

# SOCIALIST

# APPEAL

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## India:



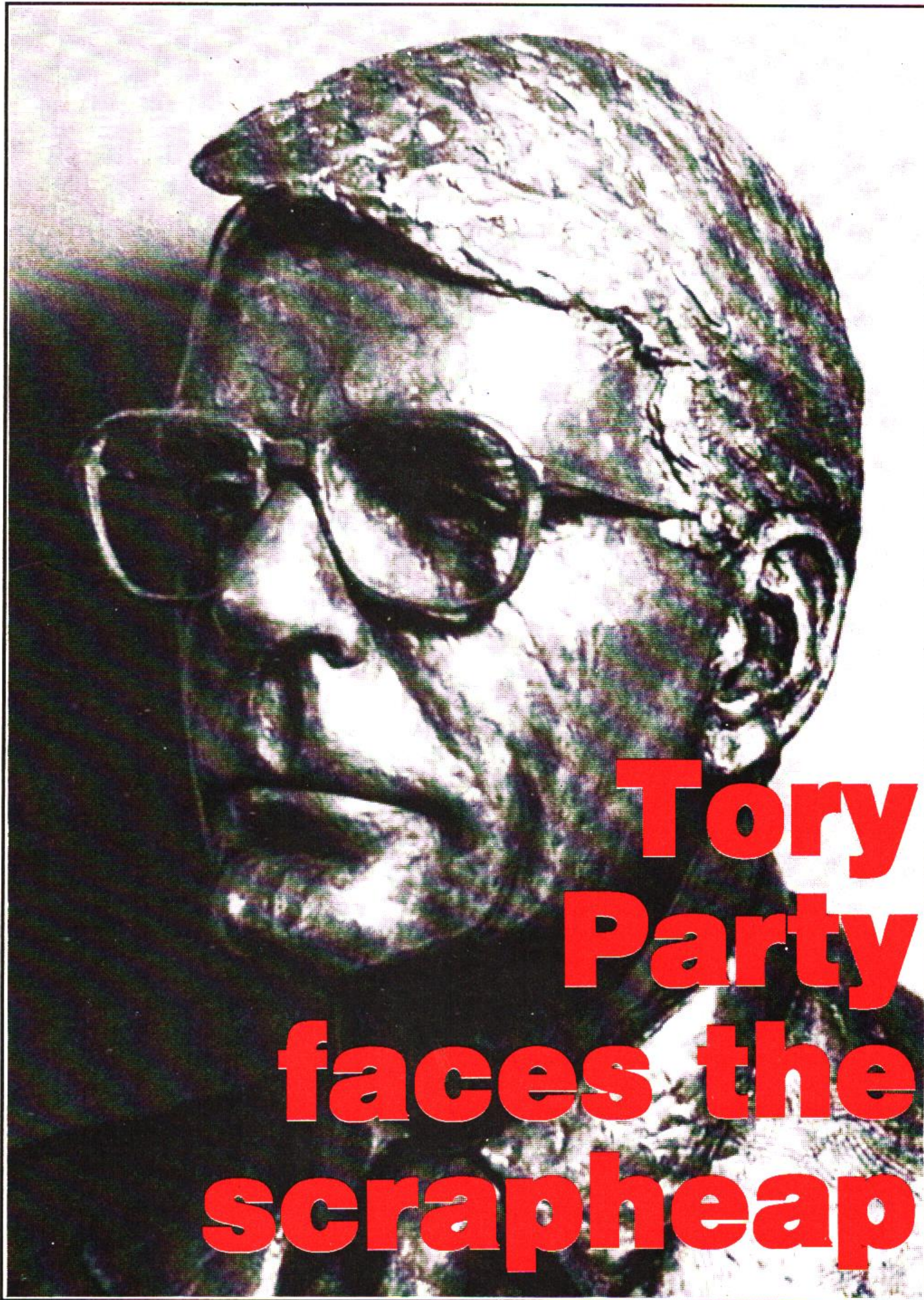
**Boom or bust for Indian capitalism**

.....  
**Tories in Trouble**

Ted Grant on the crisis facing Major's government

.....  
**Defeat from the Jaws of Victory**

*Italian elections and the aftermath*



**Tory Party faces the scrapheap**

**Plus:** • Women • Science • British Economy



# Sowing the Seeds of War

**As we go to press the renewed bombing by American planes of Bosnian Serb positions represents the latest dangerous twist in the situation in the Balkans conflict.**

This action is gambling with the lives of the Yugoslav people and the troops on the ground. It is similar to the intervention in Somalia in which the Imperialists had to retreat.

The argument that it is only a 'small' bombing has made the situation even worse. The so-called United Nations was not even consulted and the forces of Imperialism around the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) acted on their own behalf. The Russians who were not consulted either - although that would have involved merely a phonecall - have protested as their traditional allies, the Serbs, were involved.

Thus the possibility of an outbreak of war involving in some way the forces of the great powers - or at least their air forces - is latent in the crisis.

## Russians Intervene

Vitaly Churkin, the Russian negotiator in Yugoslavia, confirmed this threat when he said: "We are very much concerned that we may be on a slippery slope in terms of international involvement in the fighting. We will be trying to do everything we can in order to prevent situations where such actions could even be contemplated." The chairman of the Russian Duma's sub-committee on international affairs referred to "disappointment" and talked

of this adding to "tensions between Russia and the West."

The excuse given for the renewed bombing was the actions of the Serbs in bombing the UN protected area of Gorazde. But the Muslims both in Gorazde and elsewhere in Bosnia have been attacking Serb positions with small arms (as they do not have many tanks and heavy arms). Even though they already control 70% of Bosnia, the Serbs have felt that the UN has been practising one-way favouritism.

## Territorial Gains

The Muslims, on the other hand, have been opposed to the state of play on the ground being frozen as they feel that too much land would then be under Serb control. Both sides in the conflict have therefore shown little interest in the peace settlements offered.

The aims of the allies are not at all that of a real peace in the area but, certainly in the case of the European Imperialists (especially German Imperialism which was responsible for the outbreak of the Yugoslav conflict in the first place), remains that of increasing spheres of influence and gaining strategic positions for themselves. US Imperialism wishes to gain a strategic base of support which they will seek through the Muslims who are now reliant on them. This is every bit as dangerous a situation as existed in Somalia. The Americans have the 'advantage' that their forces are not on the ground so they care little for the fate of their 'allies' whose forces primarily are land based. Already the Serbs have put UN observers under house arrest

and restricted their movements generally. All these manoeuvres as Imperialism dips its toes in the Balkan morass has little, if anything, to do with peace or freedom.

Workers internationally can only rely on their own forces, their own solidarity and their own strength. They cannot rely on the Imperialist powers to solve the problems they have created. The only solution lies not with the hatreds that have been engendered in the Serb, Muslim and Croat masses but with the establishment of a democratic socialist federation of the Balkans.

This cockpit of war will remain a source of conflict in the future. It is possible that an eventual uneasy 'peace' may be established for a period of even years but this peace would only act as the basis for future even more bitter and wide ranging conflicts and bloodshed at a latter stage.

## Workers' Independence

The Imperialists - including would-be Russian Imperialism - offers no solution now except to sow the dragons teeth of new wars. The workers should have little interest in relying on support for any Imperialist peace that might be scrapped together.

A new period of turmoil on a world scale now opens up that will put all nations and all classes to the test. A solution for the working class lies down the road of international solidarity and the socialist transformation of society. For the beleaguered and tortured masses of the Balkans this has never been more sharply posed.

# Vote Labour on May 5

**Over 1,300 council seats are up for grabs in the local elections on Thursday May 5. All the indicators are that the Tories will be routed.**

The only thing in John Major's favour is how badly the Tories did in 1990, the last time these seats were involved in elections. Then, the Tories scored only 32% of the vote as against Labour's 40%. Within six months they had ditched Thatcher and John Major had become leader. Now the average opinion poll showing for the Tories is only 27% as against Labour's 49%. Major's

prospects look very bleak. The Tories have hammered local authorities since they came to power in 1979. But this election is not just about local government - people will be voting on the national issues too. The effect of the recession plus the Tories tax increases together have knocked off around £22 per week from average wage packets - no wonder the Tories now contemplate obliteration at the polls. In the European elections in June their prospects are even bleaker.

Labour now has a tremendous opportunity to turn the enormous anti-Tory

mood into a positive pro-Labour one. For local government they should campaign for a return to 1979 real levels of funding, a massive programme of good quality public sector house building, an end to the public sector pay freeze and an end to the "privatisation" of council services through CCT (Compulsory Competitive Tendering) and other Tory measures. This, linked into a campaign on full employment, a national minimum wage and the reversal of all the Tories' anti-union legislation, could ensure a landslide victory for Labour in the coming general

election. Of course from day one Labour needs to realise that such a radical and popular programme could only be implemented if the power of the bosses is effectively broken. This means implementing Clause 4, part 4r, of the party constitution - the nationalisation, under democratic workers' control and management, of the commanding heights of the economy. With such a programme Labour can sweep to power and begin the urgent task of transforming society in the interests of the working class people.



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## British Coal's Dirty Tricks Campaign Fails

• As we went to press it was announced by British Coal that they had withdrawn plans to close Tower colliery in light of the miners' vote and determination to fight closure. The following article was received before that announcement:

In 1984 there were 29 deep-coal mines in South Wales. Now there's one! The battle to save Tower colliery is a fight for coal-mining in the region. It has nothing to do with nostalgia. It's a fight to defend industry, employment and the workers' movement. The miners' militancy in 1974 reversed the reactionary policies of the Heath government. A decade later came Thatcher's revenge - a revenge not based on emotion but on strategic calculations. The ruling class pressed home its advantage to destroy any possibility of a repeat of 1974 by decimating the coal industry.

Now, another decade on, it continues. Thatcher took on the miners as a show of strength but Major's government has no strength to show. It backed down from open confrontation last November, when even the Labour and trade union leaders were moved

by the mood of opposition. Its tactics changed but the closure campaign continues. Nationally 34 pits have been picked off since then.

Productivity at Tower colliery is very high. It has made £26 million profit over the last three years. Its market has been deliberately cut, two-thirds of its supply to the local power station at Aberthorpe has been replaced by coal from other sources which is of no better quality. Yet despite this it is still expected to make £1 million profit this year.

Despite being offered a £9,000 handout to accept redundancies, the miners at Tower decided to fight. BC's management has phoned miners at home to persuade them to accept the deal. It has circulated a document for them to sign in an attempt to overturn the union's democratic decision. The methods of bribery and dirty tricks have failed.

The decision to fight is a magnificent testimony to the spirit of resistance of the Tower miners. A real campaign now could bring down Major's teetering regime and save, not only mining in South Wales, but many other industries under attack. The trade union and Labour leaders should take a lead now in the fight for jobs.

John Gandy

### MSF Conference

## Oppose Leadership's Moves to Go Back to the Future

Particular attention at this year's MSF conference will focus on the Labour Party conference delegation's decision to support aspects of OMOV in clear contradiction of 1993 union conference policy.

According to MSF president, Bere Saxby, there was "an irreconcilable conflict between two aspects of MSF conference policy on opposition to OMOV and support for women only shortlists for Labour Party PPCs," and as these issues were linked by the right-wing in the conference resolution, "there was no alternative but to abstain."

Of course by abstaining the delegation allowed the right wing's OMOV proposal, which the union opposed, to go through. No wonder the Scottish Region, amongst others, has called for Ms. Saxby's removal from office.

Another major issue at the conference will be the NEC's discussion paper "MSF into the 21st Century." There is no doubt changes need to be made to the present cumbersome structure of the union. But change must be democratic, with control of decision making vested in the lay membership. Annual

conference must be maintained and strengthened as the sovereign policy making body of the union, to lead the NEC and full time officers, and not vice versa. The full timers themselves should be elected by, and accountable to, the members and receive no more than an average wage of MSF members.

Unfortunately this discussion paper seems to be attempting to take the union in the direction of a "friendly society": "We want to take our place in a new social partnership which recognises the constructive contribution that unions have to make to the success of business..." and again, "we must stress the importance of partnership and prosperity," (page 17).

The lay membership must make themselves heard in this debate and not allow themselves to be railroaded by the national leadership, so that MSF can play a full part in the struggle of the labour and trade union movement for a decent future.

Steve Fricker  
Chair, MSF Southampton  
General Branch



# Save Our Steel

- ISTC must fight for jobs

Since the national pay dispute of 1980, British Steel has shed tens of thousands of jobs, sold plant, contracted jobs out, shut Ravenscraig and Normanby Park, and generally been given a free hand by ISTC (union) leaders.

Many of the steel workers who remained received large (unconsolidated) bonuses in the boom years. Now in the extended recession, nothing is certain.

The Tories claim on a purely capitalist basis, BS is now one of the most competitive in Europe, hence their anger with German, Italian and Spanish producers' "overcapacity" and subsidies. However, BS's "competitive" argument has been exposed, as the EU are fining BS (around £25M or half the profits steelworkers made last year) and 15 others, for involvement in an illegal cartel for certain construction beam steel. Workers must not be made to pay for management's secret

deals and corruption. Labour leaders must be pressured to support the exposure and fight for jobs.

Who will be next on the list of closures? The ISTC leaders should be preparing and campaigning in advance. Those advocating a split from the ISTC in Scunthorpe are completely mis-guided; any corruption at union HQ will only be exposed and removed by changing the union from within.

The case for public ownership under workers' control is more valid than ever - no secret deals and cartels - steelworkers have seen the heavy industries they are integrated with, collapsing around them - ships, mines, etc, many while nationalised, but run like Tory family businesses. The rank and file must organise to fight to ensure that the ISTC does not let steel and its workers suffer the same fate.

Miles Todd, Scunthorpe

## Poll tax: '106' Prosecutions Fail

11 Labour councillors, 2 ex-Labour and 1 Tory charged with breaching section 106 of the Local Government

Finance Act have dealt another blow to the farce of poll tax non-payment prosecutions.

Out of an original 29 councillors suspected of possible '106' breach, (which relates to non-payment of Poll/council taxes by councillors) eleven of the fourteen were cleared of illegality by magistrates whose clear scepticism of the prosecution case was evident. The remaining three Labour councillors were given 12 month conditional discharges.

The case has caused not only disquiet amongst the Council officers who have been accused of not providing accurate advice to the councillors concerning '106', but also amongst the Labour group on Plymouth City council, with one councillor resigning the Labour whip arguing that the national leadership have done nothing to

support the thirteen. The most pathetic figure in this court room debacle has turned out to be the Tory councillor who alerted the

police over the alleged '106' breaches. He now seems likely to become the scapegoat for public hostility to this grand waste of money,

time and effort. Coming as the verdict did alongside judgements on the Lambeth councillors, some local activists have

## 1000 Students March on Tories

Students from the University of Plymouth marched on the Tory Central Council conference demanding an end to plans to cut 10% plus inflation from student grants. The 1000-strong march was jointly organised by the University Labour Students and the local NUS.

Speakers at the rally reflected a strong labour movement bias, with a senior Labour councillor speaking alongside myself as secretary of the Plymouth and District Trades Council.

It was made clear that a very important struggle lay ahead for both student unionists and trade unionists in resisting and defeating the Tory cuts. Recent industrial conflicts were highlighted to bring home to students what the job market held in store for those fortunate enough to find work upon

graduation. On the whole the movement presented itself to the student population as a vital chain in the link of forces for change and the need for solidarity between students and workers was hammered home. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, the once influential Student Liberal Democrats were absent from the march. It was clear that their support had crumbled as the polarisation of ideas advanced and students moved to support a more collective message.

The fact that 1000 demonstrators turned out to oppose Tory plans shows what can be achieved in even the most politically passive universities or colleges if well thought out and conscientious planning takes place. Overall the aim was to link the students anger to the solidarity and ideas of the wider Labour movement and in this we were successful.

questioned why the thirteen did not give political reasons for non payment as did the Lambeth trio. This however remains an issue to be debated within the local party in the coming months. The trial has proven to be at best politically motivated with many Tory, and, it must be highlighted, Labour right wingers, not joining the 13 Labour councillors on the stand. Estimates have indicated that as many as 29 Plymouth City councillors were possibly in breach of '106'. At a national level Labour must organise to support its activists through future '106' cases and that way we can ensure other 'defendants' score similar successes.

Mark Townsend  
Plymouth Saffron  
CLP Youth and  
Student Officer.  
(In Personal  
Capacity)



# Teachers vote to defend education

**The totally unanimous condemnation by the 1,000 plus delegates, representing 180,000 teachers, at the NUT conference, of Tory government education policy was never mentioned by the media.**

The delegates saw that the government was reducing expenditure on education as a proportion of GDP and reintroducing selective education. Much of what the government says and does leads to one conclusion: the education clock is being turned back many years. The debate and resolutions carried were mostly won by the left at the Easter conference and the union is committed to a host of excellent policies - a continuation of a boycott of the SATs (National tests for 7, 11 and 14

year olds) which would be used for league tables and selection in education and are nothing to do with helping raise standards or educating children. National action against job losses, the cut in Section 11 funding (the special help for children with English as a second language), opposition to raising class sizes etc. Y and a clear stand against the Tory trade union laws and racism and fascism, including a proposed rule change to make a member of any fascist organisation ineligible for membership of the NUT.

There are two left organisations in the union - the Socialist Teachers Alliance (STA) and the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU), and by co-operating and working together, perhaps merging eventually, they can

transform the NUT into a fighting, campaigning union with a capable and accountable leadership. At the conference, 3 out of 4 members of the conference business committee elected were from the joint left slate - a first time victory for the left.

## Executive

In the executive elections held by postal ballot before the conference, left supported candidates won 15 seats (out of 42). In some areas the right were unopposed so that left candidates got an average of 49% of the vote where they stood. With a well planned and joint left campaign for 1996 the left can take a majority. The first task is to work in the coming General Secretary elections and get the maximum support for Mary Hufford, the left candidate, against Doug

McAvoy, the current incumbent. The urgent task facing our union is to cut across the hostility of the NASUWT leaders and build united action and campaign for one democratic union for all teachers. NUT divisions need to build up an unstoppable momentum from below, and NUT executive from above, for one union. The members of NUT and the NASUWT understand the need for this. With one TUC union we can then approach all of the teacher organisations to join in to build a very powerful force to defend our members and the education of our children.

**Bryan Beckinham,  
President Oldham  
NUT and Bob  
Edwards, Harlow  
NUT (both in  
personal capacity)**

# Young Labour

**At last the Labour Party has realised we need campaigning branches to win elections and we can't rely on the media to get our message across.**

The changes in the structure of the youth section should be welcomed. It doesn't really matter what the name is or what area a branch covers so long as we get the resources to build socialist ideas among young people. In Leicester South, we set up a youth branch a year ago. We appointed a youth officer who contacted all the members under 27. We got them together and nominated officers. Then we set about raising funds. In the past, the youth section had no money to

campaign and this hampered its work, so we started a monthly draw (200 Club) where we asked party members to buy a number each a month. We draw a number and the one is split between the winner and Young Labour. We now have around £2,000 a year to spend.

This money enabled us to produce 10,000 recruitment leaflets, advertise in the local media and write to all the trade union branches in Leicestershire asking them to circulate all their young members. We are also targeting groups of workers who are difficult to reach, such as nurses in student accommodation. We are writing directly to them and also to

youngsters with their eighteenth birthdays coming up. Our latest event was a public meeting against racism, for which 10,000 leaflets were produced and we received media coverage. The membership of Leicester South YL has gone up from 30 a year ago to 85, with 250 members county-wide. We are helping other CLPs to establish groups in their areas. You only need one person with a bit of enthusiasm to get things going. That's how we started.

**Mike Pullin  
Leicester South Labour  
Party Youth Officer**

## In the News

● Social workers in East Nottingham have staged a lightning strike to protest at "serious" staff shortages. The 60 workers, based in the east Nottingham district staged a demonstration outside the city's County Hall. They claim the staff shortages mean youngsters are suffering as there are too few child protection officers to cope with the current workload.

● The official launch of Birmingham's new benefit service took place with a lavish reception at the council house. However, there were some notable absentees - the majority of the staff! 150 Unison members are, at the time of going to press, in their fourth week of indefinite strike action in support of claims for a regrade.

The new benefit service (aimed at unifying benefit assessment and advice), whilst generally welcomed is being brought in on the cheap. Staff training has been scrapped, computers are inadequate and new claim forms unsuitable. What's worse is staff are being expected to take on extra duties and responsibilities without being paid properly for the job. Unison are now threatening to escalate the action unless management come up with a genuine offer.

Speakers/ Messages of support: Unison, Birmingham Local Government Branch No. 1, 3rd Floor, Mercury House, 71 Cornwall St, Birmingham



**The first National delegate conference of Unison will be taking place in Bournemouth between 15 - 18 May.**

Clearly the most important issue for debate is the three year Government public sector wage freeze and the cuts and privatisation that cannot be separated from the question of the freeze.

The importance of these matters is reflected in the fact that twenty-four separate motions have appeared on the preliminary agenda on these subjects.

Clearly following amendments and compositing two or three positions will evolve.

One around the national executive's position based on a "broad alliance" with the TUC, other public sector unions, user groups etc. against the freeze preparing for industrial action where necessary etc. etc. etc. Another position that the national leadership will hope is the only opposition to their policy is the ultra left call to "launch an immediate campaign for all-out co-ordinated strike action against the freeze".

#### **NEC Position**

Clearly if these are the only two positions the NEC resolution will be carried, industrial action will be dropped in favour of the broad based TUC public services committee Saturday demonstration in July, which will fizzle out to nothing following one or two token regional events in the autumn leaving public sector workers with no pay rise or a limited pay rise at the cost of other workers' jobs.

