



socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Currencies in chaos

Mad markets: Michael Roberts analyses what lies behind the crisis in the financial markets

Clause IV: In the run up to Labour's special conference get the arguments for socialism

Ireland: The Joint Framework Document - is it a solution?

Proportionality: Can 'quotas' solve the problems faced by women workers?

Engels and the trade unions

Issue 30 April 1995 price:one pound

Labour at the crossroads



This month's Special Labour Conference is of key importance. It is taking place at a time of profound crisis for the Tories and the prospects of a new Labour government. Under the banner of "modernisation" the right wing leadership are planning to ditch Clause Four and commit the party to a "dynamic market economy", ie. capitalism. The last time this was tried was in 1959 when the then leader, Hugh Gaitskell, wanted to abolish Clause Four, break the links with the unions and change the name of the Labour party. He also claimed he wanted to "modernise" the party.

However, Gaitskell failed, given the opposition from the rank and file. Will Blair succeed where Gaitskell failed? The capitalist press have whipped up support for Blair's campaign. He hopes to draw the unions behind this bandwagon, holding out the prospect of a Labour government. In fact, Blair has held a gun to the heads of Labour's rank and file: "Back me, or sack me!"

With these fears and the pressure of the party machine, the right hopes to win the day. If the present Clause Four is removed it will represent a set back for those in the Labour movement who stand by the ideas of genuine socialism. But it will certainly not be the end of the matter.

After more than 15 years of Tory government the mass of working people are looking to the Labour Party for salvation from their plight. The next Labour government will be faced with a tide of growing

expectations from all sections. On top of the desperation of the unemployed, there are millions of workers, particularly women, who have been forced to endure poverty wages. Victorian conditions in the workplaces are back with the return of illegal child labour. "A packing firm, *Independent Packaging Ltd.*, of Leek in Staffordshire", according to *The Independent*, "was ordered to pay more than £16,000 in fines after magistrates were told how children as young as 13 were operating unprotected razor-sharp machinery in its factory." (17th March).

Poorest

Since 1979 the income of the poorest families has fallen by 17%, as the richest gained 62%. A third of children are living in poverty. The Rowntree Foundation inquiry showed that the gap between rich and poor was the greatest since the Second World War.

The Tories have abolished the Wages Councils covering 2.5 million low paid workers. The Labour Party has produced figures to show that more than a million people in Britain earn less than £2.50 an hour, while 328,000 workers earned less than £1.50 an hour. Women workers are particularly affected by poverty wages, with 670,000 getting less than £2.50 per hour.

To counter this disgraceful state of affairs Labour has agreed to implement a minimum wage. But what will this minimum be? Labour's Social Justice Commission last year suggested a level of £3.50 per hour. But for a 40 hour week, this will mean only £140 before tax and insurance deductions! This level is truly pitiful. The TGWU have put

forward £4.15 an hour as a minimum. But even that would only mean £160 a week. What we have always meant by a decent minimum wage is a *living minimum wage*. In this day and age, a more realistic figure would be £6 an hour. However, Tony Blair has now indicated he doesn't want to put a figure on a minimum wage before the election. He even hinted that it should not be a national minimum, but varied from region to region. But why? Surely a decent minimum wage would rally the millions of low paid workers to support the Labour Party. But Blair says: "I do not believe you can set a minimum wage in the abstract from the economic circumstances." In other words, we cannot promise what the "dynamic market economy" cannot afford to give. Unfortunately, capitalism is incapable of eliminating poverty wages as it is based upon maximisation of profit at the expense of the working class. If capitalism cannot guarantee a decent minimum wage, a roof over our heads, a job for all, and a decent future for our children, then to hell with it! That is precisely why socialists have rejected the blessed "market economy", and argued for common ownership of the "commanding heights of the economy" as part of a socialist plan of production. This would generate the resources that could guarantee a decent living wage for all.

Prevarication

The prevarication of Tony Blair over the minimum wage, education, anti-trade union legislation and other issues has led to deep concern amongst activists. This would be reinforced by the comments of

Lord McAlpine, former Tory treasurer, who said: "I don't think you could put a razor blade between Tony Blair and John Major. There's never been a time when the politicians have been so close to each other..."

We have the prospects of a majority Labour government. The conditions which Labour will face will be more difficult than at any time since the inter-war period.

Internationally, the world economy will be sliding towards another recession. The crisis of British capitalism will be even deeper. There will inevitably be enormous expectations aroused by a Labour victory. We must avoid the mistakes of past Labour governments of calling for jam tomorrow and sacrifices today. "Those who do not learn from history will be doomed to repeat it." There will be massive pressures from the working class for change, while on the other hand big business will be demanding measures in its interests: wage restraint, cuts in spending, and the abandonment of meaningful reforms. It is essential that a Labour government carries out policies in the interests of working people. To guarantee working people a decent life, the resources will need to be generated to provide jobs, houses, schools, hospitals and decent pay. Only by taking over the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies which dominate the economy, can these aspirations be satisfied. This will create the necessary resources to provide these things. The anarchy of the "market economy" offers no way forward, only deepening crisis and cuts in living standards. Socialist planning is not a secondary option, but a vital component to a viable socialist economic policy. That is the significance of Clause Four.

Whatever the outcome of the special Labour conference, the prospect of a new Labour government will open up a new chapter. Our task remains to build up the Labour Party and prepare the ground for a struggle to commit Labour to a socialist programme. On the basis of experience, these fundamental ideas will capture the imagination and support of workers and youth throughout the Labour movement and society as a whole.

Contents

Issue 30

April 1995

- ❖ Editorial.... 2
- ❖ News..... 4
- ❖ NUT.....5
- ❖ Proportionality....6
- ❖ Clause Four....7
- ❖ NUS..... 10
- ❖ Pensions... 11
- ❖ Stress.... 13
- ❖ Currency crisis 15
- ❖ Ireland.....18
- ❖ Sales.... 20
- ❖ Italy..... 21
- ❖ Engels and the Trade Unions... 23
- ❖ Science....27
- ❖ Teamsters...30

Published by
Socialist Appeal,
PO Box 2626,
London, N1 6DU

Tel 0171 251 1094
Fax 0171 251 1095

Editor: Alan Woods
Business Manager:
Steve Jones

Urgent Socialist Appeal Ready for great leap forward!

With Issue 30, *Socialist Appeal* celebrates its third anniversary. In April 1992, in the run up to the general election, our first issue was hurriedly published. A lot has changed in the three years since. Major and the Tories have gone from electoral victors to the most unpopular government on record and we are poised for the election of a Labour government in the upcoming general election.

Socialist Appeal has also changed - we have striven to develop the content and production of the magazine. From the early issues, produced on a borrowed computer, until today, you can see the difference. But one thing has remained constant - the quality of the coverage and the depth of analysis over the 30 issues has made *Socialist Appeal* unique in the British labour movement today. In three years we have laid down a foundation for the ideas of Marxism we can be proud of.

Now we are poised to take our biggest step yet in the production of *Socialist Appeal*. We have already done a lot - we write, design and produce the artwork for the magazine using the most up-to-date technology. Recently we have embarked on a facelift that has been widely applauded - and led to increased sales. Text, photos and graphics are all

with in our control. But now we want to go one step further - to bring the whole production of *Socialist Appeal* in-house.

This idea has been long discussed but now we are in a position to take this bold step forward.

Print technology is going through rapid development and given the tradition we have established of utilising the very latest techniques, we aim to purchase a Canon high capacity printer/copier which will be able to produce *Socialist Appeal* in two colours, black and red, fully collated, at the click of a button.

In the future we will have the option of supplementing the machine with three other colours and increasing our print capacity with the addition of a further black and white unit. This technical leap is imperative - it will mean immediate financial savings that will be used to develop the magazine and its influence throughout the labour movement, it will mean a vastly reduced "turnaround" time - this means a lot less time between finishing the articles and getting the magazine out on the streets. In fact, the first copies can be ready for sale and dispatch only minutes after the last article is written!

This means a more up to date magazine and the ability to be more reactive to events. It even becomes easy to reprint with updated articles or different edi-

tions throughout the month.

Politically, too, this move is imperative. With the likely election of a Blair led Labour government, the whole political situation will be transformed and we need to be prepared for just such a situation. That is why we are taking this vital first step.

The editors of *Socialist Appeal* are therefore launching a Special Appeal for our press fund to urgently raise £5,000. We believe the machine can be installed and up and running in time for the May issue on the basis of a big down payment - but we need another £5,000 to complete the purchase. Every supporter, reader and subscriber should consider how much they can give to help us achieve this goal and rush their donations in.

We are confident that our next issue will be the first to be produced in-house - what better way for a Marxist journal to celebrate May Day, and that with your assistance we will continue to develop. The first three years have been a tremendous success. But it is the preparations that we make now, for the struggles that will inevitably develop in the coming years, that will really lay the foundation for the development of the ideas of Marxism.

**Rush your donations to
SA, PO Box 2626,
London, N1 6DU**

CPSA needs Left Unity victory

This year's elections offer a real opportunity for members of CPSA, the largest civil service union, to once and for all rid themselves of one of the most right wing leaderships in the trade union movement.

Masquerading under the title 'Moderate', Tories, Liberals and other right wing enemies of the labour movement have dominated the CPSA leadership for nine out of the last ten years, in spite of the fact that they have almost no supporters amongst the union's activists. All that is 'moderate' about these characters is their record of achievements. They have stood by whilst the civil service is decimated by cuts, market testing and privatisation, and members have been forced to accept a pay freeze when the union's top officials receive salaries three or four times more than the workers they are meant to represent. In contrast to this, under the banner of Left Unity, socialists in the CPSA have combined behind a joint slate of candidates for the 1995 national elections who combine experience with commitment to a democratic

union, dedication to serving members' interests, and a willingness to lead the union in a fight against the Tories' attacks.

A Left Unity leadership is what is desired by the majority of CPSA activists, and will work together with them for a pay increase that will make up the ground lost in the years of the Tories' public sector pay freeze, and go on the offensive against the backdoor privatisation and market testing which threatens tens of thousands of jobs. A Left Unity Executive will stand on democratic CPSA Conference policy—such as for affiliation to the Labour Party—and bring CPSA back from the right wing fringe into the mainstream of the TUC. Instead of fighting the Tories' anti-union laws, the so-called 'moderates' have taken advantage of them in order to attack the union's activists, and to refuse to support members in dispute with their employers. Left activists have raised allegations that General Secretary Barry Reamsbottom has cynically used the union's official channels to circulate misrepresentations

of Left Unity candidates to members in the same envelopes as their voting papers.

In spite of these alleged abuses, the closeness of voting in the past two years shows Left Unity can win. Socialist Appeal supporters in CPSA will be campaigning hard for a Left Unity victory and for the unification of the Broad Left and Broad Left '84 along with the independent lefts in the union into a single organisation.

Any opposition to this united front—either from the 'Democratic Left' (a right-wing split from the BL '84 which supports the 'Moderates') or from the small sectarian groups on the fringes of the Broad Left—will be seen by CPSA members and activists as assisting the right wing in the elections.

Disunity in the past has brought only defeat. Left Unity shows the way forward in CPSA and for trade unionists everywhere campaigning for a fighting leadership for their organisations.

Jon Rubidge
Branch Secretary CPSA
ES West Glamorgan &
Dyfed
(Personal Capacity)

Post Office attacks CWU

Union members have reacted with growing anger to the news that the Post Office intend using the Tory anti-trade union laws to try and cripple the CWU by seeking damages for unofficial strikes. They have already won a court case in which the union was fined £7,500 plus costs of over £100,000 over the stoppages in London last year. They are now seeking damages for 5 other disputes (Milton Keynes, Liverpool, Bristol, Cardiff and London again). It is understood that the total combined amount to be claimed will top £1 million. Here we can see the reality of the so-called impartial trade union laws and those who implement them. The trade union movement should stand up as a united force against these attempts by the Post Office and their friends at Westminster to cripple the union. It is a disgrace that Blair and the rest of the Labour leadership will not commit themselves to throwing out all these laws when Labour comes to power. These people should decide which side they are on.

Sheffield Council workers fight cuts

On March 10th, the day Sheffield City Council set its budget, trade unionists and service users held a demonstration and lobby of the Council. A call for a half day unofficial strike was taken up by some members. In libraries, where the main issue is an attempt to ditch their national agreements over Saturday payments, the strike was solid. The majority of libraries were closed and those that stayed open were staffed by managers.

Despite this show of strength, members realise that the situation in local government will continue to get worse until the union organises national action against the Tory government. A call for an emergency conference of public sector unions and Labour councils must be the first stage in this process. Sheffield Council eventually set a budget £4.5 million above the government's capping level but this still leaves services and jobs at risk. In reality this means the average council tax payer will face an increase of 13% and will receive a worse service than last year. Whilst Labour councils are prepared to make cuts and hike up taxes they will continue to take the blame for the Tory cuts. In Sheffield there is a real risk that the Liberals will make further gains in the May elections. If we are unsuccessful in getting action in the coming weeks workers will once again feel isolated in their fight against the cuts. A longer term strategy must be for a campaign in the autumn, prior to the setting of the SSA. This would have the effect of uniting all sections of the labour movement in a massive campaign which should include a call for a one day national strike of all public sector workers.

Ken Pickering,
Shop Steward, UNISON 2, Sheffield.

Manchester Marxist
Discussion Meetings
Wed 26 April 7.45pm Ireland
Wed 31 May 7.45pm Labour after
Clause IV
Slade Green Neighbourhood
Centre, Stockport Rd.,
Manchester

In Defence of Education!

Our annual conference meets at a time of enormous turbulence and unrest in the education sector. We have an opportunity of spearheading a massive movement of protest against the attacks on state education that this government is carrying out.

On March 21st we saw the angry response of teachers, parents and governors, delegations from every constituency, at a lobby of parliament. On March 25th thousands joined the Fight Against Cuts in Education (FACE) demonstration and showed the enormous potential for a mass movement of opposition to the cuts.

In every area of the country protests against the cuts in education have been organised. To their credit some councils have refused to abide by government imposed spending limits. In other areas school governors have refused to set budgets which would mean sacking teachers and other education staff. If all the Labour councils in the country united in active opposition to the Tory imposed budgets then the cuts could be defeated. Instead of meekly following government policy, it is time for councils to resist and join with public sector unions in active opposition. These people are elected by working class voters to defend our services not destroy them and workers redundant.

Our Pay Rise: a disgrace! 2.7% is a pay cut yet again!

Pay for a newly qualified teacher rises from £11,571 to just £11,883. Pay for a teacher with no extra responsibility after 7 or 9 years of service rises from £19,614 to £20,145. These rates are insulting to our members. Since 1974 average teachers pay has fallen in effect by 35% and the workload has increased to an enormous degree. Most teachers now regularly work 45 hours or more a week. We need to say to our members that we will fight for a fully funded pay rise of a minimum of £2,000 pa.

Flat rate increases should again be demanded by the union to reduce differentials and unite our members around a clearly defined demand. The cuts in education spending ordered by this Tory government cannot be allowed to proceed. Our school buildings are falling apart (as the recent NUT report showed), our conditions of work have deteriorated and our students in the schools are suffering.

Comprehensive education; properly funded and freely available for all has been the aim of the NUT: it is now under more attack than ever. Grant Maintained Schools (which will reintroduce selection), League Tables, Local Management of Schools (LMS)—all this has undermined the comprehensive system. A massive propaganda onslaught is taking place in schools. They are trying to indoctrinate students into

believing how wonderful private industry, the market and capitalism is and this is reinforced by much of the national curriculum. We need to make a stand against this.

The Labour party leadership has retreated on every policy that defends working people. The leadership is so far removed from the problems faced by ordinary people that we now have the spectacle of Tony Blair and Harriet Harman sending their children to Grant Maintained Schools and, even worse, Paul Boateng sending his children to a private school! This is an insult to members who have campaigned against private education, opting out and the other retrogressive acts of the Tories. Now we are seeing the backtracking of Labour's policies in regards to questions such as GMS just to accommodate Blair and his chums. The union should be fighting to ensure that the next Labour government is fully committed to a proper comprehensive education system.

We need as a union to join with other public sector unions to launch an active campaign to defend public services. The NUT should ballot for strike action now—lobbies of parliament are not sufficient. A series of massive demonstrations throughout the country could be realisable if the union leadership acted now. Conference should demand action along these lines. We should not just hang around and

wait for a Labour government in the hope that they will save us. Activists should be fighting for a socialist charter for education. We should remember the approach and boldness of the resolution carried way back in 1918:

"That education should be directed primarily to the strengthening of character, physique, and intelligence and secondarily and after the age of 16, to training for industry".

The TUC demanded:

1. *Nursery education available for all under 6 if desired by parents.*
2. *Universal full time education up to 16 and part time up to 18 (this at a time when 88% left school at 13).*
3. *Maintenance grants to all over 14.*
4. *Rise in salaries for teachers.*
5. *Employment of children under 16 to be prohibited and no person under 18 to work more than 25 hours per week.*
6. *All fees for secondary schools to be abolished.*
7. *Class size to be reduced to a maximum of 30 within 5 years.*
8. *No grants for military training in schools.*
9. *Universities to be opened to all classes."*

All this was called for by the movement in 1918. We could imagine a modern day version of this would generate enormous enthusiasm for a massive campaign for state comprehensive education. The aims of our predecessors were clear—and remain valid today. Our members and our students deserve nothing less from our union and the Labour movement.

**Bryan Beckingham
Oldham NUT President
NUT conference delegate (in personal capacity)**

Local government cuts: time to act!

As local authorities throughout the country set budgets for the coming year, they must also decide on the areas in which cuts must be made. Education takes up the largest share of council budgets and large spending cuts are being made in this area.

I work as a Special Needs Assistant (SNA) to children with learning difficulties. Our role is to provide one-to-one support and extra help to enable these children to be integrated into mainstream education. Our pay varies from area to area but can generally be described as appalling. The job offers little security—you never know if the job will still be there from year to year. Staff are being forced into short

term contracts which can be terminated if circumstances change. If the child they are working with is ill or otherwise away from school then their pay can be stopped; SNA's and Non-teaching assistants (NTA) receive no school holiday pay or sick pay. Payments of wages are often late with rates very low. This job can be very fulfilling but is usually under resourced—both in terms of equipment and materials but also in terms of time allotted to each child. SNA's often end up working extra unpaid time.

In many areas union officials have approached councils to say that in order to achieve the cuts required, NTA's and SNA's should be sacked first. This is hardly an act of

solidarity. All public sector employees should stand together to fight the cuts. Already services are cut to the bone and can stand no further cutbacks.

There are now very few Tory local authorities left and the government is becoming more and more fragile. This is the perfect time to act. Labour local authorities should stand alongside public sector workers and fight against the cuts. A serious struggle could be enough to bring the government down and force a general election and the victory of Labour. The prize is there to be fought for.

Ruth Fallon, Halifax

Proportionality: a way forward for women workers?

In an article pondering the value of International Women's day, *The Guardian* (6.3.95) showed that in 1993 women made up 49.5% of the workforce, but that still "the average female worker earns nearly 40% less than the average male worker." Choosing to ignore this statistic and focusing instead on social attitudes, it concluded that by the new millennium we should be able to celebrate an "Equality between the Sexes Day"!

A similar blithe disregard for economic reality and concentration on appearances characterises the very organisations which should be fighting for equality. It's clearly embarrassing for the 'modernisers' when TV coverage of conferences exposes the overwhelming male domination of the labour movement. Unfortunately, rather than adopting a fighting programme which would attract low paid women to join, both the Labour Party and the unions have gone down the road of 'quotas', or reserved seats, to increase the visibility of women in their ranks.

Manipulate

UNISON, the public services union, has perhaps gone furthest in its attempts to manipulate the presence of women in its structures. It has introduced a new concept in its structures and rulebook - proportionality. This is the "representation of women and men in fair proportion to the relevant number of female and male members comprising the electorate."

No-one could disagree with the aim of getting more women to come forward and act as stewards and branch officers. And no-one could disagree with UNISON's *Code of Good Branch Practice* which outlines organisational means of improving participation, assisting with childcare and carers support, etc. But nowhere in all the literature stressing the need to encourage

women, does the union put forward the kind of programme that most of its women members would really think important:

- a serious fight against low pay NOW, not at some eternally receding point in the future
- a minimum wage
- free, quality childcare for all who need it
- a nationally co-ordinated campaign of industrial action against cuts and privatisation of public services

Lip service

Proportionality pays lip service to the advancement of women in one public service union. The reality for its members is in stark contrast. "Women workers suffer most as councils tender out services," ran a recent *Guardian* headline, quoting an *Equal Opportunities Commission* report currently being edited. This shows a 21% drop in council manual jobs since Compulsory Competitive Tendering was forced through in 1988, a figure which "masks the effect on women because 97% of the jobs are done by them... In catering and cleaning 11,300 women's jobs had gone compared to 591 men's."

And apart from the job losses, "women workers have lost pay, employment and pension protection." The report concludes that amongst other causes "CCT has clearly accelerated job losses and has been the main cause of cuts in pay and conditions of service."

Where was, or is, the fight against compulsory tendering? The Labour leadership have been largely silent. NUPE, and now UNISON leave branches to fight alone as best they can. And whether jobs or conditions are saved at all depends randomly on a determined branch or regional official taking up the issue, generally through a legal battle on *Transfer of Undertakings*.

Women are not only the main victims in the workplace, they

suffer a double blow as the main consumers of public services for elderly relations, under 5s or school age children, etc. as these are relentlessly cut back. The figures in the EOC report undermines the thinking behind UNISON's equal opportunities policies.

Clearly, proportionality is not working in the interests of women members but acts as a career route for a tiny minority within the union. It offers the union's women members nothing in their fight against CCT and cuts. It is used by the union leadership as a 'radical' cover for its lack of activity over government attacks on public spending which disproportionately affect women employees.

Combined with UNISON's other innovative concept "fair representation" for manual and non-manual workers, race, sexuality and disability, reserved seats have become a recipe for divide and rule.

Reserving seats for one group can upset another. Reserving them for all denies the members the right to choose their representatives on the basis of ability, commitment and ideas. Quotas may mean incompetent or self-serving members get on a branch committee and be impossible to dislodge through elec-

tion. Part and parcel of this has been the introduction of so-called 'weighting'. Is a male manual worker worth more than a female white-collar worker? Is a black man worth more than a white woman? Who can adjudicate on such issues? And what have they got to do with a trade union's primary duty to fight for the terms, conditions and jobs of all its members?

Energy

Proportionality has meant that the energy of a branch can be dissipated in internal wrangling as different groups vie for positions. The fight against management can become less important than the fight against each other. No wonder the union officials appreciate the value of reserved seats!

