularity from every incident. The ruling classes they represent broke up Yugoslavia to create compliant states in their own economic interests. The nationalist gangs are carrying out the dirty work of imperialism. The blood of "little Irma" and all the other victims of the war are on their hands. The government would sooner ignore the whole thing and wait for the inevitable completion of Bosnia's division. But the media cannot ignore a war so close to home. So the government is faced with problem of trying to do as little as possible while appearing to do much as possible. But few workers are fooled by this stunt, which will backfire on Major and his government. We must cut through the web of lies and hypocrisy to reveal the truth behind the Bosnian nightmare.

John Gandy

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Learning the Lessons

It appears that the London Bus dispute is now drawing to a close. Both at SELKENT and LONDON CENTRAL staff have voted to accept managements latest offer. During my seven years working for London Buses I have never experienced the scale of opposition to an offer that received union support. In London Central the vote was 368 for and 320 against.

Benefits

The Real Scroungers

Government fraud investigators have been searching high and low for the "army of scroungers" but have failed miserably. The government have spent more than £26.4 million and have found that only about 1.4 per cent of the total are "fraudulent" claims.

John Jacobs, a social policy lecturer at Sussex University has made an independent study of the effectiveness of anti-fraud measures. Despite tighter restrictions since 1989, the amount of detected benefit fraud has gone down. Why? According to Mr. Jacobs *"The reason the measures failed so significantly to flush out a hidden army of dole cheats is that their existence has no basis in reality. The plain fact is that the vast majority of claimants are already doing as much as they can to find work. Allegations made by successive ministers are unfounded."*

When the government talk about "scroungers" they forget about their own side.

We have had the recent scandal where the head of the BBC, John Birt called himself a company as a tax dodge. Now Chris Patten has escaped a massive £22,000-a-year revenue bill after a review ruled that he could keep his tax-free status as the governor of Hong Kong. Patten earns £152,000 from his governorship alone, a person on the dole gets nearly £2,000. Nice work if you can get it eh Chris?

In Selkent the vote was 280 for and 163 against. This is in spite of the fact that officials hold enormous authority in the eyes of many members and that there was no organised opposition to the aims of the London Bus section's leadership.

The main issues were pensions, pay and schedules. There were tangible improvements with regards to pensions. However, the pay and schedules proposals, were, in my opinion, totally unacceptable. The terminology used was that the company agrees to an easement of schedules without stating exactly by how much. The only agreement set out in concrete form was that the maximum hours worked on a weekly basis would be 43.5 hours rather than the current maximum of 45 hours. While this should be welcomed, it did not state much because these jobs form a small number and what was necessary was the average length of each duty in order that a comparison could be made. Worse still the company would only conduct negotiations over pay if we agreed to call off the dispute. There were other concessions but of minor significance. To add insult to injury the company have posted notices which state that both Selkent and the TGWU are working together in order to make the business a "success" which included the signature of

our district official. Successes like reducing my hourly rate from £5.61 to £5 and increasing my working week from 38 to 42 1/2. I can do without thankyou very much.

Engels wrote that it was in the interest of every capitalist to increase his profits by reducing the wages of his work people. This is given fresh stimulus from the competition of capitalists of the same trade. Each of them tries to undersell his competitors and unless he is to sacrifice his profits he must try to reduce wages. This remains as true today as it was when Engels wrote this more than 100 years ago. Many of our union officials are under the delusion that there are common interests between the Governors and staff and that there are "good and bad" Governors.

The only reason that the companies began negotiating and offer the few crumbs mentioned above is due to the five one day strikes and a limited policy of non-cooperation.

The strikes were generally solid and more could have been won but for the limited aims of the Bus Sections leadership. Despite the current set-back and disillusionment of many members the union remains intact. Bus workers will move into struggle to regain what has been taken from them. Many of the older activists are leaving the industry making way for younger members who will be less willing to roll over and play dead in the face of future attacks of the management. A lay campaigning group to counter the conservative outlook of the officials is now a necessity. The time has come for the London Bus Section to return to its fighting traditions.

Mark Langabeer,
Plumstead Garage,
Branch Committee
(personal capacity)

Western Lies Exposed

As the German ruling class tries to unite Europe, the two sides of its own nation grow further apart. In a recent opinion poll only 11% of Easterners felt a common German identity with their Western compatriots. The leading opinion pollster, Elizabeth Noelle-Neuman, believes that she has detected a change of mood. Most East Germans are no longer impressed by capitalism and believe that socialism was a good system badly managed by the Communist Party. Support for (West) Germany's social system in the East has fallen from 51% in 1991 to 37%. Naturally it is the workers in the old industries who are in the front line of the capitalist offensive, as West German firms move in and strip down potential competitors in the East. As Harry Uhlmann, a striking steel worker said, *"This is not how we envisaged political change. We were taken for a ride under communism for forty years and we are now being duped again."*

FBU Recall Conference

Stand Firm

The Tory Government's abandonment of our Fire Service Pay Agreement and decision to offer us a maximum rise of 1.5 % was wholeheartedly rejected by all firefighters.

This line was unanimously supported by the FBU conference in May, which authorised the leadership to hold a ballot for industrial action if there was any interference with the Pay Formula. The Executive decided to recall the national conference in early September to consider the next stage in the dispute.

The Pay Formula was agreed in 1978 after prolonged industrial action, and tied firefighters' wages to 75% of the average male manual workers' pay. At last, this gave us decent increases and served to raise our poverty wages.

The government's attack on our wages is part of a general attack on the fire service, which it continues to drastically underfund. As a result fire stations have been closed or downgraded; there have been reductions in pump and special appliances; recruitment frozen in some brigades; firefighter establishment reduction; and widespread review of rank structures and staffing levels. In addition, the workload of the fire service has increased by 64% since 1980. As a result of the government's chronic underfunding the number of non-fatal fire casualties has

reached a record level and the UK now has the highest fire death rate per million in the EC.

Firefighters see the dispute over the Pay Agreement as the thin edge of the wedge. Although the employers - the Association of County Councils and the Metropolitan Authorities - have said that the Pay Formula will be fully reinstated in November 1994, that cannot be guaranteed. In reality they can promise what they want, at the end of the day, the government holds the purse strings. If the government reduces the grant, then the employers will be placed in an extremely difficult position of having to find the extra cash from existing revenues, or raising more council tax. The majority of firefighters understand that this issue is not simply about pay, but has considerable implications for the future of the service. If we are defeated on the pay front then it will open the way for new measures to be introduced. That is why we must remain firm on our original decision: if the Pay Formula is touched the Executive must call a ballot for industrial action. There is no other way forward.

By an FBU member

Warning: Privatisation can seriously damage your health.

Warnings that privatisation would lead to dangerous practices in the mining industry were confirmed even before the sell-off begins. On Wednesday 18th August, three Nottinghamshire miners were killed by a cave-in at Bilsthorpe Colliery.

The most likely cause of the disaster was the use of a roof-bolting technique that is estimated to be at least 50% cheaper. Miners leader, Arthur Scargill has long warned of its dangers. He said "Anybody who has supported the use of roof-bolts as a primary or sole means of support is wrong and will continue to be wrong. I have been saying that for over 30 years, having had the personal experience of working with roof-bolts over 30 years ago and seeing at that time a cave-in of similar proportions to that which we have seen at Bilsthorpe."

Capitalism has always put workers safety a long way behind profit. While preparing for

privatisation the Tory government is shifting responsibility for safety and inspection from pit-deputies to management. There can only be one motive for this - to cut costs at the expense of workers' safety.

Labour's energy spokesman, Martin O'Neill said "These changes will replace strict and detailed statutes with vague voluntary codes of practice. It will create conflicts between productivity and safety."

This kind of disaster must not be allowed to happen ever again. It is the inevitable consequence of Tory misrule. Labour must fight privatisation and campaign to restore safety in the mines.

At the Sharp End

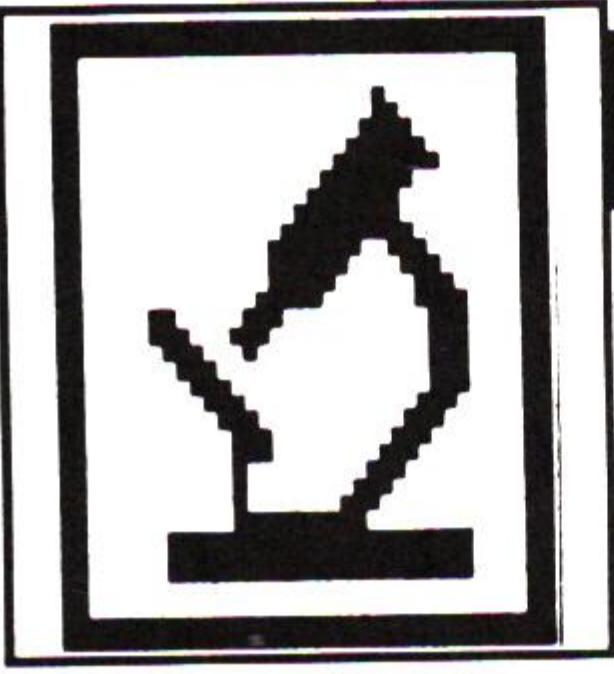
A two week long strike of Union of Communications Workers (UCW) postal workers at the main Cardiff sorting office has ended following a ballot on the compromise put to them by the branch officers and national leadership. The dispute began when management began to impose fixed shift patterns for a larger number of the workers than the present agreement. This would mean not only that those who currently do night shifts would lose money on the shift allowance, but that those unfortunate enough to get the afternoon shift (2 p.m. to 10 p.m.) and night shift would be on permanently and would be effectively only be able to see their families at weekends. After the initial 24 hour strike, the morale of the workers was tremendous and indefinite action was called.

Post boxes all over the region had wooden blocks in them, postal workers picketing outside post offices received great support.

In fact the public support for the UCW workers was a marked feature of the dispute, the justice of their case being plain for all to see. Despite the lack of labour movement activity in the month of August and few union bodies meeting, a march on Saturday 7th August drew several hundred demonstrators and a convoy of black cabs, draped with hastily made banners proclaiming "Cardiff cabbies support the postal workers"! Management attempted to break the strike by diverting mail around the country but other UCW workers would not touch it. One striker told me just days before the vote to end the strike that the hope was that other mail offices would soon be out in support. However, he said, "we've had no support from London (the national leadership) they're alright with their £50,000 salaries, we are not even getting strike pay!"

It was the lack of support from the national executive which encouraged the workers to vote to accept the offer, which a substantial minority referred to as a sell-out. The dispute showed however the depth of anger against government and employers. That that much support, even without the organised labour movement's help (which would undoubtedly have come if the dispute had lasted into September), was forthcoming, also shows that the management could have been totally defeated if there had been a fighting Left leadership supporting members who are at the sharp end.

Mark Turner



Science has always occupied a central place in the writings of the great Marxists. In the first of a regular series, Socialist Appeal looks at the role of science in understanding the development of society.

Scientific Socialism

The task of Marxism has been to uncover the general laws that govern the development of human activity, of society. It does this by applying a scientific method in the field of economics and politics. By this means it throws a new light on science.

Both Marx and Engels were scientists, with a deep knowledge of history and philosophy, investigating and revealing the laws governing capitalist society. They also took a keen interest in scientific development in general, for the Industrial Revolution gave an impetus to science; in turn, science gave an impetus to the Industrial Revolution. Without the Industrial Revolution, there would be no material basis for socialism. Using the new dialectical method which they developed, they were able to uncover the ultimate motive force of history, of human social development, namely the development of the productive forces (industry, technique, science, Etc.). "According to the materialist conception of history," stated Engels, "the

determining element in history is ultimately production and reproduction in real life."

Again Engels explains the method of Marxism as "The great basic thought that the world is not to be comprehended as a complex of ready-made things, but as a complex of processes... the concepts, go through an uninterrupted change of coming into being and passing away..."

Marx's great discovery were the laws of motion of human history and the development of nature through dialectical contradictions. He rejected the static concepts of so-called science. His appreciation of Darwin's Origin of Species was immediate though not uncritical. Marx was especially critical of the Malthusian aspect of the struggle for

existence. Within a month of its publication he wrote to Engels:

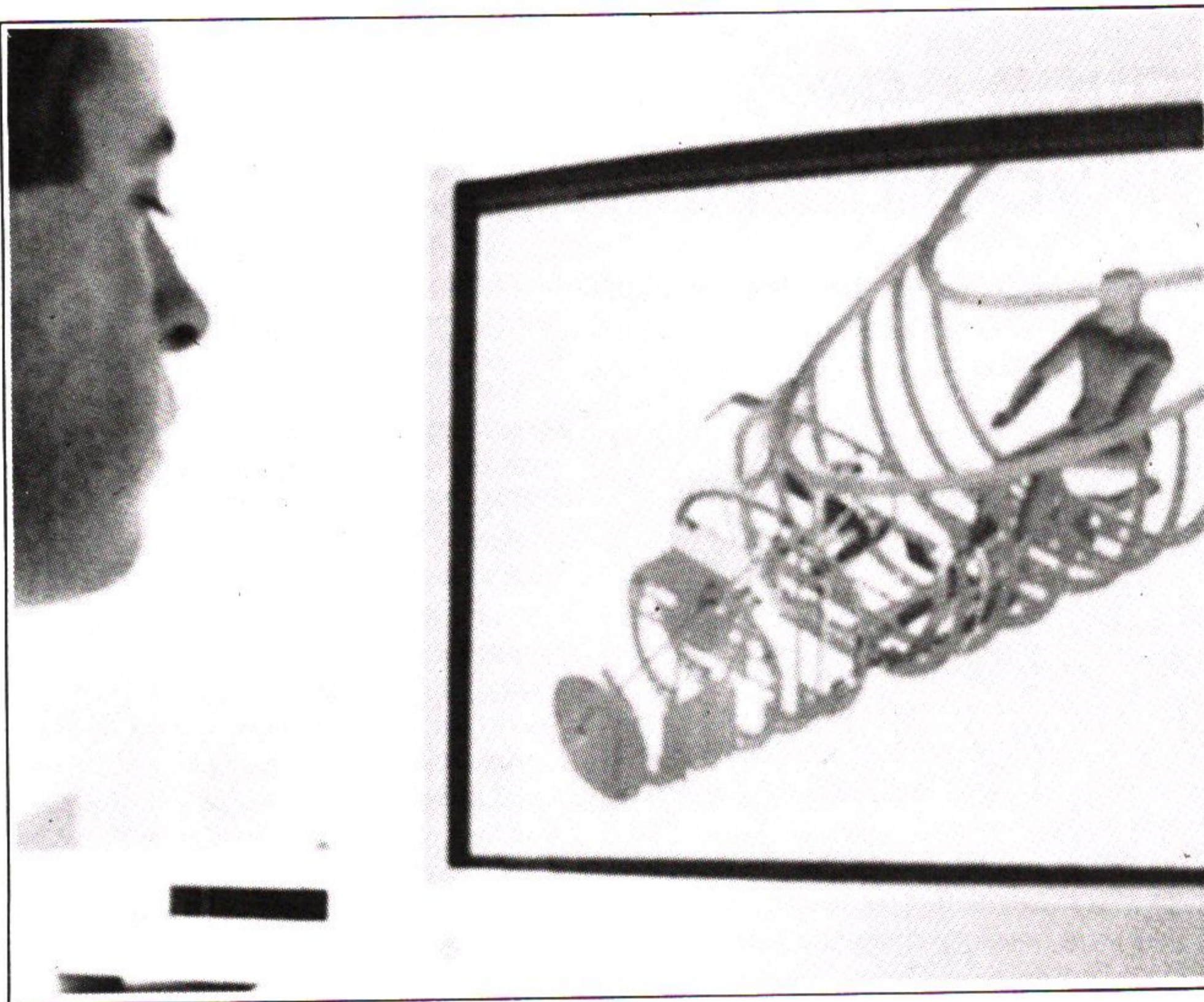
"During my time of trial, these last four weeks I have read all sorts of things. Among others Darwin's book on Natural Selection. Although it is developed in the crude English style, this book contains the basis in natural history for our view."

In the following year he wrote to Lasalle: "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history. One has to put up with the crude English method of development, of course. Despite all deficiencies, not only is the deathblow dealt here for the first time to 'Teleology' in the natural sciences but their rational meaning is empirically explained."

Evolution

Since then the concept of evolution has become universally recognised not only in the development of plants and animals, but across the sciences. Marx's philosophy is one of development in change and action. But these changes do not come about by chance or supernatural intervention, but from struggles and contradictions between elements that were themselves the product of previous changes.

Dialectics and materialism are the basic elements in the Marxist understanding of the world. But this does not mean that they can simply be applied to any sphere of knowledge, like some ready made master key. Dialectics cannot be imposed upon facts; it has to be deduced from facts, from their nature and development. Only painstaking work on a vast amount of material enabled Marx to advance the dialectical system of economics to the conception of value as social labour. Marx's historical works were constructed in the same way, and even his newspaper articles likewise. "Dialectical materialism", states Trotsky, "can be



At present science serves capitalism and is influenced by the need to maximise profits

applied to new spheres of knowledge only by mastering them from within. The purging of bourgeois science presupposes a mastery of bourgeois science. You will get nowhere with sweeping criticism or bald commands. Learning and application here go hand in hand with critical reworking. We have the method, but there is enough work for generations to do."

Both Marx and Engels held a profound interest in the sciences, as witnessed from their numerous articles and writings on the subject. For them, science should not only be used to explore the universe in which we live, but should be used for the benefit of mankind. But in capitalist society science is divorced from philosophy. As Marx explained, "Natural sciences have developed an enormous activity and appropriated to themselves a steady increasing field. Philosophy however has remained as strange to them as they have remained to philosophy." He goes on to explain that "History itself is a real part of natural history, of the development of nature into man. Later natural science will include the science of man in the same way as the science of man will include natural science. There will be only one science."

Nature and Society

This was the starting point for a Marxist analysis of nature as expounded by Engels in *Anti-Duhring*, *Origin of the Family*, *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*, and *Dialectics of Nature*. He explained in *Anti-Duhring* that "a knowledge of mathematics and natural science is essential to a conception of nature which is dialectical and at the same time materialist." Marxism maintains that the general laws governing society are as relevant to nature because they are rooted in the objective world. Nature and society form two parts of a single historical process.

