



socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement

NO casual labour

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Middle East "peace plan" in crisis

The wave of horrific suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, which claimed 58 lives, has caused revulsion round the world. Such actions - which have always been condemned by Marxists as totally counter productive - simply play into the hands of the hardline Zionists, and do nothing for the cause of the Palestinians.

"They have made us so afraid to do the thing that normal people do everywhere without thinking - take a morning bus to work," said 20 year old student Sarit Aldema. In the past, terrorism was directed at heads of government, police chiefs and the like. Although this was wrong, at least it was directed at those responsible for repression. Today's individual terrorists are scandalously directing their bombing campaign against ordinary people. In reality, individual terrorism is a blind alley that leads to the strengthening of the state apparatus. What forced the Israeli government to the negotiating table to discuss the "peace" process was not acts of individual terrorism which had been employed by the PLO for decades, but the impact of the mass protest of the Intifada in the occupied territories. Such mass protests - in effect a virtual uprising involving the youth - were written off and opposed by the PLO leadership. The Israeli ruling class came to realise that the Intifada could not be defeat-

ed militarily. It was this fact, together with the pressure of US imperialism, that forced the Israelis to grant nominal concessions over Palestinian autonomy. Hamas was founded in 1987 as an off-shoot of the Moslem Brotherhood. Originally it had the backing of Israel as a counter weight to the PLO, but soon joined the Intifada and became the most violent Palestinian faction. With repression it separated itself between the political and military wings. Now the military arm of Hamas - the Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades - are out of control. They are attempting to destroy the "peace" process, by provoking the Israelis. The political wing of Hamas, although opposed to peace with Israel, is terrified that such actions will lead to the total suppression of Hamas. The moderate wing of Hamas want an accommodation with Arafat.

Summit

The imperialists called a "Summit for Peace" in Egypt to get support for the "peace" process, to isolate Hamas and cut off its external finance of \$70 million a year. In reality the summit offers nothing. In an unprecedented move, to reassert their authority they even considered issuing a fatwa to prevent further bombings. As a result some sections have declared a cease-fire, but others in the West Bank are in opposition to the move. The inevitable reaction in Israel to the Hamas killings has put into doubt a Labour

victory in the May general election. Individual terrorism simply plays into the hands of the Zionist ruling class. The rightwing bloc, which opposes the "peace" process, has united around the single candidature of Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of the Likud. Before the bombings, Labour had a lead of 15-20 per cent. Now the right wing is leading in the opinion polls. This is a direct result of individual terrorism.

The Israeli state has reacted ruthlessly against Hamas and has forced Arafat to do likewise. If he refused, the Israelis would have threatened to retake the Palestinian areas, which they could do easily. Consequently, Arafat's police announced their capture of three leaders of the Qassam units. More than 400 Gazans have been arrested. Arafat has become increasingly a puppet of the Americans and is forced to capitulate to the demands of the Israelis in the bargain. In response to the atrocities, the Israelis closed the borders with the Palestinian state, preventing 120,000 Palestinian workers from going to work in Israel. They also announced work permits for another 16,500 migrant workers to replace Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza. This blockade produces desperation, misery and hunger amongst the Palestinians, further increasing the resentment against Israel and building support for Hamas. According to the Observer: "Abu Hashhash belongs to

the same refugee camp that was also home to two of the four recent bombers. He says that, until the siege was imposed, most of his 4,500 fellow refugees were against the killing of innocent Israeli civilians. But after two weeks of curfew he believes most would now support Hamas." (17/3/96). The blame for the whole festering crisis of the Middle East lies with imperialism which has played the game of divide and rule since the British conquered Palestine from the Turks during the First World War and encouraged Jewish immigration in order to play off Jews against Arabs. The history of the Middle East has been one of securing a stronghold for Western imperialism to protect its oil interests. Israel was an artificial state, financed and supported by the US, as its client in the region. Their intrigue led to the 1948 war between Israel and the Arab states, resulting in a million Arabs fleeing to neighbouring states.

Instability

The driving out of the Palestinians from their land was a source of continual instability and conflict. Coupled with this is the terrible condition of poverty and misery that the bulk of the population endure. Israel became a symbol of hatred for the Arab masses. The series of Arab-Israeli wars from 1948 showed that there can never be lasting peace or security under capitalism. Rather than a "land of milk and honey", the Israeli state has become a trap for the Jews. Instead of security, they have fought five wars since the founding of Israel.

The occupation of the West Bank and Gaza after the 1967 war has been a source of continual conflict. The Intifada in these occupied areas forced the Israelis to commit huge military resources, but to no avail. The strain of continued occupation, the weariness of the troops and the continuous uprising of the youth forced the Israeli government, under the pressure of imperialism, to enter

negotiations with Arafat. The failure of the Communist Parties of Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Egypt and throughout the Maghreb to lead the masses in the overthrow of the rotten Arab regimes, led to a reaction and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. It is a product of a hopeless situation for the masses.

Religion

It is not only a question of religion, but arises from the sheer despair of the masses. Under these conditions, where there is no mass socialist alternative, Islamic fundamentalist demagoguery aimed at the most downtrodden sections of society, has an effect.

But although the backward states of the Middle East offer no way forward, the example of Iran also demonstrates that Islamic fundamentalism is also a blind alley, and has no attraction for the workers in the West. However, the Israeli imperialists also lean upon Jewish fundamentalism to promote Jewish settlements in the occupied areas, although they have been forced by US pressure to abandon this tactic and freeze the settlements. The US and the European imperialists want to see a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict because of their oil interests in the region. It was for that reason that they waged a war against Iraq in January 1991. Given the collapse of Stalinism, the US has sought to strengthen their

basis in the region by resting not only on Israel, but also on Egypt and the other Arab states. The "peace" agreement opened the way for agreements with Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. They have forced the Israelis to concede limited autonomy for the fledgling Palestinian state, but the promised aid has not been forthcoming. There can never be a lasting "peace" in the Middle East on the basis of capitalism and the rotten Arab regimes. The whole basis of the chronic instability of the region is due to the impasse of the system and its inability to solve the basic problems facing the masses. The Western imperialists would prefer the victory of the Labour coalition under Shimon Peres, to allow the "peace" process to continue. As the Financial Times pointed out: *"Foreign and local investors want Mr. Peres re-elected because they believe a right-wing Likud victory would torpedo fragile Middle East peace. Furthermore, although the economic policies of the Likud and Labour parties are broadly similar, investors believe a Labour victory would guarantee stability and coherence of economic policy and enable the government to deal swiftly with its unfinished agenda. Mr. Victor Halpert, Israel analyst at Salomon Brothers, said that 'foreigners believe a Likud victory would end the peace process and lead to more government force against Palestinians, which would*

have negative effects on tourism and economic growth." (8/3/96) Even if Likud wins the election, they will be pressurised by the US to continue the "peace" process. Their subsidies from the West will be threatened if they fail to comply. In the past they made a deal with Egypt over Sinai, which involved the removal of settlers from the region. Despite the recent atrocities and the spiral of tit-for-tat assassinations, Israel and the PLO have no alternative but to continue the "peace" process. The Israelis are under pressure from the Americans, and Arafat has nowhere else to go. This does not mean that there will not be further outbreaks of violence, both from Hamas and the Jewish settlers. But for a time this agreement can hold. Nevertheless, the area will remain extremely volatile.

Revolutionary

Neither the problems of the Arab masses, nor the Israeli workers can be solved on the basis of capitalism. Nor can their aspirations for self-determination and national unification be met unless by means of the revolutionary overthrow both of Israeli imperialism and the reactionary Arab regimes. There can be no solution for the Middle East except in a democratic Socialist Federation, with the right of self-determination and full autonomy for all minority nationalities, Jews, Kurds, Copts and Druze.