There is no shortcut to equality and no alternative to the hard work of seriously addressing the issues which most affect women in order to get them to participate actively in the labour movement. For most women, there will almost always be something more pressing to do than attend a meeting - the dinner to cook, the children to see to - unless it directly touches their experience and promises a serious, concrete effort to improve their conditions. And not until the mass of women become involved will women activists develop in greater numbers. Reserved seats, presented by 'modernisers' as the solution to the under-representation of women, are in reality a harmful diversion from the true route to equality. And this is inseparable from the fight to transform society.

Elizabeth Short
Hackney UNISON
(personal capacity)



Arguments for socialism

In the build up to the Special Labour Party Conference a debate about socialism has taken place in nearly every corner of the Labour movement. Despite the Labour leadership's attempt to delete socialism from the constitution of the party, thousands of party workers have rallied to Clause Four.

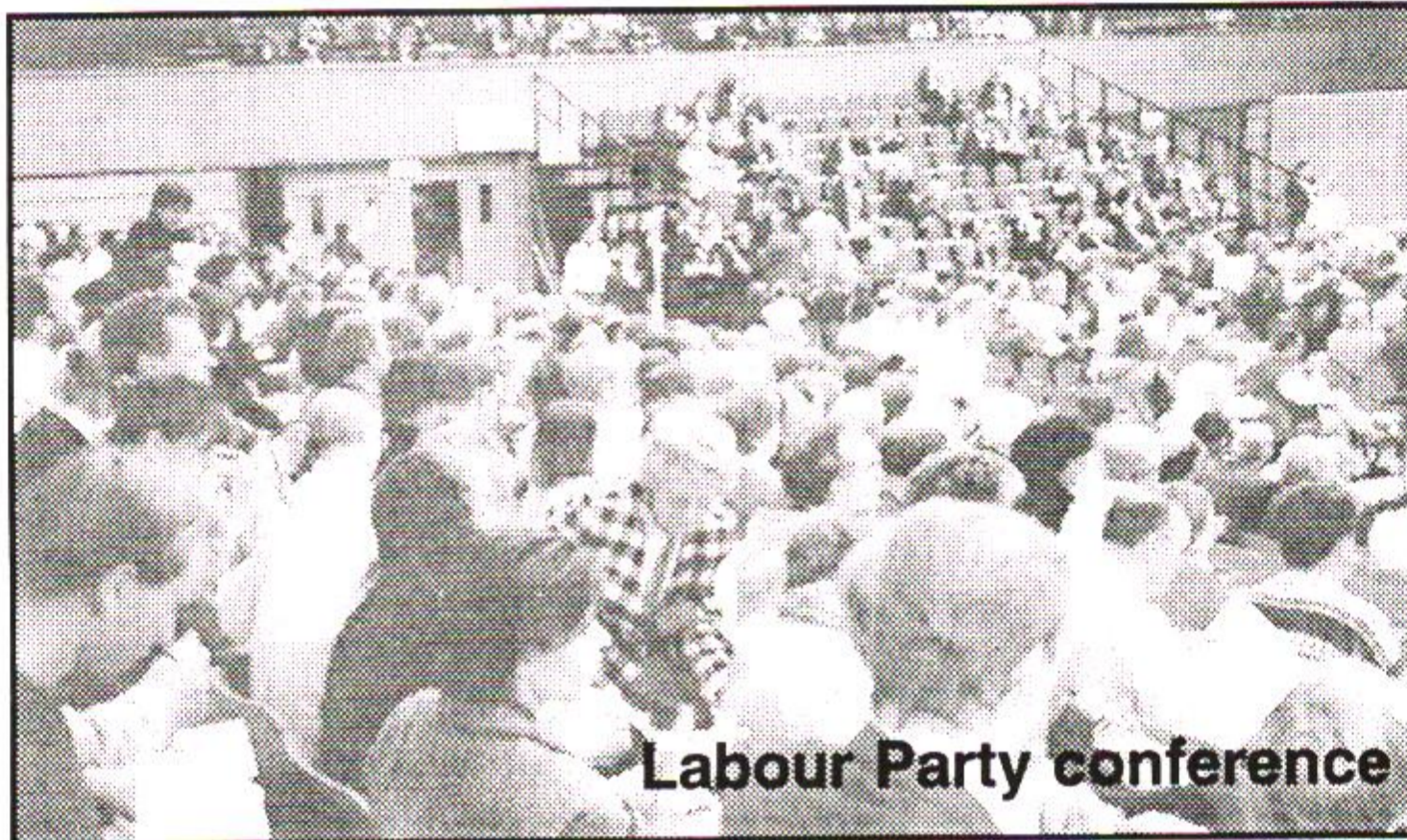
Tony Blair hoped that Clause Four would be dropped without any fuss. With the backing of the Establishment, he believed the left could be easily defeated, and the Labour Party committed, alongside the Tories and Liberals, to the "market economy", ie. capitalism. But, as with Hugh Gaitskell's attempt to ditch socialism, he has been met with stiff resistance from trade unionists and party members. The majority of local Labour Parties, where the issues have been debated, have come out in support of Clause Four. The trade unions would have followed suit if the issue had been democratically discussed at their annual conferences.

Fear

It was because of fear of this that Tony Blair has in effect made the issue a vote of confidence. He has held a gun to the heads of ordinary members: "back me and scrap Clause Four, or its the end for the party." Whatever happened to democratic discussion and debate? After more than fifteen years of Tory government, and a Labour victory in sight, a layer of party members are prepared to swallow a change to the party constitution to secure a victory at the general election. Every trick has been pulled to eliminate Clause Four: a spe-

cial conference before the union conferences, a farcical consultation with no option of keeping Clause Four, no amendments allowed to the NEC proposal, making it a vote of confidence, pressure from the party machine, etc. Given this situation, it is truly amazing that there is such a groundswell in support of keeping the commitment to socialism. Although, after a personal plea, the Scottish Labour Conference voted to back Blair, they also

However, the Labour leadership remains blind to this fact. At a time when privatised companies are profoundly unpopular, the leadership has thrown away a golden opportunity to explain the case for public ownership. The leadership's alternative proposals are contradictory platitudes which attempt to face in a number of directions. However, the heart of their revised constitution is to pledge the party to capitalism. The Tory press has been jubi-



Labour Party conference

passed a motion reaffirming its "support for common ownership", and the renationalisation of the public utilities.

It is a myth that Clause Four is "unpopular" or a "vote loser" - except amongst big business. Even a Gallup poll in January asked a sample of 1,142 voters whether they were "broadly in agreement" with the words of Clause Four. "Yes", said 37%; "no" said 28%; 35% didn't know. Given the fact that there has been no public campaign over the issue, and the media has backed Blair's stance, this is an incredible result. It shows that if the ideas of genuine socialism were forcefully explained, they could win an overwhelming majority.

lant that Blair has proposed the abandonment of socialism. According to the *Financial Times* editorial: "Mr Blair was right to.... convince the electorate that it had embraced the market economy.... The party leadership long ago abandoned the central vision of Clause 4: a socialist utopia in which the state appropriated and then distributed the fruits of economic growth. The reluctance, however, of many members to abandon formally a credo framed during the Bolshevik revolution symbolised an emotional attachment to the politics of the past." And concludes, "Mr Blair has set off in the right direction." (14th March, 1995). The capitalist media has fully

backed Blair's changes, hoping to push him to challenge the existing trade union links. The right-wing LCC have already raised this issue, urging the leadership go all the way and turn the party into a version of the US Democrats. Any move in this direction would provoke open civil war in the Labour movement. But what is the Blair leadership offering? Common ownership as envisaged by Clause Four has been discarded

in favour of "a dynamic economy", where "the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition", together with "partnership and co-operation", produces the "wealth of the nation". It goes on to praise the virtues of "a thriving private sector", where what's left of the public sector is publicly owned or made "accountable". In other words, the party is being asked to pledge itself lock, stock, and barrel to capitalism. Economic policy should be tailored to promote the "market economy", while public services form the "mixed economy" ie., under the dictates of the giant monopolies.

The leadership no longer supports public ownership, except for a few public utilities. The 'commanding heights' of the economy, the major monopolies, banks and insurance companies, are to be left in private hands. This is no different from pre-Thatcher Toryism. In fact, Ted Heath's government would appear more radical, as it at least nationalised Rolls Royce in 1971!

The Labour Party was formed not to sing the virtues of capitalism and private profit, but to implement policies in the interests of working people. Above all, to solve the problems of unemployment, homelessness, poverty, and exploitation. The party realised in 1918 that these problems were a product of capitalism itself, and therefore adopted Clause Four.

Unemployed

Despite the last 75 years these problems still persist. There are in reality four million unemployed. How is this problem going to be solved? The character of unemployment is 'structural', or permanent. Even in a

boom mass unemployment still remains. This arises from the organic crisis of British and world capitalism at the present time. There are 50 million on the dole in the main capitalist countries. The unemployed want solutions not platitudes about "opportunity" and "potential". Unfortunately, the Labour leaders have abandoned the programme of full employment. The impasse of capitalism is demonstrated by the fact that cuts and counter-reforms are taking place in all the capitalist countries. The system cannot afford the welfare state and the reforms of the past. There is no other way on the road of capitalism. In Sweden, once the model of the leadership, the Social Democrats are engaged in a programme of savage cuts. The same is true in Belgium, Greece, Italy, Spain and elsewhere. Unless the 'commanding heights' of the economy are taken over and planned in the interests and needs of the majority, mass unemployment

pay rise, taking his salary to £763,000. According to the *Financial Times*, "He will also receive an as yet undecided number of shares from the company's long-term performance plan."

But the Labour leaders don't want to put a figure (what are they afraid of?) on the level of a minimum wage. For the working class, this system has always meant 'jam tomorrow', while the bosses make a bonanza. The Blair statement of principles talks of delivering people from "the tyranny of poverty", but how is this to be achieved? Poverty has got worse and worse. The gap between rich and poor has continued to widen. This is not due simply to greed (although it is a key factor), but arises from the class nature of society. The owners of the big monopolies run them to maximise their profits and increase their personal wealth. If workers get more wages, the bosses get less profits; and vice versa.

break down. The main reasons for the present record low number of strikes is not due to co-operation, but the brutal regimes that operate in the workplaces and the lack of leadership prepared to struggle.

The NEC's statement does not challenge capitalism in any shape or form. On the contrary, it seeks to work within it. However, that is in complete contradiction to the interests of working people, given the problems they face. We would all like to "live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect". But this cannot be achieved when society is geared to profit, privilege, power and prestige. And this cannot be changed as it arises from the class nature of society, where the levers of economic power are held by a tiny handful of millionaire tycoons, and run in their interests. A leopard cannot change its spots. Capitalism is based on the profit motive; and not on production for need. It can never satisfy the needs of the working class, on the contrary, it is based upon the exploitation of the working class and the production of surplus value for the bosses.

Crises

Because capitalism functions in this way, it enters into periodic crises which takes society into a blind ally. Building workers are thrown on to the dole, while millions are homeless or live in slums. Factories, offices and pits are closed down, and working people are thrown onto the scrap heap - all in the name of efficiency and private profit. Despite the many things that are needed to be done, workers are kept in enforced idleness. It has been estimated that the wasted production through mass unemployment amounts to over £50 billion annually. This anarchy of capitalism is the economics of the madhouse.

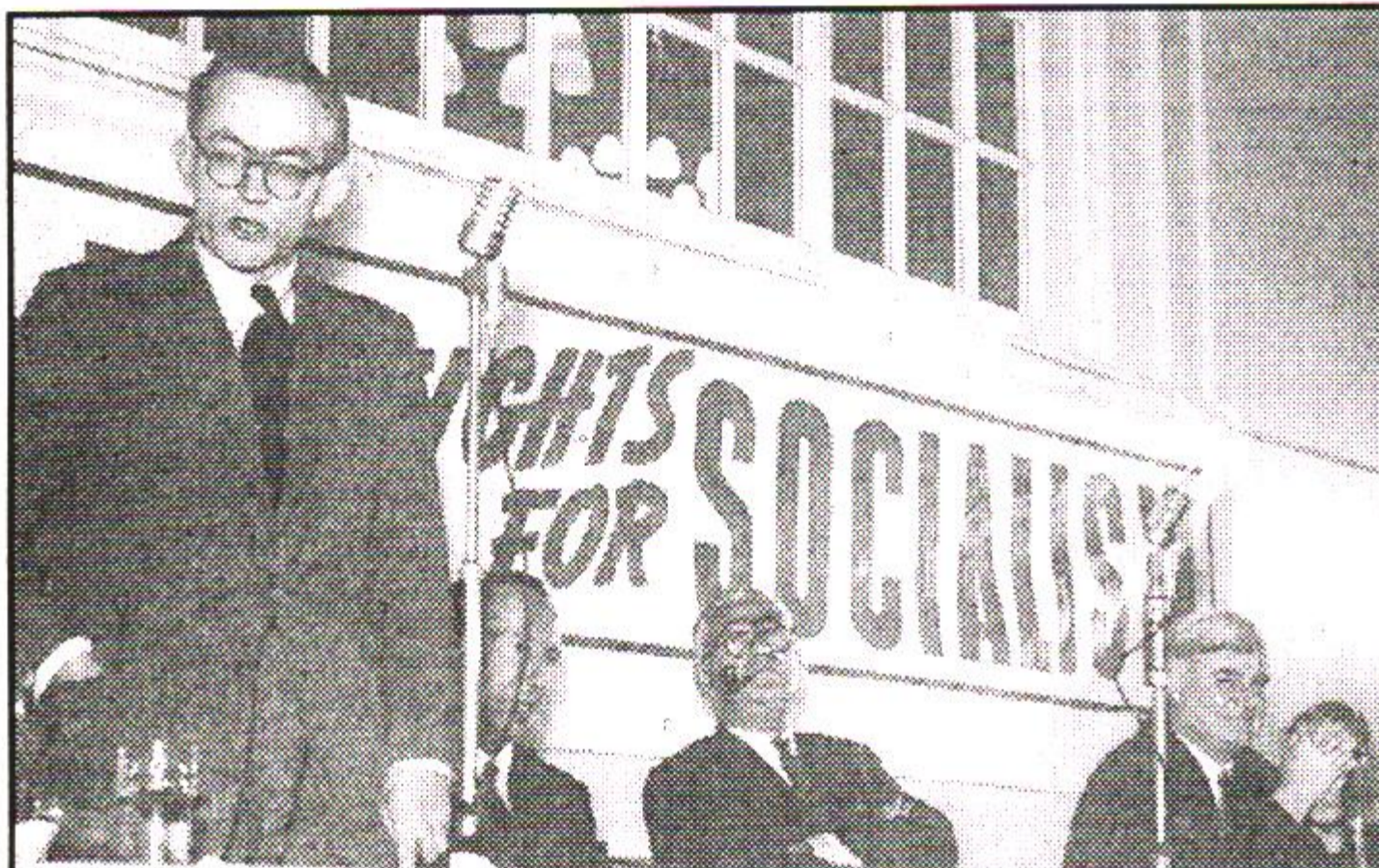
The debate over Clause Four is not academic or sentimental, but is of decisive importance for working people. It represents the only concrete solution to our problems. The next Labour government will be faced with colossal problems after sixteen years of Toryism and a new world downswing of capitalism. Millions of workers and middle class people will be

looking to Labour to solve its problems. If Labour fails to satisfy these aspirations, it will lead to disillusionment and open the way to defeat. That has been the lesson of all past Labour governments.

History

The task of Labour and trade union activists is to learn the lessons of history. If not, we will be doomed to repeat them. That is something we can ill afford to do. It is an iron law: you cannot plan what you don't control, and you don't control what you don't own! If Labour is going to tackle the terrible problems that are faced by workers, then it cannot rely upon the "market" which produces these problems, but has to take control of the commanding heights of the economy. This can only be achieved by taking over the major monopolies, bank and insurance companies that dominate 85% of the economy. To believe we can simply encourage or induce these monopolies to act in a rational manner is living in cloud cuckoo land. As Lord Stokes, once chairman of British Leyland, once said: "I am in business to make money, not to make cars"! That sums up the whole attitude of big business. If that means redundancies and cuts, so be it. The British car industry has been butchered, but, boasts the *Financial Times*, it has "the lowest motor industry labour costs in the developed world" (16th March, 1995). Not content with this, it continues: "UK productivity is among the worst in Europe." This will be the lash to drive British car workers to work harder than ever before. It is the same message across British industry.

The aim of the Labour Party is to fundamentally change society, not to rescue capitalism. The only way Labour can transform the lives of working people is to transform society on socialist lines. There is no middle way. All the past attempts to plan capitalism have failed abysmally. The interests of the top directors and financiers decide policy. When their interests are threatened, they organise economic sabotage to force governments to tow their line. Harold Wilson admitted this in his memoirs, when in 1966 he was threatened by the governor of the Bank of



Foot and Bevan argue for socialism, 1957

will persist, despite the intentions of the Labour leaders. Again, millions of workers are suffering from poverty wages and benefits. Only a minimum living wage of £200 a week can help to tackle this problem. But capitalism cannot afford this reform, as it is based upon private profit.

Obscene

Capitalism can only afford obscene salaries for the boards of directors, with their half million pound wage packets and their million pound perks. Of course, these parasites are worth every penny! Take the case of David Simon, chief executive of British Petroleum, who recently received a 24%

Profits come from the unpaid labour of the working class. That is why the bosses are continually trying to drive down wages and worsen conditions. That is a law of capitalism. Far from producing "harmony", there is an accumulation of bitterness, resentment and frustration on the shopfloor and in the workplace generally. The talk by the NEC of "partnership" in a "dynamic" market economy can never be implemented due to the class nature of society. No amount of tinkering with capitalism can alter this fact. The interests of the capitalist class and the working class are completely opposite. Even if temporary agreements are carried through, they inevitably

England. Only on the basis of a bold socialist programme can workers interests be satisfied. Even if, on the basis of loyalty and the need to close ranks to secure a Labour victory, the leadership succeed in replacing Clause Four, although a set-back, it will not mean the end of socialism. Far from it! *The Economist* is deeply concerned about how the rank and file of the party will react in the future. It says, "Behind their altar of Clause Four their New Jerusalem lies. They seek a transformation to a radically different country. A changed structure of ownership is, for them, an essential means to a wholesale restructuring of economic and social relationships.

"Their politics can never be satisfied by Mr Blair's progressive pragmatism. So, even if he wins his votes, the left will be back. It will be back at party conferences, try-

ing to restore Clause Four. It will be back under a Labour government, exploiting the inevitable disappointment with its performance to argue for more active socialism." (11th March, 1995).

It is this perspective that frightens the strategists of capital. As long as the Labour Party remains the political expression of the trade unions, it will come under pressure from working people to transform society in their interests. Far from removing socialism from the agenda, it will re-emerge in a far more powerful fashion. In the big events that lie ahead, the Labour Party will be transformed into a party that will ultimately carry through the socialist reconstruction of Britain. Whatever happens in the immediate future, the battle is far from over: in fact, it is just beginning.

Dave Simms

Blair's Statement of Party Principles

1) The Labour Party is a democratic socialist party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we achieve alone so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few, where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe, and where we live together, freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect.

2) To these ends we work for:

- * A dynamic economy, serving the public interest, in which the enterprise of the market and the rigour of competition are joined with the forces of partnership and co-operation to produce the wealth the nation needs and the opportunity for all to work and prosper, with a thriving private sector and high quality public services, where those undertakings essential to the common good are either owned by the public or accountable to them.
- * A just society, which judges its strength by the condition of the weak as much as the strong, provides security against fear, and justice at work; which nurtures families, promotes equality of opportunity and delivers people from the tyranny of poverty, prejudice and the abuse of power.
- * An open democracy, in which government is held to account by the people; decisions are taken as far as practicable by the communities they affect; and where fundamental human rights are guaranteed.
- * A healthy environment, which we protect, enhance and hold in trust for future generations.

3) Labour is committed to the defence and security of the British people, and to co-operating in European institutions, the United Nations, the Commonwealth and other international bodies to secure peace, freedom, democracy, economic security and environmental protection for all.

4) Labour will work in pursuit of these aims with trade unions, co-operative societies and other affiliated organisations, and also with voluntary organisations, consumer groups and other representative bodies.

5) On the basis of these principles, Labour seeks the trust of the people to govern.

What do the Right Wing think of Public Ownership?

In all the debates over Clause Four, it is ironic that the right wing have attempted to discredit public ownership by comparing it to Morrisonian nationalisation. Originally, the right wing were in favour of this form of bureaucratic nationalisation, where workers' control and workers' management were deliberately excluded. Now, in order to throw out common ownership, they do a complete somersault using the bureaucratic model as a stick to beat Clause Four.

But the problem with the old style nationalisation was not simply its bureaucratic character and the lack of any accountability by the working class. It only affected the then unprofitable or bankrupt industries: coal, railways, steel, etc. The profitable industries were left in private hands. John Prescott admits this in *Labour Party News*:

"Labour took industries into public ownership not just to make them publicly accountable, but because they were under-invested, bankrupt and failing the national interest."

The state was simply used to take the burden of those industries which were in crisis - and to grant massive over-compensation to the former

owners!

As a result, even at its height, the public sector only accounted for 20% of the economy. While the private sector accounted for 80%. Thus the private sector would always dominate the state sector.

So what does Labour's right propose? They see public ownership as a safety net for the "market economy". In the words of Robin Cook: "The other appropriate role for public ownership is remedying market failure, in order to support the commercial sector of the economy. Intervention through public ownership in such circumstances is not a threat to a thriving private sector but a necessary complement to it." Therefore public ownership has nothing to do with socialism, but simply regulation and fine tuning of the capitalist system. Even big business can live with this idea. In fact, nationalisation has been carried out by right wing governments in France, Germany, Italy, the USA, and elsewhere. Labour's right wing want to take the party down this harmless channel, where big business can sleep soundly in their beds at night without any fears from a Labour government.

What is Socialism?



In Defence of Clause 4

OUT NOW!

Order your copy now, by sending cheque/PO for £1.30 made payable to 'Socialist Appeal' to 'Socialist Appeal', POBox 2626, London N1 6DU

S
U
S

Students need socialism

In a recent survey by the NUS it was revealed that "26% of sixth formers said that worries over debt would prevent them from applying to university." The survey also showed that students "are more likely to graduate with debts totalling £8,000 including bank and student loans."