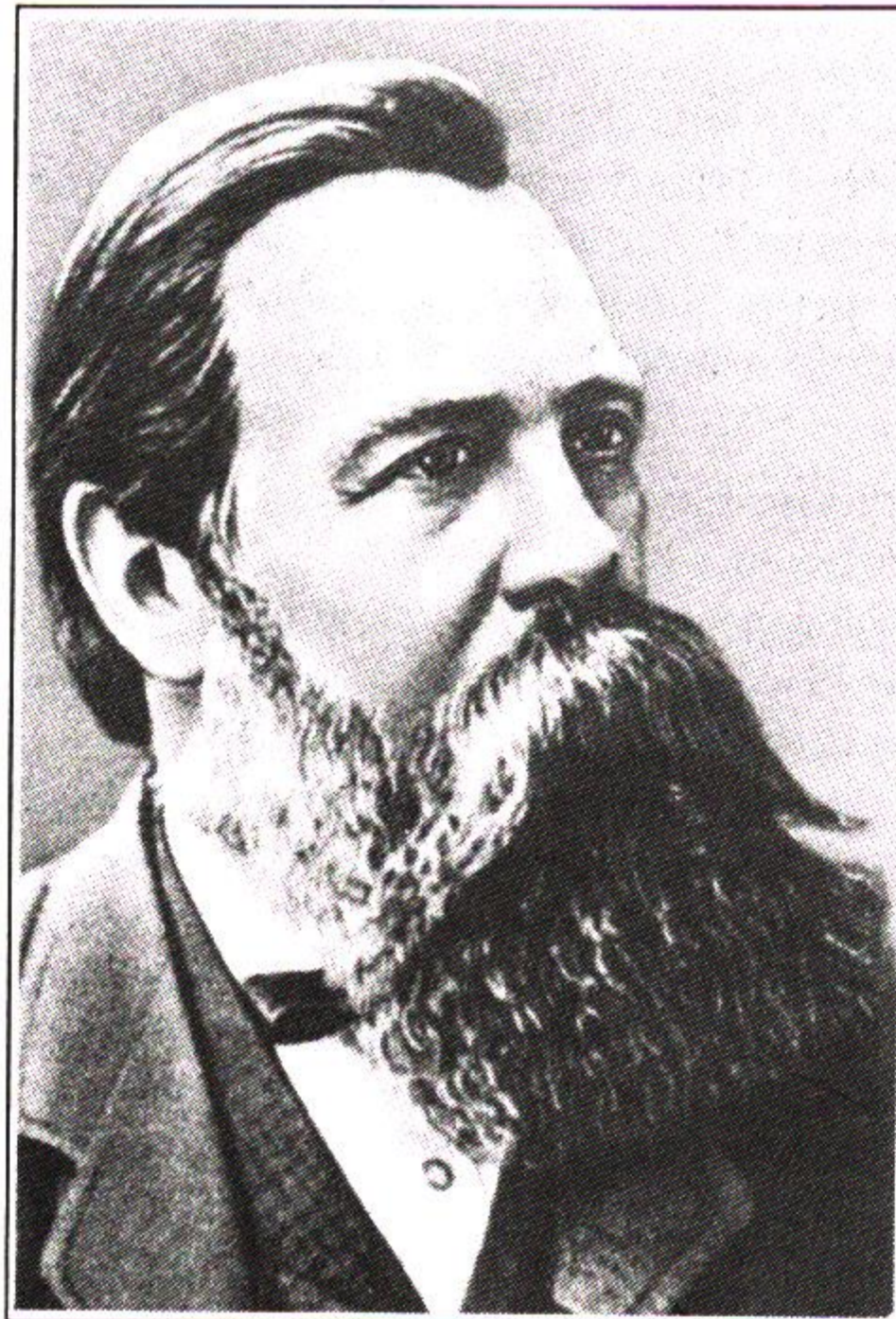
Marx and Engels found it extremely difficult to keep up with the advances in science. As Engels explained: "Marx was well versed in mathematics, but we could only partially, intermittently and sporadically keep up with the natural sciences. For this reason, when I retired from business and transferred my home to London, thus enabling myself to give the necessary time to it, I went through as complete as possible a 'moulting', as Liebig calls it, in mathematics and the natural sciences, and spent the best part of eight years on it." (*Anti-Duhring*).

There has been an astonishing amount of scientific development and discovery since Marx and Engels wrote. From chemistry, biology and physics to biochemistry, organic chemistry, genetics, astronomy, geology, anthropology, and so forth, in a greater diversity and specialisation of scientific research. The fact that 95% of scientists who have ever lived are alive today, has meant an

astonishing development of scientific knowledge.

However at present, science serves capitalism and is directly influenced by its ideology and the need to maximise profits. Scientific development and research is financed by big business not to promote human advancement, but as a means of increasing surplus value and their profits. A significant proportion are employed by industries and services catering for the needs of the military-industrial complex.

As Stephen Jay Gould recently explained, "Science is no inexorable march to truth, mediated by the collection of objective information and the destruction of ancient superstition. Scientists, as ordinary human beings, unconsciously reflect in their theories the social and political constraints of their times. As privileged members of



Engels

society, more often than not they end up defending existing social arrangements as biologically foreordained." (Ever Since Darwin, p.15). As a result science is hampered and distorted by capitalism. Only under a socialist planned economy can science be freed from these fetters, and develop in leaps and bounds, solving the problems of human society by harnessing the forces of nature.

There has been a colossal growth of interest in science over the recent period, with debates opening up on all sorts of questions. The Marxist method can assist in unravelling these mysteries of nature and point the way forward for further research. As a result, Socialist Appeal intends to carry regular material on science, the benefits, drawbacks and controversies, in particular as they clarify the complex problems facing mankind.

A New Revolution in Natural Science

Modern natural scientists will find (if they know how to seek, and if we learn how to help them) in the Hegelian dialectics materialistically interpreted a series of answers to the philosophical problems which are being raised by the revolution in natural science and which make the intellectual admirers of bourgeois fashion "stumble" into reaction.

(On the Significance of Militant Materialism - Lenin, 1922)

Open to Debate...

Socialist Appeal welcomes readers' views, comments and criticisms. It's pages are open to you. If you have something to say, write to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU. Below we print an FBU members comments about trade union mergers.

To Merge or Not to Merge

With just 17 members the Sheffield Wool Shear Workers' Union is the smallest affiliated to the TUC. As whispers of a possible GMB-TGWU marriage start to surface the trend towards "Super-Unions" continues. Some commentators are now stating to forecast the end of the smaller, craft or highly specialised trade unions. Will the FBU survive in the next century? Should we remain independent?

A large number of trade union mergers have taken place over the last couple of years. The major amalgamation between the engineering union AEU and the non-TUC EEPTU brought about the 1.1 million strong union AEEU. The ballot for a three-way merger between NALGO, NUPE and COHSE produced a massive "yes" vote to create UNISON. Representing over 1.5 million people it's the biggest trade union in Europe. If the GMB-TGWU were to combine they would have more than 2 million members.

As a Socialist I support the principle of union mergers. Workers have much more industrial muscle when they join one union in a single workplace. Industrial strength increases many times if all the workers in one industry or service integrate to form one union.

Divide and Rule

Employers always try to divide us by making distinctions between different types of work and skills, offering different pay and conditions accordingly. Employers are happy to see us split along union lines knowing that it helps undermine our collective unity against them.

The NUM had to forge the now famous "triple alliance", to increase their strength. Imagine what could have been achieved had they been part of a national power workers union. During the ambulance dispute five unions were represented at my local ambulance station. Five policies, five objectives, five divisions.

Picture the potential of one workforce united in a single union.

Even though many of today's mergers seem to have sound logic, should we support any merger at any cost?

Many mergers of the past were demanded by workers drawing the conclusion that bigger, stronger more unified unions had greater effectiveness. A number of distinct merger waves can be identified, all coinciding with times of major social struggle and political discontent. The first occurred between 1917 and 1924. During this period many of the longer-lasting bodies such as the TGWU, AEU, GMB and USDAW were created.

Amalgamations

The second occurred from 1944 to 1947 when many civil service unions amalgamated as did district unions of mine workers to form the NUM. A third merger wave took place from the late 1960s to the mid 1970s when nearly half the members acquired by amalgamations were white-collar workers. What are the motives for the present wave of mergers?

The majority of unions are losing members. There are now 7.3 million members affiliated to the TUC, a fall of around 38% since the peak of 12 million in the late 1970s. The reasons for this are well documented. A tragic 25% reduction in manufacturing jobs over the last decade, markedly in coal, steel, shipbuilding and engineering. The reduction in public sector unions has been caused by provocations and contract compliance. Public utilities such as British Telecom, British Gas, Water and electricity have all

seen enormous reductions in workers employed. Where there has been expansion it has tended to be in the service industry, jobs are being created in insurance, banking and shops. Many workers in this sector are casual, part-time and low paid. Many of them are young and many of them are female. They are often employed in small isolated workplaces making them difficult to unionise and leaving them unrepresented. With unemployment at depression levels combined with a series of anti-trade union legislation, membership could continue to decrease.

As membership falls, power and finances fall. Faced with increasing pressure from employers and government union leaders are forced to consider alternative ways of maintaining influence and resources. Some look towards loose "federation" and "joint working relationships". Some look towards full blown mergers.

The danger is that officials at the head of 1.5 million members will tend to become even more divorced from the rank and file

The danger is that officials at the head of 1.5 million members will tend to become even more divorced from the rank and file. To stop this happening it is vital that members involved in merger proposals fight to maintain hard won democratic accountability. Where does this leave the FBU?

In 1907 fire fighters were represented by many unions up and down the country. The most influential was the fireman's branch of the NUCW (National Union of Corporation Workers) based in London. The NUCW later became NUPE. In 1919, Jim Bradley

led a bitter breakaway to form the Fireman's Trade Union. Jim Bradley strongly believed that an independent union was needed to serve the distinct needs of a firefighter. He saw the Fireman's Trade Union as the only way forward. The FTU later changed its name to the Fire Brigades Union (to avoid confusion with ships and trains firemen) and we have remained and independent ever since.

Strong Position

I believe that the FBU complies with most of the principles outlined in earlier paragraphs. It represents the majority of firefighters at their place of work and nationally. It represents all levels of skill, age and job description within the service. We are able to negotiate strongly on pay and conditions. We elect all full time officials. We have forged links with and are respected by the Labour movement both in this country and internationally. Our membership numbers are reasonably stable. Our financial position is reasonably stable. Our education policy is strong. Our legal department is strong. Our health and safety experience is strong. We are still capable of producing some heavy industrial muscle when needed, and the struggle for more internal democracy continues.

Government Attacks

A merger at this time wouldn't bring any real advantages and could be a big mistake. In 1989 annual conference carried a resolution underlining our resolve to refuse any merger at the present time. Most of the 48,000 members of this union instinctively realise that this policy is correct. As government attacks continue to mount, particularly in terms of redundancies, privatisation and decentralised pay bargaining. As that happens the temper of the membership will become much more radical.

The FBU framework is firmly set to cope with many demands we, as members, make on it. It is right to continually reassess policy decisions made by conference. But in my view, we are right to stay independent for the time being.

Simon Green,
FBU, Andover
(personal capacity)

**What's your view:
Write to us at:
PO Box 2626,
London N1 6DU.**

The speculators were delighted, governments angry. But what does the collapse of the ERM really mean for workers? Economics correspondent Michael Roberts explains...

The Plots of Money

Speaking to a French newspaper, President Mitterrand of France said "we must control the plots of money". He meant the speculators who at the end of July after months of persistent efforts forced the monetary authorities of the European Community to abandon the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) on which the whole aim of the Maastricht Treaty for European monetary union and the move towards a federal European state is founded.

The EC finance ministers had to call an emergency meeting on the last weekend of July and decided that currencies within the ERM could fluctuate by up to 15% each way around their central parities. Previously they had not been allowed to move more than 2.25% apart before the central banks of each country intervened in the foreign exchange markets and either bought or sold currencies in order to keep the rates of exchange stable. The ERM in effect was a halfway house towards establishing completely fixed currency rates and then finally a single currency in Europe (the Maastricht date for this had been 1997 or at the latest 1999).

Euro Union

But now all these dreams of European unity on a capitalist basis are dead. The ERM exists only in name only, with 15% bands there is really no controls and currencies are floating (or sinking) freely, and moving wider apart. The ERM was already heading for the rocks last September, when Britain and Italy were forced out of the mechanism by the "speculators" and Spain and Portugal had to devalue their currencies. Then Britain alone spent £50 billion trying to hold up the pound (eventually losing 5-10 billion of tax-payers money in buying pounds which have since lost up to 15% of their value since September - which is twice the cost of keeping all the coal-mines they want closed open for another three years!). This time the French government spent twice as much as the UK and its losing battle with the speculators, and that has probably cost the French people more than the British. But who are these speculators that President

Mitterrand claims have organised "plots of money" against the governments of Europe, and how is it possible that they succeeded in bringing down the ERM and the hopes for "European unity".

The speculators are not grubby touts that you might find outside the queues for football matches or Wimbledon tennis trying to sell you a ticket. No, we are talking big league buying and selling - millions in every deal. But neither are the speculators those young men (and women) that the TV shows standing and shouting down phones behind lots of green monitor screens in a big bank or stockbroking house. They are just employees (very well paid no doubt) of the banks, taking orders to buy or sell various currencies. The speculators are those giving the instructions to these dealers. Who are they?

Speculators

Well, they are the big financial institutions of each capitalist country: those with cash to deposit to earn interest and also the large multinational companies who every day have millions to deposit for in different currencies. And there is a completely free market to move money around the advanced capitalist world, a market created particularly in the last 20 years. And as one banker responded when Mitterrand attacked the "plots of money", "If you have free markets, people will move their money where they want it".

So the speculators are no more and no less than the very capitalists that supposedly support the move to European monetary unity and Maastricht. But you see it's one thing to have an idea, it's another thing when it threatens your profits. The reality was that the major capitalist companies would lose money if they kept it in francs as opposed to German marks because the interest rates that could be earned in German money were much higher. So more and more money kept going into marks. The French raised their interest rates, but at a certain point the speculators decided that the French could not keep the value of the franc up, so they kept selling francs, thus achieving their very prediction, a weaker franc. So even though at the moment of the ERM crisis,

interest rates were higher in France than Germany, the franc kept falling, and eventually the authorities had to admit defeat, and agree to demolish the attempt to fix exchange rates tightly together in the ERM.

Why were interest rates higher in Germany? The unification of Germany and the absorption of the east into the capitalist West was heralded by the Kohl government as a great victory for capitalism in 1989. But in order to win a landslide victory in the elections in 1990, Kohl (against the advice of the German central bank, the Bundesbank), promised that East Germans wages would rise to meet those of the West within five years, that there would be no redundancies in the East and no tax rises in the West to pay for unification. That was impossible and all that happened was that the German government ran up a huge budget deficit to pay for its promises (which it is now trying to break). This deficit was financed by borrowing on world markets, which meant that Germans had to attract investors from abroad by offering higher interest rates than in other countries. Higher interest rates in Germany forced up the value of the German mark against other currencies, which meant that those countries in the ERM had to raise their interest rates much higher than they would like in order to keep the value of the pound, franc, lira, peseta etc. within the narrow bands set by the ERM, so that the aim of monetary unity could continue. But high interest rates, especially when profits and markets are falling, spells recession and mass unemployment. And the recession which began in the UK in mid-1990 and hit the rest of Europe a year later, was made far worse because interest rates could not be lowered. In effect, the unemployed of Europe (now over 12% in the EC and rising) were paying for German unification. Production stagnated, investment slumped and the ranks of the unemployed grew. And the governments of Major, Mitterrand, Gonzales and Italy faced severe unpopularity and electoral defeat because of this recession.

Manufacturing

So increasingly, sections of the ruling classes and the political parties representing them, particularly the depressed manufacturing sectors, demanded a change of policy: leave the ERM, lower interest rates, let the value of the currency fall, so we can sell our exports at cheaper and more competitive prices, was the cry of the manufacturing sectors.

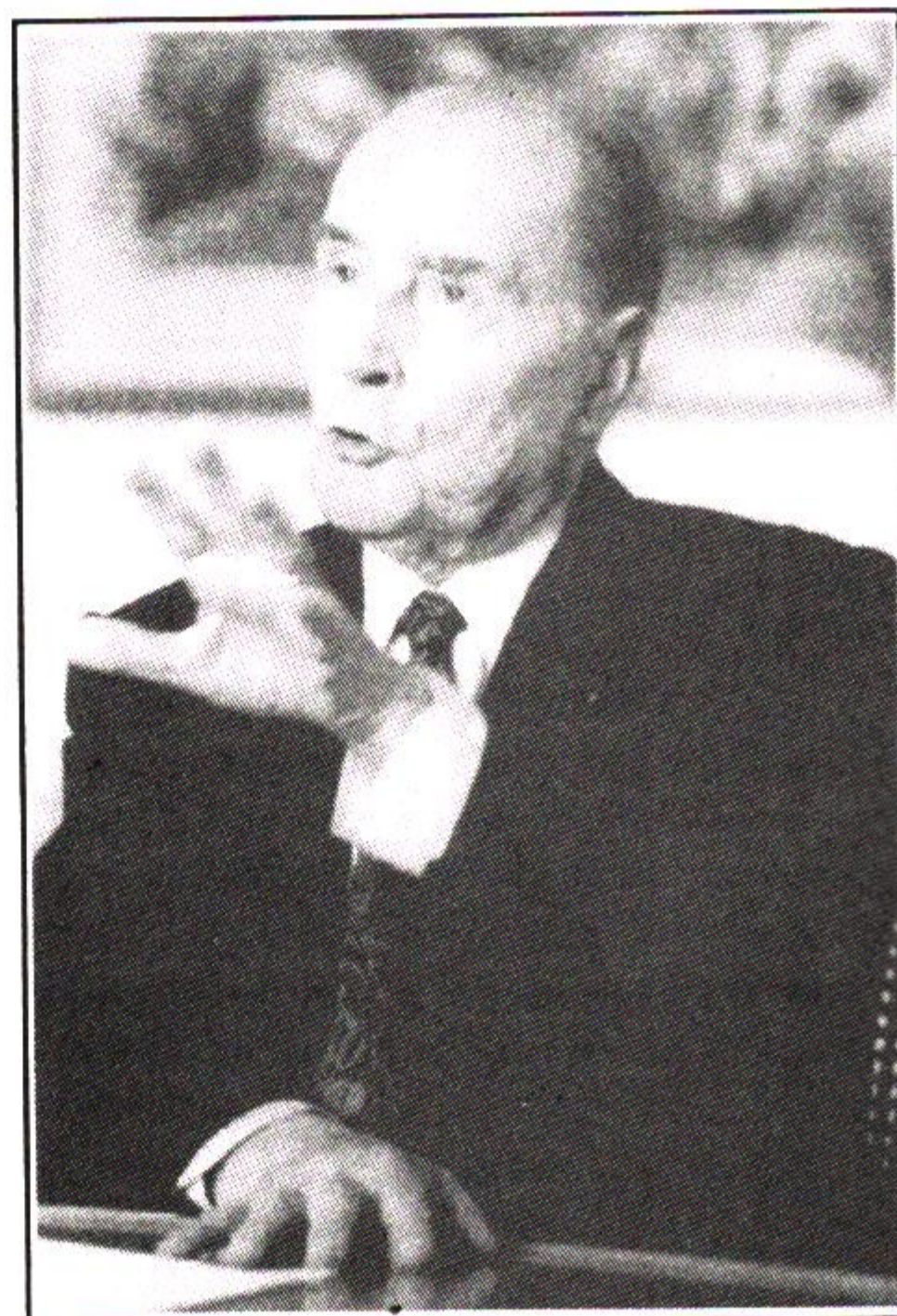
However if they all lower their interest rates they will cancel each other out. The European capitalists complained that Britain gained a temporary competitive advantage over them with the devaluation of the pound. But if they all devalue their currencies, that also would cancel any advantage for them.

In reality it is the beginning of a long drawn out crisis of capitalism. Private ownership and the nation state hem in and constrict the productive forces, the power to produce wealth, which have outgrown them. The attempt to create a united Europe was an attempt to escape from this contradiction. As we ex-

plained, under capitalism this was utopian. Once the capitalists with money to move and earn the best rates began to suspect that some currencies would not maintain their value if governments 'went for growth' by lowering interest rates and coming out of the ERM, then they were quick to move into the currencies which would maintain value with high interest rates: the German mark or the Dutch guilder. The irony of this crisis is that interest rates throughout Europe are now likely to fall sharply over the next year. The recession has ended in the UK and Scandinavia and a sluggish upturn (of about 1-2% growth) is underway. The British have partly achieved this because exports have been made cheaper in world markets by the devaluation of the pound. The same is true for the Italians and Finns. Now it is likely that the French, Spanish and Belgians will follow suit, and in 1994 they will start to recover from the recession. But the French ruling class, in particular, is reluctant to lower interest rates and devalue the franc, because to do so would be to admit that the whole policy of bringing Germany into a united Europe with France as equals would have collapsed.

Maastricht

The French government is still hoping to persuade the Germans to agree to a new timetable for implementing Maastricht and thus preserve their aim of binding the Germans into the new capitalist Europe of the next decade. But the Germans are no longer interested. They spent billions trying to protect the franc to no avail. They will no longer do that. Kohl is already saying that monetary union in Europe is postponed indefinitely. They may push just for union with the satellite economies of Holland, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland,



Mitterrand

and leave the rest of the EC to stew. They are now setting their sights on expanding their economic empire into eastern Europe. German labour costs are the highest in the world, and their huge manufacturing base (40% of Europe's manufacturing) is in deep recession. The German capitalists hope to set up new plants in Poland, Hungary and Czech lands, where they can exploit the pitifully low wages paid to skilled workers there (of course at the expense of German workers in the West). They are turning away from the French and monetary union.