Alternatively the Scarborough, Molton and Whitby Healthcare branch resolution 20 calling for UNISON to "approach other public sector unions with a view to co-ordinating a 24 hour public sector stoppage" should be supported. The resolution goes on to point out "In the event we fail to get an agreement on such a positive step forward, Conference instructs our national executive to initiate a one day UNISON strike coupled with a national demonstration that we would call on other unions to support."

This would be a realistic and serious start to the campaign that would be supported by the membership and would have to be taken seriously by the Government.

Significantly there are also a number of resolutions calling for UNISON to campaign for the

# Unison Conference

# Build Action to Defeat Tory Attacks

repeal of the Tory anti union laws that have played such a major part in suppressing the fight against cuts, privatisation and attacks on wages and conditions in recent years.

Resolution 58 from Newcastle commits UNISON to giving notice that we are prepared to contravene anti union legislation if necessary when organising industrial action and resolution 61 from Sefton is a call for support for any branch or region that is forced to organise industrial action that contravenes anti union legislation.

Both of these resolutions or the appropriate composites should be supported.

There are also a number of resolutions on the economy with particular emphasis on the policy of full employment referred to by John Smith and John Monks at the TUC and Labour Party Conferences.

The NEC position whilst containing reforms in relation to training and investment that should be supported basically falls into the trap of accepting the concept of a capitalist market economy arguing that better investment and training will make British capitalism more competitive on world markets. Resolutions 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 and 11 from Leeds Local Government No 10, Edinburgh No 1, Bexley A, Leeds again, Newcastle City and Waltham Forest Health or the appropriate composite, calling for a planned economy under a Labour Government, the renationalisation of public utilities such as water, gas, electricity and so on and the nationalisation of the banks insurance companies and commanding heights of the economy should be supported.

There are several interesting rule amendments, the most significant being rule changes 37,

38 and 39 calling for the election of the deputy general secretary every three years as opposed to appointment and rule changes 40, 41 and 42 calling for the regular election of deputy general secretaries every five years. Five years would perhaps be more realistic but either would be a major step forward.

A broad left meeting called by various left organisations within the regions has been called on the Sunday night with a view to setting up a national left grouping and a Socialist Appeal meeting

has been called for the Monday night that will be addressed by Ted Grant, delegates are urged to attend both (see details below).

**Steve McKenzie, Unison Branch Secretary (personal capacity)**

**Socialist Appeal  
Unison  
Conference  
readers' meeting**

*Britain in Crisis:  
The Socialist Answer*

**Speakers:  
Ted Grant and  
Unison delegates**

**Monday May 16th  
7.30pm**

**Winterbourne Hotel  
Priory Road  
Bournemouth**

## Defend Jobs and Services

*(continued from back page)*

country are those in the public sector in unions like Unison, the NUT, NATFHE, CPSA, NCU, UCW, RMT, NUM, TGWU, GMB, and so on.

There are over 5 million workers employed in the public sector. If the public sector unions were to call a one day public sector strike coupled with a massive national demonstration in London as a first step in the campaign to reverse these attacks there would be a tremendous response.

Unfortunately, however, in a cynical manoeuvre to undercut such action it has been reported in a union journal recently that the TUC public services committee simply wants to call a demonstration some time in July.

Whilst such a demonstration may ensure that the Tories cannot take legal action to sequester the funds and threaten the well paid livelihoods of TUC officials and other trade union bureaucrats it will not be enough to reverse the attacks on the public sector and defeat the wage freeze.

Clearly any trade unionist would urge maximum support for such a demonstration in the absence of anything else but we must not allow the manoeuvrings of the TUC public services committee and the leaders of our public sector unions to use this as an excuse not to take serious industrial action in the form of a 24 hour public sector strike.

This strike should take place on a weekday coupled with a London demonstration - at the latest in June.

Such action must be fought for at all of the public sector union conferences taking place this Spring.



# Build on Unity to Fight For Decent Pay Deal

CPSA's National Moderate Group, the most right-wing leadership in the TUC, faces its greatest ever challenge as members of the largest civil service union vote in elections in the lead up to the annual conference beginning on 9 May.

The right-wing dominated National Executive, under the leadership of General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom, and including several Tories amongst its members, is fighting for its survival in the face of the first united left election challenge in a decade.

## Market Testing

Having failed to build an effective campaign against the Tories market testing programme which threatens tens of thousands of civil service jobs, and with a new programme of market tests in the pipeline, the 'moderates' claims that they can offer members any protection against these attacks must be examined.

They have concealed from members the progress of this year's pay negotiations, and put in a 3.6% claim which they themselves admit would be "unlikely to maintain members' living standards" (NEC document). The average CPSA member receives only 63.8% of national earnings, compared to

79.8% in 1979 and 98.5% in 1971.

In spite of this, Reamsbottom and his supporters have refused to put in a claim which includes a 'catching-up' element. They have swallowed hook, line and sinker, the government's argument that a settlement should not produce an increase in the overall civil service pay bill, and attacked the Broad Left for calling for a campaign to break through the pay freeze, accusing the left of pursuing policies that will cut jobs.

The NEC's arrogance in ignoring conference policy, their refusal to campaign on the most serious issues facing the union, their undemocratic restructuring of the union with no mandate from either conference or a consultative ballot of members; their failure to defend members disciplined and sacked for trade union activity, forms a catalogue of disaster which has prompted both left factions — the Broad Left and Broad Left 84 (BL84) — to join with independents in a Unity campaign to challenge in this year's elections.

This represents a decisive step forward for the left in CPSA. In 1993 a united left campaign in the senior lay officers elections saw Broad Left member Chris Baugh elected as Vice-President.

Although the results of the 1994 elections are far from a foregone conclusion, the greater

***"This year's conference provides an excellent opportunity to begin discussions across the union on a wider unity programme of fighting policies"***

left unity which has grown out of this year's campaign, and which will be even more evident on the floor of conference itself, means the 'moderates' stranglehold on the CPSA leadership is already loosening. This year's conference provides an excellent opportunity to begin discussions across the union on a wider unity programme of fighting policies which can guarantee an end to the bankrupt leadership of Reamsbottom and his allies.

**Jon Rubidge, CPSA Branch Secretary, DE West Glamorgan and Dyfed (personal capacity)**

**Greenwich Unison**

## *Sick of monitoring madness*

**A meeting of Greenwich UNISON 'A' Branch, which met on 31st March, has agreed to support a motion from members of the Advice and Benefits Department, which requested a ballot for all-out indefinite strike action over the issue of sickness monitoring.**

Presently, each Directorate and Department of the Council have their own way of handling the issue of sickness. Therefore, last year the branch supported a boycott of all further sickness monitoring and began negotiations with Greenwich for a Council-wide sickness policy.

On the whole, management in most departments of the council have 'respected' the boycott and have held back on monitoring and disciplinary action whilst the negotiations are continuing. But the management of Advice and Benefits are taking a harder line than even the Directorate which it comes under!

Our management first decided to 'go their own way' in December, when they started the first round of sickness interviews since the boycott began.

However, to their surprise, the Shop Stewards managed to convince

a great proportion of members not to attend their interviews (referred to as "an informal chat with your manager".)

When the second round of sickness interviews began, people were now being threatened with disciplinary action, not only for their attendance record but also, initially, for not turning up for their interview! Although they soon had to back down over the latter.

We presently have a situation where one member has been threatened with severe disciplinary action, another has been given a 'verbal warning' - in writing! - and others are being told to take annual leave and flexi-leave if they feel unwell.

It was in the light of this that Advice and Benefits staff requested that we, as their Shop Stewards, seek support from the branch for a ballot for strike action, unless the management of our department suspend all disciplinarys and stop all sickness monitoring interviews.

Following the union lobby of the council on 13 April, the union activists are continuing to pressurise UNISON at a regional and national level to support the wishes of the branch.

**Dave O'Brien, Shop Steward Greenwich Advice and Benefits.**



# Britain in Crisis

**The crisis in the Conservative Party is an indication of the blind alley in which British capitalism finds itself at the present time. It is a symptom of the crises affecting the ruling class in all the countries of western capitalism. But Britain's crisis is much more deep seated.**

It is a crisis which has been developing for decades. From being a mighty imperialist power, Britain has been reduced to a second or even third rate power much weaker than Japan, the USA, or even Germany. Gordon Brown, Labour Shadow chancellor, has pointed out that "Britain has a lower national income per head than France, Italy, Hong Kong and Singapore." He added in Parliament that, "Britain faces a permanent loss of manufacturing capacity as a result of the recession ensuring that British manufacturing is smaller in size not just than Germany, France and Italy, but soon as small as countries like Brazil."

## Manufacturing

Manufacturing employment is set to fall below 5 million for the first time this century. Unemployment is higher than 4 million and in reality is still rising. Britain used to be renowned for the scrupulous correctness of its statistics. Now the Tories are distorting and rigging the figures to try and cover up their bankruptcy.

The real standard of living has fallen below the standards of other countries of western Europe. The Low Pay Unit published a report on the 9th March pointing out that average labour costs in manufacturing are lower in the UK than in southern Italy, one of the poorest regions of the European Union.

The Tories are basing themselves on constructing a low wage economy in order to compete with their rivals in Europe. This is a vain hope. Machinery will always beat low wages. The level of investment is decisive in this respect and has been lower than their rivals for decades.

## Low Pay

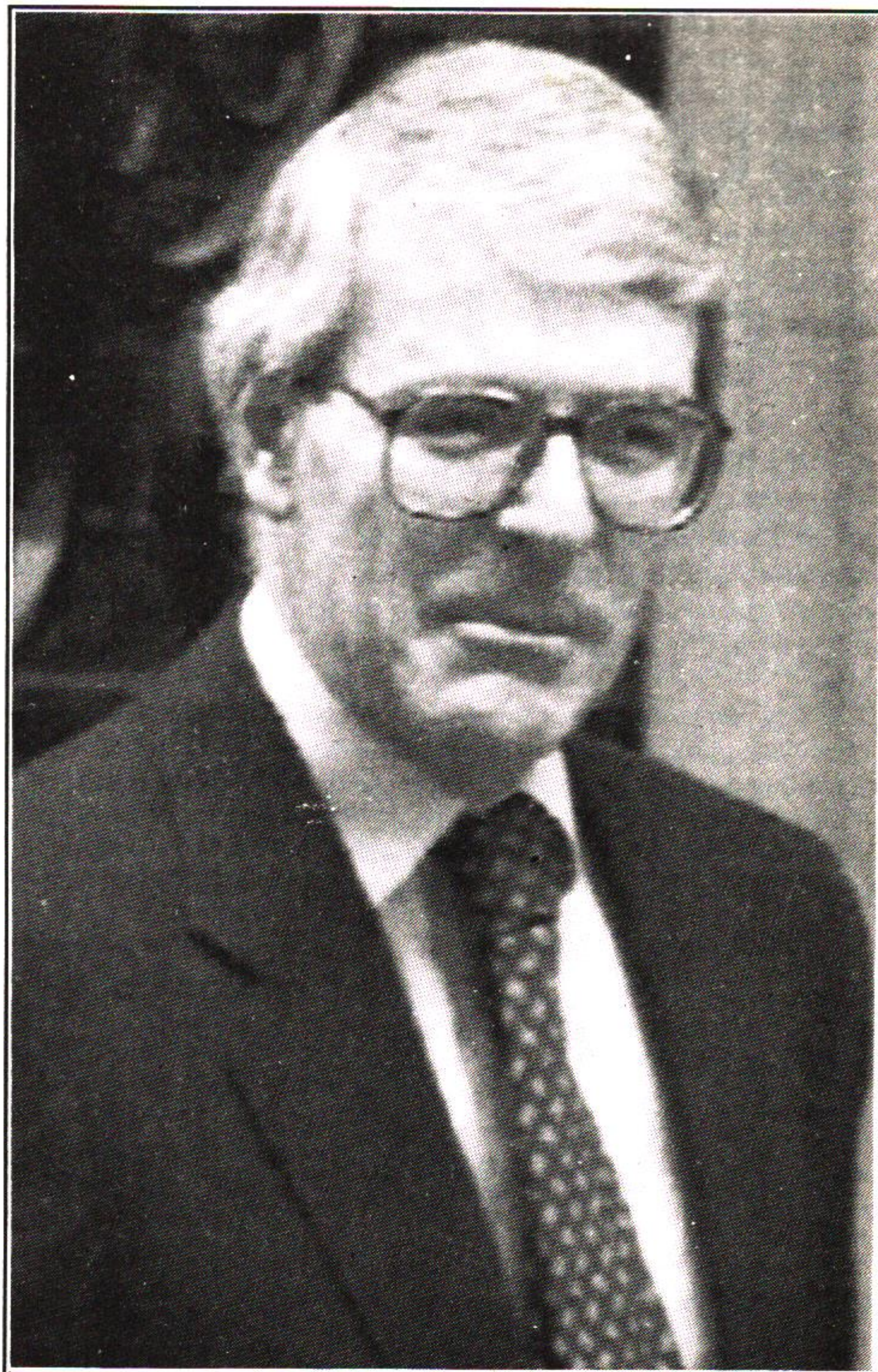
The Low Pay Unit also comments that, "the UK's success in creating jobs has been much less than in countries with higher levels of employment and social protection."

An indication of the base and vicious level to which the Tories have descended is shown by the comments of John Prescott, Labour employment spokesman, that the "government is fighting controls preventing school children from working through the night in Europe."

They have destroyed the Wages Councils which legislated on the wages of the lowest paid workers. The result is a fall in wages well below poverty levels. The councils existed since 1910 when a bill was introduced by Winston Churchill, then a Liberal. The balance of payments was £10 billion in deficit in 1993 and will increase as the inevitable "boom" follows the deep recession. Over the last five years it is over £69 billion. In addition, over the same period, £165 billion has been borrowed by Britain from abroad. With growing political instability this is rather shaky.

Over the next five years the accumulated current account deficit will be over £100 billion. In addition British capitalism will invest another £150 billion abroad.

Under these conditions, according to Will Hutton the Guardian's economics correspondent, "a run on the



**The growing crisis in the Conservative Party is an indication of the profound crisis in the British economy. Ted Grant looks at the prospect for the Tories, the economy and how Labour can exploit the Tories' weakness**

*pound is utterly predictable now. The only question is when.*"

Taxes will have been increased by £17 billion in the next three years. Average pay of the bottom 50% of wage earners fell around £10 per week between 1989 and 1991 according to the Treasury, while the top 10% gained around £40 a week in cash terms. The top 1% averaged in the same period a massive increase of about £325 per week. For the first time the top 10%, 2.6 million people, are taking a bigger slice of Britain's

income than the 13.1 million people in the bottom 50% of earners.

From the point of view of broad perspectives the Tories face an insoluble crisis. But the immediate position is no better. According to a Gallup poll published on 8th April, Labour is now on 51.5%, the Conservatives on 26.5% and the Liberal Democrats on 17.5%. John Major is on a 21% approval rating while the government's record gets only a 12% approval. The Times comments, "no Prime



*Minister or government has fallen so far and so fast in public esteem since Gallup began polling in Britain in the 1930s."*

There is a seething discontent with the Tory government, with enormous anger accumulating amongst the workers and also the middle class. The National Health Service is in a mess. The welfare state has been undermined. The Tories have been concentrating power with central government, reducing elected councils to ciphers and giving more and more powers to unelected 'quangos.' This has opened the way for corruption. It is not only in Italy that there is corruption but on a lesser scale in Britain too.

The Tories are frantically trying to make a scapegoat of the prime minister, hoping in vain that a challenge to his leadership will solve their problems. Major, adulated as a miracle worker because of his election victory, is now an albatross for the Tory party.

It seems inevitable that the Tories will junk Major in the next period. His futile and unprecedented intervention in local elections, in an endeavour to save his skin, will only make his position worse. A change of Prime Minister will not change anything fundamental though. Any revival of Tory support will be short lived.

### Europe

The tabloid rags which built him up are now savaging him. Trying to play the part of a 'strong man' he refused to accept an increase from 23 to 27 in the 'blocking minority' in the enlarged European Union. Within days, however, the 'iron man' capitulated, reflecting the weakness of British capitalism. The Tory party is split with one section dreaming of the past glories of Britain, the right wing reactionary section opposing further integration into Europe. It is not 'normal' for the Conservatives to be openly split, inside and outside parliament, with more than one MP calling for Major's resignation. The local and European elections coming after the biggest tax increases since the war, along with mass unemployment and lowered living standards, will result in massive defeats for the Tories. Poverty wages, crime which has reached unheard of levels, and the general sickness in society

are all factors dooming the Tories to big defeats.

The Conservative election victory in 1992 was due to 'nostalgia' for the boom of the 1980s and because the Labour Party didn't offer anything fundamentally different. But the cold reality of the nightmare situation facing them has hit the workers and the middle class and with an average £12 per week being taken from them in tax increases their situation will only get worse.

## There is a saying that those they would destroy the Gods first make mad. The destruction of the coal industry for the benefit of the gas and electricity monopolies is, from the point of view of the economy as a whole, insane.

The Tories have succeeded in alienating large sections of the 'professions' - teachers, doctors, lecturers and lawyers, amongst others. White collar layers like the civil servants and council staff have been under attack. Manual council workers, postal and communication workers and health workers have all experienced an undermining of job security and their working conditions, making their situation unbearable.

This guarantees that when there will be a general upsurge of the working class every layer will be involved.

Meanwhile it adds to the hatred with which the working class regards their Conservative rulers. The illusions which some sections of the skilled workers had in the Tories have been shattered.

This process repeats itself throughout Europe. In Italy, Belgium and Greece there have been general strikes. In Sweden, Germany and France massive movements of workers. And this is only the beginning of the process. But in Britain, one of the sick men of Europe, the workers have yet to reveal their power in action.

The law worked out by Marxists

that a deep crisis in society reveals itself in a split in the tops of the ruling class is splendidly demonstrated by the split in the Conservatives. This is because the pressures and discontent at the bottom produces a division at the top of society.

As the opinion polls show the Tories lag way behind Labour. In Scotland the Conservatives are polling less than the Liberal's 14%! Yet in the 1950s the Tories achieved over 50% of the vote in Scotland at one general election.

with its effect on fares and safety will alienate the commuters of the south East. It will make chaotic the national network built up over decades. Only people who have lost their heads and their bearings could have proceeded with this.

The decay in the Conservative Party is shown by the fall in membership. From a nominal 2.5 million in the 1950s to a nominal 700,000 now. The average age of Tory members is now 63! The middle class source of members has dried up.

The impasse of British capitalism leads to an impasse of the Conservative Party. Sensing approaching doom the crisis has resulted in an open split in the Tory Party. Usually differences are muffled and hidden from the gaze of the workers. Now differences are openly expressed and the discontent has crystallised around the right wing anti-European faction. They live in cloud-cuckoo land. More than 60% of Britain's trade is now with Europe!

### Division

Neither faction, either the so-called "lefts" or the right wing, has any solution to the problems of British capitalism.

The real state of affairs is indicated by the description of David Wilshire, a parliamentary aide to the Home Office, of the mood within the party as ranging from "total paranoia on the one hand to a sort of genteel resignation on the other." Trying to find an explanation he said, "If you have a small majority you panic." But that is not the real explanation. As Churchill once explained a majority of one is sufficient. But that is only when the ruling class is confident in its forces and in its future. The Tory Party is rent by division because of the situation in the country. They blindly move towards destruction. The open split in the Tory party in its turn has an effect on the moods and attitudes of the working class and the middle class.

The dialectic of history, however, is such that just when a bold socialist approach would engender enormous enthusiasm, the leaders of the Labour Party have adopted quasi-Tory policies. They seem incapable of taking advantage of the disarray of the Tory party. Their "me-too" approach has been disastrous. But the trade union leaders, even the "lefts" have also



# In the Doldrums

## *GATT forecasts little improvement in living standards*

adopted the policy of class collaboration, with the TUC espousing agreement between the CBI and employers, the government and the unions. The TUC and Labour Party under pressure have adopted a programme of full employment and a national minimum wage. These aims are now impossible under a decaying British capitalism. The Tories seem unlikely to recover much.

Labour seems likely to win the next election on an anti-Tory vote despite the "me-too" policies of the Labour leaders.

It will be a nightmare inheritance for Labour if they remain on the basis of carrying out capitalist policies.

### Leftwards Move

However the first signs of the beginning of a move to the left can be seen in the unions and even some small signs in the Labour party itself.

The resolutions of the TGWU are a modest sign of future processes under the impact of the blind alley of capitalism in Britain.

The most likely result of a new election, and the Tories will not necessarily last their full term, is a majority Labour government.

A new Labour government, or in the unlikely event of a hung parliament with a Labour-Liberal agreement, coalition or understanding, would also be a government of crisis.

The stark realities would pose themselves to the advanced workers that the only solution would be a taking over of the commanding heights of the economy on the basis of clause 4 of the party constitution.

Britain is no longer a world power. It is a second rate, or even third rate, power. That means in the twilight of world capitalism the present system offers a nightmare existence for the working class.

The assault on the rights and standards and conditions of the working class is no accident.

That is why the reactionary policy of undermining health and safety standards, minimum wages and all the other counter reforms, including the systematic anti-union legislation has been introduced by the Tories. Events will change the Labour Party and the trade unions in the titanic conflicts which impend in the next period.

It will return these organisations to their socialist roots. Only in this way will the problems of the working class be solved. ●

The world economy remains in the doldrums for yet another year, as the recession which began in the summer of 1990 heads for its fourth year of little or no growth - the longest postwar recession.

Last year world capitalism grew at just under 2% and that looks like being repeated this year. But that growth hides the sharp variance between the different regions of the globe.

South-East Asia and China are growing at a rate of 6-10% and without their contribution (which in the 1990s is no longer insignificant) there would have been virtually no growth last year.

### US Economy

This year the US economy could grow as fast as 4-4.5%. What is holding back a full recovery is the continuing deep recession in Japan and Europe. Last year Japan registered no growth at all, the first time it has done that since the 1940s, while Europe has little or no growth and may even decline absolutely this

year.