According to the *Scotsman* newspaper, "more and more students are being forced to take up part-time work to help pay their way through college... it goes on essentials like food, electricity bills and rent." A survey carried out by Oxford's

Brookes University found that as many as 57% of students in second and higher years were in regular part time employment. The study also showed that hundreds of students were graduating with a degree a class lower than they might have expected had they not had a job. One student who was forced to give up his part time job because of the detrimental effect it was having on his health, studying and social life describes his job: "what I had to do was sit for 12 hours in an empty building for two weeks and guard it.. I was very poor at

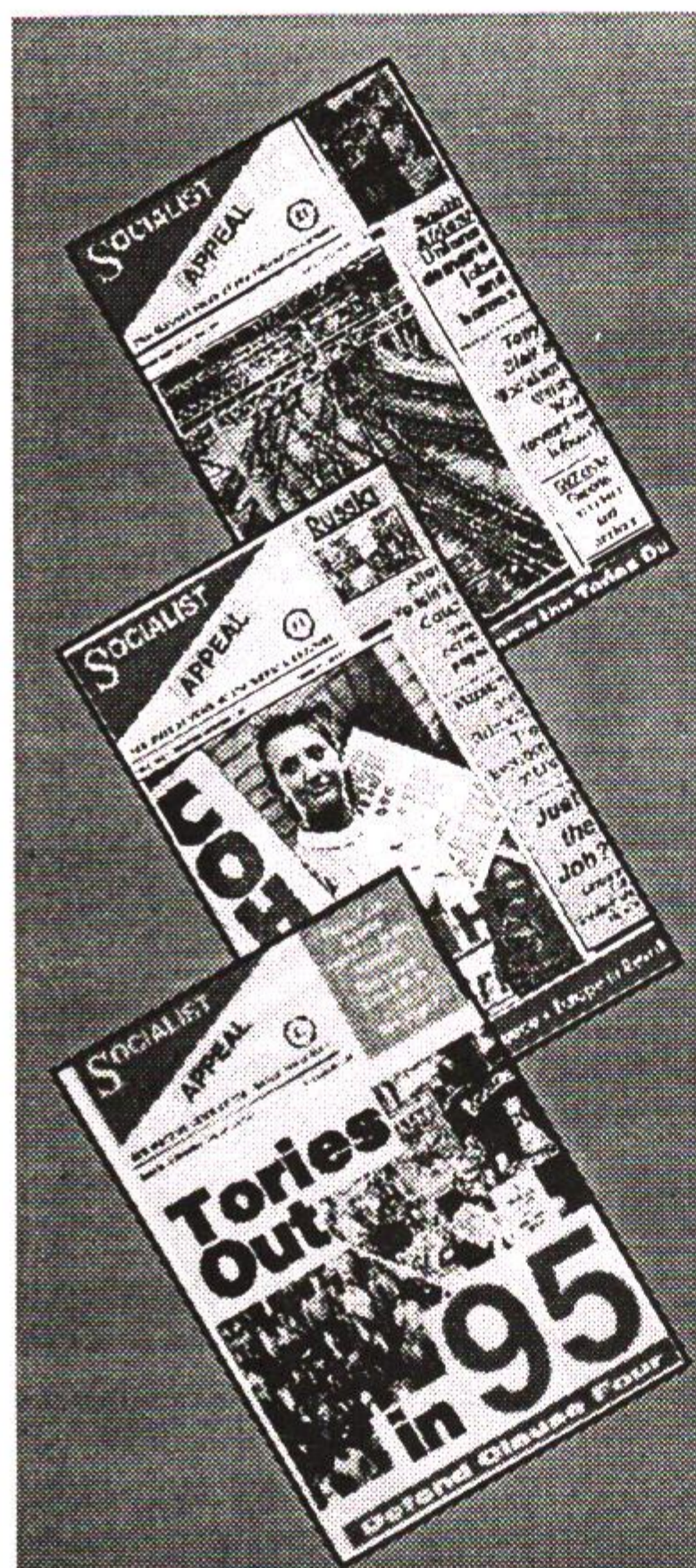
the time and needed the money... I had to keep on doing the job over term time and I tried to do it throughout the entire winter of my second year and my work was suffering. I spent the nights in a former old folks home with no toilet and only a chair in it." This is a typical example of the exploitation of students who are forced to take up part time work in order to survive at university. The wages of young workers range from as little as £1 per hour to £4 per hour. According to a survey carried out by the GMB 80 per cent of young workers earn below £4 per hour.

Students are forced to take such low paid work because the grant currently set at £39.23 per week is much less than the state recognised minimum to live on.

At a recent demonstration in London 30,000 students demonstrating against the savage cuts in grants, Jim Murphy, NUS President, said that "students are being pushed close to the edge." Because of the appalling social conditions faced by students, Labour Students should launch an immediate campaign within the NUS to get the NUS to affiliate to the TUC in order to link up with the struggles of young workers and the labour movement generally. A campaign launched by the labour movement for a living grant, restoration of housing benefit, a minimum wage and full employment would gain an enormous echo amongst students and young workers at the present time. Only the election of a Labour government committed to socialist policies can provide a real solution. This is what students must fight for.

Steve Forrest

Subscribe... Subscribe... Subscribe...



Get the Marxist voice of the labour movement

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.

Socialist Appeal has become indispensable reading for every worker wanting to understand what's really going on and help prepare the movement for the battles that lie ahead.. Subscribe today!

I want to subscribe to Socialist Appeal starting with issue number..... (Britain £15 / Europe £18 / Rest of World £20)

I want more information about Socialist Appeal's activities

I enclose a donation of £..... to Socialist Appeal's Press Fund

Total enclosed: £..... (cheques/PO to Socialist Appeal)

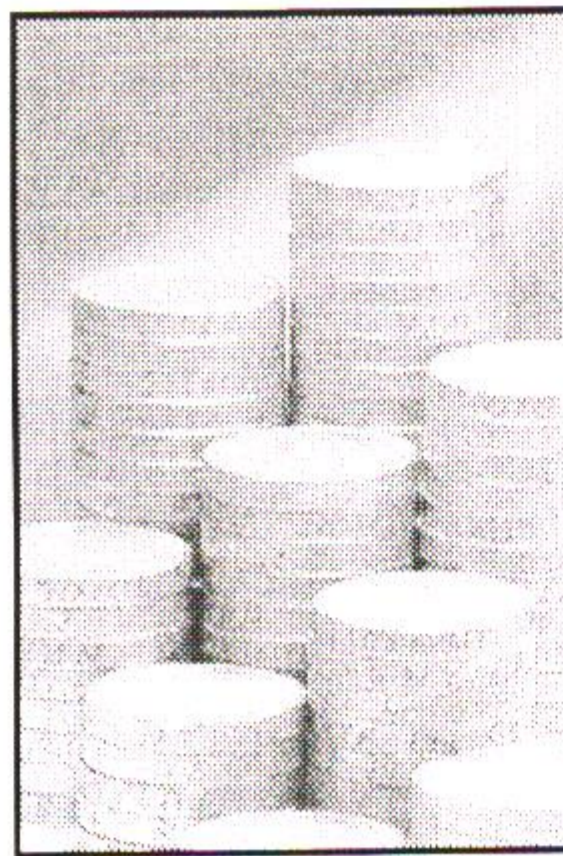
Name..... Address.....

..... Tel.....

Return to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Mick Brooks investigates...

The great pensions swindle



Buried in the small print of the Pensions Bill going through Parliament is a new attack on the pensions we all pay for and are all entitled to. The value of the State Earnings Related Pensions (SERPS) is to be halved again after being halved before by the Tories in 1988. By the year 2040 the government will be spending £10 billion on SERPS instead of the £19.5 billion projected after the 1988 cutbacks.

This means that a worker retiring in 2000 will get £2.50 a week less for a benefit they paid for - and this will get worse every year after. Occupational pensions are usually contracted out of SERPS but the government underwrites their value. So the 11 million people in occupational schemes will be hit too.

The basic state pension currently stands at £57.60 per week. This is so low that 4 million pensioners get a top up from Income Support to be able to get by. But one in three pensioners entitled to a top up don't get it - because of pride, ignorance or the demeaning bureaucracy of the social security system.

Poorest

You can't live on a basic state pension - 3 million of our pensioners are among the poorest one fifth of the population, living below the poverty level. Since 1982 the link indexing state pensions to average earnings has been broken. Pensions now go up at the same rate as prices which is usually lower. If the link had been kept the state pension would now be £76.70 - nearly £20 a week more. The pension is now just 16% of average earnings. If this trend goes on it will be worth 7% of earnings by 2020. Michael Portillo rightly describes this as 'nugatory'. -Tory speak for

meaning 'bugger all'. What is going on? Our state pension system is a 'pay as you go' system. The present generation of workers pays for the present generation of pensioners. The deal is that you know that the next generation of workers will do the same for you one day. In effect the National Insurance System acts like a piggy bank - saving up for times in our life that are likely to be hard otherwise. The Tories argue that this won't work any more because people are living longer, the average age is increasing and there will be more and more pensioners to be supported by a declining population of working age. This is the so-called 'demographic time-bomb.'

Funded systems

Their answer is to move to a funded system of pensions. The present generation should save up for their pensions so there will always be money in the kitty. Coincidentally this involves scrapping the state pension and millions of workers throwing money at the Tories pals in the City for them to play with. They can't move to a funded system all at once - a move from pay as you go to a funded system would then mean that the present generation of workers stops paying the current pensions and leaves current pensioners with no means of support; or the present generation of workers pay twice - once for current pensioners and then for themselves. So instead the Tories hack away at existing state provision so as to drive us into the hands of their friends in high finance.

The demographic timebomb is myth. The proportion of the population of working age has actually gone up over the last century. In 1870 60% of the population was of working age; in 1987 it was

67% - more than two thirds. True, the proportion of pensioners has gone up from 5% to 14%. Encouraged by these figures employers have awarded themselves contribution holidays - in other words many have stopped paying in.

Juicy

Takeover merchants have been licking their lips at these juicy occupational funds. When APV acquired Baker Perkins engineering for instance they used the merger to change the rules and stop paying in until 2002. At the same time they reduced benefits for the workers.

The trouble with occupational schemes is that you lose out if you move jobs. Long standing workers can be locked into the 'golden handcuff' even if they want to make the change. They give a comparatively decent pension to a minority of relatively secure, mainly male, full time workers. You can't live on the state pension and with PPPs 'retirement income' has become a game of roulette which few

comprehend (Will Hutton, *Guardian* 6.2.95)
So what's the alternative? Labours Social Justice Commission proposes that there should be a minimum pension guarantee. The Commission accepts that the basic state pension will keep people below the poverty line. So everyone should have a second pension - through SERPS, an occupational scheme or a private plan.
The Borrie Commission has hit on the fact that since the basic pension is below Income Support level (currently £64.00 plus housing costs) the government doesn't actually save much money by not putting pensions up to keep pace with incomes. People on the basic state pension are entitled to a top up anyway. That is why SERPS was introduced in the first place. Their guarantee would take all pensioners over the Income Support level. Generally the Social Justice Commission is wrestling with the reality which they recognise that there will never be full employment again as long as the capitalist system survives. In Borries view workers must therefore scale down their expectations since capitalism can no longer guarantee a decent living standard for all. But that is exactly why we can no longer afford capitalism!

Take over

Some on the left argue that we don't need to take over the big industrial and financial companies. After all we own them already! All we need to do is to make that ownership a reality by democratising pension funds. If we control where the money goes we can insist on socially useful production instead of the anarchy of capitalism.



Now the reason capitalist firms mistreat animals and muck up the environment, and exploit workers is because that is how they make money. Workers in pension funds will not thank you if you lob their money at projects that don't pay off. To make socially useful production pay requires a change in the system. Only when priorities are determined by a rational plan will it be possible to reorient production to social use.

Pension funds will have a role to play in a social transformation. At present they are mobilised by fund managers to prop up capitalist corporations. When the banks that organise these funds are socially owned they can be directed into socially useful channels.

Campaign

The unions are right to campaign for the democratisation of pension funds. Pensions are pay. The reason they need to be made accountable is as a check against the scams that are endemic to capitalism. Pensioners with Hampshire County Council, Blue Circle, Inchcape, W H Smith and many

others have had their funds entrusted to the tender care of Baring's Nick Leeson and will be holding their breath to see if they get their money back. The Tory Pensions Bill also raises the retirement age for women to 65 years, the same as for men. This again represents a big blow for women who are entitled to a bit of a break in their old age. Under the legislation a twenty year old woman will lose £15,000 retirement income at today's prices on account of the change.

What should have been proposed of course is to reduce men's retirement age to the same age as women's. With real unemployment at over 4 million the workforce should be cut down, not bumped up.

Again the chorus will come from the Tories that "we can't afford it". But the retired and all those of us who intend to retire one day, can't afford them and their system. It doesn't cost any less to eat, dress, put a roof over your head or travel just because you're retired. Retired workers need a wage just like everyone else. We have seen that John Hills of the LSE has estimated



that it would cost five per cent of today's National Income to pay all the extra people who will retire between now and the year 2040 a basic state pension related to overall income -not just going up with prices, so as to just about keep your head above water

Growth

The British capitalist economy has had a 'trend rate of growth' of about two and a half per cent since the industrial revolution. In

other words we are just talking about two years' capitalist growth. Yet they try to tell us they can't afford this. A socialist planned economy can guarantee a steady growth at a much higher level, providing, we use all our human and technical resources. In doing so we can certainly give people who have worked all their adult lives the decent standard of retirement they expect and deserve.

In Defence of Marxism

The first title in our *In Defence of Marxism* series, *Marxism in Our Time*, answers those "experts" who, after the collapse of Stalinism, pronounced Marxism dead. With a major new introduction by Alan Woods and Ted Grant the pamphlet represents a brief but brilliant exposition of Marxism and its burning relevance to the struggles of workers today.

Marxism in our Time by Leon Trotsky
To order your copy simply send a cheque/PO for £2.50 made payable to **Socialist Appeal** to:
Socialist Appeal,
PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

The ABC of Materialist Dialectics
To order your copy simply send a cheque/PO for £1.30 made payable to **Socialist Appeal** to: PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

The second title in the series is *The ABC of Materialist Dialectics* which contains Trotsky's classic article, and is a clear and concise explanation of Marxist philosophy, as well as a new introduction by Socialist Appeal editorial board member Rob Sewell and an appendix by John Pickard.

The third in the *In Defence of Marxism* series, looks at the situation in Ireland after the IRA ceasefire. Essential reading for every activist!

After the Ceasefire - Ireland: a Marxist Analysis
To order your copy simply send a cheque/PO for £1.30 made payable to **Socialist Appeal** to: PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Where is China Going? by Alan Woods
Send a cheque/PO for £1.30 to **Socialist Appeal**, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

Number four in the series, gives a key analysis of the current situation in China.



Capitalism can seriously damage your health

Barbara Humphries looks at what lies behind the explosion in work related stress in 1990s Britain

Workplace stress is on the increase. It has become an important issue for the trade unions. UNISON for instance has recently sued an employer, the Blyth Valley Social Services, for stress to an area manager who had a nervous breakdown following a massive increase in his workload.

The Labour Research Department has issued a pamphlet advising trade unionists of the symptoms of stress and how to deal with it. The LRD claims that 31% of all workers in the UK suffer from stress at some time from their work and that it is the third largest cause of all sick leave. The European Foundation for Living and Working Conditions claims that 48% of workers in the European Union have faced stress. The results cost £1.3 billion in the UK annually according to the GMB.

Chronic

Symptoms of stress include chronic fatigue, apathy, inability to sleep, irritability, depression, back pain, abuse of alcohol and digestive problems. In the most extreme cases it can cause increased vulnerability to accidents as the person suffering from stress takes more risks, and death from heart disease. The causes of stress include long working hours, impossible workloads, lack of control over work patterns, boredom from a repetitive job and little prospect of promotion. In some jobs there is the fear of violence from the public and isolation from other colleagues. Also employees who

are increasingly being asked to take on tasks against their professional ethics eg. doctors having to deny patients treatment because of the internal market in the NHS face stress.

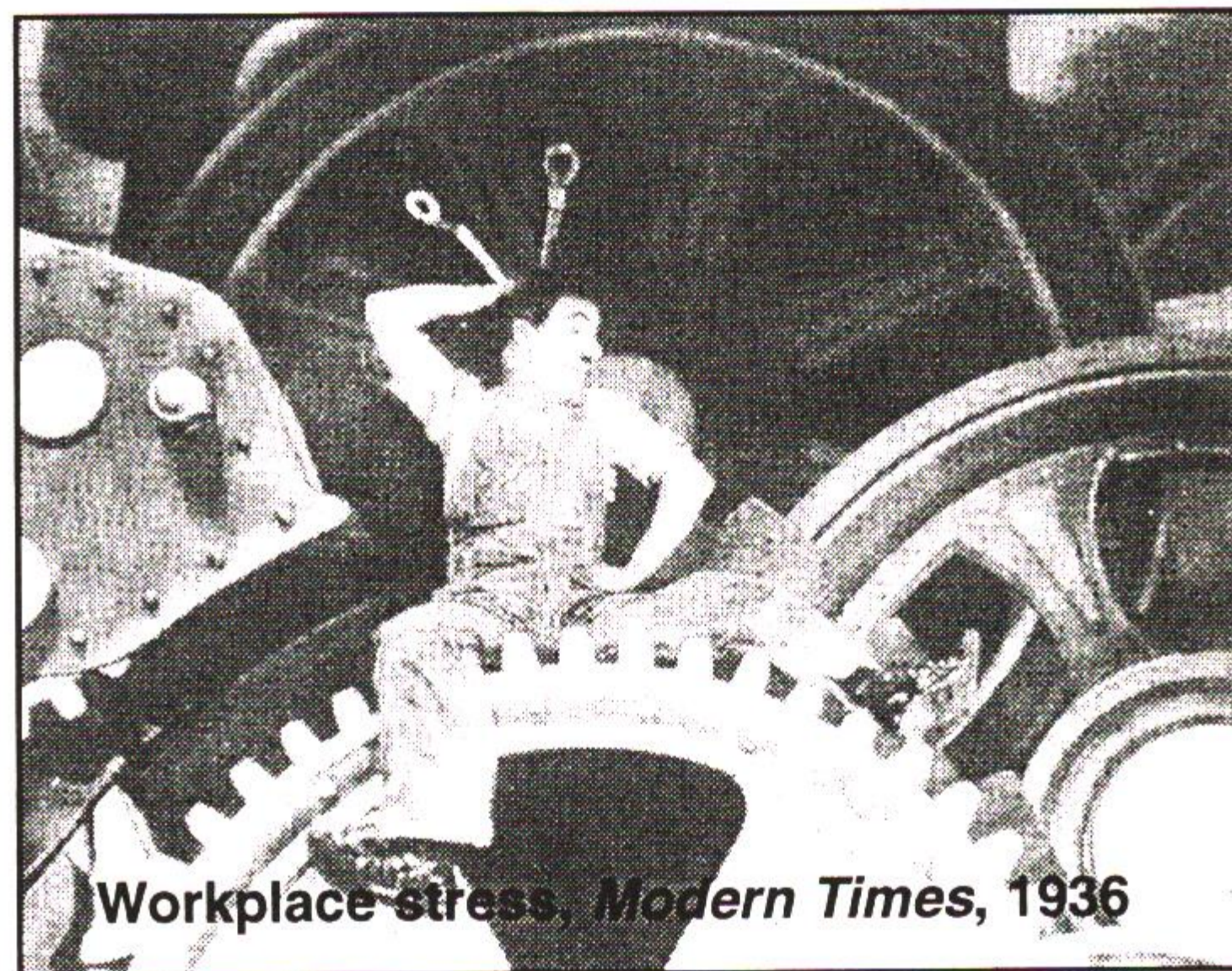
It is not managers at a higher level who face stress according to the trade unions. It is workers lower down the scale who are faced with the consequences of not having any control over their working conditions and who are not involved in decision making at work. The problem of stress has had a lot of publicity amongst professional workers in recent years because this group has been significantly exposed for the first time to the pressures which have affected manual workers for a long time. These pressures include the insecurity of short term contracts, redundancies and more centralised management control. The whole concept of a job for life has been completely undermined. Hours worked in the health service have been widely publicised with 24% of health service professionals working over 70 hours a week. But there has been a trend towards longer working hours for all white collar workers in the UK, mainly unpaid overtime! In fact the UK was the only European Union country where working hours have increased since 1983, and the majority of this was accounted for by unpaid overtime worked by the 30% of professionals who felt that it was necessary to improve their job prospects or merely to hang on to their jobs during the recession. In many public services the work loads have been increased

dramatically in the health service, education and the social services due to the policies imposed by the Tories. This has led to a deterioration of working conditions and those who can opt for early retirement. Self employed workers whose numbers grew in the 1980s also face longer working hours.

Effects

However the effects of stress on professionals are only a small part of the problem. The GMB

exist in the factory. She is combining work with domestic and childcare responsibilities for which she gets very little help. These working conditions could have been a description of working in a factory a century or more ago. This shows the effects of the recession and the defeats suffered by the trades union movement over the last ten years have had a dramatic effect on working conditions. It shows also that stress is not a new phenomenon. Capitalism, since the beginning of time, by increasing the rate of exploitation of workers has led to damage to the physical and mental health of the workforce. Imagine the levels of stress faced by the first generation of factory workers! Fordism in the 1930s and the speed up of production lines led to nervous breakdowns for those who were able to get work. Recently workers in recently privatised and deregulated industries have faced particularly high levels of stress. Transport workers for instance are at very risk as their hours have been increased. The TGWU surveyed a bus depot in Yorkshire and found that 71% of drivers suffered sleeplessness, 79% suffered exhaustion and 83% had aches and pains. The breakup of British Rail and reorganisation of the industry into smaller units has put more pressure on British Rail staff as there is little cover for absences and



Workplace stress, *Modern Times*, 1936

magazine sets out a typical case of a woman machinist in a clothing factory who has just returned from maternity leave to a new contract of employment. She has no control over her pace of work and is hourly paid. If the garments do not meet certain standards then her pay is cut. Furthermore she suffers from chemicals and bad lighting which

safety procedures have become more precarious. At British Telecom, according to the Society of Telecom Executives, the number of employees working more than 46 hours a week increased from 39% in 1991 to 51% in 1994 and 16% are now working more than 50 hours a week. According to the LRD the

actual longest hours of work are in transport, engineering, chemicals and manufacturing, although in public administration, 19% of the workforce are working more than 46 hours a week. Virtually all the trade unions have raised the issue of workplace stress with their members as a serious problem. It has been a feature in a whole number of trade union journals. Members are advised not to feel that it is their fault that they are not coping with work. The GMB magazine says "by blaming yourself for not being tougher you are ignoring important worrying signs and putting yourself at the risk of long term illness". It is important that this is taken on board in an atmosphere of almost macho proportions in relation to working hours in some workplaces where the workforce has been fragmented by the weakening of the trade union movement. Their advice however is to go to your GP and get advice. The LRD raises the issue of workplace counselling.

Responsibility

They say that employers should take responsibility for the health of their employees, including mental health, and that personnel departments should train staff in counselling for stress. Of course the labour movement has always demanded that employers provide safe working conditions and monitor for the adverse effects of for instance working with new

technology. Many employers for instance offer free eye tests on a regular basis to staff who work on VDUs. This has been done mainly as a result of trade union negotiation and in the first instance it was part of package introduced by employers when faced with a boycott of new technology by the trade unions. In other words new technology agreements were drawn up under the threat of industrial action! Employers are therefore not automatically going to provide safe working conditions including counselling for stress. Of course an "enlightened employer" should be concerned about not running their workforce into the ground, with the resultant absences due to ill health. However many British employers have a short termist attitude. If workers are being employed only for a year or even months why should they care about the long term health of their employees? In the present climate if an employee is on long term sick leave their colleagues are expected to cover for them often without additional help.