Increasingly it is becoming every man for himself in Europe: the ideals of harmonious economic development with one single market, one currency, one set of laws and taxes, and eventually one federal government, which was the dream of many European capitalists and also so-called social democrats was always dismissed as fantastical by Marxists. But now even those who promoted the idea are recognising that it cannot be done.

Capitalism cannot develop harmoniously: it is a system of competition and exploitation for profits: as such capitals compete rather than cooperate; and they exploit rather than develop productive forces. When the old social-democrat Mitterrand complains about speculators and the "plots of money", he is really complaining about capitalism itself, a system he has spent his life upholding and trying to make work better. One of his solutions to the present crisis was to demand better controls over speculative movements of money across borders, perhaps by taxing the speculators. But as one banker replied: "It is difficult to see how he could tax the profits of the foreign exchange. It would have to be imposed on a global scale and all the nations of Europe would have to agree to it. That is impossible". Yes, real control is impossible under capitalism. World or even European unity ultimately depends on the ending of the private profit system.

What We Said:

"The French bourgeois will try to continue as part of the German 'bloc'. But it is unlikely that this arrangement could last for long. The weakness of the French economy in comparison to its more powerful neighbour is glaring...The effort to keep up with the D-Mark will prove to be a colossal drain, and will eventually break down."

Editorial Board resolution printed in Britain in Crisis by Ted Grant, September 1992

Modern Centre, Victorian Conditions!

The glossy advertisements for the Time Capsule Leisure Centre in Coatbridge are very unrepresentative of the conditions of the workforce.

Workers have a 35 hour week contract but they are forced to work 42 1/2 hours. The wages are low at £3.60 an hour and there is no shift allowance. Shifts are often mixed each week, that is, from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. one day, and 8.30 a.m. the next. The poolside temperature is often unbearable for the workforce. It is no wonder that staff morale is very low, with threats of verbal and written warnings for staff members caught talking at the pool-side. The policy of "no association" is contradictory because communication should be a priority among pool attendants for customer safety. Poolstaff are expected to carry out basic cleaning duties, but these duties were more than doubled when the private cleaning firm Initial Cleaning were paid off. The poolstaff then took on all cleaning duties including the toilets, the bins, in the cafe and car. Initially full-time "contracts" were offered to the staff, but these were badly worded and contained certain clauses which stopped the majority of staff signing. As the full-time staff drifted away one by one, the bosses began employing casuals, using them as a whip to undermine the conditions of the full time staff. The casuals are paid no overtime rates even after 35 hours, they have no holiday pay, and are subject to blackmail by management as they seem to have no rights of employment. On one occasion a few "casuals" were told that if they refused to work overtime on the night concerned their shifts for the future would be reviewed. This was a polite way of telling them if they disobeyed

management they would no longer have a job in the Time Capsule.

Recently the management have been employing teenagers as young as sixteen to be pool attendants. These youngsters have no experience of dealing with everyday incidents.

Although these kids are competent enough to recognise swimmers in danger they should be given better training and support to help them gain the confidence required to take control of dangerous situations.

The safety standards for children swimming in the pool are questionable. Poolside numbers were often cut to reduce the number of staff on duty. A former worker in the Time Capsule said the risks of such cuts are too high. Even after making a rescue, staff can't get time off for a cup of tea, it's straight back to duty. The bosses have high unemployment in the local area and a non-unionized casual staff to their advantage to undermine the conditions of the workforce in general.

Customers complain of a "staff attitude" however, working in the Time Capsule is certainly not as pleasurable as a visit. If staff voice a complaint about any aspect of the job they are forced out the door. Their experience is more akin to that of the workhouse. In fact, for the workers it's, "Half-ice, half-water, but definitely not "a whole lot of fun".

Andrew Wylie

Bottom of the Class

I attended a Summer School for a Diploma Course I am on and was obliged to listen to a lecture on the relevance of the National Curriculum to children with Special Educational Needs.

The lecturer told us he had been driving home listening to the radio which broadcast edited highlights of that day's Parliamentary procedures. At one point Charles Kennedy MP, made a cogent attack on the then Education secretary, Kenneth Clarke, to which he responded by telling him to go to bed and take an Aspirin three times a day.

When the lecturer got home he took his copy of "English in the National Curriculum" off the shelf to ascertain what level Kenneth Clarke has reached in the Attainment Target for speaking and listening with his response to Charles Kennedy. The lecturer invited us in the audience to guess. Would you say he "expressed a personal point of view on a complex subject persuasively, cogently and clearly"? (Level 9) Perhaps not. Did he "contribute considered opinions or clear statements of personal feeling which were clearly responsive to the contributions of others"? (Level 6) No. Then perhaps he "took part as a speaker and listener.... commenting constructively on what was being discussed or experienced"? (Level 4) Certainly not. My lecturer had to look right through the document until he actually hit upon the very description that in his view described the level reached by Kenneth Clarke in that interchange and that went as follows: He "listened attentively and responded." Perhaps even those of you who are not familiar with the National Curriculum speak, which I should think is the vast majority of you, can guess the actual level at this point. YES! YOU'VE GOT IT!! LEVEL 1!!

This of course is not to belittle the very considerable achievement of many children in Nursery and infant classes for whom Level 1 is a great step forward, however, what it does for people's estimation of the quality of their Education Secretary, I will leave to your judgement.

In Brief

The Truth About Gummer

John Gummer "is the biggest shitbag I have met in my life."

So says the Norwegian environment minister. Norway believes that pollution from Britain causes the acid rain which is destroying their forests, but Gummer shows no concern - what's a bit of acid rain when your friends factories are at stake.

Apparently it caused chuckles among Tory MP's who regard Mr. Gummer as the most unpopular member of the cabinet.

Friends in the House are not pleased with Norman Lamont either. Sir George Gardiner, Conservative MP, said after the Tories lost the by-election "Whoever thought of sending Norman Lamont to Newbury should be given a revolver on a silver tray."

Bananas!

I am pleased to see that the French Embassy spokesman is making his usual good sense. Explaining why the import into France of bananas from British colonies is to be stopped he told the Daily Telegraph "These bananas are cheaper than normal bananas and must be stopped." Obviously British imperialism has got the very cheapest of cheap labour.

Friends

"I though he loved his country enough to go somewhere else."
- A Northern Cypriot speaks of his "friend" Asil Nadir

The publication of this issue marks the start of Socialist Appeal's Sales Campaign '93. Below, our business manager Steve Jones explains the why, where and when... and anything else you may need to know!

Building on our success

Why have you launched a special Sales Campaign?

The reason behind Sales Campaign '93 is simple. As we have explained before in our sales column, it is no use us having the correct ideas, the best programme in the labour movement and clear Marxist explanations and analysis of events as well as pointing a way forward in the struggles from the miners to local authorities and so on, without getting those ideas to the greatest number of people possible. We believe it is necessary to make an extra special effort over the coming weeks to reach even more people than we do now.

What do you hope to achieve during the campaign?

Whilst we are keen to increase substantially the absolute number of sales, more important is the number of regular readers we are able to win, that is people who take out a subscription or who agree to take a copy from sellers every month.

What is also vitally important is that people who already take a copy every month are asked to take the next step and become a seller. Many new sellers can be won from the ranks of our regular readers.

What will be taking place during the campaign?

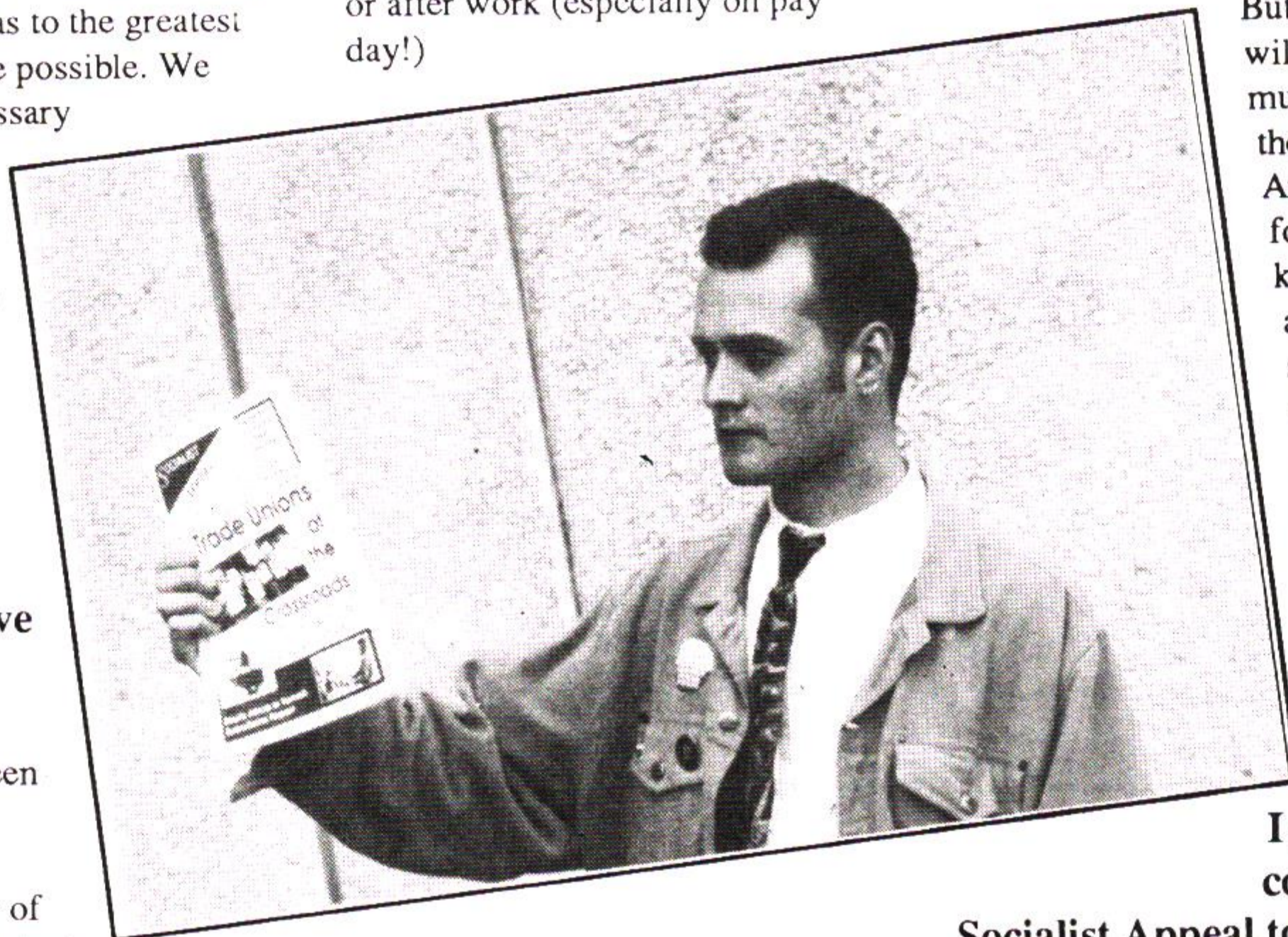
Our sellers are busy organising a wide variety of events to help boost sales.

In some areas door-to-door sales are being organised, whilst others are

picking on an issue and preparing leaflets and petitions and setting up a stall outside local shops, railway stations and so on.

Other sellers have drawn up a list of individual Labour Party or trade union members to visit to ask them to buy a copy and take out a subscription.

Sellers in other areas have chosen a local workplace and are selling outside in the mornings, lunch times or after work (especially on pay day!)



Some areas are organising special public meetings or making sure sellers are at all local trade union, Labour Party and trades council meetings.

How can I get involved in the sales drive campaign?

In many ways - but most importantly by becoming a seller of Socialist Appeal.

The more sellers we have, the more people we can reach and the more people we reach, the more potential sellers we have. Every new reader is a potential new seller.

To find out how, contact your local seller or ring our office on 071-354-3164.

Where can I sell Socialist Appeal?

You can sell it anywhere - at your trade union or Labour Party meeting, join local sellers for a sale at a factory or in the town centre on a Saturday (For details contact our office). Or you may know friends, workmates or relatives who may be interested in a copy. Many people start off saying they don't have the

confidence to sell. But quickly they will find it is much easier than they thought! And don't forget to let us know quickly about your sales so we can keep a check on our progress and report back to sellers in other areas.

How can I get hold of copies of Socialist Appeal to sell?

Contact our office and we will either arrange for local sellers to drop some off to you or post them to you.

How long does the campaign last?

The campaign will be launched at Labour Party conference (see advert for readers meeting) and will run through until the end of the year. Each issue will update the progress and the January issue will have a full round-up of the campaign.

Steve Jones,
Journal manager

Sales Campaign '93

For more info ring
071-354-3164

TUC
LABOUR PARTY

Labour Party and TUC Conference Special

Defend the Union Links

Without doubt the key debate at this year's Labour's Conference will be over trade union links. Ever since the Party's right wing proposed the introduction of so-called one member one vote (OMOV) earlier this year, wide spread opposition has erupted in the ranks of the trade unions and the Party.

The right wing have attempted to dress up their proposals as extending democracy and modernising the Party. This is completely false. Firstly, every member of the Party has the right to vote for policies and choose their representatives through their Party branches and GMC's (then in the electoral college). In these meetings members can hear the arguments and take informed decisions. They also provide the means of exercising accountability over elected representatives.

Secondly, affiliated members, embracing 4.5 million, are able to participate in the decisions of the Party through their union branches, structures and representatives. This has provided an organic link between the unions and the Party. As Bill Morris, the general secretary of the TGWU said, "Our concern is to ensure that union members, who founded and sustained the party throughout this century, continue to have some collective input into the important decisions it takes."

The right wing want to break these links and do away with this party democracy by

introducing OMOV. Far from involving more members it will disaffiliate millions of trade unionists. OMOV will also be open to abuse, where small membership based parties, and there are many, can be flooded with paid for membership. An MP's seat could be 'bought' for perhaps as little as 200 subscriptions!

Indeed, Terry Rooney, Labour MP for Bradford North was reported to have put a price of £300 on a Labour council seat and £2500 on a seat in the European Parliament. As an MP is paid more than £30,000, the £500 needed to finance reduced rate subs would be seen as a "good investment".

Throughout the trade union conference season, union after union has come out against the breaking of union links with the party. The only union to support John Smith's original proposal for OMOV was the AEEU.

Opposition

This subject, not surprisingly, has drawn the largest number of resolutions submitted to the Party Conference, nearly fifty in total. The vast majority are opposed to OMOV. They reflect the feelings of the ranks of the labour movement. Only eight resolutions support the implementation of OMOV, including the motion from the AEEU.

The AEEU resolution repeats the old Tory myth that "Conference recognises that the electorate still views with suspicion the perceived domination of the Labour Party



by the unions.... Further, the links should not be a device for the unions to control the Labour Party. Notions such as 'no say, no pay' are not only detrimental to the Party in the eyes of the electorate but are totally unacceptable."

The AEEU leadership has been in the fore front of the campaign to back OMOV. Gavin Laird, the general secretary, has even held out the prospect of a complete break at all levels between the Party and the unions - which is the real aim of the 'modernisers'. Writing in the union's August journal, Laird says, "Unlike the UK there are no formal links between the

Democratic Party and the unions, yet already measures have been taken to reverse the anti union legislation of the Reagan era. Perhaps there is a lesson here for some of my union leader colleagues who seem hell bent on destroying any possibility of the British public electing a Labour government." Laird makes no secret of his views in working to turn the Labour Party into a version of the capitalist US Democratic Party. This objective is fully in line with the thinking of the strategists of capital. They too want a docile pro-capitalist Labour Party with no links to

the trade unions. Their greatest fear is a Labour Government under the pressure of leftward moving trade unions, which would pose a threat to their system. That is why these Ladies and Gentlemen are fully backing the 'modernisers'. Big business wants them to go further and totally eliminate Clause Four and the Socialist aspirations of the party. This is the real meaning of the 'modernisation' of the Labour Party. They want Smith to continue where Gaitskell failed 30 years ago.

The arguments of the right wing are effectively answered by resolutions opposing OMOV. The motion from Littleborough & Saddleworth CLP points out that *"The Labour Party was born out of the trade unions. At the turn of the century trade unionists wanted a voice in parliament and set up the Labour Representation Committee which later became the Labour Party. As a result, over the next 30 years, Labour replaced the Liberals as the opposition to the Tories."*

Mass Base

Without the mass base provided by the trade union link, Labour would become just a mark two SDP." The same point is made repeatedly throughout many resolutions. Bradford North CLP, nevertheless, underlines the point: *"In this centenary year of the founding of the ILP Conference believes it would be electoral suicide to accept the agenda of a hostile press and dilute our relationship with the representatives of organised workers."*

The motion from UCATT makes the argument forcefully: *"Conference believes that, if the next Labour Government is properly to reflect the aspirations of the Party's 4.5 million levy payers, the participation of trade union branches, reaching their decision in traditionally collective ways and not through an impractical and individualistic register of Labour Party supporters, in constituency decision-making must in no way be diminished."*

The resolution from Dunfermline West demands the *"continued exercise of the block vote by the trade unions in accord with their*

rules and practices and specifically their voting strength should not be allowed to fall below 50% of the total conference vote; (and) opposes any attempt to remove clause 4 part 4 from the Labour Party constitution.

A 'compromise' motion is submitted by NUPE, which calls for the establishment of *"a register of levy paying members eligible to join the Labour Party.... (This would) enable affiliated trade union members living in the CLP to opt, on a fairly agreed basis, for participation in parliamentary reselections on the basis of an individual vote."* The same would also apply to the election of the leader and deputy leader of the Labour Party.

It will be around this NUPE motion that a compromise composite resolution will be cobbled together. It appears that John Smith - to the disappointment of the neanderthal right wing, or misnamed 'modernisers' - has drawn back temporarily from the introduction of full blown OMOV. A new package has been thrown together with the backing of Labour's NEC (by 20 votes to seven) and the trade union links review group, trading off continued trade union input into the Party's leadership elections for one member one vote with 'levy-plus' in parliamentary candidate selections.

The new proposals would mean a new electoral college for leadership elections now redivided between unions, CLPs and MPs getting one third of the votes each. Selection of parliamentary candidates would be on the basis of OMOV, with levy paying trade unionists only voting if they pay an additional fee to become full members. This new proposal may allow some unions, despite their conference decisions, to switch over to Smith. This must not be allowed to happen. This proposal, despite being a retreat on the original OMOV, must be opposed tooth and nail by those who oppose watering down the union links. With the TGWU, MSF and the GMB still opposed, the attempt to break the links can be defeated.

Dave Sims

Defend Union Links! Fight for Socialist Policies

**Labour Party Conference
Socialist Appeal Readers Meeting**

Speakers:

Ted Grant,

**Ruth Fallon (delegate,
Halifax CLP, personal capacity),
Perry McMillan (UCATT,
personal capacity)**

**Tuesday September 28
7.30pm .**

**Caxton Arms, North
Gardens, Brighton**

**John Smith's proposals
would mean each MP's
vote in the leadership
election would be
equivalent to that of more
than two constituency
parties.**

**300 MPs would have the
same share of the vote as
200,000 individual
members. Bill Morris
declares,**

***"What the modernisers are
really about is: One MP,
loads of votes; one
individual member, one
vote; four million trade
unionists, no vote."***

(Independent - 28.7.93)

Where Now?

This September sees the 125th Trade Union Congress. It is taking place at a crucial time for the trade union movement. Using the recession and mass unemployment, the bosses have unleashed an offensive against the pay and conditions of British workers.

The Tories have imposed a 1.5% wage freeze on the public sector, while introducing further anti-trade union legislation. Under these conditions, what is the way forward?

Despite the booming share prices on the Stock Exchange, the workers have seen a savage attack on their standards. Pay deals in the engineering industry have fallen to an average of 2.09% in the three months from April to June. In South Yorkshire one in five engineering workplaces have accepted pay freezes. At the same time, with the introduction of Compulsory Competitive Tendering and "flexibility", the capitalist class is squeezing out greater relative surplus value from the labour of the workers. In the oil industry, where the majority of workers are no longer covered by collective union agreements, the bosses are imposing sweeping changes in working practices through individual contracts. Almost one in five companies employing more than 1,000 workers have withdrawn union recognition over the past five years.