In particular, Germany remains locked in recession as German industry lays off hundreds of thousands of workers and cuts pay to the bone in order to become competitive on world markets. The UK is somewhere in between these extremes. The British economy is likely to grow by over 2.5% this year, making it one of the fastest growing European economies, although by no means a leader in the global economic league.

There is now the prospect of economic growth combined with low interest rates and

inflation at least for a while. At the beginning of the recession in 1990 interest rates were 15% and inflation was nearly 10%, producing a real rate of interest of around 5%. Now interest rates should hold for at least a year at around 5-6% while inflation is unlikely to rise much above 3-4%. That means that real rates of interest will be just 2%, less than half that in 1990. Given that profits and profit rates are likely to rise in the next year, that lays the foundations for some expansion in investment, perhaps by as much as 5% this year after a decline last year. As the world economy moves into recovery during the latter part of this year and certainly in 1995, then world markets should begin to expand and allow some opportunity for British industry to sell abroad, although things could still be tight this year, with GATT, the world trade body forecasting little improvement in world trade growth over last year's low 2.5%.

Thus it is unlikely that the huge tax increases imposed on the British people this year and next by the Tories, the largest rise in overall taxation in the history of fiscal policy will sufficiently dampen consumer spending as to drive the economy back into recession. But this new boom, both in the world and in Britain is likely to be even weaker than the last one of 1982-90 and is likely to be even shorter, perhaps peaking in 1996 for the US and the UK and in 1997 for Japan and Europe.

### Industry

The length of the boom in Britain could be even shorter simply because of the relative weakness and backwardness of British industry in world markets. Britain has the lowest rate of capital investment as a proportion of national output among the top seven capitalist economies, the G7. As the economy

Wall Street - Cheer for markets as US economy is growing again





expands over the next few years, British capitalism faces two threats to sustained growth. First, the government is spending more than it receiving in taxes 50 billion a year to pay for those 3 million on the dole, other social welfare benefits, education, health, police and of course "defence". It can borrow this money from the banks and foreign lenders but only if rates of interest rise to make it worthwhile for lenders. However, a sharp rise in interest rates would cut off the recovery. Alternatively, it can cut spending back even further.

That has been the policy of the Tories up to now, destroying the health service, education standards and creating dire poverty for those on state handouts, the sick, the old and the jobless. But even the Tories' ruthless cutting has not been enough when faced with the huge burden of three million unemployed and declining tax revenues as workers go on the dole and businesses go bankrupt in the recession. The party of low taxation has been forced to make ends meet by introducing the largest tax increases in the history of taxation. The question is that could this tax increase so cut back incomes (the average decline in real income will be about 2-3%) that it could end the recovery. On balance, probably not.

### Wage Rises

First, as the economy expands, wages of those in work will rise somewhat (if just from increased overtime) and profits for industry will boom and that will also lead to increased tax revenues.

As unemployment stops rising (it appears to have almost peaked) and begins to fall, then the burden of dole payments will fall. Very quickly, that 50 billion deficit could disappear. As it is it seems that the Tories have probably decided to raise taxes more than they need to over the next two year, not to increase public services and improve conditions for those on benefit (of course not) but instead to prepare the way for tax cuts in 1996 prior to another election. However, there is another threat to sustained growth that the Tories may not be able to avoid, and may perhaps ruin their plans to win the next election. The weakness of British capitalism in world markets is revealed

graphically in the balance of exports to the rest of the world against imports from the rest of world. The truth is that British industry has not only lost its share in world markets over the last 30 years, but it has also lost its share of its own home market to other capitalist economies. The penetration of imports into the British market continues to rise. Usually during a recession, British workers and capitalist stop buying from abroad because they cannot afford it, especially if the pound is devalued by the government, thus making imports more expensive in pounds. Thus the balance of trade usually becomes surplus of exports over imports. But for the first time in the history of the founders of the industrial revolution, Britain has continued to run a deficit on its balance of trade. Imports have continued to rise during the recession. And there was still a deficit of over 12 billion in 1993 even when the receipts from the City of London with its financial and shipping institutions came in. As the economy expands, we can expect that deficit to get worse because British industry will not be able to meet the increased demand at home or compete with foreign imports. Despite the 15-20% devaluation of the pound that took place after the black September 1992 ERM crisis, Britain's trade and current account with the rest of the world could reach 15 billion next year. Now a trade deficit can be paid for borrowing from abroad. If the British economy, or to be more exact British interest rates are

## For those who continue to depend on state support the future is bleak, if not catastrophic

sufficiently attractive then foreign companies and banks will leave their money in sterling to get a high rate of return and these deposits can be used to finance

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Kenneth Clarke - presiding over major tax increases

the deficit. Alternatively in an emergency the government could borrow from the IMF, the international lending agency. But that would mean introducing an economic policy designed to pay back the money by ending the deficit, namely higher interest rates and taxes and lower public spending. Not only would that ruin further the lives of the people it affects, it would destroy the Tories' plans for tax cuts and low interest rates before the next election. For both these methods of financing the trade deficit, interest rates must rise, and rise sharply.

### Interest Rates

Thus even before the likely 1996 summer election, the Tories would see rising mortgage rates and an end to the hardly begun boom. If the Tories keep interest rates low and do not raise taxes any further, then foreign lenders will be reluctant to keep their money in pounds, because the returns are poor.

That would inevitably mean a weakening of sterling in world currency markets, and "a run on the pound" as its value careers downwards. That is a danger for even as early as summer 1995, and looks extremely likely by 1996 unless interest rates have risen. Devaluation would make imports more expensive and exports cheaper and so eventually help the balance of trade, but they would also drive

up prices and rising inflation would then force up interest rates anyway. Moreover, other capitalist economies, especially those in the European Union, will none too pleased if Britain allows a devaluation of its currency to undercut their exports and they may retaliate with their own measures.

So whatever policy is adopted the likelihood is that this economic boom will be short-lived, perhaps lasting no longer than 1996 before we enter another crisis and recession. That could also be repeated on a world scale for other reasons. What does all this mean for the living standards of working people in Britain. Well, unemployment will stop rising and may even begin to fall over the next two to three years, but most of the new jobs will part-time or temporary, and of course with wages as low as possible. Those in work will face a struggle getting any pay increase to match the sharp rise in taxes and the creeping up of mortgage rates, even if prices do not spiral up in the short term.

For those who continue to depend on state support in one way or another the future is bleak if not catastrophic. The market economy will continue to prove that it is inefficient, inequitable and destructive to the lives of most of the British people.

**Michael Roberts**



# Italian left throw away election victory

**Italy's left had looked all set for an election victory just a few short months ago. As the parties assess the results of the general election Fernando D'Alessandro and Giovanni Russo put the outcome under the Marxist spotlight.**

Last Autumn opinion polls in Italy indicated that a bloc around the PDS would win the elections. The Christian Democrats were in a process of disintegration and there was no bourgeois alternative ready to take its place.

The two remaining bourgeois parties with any significant influence, the Northern League and the neo-fascist MSI, seemed incapable of joining together. They have similar programmes but the League stands for a Federal Republic based on regional autonomy whereas the MSI stands for the "unity of Italy".

## Berlusconi

Then Silvio Berlusconi, TV tycoon (owner of three private national television channels), set up a new party, Forza Italia, and formed an electoral pact with the League in the North and the MSI in the rest of the country. The League and Berlusconi agreed on how to divide up the constituencies so as not to stand against each other in the North and same was done in the rest of the country with the MSI. (With the new electoral system 3/4 of the MPs are elected in constituencies with a first-past-the-post system. The remaining 1/4 are elected on a system of proportional representation with the added proviso that only those parties that achieve at least 4% get any representation).

However, a minority of the bosses supported the Progressives (the alliance around the PDS). Berlusconi represents the wing of the bourgeois that is totally opposed to the idea of the PDS governing the country. That is not the position of the chairman of the Confindustria (Italian equivalent of the CBI) who repeated continually that it wasn't a question of **who** governs Italy but of **how** it is governed. The Confindustria were quite prepared to see the PDS carry out their programme for them. This would have had more than one advantage: the workers would be more prepared to accept an "austerity programme" from their own leaders (at least for an initial period) and later on the workers' parties would take the blame for such a programme thus preparing the ground for a victory of the right at a later stage. In spite of favourable conditions the leaders of the Progressives managed to throw away victory. Even a popular comedy programme had a comedian dressed up as Occhetto (leader of the PDS) saying that "we had a successful election campaign because our aim was to lose"! The programme of the PDS accepted the idea of privatization of state-owned industry and even of sections of the Health service and education! One has to remember that last year the PDS supported the budget presented by the Ciampi government. That

budget introduced the first steps towards privatization of the school system, right in the middle of one of the biggest movements of school students since 1968! It also conceded a paltry 50p per week increase in pensions. Occhetto announced before the election that the candidate for Prime Minister of a future Progressive government would be Ciampi himself! Occhetto explained that the programme of the Progressives was based essentially on privatizations and cutting the national debt! All this amounted to saying that if the Progressives had won nothing would have changed.

## Privatisation

Occhetto also went out of his way to prove that the PDS was opposed to the proposals of Bertinotti, secretary of the PRC (Rifondazione Comunista). The leadership of the PRC swung to the right and to the left in the build up to the elections. In December Bertinotti explained that he would not be opposed to privatization of state-owned steelworks and then just one month later the PRC adopted a conference document opposing privatization in any form whatsoever. As the elections approached Bertinotti came out with radical demands. He called for a reduction in the working week without any loss in pay, a programme of useful public works and taxation of government bonds (for those who had more than about

£80,000's worth). He also added the demand for withdrawal of Italy from NATO. Occhetto went to the London School of Economics to reassure the "business community" that its interests would not be at risk if the Progressives had won and announced that he would not form a government with anyone proposing taxation of government bonds and withdrawal from NATO! One has to keep in mind that both the PDS and the PRC were in the Progressive bloc. In spite of all this the PDS increased its vote from just over 16.1% to 20.4%. The PRC also slightly increased its vote (from 5.6% to 6%). Before coming out with Bertinotti's radical demands the PRC's vote seemed to be in decline (about 4.5% or 5%). The results of the PRC were patchy with some areas seeing a significant increase and others a decrease. In some areas where the party locally carried out a more radical campaign it managed to get more of an echo among workers and increased its vote. This should serve as a lesson for the leaders both of the PRC and the PDS: only radical left demands that attack the privileges of the rich will get the vote of the youth and the workers!

## Weak Campaign

Faced with such a weak campaign on the part of the Progressive bloc the right wing parties had a fairly easy job of it. Up till the last moment opinion polls revealed that about 50% of the electorate had not yet decided who to vote for: they could not see the difference! The victory of the right represents a desire to return to the past when the economy was going forward. Berlusconi promised a "new Italian miracle", and used his image of successful "self-made man". He promised to create a million new jobs (unemployment is now officially 2.8 million) and to



cut taxes. His programme could have been very easily shown up for what it was. Berlusconi's job creation programme is based on the idea that all those who pay VAT (i.e. small shopkeepers, businesses, etc.) should take on one unemployed person! His tax reduction in reality means introducing a 30% taxation level for everybody, which would mean that all those who earn less than about £30,000 per year (75% of the working population) would pay more and all those who earn more than that would pay less.

Berlusconi's real programme is that of the Confindustria, which demands "flexibility" in labour legislation (i.e., make it easier to sack workers), massive privatization, private health and pension schemes, lower wages for young workers when they get their first job, tax reductions for the wealthy, more local and less centralised taxation etc.

### Right Wing

The three right-wing parties (Northern League, MSI and Berlusconi's Forza Italia) all basically agree on this programme and yet they are finding it very difficult to form a government. This reveals the weakness of the Italian bourgeoisie. They have not been able to create an alternative bourgeois party to take the place of the Christian Democracy. With the corruption scandals they successfully destroyed the old political system which had become a burden on the economy. The national debt now stands at £750 billion (115% of GNP) one of the highest in Europe. The bourgeois needed a more stable system that could do away with the widespread patronage and corruption of the Christian Democracy. The state no longer has the resources to continue along those lines and therefore the new system was seen by the capitalists as a means of assuring a stable majority in Parliament strong enough to go on to the offensive against the working class. Yet in spite of all the propaganda and the publicity there is not one single party that got enough votes to govern the country on its own. Forza Italia got 21%, the MSI 13.5% and the League 8.4%, a total of 42.9%. Yet immediately after their "victory" they started arguing

among each other. The main problem is Bossi, leader of the League. Compared to the last general election in 1992 the League actually went down slightly, by about 0.2% but in some areas Berlusconi eat into large chunks of the League vote as in Turin for example where the League went from its 23.4% in last year's municipal elections to 8.8%! Bossi needs to go from success to success to hold his movement together and that explains why he is lashing out so violently at his so-called electoral allies! He has referred to the MSI as "hangmen" and to Berlusconi as a "danger to democracy". Bossi realises that by joining a right-wing government his League will be put to the test, and that explains why he has proposed supporting a minority Forza Italia-MSI government from outside! These developments underline the fact that far from opening up a new period of stability the "Second Republic" will be characterised by enormous instability, which goes to prove that an electoral reform in and of itself cannot solve the underlying social and economic contradictions that have developed in the country. The bourgeois are putting enormous pressure on Bossi to come to order and accept his "responsibilities" to patch together a coalition of the rightwing so as to be able to carry out an unprecedented onslaught on the gains of the working class. They are attempting to carry out the same programme of the French right-

wing government. They will provoke a similar reaction. In the short term the workers will be recovering from the shock of the victory of the right, but once the attacks begin the situation will become explosive. The more astute bourgeois "experts" are already saying they are worried at what the reactions of the Trade Unions might be. Up till recently the moderate Trade Union leaders could count on governments which were prepared to compromise. The most recent example was the struggle at Fiat at the beginning of this year. A militant mood was developing with thousands of workers taking part in strike action. The government stepped in providing the cash to cover the cost of lay-offs, early retirement, etc., thus increasing further the national debt. The bosses changed the electoral system to do away with just this type of compromise. With a new right-wing government the Trade Union leaders will have very little room to manoeuvre and they will be forced by their own ranks to go on to a counter-offensive. The swing to the right will prepare an even bigger swing to the left in the coming period. The ranks of the PDS and PRC must learn from the lessons of



Northern League leader Umberto Bossi

the past and demand a review of electoral strategy; the PRC too had been happy at the presence in the Progressive bloc of the "Rete" (the anti-mafia Network, a split-off from the Christian Democrats, which now even in Sicily, where it had widespread support, has been virtually wiped out). Alliances with bourgeois parties lead only to defeat. That is why in future the PDS and PRC must refuse any alliances with bourgeois groups such as Alleanza Democratica.

### Radical Demands

This small grouping of bourgeois politicians dictated the programme of the Progressive bloc while they themselves only got 1.2% in the elections! These small bourgeois formations are like Trojan horses in the workers' camp. The radical demands of the PRC leadership must be extended into a full socialist programme for the nationalisation of the main industries under workers' control, and a plan of production for need and not profit. Opposition to the electoral strategy of the PRC had already appeared at the party's congress in January and PDS members, who on the whole had been satisfied with their party's performance in the opinion polls, will now begin asking themselves questions about programme and strategy. PRC activists must seek a common programme with the PDS rank-and-file, based on the defence of workers' interests. In this way the workers' parties can rearm in preparation for the giant battles of the future. ●

## Election Results

	<u>1992</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>MPs</u>
<b>PDS</b>	16.1%	20.4%	
<b>PRC</b>	5.6%	6%	
<b>PSI</b>	13.6%	2.2%	
<b>Greens</b>	2.8%	2.7%	
<b>Rete</b>	1.9%	1.9%	
<b>Alleanza democratica- PROGRESSIVES</b>	1.2%	34.4%	213
<b>Alleanza Nazionale/MSI</b>	5.4%	13.5%	
<b>Forza Italia</b>	21%		
<b>Northern League</b>	8.6%	8.4%	
<b>RIGHTWING</b>		42.9%	366
<b>DC/ Popular Party</b>	29.7%	11.1%	
<b>Patto per l'Italia (Segni)</b>		4.6%	
<b>CENTRE</b>		15.7%	46



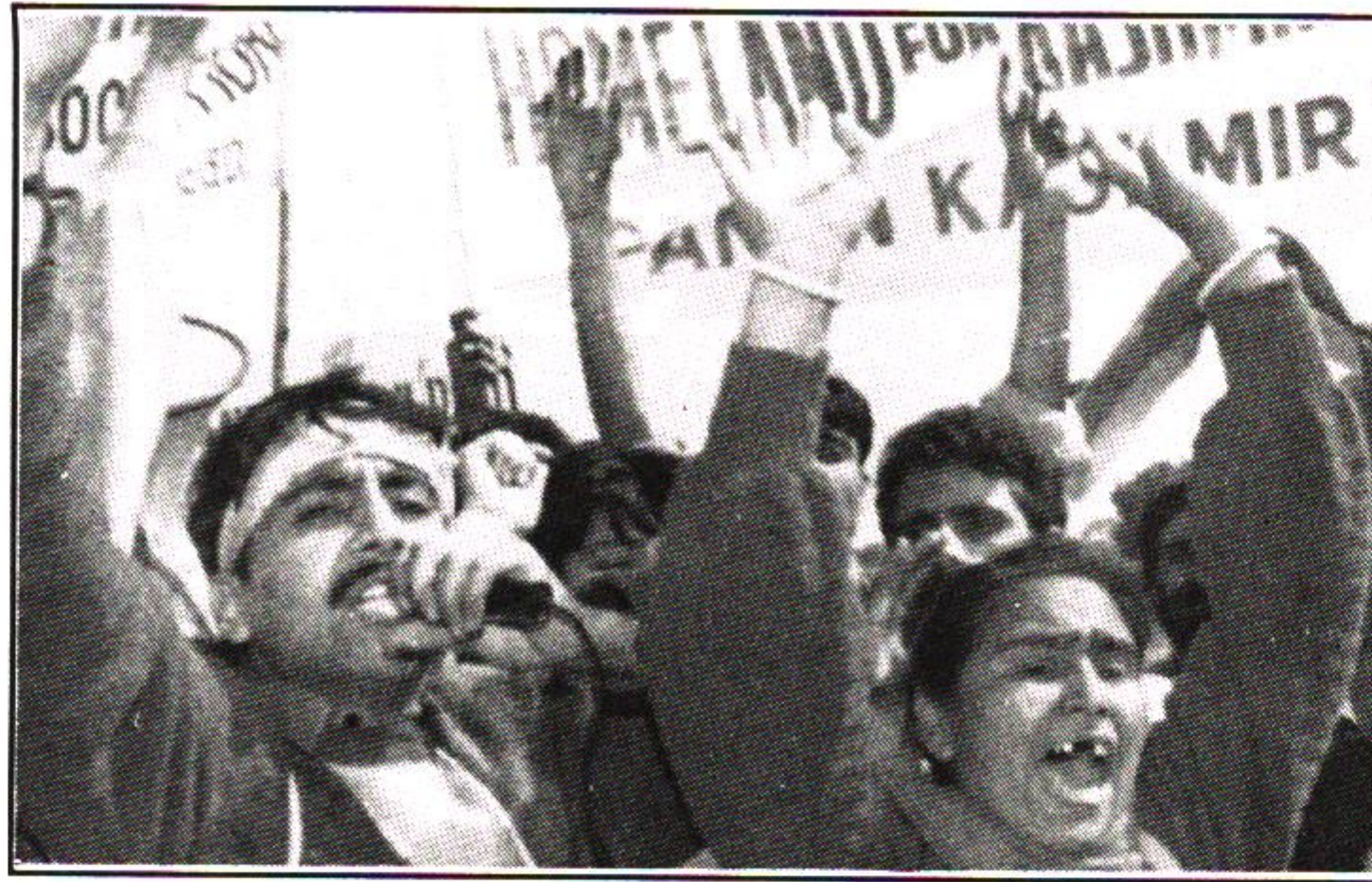
# India: Boom or Bust

In the 46 years since "independence" from British Imperialism, the Indian ruling class, with a market of 800 million, has failed to complete any of the tasks posed by history.

In spite of relative support by the state, with tight import controls and other privileges, the ruling class failed to carry out the national democratic revolution. The Nehruvian concept of using the state and other bureaucratic barriers to give a free hand to the Indian capitalist class has failed. In the 50s and 60s the world boom helped the Indian bourgeoisie to diffuse the resistance of the working class. Above all the Indian ruling class had the indirect support of the leadership of workers' organisations. During the cold war period the Indian ruling class also benefited by manoeuvring between US imperialism and Stalinist Russia. However that period is now at an end. The collapse of Stalinism and the crisis of capitalism have had their effect. The present situation has exposed the utter incapacity of the Indian ruling class to develop society and solve the crisis.

## Democratic Facade

The Indian ruling class did establish a certain industrial base. They put on a democratic parliamentary facade and endeavoured to carry out some sort of land reforms. In very relative terms they had a greater indigenous production especially in the transport industry, machine tools, computers and some other sectors. But all this development was far from what was necessary to develop India into a modern industrial society and break the shackles of the past. Today India has more doctors, engineers, technocrats and other experts than Britain or France. But with the vast geographic expanse and a population shooting towards one billion all this development is not enough. This superficial success led to confusion over the role of the Indian capitalists creating false illusions of an anti imperialist and "nationalist "



## As workers take to the streets against the GATT deal, Lal Khan assesses the state of play for Indian capitalism and the workers' movement.

progressive character in the Indian bourgeoisie. But the present crisis has exposed the reactionary and "imperialist" character of the Indian ruling class.