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Socialist Appeal

PO Box 2626

London N1 7SQ

tel 0171 251 1094

fax 0171 251 1095

e-mail:

100723.2363@compuserve.com

Editor: Alan Woods

Business manager: Steve Jones

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Casualisation on the docks

Most dockers in this dispute have rejected an offer of £25,000 to "sell" their jobs.

That offer was not available to all of us. Some were "chosen" to return to work with new, even worse conditions.

But anyway, you may wonder why anyone would reject a lump sum like that.

It is true that £25,000 does not go far these days—especially since if you are unemployed and have more than £8,000 in the bank, you are not entitled to income support or other benefits.

But that is not the main point. After all, some of us have already rejected more "generous" offers while in work.

We have a compelling reason for saying NO.

This dispute centres on one issue: CASUALISATION.

This means, "flexible working", short term contracts, constant insecurity caused by "privatisation" or competitive tendering or simply the "need to remain internationally competitive."

Workers are told there is no alternative. Somehow it is all preordained. Millions of us have fallen victim to this trend.

Women of the Waterfront are always talking about the affects of the constant call-outs, disruption to family life and the tiredness and stress they cause.

All this is the real cost of the continuing drive by the bosses, government and political parties to make this country the "enterprise centre of Europe". Collective struggle and mutual aid has been a tradition on the docks in Liverpool and through this we have tried to blunt some effects of the employers' attacks.

Picket

When the Torside dockers refused to accept casualisation and mounted their picket, the rest of us refused to cross because we wanted to preserve our collective organisation.

A trade union (collective organisation) is nothing without the right to picket - which of course is now illegal in this country.

The real reason for this dispute is the attempt by the company, in which the government is the largest shareholder, to destroy and root out

of the docks any last remnant of collective organisation and solidarity.

They want to drive down conditions and wages to make the port even more "competitive." This pressure is never-ending.

One of the most insidious changes of the last few years has been the pressure for continuous improvement, or Raizen as the Japanese call it.

In the past a rate was agreed for the job and we would be left to get on with it. Today this is no longer the case, management continually want more for less. Your best is never good enough.

It is to do with another "isation" - GLOBALISATION. The bosses are always looking around the world for cheap labour. Workers are always being made to compete with each other to make profits for them

Since last September the MDHC, the government, the Liverpool Echo and so on have been attempting to dispose of us. But they have badly miscalculated.

Instead we - the "remnants" of organised labour - have shown how it is possible to resist collectively. We can mobilise ourselves, we don't have to suffer in isolation. How? We have taken our struggle into our own hands.

We have sent delegates to ports all over the world to ask for practical solidarity.

We have organised an international conference of port workers to see if we can work out a coordinated international approach to the problem of casualisation.

We now live in a world that is far more "international" than it used to be. Companies think nothing of shipping goods round the world if it makes money.

Developments in information technology make services just as footloose. World trade is growing three times faster than world production!

This globalisation of the economy means that we, the working class, can also "globalise" our struggle and no laws in any one nation state can stop us.

Pressure

We can use international pressure to strengthen our collective organisation. So can Ford or Vauhall workers.

All this means we can begin to fight back and in the process find real answers to the problems that confront us. So remember - it isn't the money.

It is about the fact that there aren't any individual solutions any more. We need solutions at the level of society itself.

You won't be all right if you just keep your head down - casualisation affects everybody, blue collar, white collar, working class, middle class. We can successfully resist, but only by using all the weapons at our disposal - our members internationally and our ability to understand and organise ourselves.

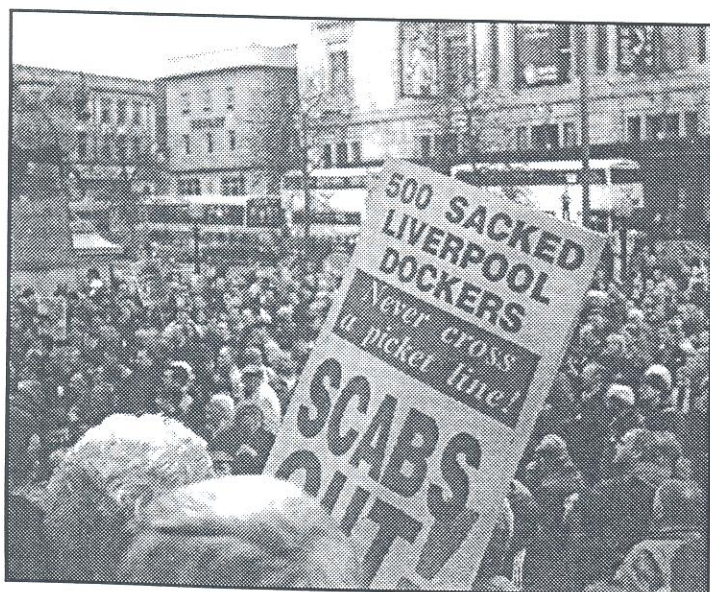
From the Dockers Charter

"How picketing

Francis Jones of Women of the Waterfront explains: "If somebody had said to me two years ago that I would be shutting down dock gates in half a foot of snow, I would have said NEVER!

The dispute has changed my life. I have become much more politically aware. I realise that the same problems are affecting a whole lot of other people all over the world.

After the defeat of the 1989 strike, things got very bad on the docks. New contracts were issued about two years ago. The conditions not only affected the dockers, but the women and families too.



In 1989 the port employers and shipowners, together with the government, conspired to carry out deregulation of the docks. Economic fear was imposed on workers. We accuse the government of conspiracy.

Despite the fact that we have seven miles of waterfront on Merseyside, we were always a united and consolidated workforce. Following defeat of the 1989 dock strike, we were divided into six separate sections with six separate contracts.

It is now impossible for one section legally to take solidarity action with any of the others. It is virtually impossible to have an official dispute.

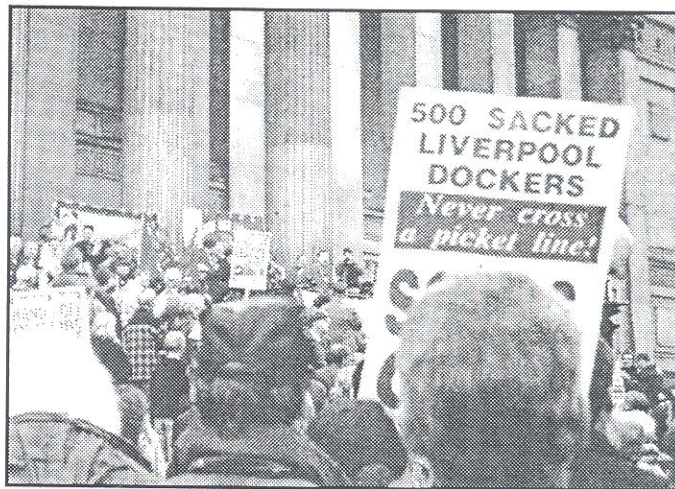
We knew two years ago that it was only a matter of time before we would have a major dispute with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company. We did not know exactly how this would start.

workers and carry out negotiations. But they do not do that. Why? Because the government owns 20 per cent of the shares. The company is government-controlled, and that same government is armed with laws against the trade unions.

Law

These laws make it virtually impossible for one worker to support another. The Transport & General Workers' Union would be breaking the law if it recognised our action. I have been a member of the TGWU for 34 years, but I am now involved in an unofficial, illegal dispute!

Meetings between the TGWU and MDHC are merely a cosmetic exercise. There is no intention to reinstate the sacked men, but that is what we are fighting for. We are proud of the support we are receiving from church leaders, local politicians, MPs, the



Coast of the United States, in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, vessels using the port of Liverpool have been boycotted. John Bowers of the International Longshoremen's Association of the US, took it to his membership. Before Christmas we sent a

have dropped from £4.80 to £4.20. We call upon you to support us financially and morally. Of course we don't expect dockers in countries where they would be shot down, to take industrial action in our support, but we call upon dockers everywhere else to

Struggle must be international

Then in September last year, in a dispute about sackings and proposals for casual labour, dockers employed by Torside Ltd. mounted a picket. As human beings and trade unionists we could not cross that picket line - and we were sacked.