Compulsory Redundancies

The working class has not taken this lying down. The threat of strike action at Fords earlier in the year forced the management to withdraw compulsory redundancies. In Glasgow, a partial victory was gained by striking workers at Yarrow. There have been strikes on the railways and in the pits over job losses. Up and down the country, council workers have taken repeated action over cuts. In banking BIFU has conducted a successful strike at the TSB and are balloting for action in Lloyds Bank. Staff at British Airways have also taken action. Health workers in London and elsewhere have struck in defence of jobs, the latest being at the University College Hospital. Postal workers have balloted for strikes or taken action in London, Sheffield, Cardiff and Liverpool. Firefighters may strike in defence of their pay formula. Civil servants have been engaged in strikes over market testing. The teaching unions successfully defeated Patten's testing plans through a boycott. Also London bus workers went on a series of one-day strikes against cuts.

These are not a complete list, and although not all were successful, they indicate a willingness to struggle despite all the obstacles. Another interesting feature of the past 10 years has been the big increase in over-time bans, especially in the private sector, which has provided a relatively low-cost way for workers to express their dissatisfaction.

The real face of British capitalism, however, is revealed at Timex in Dundee where the employers sacked the whole workforce for refusing to accept draconian cuts in pay and conditions. In face of a determined strike by 340 the bosses have decided to shut the plant. Again, the dispute at Hilliers in Reading broke out when the 42 workforce were all sacked after rejecting pay cuts of as much as 38%, abolition of sick pay and a reduction in holidays. In Bristol, 121 print workers were dismissed from Arrowsmiths for engaging in an overtime ban as part of a national claim for improved pay and conditions. Two other printing companies, Revell and George of Salford, and Harvest Printers of Macclesfield are also being picketed following dismissals arising from the campaign.

Strike Action

The number of days lost through strikes last year were the lowest since records began. There were only 240 officially recorded strikes last year, less than a 10th of the number 15 years ago. This has largely been due to the rise in unemployment, but it also reflects the failure of the trade union leaders to offer any effective fight-back. According to some observers, this situation heralds a new epoch of "new industrial relations", with the death of the closed shop and the reassertion of the rights of management. However, as the Financial Times (19.5.93) commented, "Currently conflict-free industrial relations appear to result more from worker compliance than from co-operation with management."

For instance, the decision by the Tory Government last October to close down 31 pits and sack 30,000 miners was part of their strategy to destroy the NUM and prepare the industry for privatisation. The public out-cry and mass demonstrations forced the Tories to retreat. Unfortunately, the TUC allowed the mood to dissipate, and allowed time for the Tories to strangle the industry by failing to organise any form of industrial action in defence of the miners. The miners were allowed to fight on alone, apart from the one-day strikes with the railworkers. As a result over 20,000 have left the industry and 18 of the review pits are up for sale. There is now a threat to fifteen more pits.

The reason for this abdication of leadership by the TUC is its policy of 'New Realism', and rejection of militancy. That is why they invited Howard Davies, director-general of the CBI to address last year's Congress. They have no confidence in the working class to fight and no perspective of militant struggle. A new Fabian pamphlet actually argues the TUC should provide more services on the lines of the AA motoring organisation! Only big movements from below will force them to take a lead.

This doesn't mean that everything is calm in the unions. Although activity remains at a

relatively low level, the union conferences have experienced sharp debates over the union links and pay, and the greetings given to the Timex strikers. Even the EETPU conference, which traditionally is extremely right-wing, was lively and saw the chairperson over-ruled - the first time for 30 years! Delegates overturned the standing orders committee's decision not to give Timex strikers visitors credentials. This is of enormous significance for the future. At NALGO conference the leadership was overturned on pay and forced to hold a ballot. NUPE conference also approved industrial action over defence of the NHS, as well as Care in the Community legislation, despite the reservations of the Executive.

Anti-Union Laws

The trade union leaders have hidden behind the Tory anti-union laws to cover up their impotence. These laws could be swept off the statute books by a united movement of the class. Such was the case in 1972 when Heath attempted to use the law against the dockers, only to retreat when the TUC threatened a 24-hour strike and a movement began to develop



from below. Despite the Tory laws being used against workers in struggle since then, the TUC has held back for fear of their assets being sequestered. But what is written by the power of the workers' organisations cannot be changed by lawyers' laws. The beginnings of an upturn in the economy - which could grow by 2% next year - will reintroduce confidence back on the shop floor. As order books revive so will the demand by workers to seek a share of the profits. From defensive struggles, workers will go on the offensive. There will be a rise in strikes and a movement back to the unions. The Tories are planning to introduce tax increases and cuts in November which will eat into living standards. This will push the workers further in the direction of struggle. If the trade union leaders fail to articulate this new mood, then unofficial action will take place. However, with growing pressure from below the union leaders will begin to voice this discontent and be forced to lead struggles for better pay and conditions. Just one official strike from a decisive sector of workers can break the log-jam and open up a new situation. Under such conditions the trade unions would begin to be transformed into real organs of struggle.

There is no more important question facing Labour than how to tackle Britain's economic decline. Roger Lewis looks at the current debate.

For a socialist economic policy!

Labour's Conference will debate key issues facing the working class who have suffered more than fourteen of Tory government. The Tories are in a state of crisis with Major standing lower in the polls than any prime minister at any time since records began. If Labour is to decisively defeat the Tories, it must advance a programme that can solve the problems experienced by working people.

British capitalism is in terminal decline, having experienced its longest recession in the post war period. According to the motion from Walton CLP, "the UK is suffering from the worst economic slump for 60 years and the slump involves a major housing and unemployment crisis." Despite one of the lowest wage levels in Europe, unemployment has in reality hovered around the 4 million mark, and Britain falls further and further behind her rivals. There is still a productivity gap compared with France, Germany and Japan of at least a quarter. With a widening trade deficit and a budget deficit of £50 billion, a future Labour Government will be faced with an horrendous economic position, far more than the crisis faced by the Callaghan Government.

Many resolutions to Party conference are demanding action and policies in the interests of working people. From the abolition of VAT on domestic fuel (Braintree CLP), to equalisation of the retirement age at 60 (Rother Valley), to free prescriptions (Renfrew West), full employment

which "appears to have been dropped bit by bit by the Labour leadership" (Nottingham North), nursery education for all children from four years and grants for all students over 16 (SEA), a free NHS (Upminster), 400,000 new council dwellings for rent (South Suffolk), to a national minimum wage (USDAW).

Radical Resolutions

The section dealing with economic policy contains radical resolutions, not seen for a number of years, and very critical of the present official policy of the Party. "This Party", states the motion from Cardiff South and Penarth challenging John Smith's view, "does not believe that the debate on public ownership is 'sterile and irrelevant'".

"The economic crisis and its effect of mass unemployment and poverty demonstrate clearly that free market forces alone have not and will not resolve these problems. Conference affirms that the next Labour Government will require a Socialist programme", states Oldham Central and Royton CLP.

Many of the resolutions on economic policy demand that a future Labour government take back into public ownership the privatised public utilities of gas, electricity, water, postal services, telecommunications, fuel and energy and public transport "that have been taken into private ownership during the past fourteen years" (Don Valley). A number of motions call for "the

extension of public ownership and control to strategic manufacturing, distribution and service industries where the free market palpably fails to secure the best interests of the people" (Huddersfield).

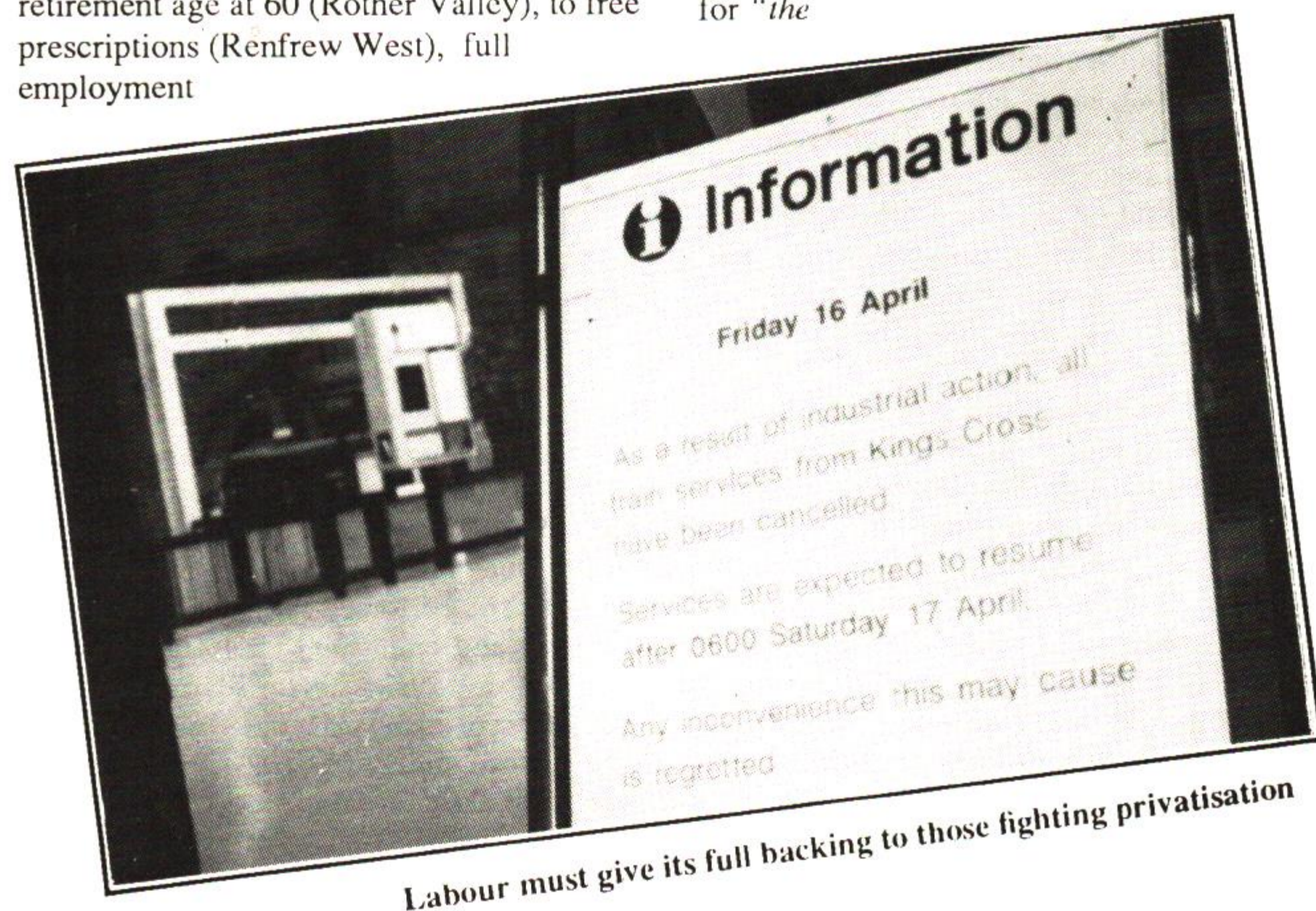
The resolution from Bristol East "reaffirms its commitment to the principle that common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange is essential to achieve an equitable distribution of wealth and a fair and just society; rejects the suggestion that common ownership is simply one of a number of means to achieve an end...(and) rejects the view that Labour's economic policy should emphasis public regulation of industry rather than public ownership and accountability through ownership."

Central to a bold socialist programme is the resolution from Paisley North which calls clearly for a "democratically planned economy".

Central to a bold socialist programme is the resolution from Paisley North which calls clearly for a "democratically planned economy" to generate the necessary resources to finance the reforms that can provide a better life for working people. The motion speaks for itself:

"This Conference recognises that unemployment, low pay, poverty and exploitation are part and parcel of the free market system.

Therefore, an incoming Labour government has to tackle these problems. Conference calls on the Party to bring in legislation to



enable workers to control industry as laid down in Clause 4 (part 4) of our constitution, thus enabling the economy to be planned on the basis of need instead of greed.

The madness of mass unemployment can be seen with thousands of construction workers on the dole whilst homelessness is rife. The lunacy of the economic system is witnessed by the fact that international speculators can force governments to jack interest rates up forcing mortgages to rise and business to collapse.

Conference therefore calls on the Party leadership to fight the next election on bold socialist policies, exposing the waste, corruption and immorality inherent in capitalism.

Conference further calls for the Party's manifesto to include a commitment to taking the top monopoly companies, including the banks and insurance companies, into public ownership, under workers' control and management.

A democratically planned economy in the interests of ordinary people and not for the profits of the rich will inspire people to return a Labour government."

It is quite clear from the agenda book that there is growing discontent with the milk and water line of the leadership. An increasing number of constituencies reject the attempt to patch up capitalism and run it better than the Tories, and have come out in

defence of Socialism and Clause 4. With only ONE motion calling for a revision of Clause 4, which according to Weaden CLP fosters 'a belief among voters of a marxist-based hidden agenda', no fewer than thirteen resist all moves to 'delete, amend or change clause 4 in any way whatsoever' (Wolverhampton North East).

"Conference affirms the commitment of the Labour Party to the establishment of socialist economic system", (Walsall North) and "nails the lie that this is a classless society by leading and fighting for the working class and the underclass against repression by capital" (Wantage CLP). The North East Cambridgeshire Party forcefully condemns the shift to the right by the leadership: "The dropping of any call for nationalisation is symptomatic of this slide as is the leadership's noticeable inability to mention the word 'socialism', preferring instead 'social justice'. This Party has nothing to be ashamed of and should be proud of its history of socialism. It should set out its vision for a socialist country based on the common ownership of the means of production and redistribution of wealth. It is time to stop bowing before the Tories who after fourteen years of uninterrupted government have brought the country and the people to its knees. We have nothing to learn from them and we must set our own alternative and socialist agenda."

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Britain's Decline and Fall

* Manufacturing accounts for a fifth of UK national income, compared to a quarter in 1981 and a third in 1970.

* Britain has invested just 18.4% of its national income in plant and machinery over the past 20 years, whereas Japan has invested 31%, France 22% and Germany 21%.

* Britain now invests less than Malawi, Mauritius, Tunisia and Pakistan in its manufacturing industry.

* In 1981, Britain exported 27% more electrical machinery, scientific instruments and power generation equipment than it imported. Last year it was just 6% more.

* Exports of manufactured goods have remained flat since 1979.

* Production of washing machines in the UK was 895,000 in 1991, 100,000 fewer than 1981. Production of electric cookers has fallen by a fifth to 446,000 over the same period.

* The West Midlands now houses 12% of UK manufacturing. Over the last ten years the region has lost nearly a quarter of a million manufacturing jobs. Service industries now employ two and half times as many people as manufacturing.

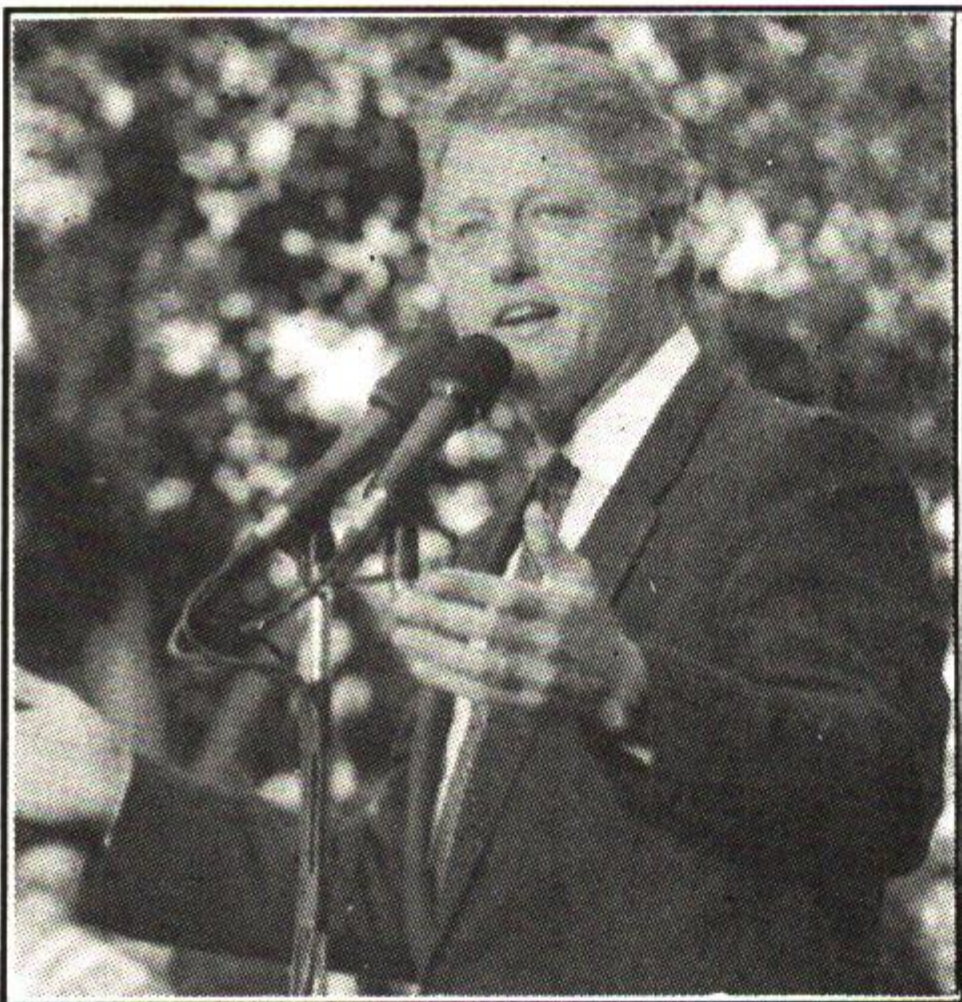
Time to Change Course

"There is no question of anyone resigning. We are going to win this by-election."

Sir Norman Fowler, Tory chairman, when asked about prospects at Christchurch.

The Labour Party conference is meeting at a time when the Major government is in complete disarray. The Tories have stumbled from one disaster to another, from Mellor's sacking to Lamont's ERM debacle; from the Mates affair to Major's cabinet bastards. In just over a year their popularity has slumped to an all-time low. Faced with grave economic problems, allegations of corrupt dealings, catastrophic by-election results, and the most shattering local election losses for 100 years, the government is coming apart at the seams. Major, the great helmsman, is the most unpopular prime minister since records began.

This has given the party a golden



Some modernisers have advocated the Clintonisation of Labour

opportunity to open up an offensive against the Tories on all fronts. By promoting a radical image Labour could completely undermine the Major government and lay the basis for a Labour victory at the next election. Rallies and meetings should be held up and down the country to capitalise on the Tories demise and rally working people solidly behind the party.

Unfortunately, the Labour leadership is blind to this great opportunity. The Front Bench appears totally ineffectual and incapable of taking the offensive. It seems mesmerised by its own moderation. Instead of using the plight of the Tories to drive home their defeat, the Labour Front Bench is attempting incredibly to put on the discredited clothes of Toryism! They are not prepared to shed their Me-to policies. No sooner had the "market" resulted in the longest post war slump, John Smith praises its virtues, and promotes the wonders of class collaboration between the workers and the captains of industry. As soon as the Labour conference is over, he has agreed to address the bosses' forum, the CBI annual conference. No doubt this is to reassure the bosses of British industry, despite the Bolshie calls for renationalisation of privatised companies from Labour's ranks, how reliable a Labour government will be when elected.