Counselling is an individualist solution to a collective problem. It is no help to an employee to be counselled if they are to be returned to the working conditions which caused the problem in the first place. Can an employer be trusted to counsel in a neutral manner? If it is agreed that an individual's workload can be reduced, how will that affect the conditions of the people

they work with? They are also potentially stressed workers who need protecting. If a worker is suffering from stress it is probably due to the pressures of work, not to the individual problems of that particular worker. Counselling for all sorts of distress has become fashionable in the 1990s, influenced from the other side of the Atlantic. But it does not change the reality of peoples lives. The increase in workplace stress in the 1990s has been due to the recession and the restructuring of capitalism. Workers face increasing insecurity and lack of control over their working lives. While unemployment stands at 3 million, workers are having to work harder, living with the threat of unemployment and poverty in old age and ill health themselves.

Quality of life

The quality of life has deteriorated rapidly, and continues to do so into the 1990s. In the UK one third of the population lives in poverty on benefits, another third exists on casual employment, the remaining third lives with the threat of both of these. In this situation employers can lay down the law and increase workloads beyond reason. No sector of the workforce has not been affected. Increasingly, even people in once secure professional jobs hate their work and their bosses exert more and more power. New management techniques - teambuilding, brainstorming, bonding, etc are sophisticated ways of getting more work out of people, often beyond their capabilities. Workers are regarded as elastic bands which can be stretched until they snap! Trade unions will negotiate on behalf of their members as individuals, but the only real counselling is a political one - to unite as workers for better working conditions, for workers control and management over the workplace and to get rid of the capitalist system.

**Barbara
Humphries**

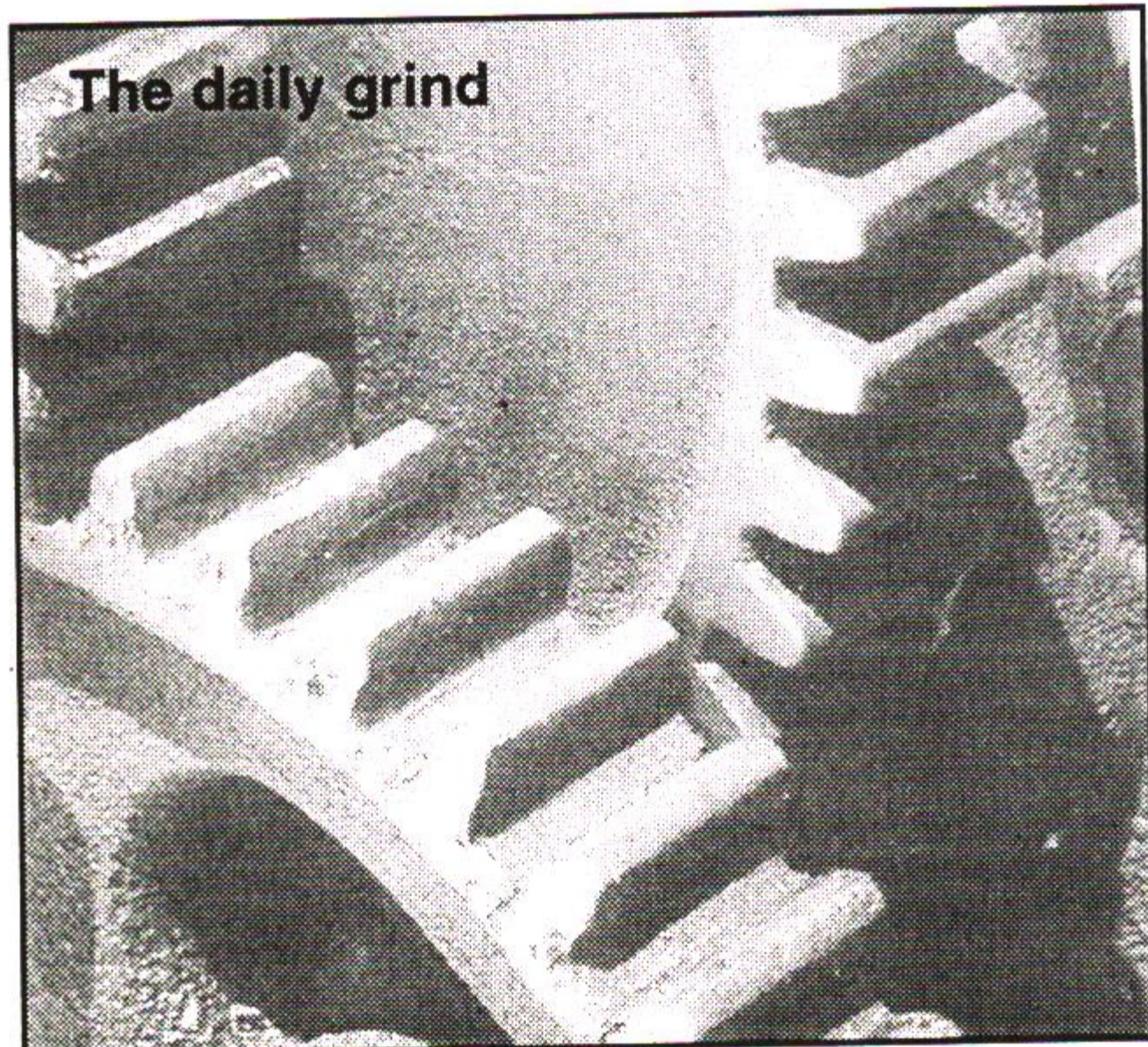
'Flexible' Workers

An article in the *National Institute Economic Review*, dug up by LRD, provides further evidence that the Tory government's theory that having a more flexible (i.e. low paid, unorganised with few rights and protections) workforce will create employment. According to data presented, the periods of lowest unemployment coincided with periods of highest investment. The writer states that it is this investment which created higher output and therefore jobs rather than any reliance on a cheap workforce to do the trick. It is also clear that any advantage gained by cheapening the labour costs in the late 80s has now been exhausted. This confirms the statements made by some employers that, at the end of the day, they will only employ the staff needed to do the job however little or much they cost. In other words, if staff costs are reduced they will just take the extra profit rather than employ extra staff 'for the good of the nation'.

The UN conference on social development (i.e. poverty) came and went last month without actually producing any solutions to the problems raised. This surprised no-one. Journals such as the *Economist* predicted in advance that anything produced would be "very general, very abstract" because, as they put it, "the poorer countries... argue for a new world economic order; established ones will have nothing of the sort". Delegates argued over the key issues of foreign debt but it became clear that nothing could be solved. The *Economist* concludes cynically that "the built-in flaw of these UN get-togethers is that, when the chat ends, national interests prevail... the free market always extracts its pound of flesh". The conference ended by sending an unintentional message to the poor both of the third Europe and the West (which governments like the British sought to play down) that they can expect no respite under capitalism. One other issue which came out of the conference was the cost of holding it! It was estimated that it cost between £20 and £38 million to stage the event. One German delegate was so concerned with poverty that he is under investigation for hiring the chauffeur-driven car at a cost of £600 a day! No wonder the message from a UN official was: "The poorer nations must take care of themselves".

Pound of Flesh

The UN conference on social development (i.e. poverty) came and went last month without actually producing any solutions to the problems raised. This surprised no-one. Journals such as the *Economist* predicted in advance that anything produced would be "very general, very abstract" because, as they put it, "the poorer countries... argue for a new world economic order; established ones will have nothing of the sort". Delegates argued over the key issues of foreign debt but it became clear that nothing could be solved. The *Economist* concludes cynically that "the built-in flaw of these UN get-togethers is that, when the chat ends, national interests prevail... the free market always extracts its pound of flesh". The conference ended by sending an unintentional message to the poor both of the third Europe and the West (which governments like the British sought to play down) that they can expect no respite under capitalism. One other issue which came out of the conference was the cost of holding it! It was estimated that it cost between £20 and £38 million to stage the event. One German delegate was so concerned with poverty that he is under investigation for hiring the chauffeur-driven car at a cost of £600 a day! No wonder the message from a UN official was: "The poorer nations must take care of themselves".



The daily grind

Socialist Appeal's economic correspondent, *Michael Roberts*, asks looks at the recent troubles in the world's money markets...

Mad markets and currency chaos

The chaos and anarchy of global capitalism was revealed starkly to the people of Mexico last month. Their currency, the peso, crashed by over 40% in value. Prices for everything shot up; 200,000 lost their jobs within weeks, and the government of the PRI, which has ruled like a Stalinist one-party state for 60 years, started to fall apart at the seams.

But what started as just a crisis in a large but poor Latin American state soon spread across the world. The fall of the peso pulled down the mighty US dollar, which began to lose value in global currency markets hand over fist. Speculators fled like rats to boltholes of security in the German mark and Swiss franc. The secretive Swiss banks received millions of deposits from rich Mexicans and Brazilians who jumped the sinking ships of the Mexican peso and Brazilian real. And foreign currency markets traded wildly as big capitalist institutions sold dollars for marks.

Dollar crisis

The crisis of the dollar then rolled on into a crisis of European currencies. The German mark was so attractive and secure that capitalist investors got out of lira, pesetas, francs and pounds to buy

marks. Rich people and big pension funds in Italy looked at their national debt, which was now 120% of annual national output (three times larger if pension payments are included). And they looked at the politicians in charge of that debt: an unelected 'technocratic' government under Dini, a megalomaniac media millionaire Berlusconi; and divided political parties with no power.

Voted

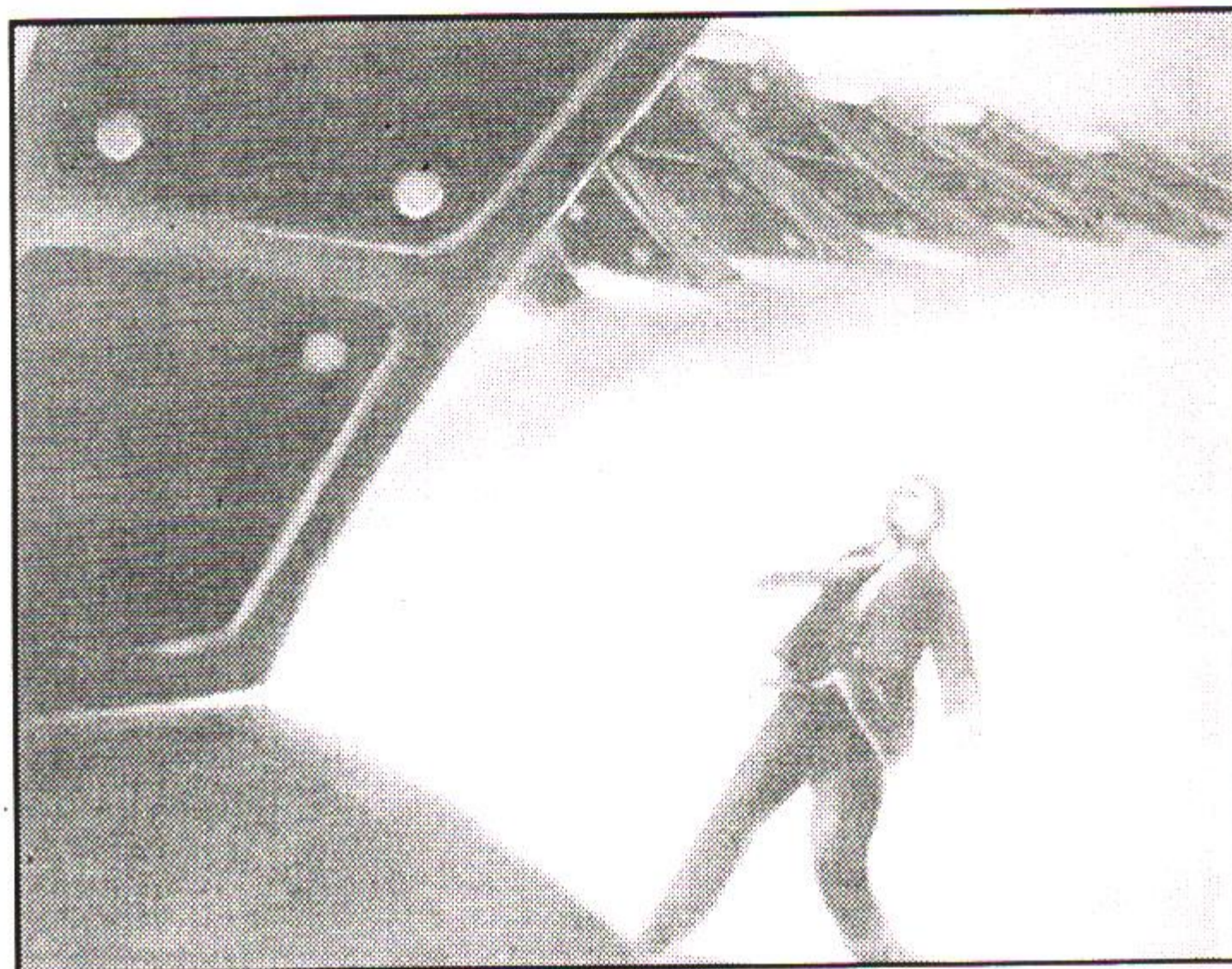
So they voted with their money: they took it out of lira and bought marks. The lira slumped dramatically and Italian bonds crashed in price, making the cost of paying the interest on them even greater. Something similar happened in Spain and Portugal. The governments there were forced to devalue their currencies with the agreement of the other members of the European Exchange Rate mechanism. The already faint possibility of achieving a single currency and European monetary union by the end of the century dissolved in clouds of chaos.

Boom

Why this crisis and why now? The US boom is now more than four years old. Growth was over 4% last year. But elsewhere in the advanced capitalist world, things were much more sluggish. Germany and Europe was just beginning

to pick with growth above 2%. In Japan, especially after the earthquake disaster in Kobe, there was little sign of life in the capitalist economy. But US growth was breeding signs of inflation.

The bankers of the world worry



about nothing but two things: that people they lend money will pay it back; and that while the money is on loan it does not lose its value in inflation. Inflation means that when bankers get their money back it is worth less; the borrower has used when it was worth more and now pays it back when it's worth less. So the borrower gains and the lender loses. Higher inflation means that bankers will charge higher interest rates to compromise.

During 1993 and 1994 US interest rates rose steadily. And then something happened.

In the last few years capitalist investors have been attracted to investing in the Third World. With interest rates low in the US and Europe and industry in recession, the big gains appeared to be in Asia with its fast growth, and in Latin America where friendly governments were allowing foreign investors a free run in their markets and offering high returns for investing in their stock exchanges and government bonds.

Investing

But financiers only keep investing as long they are confident they will get their money back and it's worth as much as when they lent it. The governments of Latin America had to promise to maintain the value of their currencies and not allow huge inflation of the past. That meant high interest rates, open markets, and above all, no spending on public services. On the contrary the

state sector had to be sold off cheap to pay the foreign investors. With these policies Mexico was allowed to join the North American Free Trade Association with the US and Canada.

Disaster

But the result of these pro-imperialist policies has been disaster. The weakness of Mexican capitalism meant that that they could not compete in 'free markets' and they began to import more than the export-

ed. They had to pay for this out of reserves: dollar reserves fell from \$30bn at the beginning to nothing by the end of 1994. And also inflation began to rise slowly. The foreign investors became worried: would they be paid back if reserves were running out; and would their money lose its value if inflation got a hold? Also, now interest rates in the US, where it was safer, had risen to much better levels. Eventually, they all came to same conclusion at the same time: rather like a herd of wildebeest that swing in one direction. They all sold pesos and bought dollars. Adios Mexico!

Panic-stricken

But that was not the end of it. The US government and American investors who had not got out quick enough were panic-stricken. If Mexico went down, the whole of Latin

industries. Such a plan has not been well received by the Mexican people. But more seriously for capitalism, investors around the world were unhappy. Where

buying dollars and selling marks, they could have a chance of stopping the crash of the dollar. But no such mechanism exists: there is no world government; no world-

“But the unplanned free market has just created chaos in production, huge waste of resources, lower living standards and mass unemployment”

was this \$50bn to come from? And would other countries in Latin America or elsewhere have to be bailed out if they collapsed? The \$50bn was being partly financed by the governments of the ‘rich world’, in other words, their taxpayers. But it also meant a

wide planning; not even global regulation of markets.

Bretton Woods

The post-war US domination of world markets and currencies had been enshrined in the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944. But that agreement which made the dollar the reserve currency of world trade and investment had been steadily weakened as the US economy declined relative to Germany and Japan, and as national states opened their borders and markets to the free movement of money capital. Not even the US can control global money movements any longer. And what’s more the Germans and Japanese are not interested in helping. The German Bundesbank was actually considering raising its interest rates and making marks even more attractive against dollars, pounds or liras. It was much more concerned about controlling inflation in Germany than the collapse of the world currency, the dollar. National interests were more important than the health of global capitalism.

in vain: their currencies have crumbled in the face of the mighty mark. The currency crisis is not just a problem for the Mexican people and those in the poor countries of the world exploited by imperialism. It also affects every working family in Europe and the US. Those countries where their currencies have fallen 15-20% in the last month will now have much higher inflation, well over 5% on average in the next year. That will hit the pound in our pockets. And it will provoke higher interest rates for loans, credit cards and mortgages. In Germany, the strong mark will mean that German companies will find it more difficult to sell in world markets. That means more job losses to add to already high unemployment there; and in France, whose government has painfully (for the unemployed) tried to stay with the Germans. And now the danger is that as credit contracts throughout the world, interest rates rise, and government’s protect their national markets, the world capitalist economy could be driven into an early recession. The US economy is slowing down, the German economy is rising only slowly, and Japan looks dead in the water. The world economy could be synchronising into recession rather than boom.

National markets

The freeing-up of national markets for the movement of capital across the globe was supposed to prove that only capitalism could bring up production and living standards for the Third World. Free trade and free capital movement was the motto for success for modern capitalism now that socialism and communism had ‘died’.

But the unplanned free market has just created chaos in production, huge waste of resources, lower living standards and mass unemployment.

Like Britain’s own lottery, this World Lottery claimed it could be you! But like British lottery it is a ghastly sham.

Sad dream

And the Germans’ attitude confirms that a single currency in Europe is just a sad dream. The real nightmare is that in trying to get their budget deficits, national debt and inflation down to German levels and so meet the Maastricht criteria for a single currency, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Britain, Ireland and Sweden, have bred much higher unemployment and much lower growth. And all their efforts have been

whole load of extra dollars coming into the market. The supply of dollars rose, and in a market economy, that means their price fell. Dollars became cheap. So speculators sold them to buy more valuable marks or yen. And again, they all did it at the same time. The dollar crisis began.

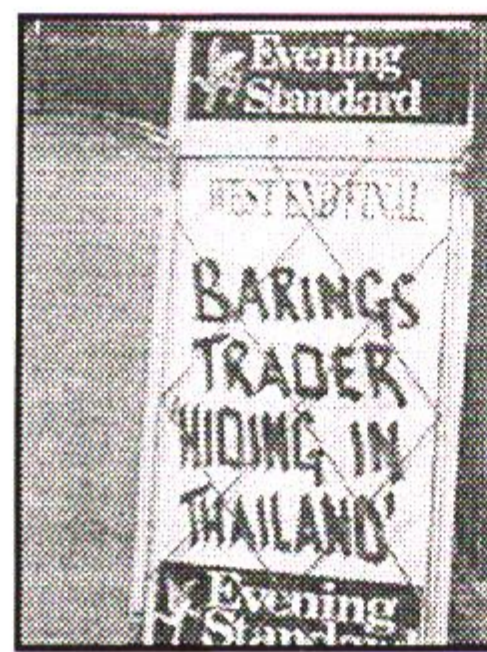
Regulate

Now if all the government and central banks of the world came together and agreed to regulate the currencies by all



America could follow, and NAFTA could fall apart. Clinton and the IMF agreed to shore up Mexican capitalism and find the money lost be foreign investors. They proposed a package of \$50bn to see Mexico through and to pay back foreign investors. In return, the Mexican government had to agree to cut real incomes for the average Mexican by 40% in one year, to give the Americans all their oil revenues and to sell off other

Just a rogue trader from Watford



Michael Roberts looks behind the collapse of Barings

When the Barings derivatives trader, Nick Leeson, was arrested at Frankfurt airport, the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, was quick to tell us that the collapse of the City of London's oldest merchant bank and the Queen's stockbroker was all due to the shenanigans of this 'rogue trader'.

The chairman of Barings, one Peter Baring, told everybody that it was a "conspiracy" against the bank, presumably organised by Leeson, who apparently was an 'oink' from Watford, not a true-blueblood from the public schools of Eton and Harrow or the universities of Oxbridge who run British finance capital.

But in the ensuing weeks, the real story has begun to emerge. This 'rogue trader' from Watford lost Barings £900m in just a few short weeks because the directors of Barings were either too ignorant or too lax to keep an eye on his activities; and the bank's management made strenuous efforts to hide what

was happening from others in the market and from the authorities supposedly regulating the market. When he started losing, the bank just gave Leeson more and more money in the blind hope that he knew what he was doing, and then tried to deny that there was anything wrong until it was too late. But what ordinary 'oinks' like us have been asking is how can a bank lose nearly a £1bn in financial markets in just a few weeks? And anyway, what is a derivative?

Derivative

A derivative is just a clever-dick name for contracts to buy and sell certain things in the future. These things could be potatoes, wheat, silver, shares or bonds, in fact anything. The contract is 'derived' from the thing you agree to buy or sell in the future. Ironically, futures (as the contracts are called) first began in order to avoid making losses. Say you are a farmer who has a wheat crop to bring to market this summer, just three months away. You don't know what the price of your crop per tonne will be yet. It could be £1000 per tonne or less or more. You would like to be sure of what you are going to get so you plan your spending for the next year. The answer is to agree to a contract to sell your wheat in three months for £1000 per tonne. The wheat merchant is also keen to be sure of the price and so is interested in such a contract. In this way your price is assured. What's the cost? Well, in three months the price of wheat may be £1100 per tonne. So you will have lost £100 and the buyer would have gained £100. On the other hand, the price may be £900 and you would have gained £100 and the buyer would have lost. By making a forward con-

tract on your wheat, both you and the buyer have taken the risk out of the market. So every day, hundreds or even thousands of forward contracts are made to deliver wheat at different prices for different dates. And a futures market is formed where people do not buy or sell wheat, but simply buy or sell forward contracts. This is how the world's largest futures market began in Chicago, next to America's wheat belt - it was market to avoid risk in buying and selling wheat.