The first thing we did was to hold mass meetings to consolidate ourselves. The company tries to create divisions amongst us: new employment contracts were sent to only 200 men.

The government should be telling the Mersey Docks and Harbour company to re-employ the sacked

trade union movement on Merseyside and unemployed organisations. But the results of this are limited because the government, with its laws, is against us.

This government has done everything to smash trade unionism - privatisation, the break-up of social and public services, introduction of casual labour and the anti-trade union laws. They want casual labour in the port of Liverpool.

When we turned to our international brothers, and made our appeal for solidarity, we won immediate support - on the East

picket, and action was taken by the US dockers against Associated Containers' Limited.

Boycott

The same thing is true of Australia and Israel and we had a surprise letter from Flushing (Vlissingen) in Holland where dockers are boycotting vessels from the Medway port, owned by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

This international action has already begun to take effect. Share values of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company

give practical support - to boycott shipping which uses the port of Liverpool.

Shipping is international and therefore we should be international. We guarantee that when we are reinstated we will give all the international solidarity necessary to you.

Workers all over the world must unite.

Jimmy Nolan, chairman of the Liverpool Dockers Shop Stewards' Committee (reprinted from The Dockers Charter)

changed my life..."

We'd had enough.

In this dispute, the women decided to get involved whether the men wanted it or not.

Some people say that the dockers are just militants, that there have always been bad industrial relations. But now the women are involved it's made people think there's a problem that needs to be sorted out.

My proudest moment was when our women's picket closed the dock gates on our

own. That made me feel we were really doing something!

This morning we were forcibly removed by the police. There were about 25 of us on the Seaforth gate despite the bad weather.

The women were just as adamant as the men to refuse the £25,000. A few people say they can't understand that. But it's not about money, it's about jobs.

Some people say: "Well I lost my job, and I didn't get offered £25,000 or anything."

But that's just the point. With millions unemployed, the bosses use fear tactics. This has been the situation throughout the Thatcher era. The working class has been manipulated by the government. The sale of council houses and low mortgages has put workers into a position where they are scared of losing their jobs. That is why we are in dispute now, and it's going to happen to a lot more people. The company put up £8 million to pay us off and break us. But the strike's been on for 20 weeks. it's just not going to go away!"

NUT: fighting lead and a national campaign needed

1000 teacher delegates will gather in Cardiff this Easter for what promises to be a bitterly fought conference. 1996 is potentially the crisis year in the struggle between those progressive, activist, fighting elements in the union and the bankrupt, collaborationist majority group of the Executive, the so-called "Broad Left."

The Broad Left leadership, congealed around General Secretary Doug McAvoy, have no programme, strategy or will to defend the interests and conditions of the membership. At a time when teachers, co-workers, parents and children are organising together to oppose the underfunding and dismantling of the comprehensive school system by a doomed but dangerous Tory government, the Executive of the largest and most effective teacher union is abrogating its leadership role in fighting against those attacks and is instead squandering the union's resources in an internal struggle to maintain its bureaucratic status and hold over the union.

This year at Conference we need to be devising national strategies to defend ourselves and our pupils against a whole battery of Tory attacks.

For example, the government's scheme to introduce Nursery Vouchers should be tackled. This scheme will actually rob working

class families of good nursery education in inner city areas. It will subsidise those affluent parents who pay to send their children to private nurseries.

Vouchers will take money away from local authorities who struggle to provide good nursery education and redirect that money to cowboy operators who will profit by employing untrained underpaid childminders.

The scheme is fraud and theft on a grand scale. For hundreds of thousands of working class children it will reduce even further their opportunities at a time which is so crucial in each child's life. It is also the thin edge of the privatisation wedge into education. The union should be fighting it with every scrap of energy.

OFSTED

Another Tory attack the union should be facing with vigour is the political use of OFSTED, which inspects schools. The only point in inspecting a school is to help to improve the performance of that school but instead OFSTED reports are being used to close down inner city schools or force them to opt out. The Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead, has made a number of ludicrous attacks on teachers which have been seized on as good copy by the press and which have sought to deflect public attention away from the government's undermining of state

education.

Part of that undermining of state education has been severe underfunding by central government over a number of years. The NUT conference should be agreeing an effective national campaign against oversized classes. We should be linking with FACE, Fight Against Cuts in Education. The union also has a duty to defend teachers' living standards. Conference should be rejecting another inadequate and unfunded pay imposition and should be leading the fight to win a proper pay rise.

The NUT should by now be celebrating the victory over SATs testing. This was a campaign that the membership nearly won but which the Broad Left abandoned so that McAvoy could pursue his nauseating and ineffectual flirtation with the Secretary of State, Gillian Shepherd. The effects of that retreat are now being waved in our faces as Shepherd announces that 1996 SATs tests will be used for league tables of primary schools and selection (and rejection) comes a huge leap closer.

These and many other issues are what our members want conference to be addressing. Instead of which we shall certainly spend most of our energy in debating and rejecting the rule changes that the Executive majority are seeking to introduce in a desperate bid to maintain bureaucratic

control over the union. Faced over the last few years by a growing strength and assertiveness of those in the union determined to defend ourselves by our own efforts, the Broad Left is attempting to fundamentally undermine the democratic procedures of the union by introducing 'consultative ballots' on every issue. As we have already seen this means that whoever controls the printing presses win the 'debate' every time.

United

These proposals will be difficult to fight because of the procedural methods the Broad Left will use, but this year the organised left groups are united as never before. The Socialist Teachers Alliance and the Campaign for a Democratic Fighting Union will stand together against the bureaucracy on the conference floor and in the elections for the National Executive. If the SWP, who have isolated themselves from the serious left, does not play into McAvoy's hands with childish stunts then the left stands poised to defeat the defeatists and give the NUT a fighting leadership with which to pursue the best interests and aspirations of our teachers and their pupils.

Tim Hales
Leeds NUT
(personal capacity)

East London fights education cuts

East London NUT have just held an 'indicative ballot' for industrial action over the latest round of education budget cuts.

The 5% average cut will inevitably mean cuts in jobs, larger classes, increased workloads for staff who remain and poorer education for children. Some schools have had budget cuts of well over 10%.

Not surprisingly, the ballot returned 82.5% in favour of strike action on a 44.9% turnout. Unfortunately, the NUT national leadership have said that they

will not sanction a full ballot on the grounds that only 37% of the total membership had voted in favour of action—yet nowhere in NUT rules or even those of the government is such a requirement made on indicative ballots. The turnout was far in excess of the level achieved by the leadership's recent "democracy" ballot which the executive are, of course, intending to fully implement.

There is a definite mood amongst teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents for action to stop the cuts. Lobbies of the Council, postcards and petitions

have already been organised, a public meeting has been organised and a demonstration set for April 20th. Students at one secondary school have formed a Students Against the Cuts group and have written to other school's student councils urging them to join forces in taking action.

The campaign in East London is echoed by others up and down the country. Education cuts made by numerous councils will mean job losses, larger classes and cuts in the quality of education provision. There is a growing mood, shown by the support for

the FACE campaign, to fight for a decent education for all children through adequate funding. It is this aspect of educational provision which David Blunkett should be addressing rather than echoing Tory propaganda against "failing" teachers.

Whatever the NUT leaders try to do, the campaign in East London will continue with the fight against the cuts, including the possibility of strike action.

Veronica Patterson
East London
Teachers Assoc.

After Manchester police attack young Asian.....

Campaign for police accountability

At 2.45 am on the morning of Wednesday 21st February, two young Asian men were arrested on Wilmslow Road, Rusholme in Manchester.