The fundamental contradiction faced by Indian capitalism is its inherent incapacity to generate enough surplus to develop a physical and social infrastructure which would lay the basis to develop society. This in turn hampered the development of industry and harmonious growth of the economy. This is the root cause of the aggravation of the economic, social and political crisis of today. India under the Nehruvian economic doctrine (which was followed until the mid 80's) had more than 70% of the economy in state control, but due to three basic factors was incapable of building the infrastructure necessary for developing society and the economy simultaneously:

- 1) The pressure of imperialism in spite of the tight controls and tariff barriers. With participation on the world market this was inevitable.
- 2) The impoverishment of the masses and certain limitations in extracting surplus from the ruling class due to the resistance of the

class struggle, despite its leadership.

- 3) The corrupt nature of the bourgeoisie, its technological and social backwardness and its incapability to feed back enough revenues to the state. 55-60% of the Indian economy is black market and a flood of scandals rocks the economy every now and then.

## Scandals

The Harshad Mehta scandal, of last year exposed a fraud of 14 billion Rupees and the stock exchange crashed. This organic crisis of Indian capitalism resulted in a society where the agrarian question was not resolved and infrastructural, power and technological development was incompatible with the needs of a modern industrial society. Indian national unification and cohesion is even worse than in 1947. With a democratic facade at the top, the masses were subjected to all forms of state brutality and dictatorial oppression. This historical crisis of Indian capitalism coincided with the impending crisis of imperialism on a world scale. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and intensification of the

crisis of world capitalism the pressure of US imperialism on India became intolerable. With a rising debt of \$87 billion, more than half the Government's current spending, it has to borrow more to pay off past debts. Its budgetary and fiscal deficit is also rising sharply (7.3% of the GDP instead of 4.7%).

At the same time government propaganda about "high" growth rates and increased "foreign investment" is also deceptive. Firstly the high growth rates of around 10% in late 1980s was accounted for more by nature (rains etc.) than the manufacturing economy. Since 1991 growth rates have averaged 3.1%. For the past two years, industrial production as a whole has grown less than 2%. Secondly growth rates do not depict the general development of society. The vast proportion of the population hardly benefits from the growth. Due to the exploitative nature of the society the oppressed classes are further impoverished.

## Investment

The growth of western investment is also very deceptive. Due to the crisis of world capitalism, the advanced western imperialists are desperately looking for new ways to penetrate the markets of the ex-colonial or the third world countries, especially the relatively large Indian market with a supposedly large "middle" class of 15-20million people. But instead of starting new industrial and manufacturing projects, the bulk of US money "poured" into India in the last two years went into buying stocks of indigenous industry. Apart from that the IMF and World Bank has forced the Indian Government to slash import duties, trade barriers and open the market to goods from imperialist monopolies. The signing of the GATT agreement by the Indian Government was the final capitulation to the pressures of world imperialism. As a consequence of this, the social crisis of Indian society has been further aggravated. With more than 350 million Indians living below the poverty line (according to official estimates),



unemployment, poverty and misery have reached unprecedented levels. The horrors of the past are raising their ugly heads over the social and political horizon of India. The rise of Hindu fundamentalism is a direct consequence of the decline of the left and the utter failure of the Indian capitalists to develop society further. With the present capitulation of the traditional party of Indian capitalism (Congress) to imperialism, new splits and conflicts have started developing amongst sections of the ruling class. Some important sections have started grouping around the BJP fundamentalists to safeguard their vested interests. Others are using anti-imperialist rhetoric to try to get the left parties to support them again. (Janata dal, National Front, SP etc). The Congress(I) has had to pay a huge price due to this capitulation. There is disarray and increasing conflict amongst its leadership at all levels. Perhaps this is the beginning of the end of the Congress. As the crisis is further aggravated the process of splitting of the Congress will accelerate. The possibility of the formation of another party to play the role of Congress remains remote. The period being ushered in will see unprecedented upheavals even for a country like India. The rise of reaction in the form of Hindu fundamentalism and other reactionary movements will be mixed with revolutionary movements of the working class.

### Kashmir

The movement of secession in Kashmir has rocked the Indian state with 600,000 troops in Kashmir and one military personnel for every two male adults. But Kashmir is not the only bleeding wound in India's body - national, ethnic and sectarian conflicts are more widespread than ever. It could lead to the disintegration of India into fragments. The present "reforms" of Manmohan Singh can only exacerbate the situation.

In spite of the certain rise of reaction and a lull in the class struggle, the resistance of the Indian proletariat is far from over. Under pressure from below and for the sake of their own existence the left parties called a day of United Action on April 5th

against the GATT deal, the implementation of double charges (leading to exorbitant increases in the price of drugs and utilities) and concessions given to imperialism by Narasimha Rao's Government. They called a mass protest outside Parliament in Delhi in the wake of unexpected (by the leadership) levels of hatred against the IMF austerity programme.

### Communist Unity

In addition for the first time since the Communist parties split in 1964, they called for a united rally on a state level. The rally was held in Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh in February. Nearly 500,000 people with red flags and communist banners demonstrated. This show of strength not only reignited enthusiasm amongst the workers but also moved the leadership. The pressure for the unity of the CPI and CPI (M) was enormous. The general secretary of CPI, Indrajeet Gupta, said, "*since only CPI and CPI (M) had a noticeable presence ..... it naturally generated enormous aspirations of unification of these parties amongst the activists..... I chose to appeal to those sentiments by holding out the promise of unification of the CPI and the CPI (M). The five hundred thousands cadres wanted to hear something and we had to respond. The Kisan Sabahas (peasant councils) of the CPI (M) and the CPI are likely to merge. The trade unions, the Hind Mazdoor Sabaha (former SP union) and all India Trade Union Congress - CPI trade union federation also may merge, hopefully.*" (Front Line, March 11, 1994)

But the speech of Indrajeet Gupta sent a chill down the spines of the left leadership, especially the CPI(M) leadership. The suggestion of merger was cold-shouldered by Harkishan Singh Surjeet the general secretary of CPI(M). This reaction showed a certain fear in losing their bureaucratic control. Surjeet cited "ideological reasons" such as differences on the role of Gorbachev, the nature of the Indian state, the stage of "revolution we are passing through and theoretical perceptions", "tactics" and struggle. Indrajeet Gupta is now embarrassed by what he said

but the sentiment of unity from below had made its mark. With the resurgence of class struggle this will grow and the greater the intensity of the movement from below, the greater would be the intensity of the pressure on the leadership to merge. With Congress in disarray and other "liberal" and "secular parties" nearing extinction, new avenues are opening up for the rapid development of the left parties - CPI (M) and CPI specifically. A merger could accelerate this process. With the horrors of Hindu fundamentalism in the form of the BJP looming large on the horizon the yearning for unity amongst the left activists and advanced workers has never been so intense. This situation

## More than 350 million Indians live below the poverty line - unemployment, poverty and misery have reached new heights. The horrors of the past are rearing their ugly heads over the political and social horizon

shows the beginnings of a new awakening of the class struggle. But apart from the organisational and bureaucratic impediments towards this unity, by the leadership, ideological flaws can play havoc. Although there is a lot of questioning and ferment in the ranks of CPI(M) and the CPI, the leadership is still trying to maintain its old policies of the two stage theory and class collaboration for "democracy," "national unity" and "secularism." But if the left leadership tries tail sections of the "anti-imperialist bourgeoisie," it can end up towing the line of BJP (Hindu fundamentalist alliance). Such a policy would spell disaster for the

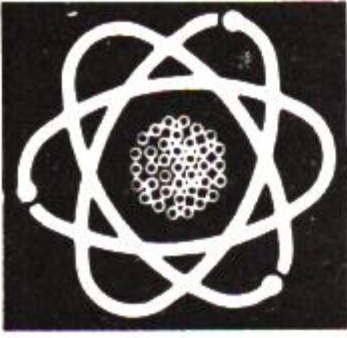
class movement and can give rise to a new wave of reaction. The whole experience in India has shown that, in the final analysis, the Indian bourgeoisie can neither be progressive nor anti-imperialist. An independent movement of the proletariat is vital to fulfil the tasks that the ruling classes have failed to carry through. Had the CPI and CPI(M) pursued an independent class policy and programme they would have been the largest Communist Party in the world. With the traditional bourgeois parties in disarray the fundamentalists would be rejected by both the Indian ruling classes and US Imperialism.

### Military Solution

With the intensifying crisis, a military police option cannot be ruled out in the long run. Both on the domestic and foreign fronts (Kashmir, war with Pakistan etc.) the Indian state is in a mess. They cannot resolve these questions. But before going for the military option, a mass base left front experiment by the ruling elite cannot be ruled out either. With the present compromised policies such an option would not be the worst for them. If they pursue such policies - doing the ruling class's dirty work in the name of democracy - the left leaders will lead the Indian workers to disaster. However the toiling masses of India have suffered for too long. In the wake of a resurgent class struggle with the traditional parties of the left gaining support, a massive wave of radicalism will ensue. A pre- or pre-revolutionary situation could develop in India under such circumstances. The presence of a strong Marxist tendency in these parties would have a crucial effect. The whole movement could move in a revolutionary direction. Indian capitalism could be overthrown by a socialist revolution. The CPI and CPI(M) were never more ripe for Marxist ideas. Stalinism and reformism have been discredited by the wave of historical events. The only way forward for the emancipation of the toiling masses, oppressed nationalities and enslaved peoples of the Indian sub-continent is socialist revolution under the banner of revolutionary Marxism.

Lal Khan





One hundred years ago scientists believed they had successfully

concluded the search for the "bricks of matter" - the ultimate smallest particle - which they thought they had located in the atom.

The discovery of sub-atomic particles led physics to probe deeper into the structure of matter. By 1928 scientists imagined that they had discovered the smallest particles - protons, electrons and photons. All the material world was supposed to be made up of these three.

Subsequently, this was shattered by the discovery of the proton, then the neutron, then a host of other particles, ever smaller, with an increasingly fleeting existence - neutrinos, pi-mesons, mu-mesons, k-mesons, and many others.

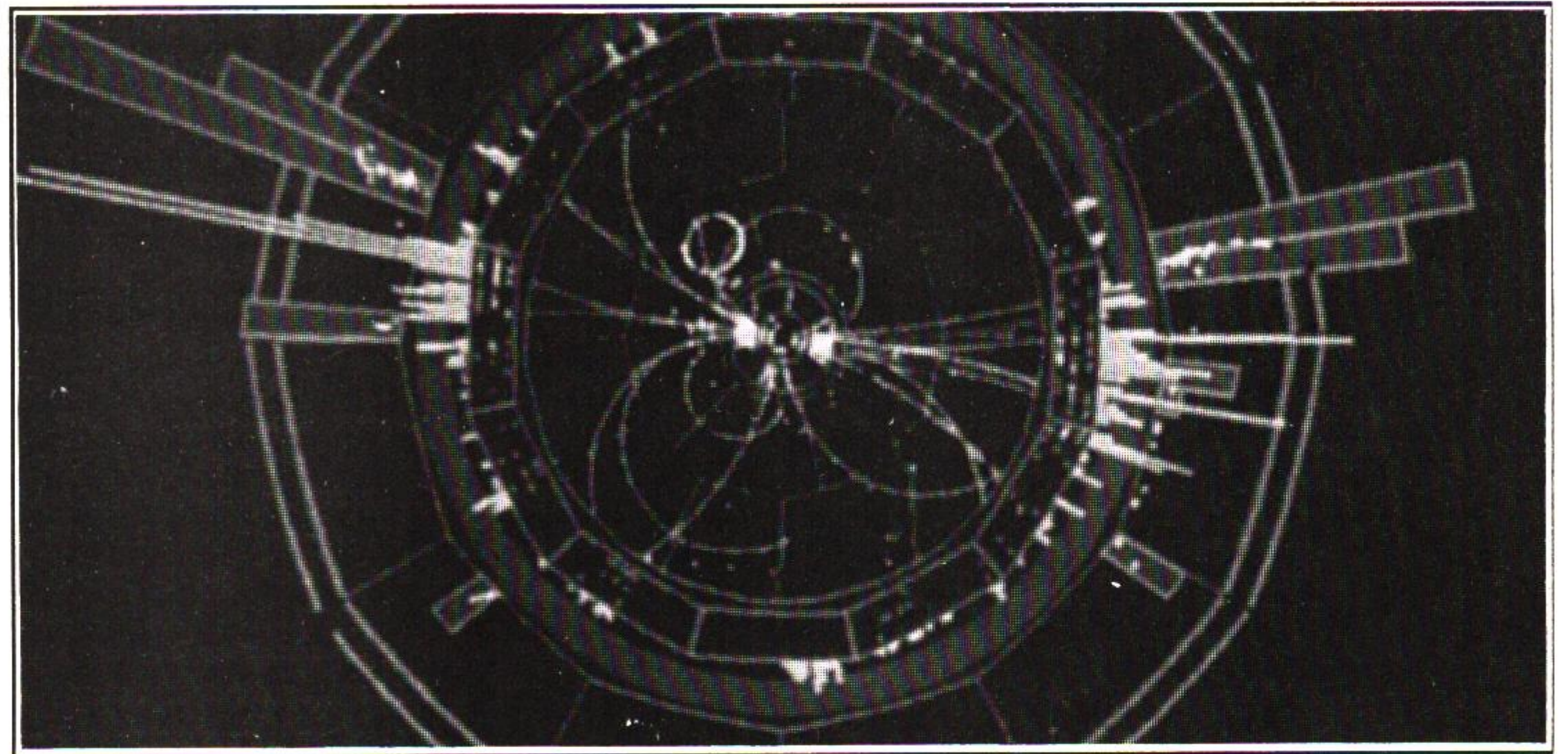
The life-span of some of these particles is so evanescent - maybe a billionth of a second - that they have been described as "virtual particles" - something utterly unthinkable in the pre-quantum era.

### State of Change

From the standpoint of dialectics, these are extremely important discoveries. What is the significance of these "strange particles" with a "virtual existence" - that you cannot say exactly whether they are or are not (the neutrino is described by B.Hoffmann as "*fluctuating uncertainly between existence and non-existence*")? That is to say, in the language of dialectics, they are and are not. This is a striking confirmation of the dialectical conception of nature as a never-ending process, in a state of continuous change which takes place through contradictions, in which things change into their opposite. "*When we reflect on Nature, or the history of mankind, or our own intellectual activity,*" Engels wrote, "*the first picture presented to us is of an endless maze of relations and interactions, in which nothing remains what, where and as it was, but everything moves, changes, comes into being and passes out*

## Dialectical Materialism Today: Part Two

# Chaos Theory, the Big Bang ...and Beyond



In the second of his two part article on dialectical materialism, Alan Woods subjects chaos theory, the big bang and formal logic to a Marxist analysis.

*of existence. This primitive, naive, yet intrinsically correct conception of the world was that of ancient Greek philosophy, and was first clearly formulated by Heraclitus: everything is and also is not, for everything is in flux, is constantly changing, constantly coming into being and passing away.*" (Anti-Duhring, p.27). Let us compare this to another quotation: "*In the world of quantum, particles are incessantly appearing and disappearing. What we would think of as empty space is a teeming, fluctuating nothingness, with photons appearing from*

*nowhere and vanishing almost as soon as they were born, with electrons frothing up for brief moments from the monstrous ocean to create evanescent electron-proton pairs and sundry other particles adding to the confusion.*" (B.Hoffmann, *Strange Story of the Quantum* p.210). Over a hundred years later, Engels's dialectical world-view is startlingly confirmed, not only on the macrocosmic but also on the microcosmic level. How far removed all this is from the static, changeless idealistic universe of Plato! Yet, incredibly,

it is the philosophy of Plato and other idealists that dominates the thinking of probably a majority of scientists in flat contradiction to the results of their own research. They treat Hegel as a "dead dog" (not to speak of Marx and Engels), only to resort to idealism in its most abstract and obscurantist forms. That individual particles (including "virtual" particles) exist is not in question. They "are," and their properties (some of them, at least) are known. But try to determine them more closely, to fix them in time and space, and they prove extremely



elusive. "They are and are not, because they are in flux." An electron is both a particle and a wave, both "here" and "there" at the same time.

This conception of matter as being in a state of constant change, and also involved in an universal web of interconnection and inter-penetration is precisely the essence of the dialectical outlook. This is no longer the naive but brilliant guesswork of Heraclitus, but is firmly established by experiment. That does not, of course, prevent idealists from attempting to attack materialism by systematically distorting the conclusions of modern science for their own ends.

### Einstein

Thus, they argued that the production of photons implied that matter had "disappeared." This overlooks the fact that, from the point of view of dialectical materialism matter and energy are the same. This was scientifically demonstrated by Einstein's famous law of the equivalence of mass and energy. In point of fact, mass is constantly being changed into energy (including light - photons) and energy into mass. For example, photons (light) are constantly being changed into pairs of electrons and positrons, - the opposite process. And this process has gone on uninterrupted for all eternity. It is a concrete demonstration of the indestructibility of matter - precisely the opposite of what it was meant to prove.

The search for the "bricks of matter" has been shown to be futile. But on the level of the universe as a whole, there has been a similar attempt to impose a "limit" on matter, in the form of a finite universe. The so-called theory of the "Big Bang" in effect is a throw-back to the old mediaeval idea of a "closed universe." Ultimately it implies the existence of a Creator. Decades ago, Ted Grant, using the method of dialectical materialism, showed the

unsoundness both of the "Big Bang" theory of the origin of the universe and the alternative Steady-State theory put forward by Fred Hoyle and H. Bondi. Subsequently, the Steady-State theory, which was based on the "continuous creation of matter" (from nothing) was shown to be false. The Big Bang theory therefore "won" by default, and is still defended by the majority of the scientific Establishment. The Big Bang theory maintains that the universe was created in a gigantic explosion that happened between ten and twenty billion years ago. Prior to that, its adherents would have us believe, all the matter in the universe was concentrated in a single point, the dimensions of which have been variously expressed. In fact, there have been at least five different versions of this theory. The first was put forward in the 1930's by a Catholic priest who later occupied the post of director of the Pontifical Academy of Science, Georges-Henri Lemaitre. This was soon refuted on a number of different grounds - incorrect conclusions drawn from general relativity and thermo-dynamics, a false theory of cosmic rays and stellar evolution, etc.

After the Second World War, the discredited theory was revived by George Gamow and others, in a new form. However, in all its versions, the Big Bang theory represents a mystical view of the universe as finite in time and space, and being created at a definite moment by a mysterious process, no longer to be observed anywhere in nature. The whole idea is plagued with difficulties both of a philosophical and scientific character. Scientists talk about the "birth of time," at the moment of the Big Bang. But time and space (together with motion) are the mode of existence of matter. It is arrant nonsense to talk of the beginning of time or the end of it, unless we consider, along with St. Augustine, that God created the universe from nothing,

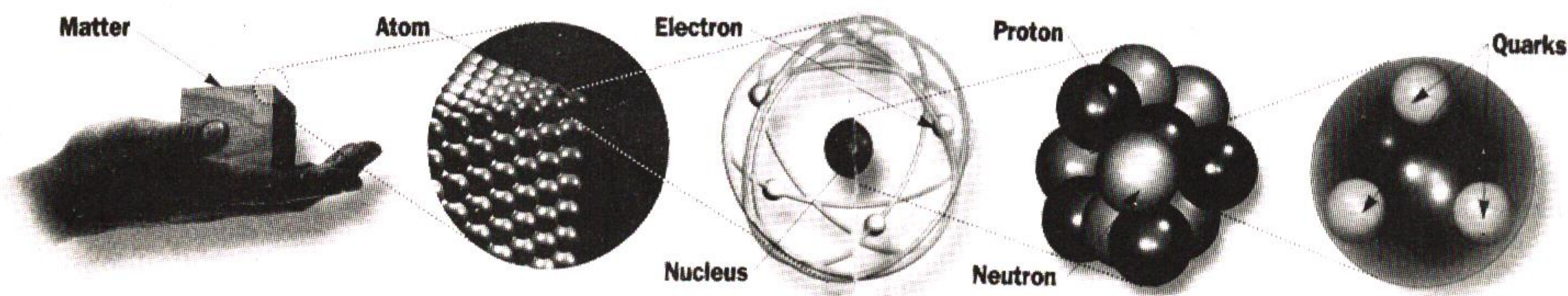
something which not only flies in the face of all experience, but also contradicts one of the most fundamental laws of physics, the law of the conservation of energy, that energy (and therefore matter), can neither be created nor destroyed.

If we accept the Big Bang, all kinds of questions arise. For example, what caused it? What were the laws of motion which conditioned this tiny point, suspended in space for all eternity, in which all the matter is the universe (neither more, nor less) was supposed to be concentrated? The theory leaves the door wide open to the intervention of a Supreme Being and all kinds of mysticism, hence its attractions to the Catholic Lemaitre and idealists in general. A number of calculations were advanced by Gamow and others, (incidentally, not without a certain amount of scientific "creative accountancy") to explain the different phenomena which would flow from the Big Bang - density of matter, temperature, radiation levels, etc. A whole number of discrepancies were found which invalidated, not only Gamow's model, but the "oscillating universe" model subsequently worked out by Robert Dicke and others, in an attempt to get round the problem of what happened before the Big Bang, by making the Universe oscillate in a never-ending cycle.