Big Business

This strategy of ingratiating the Labour leadership to Big Business is simply a continuation of the so-called 'prawn cocktail' circuit of City lunches by senior Labour spokesmen before the last general election. John Smith will have the "honour" of becoming the first leader of Britain's main parties - let alone a Labour leader - to

address the CBI conference. Neither Thatcher nor Major have had that "honour". This spectacle reflects the shift to the right over the last ten years. The boom of 1982-90, together with the lack of participation of the class in its organisations, has resulted in the leadership becoming increasingly divorced from the ranks, and even more under the influence of pro-capitalist ideas. It is the mirror image of the process in the trade unions where last year the TUC congress was addressed by the director-general of the CBI, Howard Davies. The Labour leaders have no conception that we live in a class society, based on the exploitation of the labour of the working class by a handful of millionaire parasites. That inherent in capitalism is boom and slump, resulting in millions of unemployed, poverty and degradation. According to Tony Blair, this is not the situation: we are all "members of a community and society that own obligations to one another as much as to themselves and depend on each other, in part at least, to succeed." For him class society doesn't exist. We need an identity, he says. "But the identity should be one for the modern world, not a throwback to a romanticised view of the past."

These ideas are nothing new. They have been peddled before by reformist leaders, especially in boom periods. They are exactly the same ideas as Crossland and Gaitskell in the 1950's. They also maintained that capitalism had changed, and that Clause 4 and classes were old fashioned, and the movement needed new ideas for a new situation. However, since then, the monopolisation of industry has reached greater proportions. In 1959, 600 monopolies dominated the British economy. By 1964 it had fallen to 400 companies; by 1974 to only 250 companies; and today just over 150 monopolies dominate the economy.

Poverty Trap

According to the Party's Commission on Social Justice, the bosses of Britain's 100 biggest companies have seen their salaries rise by an average of 133% in the last five years, to £10,000 per week. At the same time, 16 million people today have to survive on less than £61 per week. The poorest 10% of the population have had their meagre incomes slashed by 14% under the Tories. The Commission's report states that 400,000 people are officially homeless and seven million households are unable to afford heating. According to The Independent (28.4.92), "During the first 15 weeks of this year a total of 7,518 cases of dysentery were reported in England and Wales, compared with 1,708 for the same period in 1991."

At present the richest 10% of the population own half of all the wealth, while the bottom

half of the population gets just 8%. "The gap between the highest and lowest paid is wider today than at any time since 1886" (Commission Report). It then concludes: "It has become conventional to hear people argue that class does not matter in Britain today, they say 'class is irrelevant'. We do not accept this."

Tony Blair has capitulated to Tory ideology. His call for a new relationship between society and the individual in a society based on class exploitation and privilege is completely hollow. Inevitably he advocates a partnership between the public and private sector. But the private sector has always used the public sector as a milch cow it can squeeze dry. Bowing to the "free market", he says: "We should open up the issue of how public services are funded, how we raise money and how we spend it... In fighting poverty, the aim is not to maintain dependency on the state, but to create the conditions for people to escape it." Stripped of all the frills, Blair is calling for an abandonment of Labour's traditional support for adequate state funding of public services, and opening them up, as the Tories have done, to big business.

When Blair made his speech extolling the Tory virtues of "family values" and the "individual freedom in lifestyle", he said Labour "had to recognise family break-up along with the need for discipline in schools, responsibility and citizenship." (Independent, 26.6.93). It is no accident this opened the way for Thatcherite John Redwood to eulogise about the "normal love and support that fathers have offered down the ages to their families", and therefore "it must be right before granting state aid to pursue the father."

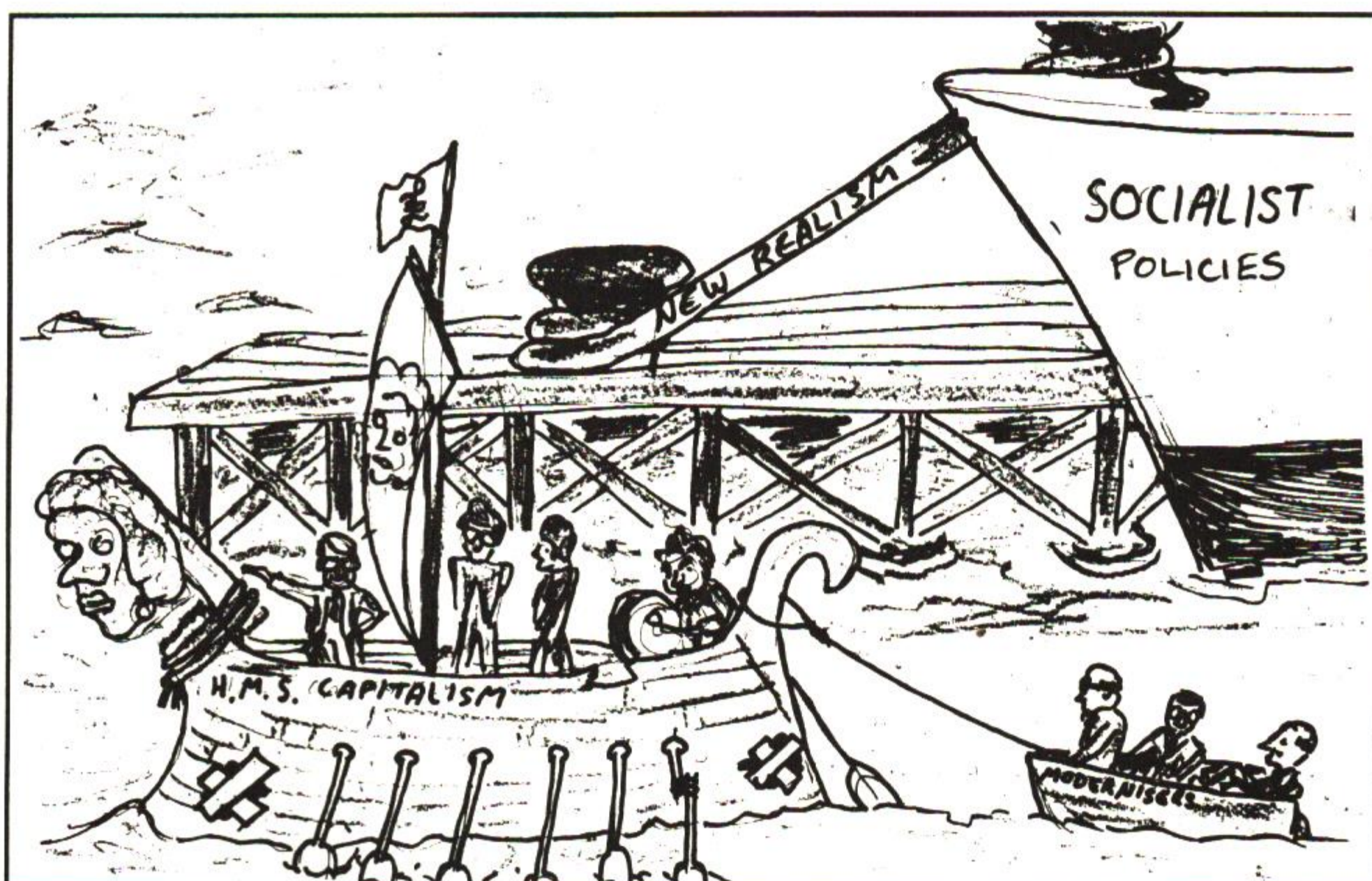
The undermining of the family has little to do with "irresponsible behaviour" on the part of individuals, and very much to do with the crisis of capitalism and the pressures it imposes. More than one in three marriages ends in divorce. At present lone parents are bringing up one out of every five children. The majority of relationships break down under the strains of unemployment, poverty, debt, insecurity, the stress at work, and the general pressures of making ends meet. How is it possible to ensure stable family relations without a stable and secure social environment?

Again, on the eve of a speech by Tom Sackville, the junior health minister, about the need to curb the rising numbers of illegitimate births, David Blunkett proposed that the points system for council housing waiting lists should be changed to reward responsible couples who have stable relationships! "We need to transform the housing service so we have more appropriate housing, readily available, and a waiting list structure that positively rewards those who have tried their best to

take responsibility and have some order in their lives... a stable relationship prior to having children. We need to encourage them rather than punish other people. They need to know it's worth waiting.... We see a woman in Bath with nine children and different fathers. What chance do those

longer afford the reforms of the past. The system demands a cut in public expenditure and the 'social wage'.

This is now the ground on which Labour's right wing stands. Policies can only be put forward "if the (capitalist) economy can afford it". That is the position of John Smith



For many in the labour leadership it is not the system that is at fault for not providing decent housing, a decent environment and so on, but the fault of individuals. This is to swallow hook, line and sinker the Tory arguments of individuals being responsible for poverty homelessness and unemployment.

children have in circumstances of total instability?" For Blunkett, it is not the system that is at fault for not providing decent housing for all and a decent environment, but the fault of individuals for not having sufficient 'responsibility'. This is to swallow hook line and sinker the Tory arguments of individuals being responsible for poverty, homelessness and unemployment. It is a disgrace that Labour leaders should come out with such cant. How can they argue with any credibility against the views of Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, who supports placing single mothers in council hostels rather than houses? Or Charles Hendry, the Tory joint chair of an all-party group on homelessness, believes single mothers should be refused hostels and forced to stay at home?

This is where attempts to work within the confines of capitalism end up. The Labour leadership is attempting to trim its programme to what capitalism can afford. Given the crisis, counter reforms, not reforms, are on the agenda. That is why the Tories are attacking the NHS, education, housing and the welfare state. It is not a question of Tory ideology, although there is an element of this, but the system can no

and Co. In a recent book on the Labour Leader by Andy McSmith ('John Smith: Playing the Long Game'), the author, who was Labour's chief press officer in the 1987 general election, make some interesting observations. Despite failing to take account of the trade unions to block the plans of the 'modernisers', he states: "There is no doubt about how the contest between the modernisers and the rest will work out. One side is well-organised, with strong professional back-up. They have not one but two credible leaders in Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, Neil Kinnock in support and a clear idea of what they want. Their Labour Party would be more European than the Tories, very strong on law and order, with a promise of electoral reform, and social welfare without excessive tax increases. "Its internal democracy would be based on one member one vote, minus the union block vote; and it would rely heavily on professional advisers and image-makers to dispose of the party's traditional association with dying industries and decaying inner cities. It would be a party where the upwardly mobile could feel at home - not unlike the one that David Owen tried to create a decade ago. On the other side there is not a disciplined army but a jumble of

Right- and Left-wing factions opposed to one part or another of the Kinnockite project."

This is exactly what the right wing 'modernisers' would like to see as soon as possible.

However, in the words of Burns, "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft a-gley." Already their plans to introduce so-called one member one vote has hit big obstacles through trade union and constituency opposition. The right wing coalition under Kinnock has come apart at the seams, with John Edmonds, John Prescott and Brian Gould being pushed into semi-opposition. Even Tribune, which slavishly followed the Kinnock line, has begun to thunder against the 'modernisers' and describes them as "a group of individuals who have virtually abandoned what Labour stands for and totally betrayed its origins in the trade union movement as the protector - not of the upwardly mobile - but of the poor and needy.... the 'modernisers', like the old SDP, have made Labour unelectable and offer only a mild form of Conservatism.... Meanwhile it would be an encouraging start if the block

vote were used to chuck some of the young fogies off Labour's National Executive Committee at this year's party conference." (2 July 1993). Again, "while the moderniser camp is fixated, eighties-style, on winning over the dwindling bands of upwardly mobile, it is increasingly obvious to others that Labour can return to office only by winning back its one-time commanding lead among working-class voters." (6 August 1993). A Tribune pamphlet by Peter Hain states

"There has been little to distinguish Labour's macroeconomic policy from that of the Tories." It was immediately attacked by Nigel Griffiths, Labour trade and industry spokesperson and Tribune member, as "political naivety and economic illiteracy".

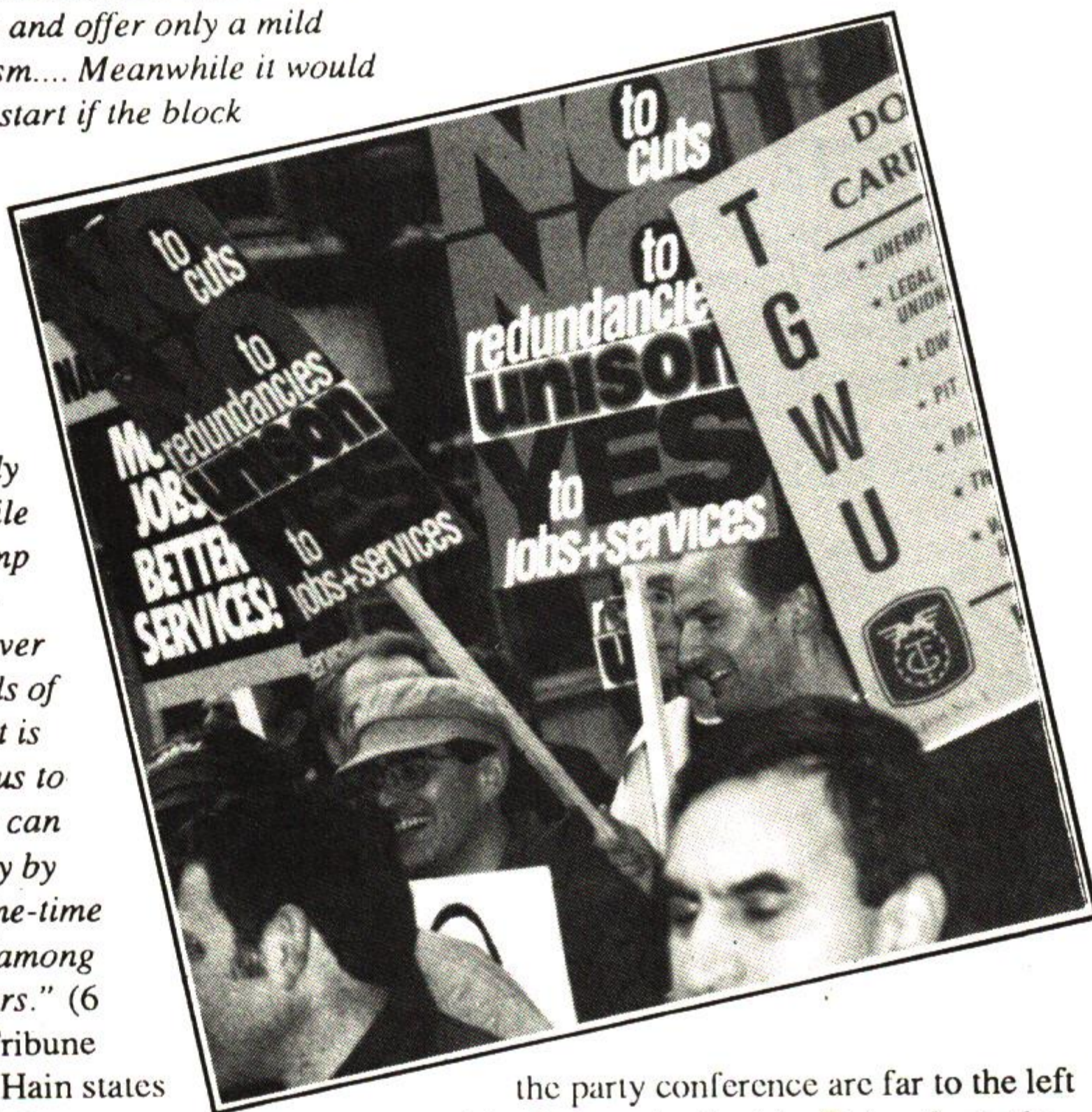
When Gordon Brown, the Shadow Chancellor, announced the new document, The New Economic Approach, he was desperate to reassure big business that "the next Labour government will not tax for its own sake. Labour is not against wealth, nor will we seek to penalise it." On public spending, he talked of cutting waste: "Wherever spending has become divorced from these purposes (people's

opportunities and prosperity), then it is wasteful and inefficient and we should cut it or eliminate it."

Even sections of the right wing are increasingly alarmed at the tame statements of the Labour leadership. For instance, Nick Raynsford, MP for Greenwich, said Labour needed "rather more radical policies than have yet been enunciated". He said the new document was "too cautious" on tax, and feared it would not allow a Labour chancellor to deliver what would be expected from a Labour government. Bryan Gould has accused the leadership of "spitting in the wind". Whereas Austin Mitchell charged the front bench with pursuing "a policy of impotence, back-peddling and good jokes".

Splits and Divisions

These splits and divisions at the top are extremely symptomatic, and reflect discontent amongst the party activists. It is no accident that the resolutions to



the party conference are far to the left of the Labour leadership. This reflects the real situation at the base of the party, while the leadership tries to out Tory the Tories. Similarly, a number of unions have begun to move into semi-opposition to the parliamentary leadership.

The TGWU is hinting at removing its sponsorship from the 'modernisers' Blair and Brown after the introduction of a 'new working code' for sponsorship, against which their performance will be measured. John Edmonds has made scathing attacks on the 'modernisers' over trade union links and economic policy.

It represents a break in the situation, and the beginnings of a shift to the left in the party. It is only the beginning, as the working class

as a whole has not yet moved into its organisations. Industrial activity, apart from some notable exceptions, has been at an historically low level. Activity generally in the labour movement is also at a similar level.

The election of a Labour government pursuing present policies, will bring inevitable moves towards counter-reform on the basis of crisis. Such measures will propel the trade unions into opposition and serve to radicalise the party's rank and file.

As Marxists have explained many times, the working class does not enter the road of struggle for the sake of it. They will take the line of least resistance. Only when there is no other way will the workers move into action. Again the British working class is generally slow to move, but when they do they are determined. When they are blocked industrially, they will turn to the political front, through their mass organisation, the Labour Party. The splits in the leadership of the movement will result in a trickle of workers moving into the party. This in turn will embolden the opposition to the right wing.

The election of a new Labour government, pursuing present policies, will bring inevitable move towards counter reform on the basis of the crisis. Such measures will propel the trade unions into opposition, as in 1978, and serve to radicalise the party's rank and file. New workers will be drawn in, which will push the party to the left. On the basis of events, we will see a transformation and re-transformation of the mass organisations.

The task of Marxism will be to struggle shoulder to shoulder with workers in struggle against any attempt to patch up capitalism, while putting forward a bold socialist programme to rearm the movement, based on Clause 4, that will put an end to Toryism and their bankrupt system once and for all.

Mass Action to Drive Out the Murder Gangs

With the escalation of violence over the recent period, South Africa appears to be at the cross-roads. Socialist Appeal spoke to Malcolm Zondi from the Cape Town ANC youth, who has been conducting a speaking tour in Europe.

SA: How would you describe the current situation?

MZ: I would say the situation is becoming increasingly polarised. There is deep frustration felt by the masses in the constant delays in the all-party negotiations. There are great illusions in the proposed elections scheduled for April. Although the right to vote is a victory, many believe simply that they can get a majority ANC government that will change their lives. On the other hand there is the escalating violence, which claimed at least 220 lives in the first 10 days of August. That makes about 1,000 political killings since the beginning of June. This has put the elections in doubt. Already De Klerk has said they cannot go ahead if the violence continues.

SA: Do you see the violence subsiding by then?

MZ: No. I believe it will increase as we approach the elections. It is being perpetrated by the right wing organisations, Inkatha, the AWB (neo-fascist Afrikaner Resistance Movement), and behind them the security forces. They are opposed to majority rule and fear that these negotiations and elections will ultimately lead to it. To preserve its power in KwaZulu, Inkatha wants to block the elections as it will be electorally wiped out, with less than 5% of the vote. They have less than 3% support amongst the Zulus. They are also supported

by white businessmen, who see them as a moderate force against the ANC. It was for this reason also that they were financed and backed by the state. The Conservative Party and the extreme right also want to stop majority rule and are campaigning for a white homeland. They have established a formal alliance, the Afrikaner Volksfront, headed by the retired chief of the South African Defence Force, General Viljoen. It was this gang who stormed the multi-party negotiations in June. It is in their interests to create a climate of fear and intimidation,

stirred up by the right wing. They accuse the government of preparing to hand over the country to an ANC-SACP alliance, where the whites would be driven out and killed. Again, if the elections are halted, then the frustration of the masses will also burst out. Many workers have been held back from taking strike action over pay for fear of disrupting the negotiations. A failure in this field will lead to big strikes.

SA: What has been the strategy of the ANC leaders?