Wilmslow Road was the site of celebrations for the Eid festival which marks the end of Ramadan. One of the arrested men, Amer Rafiq, had only finished work in a local restaurant about half an hour earlier. The two men were placed in separate police vans which then drove to Platt Lane Police station, about one mile away. The first van took about three minutes to arrive. The second van, which had Amer Rafiq in it, took fifteen minutes to arrive. Amer had been severely beaten on

the way to the police station and on arrival he was examined by a doctor and immediately transferred to the Royal Infirmary where he underwent surgery for the removal of an eye.

This incident has caused outrage not only in the Muslim community but in the wider community. The police have freely admitted that Amer's injuries occurred while in police custody. They also admit that at worst Amer would have been charged with a public order offence eg. obstruction. What has also caused outrage is the fact that the police officers responsible, who are part of the "Tactical Support Unit" (Riot Police), have not even been

suspended from duty. The police are conducting an internal inquiry.

The attack on Amer while in police custody has raised a number of questions. The Rafiq family and the Amer Rafiq Defence Campaign have called for a public inquiry. This demand is supported by the local Labour Party. But this incident again highlights the need for the labour movement to campaign for democratic control and accountability of the police. We should be campaigning for the police to be under the control of committees made up from the local council, the local community and the trade union movement.

Another issue is the police's

attitude to the Eid festival in Rusholme. Wilmslow Road has one of the biggest concentrations of Asian restaurants in Britain; there are some eighty restaurants in a half mile stretch. As a result, at the end of Ramadan, Wilmslow Road is a focal point for the Eid celebrations, one of the major religious and cultural festivals on the Muslim calendar. For many years Eid has been celebrated in Rusholme by a large gathering of young Asians and Wilmslow Road is closed to traffic. However, the celebrations have been marred by a heavy police presence, including mounted and riot police. This deters a family celebration taking place. One of the main issues raised is the need to remove the heavy police presence and to have the Eid festivities stewarded by community organisations. Eid in Rusholme is like the Notting Hill Carnival, it is not a riot in the making.

*John Byrne
Rusholme
Labour councillor*

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Tories risk CJD epidemic to safeguard agricultural industry profits

"I should make it clear that humans do not get mad cows disease" John Major October 1995

"There is currently no scientific evidence that BSE can be transmitted to humans or that eating beef causes CJD in humans. That issue is not in question." John Major 1995

The trouble for Major and the Tories is that as of Wednesday March 20 1996 not only is the question of the dangers of BSE (or Mad Cows Disease as most people know it) in relation to humans very much in question but that the government has had to admit it. For years the government and the ministry responsible, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), have been cheerfully denying links and stalled on any action to clarify the matter. With the announcement that there are 10 cases (so far) of people who have been affected by a variation, first detected back in 1994, of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD), which appear to be linked directly to "exposure to BSE" this scandal has been blown wide open. Nearly two years ago *Socialist Appeal* (issue 22) carried an article on the dangers of BSE in which we showed how MAFF has acted to protect the interests of the wealthier sections of the beef industry against the consumer. We said then that this means that "it is a fact of life under capitalism that action to protect peoples well-being and safety tends to be taken only after a problem has unavoidably shown itself (for example after a major accident or disaster) rather than before hand. MAFF seems quite happy to suppress fears about BSE and hope for the

best." Well those hopes have been dashed! Given the long incubation period of CJD in humans the damage of failing to act could be severe. Experts are talking about a possible epidemic within 10 years. The worst case scenario is that of 10 million people affected by 2010—a nightmare to equal that of the black death in the middle ages. Whilst apocalyptic predictions should be treated with caution the 'best case' scenario of 100 cases is now seen as certainly likely to be surpassed. Even government expert Professor Pattison, chairman of SEAC (the governments BSE committee) was heard to say on the BBC that "if you are asking me if the risk of eating British beef is zero then I can't do that."

Sober

The formerly 'sober' experts are now talking about extermination of the entire national herd of cattle—over 11 million—as a necessary act to contain the problem. Mind you, that would be a commercial decision not a health one, taken to protect the wider interests of agriculture and with the safety net of compensation. Even the Ministers responsible for announcing this situation in parliament felt obliged not to join in with the calls of "scaremongering" made by Tory backbenchers, many of whom are owners of farming interests, on the basis that they understood the likely consequences. The attitude of these Tory landowners is a disgrace in itself—one was even reported as making cow-like sounds during the debate! Of course nothing has been firmly proved either way, but at least the government can no longer deny that there is something

wrong with the state of Britain's meat. Other theories have been advanced to explain the causes of CJD but these are even more damning so far as the food producers and MAFF are concerned. One explanation raised is that in the 80s, MAFF forced farmers to treat all cattle with a systematic pesticide to deal with an infestation of warble fly. This highly poisonous concoction was supposed to penetrate into the spine and therefore into the whole internal system of the cattle. Only so-called organic farmers, following a court case, got out of having to carry out this treatment. This may or may not explain the problem with beef in the 80s but hardly puts the MAFF in a good light whatever the actual truth. There has been an unhealthy tendency in recent years to throw chemicals at problems—thereby creating large profits for both the agricultural and chemical industry but with little concern for long term side effects.

Who is to blame? Both the government, MAFF and the big farming companies must take the

blame having acted together in collusion to protect their profits at the expense of our health. One small farmer, quoted in the *Guardian* of March 21st made it clear when he said "If the government had said they didn't know if there were any risks to humans and had set up a proper programme of slaughtering infected herds and issuing lists of safe farms, there wouldn't have been such a problem." Even a junior Scottish minister found himself having to admit that the government might have to take "some blame" for all this. As our previous article explained, the methods of modern large scale livestock farming have been directly responsible for causing the epidemic of BSE with their factory methods. Despite measures being belatedly taken by the authorities, it is understood that some infected meat is still getting into the food chain creating more risks for the future. It was the relaxation of restrictions in the 80s by MAFF of what could be feed to farm animals which opened up this Pandora's box.

Organic

Interestingly the organic farmers, who keep cattle in the old traditional way, have had no cases of BSE on their farms whatsoever. The big companies are busy selling their interests in the 'red meat' business and moving into other areas instead. It is the small farmer on the one hand and those who have to eat the cheaper cuts of meat who will pay the price. Labour should be taking a stand in demanding that those responsible should be called to account. Time and time again it has been the working class who have been made to pay for the greed of the few.

Steve Jones



Socialist Appeal Campaign Fund

With this issue of *Socialist Appeal* we reach two anniversaries; our 40th issue and our fourth year of publication. We have also reached one other point—the last year of the Tory government.

we do not have the massive resources of the Tories and the Labour right wing. They can rely on donations from big business and advertising revenue from companies to support their ventures. We have to—and prefer to—rely on donations and support

books to come. We have constantly fought with very limited resources to keep the ideas of Marxism alive in the movement and provide a clear analysis and programme for left activists looking for a way forward. Now in this important year of

ward. As a first step please complete and return the form below to us with what ever you can afford. If you would like to make a regular donation through your bank by standing order then please drop us a line or phone and we will send you details. We

Election on horizon

Within the next 12 months a general election will take place which should usher in a majority Labour government. That government will be a government of crisis as it has to decide whether to act in the interests of workers or capital. The signs are pretty clear as to which way they will go. People like Peter Mandelson in cahoots with the old SDP renegades are already using the media to peddle their line of class collaboration with the Liberals etc. New Labour is clearly a party within a party. Policies are already being abandoned even before they come to office. *Socialist Appeal* plays a role in raising an alternative solution for activists in the labour and trade union movement. Despite the abolition of Clause IV etc. socialism will not be silenced. In this election year the voice of Marxism needs to be heard louder than ever. But

from ordinary men and women who are prepared to make sacrifices to back us. Thanks to your efforts already we have established our own offices, staff and—most important of all—our own printing press. With this we have been able to

struggle we need your help once again. We are launching in this issue a financial appeal to all our readers and supporters for £6,000 to be raised by the end of September. We are confident that if a spring offensive is launched on this question