### No Evidence

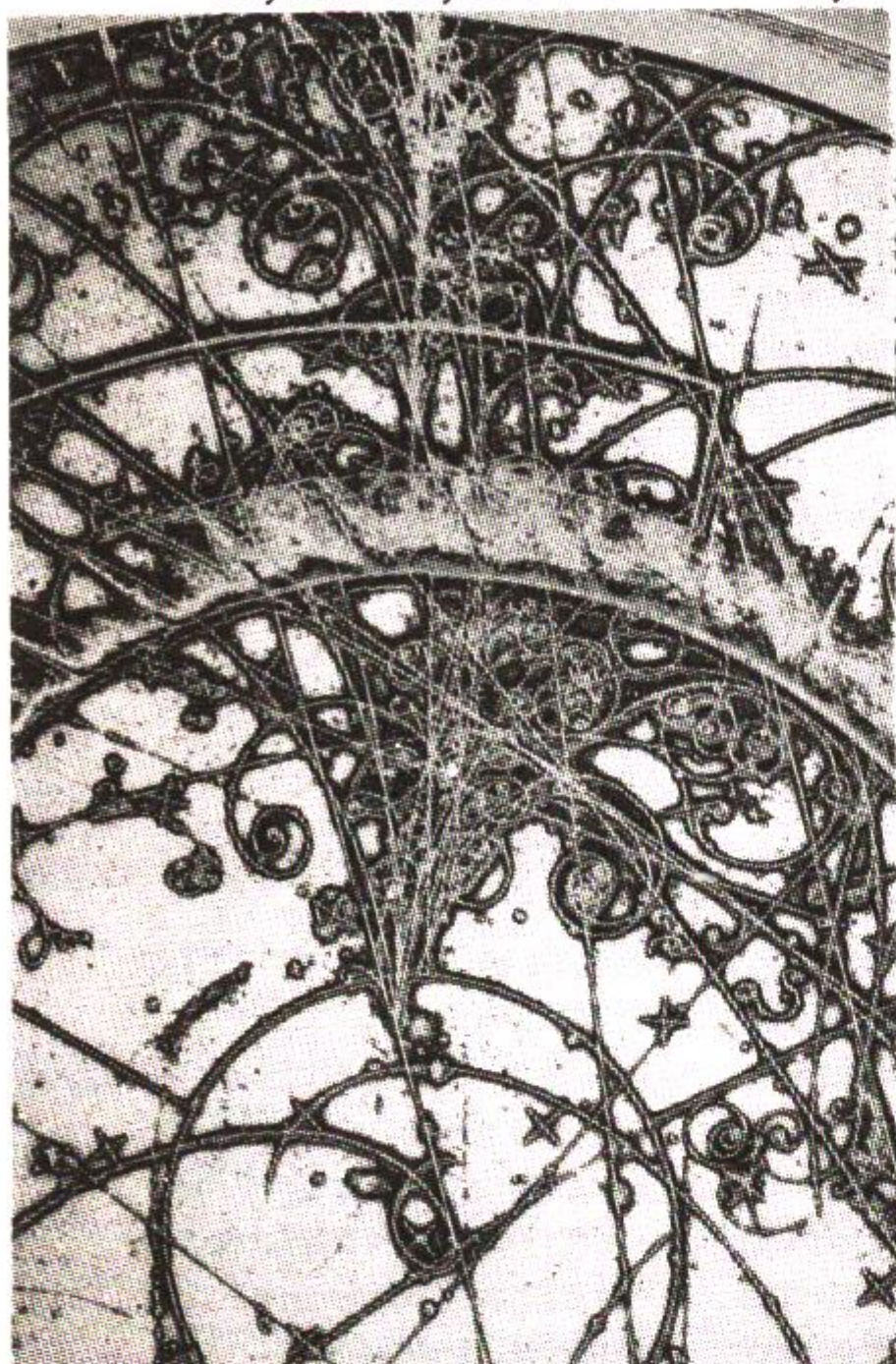
It must be emphasised that there is virtually no empirical evidence to bear out the Big Bang theory. Most of the work done to support it is of a purely theoretical character, leaning heavily on abstruse and esoteric mathematical formulae. The numerous contradictions between the preconceived 'Big Bang' schema and the observable evidence have been covered up by constantly moving the goal posts in order to preserve at all costs a theory upon which so many academic reputation have been built.

According to the 'Big Bang' cosmologists, in order for galaxies to have been formed from the 'Big Bang', there must have been sufficient matter in the universe to bring about an eventual halt to its expansion through the law of gravitation. This would mean a density of approximately ten atoms per cubic metre of space. In reality, the amount of matter present in the observable universe is about one atom per ten cubic metres - a hundred times less than the amount predicted by the theory. Instead of seeing the discrepancy as a fundamental flaw in the theory, the 'Big Bangers' turned for help to fundamental particle physicists, who obliged them by inventing the idea of "dark matter," an invisible substance, for the existence of which there is not a single shred of empirical evidence, but which is supposed to account for no less than 99% of all the matter in the universe! The latest version of the 'Big Bang' - the so-called "inflation theory" - carries us not one step further. Indeed, it is even more mystical and contradictory than its discredited predecessors. According to the latest mastermind, Alan Guth, the Big Bang had to be speeded up so that the "inflationary" universe doubled in size every 10-35 seconds, thus instantaneously filling the whole of space. The question of where these colossal amounts of energy could come from remains unanswered. Evidently it "just appeared" - OUT OF NOTHING, a trick which, once again, is barely conceivable without the intervention of the cosmic Ju-Ju Man. And all this is meant to be taken on trust, as an article of faith, in order to prop up the increasingly shaky edifice of the Big Bang. The one empirically verifiable proposition to emerge from the new theory in that, according to it, protons decay. Since the great majority of the observable universe is made up of protons, this has quite dramatic consequences. It would





mean that the universe itself is doomed to decay. However, experiment proved the contrary: that protons do not decay. Their life span extends many trillions of years beyond the limit set by



Sub-atomic particles created in gigantic machines reveal their formation

the experiments.

In the eighteenth century, bishop Usher worked out the exact date of the Creation of the world - October 23, 4004 B.C. The present day 'Big Bangers' have also put a date for the birth of the Universe (and time, of course) - between ten and twenty billion years ago. This date cannot be placed further back in time without contradicting the actual measurements of the distance from us of the galaxies and the speed with which they seem to be moving apart.

It follows from this that, according to the theory, there can be nothing in the Universe older than 20 billion years. But there is evidence that appears to contradict this proposition. In 1986, Brent Tully of Hawaii University claimed to have discovered huge agglomerations of galaxies ("superclusters") about a billion light years long, three hundred million light years wide and one hundred million light-years thick. In order for such vast objects to form, it would have taken between eighty and a hundred billion years, that is to say four or five times longer than what would be allowed by the 'Big Bangers.' Since then there have been other results which tend to confirm these observations.

The New Scientist (5th of February, 1994) carried a report of the discovery of a cluster of galaxies by Charles Steidel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Donald Hamilton of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena with big implications for the Big Bang theory:

*"The discovery of such a cluster spells trouble for theories of cold dark matter, which assume that a large fraction of the mass of the Universe is in cold, dark objects such as planets or black holes. The theories predict that material in the early Universe clumped together from the 'bottom up', so that galaxies formed first, then only later clumped to form clusters."*

As usual, the initial reaction of astronomers is to resort to "moving the goal posts," adjusting the theory to get round awkward facts. Thus, Mauro Giavalisco of the Baltimore Space Telescope Science Institute believes it might just be possible to explain the birth of the first galaxy cluster at a red shift of 3.4 by fine-tuning the cold dark matter theory. But he adds a warning. *"If you found ten clusters at red shift 3.5, it would kill cold dark matter theories"*

We may take for granted that not just ten but a far larger number of these vast clusters exist and will be discovered. And these, in turn, will only represent a minute proportion of all the matter which stretches far beyond the limits of the observable universe and reaches out to infinity. All attempt to place a limit on the material universe are doomed to fail. Matter is boundless, both at the sub-atomic level, and with regard to time and space.

One of the main characteristics of the great scientists of the Renaissance was that they were whole human beings. They had an all-rounded development, which enabled, for example, Leonardo da Vinci to be a great engineer, mathematician and mechanic, as well as an artist of genius. The same was true of Duhrer, Machiavelli, Luther, and countless others, of whom Engels wrote:

*"The heroes of that time were not yet in thrall to the division of labour, the restricting effects of which, with its production of one-sidedness, we so often notice in their successors."* (Dialectics of Nature, p.31).

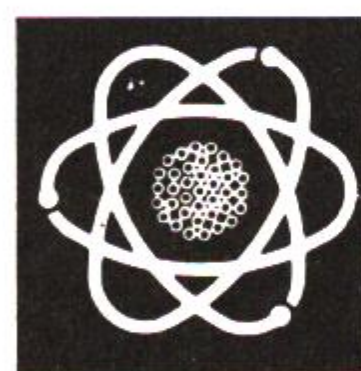
The division of labour, of course, plays a necessary role in the

development of the productive forces. However, under capitalism, this has been carried to such an extreme that it begins to turn into its opposite.

The extreme division, on the one hand, between mental and manual labour means that millions of men and women are reduced to a life of unthinking drudgery on the production line, denied of any possibility to display the creativity and inventiveness which is latent in every human being.

At the other extreme, we have the development of a kind of intellectual priestly caste which has arrogated to itself the sole right to the title of "guardians of science and culture." To the degree that these people become remote from the real life of society, this has a negative effect on their consciousness.

They develop in an entirely narrow, one-sided way. Not only is there an abyss separating "artists" from scientists, but the scientific community itself is riven with ever-increasing divisions between increasingly narrow specialisation. It is ironic that, precisely when the "lines of demarcation" between physics, chemistry and biology are breaking down, the gulf which divides even different branches of, say, physics has become virtually unbridgeable.



James Gleick, the author of a well-known book on "Chaos" describes the situation thus: *"Few laymen*

*realise how tightly compartmentalised the scientific community had become, a battleship with bulkheads sealed against leaks. Biologists had enough to read without keeping up with the mathematical literature - for that matter, molecular biologists had enough to read without keeping up with population biology, Physicists had better ways to spend their time than sifting through the meteorology journals."* (Chaos - Making a New Science, p.31). In recent years, the advent of chaos theory is one of the indications that something is stirring in the scientific community. Increasingly, scientists from different fields feel that they have somehow

reached a dead end. It is necessary to break out in a new direction.

What are the main features of chaos theory? Gleick describes them in the following way:

*"To some physicists, chaos is a science of process rather than state, of becoming rather than being."* (op.cit. p.5).

*"They feel that they are turning back a trend in science towards reductionism, the analysis of systems in terms of their constituent parts: quarks, chromosomes, or neutrons. They believe that they are looking for the whole."* (op.cit. p.11).

The method of dialectical materialism is precisely to look at *"process rather than state, of becoming rather than being."* Compare what Engels says about the "metaphysical" mode of thought:

*"But this method of investigation has also left us as a legacy the habit of observing natural objects and natural processes in their isolation, detached from the whole vast interconnection of things: and therefore not in their motion but in their repose: not as essentially changing, but as fixed constants: not in their life, but in their death."* (Anti-Duhring, p.27).

#### Dialectics

And again: *"But for dialectics, which grasps things and their images, ideas, essentially in their interconnection, in their sequence, their movement, their birth and death, such processes as those mentioned above are so many corroborations of its own method of treatment. Nature is the test of dialectics, and it must be said for modern natural science that it has furnished extremely rich and daily increasing materials for his test, and has thus proved that in the last analysis Nature's process is dialectical and not metaphysical. "But the scientists who have learnt to think dialectically are still few and far between, and hence the conflict between the discoveries made and the old traditional mode of thought is the explanation of the boundless confusion which now reigns in theoretical natural science and reduces both teachers and students, writers and readers to despair."* (Engels, op.cit. p.29). Over one hundred years ago, Engels accurately describes the state of science today. Despite all the wonderful advances of science and technology, there is a deep-seated feeling of



malaise. An increasing number of scientists are beginning to rebel against the prevailing orthodoxy and seek new solutions to the problems facing them. Sooner or later, this is bound to result in a new revolution in science, similar to the one affected by Einstein and Planck nearly a century ago. Significantly, Einstein himself, so far from being a member of the scientific Establishment, was a humble clerk in a patent office in Zurich.

### Scientific Advance

There are indications that the rate of advance of science and technology has slowed down significantly in the last few decades. A recent study shows that, with the exception of biology, there has been no major qualitative advance in technology for the past thirty years, as opposed to the quantitative perfecting of already existing techniques.

*"The mainstream for most of the twentieth century,"* Gleick remarks, *"has been particle physics, exploring the building blocks of matter at higher and higher energies, smaller and smaller scale, shorter and shorter times. Out of particle physics have come theories about the fundamental forces of nature and about the origin of the universe. Yet some young physicists have grown dissatisfied with the direction of the most prestigious of sciences. Progress has begun to seem slow, the naming of new particles futile, the body of theory cluttered. With the coming of chaos, younger scientists believed they were seeing the beginnings of a course change for all of physics. The field had been dominated long enough, they felt, by the glittering abstractions of high-energy particles and quantum mechanics."* (J.Gleick, op.cit. p.6).

It is as yet too early to form a definitive view of chaos theory. However, what is clear is that these scientists are groping in the direction of a dialectical view of nature. For example, the dialectical law of the transformation of quantity into quality (and vice-versa) plays a prominent role in chaos theory: *"He (Von Neumann) recognised that a complicated dynamical system could have points of instability - critical points where a small push can have large*

*consequences, as with a ball balanced at the top of a hill."*

(ibid, p.18-19)

And again: *"In science as in life, it is well known that a chain of events can have a point of crisis that could magnify small changes. But chaos meant that such points were everywhere. They were pervasive."* (ibid, p.23).

These and many other passages reveal a striking resemblance between certain aspects of chaos theory and dialectics. Yet the most incredible thing is that the pioneers of "chaos" seem to have not the slightest knowledge not only of the writings of Marx and Engels, but even of Hegel! In one sense, this provides even more striking confirmation of the correctness of dialectical materialism. But in another, it is a frustrating thought that the absence of an adequate philosophical framework and methodology has been denied to science needlessly and for such a long time.

Trotsky once said that the relationship between formal logic and dialectics was similar to the relationship between lower and higher mathematics. We could add that it is also similar to that between classical physics and quantum mechanics. The one does not deny the other and continues to be valid within certain limits.

*"The dialectic is neither fiction nor mysticism, but a science of the forms of our thinking insofar*

*as it is not limited to the daily problems of life but attempts to arrive at an understanding of more complicated and drawn-out processes,"* he wrote.

*"Dialectics is related to vulgar thinking in the same way that a motion picture is related to a still photograph. The motion picture does not outlaw the still photograph but combines a series of them according to the laws of motion. Dialectics does not deny the syllogism (the laws of formal logic - AW) but teaches us to combine syllogisms, in such a way as to bring our understanding closer to the eternally changing reality. Hegel in his Logic established a series of laws: change of quantity into quality, development through contradictions, conflict of content and form, interruption of continuity, change of possibility into inevitability, etc., which are just as important for theoretical thought as is the simple syllogism for more elementary tasks."* (Trotsky, In Defence of Marxism, pp.65-6).

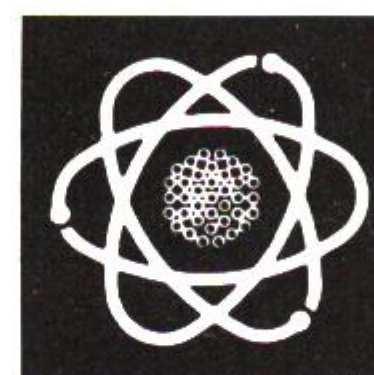
### Formal Logic

The relationship between dialectics and formal logic can be compared to the relationship between quantum mechanics and classical mechanics. They do not contradict but complement each other. The laws of classical mechanics still hold good for an immense number of operations. However,

they cannot be adequately applied to the world of subatomic particles, involving infinitesimally small quantities and tremendous velocities.

Formal logic (which has acquired the force of popular prejudice in the form of "common sense") equally holds good for a whole series of everyday experiences. However, the laws of formal logic, which set out from an essentially static view of things, inevitably break down when dealing with more complex, changing and contradictory phenomena.

To use the language of chaos theory, the "linear" equations of formal logic cannot cope with the turbulent processes which can be observed throughout nature, society and history. Only the dialectical method will suffice for this purpose.



It is an incredible fact that the basic laws of formal logic worked out by Aristotle,

have remained fundamentally unchanged for over two thousand years. In this period, we have witnessed a continuous process of change in all spheres of science, technology and human thought. And yet scientists have been content to continue to use essentially the same methodological tools that were used by the Mediaeval Schoolmen in the days when science was still on the level of alchemy.

It is equally astonishing that the pioneers of chaos theory, who are attempting to break with the stultifying "linear" methodology and work out a new "non-linear" mathematics, which is more in consonance with the turbulent reality of ever-changing nature, appear to be completely ignorant of the only genuine revolution in Logic in two millennia - the dialectical logic elaborated by Hegel, and subsequently perfected on a scientific and materialist basis by Marx and Engels.

How many errors, blind alleys and crises in science could have been avoided if scientists had been equipped with a methodology which genuinely reflects the dynamic reality of nature, instead of conflicting with it at every turn! ●





# Women's Liberation?

**Back to basics and the CSA have little to do with personal morality and everything to do with cuts in the welfare state.**

Indeed the back to basics campaign has been embarrassing for the government as one MP after another has been uncovered "not adhering to basic family values". Why is the government so concerned to enforce "traditional values" and turn back the clock on what many would see as decades of progressive reforms which have given many people, in particular women, more choice over the way they lead their lives.

## Private Property

Marxists look to the material roots of ideas and institutions and the family is no exception. The family as an institution came into being historically at a certain stage in the development of human society with the origins of private property. It has evolved with changing property relations. Engels in "Origins of the Family..." explains, using evidence from contemporary anthropologists, that the family did not exist in early primitive communism and it came into being with the development of private property (herds of cattle owned by men.) It was only at this stage it became necessary for a man to identify his children to ensure his property would be inherited by them and thus the institution of private property would be continued. It was therefore necessary for him to control the reproductive habits of the female of the species. Women were to be bound

**The Tories' back to basics campaign and the setting up of the Child Support Agency have brought to the forefront problems affecting women in society. Barbara Humphries looks at the position of women under capitalism.**

eventually to one man for life and chastity on her part was to be enforced. At the same time women were excluded from the main economic activity of the time. This Engels called "the world historic defeat of the female sex."

The family as an institution evolved through feudalism and capitalism to the nuclear family we know today. In the Middle Ages marriage of the propertied classes was a matter of convenience to ensure ownership of the land remained in the right hands through generations. Bourgeois morality with its emphasis on rights challenged this basis of marriage, and the right of happiness through sexual love was recognised. But these rights frequently challenged economic realities and were often simply academic rights. If marriage for the propertied class exists under capitalism for the maintenance of private property why should it exist for the propertyless. What economic role does it play? The answer lies in the fact that society expects certain tasks such as the child

rearing, and the provision of adults daily needs to be performed privately by unpaid domestic labour. These are social tasks but capitalist society is not willing to pay. They are seen by capitalism as the family's task and not society's. In industrialised societies the labour movement has fought for social provision for the young, sick and elderly. The success of the labour movement in the 20th century in achieving welfare reforms led to higher expectations of life for a whole generation. The decline of the extended family in countries such as Britain also means people no longer feel it a duty to look after aunts, cousins etc fallen on hard times. The Tories are worried at the "extra burden" the breakdown of the nuclear and extended family may have on the cost of keeping the sick and elderly. Their back to basics campaign aims to ensure the responsibility and hence the costs of these tasks are borne by the family and not the welfare state which they are trying to cut in order to reduce expenditure. The decline in the nuclear family has been accentuated by employment changes which has in turn led people to migrate to look for better jobs and housing. Also women are no longer prepared to stay in unhappy (or violent) relationships as they were in the past. One in three marriages in the UK ends in divorce. While the Tories demand cuts in the welfare state women actually need more back-up from the state especially in the provision of childcare to enable them to lead fully independent lives.

The decline of the nuclear family has also been effected by dramatic changes in the labour market over past decades. In the

UK women are now 50% of the workforce. Men form the majority of the registered unemployed. One in five households is headed by a lone woman. Increases in employment have been largely restricted to areas of part-time work for women.

Contrary to what some reactionary commentators say there was no "golden age" when women were in the home. In pre-industrial societies there was little division between home and work. After the industrial revolution women were pulled into the factories they even worked down the mines. In the textile mills women were the unskilled labour on lower wages. Skilled jobs such as engineering were kept for men and this was reflected in the politics of the craft unions. It was only upper and middle class women who were in the home whilst their husbands pursued careers. Often with domestic help these women were redundant and, desperate to find a role for themselves, they took to charity work and campaigns for equal rights for women like the right to vote and bourgeois feminism.

## Domestic Service

For working women the main field of employment in the 19th century was domestic service. As the birth rate was still high it was unusual for women to work beyond childbirth. Two world wars changed expectations. As the men were sent to the front women were pulled into the factories. The ruling class did not quibble about state nurseries at this stage. Between the wars there was mass unemployment and women were sent back to the home. In many professions a marriage bar operated. After 1945 the role of the housewife was revived and new industries targeted consumer goods at women boasting of labour saving devices which would make them better wives and mothers! Changes in the workforce have been accentuated over the last few decades due to the changing nature of work, the decline of heavy industry and growth of the service sector. Women have been cheaper to employ than men (after all they do not expect a family wage) and more flexible. Birth control has meant that women's lives are not dominated

Match-girls present a petition to parliament shortly before the start of their famous strike





by childbirth and therefore they can continue working in paid employment throughout their adult lives. Although women have always been part of the workforce under capitalism, the difference now is women continue to be employed after having had children.

It has also become essential for women to work financially, not just for single women but also women with partners. There is no longer a family wage for most people. A major factor in this has been the decline of wages and salaries in relation to basic commodities especially housing. By the 1980s cheap housing in both the private and public sector disappeared and home ownership became the only option for many. Some couples spent 50% or more of their income on housing. With the offensive on unions and conditions launched by the employers in the 1980s the employment of women on a part time basis and on short term contracts became more attractive. Many women face the pressure of coping with the home and childcare as well as being major breadwinners. This has become more critical as the welfare state crumbles. Women also take responsibility for care of the elderly. Women combining domestic and employment responsibilities face a dearth of care facilities, often resorting to paying other women on low wages to look after their children. The cost has been their free time, health and relationships. The decline of the extended family in the UK means they don't even have grandparents to turn to in many cases.