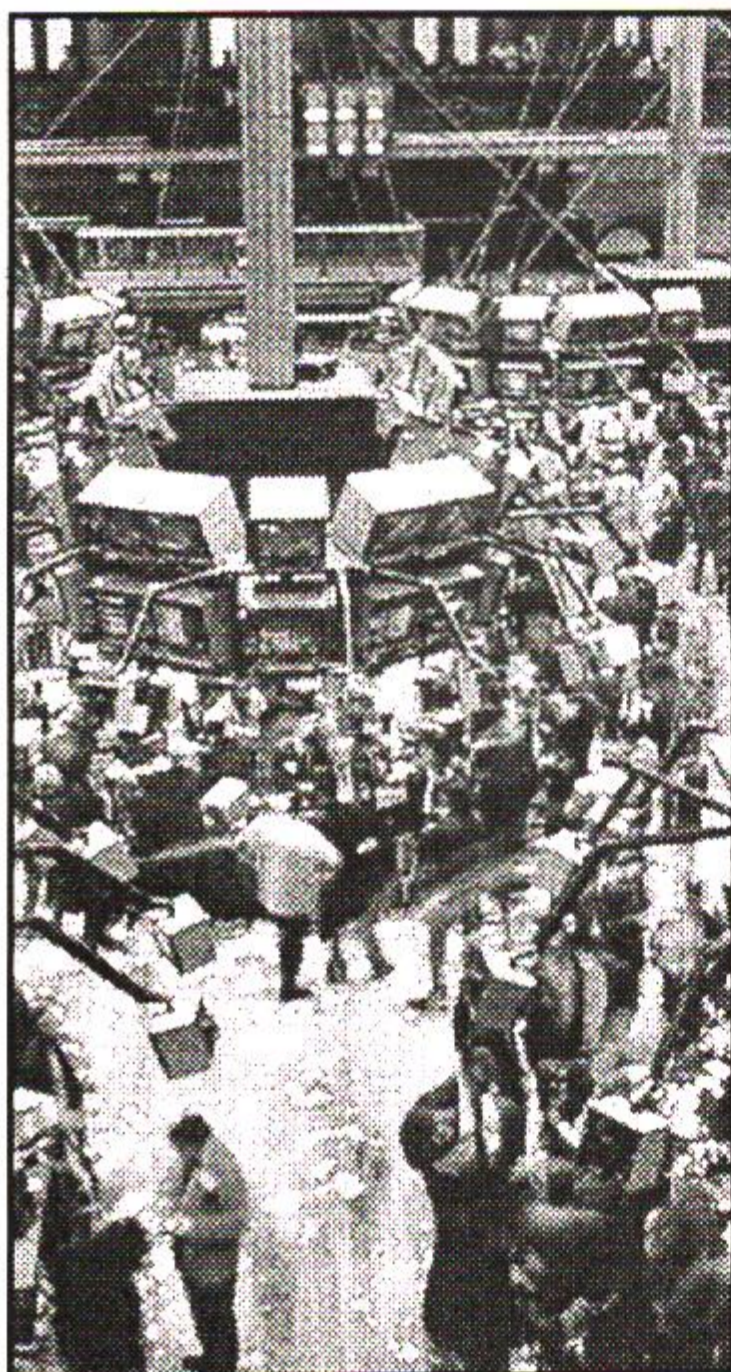
But capitalism is one large casino. Soon the betting on a price was not restricted to agricultural products or metals dug out of the ground. The futures market moved on to trading in contracts for share prices in the future. Then other 'derivatives' were invented by which you took out an option to buy or sell contracts on what share prices would be: now you were betting on the bet! The big advantage of this was that you never had to pay for any wheat or any shares, you simply had to put a small deposit down on your contract to show good faith. As soon as you made a contract to buy, you could sell it to somebody else if they were willing pay slightly more. So you never had to complete any contract; you sold them all before the date, and then bought more! Even more, the prices of futures contracts can vary from market to market. In Tokyo, the contract could cost \$100, but in Osaka, the same contract might cost \$99. Not a lot of difference, but if you bought thousands of contracts every day, you could make a profit immediately.

That's where Nick Leeson and his like came in. The old merchant banks of London found that they could make more money in the "global market" by

derivatives trading than they could by lending money in the traditional way at high rates of interest. It was cheaper to finance and the profits were larger and came in quicker. Of course, that depended on making the right calls in the casino. Last Xmas Nick Leeson took it in his head to bet that the Tokyo stock market would rise. So he bought contracts that were bets that Tokyo shares would rise three months ahead. And he bought lots of them, 20,000-30,000, all one way. But the Tokyo market started falling. Then there was the Kobe earthquake and it fell further. Leeson apparently tried to make up his potential losses by buying more contracts that the market would rise. In effect, he was going for double or quits. Eventually it was quits when the bank run out of money.

Global capitalism

The derivatives market is the latest example of the global capitalism gone mad. What was originally seen as a way to reduce risk in the market economy, to 'hedge' or insure against possible losses, has been turned into huge market for speculation (\$17trn), much bigger than the market for the real things they are derived from. World trade is now just a tiny proportion of the global financial market turnover. This bubble of fictitious capital can just as easily burst as expand, and so devalue and waste the real resources of society. In the big league of financial crises, the Barings collapse is small beer. Only last year, Orange County in California lost twice as much gambling on the derivatives market with taxpayers' money. And John Major and Norman Lamont lost £5bn of Britain's foreign exchange reserves in one day trying to beat the market and keep the pound inside the European Exchange Rate Mechanism on 'Black Wednesday' in September 1992. But its very smallness shows how weak British capitalism now is, even the City of London. For one 'rogue trader' brought down a pillar of British finance capital, and the British financial establishment was too poor or too small to bail it out. It had to be 'saved' by the Dutch!



Ireland: Joint Framework Document offers no solution

by Alastair Wilson

The Joint Framework Document produced by the British and Irish governments has been heralded as a crucial breakthrough in the 25 year long history of the "troubles" in the north of Ireland. *The Guardian* hailed it as "a quintessential text for and of our times... it has something for everyone."

The main points of the document were a recognition by the British government that the people of Northern Ireland as a whole have a right to decide

"power sharing" assembly elected by proportional representation, the direct election of a panel of three people to "complement" the work of the assembly, a series of checks and balances between the assembly and the panel to ensure that no "majority" can ride roughshod over a "minority," the establishment of a new cross-border body made up of representatives of the new assembly and the Irish parliament, and the setting up of new inter-governmental relationships between Britain, Ireland and the North.

divide and rule throughout the world. Ireland after the First World War was on the verge of revolution and it was only 'natural' that the British government seek to divide the working class using the religious sectarianism that they themselves had planted there in the past. The treaty that led to partition was an enormous defeat for the working class in Ireland - the years following partition were years of vicious sectarianism and pogroms in the North and civil war in the South. However, for the British ruling class all the reasons for partition have long ago evaporated. They would now favour a united Ireland - although that would be resisted by the Protestant majority. The economic position of the South is that of a satellite of Britain. With the long post war boom the economy of the South became more dependent on that of Britain not less, despite independence. All the military and strategic reasons to maintain partition have also long since disappeared.

History

But despite this the British ruling class has been unable to resolve the situation they themselves created. The ghosts of history have long haunted them and refused to go away. Rather than some new and radical departure in the British governments policy on Ireland, the document is just the latest in a whole series of 'diplomatic' manoeuvres to try and settle the Irish question. In 1973 a power sharing assembly was actually established. The

Unionists, the SDLP and the Alliance Party agreed to set up a joint executive or government, later all three parties signed up for the Sunningdale agreement which would have meant the establishment of a Council of Ireland made up of representatives of the assembly and the Irish government in the south. Just like now all sides pay lip service to the self determination of the "other" side. However, what has been written by generations of conflict cannot simply be overturned by the stroke of the diplomats pen. In the 1974 general election pro-agreement candidates were hammered and later that year the agreement was finally sunk by the Ulster Workers Council strike.

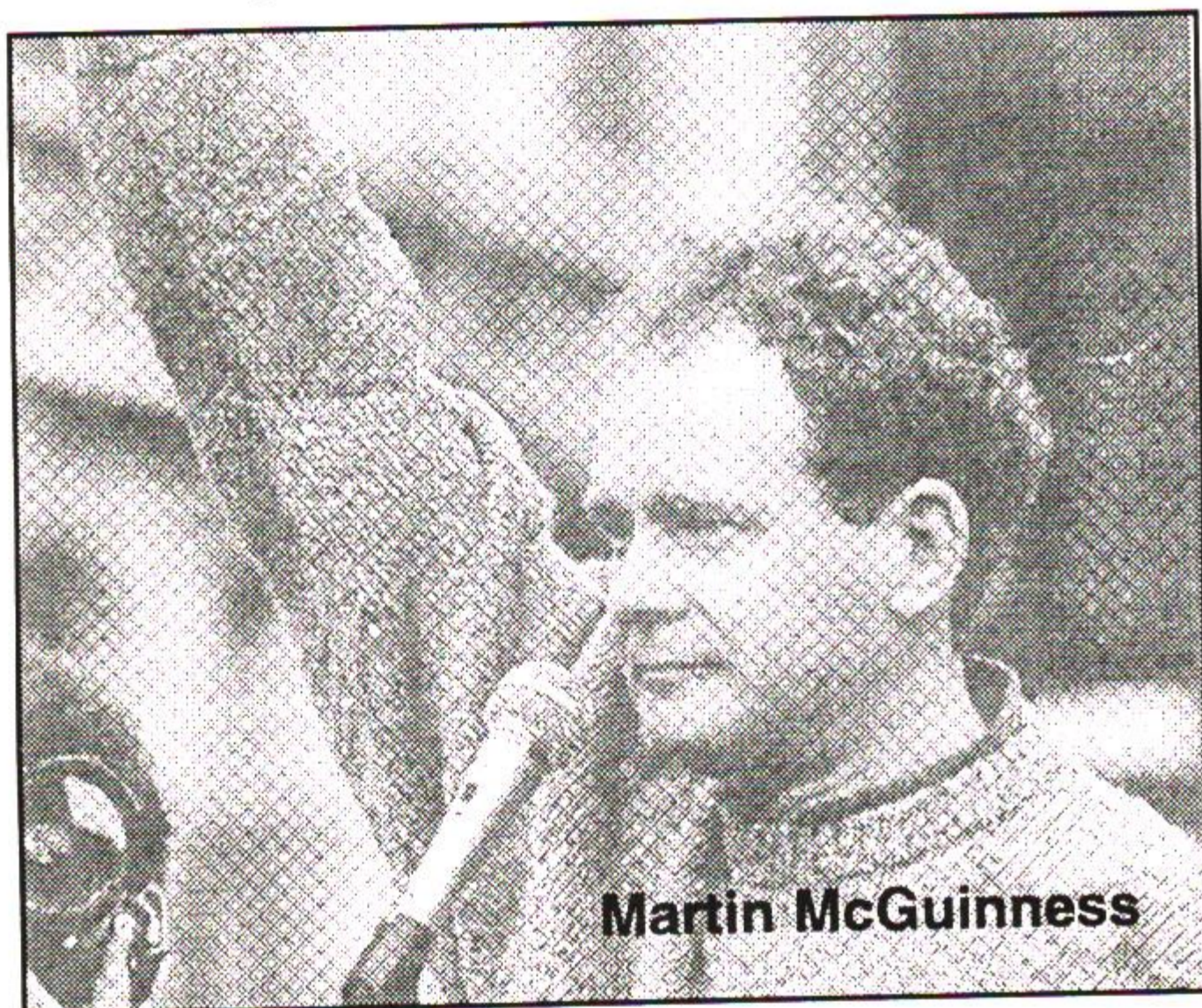
There has been a long line of agreements, talks, solutions and diplomatic manoeuvres - all have failed. So is there anything different about the present situation?

"Political" strategy

It is not the first time that the IRA have called a ceasefire but it certainly looks like the most serious and the most likely to hold. The "political" strategy favoured by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness has finally won the day not because of the correctness of that strategy but because of the serious impasse the IRA found itself in after 25 years of so-called armed struggle.

After the IRA hunger strike campaign in the early 1980s a "political" strategy was seen by some to be not only possible but potentially "successful." In the wake of the hunger strike campaign Sinn Fein was to achieve its biggest political "success." In 1981, Sinn Fein's Director of Publicity, Danny Morrison, hailed the new strategy, "with a ballot box in this hand and an armalite in this hand we take power in Ireland." Now, however the Adams faction at the head of Sinn Fein are not only abandoning the armalite but also any pretence of being able to "take power in Ireland."

This changed outlook comes out of the crisis faced by the IRA over the last few years. Despite a massive armoury and access to enormous funds the IRA were forced to accept a "long war" of attrition they increasingly knew they could never win. Despite some spec-



Martin McGuinness

their own future even if that means leaving the United Kingdom, the ending of the Irish governments constitutional claim to the six counties of Northern Ireland and recognition of the will of the majority in the North in deciding their own fate, the establishment of a new

With these measure the Tories hope to settle the long running problem of the Irish question, a problem that has existed for generations, a problem of their own making but one which they have up until now universally failed to resolve.

The British ruling class have been masters of the politics of

never win. Despite some spectacular attacks they were not in a position to make a serious challenge to the British state. After 25 years of "struggle" they were probably further away from their goals than they were at the beginning. Although they could not achieve even modest success in shaking the foundations of British rule in the north of Ireland. They were also becoming seriously isolated from big sections of the Catholic community. The share of the vote in local elections was drifting downward as the SDLP increased support. Their electoral intervention in the South was at best a disaster. Unable to escape from this impasse and overcome its contradictory predicament a section of the leadership increasingly looked for "political" solutions. In reality, this has meant capitulation. At the recent Sinn Fein 'Ard Fheis' (congress) Gerry Adams never even mentioned a united Ireland let alone a victorious struggle. The new talk is about "agreement" and "negotiations."

The Tory government has been well aware of these shifts within Sinn Fein and the IRA over the years, this is why they brought forward the Anglo-Irish Agreement in late 1985. This agreement though, while recognising the shifting position within the nationalist movement failed to take account of the revulsion of the Protestant community.

The Agreement never took off. The Unionists called a one day strike of Protestant workers, sectarian violence escalated and the UDA and UVF were able to make new recruits.

Escalate

In the late 1980s the loyalist paramilitaries were able to escalate their activities. In fact, by 1993, the last full year before the ceasefire, the loyalist paramilitaries were doing more killing than the IRA and they claimed a much higher membership. This was also a big factor in the thinking of the Adams leadership - without any real success against the British state and a real fear of being outgunned by the UDA and UVF their options were limited and as Adams has said, "to sue for peace is a noble thing." (!) After the stalemate of the Anglo-Irish Agreement the Tories were left with no policy

on Ireland other than one of "containment." Despite the fact that, in the words of former Tory Secretary of State for Ireland, Peter Brooke, "the British government has no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland," they were unable to "disengage" or come up with any real solution to the situation.

It has been the retreat of the Sinn Fein leadership that has been the catalyst for the new situation.

Given this situation it was inevitable that the loyalist paramilitaries would also call a ceasefire. If they had continued their "armed struggle" they would have faced growing isolation from the Protestant community. The revulsion against barbaric acts like the Shankhill and Greysteel massacres are still vivid in the minds of both communities, and those who seek to needlessly continue with such atrocities would be widely condemned.

"War weariness"

The "war weariness" amongst both Catholics and Protestants has been a very real factor. Martin McGuinness, in a recent *Guardian* interview, voiced his desire to lead a "normal" life, he wants to spend his weekends fly-fishing in Donegal! But this is not just a personal whim.

Thousands of young people have wasted their lives over the last 25 years and got nowhere - now there is a real feeling that something must change. Some of the strongest proponents of the ceasefire have been from amongst the large prison communities of both Catholic and Protestant ex-paramilitaries. These men and women who joined the paramilitaries in their youth may have had time to think and appraise the situation for the first time in their lives, many have studied and are studying for degrees and diplomas whilst in prison. More than anyone they are aware of the blind alley terrorism has led them into over the years.

The political groups most linked with the loyalist paramilitaries, the Ulster Democratic Party and the Progressive Unionist Party, have been the most forthright of all the Unionists in welcoming the ceasefire, even the Framework Document itself. Only Ian Paisley and his Democratic Unionist Party have condemned all the moves as



their whole political position is based on what has happened over the last 25 years. Whilst the IRA and the loyalist paramilitaries believe they have a lot to gain by being accepted into the political mainstream, Paisley has everything to lose from just such a scenario.

For the first time in a long period a new political situation has developed in the North. With the immediate threat of terrorism lifted people can begin to talk about real political questions out of the shadow of the gun. Trade unions and trades councils have begun to discuss the question of labour representation. Debate on the "peace dividend" has opened up - how will the £4 billion the British government spends in the North, much of it on security and related matters, now be spent. The labour movement now has the opportunity to raise class issues and push them to the fore. Full employment, housing and welfare projects - all could be financed by this so-called "dividend" but only if the movement is united and mobilised around a socialist programme.

Allegiances

Old political allegiances are being questioned across both communities and this will give the labour movement a great opportunity for advance. The trade union leadership must now call a conference of labour to discuss all the issues and to take immediate steps to organise a genuine party of labour in the North. Now is the greatest opportunity for such a development in a whole generation and it must be seized. In the short term the ceasefire

will hold. But in the long term it and the so-called power sharing proposals in the Framework Document offer no real solution. Complex power sharing arrangements were also established in Cyprus and Lebanon in the past - but inevitably broke down in civil war. Power sharing enshrines rather than breaks down sectarianism. Unless a real solution is brought forward - and this can only come from the labour movement and the working class - then not one of the problems faced by Irish workers will be solved.

Opportunity

The labour movement is faced with a tremendous opportunity at present. Only if it fails will the spectre of sectarian civil war be able to rise again.

The Irish working class has a proud record of struggle, where Catholic and Protestant workers have united in common action against the bosses. Despite the sectarianism, the trade union movement is organised across the whole working class, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers in the same organisations. This is the key to the solution. The labour movement must take the initiative out of the hands of the sectarians and all the different shades of Toryism

A genuine party of labour, linked to a real socialist programme capable of tackling the immense social and economic problems that face the North, is the only way forward. There can be no lasting solution on a capitalist basis. A working class united in struggle would sideline the sectarians and lay the basis for a socialist united Ireland.

Marxist books more relevant than ever

In this month's review of what is available from Well Red Books, I want to start by drawing your attention to a couple of bargains. Firstly, we have in stock copies of *'The Quiet Revolutionary'* by Margaret Dewar, priced at only £2.99.

This autobiography recounts the authors experiences first as a schoolgirl in Russia 1917 and then in Berlin during the rise of fascism. As an active socialist who was to be influenced by the ideas of Trotsky during her time in the Communist Party, her story is one which is worth hearing. Also in stock is the *Selected Works In One Volume of Marx and Engels* priced hardback at £11.99. This may seem expensive but you get all the main essential works in one handy hardback version of 760 pages, including *Communist Manifesto; Value, Price & Profit; Socialism: Utopian and Scientific; Origin of the Family; Ludwig Feuerbach; Civil War In France*, together with other complete works, key extracts from larger writings including *Capital* and a selection of letters. Since some of this stuff is now not so easy to get hold of, this book may prove to be a useful alternative to hunting around for some of the titles. We do stock most of the

classic writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin as well as Trotsky—however some titles are now becoming more difficult to get hold of. Russian printings are now becoming rarer and we hold the last available stocks from China. So, once we have run out then it may not be able to re-order—and certainly not at the current price. For example, the new editions of Lenin's collected works are priced at £40 each and the only edition of Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution* now being published costs £23.50! Looking at some other books now in stock again, we have the 3 volumes of Maurice Cornforth's *Introduction to Dialectical Materialism* (Materialism and the dialectical method—£5.99, *Historical materialism—*£5.99, *Theory of Knowledge—*£4.95). These works are very readable and serve as a useful introduction (along with the *Socialist Appeal* pamphlet: *The ABC of materialist dialectics—*£1) to a subject which every socialist should take time to study. Two other classics in stock

now are *We, The People* (£7.95) and *Man's Wordly Goods* (£6.95): both by Leo Huberman. The first examines the history of the US up to the beginning of the thirties and is a chance to look at history from a socialist perspective. The second looks at how capitalism arose and achieved its wealth at the expense of working people. Both books are very readable and provide a wealth of information that is far removed from the dry history books of the mainstream. Finally we have in stock *Revolutionaries they could not break* by Ngo Van priced at £11.99 which looks at the struggle of the Trotskyist in Indochina from 1930 to 1945 and contains much which has not been available in English before. A 1995 stocklist is available—write to us at PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU or ring me on 0171 251 1095 for a copy or for further information about books in stock.

Steve Jones

Selling Socialist Appeal

With the special Labour Party conference on Clause IV at the end of this month, there has never been a greater need for a publication which will stand up and defend the ideas of public ownership and workers control. In the light of Tony Blair's attempt to take the Party out of what the media terms 'class politics' towards the fantasy of a non-working class 'alternative' to the Tories acceptable to the ruling class, there is a burning need to stand up for socialist ideas. Only socialist policies will be able to satisfy those expectations. It is that struggle that *Socialist Appeal* is committed to. Up and down the country we have been selling our journal at meetings and rallies, raising the need for socialism and explaining that it is more relevant now than ever. Why not help us and become a *Socialist Appeal* seller—write or ring us now for details. Alternatively why not become a subscriber. For those coming across our journal for the first time we have a special introductory offer: send £3 (made payable to *Socialist Appeal*) together with your name and address and we will send you the next 3 issues of *Socialist Appeal* so you can see if it is worth subscribing for the full amount. We are confident that you will be convinced.

Sales/Press Fund

I enclose a donation to the £5,000 Special Press Fund Appeal of:

£5 £10 £20 £50
£100 Other £.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....Tel.....

Return to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU

For sales enquiries ring 0171-251-1094

PDS leaders fall into bosses trap

by Fernando
D'Alessandro

ITALLY

Just one year ago Berlusconi botched together a right-wing alliance that won the elections, but as soon as Berlusconi tried to cut pensions, after years of apparent "social peace" suddenly millions of workers were on the move again.

After the 14th October four hour general strike and the 12th November national demonstration of 1.5 million, the trade union leadership had been forced to call an eight hour general strike for the 2nd December, which would surely have been one of the most impressive movements for decades (if it had not been called off).

The trade union leaders' demand was to take out of the budget the part concerning pensions, and put off the question to a later date. Mastella, Berlusconi's Minister of Labour, was adamant that the demand of the trade union leaders should be met. Some of the capitalists were terrified that another massive general strike could open the gates to a new period of bitter class struggles. That explains why Berlusconi was forced to back down and then to resign a few weeks later.

Technocrats

The new Dini government is made up of so-called "technocrats", i.e. "non-political specialists", who in reality are all representatives of the capitalist class. The so-called "centre-left", PDS, Popular Party and Bossi's wing of the League, plus a few minor bourgeois groupings voted in favour of Dini, while the right-wing abstained. The only

party to vote against was the Reformed Communists (Rifondazione Comunista). The capitalists are giving full support to Dini's "manoeuvre", an emergency mini-budget (cuts in social spending and increased taxation) aimed at holding back the growth of the national debt.