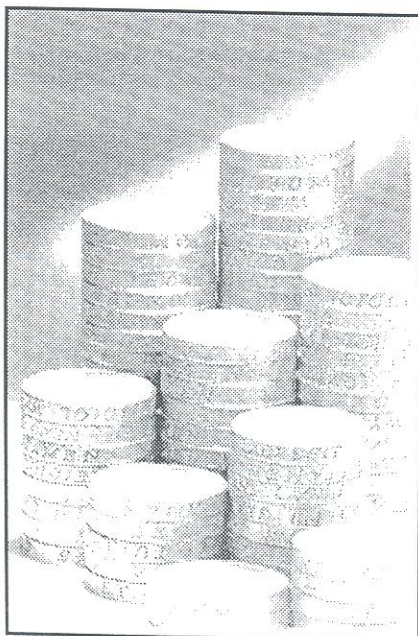
also call on all our supporters to not only give a donation themselves but also start organising to raise the cash from other readers and the movement at large. Jumble sales, car boot sales, socials, raffles together with collections at meetings—all can be

£6,000 appeal

produce not only *Socialist Appeal* but a whole series of pamphlets ranging from practical issues in the movement over to Marxist theory that explains the processes taking place within society. Our book publishing wing has already produced a major work on modern science and Marxist philosophy to mark the centenary of the death of Frederick Engels, with further

then we can easily meet and surpass this amount well before the deadline. This cash will ensure that we are able to use *Socialist Appeal* to the fullest—at the union conferences, picket lines, demonstrations, meetings of the movement and most of all in the general election itself. This cash will give us the extra resources to take the ideas of *Socialist Appeal* for-

tried. How about donating those expenses from attendance at union conferences? Remember that even small amounts can add up to make a difference. Its down to you to help ruin John Major's day. Please give what you can. We will monitor the progress of the campaign and report notable successes and interesting ideas in each issue of *Socialist Appeal*.



Donation

I enclose a donation of £.....
to Socialist Appeal's Campaign Fund.
All cheques/postal orders should be made
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LEAN AND MEAN

You can't with a NISSAN

Twenty years ago the future of manufacturing seemed to be in the upgrading of automation and further increases in mechanisation. Today, the picture is very different. "Flexible" production strategies and new managerial ideologies have transformed the face of industry. This restructuring is part of the bosses counter-revolution that has taken place throughout the economy. One of the spearhead companies in this process has been Nissan.

They have been followed by other Japanese transplants - Honda in Swindon and Toyota in Derbyshire. Nissan came to Sunderland in the mid 80s with full encouragement from Thatcher and the Tories. In fact they were financed to the tune of £130 million to provide 3500 jobs. Ironically at the same time as the Tories were negotiating with Nissan they announced the closure of North East Shipbuilders, the last remaining state owned yard in Sunderland, with the loss of 2000 jobs. The government refused to give it any financial aid. If all Nissan's subsidies, both direct and indirect, are taken into account,

then we do not have a picture of a new economic revival based on private capital but, rather, the Tories favouring a "soul mate" company that would be used as a model in its policy of economic "restructuring" in the interests of the bosses. So what is the basis of this model. The model that has now been used to dramatic effect throughout the economy, from traditional manufacturing industries right through to public sector enterprises like the post office. Nissan bases its production strategy on what can be described as "lean production."

Lean

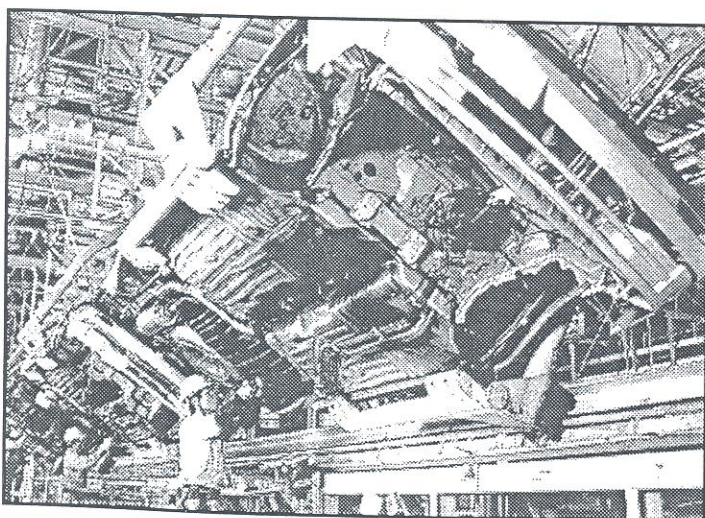
The goal of being "lean" demands that there be no waste, whether capital, labour, or materials. "Just in time" production (JIT), teamworking and flexibility, these are some of the major elements of the Nissan way. But what is it really like to work for Nissan and what makes it any different from what happens in the traditional manufacturing industries. Underpinning the whole production method at Nissan is JIT. JIT requires tight supervision of production flows and employee commitment to it. JIT must limit potential disruptions to a minimum - this means

control on a level not heard of before in traditional manufacturing. This means companies like Nissan controlling not just their own procedures but dominating its supply companies, determining what they produce, how and when. Central to this policy is an anti-union stance from most of the "lean" companies, tight recruitment policies that include psychological profiling and attempts to "incorporate" the workers into the company strategy, hence Nissan's one car park and one canteen. However, this joint approach has not been extended to salaries or real impact on company decision making. At Nissan the central core of managements control on the assembly line is organised around "kaizen." This is the daily team meeting where workers discuss the targets for the day, and how they will meet them. The meeting is used to tightly police all working methods at a technical level, drumming what Nissan call the "standard operation" into everyone. So, rather than the flexible, multi-skilled workforce dreamt of by the "lean" utopians, Nissan has effectively driven out any sense of flexibility and even genuine skill from the assembly line. As a good example just look at Nissan's definition of skill. We all know what we mean by skill, but what do Nissan mean. Their manual states clearly that skill can be defined as 'the capability of always performing the operation securely, by the best operation method and the ability to further improve the method.' "The best operation method.." is quite obviously Nissan's own "standard operation." So rather than real skill, Nissan view it as a type of work the very opposite of skill. Kaizen means that workers experience of work is contingent on the needs of the line - work is reactive not creative. In the hands of Nissan "flexibility"

and "multiskilling" have become tools not to "empower" the employees, as they argue, but tools of greater subordination than existed even in traditional manufacturing models. So called "standard operation" in reality deskills even the simplest of tasks, removing any discretion a worker has in its operation. Teamworking is also central to Nissan's policy of line control. By working in a team, any individual control a worker may have over things like line speed ups is gone. On the traditional line a worker could fulfil his task or quota rapidly thus gaining valuable rest time. Teamworking eradicates this potential. JIT does not necessarily need a weak union structure and it does not necessarily need production to be organised on a team basis. These are policies used by Nissan for the social control of the workplace. Another central factor in Nissan's method is its policy of Total Quality Management, or what could be more correctly called Total Management Control. Nissan prides itself on the quality of its cars. And in fact quality of cars over the last ten or twenty years has leaped forward dramatically. But is it all in the interest of the consumer? Nissan goes to extraordinary lengths to determine "quality," even down to the amount of carpet tucked and sewn under the seats. Of course no one driving a car is ever going to know about this particular level of their Nissan's "quality." What Nissan are doing is using "quality" to define strict limits on how workers operate on the line. This is backed up by "kaizen," "standard operation" and the team. A wire runs the whole length of the assembly line. If a worker has a "quality concern" then they pull it and a siren and flashing "help lamp" are set off. Sounds like a good idea?