Women organised themselves into the trade union movement in the 19th century. The craft unions

wanted to keep women out of work but organisations such as Emma Patterson's Women's Protective and Provident League, later the National Union of Women Workers, organised women in the factories. They were active in political movements such as Chartism even though it failed to advance women's suffrage. In the 1880s women were involved in famous disputes such as the Bryant and May Match Girls strike and Berrymondsey Uprising.

### Trade Unions

The major breakthrough for women in the trade union movement came in the 20th century, particularly the 1970s. Women recruits were drawn into unions such as Nupe and Nalgo and the image of the trade unionist changed from that of the car worker or the coalminer to the nurse, council worker and civil servant. This was part of the growing militancy of the unions in the 1970s and early 80s, which drew public sector and white collar workers into the labour movement. The involvement of women helped advance campaigns for working women. The campaign for "equal pay for equal work" arose from the struggle of women car workers at Ford in the 1960s. The unions began to take up increasingly, not only work-related issues such as pay and maternity leave but also issues such as abortion rights around which the TUC organised a demonstration. Another influence was that of feminism. In the 1960s the Women's Liberation Movement was started, involving mainly (but not entirely) middle class women who wanted equality with men. The demands evolving from this campaign included positive

discrimination, quotas, and the introduction of politically correct language. It had its impact on the labour movement mainly through the growing numbers of professional women who got involved in unions and the Labour Party. Today, many of the basic aims of this movement in terms of rights, have been achieved. In the Labour Party there are quotas for women and who would dare to say anything but "chairperson"! However, there is little evidence that as a result of these reforms more women are involved in the Labour Party. This puts more pressure on women who are involved to take on disproportionate amounts of responsibility. The problem is that for many women the dual pressure of home and work leaves them with little energy for political activity. In the 1930s many women were involved in the Labour Party. Women's Sections which met during the day thrived often meeting on a weekly basis.

### Sunday Opening

Other issues have been raised recently which question the position of women in society. Sunday shop opening hours are supposed to benefit women and yet it will often be women who will be the workers forced to work on Sunday. If you are not one of those working on a Sunday you can spend your day off shopping (another form of work)! Also there is the issue of fertility - who should and who should not have children now the bounds of nature have been breached. Again economic circumstances will colour judgements, and whatever you do, you stand to be condemned in the light of bourgeois family values. Consumer pressures have led

parents to feel the need for more money but if they both work the mother is condemned for "neglecting her children". According to the Tory press you should not have children if you are too young, too old or too poor (30% of all children in the UK are living below the poverty line - up from 10% in the 1960s). And if you happen to escape this dilemma by not having children you are also condemned!

### Reactionaries

The growing concern over AIDS has also led to crusades by reactionaries for a return to puritanical sexual values. A return to Victorian sexual values would mean a return to greater hypocrisy, double standards and the proliferation of prostitution as in the 19th century. Any woman found to be breaking the rules in those days was confined to a lunatic asylum.

The majority of us (men and women) are now "deviants" in a society which upholds the nuclear family - a lifestyle to which only a minority of the population adheres. At the same time lives are more insecure - who looks after you when you are too old or sick to work? Our society only accepts one lifestyle, which is unattainable by most people even if they wished it. The 'back to basics' campaign wants us to change but it is society which must change. The social nature of domestic tasks must be recognised and taken out of the private domain. Only then will women be liberated and the individual have real choice. Cuts in welfare must be resisted and a programme of social provision for childcare, the sick and elderly be part of the socialist alternative to the Tories.

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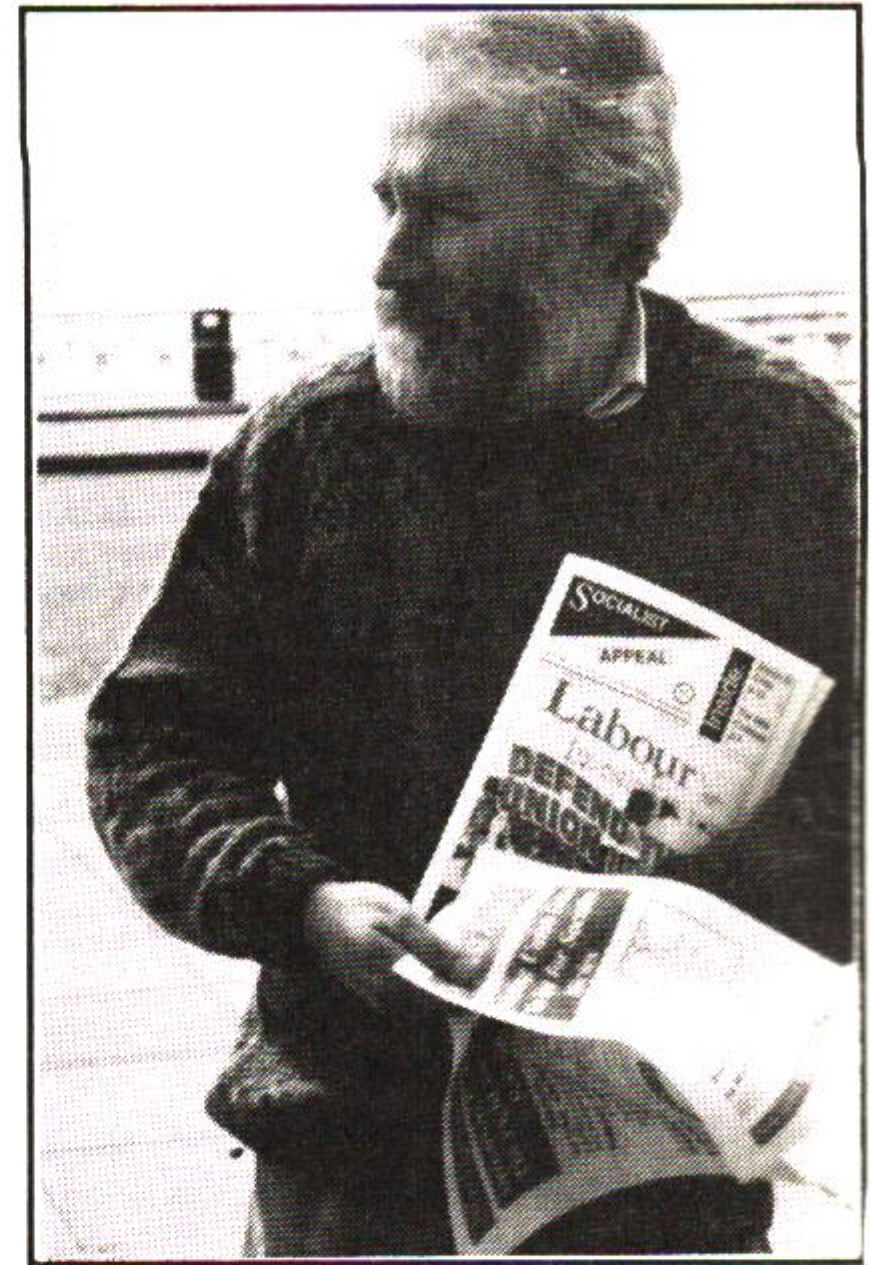
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With the 1994 press fund campaign only a few weeks old at time of writing already the money is starting to flow in as readers respond to our appeal for £15,000.

As stated in our last issue this money is needed to fund the launch of our most important step forward yet. With this money we will be able to pay the first installment on the purchase of our own

offset press. With this we will be able to print Socialist Appeal quickly in-house thereby reducing the time between the journal being written and the copies 'hitting' the streets.

We can also be more reactive to events - producing broadsheets and specials whenever necessary. We could also enhance our pamphlet and booklet production - including photos, better quality covers etc. Last but not least we

could move to a more regular production of Socialist Appeal when we are ready without fearing a big hike in our costs. Alongside the press itself, the £5,000 will also enable us to obtain platemaking equipment, a scanner to process photos and graphics and underwrite the move to suitable premises where we could print and store the journal.

So help keep the campaign rolling - fill in the appeal form and send us as much as you can. Special thanks this month to London readers who sent in over £130 before the campaign was even launched!

Also thanks to the following: Readers from Brighton (£17), Hull (£22), Southampton (£33), W.Yorks (£15) also R.Norris (£8), Railway worker (£40), Liz Floyd (£5), CPSA reader (£17), Watford reader (£10) and others who have sent cash in. Keep it coming!

**Steve Jones  
Journal  
Manager**

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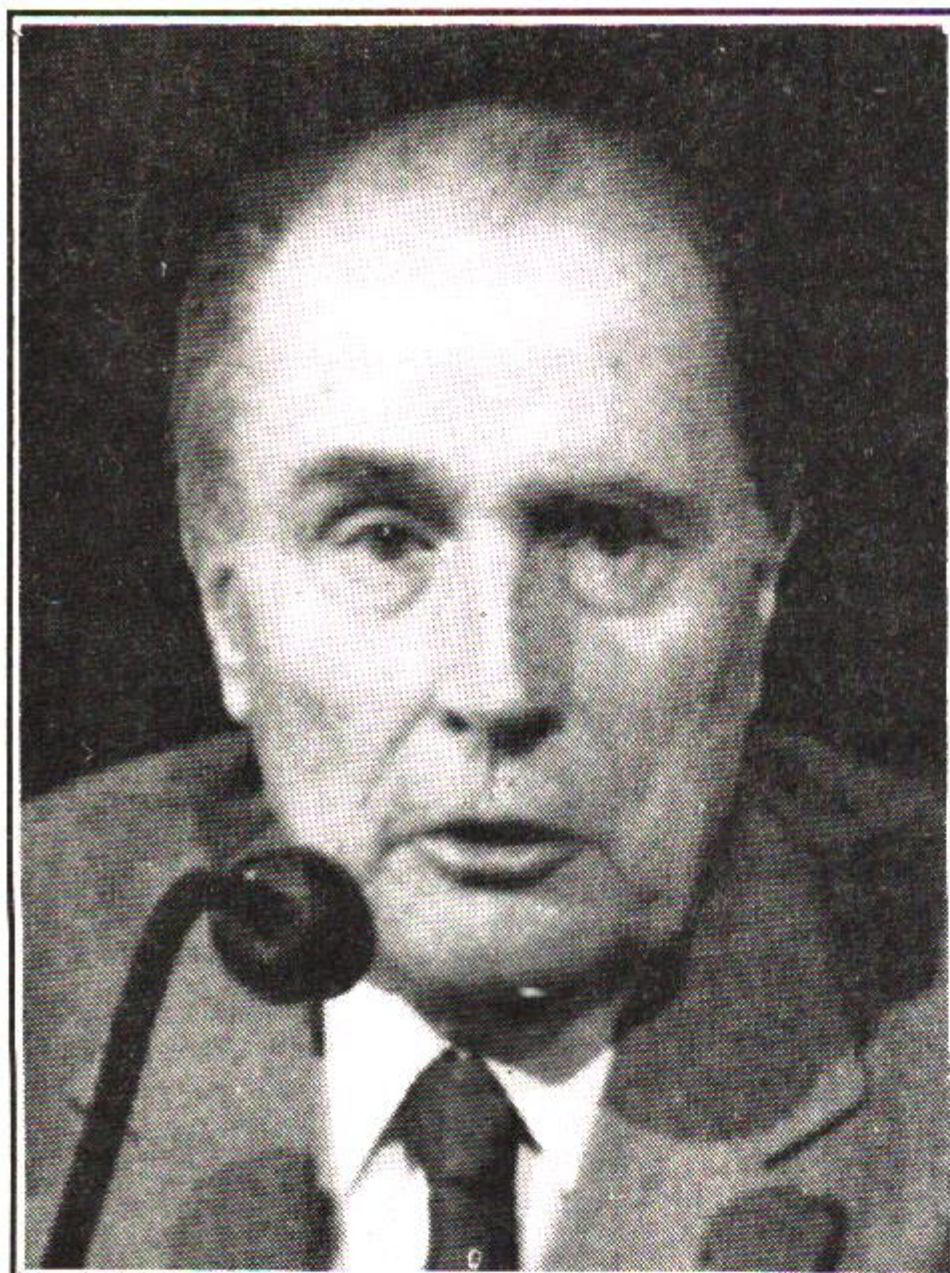
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# French youth force government retreat



Mitterrand: warning of "general disorder"

France has been rocked over the last few weeks by a series of increasingly angry demonstrations by school leavers and students against the rise of youth unemployment.

A year after the right wing had won the largest majority this century in the general election, the government has been forced into a series of reversals. After being seen to give in to striking workers such as the Air France workers and the movements of the fishermen and farmers, the Prime Minister, Edouard Balladur, has now withdrawn controversial measures presented on February 24th to cut the minimum wage level for first-time employees by 20% and has now proposed replacing this with proposals for subsidies for companies taking on school leavers. But having opened Pandora's box, he cannot easily close it. With unemployment having risen on the back of the recession to 12.2% and with 1 in 4 under 25s out of work the mood of opposition has hardened. A Paris poll stated that 70% of those

interviewed now believe that a social explosion is likely and 57% said they would participate in any demonstration called!. Balladur is now likened to a latter day Louis XVI and is clearly remembering with fear his days as Social Affairs adviser to Pompidou in May 1968. His support has fallen to 40% in the opinion polls and the left did relatively well in the March local elections. Workers and students are already calling for the marches to be turned into a general demonstration against government policies. President Mitterrand is warning of a mood of 'general disorder' and one student leader has talked about the 'time of riots' having arrived. In 1968 the Stalinists acted as a brake on the unions but capitalism cannot rely on them this time. Despite their parliamentary majority the right live in fear now of the might of the labour movement coming to the fore in the social movements that will occur over the next period.

Ettiene (Paris)

## Get the Marxist Voice of the Labour Movement

### A Socialist Appeal to Workers

Socialist Appeal was launched in April 1992 to provide trade unionists, labour activists and youth with a Marxist analysis of events. Given the complexity of the political situation in Britain and internationally there has never been a greater need.

The boast of the capitalists of a "new world order" after the collapse of Stalinism have turned to dust with the crisis in Russia, the bloody civil war in the former Yugoslavia and the continuing economic recession in Europe and Japan.

As the employers continue their offensive against wages and conditions, governments everywhere are attempting to push through austerity measures against the working class. In Europe these attacks have pushed workers into militant action. The ideas of class collaboration are more and more threadbare as the ills of capitalism re-emerge with a vengeance: mass unemployment, wage

cuts, squalid working conditions, and so on.

The task of Socialist Appeal is to arm the new generation of class-conscious workers and youth with a strategy and programme to put an end to this nightmare.

Marxism provides a scientific understanding of the problems and issues that face the working class. Socialist Appeal believes it is essential for the labour movement to adopt a class approach and a socialist programme to transform the lives of ordinary working people.

Socialist Appeal is indispensable reading for every worker wanting to understand and help prepare the workers movement for the battles that lie ahead. Subscribe today!

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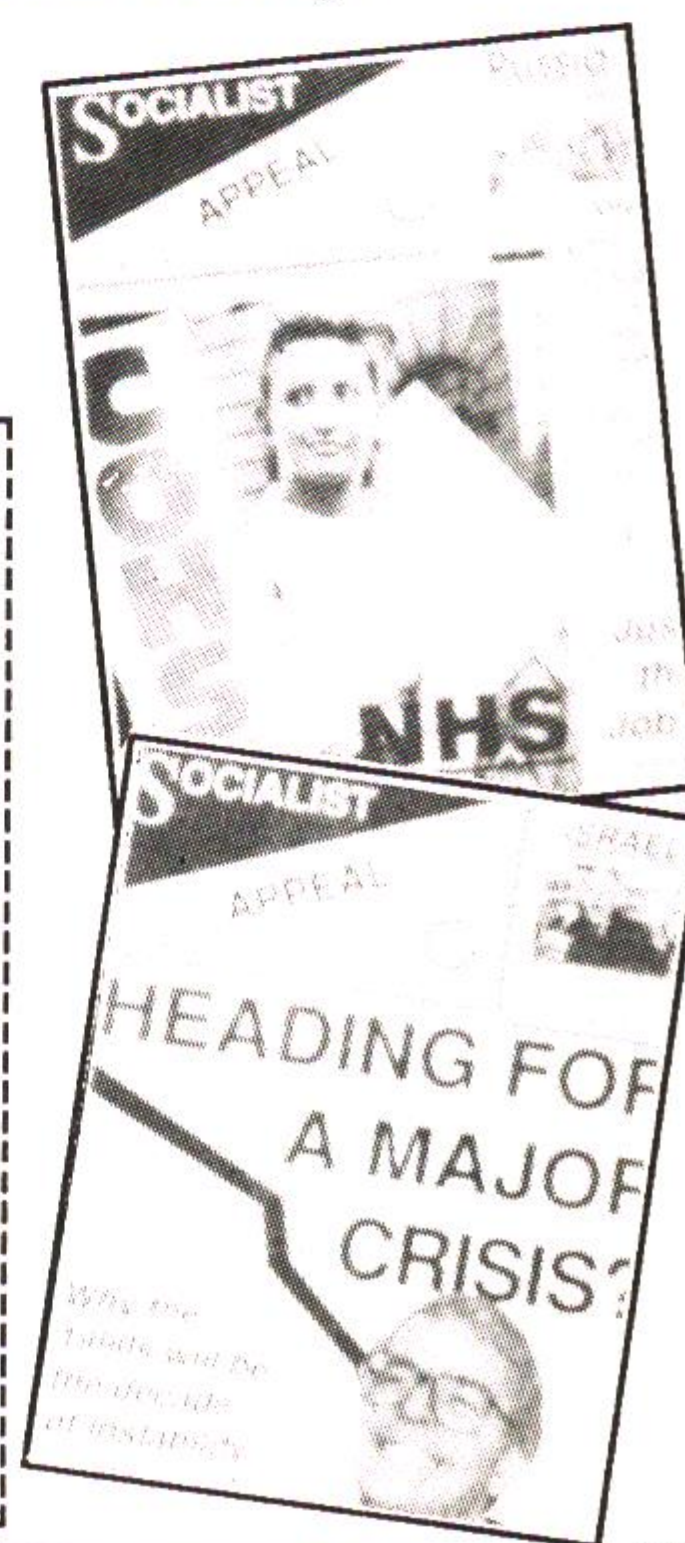
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# Rivethead: Tales from the Assembly Line

by Ben Hamper

Published by Fourth Estate

Price £7.99

*"We were never supposed to get out, and you were never supposed to hear our voices. It all comes down to a matter of class, of knowing our place, and a place like Flint, Michigan, doesn't really exist in the minds of the media or decision makers. Even the country's liberals are at a loss when it comes to thinking about the Ben Hampers. They speak often, as they should, of the ills of our society, but rarely do they mention class, that growing distinction*

*between rich and poor, between those who sweat for their money and those who inherit it or legally steal it. Do they ever give one iota of thought to what the person who rivets their rocker panels is going through. Rocker panels, you say? Huh? Exactly."* Michael Moore, director of the film 'Roger and Me', writing in the prologue to Rivethead.

Ben Hamper was a third generation autoworker who worked on the assembly line for General Motors in Flint, Michigan. 'Rivethead' is the story of how he worked and survived in the "jungle." A raw slice of everyday life of an American worker, where the 'American dream' is reduced to a rivetgun and a six-pack! Hamper describes the 'boom' years of GM when he started work in 1977, "the truck plant

*was hummin' six days a week, nine hours per shift. All of this overtime added up to one gorgeous stream of income. There was the time and a half money. There was the second shift premium bonus and there were frequent cost of living adjustments. It seemed like every time I turned around, the paymaster was stuffin' another wad of currency into my waistband... These were truly prosperous times."*

### Redundancies

Of course the 'boom' years did not last forever. Layoff followed layoff in the late seventies, "like some banged up middleweight resting its rump on the ropes... the big payday, the cool precision, the bully mystique - all of it was being soundly trounced." And worse was to come.. "Each time we'd been shelved,

GM reeled us back in just before our benefits were set to dissolve, so our layoffs seemed more like paid vacations. But this was before Reaganomics, before the merry-go-round rusted to a standstill." Hamper brings life and humour to the bleak underside of an autoworkers life. A life of American bars and cars!

### Survival

He manages to give us a dark evocation of the struggle for survival 'on the line.' Dodging supervisors, killing time - just surviving. He started to write a column for the Flint Voice, a paper started by Michael Moore, using the pseudonym Rivethead. These articles became immensely popular, even leading to an appearance on the front page of the Wall Street Journal. Then it started to go wrong. Hamper starts to have a breakdown, anxiety and panic attacks, and his life goes into a haze of beer and medication. Eventually he signs in to a mental health clinic. When the doctor advises him against ever returning to work in an auto factory and take up writing about "other topics of interest," Hamper's reply is very simple, "I have no other topics of interest." To everyone who thought that 1980's America was just a succession of bigger and bigger shopping malls, Hamper's book is a brilliant antidote. You'd better read it for yourself.

Alastair Wilson

## Music

### In the Picture

It's unusual to pick up a tape with a credit on the sleeve to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky. It's even more unusual to hear such a varied and promising debut from such a young band. Esque manage to combine exciting and intelligent music with a strong socialist message, which reflects their active involvement in the struggle against the Tories and the nazis as part of Young Labour on Tyneside. If you try to categorise this band - forget it! The sound is very distinctive. The socialist content of the band's material is best heard on songs Strange Gods (which attacks the hypocrisy of organised religion) and A Short Lesson in History (which exposes the role of the police). The tape, called Picture-Esque costs £2.50 including postage & packaging and is available from Esque, 11 Brierdene Road, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE26 4NP.

Terry

## Out Now!

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# Leaders snatch defeat from the jaws of victory

***"Capitalism is dead in Portugal" wrote the Times in 1975. And yet today it lives. How was it able to survive? What lessons can we learn from the Portuguese Revolution of 1974?***

On the morning of April 25th 1974, as tanks rolled into Lisbon under the direction of the young officers of the Armed Forces Movement (AFM), hundreds of thousands of workers crowded the streets to celebrate the overthrow of the hated Caetano regime. This was no mere palace coup. In the words of The Sunday Times, *"the crash made the statesmen and nations of at least two continents tremble. For like the single stone that starts an avalanche, Portugal's coup may be more a beginning than an end of things."*

The fascist regime in Portugal had lasted longer than any other of its kind. How was it able to maintain itself and what forces finally brought about its downfall?