The PDS leadership's argument is: we must support Dini to stop the right-wing (ignoring the fact that Dini was Berlusconi's Treasury Minister!). Berlusconi is pushing for early elections because he feels he is in an advantage and yet in the Novembre/December council elections Forza Italia, Berlusconi's "party", lost about one third of its votes. The massive movement of the working class was beginning to push sections of the population to the left. The 2nd December general strike should not have been called. The PDS leadership together with the Trade union leaders could easily have pushed for a victory. Instead we have the opposite situation: no mobilisation of the working class and the main workers' party, the PDS, is supporting a right-wing government.

Dini is a trusted man of the capitalists (ex-Director of the Bank of Italy) that has managed to get the support of the PDS leadership. The ruling class in fact have learnt the lesson of the Berlusconi government: a direct confrontation between left and right opens the road to a mobilisation of the working class, which is a very dangerous thing from their point of view considering the traditions of the Italian workers.

However, nobody believes the

Dini government will last long. The tragedy of the situation is the behaviour of the PDS leadership. By supporting Dini they are taking the blame for the cuts, having learnt nothing from the Ciampi experience. Ciampi introduced cuts with the support of the PDS MPs and when early elections were called for March of last year it was the right that stood out as an opposition. The then fascist MSI (now Alleanza Nazionale) actually demagogically voted against privatization!

"Centre-left"

That explains why professor Prodi has come forward as a candidate for the "centre-left". He is no different from Dini and yet the PDS leadership has openly come out in his favour. The next general election will see two main fronts opposing each other, the "centre-right" (Alleanza Nazionale, Forza Italia, Democratic Christians, the Federalisti, a right split off from the League, together with the right-wing of the Popular Party) led by Berlusconi, and the "centre-left" ("left-wing" of the Popular Party, Alleanza Democratica, Segni's group and the PDS, together with the right-wing of Rifondazione Comunista and Bossi's wing of the League) led by Prodi.

This regrouping of parties has led to three important splits. The Northern League has split with a section going over to Berlusconi. The Popular Party is in the process of splitting between Buttiglione's (the party secretary) supporters who want an alliance with Berlusconi and the so-called

"left" which is supporting Prodi.

The split of the Popular Party represents an important division within the ruling class. The big bosses like Agnelli of Fiat are supporting Prodi because they understand that in order to push through their programme of vicious cuts they need the support of the PDS and trade union leaders. It is the repetition of an old film seen many times before: the bosses get the workers' leaders to put forward their programme of cuts, and then the left gets the blame for attacking the workers' living standards thus preparing the ground for a return of the right.

An important section of the capitalists are worried that a new Berlusconi government would be another provocation for the working class and that this would lead to new movements like that of last Autumn. That explains the bitter struggle taking place within the Popular party.

Rifondazione Comunista, unfortunately, is not immune to these pressures and is also in the process of splitting. The right-wing of the party led by Garavini, ex-party secretary, has voted in favour of Dini's cuts, following the same line as the PDS leadership. The PDS leadership is in fact working on the right-wing of Rifondazione to get it to split away, thus weakening any alternative that might exist to its left.

In a direct clash between "centre-left" and "centre-right" many workers will probably support Prodi as the lesser evil. Genuine Marxists must explain that support for Prodi's programme means preparing the ground for a victory of the right at a later stage, if Prodi wins. The "if" should be stressed because the policies of the PDS and trade union leaders could well give victory to the right at the next election.

Rifondazione could be isolated for a period, but at a later stage it would have everything to gain if it puts up a principled opposition to the programme of the bosses.

Socialist Appeal will take up the important developments inside Rifondazione in more detail in its future issues.

Workers around the world have responded with anger and declarations of solidarity to the news of the murder of Arif Shah, President of the Punjab Labour Federation in Pakistan, on 19th January (as reported in the last issue of *Socialist Appeal*). Donations and messages of support have been flooding in to the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, established by leading trade union activists and sponsored by organisations such as the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the Railway Workers Union, the National Union of Postal Employees and many other organisations and individuals.

In Pakistan itself, the nationwide protest against Arif Shah's murder held on 15th February, reported in our last issue, has been followed up by a ceremony held, as is the tradition in Islamic countries 40 days after a person's death, which took place in Sheikhpura (his hometown) on 22nd February. Between 2,000 and 3,000 workers attended an open air meeting throughout the day, despite the efforts of the police who were sent to the main factories to stop workers taking strike action to attend. A number of trade union leaders spoke and those attending included Murtaza Bhutto (Benazir's brother who is leading a left opposition faction in the PPP). In Britain, support has come in from a number of Trades Councils, union branches, and Labour Party organisations. Tony Benn MP and Alan Simpson MP along with the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs have also declared their support. In addition to the dona-

Pakistan defence campaign wins international support



tions made, a number of these organisations have been moved to give special messages of support. One such message has come from the Birmingham NUJ who spoke of the effect that the news of Arif Shah's murder had on their organisation, saying that "his death serves not to dent our spirit, but to fire our resolve to build the fight for workers rights and a system that serves the interests of the majority—the working class—instead of the interests of the greedy few." In Belgium, sponsorship for the campaign has come from Leona Detiege (Socialist Mayor of Antwerp), the Committee for the Cancellation of the Third World Debt, the Flemish Socialist Party of Brussels and Molenback, the Antwerp YS branch and provincial organisation, as well as support from sections of the socialist public sector union, ACOD. Also a number of shop stewards who are circulating material in their factories. A well attended fund raising meal was also organised, with Pakistani food. In Spain, in addition to a long list of sponsors (over 550 individuals and organisations) from the labour movement, a letter of protest has been sent by the National Executive Committee of PSOE to the Pakistan embassy.

The campaign is also being raised in countries such as Sweden, where reports of the murder have appeared in several newspapers. Messages of solidarity received so far from Sweden, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Morocco, Denmark and Italy.

The campaign has also spread to other parts of the globe. From Australia letters of solidarity have come from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union of Victoria and the Maritime Union of Australia. A bulletin has also been circulated with over £150 raised. In Mexico, sponsors have included Felix Aguado (Federal MP), the President of the PRD National Trade Union Committee and the President of the PRD Provincial Committee in Morelos. Over \$300 has been raised towards a target of \$500. A great achievement, considering the repression taking place in Mexico and shows the spirit of international solidarity between workers in struggle against the common enemy. Activists should be raising the issue of Arif Shah's murder and the general attacks by the bosses against trade unionists in Pakistan and calling for support for the Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign in their

unions, trade councils, Labour Party branches/GCs and so on. Labour MPs and local councillors should be approached directly to sponsor the campaign. Use the form printed in this issue, or write to the campaign at PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN, for forms and information.

The campaign seeks to raise the following demands:

- Defence of our trade unions from the physical attacks of the employers. Defend our right to organise!
- Stop the privatisation and plunder of state industries.
- For a minimum wage for all.
- The abolition of child labour.
- The abolition of draconian fundamentalist laws against women. Equal rights for women.

This is an international appeal for help and sponsorship. There is a particular bond between the workers movement in Britain and Pakistan given the terrible role that British imperialism played in the Indian sub-continent. This is not an appeal for charity but an appeal for international solidarity.

Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign

Sponsored by the Punjab Labour Federation, the United Labour Federation, the Progressive Workers Alliance, the National Railway workers Union and the National Union of Postal Employees.

Name..... Organisation.....

Address.....

I wish to sponsor the campaign

I want to make a donation of £.....

All correspondence and donations to: Shahida Jabeen, Secretary, Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign, PO Box 6977, London N1 3JN. All cheques payable to Pakistan Trade Union Defence Campaign.

ENGELS CENTENARY

Engels and the trade unions

by Steve Davidson

“Trade Unionism is the ideal preparation for social war. It is in these organisations that the characteristic courage of the Englishman finds its best expression.”

Sadly today most workers and trade unionists have never heard of Friedrich Engels let alone read his works. Yet this hasn't always been the case. During the birth of the English working class and particularly the revolutionary days of Chartism, Engels was an astute observer of the class struggle in Britain whose ideas were eagerly sought by the active workers and their leaders. In his classic work “The Condition of the Working Class in England”, written in 1844, Engels exposed the anarchic development of the great northern industrial towns and the appalling social and housing conditions that prevailed.

Dialectics

In later chapters he applied the methods of Dialectic Materialism to discover the development and momentum of the class struggle that was unfurling in Britain. As part of this Engels outlined his (and Marx's) theory of wages and drew the conclusion that there were limits to what trade unionism could achieve. Whilst they were the single-most important organisations developed by the working class they were not capable of overthrowing capitalism.

The analysis from this study was of great importance in the

formulation with Karl Marx of the Communist Manifesto in 1848 which categorically stated that the next historical phase would be the struggle between the new industrial working class and the bourgeois. The work elaborated that the progressive phase of the bourgeois had completely ended in England and that the split in the ranks of the Chartists was the “final evidence” of this. In future the working class would have to fight under its own banner and programme.

Working class

This was written it must be remembered when the working class was hardly in existence and the bourgeois had yet to take political power in most of Europe let alone in the vast expanses of the globe. It may be surprising to readers in 1995 to learn that Engels addressed a number of questions that contemporary Marxists have to deal with today. What are the role of the trade unions? What have they achieved and what are the limitations to trade union organisation and power? The relationship between the political and industrial wings of the working class. How to overcome the weakness of the Socialist movement and how class consciousness develops. Engels outlined the history of the English working class movements from illegality and machine breaking to the attempt to form a universal trade union for the entire working class, The Grand National

Consolidated Trade Union and support for the political demands of the Charter. Summarising this history Engels observed:

“The History of trade unionism is the story of many defeats and of only a few isolated victories. It is obvious that all these efforts on the part of trade unionists cannot change the

its laws would always determine events. This would be a crude economic determinism. As such, revolutionaries shouldn't get involved in trade union affairs, a strategy that the sectarian Social Democratic Federation was to adopt half a century later. That all the energies spent by the workers was a diversion from the main task, that of preparing an insurrectionary struggle against the bourgeoisie.

Engels (with Marx) addressed this point in the ‘Communist Manifesto’, in the chapter, ‘Proletarians and Communists’. “The communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole.....they do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.”

Revolutionary

Showing the sense of humility that the revolutionary minority requires to get its orientation correct and build up its points of support in the working class,



economic law by which wages are fixed according to supply and demand in the labour market.”

Taken by itself, the conclusion could be drawn that trade unionism is a waste of time and that economic development and

Engels was asserting that in the case of Britain the trade unions were the class based weapons that the workers had formed to advance their cause. Their limitations and the problems of moving beyond mere trade unionism has dogged the revo-

lutionary movement both theoretically and practically ever since. The Communist Manifesto declared openly that the workers must develop their own political party. The formation of the Communist League was a step in that direction. However, from a revolutionary perspective there were numerous very positive sides to early trade unionism. The union policy on wages was one of establishing universal rates throughout the country for the various trades and many strikes were to maintain this principle of universalism. The restriction on the number of apprentices flowed from the same principle of playing the capitalists off against each other to keep wages high. The early trade unionists clearly understood that the competition between workers was the main reason for their abject poverty. Thus the bitter hatred of the strikebreaker. Yet in this simple recognition the trade unions were hitting right at the heart of capitalism.

"The real importance, however, of trade unions and strikes is that they constitute the first attempt of the workers to put an end to competition amongst themselves. They are based on a recognition of the fact that the power of the middle classes over the workers is due entirely to the existence of competition between workers themselves - that is to say their lack of solidarity and internecine rivalries. Trade unions have proved to be so dangerous to the existing social order simply because they have - if only to a limited degree - firmly opposed that competition of workers amongst themselves, which is the very cornerstone of modern society."

Trade unions

Should the trade unions be totally successful in this, Engels asserts, then capitalism would be unable to function. Thus the attempt to generalise strike movements is an essential feature of trade union activity. Preventing this happening is one of the prime functions of the bourgeois and their political representatives. This understanding is the background to the successive pieces of anti-trade union legislation passed by the Tories in the last decade and a half which makes virtually any attempt to give solidarity action illegal. It is a significant

feature of the present period that despite the low levels of strikes, the prevailing mood of the working class is the need for generalised action rather than leave individual groups of workers to fight it out against the class enemy that has secured notable victories in the last period. This understanding is a portend of what will actually happen as the class struggle unfurls in Britain. It is an indication of the likelihood of widespread industrial action, probably in the defence of wages and living standards. Why then do workers strike when the odds are so heavily stacked against them? Again

Engels addresses this question. "The answer is, simply, that the workers must protest both against a reduction in wages and also against the circumstances which make that reduction necessary. They must assert that since they are human beings they do not propose to submit to the pressure of inexorable forces. On the contrary they demand that economic forces should be adapted to suit *their* convenience." How better could we describe the bitter year long struggle of the miners in 1984/85 in defence of jobs and their communities? Or the London printers, the Seafarers? If workers

were to allow the capitalist to go unchallenged then there would never be any point in struggle.

Organisations

There would be no need for organisations to represent the working class because the prevailing consciousness of the workers would be that we all had the same interests. That there must inevitably be casualties of the economic system. That certain men and women had the divine right to rule over us. "Such acquiescence", says Engels, "would be a recognition of the right of the middle classes to exploit the workers when

I propose to discuss at greater length a strike which culminated in violence in Manchester when I was there in May 1843. Messrs Pauling and Henfrey decided to increase the size of the bricks made at their works. They naturally proposed to charge more for the new bricks than for the smaller ones but they failed to raise the wages of the men who made them.

A wage-claim was rejected by the employers, the men went on strike and the men's trade union supported them by blacklisting the firm. Messrs Pauling and Henfrey succeeded, though not without great difficulty, in securing blackleg labour from Manchester and district.

The strikers threatened with violence those who persisted in working for the firm and then Messrs Pauling and Henfrey engaged twelve men, all ex soldiers or former policemen, and armed them with flintlocks for the defence of the brick yard. Having failed to intimidate the blacklegs, the strikers proceeded to sterner measures.

At ten o'clock one night a disciplined force of strikers - the front rank armed with blunderbusses - marched on the brickworks, which were only four hundred yards away from an infantry barracks. The strikers pressed on. As soon as they saw the guards, they fired on them, trampled on the wet bricks spread out to dry, scattered the stacks of finished bricks and destroyed everything in their path. Then they broke into the house of the manager beat up his wife, and destroyed the furniture.

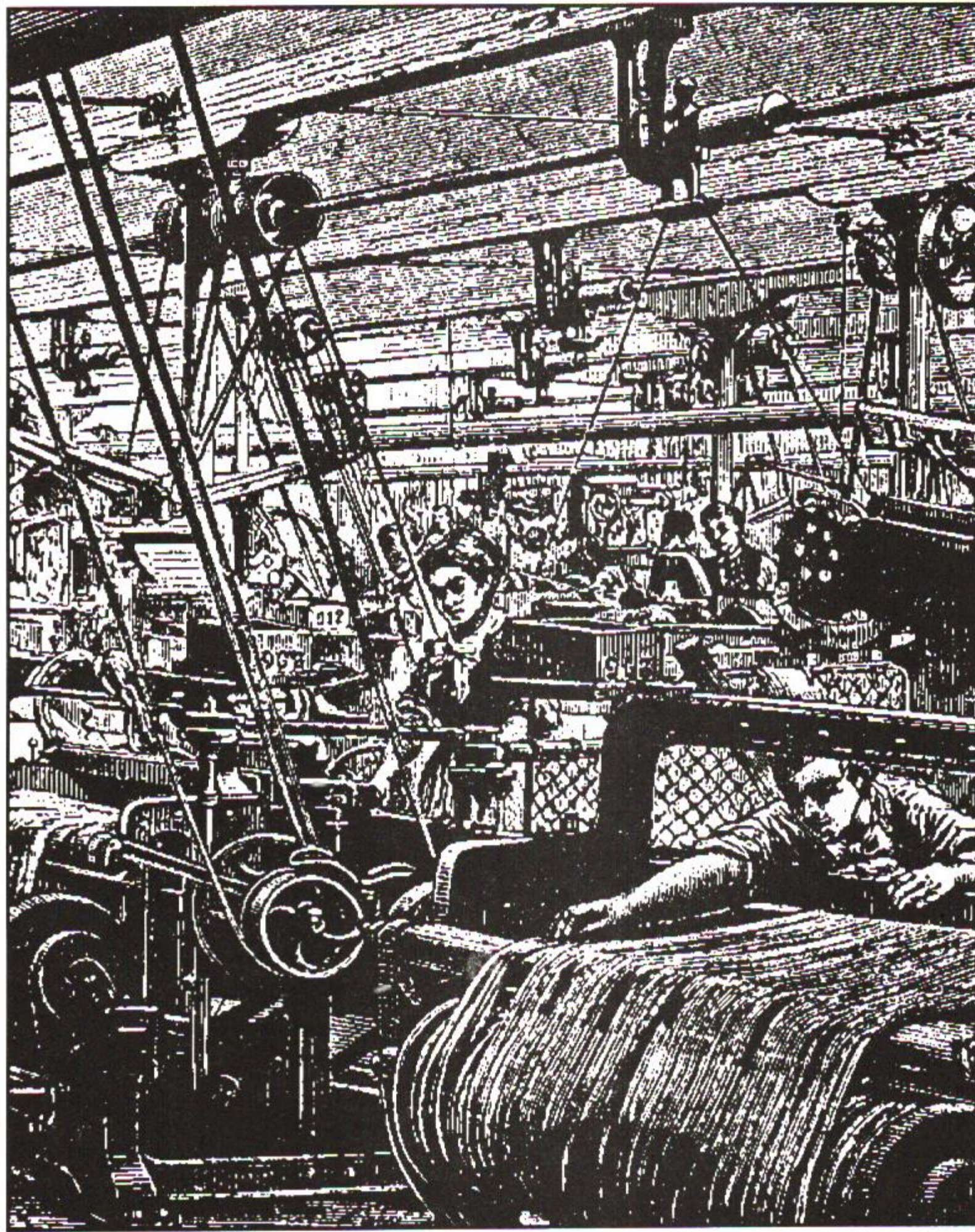
Meanwhile the guards were able to fire on the strikers from a safe vantage point which they had taken up behind a hedge. The rioters were now standing around a kiln in which bricks were being fired; they were clearly silhouetted against the fire. Consequently every bullet fired by the guards found its mark, while the return fire of the strikers was wholly ineffective.

The firing went on for over half-an-hour until supplies of ammunition ran out. By this time, however, the object of the attack - the demolition of what could be destroyed in the brickyard - had been accomplished. When the military appeared the brickmakers retreated to Eccles, which is three miles from Manchester.

Shortly before reaching Eccles, a roll-call was held and each man had to answer to his number. The men thereupon dispersed, but it is not surprising that they immediately fell into the hands of the police who were closing in upon them from all sides. The number of wounded must have been very considerable, but only some of them were arrested. One of them had been hit three times, in the thigh, the calf and the shoulder, and yet had managed to walk for over four miles.

Surely it cannot be denied that these strikers showed all the courage needed by revolutionaries and did not flinch from a hail of bullets.

Frederick Engels



business was flourishing and to let the workers go hungry when business was slack."

Forty years later Engels returned to this question of the Economical Law of Wages in a series of articles in the *Labour Standard* because "it is of the highest importance that the working classes generally should thoroughly understand it".

The competition between the capitalists forces them to increase their profits at the expense of wages. This can be done either by increasing the intensity of work without extra pay or increasing the total number of working hours and cutting pay levels in any number of combinations.

Trade union organisation stands in the way of the right of the employer to do any of these at their will or at least not without a fight. Against this pressure of the capitalist the unorganised workers have no defence. "Therefore in trades without organisation of the workpeople, wages tend constantly to fall and the working hours tend constantly to increase."

Engels could be talking about Britain today where over half of all the workers that work over

46 hours each week in the European Community are British. A country where £2 billion pounds of state subsidy to employers is paid in Income Support to the lowest paid workers in this country.

The well organised workers are at least able to secure a higher proportion of the profits that they make for the capitalist but never receive their full amount, the remainder going to the capitalist as surplus value.

"This, however, is the utmost Trade Unions, as at present organised can hope to attain, and that by constant struggle only, by an immense waste of strength and money; and then the fluctuations of trade, once every ten years at least, break down for the moment what has been conquered, and the fight has to be fought over again. It is a vicious circle from which there is no issue. The working class remains what it was, and what our Chartist fore-fathers were not afraid to call it, a class of wage slaves."

What was required stated Engels was the Abolition of the wages system altogether! It is timely to make trade unionists and Labour Party members familiar with these words. Tony Blair and the champagne

socialists may remove clause four from Labours constitution but they cannot eliminate the economic laws of capitalism and no amount of mealy mouthed words about equality and social justice will alter the fact that under capitalism the workers will remain wage slaves.

Again it is possible to merely deduce pessimistic conclusions from these statements.

However something else happens when workers are involved in struggle. In the course of these struggles the class hatred of the workers to the capitalists is brought to the fore. All the pent up feelings come rushing forward and acts that would have been unthinkable occur.

The 1840's was a decade of incessant and bitter strikes that took place in the context of the mass struggle for the Peoples Charter in which Engels observed

that the workers were drawing political conclusions and moving ever nearer to the cause of revolutionary struggle against the bourgeois.

Engels studiously examined the reports of the disputes in the 1840's and quoted many at length. He also analysed these and drew a number of conclusions about the manner and method by which the English workers struggled.

Passion

He began by taking up the argument that the English workers lacked the revolutionary passion of their counterparts in France and the courage to fight things through to their conclusion, ie manning the barricades. In this analysis Engels elaborated the key characteristics of the English workers which in general terms are the same characteristics that we see today.

How often do we hear the argument put that it is not in the nature of the British to act spontaneously to events in the way that the French, Italian or the Spanish workers do? That they don't have the "Latin Temperament" as though the class struggle is determined by

geographic or climatic causes. This line of argument concludes that there cannot be a workers revolution in Britain. Certainly there are historical differences that play a significant part in the make up and thinking of the working classes throughout the world. The English workers were the first born sons of the Industrial Revolution, they had no model to follow, they had no rich history of theoretical debate and political clarity to fall back on. They had to make their own history with the tools that were available at the time. The British bourgeois revolution took place centuries earlier than in Europe and the workers saw no gains from politics or alliances with the aspiring sections of the new middle classes. Almost ten generations had passed since the revolutionary Levellers and Diggers to the mass movement around the Peoples Charter.