Pressure

But workers are placed under enormous pressure by the lamps. They fear that lamps going off further down the line would expose them as incompetent. A particular team would therefore only pull the wire as a last resort, rectifying faults caused by other teams rather than risk a line stoppage and inspection and the possible discovery of more faults that could be attributed to them. So rather than a tool to spot quality defects, the help lamps force the



teams to cover for each other and minimise the risk of disruption to the assembly line. "Neighbour check" is another method employed. This means teams are encouraged to check the quality of neighbouring teams work. This is based on the idea that no defect will pass from one part of the process to the next. However, what is generated is a kind of competition between teams, picking up faults in others work before their work is found at fault. Is this quality control or is it worker self surveillance of the line? These methods have allowed Nissan to do away with a whole layer of supervisors and foremen. It is more profitable to do it without them! Behind the Nissan training manuals exhortation to "quality, flexibility and teamwork" we can see the reality of control, exploitation and surveillance. Lean production has been successful. More and more it is becoming the established norm throughout British industry. Wages are lower, hours are longer, contracts are shorter, capital investment is negligible. This is why the bosses are adopting it. Forget "quality" and "efficiency" and think about the enormous increase in the level of exploitation. In such a situation we need to build a strong and militant trade union movement - that is going to be the biggest question facing workers at Nissan and similar workplaces as we move towards the 21st century.

Alastair Wilson

Stagecoach Selkent workers vote for strike

Stagecoach workers at Selkent buses in south east London have voted for strike action. The ballot was over Stagecoach's attempt to introduce new contracts which will substantially decrease their terms and conditions. In particular, workers will have to work another 1.5 hours a week without extra pay. The vote for strike action was 515 (82.9%) against 109 (17.1%). Two 24 hour strikes have now been called, on 10 April and 17 April. On the 17th a mass rally and demonstration to Stagecoach HQ will take place. A fuller article will appear in next months Socialist Appeal.

Mark Langabeer
Plumstead Garage Rep.
TGWU Branch 1/366

The Blair Revolution?

With the publication of Peter Mandelson's new book, *Steve Forrest* looks at what is really going on inside the Labour Party.

Ever since the general election defeat in 1983, the Labour Party leadership has moved consistently to the right, firstly under Kinnock, then under John Smith. However, since the election of Tony Blair as leader in 1994, there has been an unprecedented speeding up of the so-called "reforms" in the party, including the abandonment of Clause IV, and a further shift to the right on policy. Tony Blair, speaking at the GMB conference in June 1995 said that "people ask me, when I will draw the line under reform? when can we say it is done with? The answer is never." On the Frost programme he went further: "New Labour is not some public relations exercise but a new and different party."

Frustrated by the process of "reform", the defeat of Clause IV and the continual shift to the right, Arthur Scargill has, together with others from inside and outside the Labour Party, broken away and formed the Socialist Labour Party. Explaining his decision in the *Guardian*, he wrote "New Labour's constitution has not only abandoned socialism but embraced capitalism and the free market. In other words, Labour has ceased any pretence of being a socialist

party." This situation has opened up an important debate amongst wider layers inside the British labour movement on the direction of the Labour Party and its relationship to the unions and the working class. Questions have been raised as to why a figure of the standing of Scargill has decided to take the step he has. Although the formation of the SLP is a serious error and reflects the lack of perspective and understanding on the part of Scargill and others, it is clear that the motives are in the main genuine enough. But what are the motives of the Labour right wing? Where do they stand and what do they want? In order to enlighten us, Peter Mandelson, Blair's close adviser and organiser for the right wing, together with former SDP founder Roger Liddle has produced a book called *The Blair Revolution—Can New Labour Deliver*

(Faber £7.99). This work is meant to cover all aspects of Blair's "revolution", the economy, Labour's programme and how the new Labour government will succeed. According to the inside cover this will be "a radical, exciting vision" in which we will see how Labour will "secure the sustained period in office to transform Britain." They wish us to "understand better why Labour has changed and what it has changed into." Space prevents any analysis here of the economics and political programme outlined in this work, which the authors wish to foist on the Party, but the question of the nature of our Party should be tackled straight away. After the unexpected defeat in the 1992 election, caused mainly by the blunders of the Labour right wing (but the book passes over that apart, from a passing criticism of John Smith for





"ignoring" their warnings) a meeting took place between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair to analyse the reason for the defeat. There they concluded that "Labour's future success depended on continuing the process of modernisation begun under Neil Kinnock..." The right blamed the defeat on the "outdated, irrelevant policies of old Labour" and they saw the answer as a "reformed, stronger Labour Party as the necessary foundation stone of a successful Labour government."

Discontent

Following the "winter of discontent" and the election defeat of 1979, a mood of radicalisation developed inside the Labour Party. There developed an opposition which crystallised itself around the reform of the system of electing the leader and the reselection of MPs and then around the campaign of Tony Benn to be elected Deputy Leader (which he lost by a whisker). The constituencies were to the left and important victories were won at the annual conferences, as opposition developed against the Tories and their policies. The authors call this period 'Bennite madness' and use it to justify the motives of many of the SDP traitors.

However, under Kinnock the party moved to the right on the backs of first the Tory landslide victory of 1983, and then the defeat of the miners strike, which involved a criminal lack of support by the Labour lead-

ership for the strikers. The economic boom of the Eighties (1982-90) underwrote both the reactionary Thatcher government and also the ambitions of the right wing in the Labour Party. We saw the collapse of Left reformism which was reduced to a rump inside the parliamentary Labour Party and the shift of former lefts into the camp of the right wing. Even journals such as Tribune for a period reflected this shift with support for Kinnock's actions. The formerly left wing Labour Coordinating Committee became a vehicle for the so-called "modernisers"—a role it has maintained up to the present. Kinnock was able to launch attacks on left councils such as Liverpool City Council, who had stood up to the Tories, and against bodies such as the Labour Party Young Socialists whose democratic structures were closed down. Expulsions of Marxists were carried out albeit in limited numbers and important long standing policies were dropped in the interests of so-called "winnability" at the polling booths. Under John Smith, the sham democracy of OMOV was introduced—by the narrowness of margins following a switch of line by the MSF delegation for which they were subsequently censured for going against union policy—to undermine the role of activists in the Party and create a 'silent majority' which could be used by the media and the right wing to swing things their way. This was how

the Clause IV debate was swung with ballots being sent out with loaded questions to force local parties who's GC's had voted to keep Clause IV to change their vote. As no party could amend the new Clause IV—so much for democracy!—the right had everything sewn up.

With the passing of OMOV, John Smith seemed to have drawn a line on further action for a while, perhaps reflecting on how close things had been over OMOV. The Blairites had no such fears. They have taken the process of reform in a new and coordinated direction in pursuit of, in Tony Blair's words, "a literally new party." They launched a massive, well funded campaign to get rid of Clause IV once they saw how things were going in the Party with virtually all GC's opposing the change and a number of MEPs publishing an advert in favour of the status quo. Blair was terrified of getting a "disappointing result through bad organisation." A meeting took place at Walworth Road where a number of key officers including Tom Sawyer, the general secretary, were ordered to carry out a "high profile crusade for change to be monitored in every part of the country. What's more, he (Blair) decided to lead it himself, and his diary for the next three months was cleared for the purpose." The Blair machine was put on action stations." So much for the impartial party officials—they are now the Blair machine! In addition the book continues, without shame, to tell us "...a New Clause IV Campaign was set up in an office in Vauxhall across the Thames."

Flash

How this campaign with its flash offices and expensive free leaflets was paid for is not dealt with by the authors any more than the similar campaign to elect Blair as leader. Despite all this, with Blair speaking to over 30,000 members, a number of unions including Unison and the TGWU still voted against the change. Other unions would have done so had the vote taken place after their confer-

ences which conveniently it did not.