The pioneering days of the Portuguese slave traders of the 15th and 16th centuries we read about at school were doomed by Portugal's narrow home economic base. The struggle against piracy and contraband could not be sustained, and domination by Spain for 60 years up to 1640 strangled Portugal as a world power. Rapidly overtaken by Britain and Holland, the loss of Brazil saw the beginning of the break up of its empire, and throughout the 19th century it was racked by financial bankruptcy.

The great revolution of 1910 deposed the rotten Portuguese monarchy but inevitably broke down into its antagonistic class components. In the three years following the assassination of the dictator, placed in power by a military coup in 1917, there were no less than 16 governments. In just 5 years the currency fell to

5% of its previous value. Then, after years of coups, strikes, uprisings and repression, the heroic working class finally fell exhausted before the fascist thugs, who aped their victorious "heroes" in Italy.

In 1927 the fascists exacted a bloody revenge against the working class. As Minister of Finance, Colonies, War, Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister, Salazar succeeded in balancing the budget for the first time in a century by stamping on the faces of the workers.

A "corporate republic", a so-called "New State", was imposed, in which only the official Fascist party was permitted to exist. Trade unions and strikes were outlawed, workers were herded into State company unions, while sole negotiating rights and absolute arbitration powers were vested in official "corporations."

## Repression

The President and government were "elected" exclusively by the so-called "educated strata". This regime came to rest increasingly on the Portuguese Gestapo, who were responsible for outrageous atrocities including beheadings, crucifixions, and mass executions against the African independence movements and opposition at home. At one time or another, up to 10% of the population "passed through their hands." In the end only this force was keeping the regime in power, until it burst like a pricked balloon after the April 25th coup. Beneath the calm surface of tyranny, a tumour had been gnawing away at the vitals of the regime. In the end it disintegrated because it had lost its social base. Every revolution begins not at the bottom but the top. The first condition for revolution is a crisis within the ruling class. Feeling themselves to be in a blind alley, no longer able to rule in the old way, they cast around in a panic for



**On the anniversary of the Portuguese revolution of 1974, Phil Mitchinson looks back at the ebb and flow of the events and draws out the lessons for the workers' movement today**

panaceas, squabbling amongst themselves as disaster approaches.

General Spínola, placed in power by the April 25th coup, was cast in the press as a knight in shining armour. Yet in reality he was the son of Salazar's closest friend, he volunteered to fight for both Franco and Hitler. As Commander-in-Chief of the Portuguese forces in Guinea he earned the nickname "butcher." In addition, prior to the coup he was a director of two of Portugal's leading monopolies. He was the consummate representative of the Portuguese ruling class, right down to the toe of his jackboot.

That such a man could find himself at the head of a revolutionary junta can only be explained in the context of the crisis facing the ruling class.

War had raged in the African colonies since 1961 when the Angolan liberation movement was launched. This was followed by the revolt in Guinea in 1963, and Mozambique in 1964. To prop up this pretence of Imperial rule was costing Portugal 48% of its annual budget and thousands of lives.

## African Wars

The African wars were a crippling cancer on society. After 13 years it was clear these wars were unwinnable. Gradually, the will of the ordinary soldiers was undermined. To avoid conscription of up to four years on starvation rations in the African jungles, a massive movement of desertion and draft dodging gathered pace. Between emigration and conscription, Portugal lost half its



labour force. The shortage of labour left the big estates of the south to run to waste and held back the development of industry. At the same time, Portugal was less and less able to exploit the resources of its own African colonies. At home, inflation soared to 25-30% and beyond.

Against this background, the monopolies pushed Caetano, Salazar's successor, into making some limited reforms. In 1969, officially approved "opposition candidates" were allowed to stand for election to the National Assembly. Only 20% of the population were allowed to vote however, and the Fascists with 88% of the votes took all 130 seats. In the 1973 elections the "opposition candidates" all withdrew days before the ballot. It was at this time that General Spinoza wrote his book "Portugal and the Future", arguing for finding a peaceful, safe way to extricate Portugal from the crippling African wars by placing in power a moderate black elite who could be split away from the nationalists, as had been done successfully in Zaire. However, President Tomas, among others, remained convinced of "Portugal's Christian civilising mission." So fierce was the division, that in December there was an attempt at a right wing coup to prevent any move in the direction indicated by Spinoza.

### Heroic Strikes

Every section of the population was beginning to stir. The capitalists were bickering, uncertain of which way to turn next. The working class mounted a series of heroic strikes, which turned the Fascist law-books into so much scrap paper. In the face of an armed police operation the workers at Plesseys, ITT, Hoechst, Fords, Timex and many others, fought heroic, if often unsuccessful strikes. The middle class, especially the youth, bitterly opposed the regime. From 1968 there was a rash of student demonstrations at Lisbon University, the Economics Institute, and even Lisbon Military Academy. It was precisely these lower army officers from the middle class, who came to the fore in the initial stage of the revolution in the "Armed Forces Movement". Surrounding the Presidential headquarters, they received messages of support

from garrisons around the country. Three waves of the Seventh Cavalry were sent against them, the first immediately rallying to their side, the second followed suit after the arrest of their commander and the third wavered then capitulated after a few minutes half-hearted resistance. Then the masses flooded the streets. Caetano insisted on talking to a

junta promised a programme of national salvation, but at the same time appealed for "calm." The news of Caetano's overthrow, however, had breached the dam and no warnings or appeals could shore it up again. Meetings occupied every town square or street corner. The workers also occupied the banks, factories, newspaper offices and radio

be such a revolutionary leadership. Following the April 25th coup SP leader, and later Prime Minister, Mario Soares said he favoured "a programme of national salvation as the Junta describes it. A front of national unity, an alliance of many forces. And so you will see conservatives, Catholics, liberals, Socialists, and Communists all working together in the new civilian administration." Even "progressive"(!) fascists were to be involved. Soares expressed the hope that "Spinola will be like a Portuguese De Gaulle." The SP, unlike the "Communists", had no tradition of struggle under the Salazar/Caetano regime. It was a shell of a party comprised of a handful of lawyers, and yet on the basis of the events which were unfolding, it too grew rapidly into a genuinely mass force. The growth of the SP and the CP demonstrated the historical law that when the masses move into action they turn first to their traditional organisations.

## Only a programme of workers' democracy, based on the nationalisation of industry and the banks under the democratic control and management of the working class could defend the workers' gains and prepare the next step forward towards socialism.

top ranking officer, and finally agreed to hand over power to his old friend Spinoza. According to the Financial Times Caetano "sitting in a small room in the Central City Carno barracks, surrounded by rebel forces, begged Spinoza to take the leadership of the country, as the only man who could save it. This coincided with the arrival at Spinoza's modest apartment of emissaries from the rebel HQ...asking him to assume the Presidency." Spinoza in turn was forced to accept the democratic charter of the rebel officers, or, in the words of Caetano, "hand over power to the mob."

### Secret Police

The dam had burst. Only one section of the Portuguese population was prepared to resist the coup, the secret police - out of sheer panic in the face of workers intent on vengeance. On May 5th The Observer commented, "Portugal is a state with a head but no body." Similarly, when Lenin returned to Russia in April 1917 he described it as the "freest country in the world", not because of any faith in the democratic principles of the Provisional government but because temporarily the old state machine could not be used to defend the ruling class. The same was true in Portugal. The floodgates were open. The new

stations. Workers' committees sprang up and began clearing away remnants of the old regime.

Without the permission or advice of the junta, workers exercised the right to strike; without waiting for lawyers verdicts they exercised the right to demonstrate with half a million marching through Lisbon on May Day. Newspaper staff purged the fascist editors and took over the running of the papers. The revolutionary spirit spread like wildfire through the armed forces, the soldiers turned out on parade with red carnations blooming from the barrels of their guns, the sailors marched alongside the workers on May Day carrying banners calling for socialism.

At that moment no coercive force on earth could have held the workers back. With the leadership of a revolutionary, Bolshevik party, the workers could have taken power peacefully - reaction was impotent. The whole face of the globe would have been transformed. Spain, Greece, Italy, France and the whole of Europe would have followed the example of their Portuguese brothers and sisters. So would Brazil, Argentina and the rest of South America. A socialist future could have been assured. However neither the Socialist nor the Communist parties proved to

### CP Role

As these millions of "politically untutored" masses poured into the political arena, they didn't immediately differentiate between the different workers' parties. This made the role of the CP all the more vital. Their task should have been to patiently explain to the industrial militants who looked to them for a lead the danger of leaving economic and political power in the hands of the capitalists. That is precisely how the Bolsheviks in Russia were able in a few stormy months to win the overwhelming support of the Russian working class. But the CP leader Cunhal took not a Bolshevik, but a Menshevik position, "We need a union of all political movements to strengthen democracy in Portugal. United we shall crush the last of fascism and create a free democratic society." Compare the Portuguese "Leninists" position with that of Lenin himself after the 1917 February Revolution, "Our tactic: no trust in and no support of the new government: Kerensky is especially suspect. Arming of the proletariat is the only guarantee: immediate elections to the Petrograd city council: no rapprochement with other parties."



In Portugal the "Communist" Party favoured such coalitions all along. The leaders of the CP and SP rushed into an alliance with Spinoia, believing socialism to be a distant future.

In reality only a programme of workers' democracy, based on the nationalisation of industry and banks under the democratic control and management of the working class could defend the workers' gains and prepare the next step forward towards socialism. "Unity" with big business under the guise of a "fight against fascism" spells catastrophe for workers at a later stage. Soares, for example, ominously declared "*the Portuguese army is not the Chilean army.*" Yet on the eve of that bloodiest of coups, Allende and Corvalan soothed their supporters with assurances that the Chilean army wasn't like others, had a democratic tradition and so on. Meanwhile, behind the scenes reaction was preparing a comeback.

### Coalition Falls

The first of these coalition governments collapsed after just two months, with the resignation of the PM and four other minister-capitalists, in what Soares rightly described as an attempted counter-coup. The capitalists demanded the removal of the Socialists from the government. But the Bonapartist Spinoia understood that his only hope of keeping the masses in check was the presence in the government of the leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties. Spinoia was performing a balancing act between the workers and bosses, promising liberty to the workers, at the same time, more honestly, promising the capitalists he would crush all "abuses of liberty." These "abuses", the workers' strikes and occupations, were also denounced by the CP and SP leaders, as "ultra-left adventures" or even "imperialist plots." Only the manoeuvres of reaction and the response of the workers forced them to change their position. As Marx explained "the revolution sometimes needs the whip of counter-revolution." Each attempt of reaction was repulsed by the actions of the workers, which in turn pushed both the CP and SP further to the left.

The CP carried a heavy anchor in the shape of its heritage of struggle and its direct links with the Russian Revolution, but the SP was tossed around on the waves of revolution, forcing its leaders to swing left or be blown overboard.

Thus we saw the remarkable transformation of Soares declaring the SP to be a Marxist party, adopting a position far to the left of the CP.

### December Congress

At the December Congress of the SP, delegate after delegate called for the nationalisation of industry and the banks, democratic workers control and a socialist plan of production. One delegate demanded an immediate end to capitalism like the Russian worker who demanded of his socialist leaders, "*take the power when we give it to you.*" However the Marxist words of Soares were just that, words, and the inaction of the workers' leaders again allowed reaction a breathing space to attempt to regroup.

In March 1975 it was Spinoia himself who led a comic opera of a coup, with a few old Second World War planes and a handful of paratroopers, who were rapidly won over to the side of the workers.

The workers themselves responded to the coup attempt with massive demonstrations. Bankworkers occupied the banks, demanding their nationalisation. Previously the CP and SP leaders had opposed this, postponing the question to the indefinite future, but the bankworkers weren't to be bought with vague promises. In the end the banks were nationalised, with no compensation for the big capitalists, in just one week. This was a major step forward. Because of their key position in the Portuguese economy this meant the AFM and the Provisional government, between whom a kind of dual power had developed, were forced to nationalise 50% of the economy. Eventually as a result of the actions of the workers, three-quarters of the Portuguese economy was nationalised. But nationalisation alone was not enough. What was needed was a programme of workers' democracy.

A government based on workers'

control and management, through workers' and farmers' councils would have been invincible. Measures such as the right of recall, no official to receive more than the wage of a skilled worker, the organisation of workers' militias, could have removed every point of support of reaction, and undermined the demagogic campaign for "democracy", which both the reactionaries and the SP leaders hid behind. But the CP leaders saw victory over the March coup as an opportunity to bureaucratically consolidate their positions in the local councils and trade unions.

The AFM too was pushed to the left by the movements of workers and rank and file soldiers. But instead of demanding the democratisation of the army, the election of officers and arming of the workers in defence of the revolution, the CP became an echo of the AFM itself. It looked not to the ordinary soldiers, but to the radicalised officers, and saw the opportunity to carve out in alliance with them a privileged position for themselves in a new bureaucratic regime.

After almost 50 years of fascism, however, the workers were rightly suspicious of any new totalitarianism. The SP leaders began to gain an echo for their abstract campaign for a "democracy." But democracy is a means to an end, if it does not lead to a solution of the fundamental problems of life, then it is worthless. Such a solution, socialism, is incompatible with the class interests of the bankers and industrialists, be they fascists or "democrats."

### Workers' Democracy

Only a programme of workers' democracy, the organisation of revolutionary committees in the armed forces, the linking up of workers', soldiers' and farmers' councils at every level, the mobilisation of the working class in defence of the revolution could lead successfully to that solution. Behind the skirts of this abstract "democracy" hid the forces of reaction.

While the AFM and CP leaders began carving up posts between them the SP walked out of the government. Again in November, the forces of reaction emerged from the cover given them by the SP leaders, and attempted to regain power, and once again

they were beaten back by the workers. It had become a law of the Portuguese revolution that each attempt at open counter revolution provoked a massive counter attack by the working class. The ruling class came to realise this too, and turned away from such dangerous attempts, relying instead on the leaders of the workers' parties, to prevent workers going "too far." The counter revolution in Portugal took a democratic form, with the SP being placed in power by the working class, but once in office

## Not for the first, or last time, the responsibility for the failure of the socialist revolution lay with the leaders of reformism and Stalinism

defending the interests of capitalism.

In 1974 "capitalism was dead" in Portugal, only the leaders of the workers' parties were able to revive it.

Not for the first or last time, the responsibility for the failure of the socialist revolution lay with the leaders of reformism and Stalinism.

With their assistance the capitalist class was able to gradually reconstruct its state machine, transfer ownership of the economy back into private hands, even organise a new political party and eventually win a national election again. The presence of a Marxist tendency, rooted in the traditional mass organisations of the Portuguese working class, could have ensured that power remained in the hands of the working class, but time and again history teaches us that such a conscious Marxist leadership cannot just simply spring fully formed from thin air in the course of events, but must be consciously built up in advance ●



*"When the scale of the Labour Party's victory became known on the night of 26 July, bonfires were lit, people danced in the streets, and young and old crowded into halls all over the country to acclaim their elected standard bearers."*

Michael Foot ('Aneurin Bevan', vol two, p13)

**T**he massive victory for Labour in 1945 saw unprecedented scenes. When the Commons first met, the Labour benches, to the horror of the Tories, celebrated the event by singing the Red Flag. Herbert Morrison, new Labour Leader of the Commons, who described himself as "mildly disturbed", stated that *"these youngsters still had to absorb the atmosphere of the House. But I recognised that it was largely first-day spirits."*

Despite Morrison's concern, millions of workers looked to the Labour Government to carry through a programme of fundamental change. Their aspirations, after years of war, poverty and mass unemployment, were for a democratic Socialist Britain. In 1944 the TUC adopted a programme for post-war reconstruction which included the nationalisation of basic industries.

### Labour's Programme

The following year Labour followed suit with its programme 'Let Us Face the Future', stating that the Party's aim at home is *"the establishment of the Socialist Commonwealth"*. The new Labour Government, unlike its predecessors of 1924 and 1929-31, seemed to move in that direction, introducing a whole series of important reforms: the Welfare State, a key component of which was the National Health Service, with free health care, public ownership of the Bank of England, the coal industry, railways, road haulage, electricity, gas, and the iron and steel industry. This gave rise to widespread enthusiasm amongst the working class, and even the middle classes. Unfortunately, Labour's nationalisation programme, instead of taking over the "commanding heights", took over the bankrupt sectors of the economy, leaving the dominant profitable sections in private



## "Let us Face the Future"

hands. It represented a form of 'state capitalism'. The ex-owners received massive over compensation. The transport bosses, for instance, received £3.8 million per year in compensation. The ex-coal owners got £164.7 million for the pits and £78.5 million for royalty owners. There was extra compensation for other assets. In this context, the capitalist opposition to nationalisation was luke warm; the public sector being used as a *milch cow* by big business, providing cheap coal, electricity, gas, transport, etc. In reality Labour did not nationalise coal and the railways. Both were taken into state control by the Tory-dominated war coalition government. The decision of whether or not to hand them back to their former owners was settled by a Royal Commission, in the case of coal by Sir Charles Reid of Fife Coal Company, who headed the Commission.

So, despite its radical programme, the Attlee government continued to operate on the traditional basis of capitalism. With roughly 20% of the economy in state hands, and 80% in the private sector, it was inevitable that the latter would dictate to the former. In the stark words of Morrison (to King George VI): *"During the Coalition the Labour members had learnt a great deal from the Conservatives in how to govern."*

### Gradual Approach

This summed up their whole approach. They believed that bit by bit, over decades, capitalism would be gradually transformed into socialism. Nationalisation or public ownership had long been the aspiration of organised labour. Ever since 1919, the Miners' Federation had demanded nationalisation of the pits under workers' control. However, by 1947, the consultations held

with the TUC and the Miners' Union resulted not in nationalisation of the mines under democratic workers' control and management, but under the control of unaccountable management boards at regional and national level. These governing boards were staffed with ex-managers, ex-generals, top civil servants and a sprinkling of trade union bureaucrats. The TUC nominated Sir Walter Citrine, who then was granted a peerage, and the Miners' Union their secretary, Eddy Edwards. The same was true of the boards of the other nationalised industries. In the contemptuous words of the ex-left Stafford Cripps: *"workers simply did not have the necessary skills to participate in management."* As a result, the rights of management were left to the traditional 'Captains of Industry' and state bureaucrats. As expected, Prime Minister Attlee brought a number of trade union sponsored MPs into the Government. Nye Bevan at Health, Ellen Wilkinson at Education, Isaacs, chairman of the TUC, as Minister of Labour; and Ernest Bevin as Foreign secretary. One of the first measures of the new Parliament was the repeal of the infamous Trade Disputes Act of 1927. As a consequence, the civil service unions were now able to affiliate to the TUC, and the Labour Party received a big boost to its finances when 'contracting - out' from the political levy was reintroduced. Throughout these years there was close collaboration between the trade union tops and the Government. The latter were desperate to increase production and leaned heavily upon the right wing trade union leaders to pursue this line. The Stalinists simply continued to play second fiddle in this drive for increased production. Arthur Horner, the newly elected NUM general secretary, headed a £20,000 union campaign to increase coal production. *"For the first time in the history of the trade union movement in this country"*, stated Horner, *"the miners' union assumed the responsibility of actively assisting in the efforts to increase coal output."* In the words of CP general secretary, Harry Pollitt: *"The battle for production ... must not be confined to the nationalised industries. The unions should*



demand that joint production machinery - national, regional, local and factory - should be set up in all industries without delay." At this time, this stance was no different from the right wing.

As soon as Labour came to power, the government was faced with a continuing strike at the Surrey Docks in London. Churchill had ordered troops on standby which were then called upon by Attlee to handle the vessels. This was the first time that troops were used by a Labour Government to break strikes. On hearing the general election result, Churchill remarked: "I do not feel down at all; I'm not certain the Conservative Party could have dealt with the labour troubles that are coming."

The second unofficial dock strike in the Autumn was far more extensive, involving widespread discontent over wages, conditions and grievances against the TGWU bureaucracy. Again 21,000 troops were used to break the strike.

### National Debts

The war had transformed British capitalism from a major international creditor to a major debtor. Overseas assets of £1.2 billion had been sold off and exports were down to a third of their pre-war level. On the basis of the Bretton Woods agreement, American imperialism granted Britain a loan of \$3.75 billion, which helped bridge the balance of payments deficit with the USA. Under the pressure of big business at home and abroad, the Attlee Government continued to pursue orthodox economic policies.