MZ: The strategy since the release of

Mandela has been to achieve majority rule through negotiation with De Klerk. They have promoted a moderate face, attempting to hold back the mass movement. This is a strategy of getting the tiger to change its spots.

SA: Can these negotiations succeed?

MZ: Firstly, the ruling class has pursued a policy of repression (in backing the death squads) and concession (in the form of negotiation and the legalisation of the ANC). They are unable to rule in the old way, where 5 million whites are dominating 34 million blacks,



Police on the streets of Alexandra township - just one of the recent flashpoints.

through the use of violence.

SA: How do you view the proposed elections in April?

MZ: Well a lot can happen in eight months. I don't believe that they will go ahead. The violence will intensify and there could be a blood bath by then. Under these conditions I believe they will be cancelled or indefinitely postponed. This will dramatically polarise the situation as the right wing want. The greater the violence, the more the support for the right increases amongst the whites. The murder of 10 white people in a church in Cape Town confirmed this. This is a liberal area relatively free from violence. But the killings served to panic the white population,

coloureds and mixed races. They want to maintain their power through other means. While conceding one person one vote, they are attempting to bring about a rigged constitution to guarantee their privileges. They will accept certain concessions, but the only way they can reach full agreement in the negotiations is the complete capitulation of the ANC to the De Klerk government. The ANC have made the demand that the security forces be placed under the control of the parties involved in the negotiations. The government has refused point blank, and called on the ANC to dissolve its military wing in an attempt to cause difficulties for the ANC leaders.

South Africa/Bookshelf

De Klerk's strategy is to discredit the ANC and separate them from the masses, to cause confusion and mistrust in an attempt to preserve the position of the white minority. The ANC have been forced to compromise and act as a fire hose on its supporters. Instead of capitulating to the demands of big business and white privilege, the ANC must negotiate on the basis of black majority rule with full and equal rights for all national minorities.

At the same time the ANC leaders must tell the masses that they cannot rely upon these negotiations to solve their problems, and should mobilise the workers on an independent class programme to overthrow the regime.

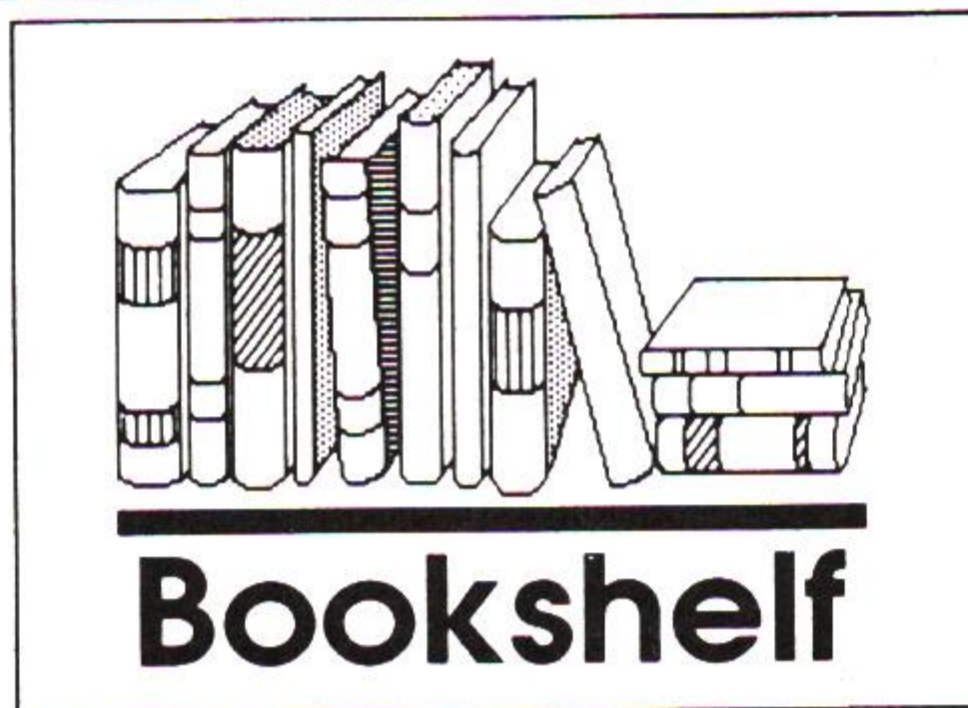
SA: How do the masses view the ANC leaders?

MZ: Many of the youth are very critical at this moment. When I attended the funeral of comrade Hani, the 70,000 people were very intense and angry. Every youth present was armed in one form or another. They looked to the leadership for a lead. Enough was enough. But when Mandela spoke all he called for was calm and the need to go forward to negotiations. He was booed for that and at least a third of the stadium left. There are divisions at the top of the ANC of how best to go forward. Given the events that will come, these divisions could open up into splits.

SA: How do you see the way forward?

MZ: The black working class is very powerful in South Africa. It has the strength to change things decisively. The ANC and COSATU should organise mass action to fight the regime and drive out the murder gangs. Only the overthrow of the regime can bring about genuine national liberation. This can only be achieved through a bold socialist programme and a clear Marxist leadership which is not prepared to compromise with the regime. Such a programme could win over a decisive section of white workers to the cause of a socialist South Africa. Only that can answer the problems of unemployment and poverty experienced by the mass of the population.

The next issue of SOCIALIST APPEAL will contain a full analysis and perspectives for South Africa.



In this month's Bookshelf, Jerry Smith reviews an important recent re-publication...

WORLD REVOLUTION 1917 - 1936

C.L.R. JAMES (Humanities Press Int. 1993)

It is a matter of some surprise that until now this book has been out of print since it was first published in 1937. Indeed virtually everything written by James seems to be currently out of print with the exception of "The Black Jacobins"; his superb and justly famous account of Toussaint L'Ouverture and the 1791 Haitian slave revolt (available from Well Red Books).

The re-publication of this work is therefore to be welcomed. Its subject is the Russian revolution and the rise of Stalinism and its effect on the Communist International.

Written with the general public in mind to counteract the mass of Stalinist propaganda that was spewing out from all quarters it owes much to the ideas of Trotsky (as he freely admits) and indeed Trotsky was to call it "a very good book".

However the reader should be warned (as the introduction notes) that the book does contain errors of analysis particularly on the question of the degeneration of the soviet state - James was to move away from Trotskyism during the 1940s.

Never the less James' sharp depiction of the horrors of the purge has been confirmed by history - indeed recent information now available from post-stalinist Russia has shown that if anything the estimates of the degree of bloodshed by Stalin and his henchmen have been too low.

Reviled by the left press at the time - who refused to carry adverts for it - this book deserves to be read now.

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by MILIBAND £7.95

A.J. COOK by Paul DAVIES on offer at £1

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Japan's Liberal Democratic Party, which governed the country continuously since 1955, was toppled in the recent general election. This unparalleled political crisis reflects the enormous economic crisis now facing capitalism's once "dream" economy. *Alastair Wilson* looks at...

Japan's Fading Sun

Japan shows all the signs of classical capitalist crisis. Economically and politically it has reached an impasse.

The Japanese economy was able to develop with average growth rates of over 9% between 1951 and 1973, its productivity levels grew by around 11% per annum over the same period. But since the Tokyo stock market crash in 1990, however, growth has reached all time post war lows. In 1992 GDP increased a meagre 1.6%! This has caused havoc in the economy and in society.

Big companies like Sony, facing recession in its export and in its home market, have returned losses for the first time in their history. Between January and June this year, car production fell by 7.2%, the fifth consecutive half yearly decline. The number of cars produced went below 6 million for the first time in eight years.

Retail sales fell 1.3% in June (13.4% over the year), the tenth consecutive monthly decline. Sales in clothing have fallen 11.6% over the year, and even food sales have dropped by 8.1%.

Bankruptcies Rise

In the first half of this year, bankruptcies linked with the economic downturn rose 40% according to the Teikoku Data Bank.

Unemployment, officially 2.5%, is in reality way above this figure. According to Nikko Securities, 900,000 (6%) workers are "unemployed within their own companies." Because of the "jobs for life" policy operated in the big companies, workers are paid to stay at home. This policy, though, is increasingly coming under threat. One big bank had the novel idea recently of making its clients take over the contracts of some of its workforce on the threat of withdrawing their loan and overdraft facilities!

In the recent period, wages have been virtually frozen. In some companies they have even started paying out the workers bonuses in unsold goods.

The leading edge that many Japanese companies have in fields of technology is now rapidly diminishing. Spending on research and development has been hammered in the current climate.

In April the government injected ¥13,000 billion (£82 billion) into the economy in an



Organised crime gangs protest against emergency measures to crack down on Japan's corruption crisis

attempt to stimulate the economy. But to little avail. According to Yashui Mieno, governor of the Bank of Japan, (Financial Times 6.7.93), the economy has yet to hit the bottom of the recession. There is no evidence of a recovery in personal consumption or in corporate capital spending. And when the recovery does come: "The bank has toned down its forecasts for the strength of the expected recovery from 'modest' to 'very modest'.

described by an EC trade spokesman as "a massive macro-economic problem for Japan and the world."

But this reliance on trade with recession bound USA and Europe has created enormous problems. Japan is now in the process of developing a big trading bloc with its East Asian satellites. In 1985 only 22% of exports went to the Asian market, this year it will reach 40%, and by the end of the century it will surpass 50%. China is now Japan's second largest trading partner, after the USA.

GROWTH IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE

	1988	1992
SONY	10.4%	2.1%
FUJITSU	28.9%	8.2%
HITACHI	13.0%	-4.0%

Since the 1950s Japan has rebuilt its economy to rival that of the USA. It has developed an enormous trade surplus - one of the world economy's great imbalances. It had a surplus with the USA of \$44.5 billion in 1992, \$41.6 billion with the rest of South East Asia and \$37 billion with the EC. Even during the recession its exports rose by 7.9% while imports fell from \$203 billion to \$198 billion (in the year 1991-92). Its massive trade surplus, now standing at \$150 billion per year (3.5% of GNP), was

Political Crisis

Japan's economic woes have been mirrored by its greatest political crisis since the fifties. The LDP has ruled Japan since 1955. Bourgeois commentators talked about Japan having become a virtual "one party state". But that party was racked by crisis and corruption scandals. A split of one faction and then another made the general election inevitable. The LDP looked doomed to defeat. As the LDP Foreign Minister, Kaban Muto, stated, "If by any chance Mr. Miyazawa dies, then the LDP will win a landslide victory." And he was one of the party's more confident representatives!

The LDP was formed in 1955, with full "backing" from US imperialism, through the merger of Japan's two rival conservative parties. The main fear of the bourgeois was of the spread of communism - only a few years before Japan had seen a massive wave of

working class protest in the late 1940s. It was the defeat of this movement that led to the introduction of new working practices and contracts in the big enterprises. But by 1955 Japanese capitalism was far from consolidated and the conservatives sunk their differences in a merger whose main aim was to stop the Left from ever achieving power. From the start the party was dominated by vested interests, factionalism and corruption.

By the late 1980s a section of the Japanese bourgeois were determined to reform the corrupt LDP.

They wanted reforms that would sideline the old LDP, the "grandees", the bureaucrats and the influential farmers lobby. As the *Independent* (19.6.93) put it, "A country which leads the world in cars and electronics should not have its hands tied by a diminishing group of pension age rice farmers."

It was this factional struggle between the "old guard" and the "progressive" wing of the party which led to the relentless stream of corruption scandals.

The main "reform" faction was led by Shin Kanemara. He launched a campaign for a realignment of the "progressive" wing of the LDP with "moderate" Socialists and some other smaller opposition parties. He groomed Ichiro Ozawa as a future Prime Minister and started to amass a small fortune from big business to finance this campaign. Unfortunately for Kanemara, after a "tip-off", he was found with millions of dollars of cash and gold at his home and he, along with Ozawa, were disgraced.

The mantle of the "reformers" then fell to Tsutomu Hata. It was Hata who led the walkout from the LDP and the subsequent defeat of the party in the general election.

ELECTION RESULTS

	NEW	OLD
LDP	223	227
SDP	70	134
RENEWAL	55	36
Komeito	51	45
New Japan	35	0
Dem. Socialist	15	13
CP	15	16
New Harbinger	13	10
Others	34	16

It was the split-offs from the LDP who made the biggest gains in the election. Hata's Renewal Party and the New Japan Party of Hosakawa (the new coalition Prime Minister) exploited the enormous disillusionment with the LDP, the party they were members of until a few weeks ago. The right wing religious party, Komeito, also made gains.

Despite the economic recession, the corruption scandals and the splits in the ruling party, the Socialists (SDP) were the main losers. They lost nearly half of their seats. Ironically, Japan's main opposition lost seat after seat to the ex-LDP members. The formerly left wing SDP has gone through a period of "modernisation" over the last few years. **The leadership took the view that to beat the LDP you had to adopt the policies of the LDP! Of course the growing resentment towards the LDP meant that in this general election the SDP was left naked: it had nothing to offer Japanese workers, so they voted for the ex-LDP "reformers".**

In central Tokyo the SDP lost 10 of its 11 seats. Party Chairman Sadao Yamahana is now the only SDP MP in the city. When asked if he was going to resign as Chair he said that it wasn't a priority, "the priority is to get into a coalition government."

The right wing leadership of the 7.7 million strong Rengo trade union confederation have also pushed this disastrous policy of "modernisation." Since 1990 they have put forward a plan to unify a "centre-left" coalition. Of course this coalition would exclude the SDP left and the CP!

Just like in Britain, "modernisation" is merely a cover for capitulation and defeat.

The ending of Japan's economic miracle will inevitably mean that the Japanese bosses will have to attack the wages, conditions and job security of Japanese workers. They have no alternative.

Workers need fighting organisations with a fighting programme. On Mayday 1993 100,000 workers marched through the streets of Tokyo. If the SDP had tapped into this developing mood of anger at the recession and the political bankruptcy of all the corrupt bourgeois politicians then clearly it could have scored a great victory.

In the coming period the bourgeois "reformers" and the SDP "modernisers" will be shown up to have no policy differences with the discredited LDP. They are incapable of tackling any of the fundamental problems faced by the Japanese economy and their coalition will inevitably be short-lived.

The Japanese working class must reclaim and rebuild their organisations. Only with genuine socialist policies can a real alternative be posed to the growing crisis of Japanese society.

US Miners Resist Company Violence

More US miners have walked out on strike to defend their union and their livelihood following the latest rejection of talks by the mine owners. Over 17,000 miners are now on strike as the company seeks to use violence to force an end to the four-month old dispute, which has already cost Peabody £30 million.

The mine owners are attempting to impose new contracts on US miners which would mean cuts in pay and the loss of union rights.

Already one scab has been killed during picket line clashes between private armed guards and strikers and United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) members expect the situation to become even worse in the next few weeks as the company has placed adverts in the press to try and recruit more scab labour. Peabody, the largest US coal company, making a profit last year of £176 million, has taken out lawsuits against the miners under America's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt

Organisations Act to try and deter pickets and break the strike. But the company's actions have only succeeded in strengthening the resolve of the strikers. In the past few weeks over 1000 more miners have joined the dispute. Lord Hanson, owner of Peabody says he is prepared for a long dispute but UMWA members say they will stick it out as long as necessary. As one striker said: "We'll cost him a lot of money before this is over. It's gonna get rough but we're

ready for it. If they declare nuclear war on us by recruiting scabs, I can envisage an all-out strike."

The miners are well aware that Hanson is trying to get round contractual obligations to the miners by opening new pits under different names and manning them with scab labour and they have warned Hanson they will fight the opening of new pits designed solely to break the strike.

"He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it". On the twentieth anniversary of the Pinochet coup in Chile, Phil Mitchinson analyses the events and their lessons for the workers' movement today.

Revolution and Counter-Revolution

The Chilean ruling class long ago proved itself completely incapable of carrying out the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution which had been realised by the English and French bourgeoisie in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Which class then could carry out their historic mission? The peasantry proved capable of carrying out only acts of desperate rebellion, doomed to failure, because they didn't find a conscious leadership in another social class. Historically the class least capable of playing an independent political role, they normally act either under the leadership of the proletariat or the bourgeoisie.

The "middle class" had in the main been bought off with bureaucratic careers in the state and the government. The liberal politicians sold themselves to the oligarchy of landlords and capitalists for six pieces of silver, and from that moment the middle class in Chile found politics a very profitable business.

Meanwhile, the rise of the Chilean economy brought with it the development of industry and, consequently, the working class. Marx had explained that in developing production, capitalism created its own gravediggers - the proletariat. Forced to organise at the point of production, first of all in trade unions and also in parties, the workers begin to create the embryo of a new society within the womb of the old system.

By the time of the Presidential elections in 1964 the working class had become a majority in Chilean society. The peasantry still represented about 30% of the active population, but while the census of 1940 showed just 52% of the population living in the cities, by 1960 this figure had reached 66%.

Alessandri's National Party government was completely discredited. Capitalism desperately needed a political alternative capable of halting the advance of the workers' parties. This alternative was to be the Christian Democratic party.

The growing radicalisation, both in the

town and in the country, was illustrated by the reduction of the 1964 elections to a straight fight between the Christian Democrats (CD), represented by Frei, and the FRAP (Popular Action Front, Socialist Party - Communist Party alliance) represented by Allende.

The CD made use of a "leftist" demagogy to win the votes of the petty-bourgeois masses, their slogan, again reflecting the discontent of the masses and the process of social ferment, was "Revolution in Freedom". Frei gained a decisive majority with 56% of the vote. A year later the CD victory was confirmed in elections to Congress, where they went from 23 seats to 82, a majority. Once more, however, the experience of the Frei government exposed the liberals' inability to carry out the most urgent tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

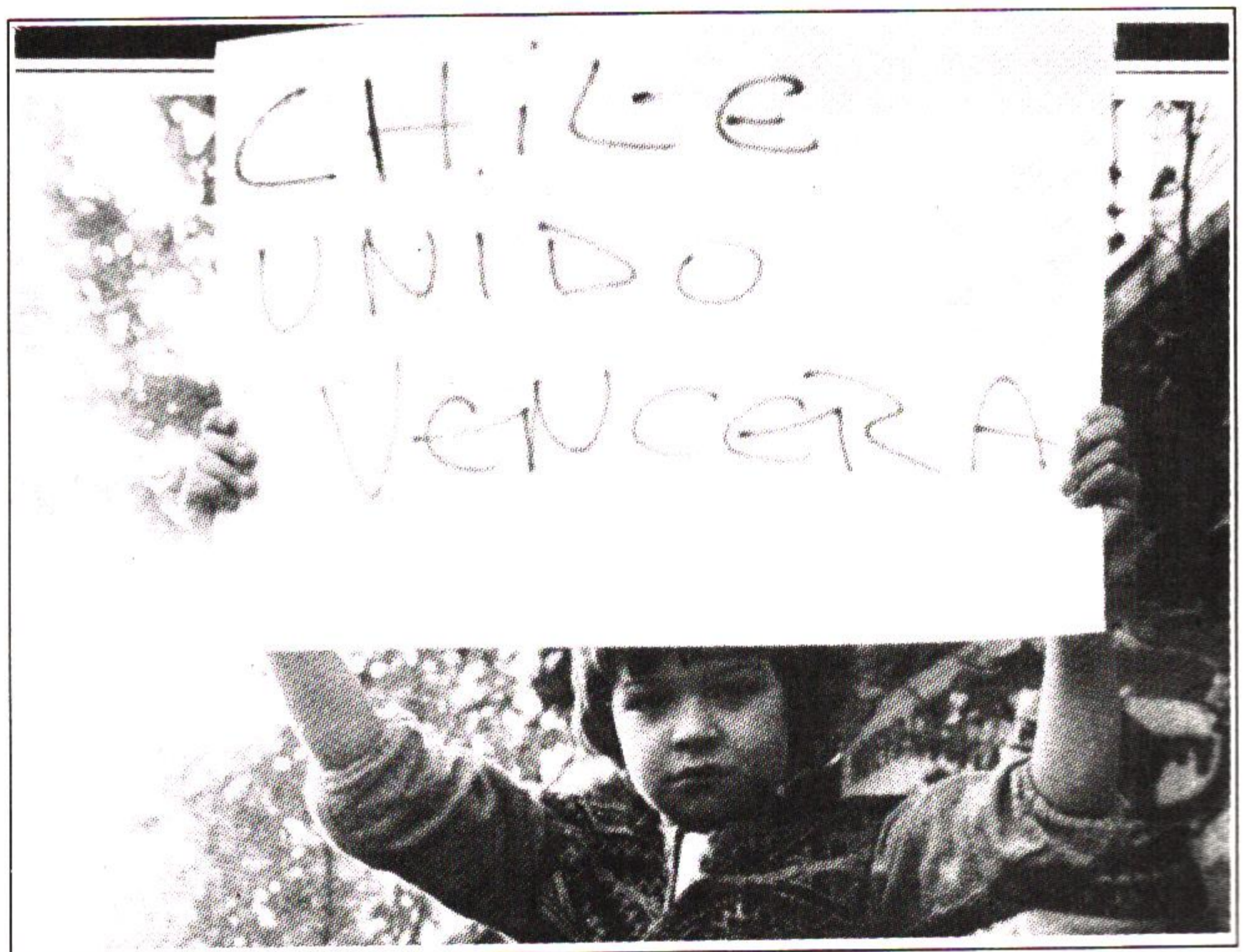
Although the state gained 51% of the shares in the big US copper companies, this did not alter the crushing dominance of US imperial-

ism over the Chilean economy. Agrarian reform crept forward at little more than a snail's pace, state intervention in banking was dropped altogether.