Although the removal of Clause IV was a defeat for the Left it can be seen from this book that it was achieved on the back of a high profile, well disciplined and well financed campaign which relied on a "back me or I go" threat to force its aims through on the fears of those who saw election victory being put at risk. How far can the apparently "continuous process of revolution" go inside the Labour Party? We have seen the arrival of OMOV, New Clause IV, the reactionary constitutional changes passed at last years LP conference and a general move away from the Party conference being a policy making body and towards that of a convention for the leadership and the prospective parliamentary candidates. The book denies that they want an SDP mark II but they fall over themselves to praise the SDP, only breaking themselves with that gang over Owen's supposed right wing leanings. In reality the SDP did not reflect the claimed defence of what Labour had "traditionally stood for" but rather was an attempt to create two right wing parties with the working class disenfranchised. Having assisted in the defeat of Labour and no longer having any purpose for the ruling class that organisation was wound up and the remnants merged with the Liberals as a right wing counter weight inside that organisation. Now Blair welcomes these traitors back and according to the book "does not carry any animus towards those who defected to the SDP..." The book even lists with pride the number of leading SDPers who have crept back into the Labour Party now that their career prospects have opened up again. Interestingly the original draft of this book made very clear the desire to restructure the Labour Party into some sought of "left of centre" (ie right wing) alliance with the Liberals and others to counteract the leftwing under conditions of unpopularity. Only the fear of being "too bold" forced them to water this down. Apart from hardly being a great vote

of confidence in the fate of the next Labour government this shows that the old dream of the ruling class about two Tory parties still has its devotees. It also raises the question of why should Labour need the support of others if it, as seem likely, has a large majority in Parliament? Perhaps the authors are anticipating problems in keeping all the Labour MPs on board under conditions of class struggle. To achieve the dream which the authors have of replacing Labour with New Labour (which they consistently use as the Party's name when looking ahead)—a kind of variation on the US Democratic Party—they would need to deal with the links between the party and the unions. As the book states: *"The decision already taken to reduce the influence of the unions at the Party's conference is a necessary first step in modernising the Party-union link. In the last three years the voting strength of the unions has been virtually halved."*

Links

However to attempt to proceed and actually break these links would be a recipe for civil war inside the labour movement. In Britain, as Trotsky put it, *"the British proletariat forced the trade unions to create an independent party."* There is a tremendous loyalty to the Labour Party in the ranks of the working class. This is not only reflected in the opinion polls and local election results but more importantly in the ballots for retention of political funds in the unions, many of which have consistently achieved results as high, or better than, an 80% yes votes. These votes were particularly impressive since for many unions the campaign for this vote came hard on the heels of the drive to get members to sign up again for check-off. The book notes that *"the best way for the concerns of trade unionism to be addressed is by more and more becoming individual members of the Party"* and continues *"far from being the breaking of a link it is actually the establishment of thousands of individual unbreakable links. In branch*

meetings, on campaign committees... trade unionists will be able to participate in Labour's affairs." What the authors don't realise is that far from acting as a block, this involvement will at a certain stage have a tremendous effect on struggles over questions such as the minimum wage, full employment and the repeal of the anti-trade union laws (which Blair wishes to retain). Many trade unionists have drawn political conclusions in the light of the recession of the Nineties and taken their opposition to the Tories one step further and—using the reduced trade union membership levy—joined the Labour Party. The Blairites believe that this will create a 'silent majority' for them in times to come, in fact the reverse will happen.

Mandelson and Liddle state that one of the *"high priorities for the Labour government"* is to ensure that the correct relationship is forged with the unions so *"confrontation doesn't take place as before."* However, no amount of *"reform"* can prevent the might of the trade unions from showing itself when they move into action inside the Labour Party itself. Only by acting in the interests of the working class can the Labour Party *"avoid"* this confrontation.

Already we can see a general revulsion against the policies of the market economy. After 17 years of the *"Thatcher revolution"* we now work longer hours than any other European country and suffer massive job insecurity through a continual threat of unemployment. Temporary and Part time working has increased apace. There is a squeezing of the age range of people in work whereby a young person or anyone over 45 will find it very difficult to get work even if they are very well qualified. There is a mood of anger against the *"fat cats"* of the privatised industries. Now we open this book and discover that Tony Blair and New Labour welcomes *"the rigours of competitive markets as the most efficient means of anticipating and supplying consumers wants, offering choice and stimulating innovation."*



Competition is the only effective force..."

The feeling expressed here is that *"Margaret Thatcher was asking some of the right questions about Britain's problems when she first came to power. But having got part of her diagnoses right, the Thatcher prescription went too far or in other respects was nonexistent or wrong."* They wish to *"move forward from where Margaret Thatcher left off, rather than dismantle every single thing she did."* For a Blair led government to attempt to run capitalism by updating and continuing the so-called Thatcher revolution albeit in a more *"caring"* way will lead to disaster.

Recession

At some point in the next few years the world economy will move into recession—already there is a slowdown in Germany and the USA and Japan are struggling to recover from the last recession. This world recession will put enormous pressure on the Labour government. The working class will come under an intensified attack as the bosses seek to protect their profits. They will lean on the government to force through an austerity programme, attacking public expenditure and workers living standards. The programme proposed by this book and the Blairites of *"community"* and the *"stakeholder economy"* will fade

away. The talk of *"One Nation"* and the *"new type of politics"* which *"does not accept the classic view of the left-right divide, in which both sides are seen to be locked in permanent conflict"* will be replaced by just such a conflict in which sides will have to be taken. At this point a radicalisation will occur, first in the unions and then in the Labour Party itself in which new layers will come onto the centre stage against the attacks which would be demanded of the Labour government by the voices of capital. The dreams of our authors will be shattered as the class moves as they have always done through their traditional organisations to reclaim and reforge them. As Ken Livingstone said recently in the Guardian about the issue of Scargill's party: *"It is a tragedy for Arthur and the small number who follow him that he will not be around to take part in the decisive struggles for the future of the labour movement and the next Labour government."* In those struggles—on low pay, the minimum wage, full employment, public spending and education etc. (all areas where the Labour leaders are busy beating a retreat)—the ideas of Marxism will again come to the fore and play an enormously important role in this struggle.

Michael Roberts looks at the Tories failed attempt to rekindle the "feelgood" factor and how it has gone disastrously wrong...

Major goes mad in Turin

John Major is hopping mad. As I write he is flying to Turin, Italy to meet his fellow European leaders, ostensibly to discuss the weighty issues of the future of an expanded Europe etc. But he is furious. He's had to leave behind a herd of mad cows, and I don't mean the bovine kind. I mean his Cabinet.

They've been left to flop about desperately trying to beat off the flak that's hit them from an enraged public who feel they've been set up for years to swallow down great lumps of diseased beef, all for the profit of the few. Michael Heseltine tried to cover it up to the last moment, and

Stephen Dorrell tries to blame the scientists for misleading him and us all. But our John knows whom to blame: it's those European bureaucrats for daring to ban good British beef, and just before an election. I don't mean the by-election in Staffordshire, that by the time you read this the Tories will have lost, reducing their overall majority in Westminster to just one. No, I mean the general election.