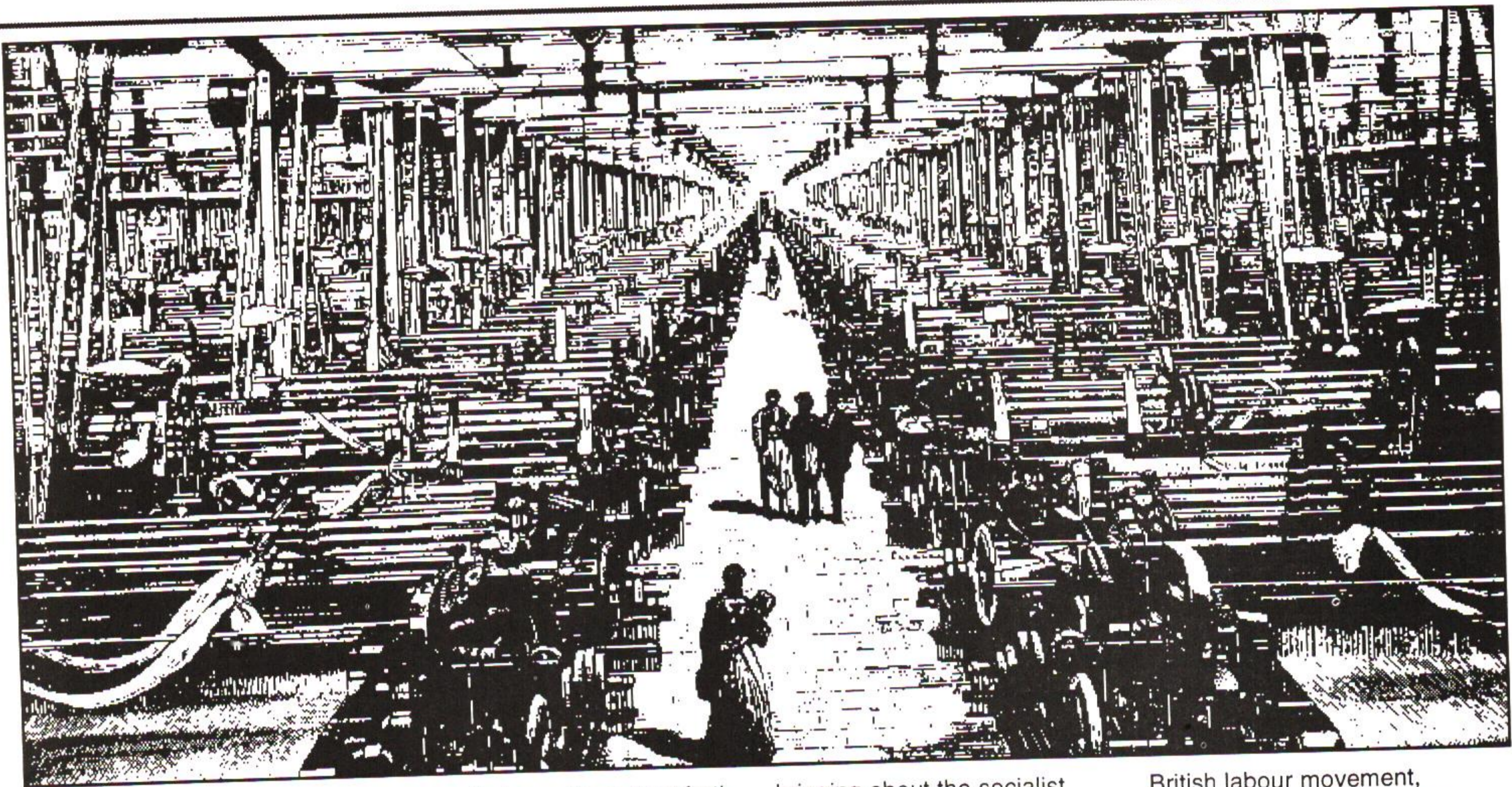
Factories

The English working class was moulded in the mills and factories of the Industrial Revolution and not on the barricades in the struggle for Liberty, Fraternity and Equality as in continental Europe. These differences were significant as Engels observed;

"The French workers have politics in their blood, and so they fight social evils with political weapons. The English workers hold aloof from politics, which they look upon as a game played solely in the interests of the middle-class groups.

Therefore instead of fighting against the government, the English workers strike directly at their middle-class enemies."(my italics)

Historically deprived of their ancient rights and customs and given none of the rights of citizenship enshrined in the constitutions of the European Bourgeois revolutions the British workers have had no option but to return time and time again to their own organisations namely the trade unions. The British workers loyalty to their traditional organisations are total and absolute. They will participate in them and change them a thousand times before they will move over to a different form. Engels grasped the historic significance of this from the earliest



days. It would lead him decades later to recognise that the formation of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) represented the politicisation of the trade unions and would form the basis of a mass party of labour that the British workers so desperately needed. This despite the existence of various sects that claimed to be Marxists.

As for courage Engels went on; "courage is needed not only by armed rebels but also by strikers. Indeed, it is obvious that a striker needs greater courage and a keener and steadier determination than the man at the barricades. It is no mean trifle for a worker with first hand experience of poverty to face hunger and distress with wife and child for months on end and still remain steadfast in the cause."

Strike

The strike was the method of the English worker to hit right at the class enemy, face to face, and slug it out to the bitter end. It led Engels to conclude rather than deride the English workers and their methods of struggle, revolutionaries should recognise, "the obstinate, unconquerable spirit of the English workers, which only surrenders to superior strength when all further resistance is obviously hopeless. The character of the English worker indeed deserves our respect when we see how in such circumstances he bears

his sufferings with patient fortitude and determination. The strikers steadfastness is tested a hundred times a day and still he stands firm. Men who are prepared to suffer so much to break the will of a single obstinate factory owner will one day be able to smash the power of the whole bourgeois."

It is often said that the workers get the leaders that they deserve. How false this is! If ever any working class deserved true and honest leadership that matched its fighting capabilities, instead of the mediocrities and social climbers that have infested the labour and trade union movement, it is the British workers. Engels basic analysis of the fighting characteristics of the British workers is still true today, despite all the defeats and false dawns of 200 years of struggle. The long history of the British workers and the many betrayals do, as Marx once commented, hang like a deadweight around the necks of the present generation. An essential part of the armoury of Socialists, alongside theory, strategy and tactics, is a thorough understanding of the history and makeup of the working class.

Unconquerable

From that comes an unconquerable belief in the ability of your class to carry through to its conclusion the tasks that history has placed in front of them, namely the necessity of

bringing about the socialist transformation of society and the establishment of a new socialist world order to take the whole of humanity forward. Engels writings are an inspiration to us all and proof positive of the superiority of the Marxist method that places before us truths that clarify our understandings and act as a guide to our actions.

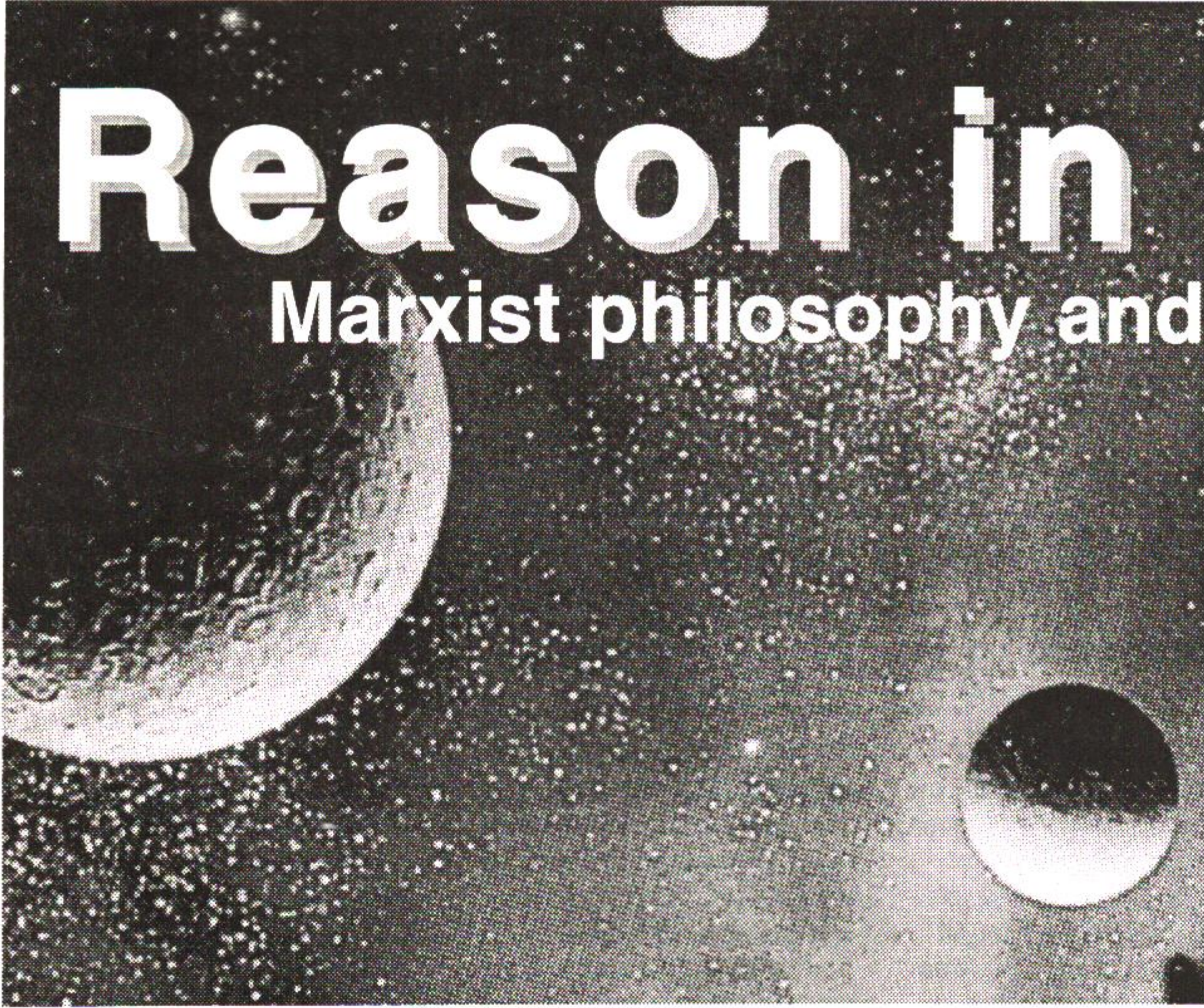
Engels recognition of the potential power of the working class led him to conclude, at a time of deep despair in the

British labour movement, where the mass of unskilled workers were unorganised, and the workers had no political party of their own or a single voice in Parliament, that once they move into action, "there is no power in the world which could for a day resist the British working class organised as a body." (Labour Standard 1881)

Further reading by Frederick Engels

Socialism, Utopian and Scientific	£0.50
Anti-Duhring	£2.00
The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State	£1.20
The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man	£0.30
Letters on Historical Materialism	£0.50
Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany	£1.20
Principles of Communism	£0.45
On Marx	£0.50
Marx/Engels Selected Letters	£0.75

All available from Well Red Books
PO Box 2626, London N1 6DU
Cheques payable to Socialist Appeal,
Please add 10% for postage



Reason in revolt

Marxist philosophy and modern science

Reason in Revolt
Marxist Philosophy
and Modern
Science

by Ted Grant &
Alan Woods

1995 marks the centenary of the death of Frederick Engels, the man who, together with Karl Marx developed an entirely new way of looking at the world of nature, society and human development. After this nothing would ever be the same. Whether one accepts or rejects the ideas of Marxism, it is impossible to deny the colossal impact which they have exercised on the world, from the appearance of the *Communist Manifesto*, down to the present day.

Marxism has been a decisive factor in the development of human thought in the twentieth century. However, the scope of Marxism extends far beyond politics and economics. At the heart of Marxism lies the philosophy of dialectical materialism. The immense labour of writing *Capital* prevented Marx from writing a comprehensive work on the subject, as he had intended. The principal works of Marxist philosophy were written by Engels. The modern student who wants to understand dialectical material-

ism must begin by a thorough knowledge of *Anti-Dühring*, *The Dialectics of Nature*, and *Ludwig Feuerbach*, all written by Engels.

To what extent have the philosophical writings of this man who died a century ago stood the test of time? That is the starting-point of this new book. Engels defined dialectics as "the most general laws of motion of nature, society, and human thought." In *The Dialectics of Nature*, in particular, Engels based himself on a careful study

of the most advanced scientific knowledge of the day, to show that "in the last analysis, the workings of nature are dialectical." This new book, *Reason in Revolt*, by Ted Grant and Alan Woods, defends this central idea using the most important scientific discoveries of twentieth century, which provide a striking confirmation of Engels. The book traces the development of thought, outlines the laws of dialectical materialism, shows its confirmation in science, and then takes up the main

schools of bourgeois philosophy today. It provides a comprehensive study of Marxist philosophy, probably not undertaken since the writings of Engels. The publication date is early May 1995. The number of pages is estimated at 400. The cover price (paperback) is £9.95. As a pre-publication offer, the book will be dispatched free of charge. To purchase a copy, send a cheque/postal order for £9.95 to Wellred Publications, P. O. Box 2626, London N1 6DU.

Special pre-publication offer

Please send me copy/copies of *Reason in Revolt - Marxist philosophy and modern science* by Ted Grant & Alan Woods at £9.95 each. Post free before 1st May 1995
I enclose to cover the cost.

Name

Address.....

Tel.

RETURN to: Wellred Publications, P. O. Box 2626, London N1 6DU.
Please make all cheques/postal orders payable to Wellred Books.

Natural born killers?

by Rob Sewell

Alongside the publicity for the film *Natural Born Killers*, we have seen the recent case of convicted American murderer Stephen Mobley. He is appealing to the Supreme Court of Georgia, arguing that he suffers from a genetically determined imbalance in his brain chemistry. The so-called link between crime and genetics has become a burning issue in the US. Already, the US National Institute of Health has increased its budget for violence-related research to \$58 million. And last December the National Science Foundation began promoting proposals for a \$12 million, five year research consortium. Such pseudo-scientific ideas have also emerged in Britain.

It has become fashionable in certain circles to attribute all kinds of things to genetic or biological disorders, rather than recognising that social problems arise from social conditions. The school of genetic determinism has drawn all types of reactionary conclusions, reducing all social problems to the level of genetics.

These ideas are nothing new. In the 1930s the eugenics movement was in full swing and was based on the idea that mental illness and criminal behaviour were inherited. By the 1930s, over 30 states in America had passed sterilisation laws, expanding those eligible for treatment to alcoholics and drug addicts, and even blindness and deafness in others. The campaign

reached its height in 1927, when the Supreme Court, by 8-1 votes, upheld the Virginia sterilisation law in *Buck v. Bell*. This case involved an eighteen year old white girl called Carrie Buck, who was involuntarily incarcerated in the State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-Minded, and was the first person to be sterilised under the act. She was chosen, according to Harry Laughlin, the superintendent of the Eugenics Record Office (who wanted to eliminate "the most worthless one-tenth of our present population"), as she, her daughter and her mother were genetically mentally subnormal. This information was largely accrued from the Stanford-Binet test of IQ - which was later proved to be totally wrong. The judge in the case, O.W. Holmes, stated "Three generations of imbeciles are enough!" Carrie's sister Doris was also covertly sterilised under the same law.

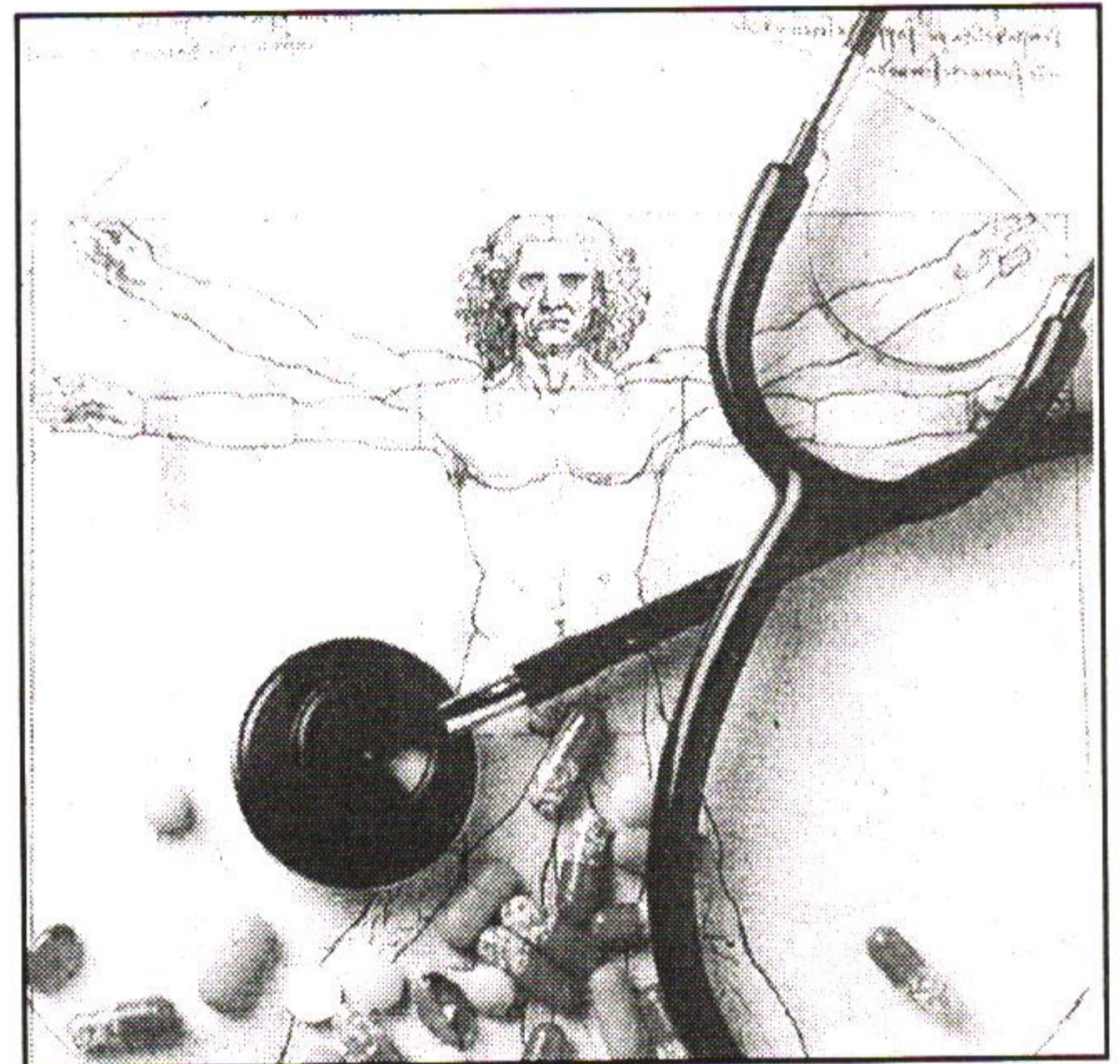
By January 1935, around 20,000 forced sterilisations for eugenic purposes were carried out in the US. Laughlin wanted the net to include "homeless, tramps and paupers" and was taken up most fervently in Nazi Germany, where the *Erbgesundheitsrecht* led to the sterilisation of some 375,000, mainly for "congenital blemindedness", but also including 4,000 for blindness and deafness.

In 1980, Dr. K. Nelson, the then director of the Lynchburg Hospital where Carrie Buck was sterilised, discovered that over 4,000 operations had been carried out, the last as late as 1972.

These reactionary ideas of forced sterilisation are not simply confined to the 'dark ages' of the past, but are alive today, sustained on pseudo-scientific theories, particularly in America. The psychologists Hans Eysenck in Britain, Richard Herrnstein and Arthur Jensen in the States, have promoted the idea that intelligence is largely inherited. They also maintain that the average IQ of blacks is genetically lower than that of whites, and that of the Irish lower than that of the English. Eysenck apparently believes that blacks and the Irish have been selectively bred for 'low IQ' genes. In February 1995, a confer-

Although the chairperson, Sir Michael Rutter of the London Institute of Psychiatry stated "there can be no such thing as a gene for crime", other participants, like Dr. Gregory Carey of the Institute of Behavioural Genetics, University of Colorado, maintained that genetic factors as a whole were responsible for 40-50% of criminal violence. Although he said it would be impractical to "treat" criminality through genetic engineering, others said there were good prospects for developing drugs to control excessive aggression, one the responsible genes had been found. He suggested, however, that abortion should be considered when antenatal testing indicates a child is likely to be born with genes predisposing it to aggression or antisocial behaviour. His view was endorsed by Dr. David Goldman from the Laboratory of Neurogenetics at the US National Institutes of Health. "The families should be given the information and should be allowed to decide privately how to use it." (*The Independent*, 14th February 1995)

According to Professor Han Brunner of Nijmegen University Hospital in Holland, men in a family who inherited a particular mutation in the



ence on Genetics of Criminal and Anti-social Behaviour was held in London. Ten of the thirteen speakers were from the States where a similar conference in 1992, with racial overtones, was abandoned due to public pressure.

gene for a brain enzyme called monoamine oxidase have shown "impulsive aggression" including arson and attempted rape. Dr. David Goldman of the National Institutes of Health Laboratory of Neurogenetics

in Maryland, and professor Matti Virkkunen of the University of Helsinki said they were discovering aggression-related genetic variations in the way people process brain chemicals.

"Pharmaceutical companies are already interested in our findings," said Virkkunen. (*The Financial Times*, 14th February, 1995)

These scientists were severely criticised by Professor Steven Rose, who described the conference as "troublesome, disturbing and unbalanced". The event itself was attacked in a letter by 15 scientists. Dr. Zakari Erzincliglu, director of the Centre for Forensic Science at Durham University, called it "very disturbing, simple minded and mischievous".

The dangers of phony research leading to genetic links to race and criminal or antisocial behaviour is ever present. False conclusions can be drawn from the statistic that in the US, where 12.4% of the population are blacks, they account for 44.8% of arrests for violent crime. As a recent article in *Scientific American* explained: "there is reason to be concerned that ostensibly objective biological studies, blindly ignoring social and cultural differences, could misguidedly reinforce racial stereotypes." (March 1995) Due to this threat boycotts have taken place over blood and urine samples being taken from

racial minorities. So, according to Raine, "all the biological and genetic studies conducted to date have been done on whites." Raine continues: "Imagine you are the father of an eight-year old boy. The ethical dilemma is this: I could say to you, 'Well, we have taken a wide variety of measurements, and we can predict with 80% accuracy that your son is going to become seriously violent within 20 years. We can offer you a series of biological, social and cognitive intervention programmes that will greatly reduce the chance of his becoming a violent offender.'

"What do you do? Do you place your boy in those programmes and risk stigmatising him as a violent criminal even though there is a real possibility that he is innocent? Or do you say no to the treatment and run an 80% chance that your child will grow up (a) destroy his life, (b) destroy your life, (c) destroy the lives of his brothers and sisters and, most important, (d) destroy the lives of the innocent victims who suffer at his hands?"

Firstly, it is not possible to predict a child's future criminal behaviour - let alone with 80% accuracy. And secondly, it puts the blame of crime on the individual. This reactionary argument fails to see crime, violence, and other social ills, as a product of the society we live under. It is a society based upon human exploitation and the max-

imisation of profit that results in mass unemployment, homelessness, poverty, and the denigration of life. These social conditions, in turn, produces crime, violence, and brutality. This is nothing to do with genes or biology, and everything to do with the barbarism of capitalist society.