The mass of workers and peasants had passed through the school of Christian Democracy learning one lesson - it was a gigantic fraud.

A fresh attempt was now made to relaunch the electoral front of the SP and the CP. The idea of the "Popular Unity" was raised. Its programme was inevitably a mish-mash of the two contradictory positions held by the main coalition partners; the socialist character of the Chilean revolution as defended by the SP, and its bourgeois-democratic character in the eyes of the CP.

This Popular Unity coalition, incidentally, included not only the CP and SP but also a number of minor petty-bourgeois parties (MAPU - a left split from the CD, API, PSD, and the Radicals). The Radical party was undoubtedly a bourgeois party when it



"Chile United will overcome" - despite the heroism of workers the revolution was defeated

entered the coalition, though it later split under the pressure of the masses. Unlike the Popular Front of the '30's however, in which the Radicals were the dominant group, here they were a sect, while the workers' parties were the dominant force. Nevertheless, the Stalinist leaders required the presence of the Radicals, not because of their electoral strength, but as an excuse for not carrying out a socialist programme, "if we go too fast, we might endanger the coalition".

Agrarian Reform

Against the Popular Unity stood the two capitalist parties: Alessandri's National Party, open representatives of the oligarchy, and Tomic's Christian Democrats, who, desperately trying to retrieve their "left" cover, proposed the total nationalisation of the copper industry, and the banks, and a speeding-up of agrarian reform. Having been bitten once, however, the masses shied away from these false promises a second time around. The results were as follows:-

Allende.....	1,075,616 (36.3%)
Alessandri.....	1,036,278 (34.9%)
Tomic.....	824,849 (27.8%)

The CD vote collapsed as a result of the class polarisation in Chilean society. Already in 1969 they had lost their overall majority in the Congress. The 1970 elections gave the Popular Unity victory but not yet an absolute majority. The Right used this fact to impose conditions on Allende forming a government. **The Popular Unity leaders had two choices; either denounce these dirty manoeuvres to the masses, and organise massive demonstrations all over the country, or bend the knee and accept the imposed conditions. Not for the last time their knees buckled.**

The power of the workers movement had already been demonstrated by the strike-waves during the Ibanez and Alessandri governments. The working class had become the decisive majority of society, 75% of the population were wage-earners, whilst under 25% were dependent on agriculture. At the same time the workers were well aware of the trickery used against the Popular Unity in the election campaign. Any attempt to block Allende's entry into the government would have been the signal for an unprecedented movement involving every town and village in the land.

In addition, although election results are an important barometer of the consciousness of the masses at a given moment, they aren't the decisive factor in determining a Marxist strategy. Marxists are not anarchists, we participate in elections and use all the mechanisms of bourgeois democracy in our struggle to transform society. Nevertheless, the whole of history, not least that of Chile, shows that the ruling class is prepared to

tolerate democracy only within certain limits. When they see their power and privilege threatened they do not flinch from breaking with the "rules of democracy" which they invented precisely for their own protection. Marxists are realists and we have learned something from history. As Sepulveda put it in his history of the Chilean SP, *El Socialismo Chileno*:

"On the question of power it is not a question of the numerical correlation of forces, of having a majority. For example, if in March 1973 we had obtained 51% or 55%, would that have meant that imperialism and the big bourgeoisie would have ceased to prepare the coup?...At least, historical experience shows that, even when in a minority, the reaction defends its class predominance by violent means."

Constitutional Guarantee

The bourgeoisie was preparing a trap, and once again the main protagonists of the manoeuvre were the CD. Under the insistent pressure of Corvalan and Co. of the CP, Allende reached agreement with the CD, accepting the "constitutional guarantees pact", forbidding the formation of "private militias" or the nomination of officers who had not been trained at the military academy. No changes were to be made to the armed forces or the police without the prior consent of Congress, where the bourgeois parties still had a majority.

Allende and the Popular Unity leaders fell into the trap head first, forgetting the fundamental principles of Marxism, and the founding programme of Chilean socialism:- *"Evolutionary transformation by means of the democratic system is not possible because the ruling class has organised itself in armed civil bodies and erected its own dictatorship to maintain the workers in poverty and ignorance and prevent their emancipation"*.

Marx and Lenin had explained many times that the state consists basically of "armed bodies of men in defence of property". The constitutional guarantees pact" was an agreement in advance by the Popular Unity leaders not to arm the workers and not to touch the repressive apparatus constructed by the ruling class to defend its property. The SP, and above all the CP leaders, deceived themselves and the workers by insisting on the patriotism and impartiality of the military caste. The state apparatus, and above all, the military is not something which stands above classes and society, but an organ of repression in the hands of the ruling class. This is ABC for Marxism, and equally it seems for the bourgeoisie, who understood that the pact was not a secondary question but the crux of the matter, as became clear 3 years later with disastrous consequences for the working class and the whole Chilean people.

Nonetheless the formation of a Popular Unity (UP) government opened up a new phase in the revolutionary process. Under the pressure of the masses the government went much further than many of its leaders had foreseen. The Chinese wall artificially erected by the Stalinists between the bourgeois-democratic tasks and the tasks of the proletarian revolution was demolished by the movement of the masses.

Important measures of nationalisation were carried out. Frei's "Chileanisation" measures had left 49% of the copper industry in US hands, and enormous sums had been paid out in compensation. Now the copper industry was fully nationalised as were the coal mines, the iron and nitrate mines, the textile industry, ITT and INASA. A series of social reforms were launched, free distribution of milk to schoolchildren, the freezing of rents and prices, wage and pension increases. Popular support for the government grew dramatically. At the same time, the movement of the masses was given a great spur by these measures, at last they had a government acting in their interests. A wave of radicalisation swept through town and village. Agrarian reform was pushed along by the mass of the peasants themselves. Meanwhile, the landlords began sabotaging their farms. Already many of them were funding ultra-right wing groups with a view to resisting land reform. From the very first day, in reality, the Chilean

The only way to disarm the reaction would have been the arming of the poor peasants, organised in committees of action for the occupation of the land with government backing

ruling class were preparing a coup. Frightened and demoralised by the scale and scope of the movement, they were forced to bide their time, plotting and conspiring at the very highest levels.

The only way to disarm the reaction would have been precisely the arming of the poor peasants, organised in committees of action for occupation of the land with the govern-

ment's backing. But the leaders of the Popular Unity lacked all confidence in the masses and feared above all else "provoking the reaction". Not only did they oppose the "illegal land occupations" carried out by the poor peasants, they went so far as to send in the police to evict peasants who'd carried out such actions.

Leaders' Failure

Instead of organising the peasant movement and tying it to the movement of the workers, the Popular Unity leaders, from the word go placed all their confidence in bourgeois legality, and the possibility of transforming society leaving all the old state apparatus intact.

In spite of everything, under pressure from the masses, "unlawful" occupations and so on, the Popular Unity government carried through the most profound agrarian reform in Chilean history. Almost as many farms were expropriated in 1971 alone as had been during the 6 years of CD government. Popular enthusiasm for the governments policies continued to soar. In April 1971, the local elections produced the following results:-

Socialists	631,939	22.4%
Communists	479,206	17.0%
Radicals	225,851	8.0%
PSD	38,067	1.4%
USOPO	29,132	1.0%
CD	723,623	25.6%
National	511,669	18.2%
Rad-Dem	108,192	3.8%
Nat-Dem	13,435	0.4%
Independents	23,907	0.8%

In the Presidential elections Allende had received only 36.3% of the vote. Now the Popular Unity parties got 49.7%, the combined opposition only 48.05%. With the Popular Socialist Union (USOPO) the left had an overall majority.

Objective Conditions

Embryonic organs of workers power began to develop in the factories and in the towns. In the country the poor peasants were attempting to seize the land. The middle class was shaken by this ferment too. Seven MPs split away from the CD to form a new party, the Movement of the Christian Left. 20% of the party's youth wing affiliated, supporting "the construction of socialism jointly with the UP government". The right wing of the Radical party split away when at it's 25th Congress the party declared for "the class struggle and the need to end the exploitation of man by man".

Yet the balance of forces electorally was but a pale reflection of the strength of the workers and peasants at that moment. **All the objective conditions existed for the peaceful transformation of Chilean**



Police arrest demonstrators supporting Allende

society. The ruling class was demoralised and vacillating. The movement of the masses was advancing, leaving the schemes of the reformist leaders far behind. The middle class, especially the peasants, were looking hopefully to the government. The SP and CP leaders had the advantage of being the legitimate government, which helped it in the eyes of the more backward sections. Even in the army, the Popular unity had a good deal of support. It is hard to imagine a more favourable opportunity. Yet the leaders of the CP and the SP failed to deliver the decisive blow.

Elements of dual power emerged, but the leaders of the labour movement did not dare to lay a hand on the army or the police.

Again Sepulveda summed up the situation, "the Popular Unity had the executive power but the enemy controlled all the bourgeois institutionality and shielded itself behind it in order to make its counter-revolutionary preparations."

Had the government called a new general election it would have undoubtedly produced a clear victory for the workers' parties.

Instead the UP leaders threw away a remarkable opportunity to transform society peacefully: a fresh election, securing a solid majority and robbing the bourgeois parties of their last "legal" pretext for blocking socialist legislation; arming the workers and peasants to defend their social, economic, and democratic gains; developing councils of workers, peasants, soldiers, small shopkeepers and so on, to organise production and maintain order; spreading these councils to all corners of the country and all levels of society, constituting themselves as real organs of power, democratically elected by the workers and peasants, and subject to an

immediate right of recall.

In this situation the ruling class, the military elite and the state bureaucracy would have been dangling in mid-air, powerless. The workers' leaders, forgetting the ABCs of Marxism, let the opportunity slip. The moment passed, and the initiative was in the hands of reaction.

Rise of Reaction

Through the pages of the press, which the ruling class still controlled, the CD and the National Party began demanding the disarming of all armed groups, referring exclusively to left-wing groups, of course. as the armed fascist gangs were allowed to carry out their terrorist activities at will. Opposition to the government became divided between the clean, respectable CD, systematically blocking socialist legislation, and the armed aggression of the Patria y Libertad (Fatherland and Freedom) sowing terror in the streets.

The capitalists and landlords sabotaged the economy, US imperialism cut off all economic aid and tried to organise a worldwide boycott of Chilean copper. The nationalisations, which had been carried out without an overall plan of the economy, gave rise to convulsions. A steep rise in inflation rapidly undid the advantages of the wage increases and had a similar effect on the sympathies of the middle class. Support began turning into opposition.

The first blow of the counter-revolutionary offensive was struck in October 1972 with the lorry-owners' strike. The workers, understanding the danger, mobilised massively. And their leaders? They implemented a cabinet reshuffle, and for the first time brought members of the military caste into the government. **Once again the victory achieved by the initiative of the workers was upended by the reformist short-sightedness of their leaders.**

Four months of reactionary propaganda followed. Counter-revolution was preparing, conspiracies were being hatched in the barracks, and yet the UP leaders maintained their blind loyalty in the "patriotic" generals. Then, in the elections of March 1973, despite everything, the Popular Unity won 44% of the votes.

Surely now was the time for an offensive. The workers were waiting for their leaders to call them into the streets to smash the reaction. They called for arms, but all they got were nice words, promises and appeals for discipline.

The capitulation of the UP leaders in November had whetted the reactionaries appetites, these election results only served to postpone the final reckoning. If it had depended on the leaders alone the counter-revolution would have triumphed in Chile a year earlier. Only the resistance of the workers forced them to hesitate.

The power of the workers' movement was illustrated by the utter failure of the "rising of the tanks" on the 29th of June. Within hours, thousands of workers went on strike, occupied the factories, and leaving pickets behind, marched on the government buildings. Sepulveda again summarises the situation, "Yet another extraordinary chance to advance and to strike....the right-wing MPs were trembling in the corridors".

And the workers' leaders? Allende appealed for a return to work. The police were sent in to disperse the workers who were wandering through the streets of the capital. This all gave fresh heart to the forces of reaction, who launched a new lorry-owners' strike. Yet again the workers responded, this time with a 24-hour general strike.

Herein lies the tragedy of the Chilean working class. In spite of the enormous power which rested in its hands, in spite of its tremendous heroism, at every decisive moment its leadership failed. The representatives of the ruling class, however, recognised when their class interests were at stake and acted decisively to defend them.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Chilean workers could have come to power not once but three or four times during the life of the UP government, all the conditions were present except one, a revolutionary leadership with a Marxist policy and the will to carry it out.

Corvalan and the other CP leaders had put pressure on Allende to reach an agreement with the CD from the outset. Nonetheless, a responsibility lies with Allende and the SP leadership who, after all, accepted this policy. **While there is no doubt that Allende and the other UP leaders were sincere in their desire for a "peaceful change without traumas", their desire wasn't enough. In Chile the way to hell was truly paved with the best of intentions.** Obviously none of us want violence, we all want a "peaceful change without

traumas", but a precondition for this is the mobilisation of the power of the labour movement to paralyse reaction.

On the 4th of September 800,000 workers, marched through the streets of Santiago chanting "Strike hard, Allende the people will defend you". The workers had confidence in their leaders, but instead of arming the workers to defend the government, the leaders kept their faith in the generals, again offering the workers nothing but high sounding words, disarming them on the very eve of the coup.

Generals' Loyalty

To the very last Allende was confident that the generals would remain "loyal". It is a macabre irony of history that shortly before the coup, it was Allende himself who nominated Pinochet to head the army. Even when the tanks were in the streets, Allende appealed to workers to remain calm while trying to contact Pinochet by telephone! Pinochet, of course, was otherwise engaged. The fundamental error of the UP leaders was to imagine that the state forces could be neutral in the class struggle, and that in any case Chile was an exception to the general rule because of the "democratic traditions" of its armed forces. Had they expended a fraction of the energy they wasted on trying to win the confidence of the military elite, on trying to win over the rank and file, the defeat of September 11th would never have been possible. Many soldiers, even NCOs and junior officers sympathised with the workers movement, many even carried SP or CP cards. But sympathy is much easier than action. To produce an active movement in the ranks of the army, the soldiers must be convinced of the possibility of victory, otherwise fear of the officers will be enough to maintain discipline.

On September 11th itself only a minority of soldiers actively participated in the coup, the majority remained confined to barracks. But

without a massive resistance, there was no possibility of winning over those soldiers who in a "passive" way sympathised with the workers' movement. Thus the "pacifist" methods of reformism invariably lead to results diametrically opposed to those intended. This defeat was a truly unworthy end to three years of heroic struggles. There can be nothing worse than to surrender without a fight. Even a defeat after a heroic

battle like the Paris Commune at least leaves behind a tradition for new generations to build on.

Comparisons have been made with Hitler's coming to power "without breaking a window pane". Indeed many people characterised the Pinochet regime as fascist, after all they used the same methods of torture, concentration camps and so on that Hitler, Mussolini and Franco had employed. Yet there are very important differences.

Firstly the Chilean workers were in a much stronger position, showing their will to struggle even as late as the 4th of September. The German workers had suffered one serious defeat after another.

But crucially, Hitler based himself on a mass movement of the ruined middle class and the lumpens. Fascism's objective is the total atomisation of the workers movement, the destruction of the embryo of a new society within the old. For this task even the colossal instrument of the state is insufficient, a mass base in the population is required.

Military Police Dictatorship

The Pinochet regime never enjoyed such a mass base. Fascist gangs like "Patria y Libertad" were no more than an auxiliary arm of the state preparing the ground for the generals' intervention. Pinochet's regime was a military-police dictatorship, based on "rule by the sword" - a bonapartist regime. The "success" of certain extreme right wing groups in Europe over the last few years has given rise to the idea that fascism is rising to power again. This is fundamentally mistaken. Having burnt their fingers with Hitler, the European capitalists won't want to turn power over to these fascist madmen. Today they will turn instead to the generals who they believe to be more manageable.

It couldn't be ruled out that such military-police dictatorships could be established not only in Latin America or the Third World but also in Europe. The experience of Greece and Spain is not that distant. In Italy we are witnessing a very dangerous period of destabilisation, and even in Britain in the '60s and '70s plans were laid to oust Wilson in the event that the Labour government threatened capitalism. However, bonapartist dictatorships like that of Chile would only be possible on the basis of big defeats for the working class. There will be many opportunities for victory too.

Over the last 20 years Salvador Allende has become a martyr of the labour movement, but no amount of sympathy can change what happened on the 11th of September 1973, nor absolve Allende of his share of responsibility. The most important tribute we can pay to Allende and the countless others, murdered by the Pinochet regime, is to learn from the experience in order not to repeat the mistakes.



Allende and Pinochet

In the Cause of Labour: **War and** **the Unions**

As layer after layer of workers entered into struggle, the 'Great Unrest' of 1910 to 1914 took the industrial movement of the British working class onto new heights. Militant trade unionism, epitomised by the actions of miners, railworkers, dockers and other key sections. Britain, by all indications, was heading for a revolutionary explosion. The big battalions of labour were lining up for decisive action.

However, with the entry of Britain into war with Germany on 4th August 1914, combined with the universal capitulation of the trade union and social democratic leaders, the mighty industrial wave of the previous four years quickly ebbed. The revolutionary mood sweeping industry was completely cut across.

War Drive

The leadership of the labour movement quickly lined up behind the Government and the war effort. The General Federation of Trade Unions gave whole-hearted backing for the war. The TUC, through its Parliamentary Committee, unilaterally pledged the support of the unions. By the end of August 1914, the Labour Party Executive Committee agreed to support the Government's 'all-Party' recruiting campaign. Ramsey MacDonald, who resigned from the leadership on pacifist grounds, nevertheless wrote to his constituency advising the young men to join up. On 8th August MacDonald declared: "*Whatever our view may be on the origin of the war, we must go through with it.*"

On the international front the workers' organisations affiliated to the Second International, despite their resolutions of the Stuttgart and Copenhagen conferences to oppose war by revolutionary means, shamefully capitulated to their own ruling classes. This constituted an historic betrayal of the international interests of the working class.

The leadership of the movement had increasingly carved out a privileged position for itself and was reconciling itself to capitalism. As Lenin explained, "*The relatively 'peaceful' character of the period between 1871 and 1914 served to foster opportunism*

first as a mood, then as a trend, until finally it formed a group or stratum among the labour bureaucracy and petty-bourgeois fellow-travellers. These elements were able to gain control of the labour movement only by paying lip-service to revolutionary aims and revolutionary tactics." The only exception, which stood out against the imperialist war, was the Russian Social Democracy. The International had collapsed like a pack of cards.