The Ministry of Labour persuaded the TUC to continue Order 1305, which declared strikes illegal and enforced arbitration. It also agreed that the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act (1942) would not be operated for the moment. The 1947 fuel crisis put increased pressure on the Labour Government. The sterling crisis which followed forced Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor, to abandon the convertibility of sterling. By February 1948, Attlee presented a statement to parliament on 'Personal Incomes, Costs and Prices', and further pressure was put on organised labour to desist from any form of militancy. Despite industrial action on the buses and on the docks (which resulted in a state of

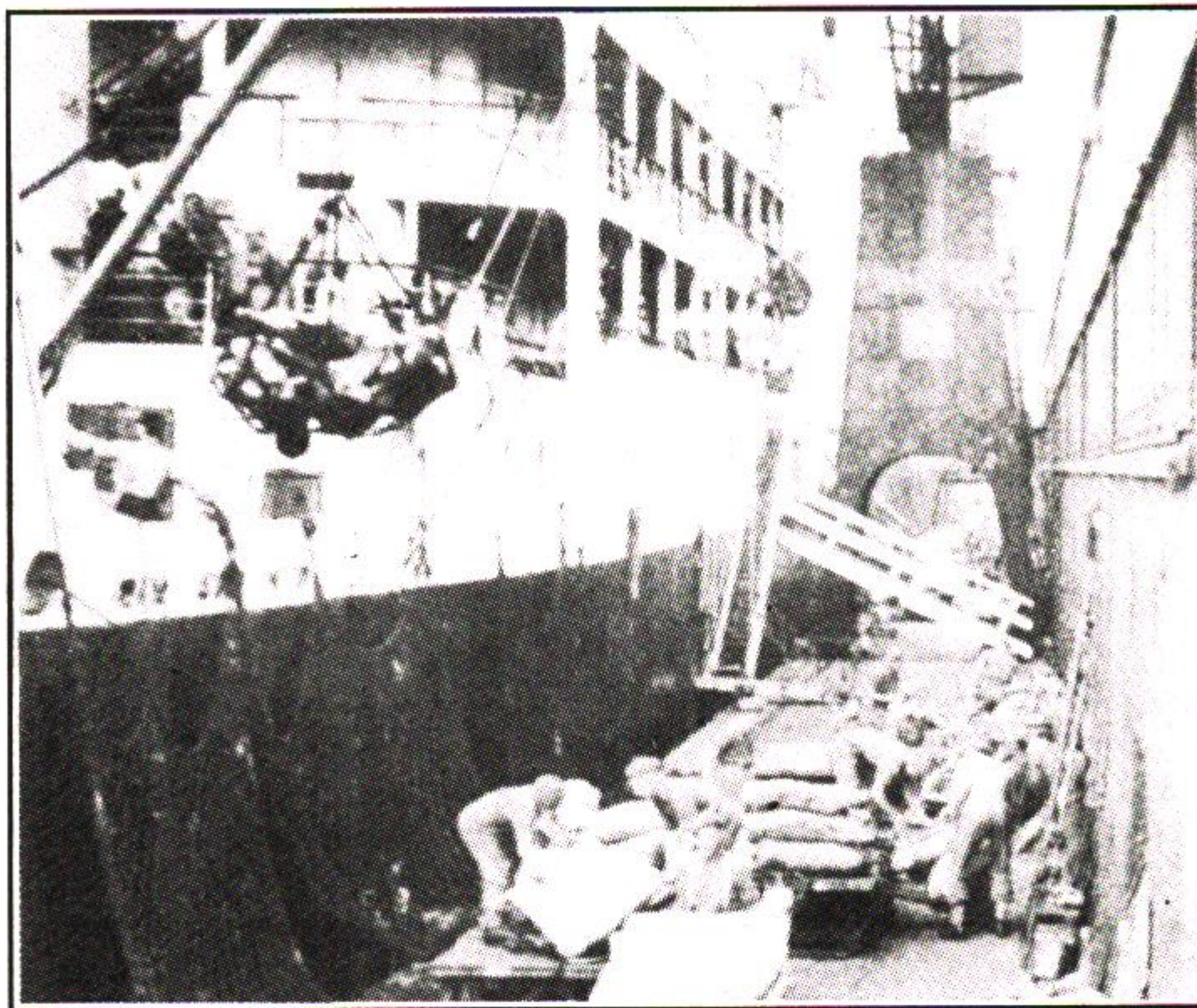
emergency), the TUC General Council acquiesced, agreeing to examine 'wage restraint' as an option. By 1949, the new Chancellor, Stafford Cripps, was forced to devalue the pound and introduced an austerity package, including a wage freeze. Despite unofficial action on the docks (which resulted in the expulsion from the union of three dockers' leaders), power stations and in the meat market, the General Council fought to hold the line. But by 1950, with improvement in the economy, and the start of a new world economic upswing, industrial discontent surfaced. The cost of living rose rapidly as a result of the devaluation and the effects of the Korean war. The Easter conference of USDAW opposed the TUC line and the AEU was talking about strike action. Unofficial action spread to the docks over the victimisation of their leaders by Deakin. In June 1,500 lorry drivers at Smithfield market came out on unofficial strike over wages. The Government called in troops to clear meat supplies from the market and the strikers were eventually persuaded to return to work. By the Autumn, gas workers struck over wages. At the September TUC, a resolution was carried against the General Council declaring there was "no basis for a restraint on wage applications." The Labour Government, which was returned in February 1951 with a majority of only six seats, was forced to accept the position.

### Cold War

The changed relationships between the Super Powers internationally also directly affected the labour movement in Britain. In 1944 and 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin at the conferences of Teheran, Moscow, Yalta and Potsdam agreed to carve up Europe into spheres of influence. In his memoirs, Churchill describes a meeting with Stalin in Moscow: "The moment was apt for business, so I said, 'Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Rumania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety per cent predominance in Rumania, for us to have ninety per cent of the say in Greece, and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?'..... At length I said, 'might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we

had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of the people, in such an off-hand manner? Let us burn the paper.' 'No, you keep it' said Stalin." (Triumph and Tragedy, p227-8). Under these pacts, the Greek

The British 'Communist' Party, which had become ultra-nationalist during the war, and fought against strikes and campaigned for increased production - even after the war - now turned against the



Troops unloading foodstuffs during the 1949 dock strike.

revolution was deliberately betrayed by Stalin, and he ordered Tito in Yugoslavia and Mao in China, who headed independent forces, to come to an agreement with the agents of counter-revolution. Fortunately for them they ignored this 'advice' and proceeded to carry through the revolution, albeit in a distorted form. In Western Europe, the Stalinists succeeded in derailing the revolutionary wave by entering coalition governments in France and Italy. In Britain, the Attlee Government served to check the aspirations of the workers. This break represented the victory of the counter revolution in a democratic form. By 1947, the attempts by American imperialism to interfere in the spheres of the Russian bureaucracy, using the Marshall Aid Plan, led to a sharp deterioration in international relations. This marked the beginning of the 'Cold War' period and the opening of intense rivalry between the Super Powers on a world scale. In the final analysis, it reflected the irreconcilable antagonism between the two social systems - Stalinism based upon state ownership and imperialism based upon private ownership. In Fulton, Missouri, Churchill spoke of the need to 'roll back the frontiers of Communism'.

Government. Following orders from Moscow they came out against Marshall Aid and began to galvanise opposition to wage restraint in the trade unions. Although weak on the political front (they had only won two seats in 1945), they had a significant influence in the trade union movement. They controlled the Electrical Trades Union, the Foundry Workers, and the Fire Brigades Union. They dominated the Welsh and Scottish areas of the National Union of Mineworkers, with Arthur Horner as national secretary, replacing Eddy Edwards who left to join the National Coal Board. The Stalinists also had a strong influence in the AEU, especially in London; and by 1946, they had nine out of 34 members of the Executive Council of the Transport and General. They also had a large basis in the Trades Councils and were well organised throughout industry generally. The right wing on the TUC General Council, reflecting the outlook and interests of the imperialists, took action to drive out the Stalinists. In October 1948 it issued a statement denouncing the CP's aim of 'sabotage of the European Recovery Programme'. This was followed up by a statement, 'Defend Democracy', which called upon the unions to remove the Stalinists from all



key union positions and prevent them being delegates to union conferences. The General Council also threatened to disaffiliate trades councils which refused to adhere to this official line. As Jack Jones, former General Secretary of the TGWU explained: *"With the increasing tension between East and West he (Deakin) began to look on the union and the TUC as battlegrounds and he set out to bludgeon any opposition, whether from Labour's left wing or from members of the Communist Party. He became highly suspicious of anything smelling of the Left. In my experience those who claimed that he suffered from a 'reds under the beds' complex were correct."* (Union Man - an autobiography, p132).

This outlook was not isolated but shared by the majority of the General Council.

Some unions like the General and Municipal Workers, already had rules banning Communists from office. Those under Stalinist influence, like the FBU, rejected the advice. *"The response of the FBU leadership"*, records the official history of the union, *"was that these publications had no relevance to the union and as such 'witch-hunting' could only weaken the working class."* (Forged in Fire, p198).

The big battle took place in the TGWU where Bevin's authoritarian successor, Arthur Deakin persuaded the union's Biennial Delegate Conference in July 1949 to prevent CP members from holding union office. Originally, the TGWU had gone on record opposing the 1934 'Black Circular', now it was in the fore-front of the

witch-hunt. Within six months, nine full-time officials were sacked, including Bert Papworth, who lost his position on the General Council. All lay officials had to sign a declaration before taking office. Incredibly, the left-wing 'Tribune' newspaper gave support to the witch-hunt: *"It is nonsense to denounce the TGWU's ban on communist office-holders as 'undemocratic'. The decision which, incidentally, also applies to members of the British Union of Fascists, was taken by more than two thirds of the conference delegates."* (15.7.49).

#### Witch-Hunt

Within two years, the 'Tribune' was reeling under the blows from a vicious witch-hunt within the Labour Party against the Bevanites.

As Jack Jones wrote: *"I shared their view (the active members) that the decision smelled of McCarthyism. Since a number of shop stewards in my district were communists I felt that the union could only be harmed by the decision. Some members did, in fact, leave the TGWU and join the ETU. Determined to be no party to victimisation, I managed to protect the shop stewards and they continued to function in my district."* (ibid, p133).

It was not until 1969, when Jack Jones became General Secretary, that the ban in the TGWU was rescinded. The ban had resulted in the removal of many leading figures in the London Bus Section, which resulted in an upsurge of unofficial action. The union bureaucracy came down hard,

which, after a whole series of skirmishes, the whole of the Dalston union committee and officers were debarred from office until the end of 1952/3. Although unofficial activity was successfully organised around the fortnightly 'Platform' journal, it never succeeded in creating a large scale rank and file organisation. *"This was due partly to the climate created by Deakinism..."* explains Ken Fuller (Radical Aristocrats, London Busworkers). The bureaucracy, through control of the apparatus, maintained a tight grip on the union.

The Cold War witch-hunt took on international dimensions with the rise of McCarthyism in America. In October 1945, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was formed, composed of 70 million members in 71 countries. Within two years it was split wide apart.

The initiative was taken by the then President of WFTU, Arthur Deakin, who rested on the British TUC and the American CIO. Deakin denounced WFTU at 1948 TUC as *"nothing more than another platform and instrument for furtherance of Soviet policy"*. The following January, the British, American and Dutch representatives walked out, and by the end of 1949 established the pro-Western International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

In Britain, unrest on the docks and on the railways set the scene for 1951. The new Labour Chancellor, Hugh Gaitskell, in the face of a new balance of payments crisis, introduced austerity measures, reducing the NHS budget by

£25 million. In the words of Ralph Miliband, *"the Budget served to crystallise an accumulation of discontents over the general drift of the Government's policy."*

This caused the resignations from the Government of Nye Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman. In the General Election on 25th October 1951, the Labour Party was defeated despite achieving its highest poll ever, with 13,948,605 votes or 48.8% of the total vote. The Conservatives, who formed the government, secured less with 13,717,538 votes or 48% of the vote.

#### Churchill

By the end of the year trade union membership had reached nearly nine and half million, of which eight million were affiliated to the TUC. True to form, with Labour's defeat, the trade union bureaucracy immediately entered into friendly relations with the new Churchill Government. In the words of the right wing historian Francis Williams, who praised *"the readiness of the trade unions to join with whatever Government is in power in search for a solution of problems."*

He went on to explain: *"This readiness was officially asserted by the TUC General Council immediately the Conservative Government took office in 1951."* (Magnificent Journey, p426).

This open class collaboration with the Tory Government coloured trade unionism for the following decade.

**Rob Sewell**

## Trotsky: The trade unions' role in the present epoch



The Trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, i.e., ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of people and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because objective conditions leave no room for any serious

and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

*(from Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay - Leon Trotsky)*



# The Great British Tradition



By Beatrice Windsor

## Gang fights and thievery

The War of the Roses was a row between the ruling elite which took the form of a long drawn-out gang fight. It was Edward III's fault. By the time of his death in 1377, he had married his children off to the heirs of the most powerful nobles in the land, thinking it would strengthen the monarchy.

It had the reverse effect - the Monarchy was not protected by the 'divine authority of God' as Edward thought, but by the blades and cutlasses of the Barony. They were rewarded for their loyalty by being given land, the means of producing wealth in the Middle Ages. But Edward's grand plan meant that more and more land was concentrated in the hands of the King's favourites. Also, the disastrous end to the Hundred Years War meant that lesser Barons could no longer be fobbed off with a nice Gite in France.

By the time Henry VI took the throne, there was a long queue of disgruntled Barons ready to slit his throat, with the Duke of York at its head. And so the war began. Bourgeois historians have since glorified what was in fact just a nasty spat between rival cut-throats. It was the dewy eyed romantic novelist Sir Walter Scott who gave it the grand title of the 'War of the Roses' 350 years later in the 19th Century.

Today, little 'Crossed Swords' litter OS maps, hinting at some great battle of ideals as the nation of Britain was forged on the anvil of history. Absolute nonsense of course - most of these 'battles' involved less people than your average Bank Holiday Monday punch-up. Indeed the first clash of the war, the Battle of St Albans was dismissed by the 19th century historian JS Davies as "a short scuffle in the street"!

By comparison the mass struggles of the peasants from 1381 through to the Kentish Rising have been obliterated from history - no statues, no plaques, no little crossed swords on maps for them.

The War of the Roses was no noble ideological crusade. All Barons changed side at least once; Henry VI was deposed, imprisoned, reinstated, deposed, imprisoned and finally murdered. But unbeknown to the Barons, while they plotted and schemed they were actually fulfilling the duties demanded of them by the motor of history.

As they liquidated themselves, so their stranglehold over society was loosened, allowing the new embryonic merchant class to perform a small but significant revolution; they were able to transfer land usage from arable production to wool production, and from that to the manufacture of textiles which could be traded with Europe.

The merchants were also strengthened by the opportunistic patronage of the House of York. The Yorkists were first to realise that more Geld could be made from trade for their war, rather than - as the Lancastrians thought - trying to bludgeon taxes out of the already impoverished masses.

By the end of the war in 1485 with Henry VII taking the throne beginning the reign of the Tudors, the nature of British society had changed fundamentally - the new wealth lay in trade and commerce.

The nascent capitalist class were further strengthened by the formation of the Church of England, established in opposition to Roman Catholicism. You're taught at school this was merely because the new king, Henry VIII, couldn't get a quickie divorce from the Pope. The actual issue however was inconsequential - it was the final straw in a long line of conflicts with Rome, and was the point at which England felt strong enough to declare its 'independence'.

While schoolchildren are taught the names of Henry's six wives, more important than his nuptial conquests was his dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536. The 'property of Rome' was confiscated and handed out to Henry's favourites - in the main the new merchant class, and his actions are with us to this day. As modern historian Charles Poulsen explains: "The loot of the monasteries was the foundation of the fortunes of many of the aristocratic families of our own time."

The capitalist class today like to present themselves as the pinnacle of civilised society. Yet the foundation stones upon which their system was built consist of gangsterism, theft, intrigue, terror and assassination.

Next month: the Catholic revolutionaries and the Cornish 'March for Jobs'

## The Upper Crust



## It's not what you know...

No wonder the Tories aren't worried about the high level of unemployment. They can all get jobs in the NHS! According to a survey over half the NHS trusts are chaired by people with Tory connections. In one trust 4 of the 5 non-executive directors are linked - one is married to a Tory MP and another is President of the local association.

More than 50,000 new management and clerical jobs have been created whilst 28,000 nurses jobs have been lost under the Tory reforms. This represents an increase since 1989 of 236% in managers as against a loss of over 5% of nurses. Management wages increased in the same period by 205% as against an increase of 23% for nurses. Over the last year spending on management cars tripled to £24 million. One trust boss sacked 600 workers and then gave himself a 33% pay rise bringing it up to £137,000 pa. The quality of these managers can be judged by the recent case of a hospital administrator who was sacked after it was discovered that she had bugged the phone of a consultant who had repeatedly criticised the methods she had been using! All this on the day a young NHS died from exhaustion after working an 86 hour week.

## That's Rich!

Every year the Sunday Times lists the 500 richest people in Britain. At a time when figures are showing ordinary people are earning less now than they were before the recession due to loss of overtime, wage cuts etc. these new figures show the rich are getting richer! Five years ago the top 200 "earned" £38 billion between them. Now it is £54.3 billion. Over 500 people now have more than £20 million each in their piggy banks as against less than 200 in 1989. Its a hard life for some isn't it!



# SOCIALIST APPEAL

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## Tory wage freeze must be defeated

# Defend Jobs and Services

**Every advanced capitalist country is attempting to solve the current crisis of capitalism by shifting the burden onto the backs of the working class.**

Increases in direct and indirect taxation are one method, massive cuts in public expenditure are another but above all, and inextricably linked to these methods, is the drive to push down workers' wages and conditions in an attempt to increase profits and compete more successfully on world markets.

Such methods are doomed to failure because cutting jobs, wages and conditions in all countries simply cuts workers' income and therefore demand and diminishes markets. It is important to understand the motivation and methods of the

ruling classes and their respective governments if the unions and the political parties of the working class are to fight back effectively against these attacks.

In Britain the employers' and the Tory Government's attacks on workers, and the public sector in particular, are as vicious if not more so than in any other advanced western country. In an attempt to reduce the £50 million budget deficit, which is a deficit of their own making based on failure to invest and short sighted economic policies, the Tories have launched a massive offensive against workers wages and conditions and against all the gains of the welfare state.

All workers are suffering increased taxation with VAT on fuel, increases in National

Insurance, a freezing of mortgage relief and so on. However on top of this public sector workers have been told that there is to be a three year wage freeze unless wage increases can be self financing. In simplistic terms this means sacking some workers with those left picking up the extra workload and sharing out the sacked workers wages to ensure the government do not foot the bill.

Add to this cuts in budgets to the various sections of the public sector, the closure of hospitals, mines, schools and so on and the picture doesn't look good.

### Privatisation

However, on top of all of this and linked to it is the question of privatisation or "externalisation" or market testing. Whatever fancy word they use it all means the same thing - hiving off sections of the public sector to private profiteers or, if that is not done, using the threat of privatisation to cut jobs, wages and conditions of public sector workers on the basis of having to undercut private competitors to save your job.

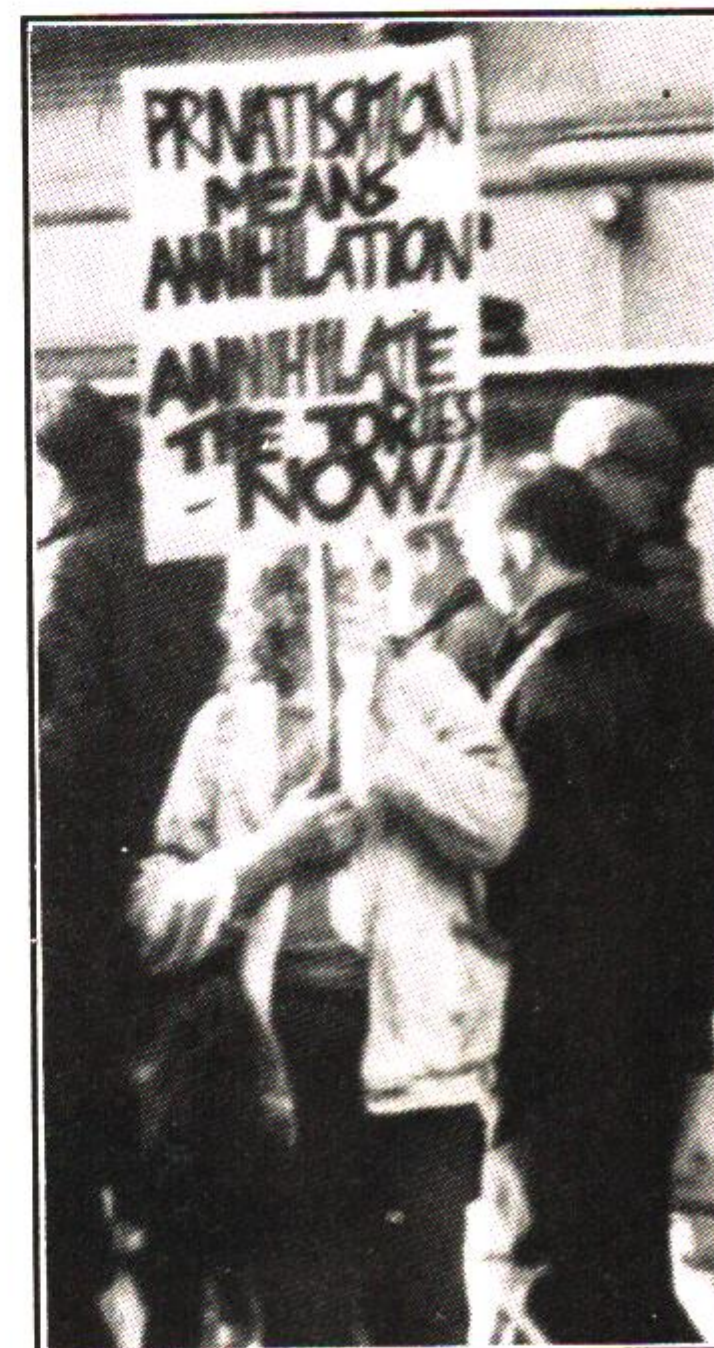
This phenomena has led to the obscenity of old peoples' homes, hostels for mentally ill people and centres for people with learning difficulties being run more and more by private companies primarily for profit. It has led to the utter farce of Group 4 operating an alleged security service in our prisons, it

has totally undermined health and safety which will be a problem multiplied tenfold as public services such as the railways and the mines are subjected to privatisation and taken over by private companies.

A superficial look however at the industries and the unions involved in these processes will make it clear that the potential to reverse these attacks is enormous: Local government, the health service, the civil service, telecommunications, post, the railways, the mines, water industry, gas, electricity and so on.

By far the most heavily unionised workforces in

(continued on page 6)



## Labour/TUC: Force the Tories Out!