The biological determinists are used to bolster up reactionary social ideas. They argue it is not society that is to blame for crime, poverty, unemployment, etc, but the individual, through their genes or defective biology. The answer, therefore, is brain or genetic surgery. Others look for abnormal levels of testosterone, or slower heartbeats as the explanation of human violence. Some scientists have pointed to the low levels of serotonin, a chemical that in the body affects the stomach, muscles and brain function. Thus, C.R. Jeffery wrote in the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*: "by increasing the level of serotonin in the brain, we can reduce the level of violence." So serotonin boosters, like the antidepressant Prozac, are administered to patients to cure their aggression. The falsehood of this view is explained by the fact that this chemical can rise or drop in different parts of the brain at different times, with different effects. However, it does not stop these people from making outrageous claims to bolster

their reactionary views.

Stuart Yudofsky, chair of the psychiatry department at Baylor College of Medicine, takes things further and asserts: "We are now on the verge of a revolution in genetic medicine. The future will be to understand the genetics of aggressive disorders and to identify those who have greater tendencies to become violent." He believes that hyperactive children should be tested and if necessary, given beta blockers, anticonvulsants or lithium! Yudofsky says these drugs will be "cost effective" and a tremendous "opportunity for the pharmaceutical industry."

"There are areas where we can begin to incorporate biological approaches," argues Fishbein. "Delinquents need to be individually assessed". Masters believes that "we now know enough about the serotonergic system so that if we see a kid doing poorly in school, we ought to look at his serotonin levels." This is the height of savagery; promoted and sustained by pseudo-science. Genuine science is a tremendous service for humanity, but the theories of biological determinism, so endearing to reactionary aims, can only lead to a blind alley of superstition and ignorance. Only when science is genuinely, guided by the broad interests of society, and not by the interests of privilege and power, can it truly serve humanity.

Big bang...

Dear Socialist Appeal,

As far as the 'Big Bang' theory is concerned I am agnostic and I certainly am not a scientist but a number of questions arise from Alan Woods article.

(a) First of all, religious attitude to the Big Bang theory is fractured. If Catholicism sees Genesis here, Protestant fundamentalism sees biblical antithesis. There was no convincing attempt to show science as either the purveyor or the victim of resurgent ideological reaction. Why should it be? Capitalism, in the West at least, has survived the death of god and constructed fresh idols.

(b) Much is left out of your discussion of 'beginnings' and 'ends' which you posit as an inimical threat to an eternal dialectic of 'matter, space and time'. Einstein's powerfully dialectical thought showed time to be a relative concept. It passes 'faster' or 'slower' depending on gravitational states. Hence the theory of 'Black Holes' on the edge of which, time 'stops'. Time/No time. Matter/Anti-mat-

ter. Space/No space. Beginning/Ends? I share the doubtful wonder of a universe imprisoned inside a pinhead but surely that is the doubt of a formal logic. A logic that looks on still in wonder at the idea of curved space and negated time and that would recoil equally strongly from the idea of a fixed, eternal universe 'without beginning or end'. The empirical conundrum of Big Bang theory certainly points to a theoretical deficiency but we must beware of posing this problem as some sort of triumph for a 'magical' dialectic.

(c) Surely the article also unconsciously sheds light on the much celebrated opposition between idealism and materialism. Isn't the criticism of science here, that it is only camouflaged ideology? But is there an opposition between 'scientific science' and 'ideological science'? Doesn't the dialectic between thought/action, subject/object, ideas/matter... freedom/necessity mean that the former is an illusion? The danger is that in counterpoising a heirarchical opposition

between materialism and idealism rather than emphasising the dialectical interaction between the subjective and the objective, valid ideas are relegated to non-distorted reflections of life, and the human subject as both 'knower' and 'actor' is devalued. This is antithetical to the idea of the revolutionary party as historical subject and threatens a Kautskyite politics where socialism is seen as an inevitable process carried through by 'history' not achieved by human action. The boldness of Alan Woods' article gives a sound basis for debate. I could hope your magazine could give similar attention to modern day philosophy, the neglect of which I can't imagine Marx would have sanctioned.

Yours fraternally,
Dave McHale, Birmingham.

Many of Dave's points we feel will be answered in the forthcoming book *Reason In Revolt*, by Ted Grant and Alan Woods. More details on page 27.

Book Review

Steve Forrest reviews
Farrell Dobbs classic

Teamster Rebellion

This classic book recounts the story of the historic Teamsters' strike which took place in Minneapolis, USA during 1934 under the leadership of Marxists. It was written by Farrell Dobbs who, as secretary-treasurer of Local (branch) 574 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Union, played a key role in the events he describes.

He recounts that during the magnificent movement of the workers in Minneapolis it became clear that: "Events were showing that the Trotskyists possessed the really fundamental revolutionary attributes: program, strategy, tactics, and the fighting capacity to lead workers in battle against the capitalist class" (page 100, 1995 edition). It is this analysis of how Marxists approach a trade union struggle that makes this work so valuable for activists today to read and study.

75 members

In 1933, branch 574 had less than 75 members and was financially poverty strike. However this was a time when an upsurge in the class struggle was starting to develop in the US and as a result of the growing mood against the conditions of 'low pay, long hours and a general feeling of insecurity' (trade unionists will no doubt recognise these questions today) workers were joining the unions in increasing numbers in order to defend their interests. The opportunity was starting to present itself to build a powerful trade union organisation throughout the country. In Minneapolis a general organising campaign was planned around branch 574 which had been established in 1915 as a 'general' branch rather than sticking to the strict craft lines which divided

the vast majority of other branches. As Dobbs relates; "A successful organising drive could flood the local with new members from all parts of the industry... such potential was inherent in the trucking industry because it was strategic to the whole economic complex in a commercial city like Minneapolis. This factor made the truck drivers the most powerful body of workers in the town" (pages 39-40).

For over 20 years no strike had been won by the workers in Minneapolis, mainly due to the class collaboration of the union officials. It was therefore vital to show that in any developing clash with the bosses strikes could be won. For strategic reasons a movement in the coal industry was selected as the opening target. Thanks to a very cold February and the fact that people had not been able to stock up on coal, the union was in a strong position. A volunteer committee was formed for the purpose of organising all coal workers to fight for admission into the union. This struggle was won and under the local leadership a list of demands was drawn up to present to the coal bosses including union recognition, improved working conditions and so on.

The bosses rejected the demands and despite delaying tactics by the union officials a strike was called for February 7th 1934. "Picketing day and night with little sleep, the strikers fought hard to keep the industry tied up tight. We were spurred on by the big stake we had in the outcome of the battle and our militancy was further stimulated by a growing awareness of organised labor's inherent power." (page 20). On February 9th with the strike solid, a settlement was proposed which after much discussion was accepted. Although only a partial victory,

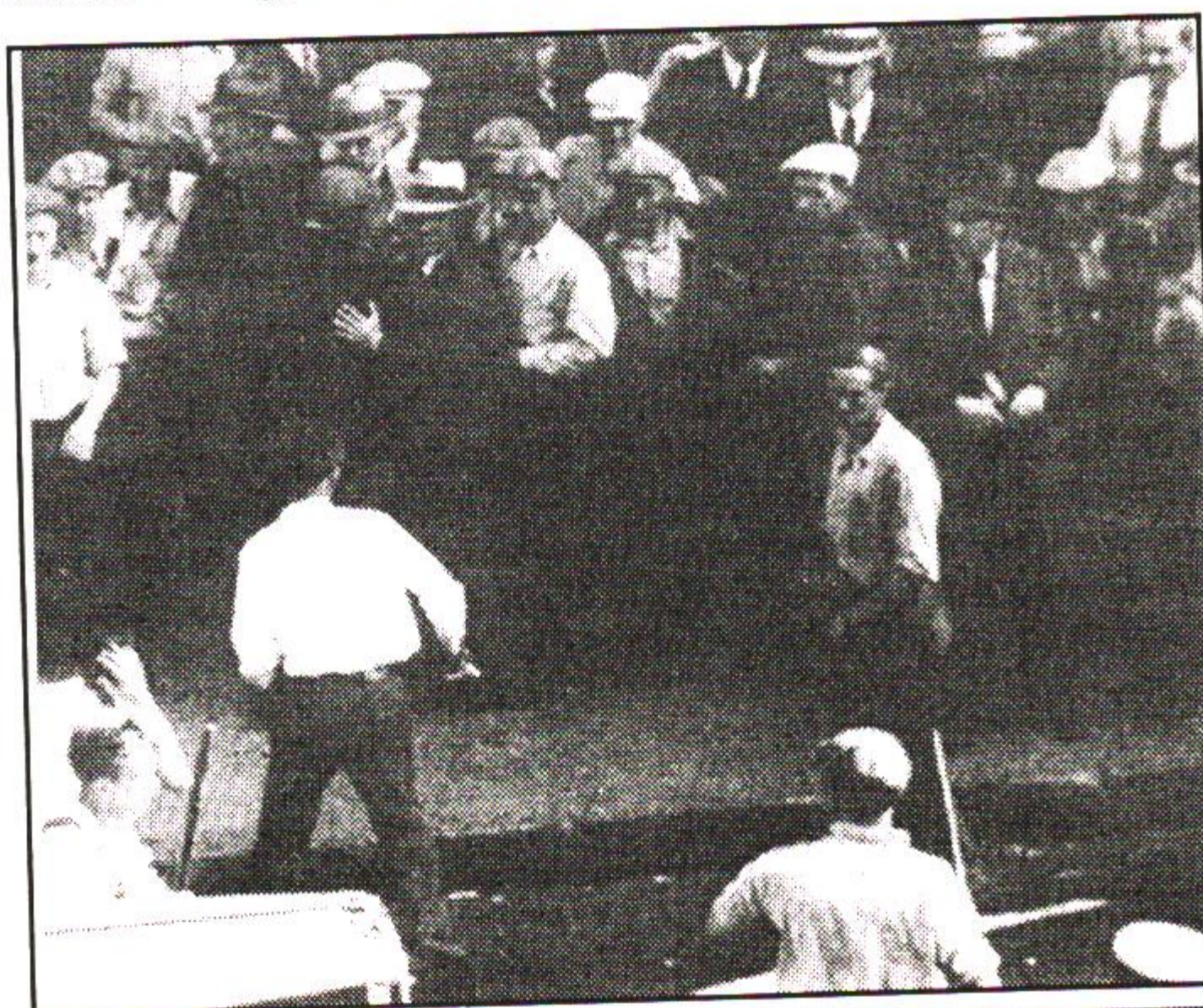
the author notes that "we now had a strong union, at least in terms of its battle tested ranks..." This strike was only the beginning of what was to be remembered as an enormous movement of the Minneapolis working class headed by branch 574. The struggle of the union against the bosses was to develop into a virtual city-wide general strike with the workers having to take on the combined might of the bosses and the government. In studying how the so-called impartial state machine intervened always on the side of the bosses and how the workers had to respond there are clear lessons here for those who would argue that the state can 'assist' in negotiating in labour disputes. Such bodies will only act in the interests of the workers when union might and pressure forces them to concede ground out of fear of what the workers might do. Left to their own devices they will always betray the workers and should not be relied upon as seems to be the wish of many a nervous trade union leader. Minneapolis shows that the law will never protect workers in struggle and they can

only trust their own forces and strength. Dobbs correctly describes these state negotiators as always having been "neutral on the side of the bosses."

The fight of Local 574 shows the ability of workers when fighting the bosses to take the struggle forward when they have a fighting leadership. Mobile pickets, mass rallies of up to 40,000 workers, union hospitals and the first daily union newspaper in the history of the US labour movement were just some of the deeds organised by the union. Although the strikes of 1934 were to end in a victory, the union activists noted that "the strike ends but the struggle does not end." They understood that the bosses would seek to take back what had been lost and that the fight to reform the union and give it a fighting leadership would have to be taken beyond the confines of Minneapolis. Local 574 had become the leadership in Minneapolis but the national union was still in the hands of the right wing and it was that leadership which needed change if the gains of 1934 were to be built on. Many of those involved in the movement also started to study the ideas of Marxism as a result of their experiences. These lessons are if anything more relevant today for those involved in trade union and class struggle. Every labour movement activist should take the opportunity to read (or re-read) this book.

Teamster Rebellion
Farrell Dobbs (Pathfinder)
£10.95

Available from
Well Red Books



The Great British Tradition

By Beatrice Windsor

'New Age' True Levellers

A commune squatting on waste land in Surrey raised the ire of the local community. Made up of unemployed people and well known community activists, the commune received petty harassment from the state authorities, children pelted them with rotten vegetables, they were attacked by local church leaders, while local farmers led mobs who trampled on vegetable plots and crippled their livestock.

This all sounds depressingly familiar, but its not about New Age travellers in the west country. This was the fate of the Diggers when they set up their communal settlement at Walton-on-Thames in 1649.

That year the Levellers were being liquidated by Cromwell. But while one movement was being suppressed, so a new one with revolutionary ideas 200 years ahead of their time, were making their mark.

They were known as the Diggers, although they called themselves True Levellers. They were the first to formulate truly communistic ideas, based on the works of Gerard Winstanley. He was a Baptist but was developing humanist theories that would form the basis of socialist ideas. Like the Levellers and many others before them, Winstanley agreed that all men were equal - but he also argued that this equality extended to property rights to. Much to the annoyance of the bourgeois leaders of the English Revolution, he hammered their abstract claims of 'freedom', pointing out that political freedom alone was of little use to the poor if they still went hungry.

His programme began to attract support from the more advanced sections of the Levellers. The Diggers argued for:

- ☛ all land to be owned communally and its produce shared throughout society.
- ☛ the new evil of 'money' would be abolished and replaced by a method of exchange based on labour and need.
- ☛ State officials including Magistrates would be elected.
- ☛ Annual Parliaments would be elected by universal male suffrage
- ☛ the right to free education for all children, male *and* female
- ☛ the abolition of all titles etc, with honours only for inventors

This progressive programme even upset the mainstream Levellers who viewed it as 'ultra left' (and more to the point it exposed the weakness of their own programme). Winstanley decided to put his ideas into action. But as soon as the commune was established at St George's Hill at Walton, so the hostility began.

The local clergy were alarmed at Winstanley's preaching that the Bible should not be taken as literal truth, and that 'God' should instead be interpreted as 'reason'. Nor did they take kindly the Diggers' continual referral to Jesus as "the Chief Leveller"! Freeholding farmers were also alarmed at their disrespect for property. So the campaign to get them moved on began. The attacks took place week after week. The State eventually acted, joining in the harassment. The Diggers were charged with trespass, fined £10 each, their cattle confiscated and their huts destroyed.

With each attack, the Diggers offered no resistance but merely began to rebuild their little community. But after 11 months they had little choice but to throw in the towel. Winstanley did attempt to begin a new commune at Cobham Heath. But a local parson followed them there with an armed band, attacking them and destroying all they had brought with them. A 24 hour armed guard was then put on this supposed plot of 'common' land to keep the Diggers out.

The experiment failed and the movement collapsed. Winstanley continued propagandising, but the failure left him confused as to the way forward. He eventually concluded that for such a 'commonwealth' society to succeed it would need to be imposed from above. He even petitioned Cromwell to take on this role. To an extent, Winstanley's conclusions were right - his ideas were good enough but what was missing was the 'vanguard' necessary to implement them.

Next month: *the New Model Army on the march again*

BOURGEOIS of the month

The Rausing brothers

ITS BAD enough getting squirted with milk everytime you try to open a milk carton.

Adding insult to injury is the fact that the man who invented the bloody thing, Ruben Rausing, made a fortune.

Ruben's sons, Gad and Hans are now the richest people in the UK, thanks to daddy.

Their inherited control of the Tetra Laval multinational has given them a personal fortune of £5,200 million.

The Rausing family came here in the 1980s, fleeing their native Sweden to get out of paying taxes. Thatcher of course made them very welcome.

They showed their thanks by knocking off two Great Brits from top of the 'filthy rich' charts.

For most of the post war period the unchallenged holders of No 1 and No 2 slots in the country's richest people Top Ten were;
- the Queen (with a personal fortune of around £5 billion)
- and the Duke of Westminster as runner up (with about £3 billion - until he took a 50% dive as property prices collapsed).

But the Rausing family took the lead in 1991. The brothers have now retired from active involvement in the family business; Hans shares an estate in Sussex with a herd of deer and a collection of vintage cars.

Gad meanwhile dabbles in academia, making donations to Oxford University. Which isn't too surprising. After all, you need a Degree to open one of their milk cartons.

Next month:
the Rock millionaires

socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

Tories in crisis

The Major government is on its last legs. It is the most unpopular government since records began. Reflecting the impasse of the system, it has been rocked by one crisis after another. They face an electoral meltdown in the elections for metropolitan and shire councils in England and Wales on 4th May, and the new unitary authorities in Scotland on 6th April. The Tories will be massively defeated in the Perth and Kinross by-election. Their prospects in a general election look extremely bleak, with many Tories resigned to a Canadian-style wipeout. No amount of tax bribes will alter this prospect. They are a doomed party.

Following the deep splits on Europe, we have the blunders of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke. He came out with the gaffe about the defunct steel works at Consett being "one of the best in Europe", and the "successful" nappy factory in the same town that had also closed down. This was then followed by his defence of high pay for company executives, and his claim that the "feel-good" factor may not materialise until after the next general election! These banana skins

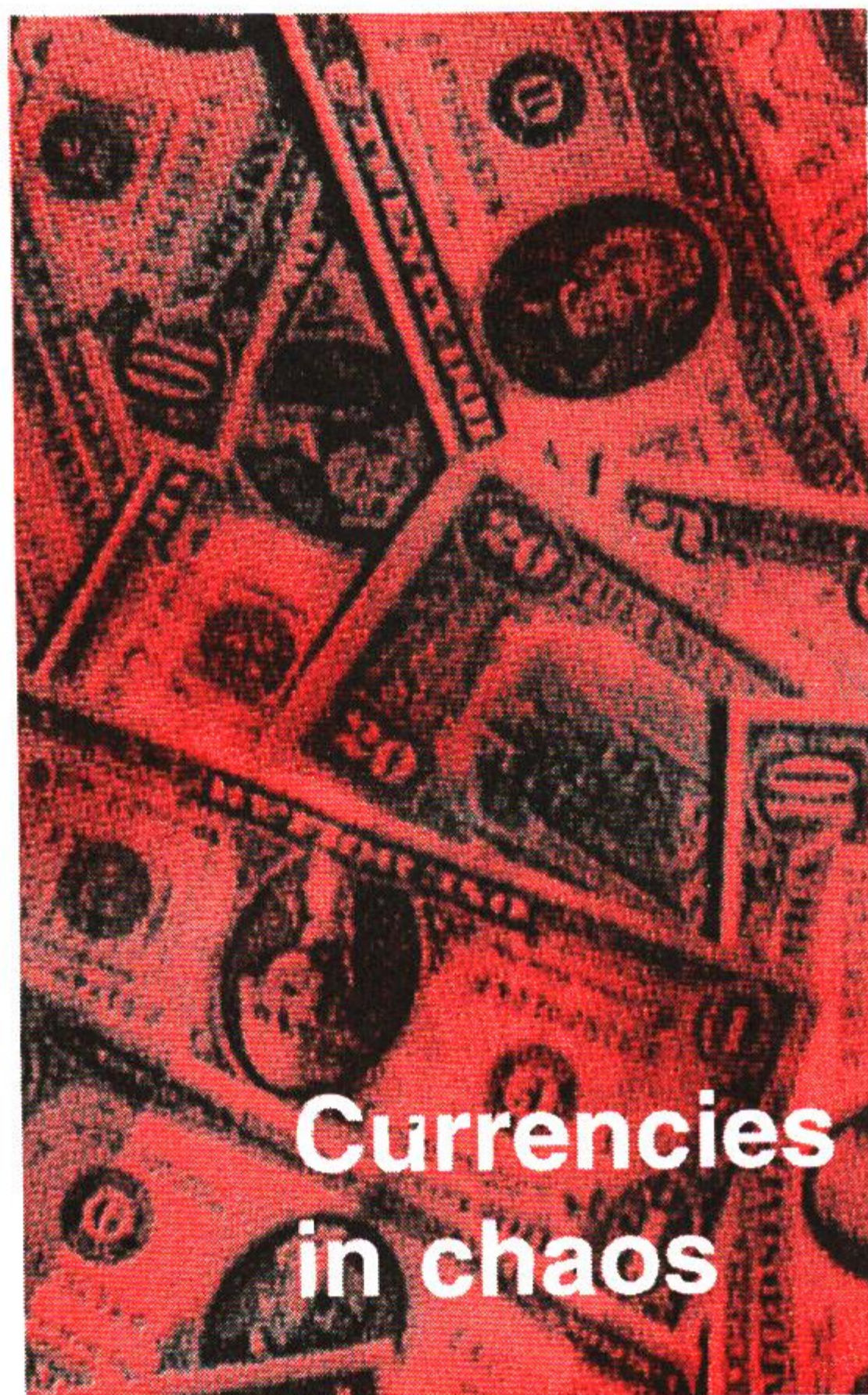
are the product of a government in crisis. In such conditions, Hanley, the Tory chairman, has lashed out accusing Labour Councils of corruption. What ever happened to Tory Westminster? No wonder the rats are leaving the sinking ship. Big business are losing confidence in Major. Peter Cadbury, the former head of Westward Television, said after his

"After a nightmare of more than 15 years of Toryism, the end is in sight. A new Labour government must take immediate action to remedy the ills that millions face: unemployment, low pay, homelessness, crumbling schools and hospitals"

home was burgled that he would no longer finance the Tory party, and forecast that they would be "wiped out" at the next election. Lord Sterling, chairman of P&O and adviser to Thatcher between 1982 and 1990, said he would now be happy to advise a future Labour government. It is no accident that under these circumstances a layer of Tories have become resigned to electoral defeat, attempting to

turn it into a virtue. Lord McAlpine, former Tory treasurer said of Major that he has "nothing against the chap personally. He's never done me any harm, except stuff up the Conservative Party." Asked about whether he was advocating a spell in opposition, he said: "I am. I think it's healthy. It's going into the wilderness, its taking a sabbatical." He said his views

were supported privately by Tory MPs and concluded: "They can see it coming. The sooner you start the next cycle, the better." Working people will be jubilant with these words. After a nightmare of more than 15 years of Toryism, the end is in sight. A new Labour government must take immediate action to remedy the ills that millions face: unemployment, low pay, homelessness, crumbling schools and hospitals, etc. To fulfil these aspirations, Labour must not tinker with the system, but take over the levers of economic power and plan the economy in the interests of the majority and not the profits of the few. Only on this socialist road can our problems be solved and the Tories be cast into the dustbin of history.



Currencies in chaos

Fight for Socialism