In Britain, there was very little organised opposition to the war. Once organised Labour had swung into support, the rank and file were completely disorientated. The activists were completely stunned. According to a young shop steward at the time: "*Probably nothing reveals the political infancy of the revolutionary socialists and syndicalists at this time more than their utter helplessness at the outbreak of war.*" (J.T. Murphy, *Preparing for Power*). Many had looked to the trade unions for action but none had come. As late as 2nd August demonstrations in Trafalgar Square, addressed by Lansbury, Hardie, Henderson and Will Thorne, declared their opposition to the coming war, but the declaration of war transformed the situation completely. When time for action came, nothing happened.

The railwaymen withdrew their strike notices. The London building workers returned to work. The engineers dropped their demand for a 48 hour week. By January 1915, 12% of the skilled engineering workers of the country had already enlisted. This rose to 19.5% before serious attempts were made to keep young people in work.

"Thousands went flocking to the colours in the first days, not because of any 'love of country', not because of any high feeling of



'patriotism'", recalls Willie Gallagher of the Clyde shop stewards, "*but because of the new, strange and thrilling life that lay before them. Later the reality of the fearsome slaughterhouse, with all its long agony of filth and horror, turned them from buoyant youth to despair or madness.*" (*Revolt on the Clyde*)

The labour leaders agreed to set aside for the duration of the war all trade union conditions of labour. An 'industrial peace' was unilaterally declared by the workers' organisations. "*Had labour been hostile,*" wrote Lloyd George, "*the war could not have been carried on effectively.*"

Voices Stifled

The only union to oppose the war was the newly established Building Workers Industrial Union, but its voice was quickly stifled. The union was set up by disenchanted militants who led a breakaway from existing unions to form a new revolutionary one. This splitting tactic, which was tragically repeated in future years by impatient sections, simply played into the hands of the right wing trade union leaders. "*It had by its foundation,*" wrote Cole and Postage, "*merely drained off out of every union the rebel members, leaving the reactionary officials in complete control. The tactic of dual unionism, of founding a rival true-red union, had led to utter disaster...*" (*The Common People*).

Unscrupulously, the capitalists took advantage of the war to boost their profits across the board. Those involved on war contracts pressed hard for the relaxation of trade practices. The government pushed for big increases in engineering and ship building which supplied armaments and munitions. In March 1915 the

'Shells and Fuses Agreement' was made between employers and unions that agreed 'dilution', that is the introduction of unskilled labour where skilled labour previously worked. Whereas the union leaders signed away these rights, the shop floor workers had other ideas. In the words of the 'Daily Herald', "the trade union lamb has lain down with the capitalist lion".

Unemployment

War time conditions brought a big rise in the cost of living and a steep jump in unemployment, which caused widespread discontent. In February 1915 the situation broke in the Clydeside when up to 10,000 engineering workers, against the union officialdom, took strike action in support of a pay rise to compensate for the rise in food prices and rents. The leadership of the strike fell to the shop stewards who formed the Central Labour Withholding Committee, later renamed the Clyde Workers' Committee, under the chairmanship of Willie Gallagher, and the political guidance of John McLean. The solidarity of the strikers, despite the opposition they faced, secured a victory over pay. The Daily Herald of 20th March, which had swung against the war, reported: "Despite insults and threats, despite official pressure, the Clyde men have kept the flag of revolutionary trade unionism flying and that itself is something."

Leon Trotsky wrote in an unfinished article, 'Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay', that in the period of capitalist decline the organic tendency of the trade union apparatus was to fuse with the state machine. This tendency would periodically break down under the pressure of the masses. In the first imperialist war, with the working class disorientated, this phenomenon reached its height. Trade union leaders and officials sat on innumerable Government and joint industrial councils. They became firmly embroiled in the state machinery. Ernest Bevin, the dockers' leader, was a member of close upon a dozen Government committees by the end of the war. The trade union apparatus became, in the words of the Webbs, "part of the social machinery of the State". The Clydeside strike had confirmed this fusion. The strikers were met with the combined opposition of the employers, government and union bureaucracy. Lloyd George intervened personally. A new agreement - the 'Treasury Agreement' - was signed by all the union hierarchy, except the mineworkers. By May 1915, Asquith established a Coalition Government, which drew in the Labour leader Arthur Henderson and two other Labour MP's. New laws were then introduced granting enormous powers to the Government over the munition industry, authorising compulsory arbitration of disputes and the suspension of trade practices. Mmunition workers could not leave their jobs without a 'Leaving Certificate'. Although the tops of the labour move-

ment carried out the dictates of the ruling class, it proved another matter for the workers in industry.

Within a few days of the introduction of the Munitions Act, the South Wales miners rejected the wage offer by the Government's arbitration committee. This was met by Lloyd George declaring strikes illegal. Within two days 200,000 miners came out, forcing the Government to back down and agree to most of their demands.

Growing industrial turmoil on the Clyde resulted in Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson being forced to meet the Workers' Committee in December 1915 and being shouted down at a mass meeting. In early 1916 the C.W.C. newspaper was suppressed, and a number of unofficial strike leaders arrested and imprisoned. Six leading shop stewards were later arrested and deported from Glasgow. John MacLean was arrested and sentenced to three years imprisonment for sedition. As a result of this repression, the industrial storm centre shifted from the Clyde to the Sheffield area.

Revolutionary Objectives

The Clyde Shop Stewards Committee however, was extended throughout the country to form the National Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement. But while they preached revolutionary objectives, the syndicalist antipathy towards politics and leadership was still pronounced and served to weaken the movement.

In December 1916, a new Coalition Government was formed with Lloyd George as Prime Minister. An astute representative of the British ruling class, he rapidly drew in further the Labour Party leaders into Government posts. Henderson entered the War Cabinet, John Hodge, secretary of the Steel Smelters, took Minister of Labour, and George Barnes of the Engineers, became Minister of Pensions. Their

The labour leaders authority was used to hold back the growing discontent in the working class

authority was used to hold back the growing discontent in the working class.

This became intensified with the increasing resentment against the super war profits being made by the employers. A 'munitions levy' imposed in 1916 to check excess profits was abolished within a year. Lord Buckmaster noted that the war had produced "the most amazing profits that this country has ever witnessed." He estimated that more than £4 billion in prof-

its compared to the prewar period.

1917 marked a crucial year. In engineering, it was the peak year for strikes, where over 300,000 workers were involved and two and a half million days were lost. The new rank and file National Shop Stewards Committee was to the fore in strikes at Barrow and on the Tyne in March, and in Coventry in November. In May, a rash of strikes took place on the Clyde, Sheffield and London, as well as other munition centres, against the extension of dilution and the use of the Munitions Act. Despite coercion and arrests under the Act, far from cowering the strike movement, it did the opposite. Up to July 1916, over 1,000 workers had been arrested under the Munitions Act for strike activities.

Russian Revolution

The first Russian revolution of March, which swept away Tsarist despotism, had an enormous impact amongst the Labour movement internationally. In Britain, a Convention was called by the leaders of the Independent Labour Party in Leeds in June to celebrate the event. The Convention attracted 1,150 delegates, 371 of whom were from the trade unions. Given the fervour of the occasion, Ramsey MacDonald spoke in favour of a successful motion to establish Soviets in Britain on the lines of the Workers' and Soldiers' councils in Russia! Despite this show of verbal radicalism, the ILP leaders refused to set up these bodies. Events were to do this for them in the Councils of Action of 1920 and 1926.

This ferment in the ranks began to have an effect in the leadership of the movement. The Labour Party and the TUC moved towards semi opposition to the war policies of the Government, a by-product of this was the resignation of Henderson from the Cabinet, although Barnes and Hodge remained. In early 1918, under the impact of the Bolshevik revolution, the idea of peace negotiations - the 'Memorandum on War Aims' - was endorsed by a conference of Allied labour leaders.

In the last year of the war, the shop stewards movement had developed a powerful position. Parallel with this, occurred the formal ratification of the Triple Alliance of miners, railway and transport workers, which was first planned in 1914. The TUC membership had jumped from less than two and a quarter millions in 1913 to over four and a half million in 1918. There were also extensive moves towards amalgamation and federation, such as the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation. The Labour Party, affected by the events in Russia, also decided to implement a new Socialist Constitution. At its Nottingham Conference, Litvinov, the representative of the Soviet Government, received an ovation.

The tide of unrest swelled up in 1918, reflected in monster May Day demonstrations on the Clyde, and culminating in an unprecedented police strike in August and mutinies at a number

of South Coast naval bases. The police, who formed their own union in October 1913, struck at the end of August over union recognition, employing flying pickets to bring out stations. The government was forced to grant wage rises, and reinstate those dismissed, but failed to recognise the NUPPO, only conceding a Police Representation Board. Thousands of police joined the union as a result of this stand. "This country was nearer to Bolshevism that day than at any time since", stated Lloyd George. This was followed by an unofficial rail strike in September, and unrest broke out in the South Wales coalfield and in the Lancashire cotton industry. Within a few short months the November German Revolution had brought the War to an end. The Hapsburg and Hohenzollern empires had followed the Romanov into the dust. The ruling class in Britain and internationally were terrified. "The whole of Europe is filled with the spirit of revolution", noted Lloyd George.

General Election

Within three days of the armistice an emergency Labour Party Conference withdrew the Labour ministers from the coalition and proclaimed its "protest against any patching up of the old economic order." In the General Election Labour fought with a radical manifesto, specifically demanding "The immediate nationalisation and democratic control of vital public services such as mines, railways, shipping, armaments, and electric power; fullest recognition and utmost extension of trade unionism... the national minimum... the abolition of the menace of unemployment... the universal right to work or maintenance, legal limitation of the hours of labour and the drastic amendment of the Acts dealing with factory conditions, safety and workmen's compensation."

Although Lloyd George's Coalition was returned with a big majority in the 'Khaki' election, Labour had become the effective opposition, with two and a half million votes (up from half a million in 1910) and 57 seats. The revolutionary feeling, however, was not translated into parliamentary arithmetic. The opening days of 1919 were preparing an explosion and a revolutionary chapter in the history of the British working class. It represented the retying of a knot of struggle that had been broken by the war, but on a far higher level.

**Next Month:
Revolutionary
Events in
Post-War
Britain**

The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor



The first attempt at Pay Restraint

Medieval England was far removed from the idyllic vision of 'Merrie England' perpetrated by generations of bourgeois historians.

It was a grim existence. Society was wracked by disease and pestilence, with the peasants tied to the land and ruled by an arrogant elite who obtained their positions by simply being the best thugs in the land. Meteorological records show that it even belted down with rain most of the time too.

But the workers got a break in August 1348. The Black Death ravaged the British isles, which was bad news for the third of the population - around 1.5 million - who got the sneezes and diseases. But for those that remained it was *boom time*.

In the resulting labour shortage, peasants and workmen realised they could sell their labour at a higher price. A chronicler of the time moaned that whereas thatchers used to receive the equivalent of one old penny a day, they were now charging 2.5d. The average cost of employing extra hands to bring in the harvest for a typical village had been £3 - now it was £13. There were also the formation of 'Brotherhoods', where peasants came up with the scandalous idea that if they formed together in a combination, they could use collective bargaining to protect their levels of pay (now this idea could catch on).

However, the Lords of the Manor and the fledgling merchant class thought themselves very clever when they came up with a simple measure to protect their profit margins against rising labour costs. They would increase their prices. And so came ye olde inflation.

The Lords of the Manor responded by trying to re-introduce 'boon work', where peasants - for the privilege of living under autocratic Manorial rule - had to give two or three days free labour to their Lord.

The response of the more skilled labourers was to leg it to a new district where they could sell their wares unmolested, many of them gravitating to the new swinging hotspots of the developing cities of Coventry, Bristol, York and Plymouth. This only antagonised the labour shortage further.

As society plunged into chaos, so the absolute power in society - the monarchy - was forced to act. The corrupt king, Edward III took time off from his wars with France, (where he was trying to convince the Frenchies that the Dordogne was actually part of England) and to take action which he hoped would sooth his troubled Lords of the Manor.

He summoned a Parliament and introduced a **Statute of Labourers**. This four part action plan ruled that:

- ☞ no workman could demand or earn more than 1347 levels of pay (i.e pre-Black Death).
- ☞ workmen were forbidden to refuse to work for these rates of pay
- ☞ anyone belonging to a 'Brotherhood' was for it
- ☞ a new agency called Justices of the Peace would be set up to enforce the above.

But it had little effect. There were too few JPs to enforce the new law - faced with losing their harvest while they waited weeks for the JPs to arrive, or negotiating a settlement with the local Brotherhood, many Lords chose the latter. Meanwhile the flight to the cities of the artisans fearful of being pulled up before the Beak continued.

And those who couldn't flee introduced a new concept - the Go Slow. A chronicler of the time, the churchman Henry Knighton in his *Chronicon Henrici Knighton* reported:

"From that time forth they served their masters worse from day to day than they had done previously".

The rulers learnt their first lesson in labour relations - you can pass all the laws you like but you need the armed bodies of men to enforce them. To extract the wealth from the masses for their own abasement the lords and masters would need a new system of economic oppression - the Poll Tax. But that's another story.

Next month - the 1380 Anti-Poll Tax Campaign

SOCIALIST

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The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Inside this issue:

- TUC/Labour Party Conference preview
- Marxism and Science

Fight Tory Education Cuts

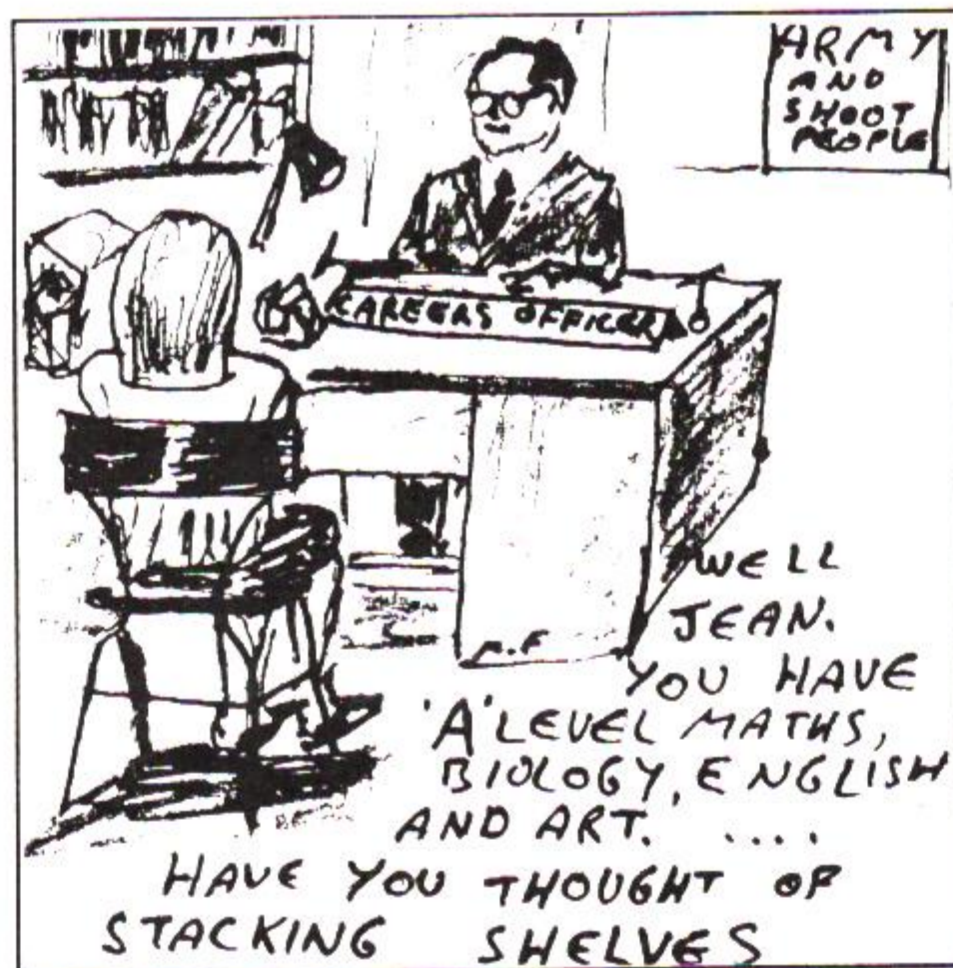
The crisis in higher education has finally hit the front pages. Some students hoping to get into university will find themselves refused a place when the A-level grades come out. Moving the goalposts like this has been a feature of Tory policy in education, and it is harrowing for the people who are trying to better their chances in a recession-hit job market.

The problem now is that the Government has reduced the funding for places it encouraged Universities to offer! For five years the Government has been coercing universities into offering more and more places - aiming at doubling student numbers by the year 2000. In 1993 the Government wavered on this

by Wendy Olsen

expansion programme, perhaps realising how much the strategy could cost in the long run. So far no increase in funds for staff or facilities has been given, leading to massive shortages of housing, books, and classroom space. The Tories' idea was to increase the 'productivity' of academic staff. They see productivity as the output-per-input, or in other words the number of degrees given per lecturer. This huge shift in perspectives turns the main traditional measure of quality in higher education - the student-staff ratio - on its head. Ratios of 20 to 1, which really mean less attention for each student from the harassed lecturers are now used to imply high 'efficiency' compared with past ratios of 12 to 1! The policy of changing 'Polytechnics' to University status was done in name only, without taking up the real questions of the diverse needs of the people who use education: funds for bringing Poly's up to the same standards as Universities were not provided. All universities were rated in a much-criticised 'Research Assessment Exercise': quantitative measures were used of academics' 'OUTPUT' (e.g. papers and books count one each) and people who don't produce those approved 'outputs' have been heavily criticised. Worst of all, because funding-per-student was

cut, the Government forced universities to begin charging students for more of their supplies, especially study packets to replace books. The books are not affordable, and library stocks are now too limited for the increased numbers of students. At Lancaster University, frantic efforts to build a new teaching wing have cost more than expected, leading to diversion of annual grants into the building work. Without the new space, students just won't have space for classes. Already tutors are sharing rooms and some have to vacate their rooms to use for tutorials held by others. At Manchester University and many others, first-year class sizes go up to 650 and there are no lecture halls for this number. The students who come late have to sit in an 'overflow' room and watch the lecture on video. However there are no provisions for viewing videoed lectures at other times! For students, the creation of Research Institutes and Graduate Schools will mean having less experienced staff (and even post-graduates) as



tutors instead of experienced lecturers. Management have insisted on discretionary pay awards to individual staff. There is now a direct threat to the national pay scales. If local pay arrangements replace the national scales, then the national unions will be weakened even more in their attempts to ensure adequate standards of pay and conditions for lecturers. So if your lecturer rushes past without speaking and acts like a stress victim, don't be surprised! After three years of study and no job to go to, you'll feel stressed out too!

The Association of University Teachers (AUT) have balked at the idea of merger with the other major union: NATFHE. From a member's viewpoint the only apparent barriers to merger are bureaucratic.

The unions face a problem because of the unequal pay of their own members; Lectureships start at £12,800 and go up to £35,000 - but professors' salaries (which averaged £35,000 last year) are not even on the scales. They are considered private. This inequality is in itself a source of discontent. One professor and Head of Department, who is paid around £80,000 (usually a salary reserved for Vice Chancellors), achieved this pay by arguing that work in America pays that well and if they don't match it they could stuff the job.

Tory Attacks

To worsen matters on a daily basis, support staff such as secretaries are paid a pittance. The academic unions tend to ignore the huge gap between the pay of these highly skilled and experienced people. Their pay scales range from £7,000 to £14,000. As a result, secretaries have little sympathy when lecturers complain! Universities are workplaces like any other and under this government, this means that we are a target for 'efficiency drives' and irrational managerial initiatives. We even get consultants, paid ridiculous amounts per day, to assess the situation (under the guise of 'academic auditing'). Students living conditions are deteriorating fast. Every year there is a race for rooms. In one case students have been put in Pontins chalets and in others university canteens have been converted to temporary bedrooms with plastic partitions separating students' beds! Is this the way to run an education system? Lecturers, support staff and students are all victims of the latest round of Tory attacks, only the labour movement can stop this.