Chickens

Despite the budget tax cuts, despite rising wages, despite Harriet Harman, despite peace in our time in Ulster (or have I got that one wrong?), the Tories still languish in the opinion polls

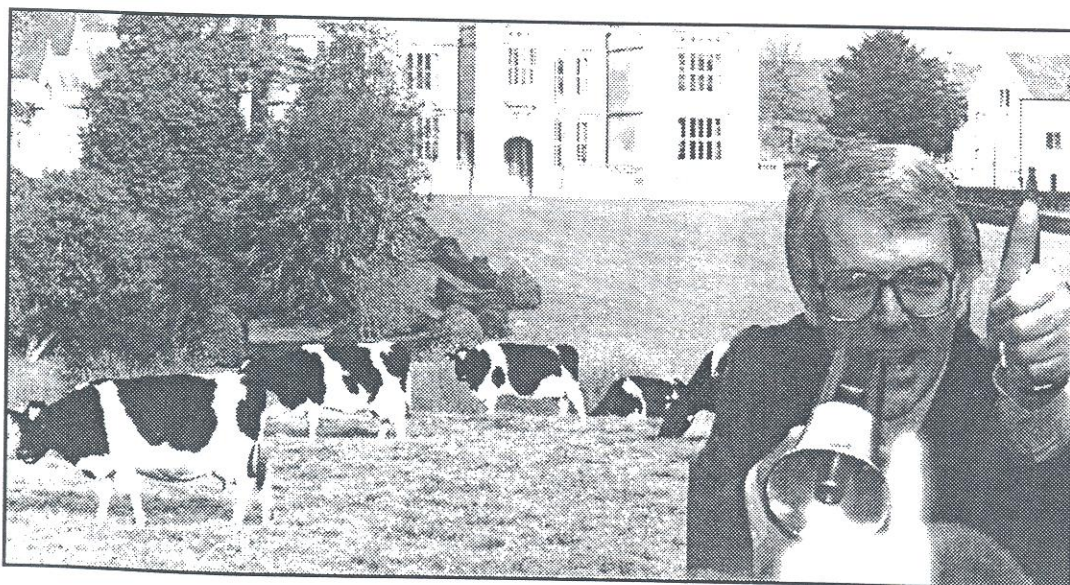
by anything up to 30 points. The chickens have come home to roost for the Tories (or should that be that the cows have come back to their sheds?). There is still no 'feel-good' factor present in the hearts and minds of the British people. John and fellow mad animals try to convince us that the economy is really so much better, that the health service is safe in their 'trusty' hands, that education is being 'grant maintained', that public transport has never been more franchised. But somehow nobody seems convinced. As I commented in this column last November before Ken Clarke's budget, the Tories were placing their political futures in his fat

hands. Ken had to make big tax cuts to put some money into people's pockets, and he had to get interest rates down so that a slowing industry could pick up and start employing a few people instead of sacking them. Well, he didn't deliver. Kenny was worried that if he 'gave away' too much of our own money without squeezing our crushed social services just a little more, that he would have a huge government budget deficit on his hands. A huge deficit means borrowing more money and driving interest rates up not down, and prices up not down. So cuts and minimal tax reductions were the order of fat Ken's day.

But it has solved nothing. The budget deficit for the tax year ending this month has reached nearly £30bn, or 4% of our national output, much more than Ken forecast this time last year. Why? because the UK economy slowed to just 2.5% growth compared with over 4% in 1994. That meant less VAT and income tax revenues into the coffers and more people needing unemployment benefit (sorry job seekers allowance) and social security than expected. All the efforts of Peter Lilley and all in the SS could not 'save' enough to stop the deficit rising. So unless the economy grew faster this year, poor Ken would not be able to make enough tax cuts to see the Tories home, or so John and the other mad cows argued.

Fat

Sure, fat Ken persuaded big Eddy George at the Bank of England to agree to some interest rates cuts. But the housing market remains resolutely dead, unemployment remains stubbornly high (still over 2m), and the economy will be lucky to make 2.5% again this year. So we are heading for another huge government deficit this year, probably about £23bn. There's not much room for a big tax handout next April with that.



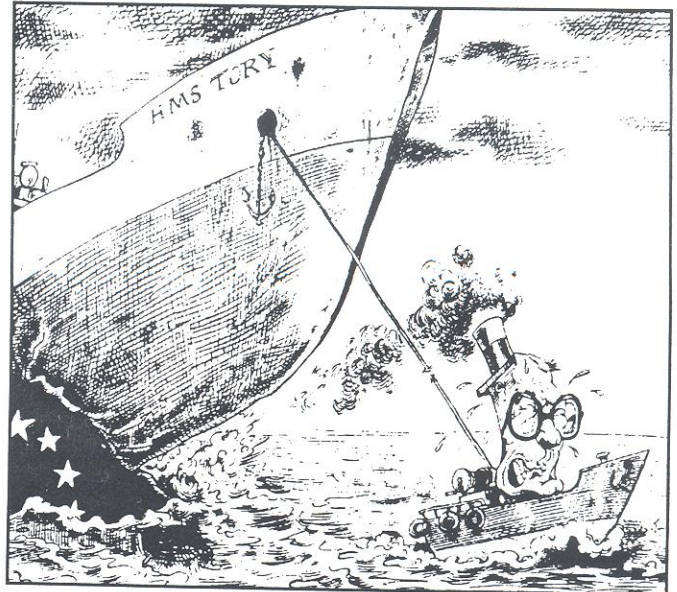
But as I argued last November even a big tax cut is unlikely to sway enough voters, sick and tired as they are of the madhouse that is this Tory government. And remember, in a period when growth is slowing, and the demand for goods and services by British people is relatively subdued, and when the pound is cheap in world markets, now 25% cheaper than it was before that infamous 'black Wednesday' in September 1992, when Norman Lamont (remember him) had to walk out of No 11 Downing St and tell the assembled TV and press hacks that he was going to let the pound slump. Despite all these advantages, last year British industry sold £16bn less abroad than Britain imported.

Off shore

Luckily, North Sea oil and the City of London, that offshore island in the centre of the capital, earned enough to get the overall deficit with other countries down to just £6.7bn last year. Without liquid gold and a bunch of financial wheeler-dealers, the British economy would be dead in the water. The real problem, not just for Ken and John, but also for Tony and Gordon, is that if the UK economy starts to grow faster then that deficit on trade will leap up. It could be paid for by Japanese, American and German companies investing more in the UK. And that's the plan of mad cows Heseltine and Portillo. They preach the advantages of Britain's cheap labour, weak trade unions, vicious anti-

labour laws and deregulated factory and commercial laws to attract foreign investment. And we've had some. But as fast as foreigners invest in Britain, much, much more shoots out to other countries from the coffers of British industry and the banks of the City. They prefer to put their money where their mouth is, and that's not in Britain. UK companies invested a record £24bn overseas last year. So the triple deficit of the government budget, trade and investment have to be paid for. The only way is to offer higher rates of interest when you lend to Britons than if you lent to Germans. British industry is continually squeezed by high interest rates, and that cuts off investment and growth. Investment growth last year fell by 0.7%, so not even worn out machines could have been replaced.

And talking of deregulation, what should come along but a bunch of mad cows, this time real ones. Having removed all regulations on what cattle are fed in the early 1980s, having removed regulation on abattoirs and reduced the number of inspectors in the mid-1980s, then the government was faced with the spread of the deadly BSE infection, the result of cattle being forced to become cannibals by eating dead sheep bits. But again faced with this crisis, the government avoided the costly solution: it refused to spend money culling the infected herds. Instead it just killed the infected cows - cheap, but not very effective. So BSE went on. Then it was



revealed that abattoirs were breaking the new 'regulations' about handling carcasses because nobody was inspecting them. Finally, it was admitted what has been most likely all the time, but was denied and denied again like St Peter, that BSE could turn into deadly and dark CJD, the human version of infected madness.

Beef

Now the cost is not just to human health and lives. It is also the cost of thousands of jobs lost in the beef and dairy industry and among farming communities. First, if the EU ban on beef exports is maintained, beef will have to be imported. The hit to the already large trade deficit could be another £1.5bn in a year. That could be even greater if British dairy herds have to be culled. Then Britain will have to import milk, prices will rise and the trade deficit will be even larg-

er. But worst of all for the government, it may be forced to slaughter all or most of Britain's 11m cattle. If proper compensation is paid including loss of earnings for those in industry, that could cost £20bn over the next five years to the taxpayer. The government has some reserves in the budget, but that would knock a huge hole in beef-eating Ken's target for the deficit this year. It probably won't stop Ken going for tax cuts anyway. What else can the Tories do? But it will leave young Gordon Brown with a big headache if he takes over in the summer of 1997.

That's why John Major is fighting mad. In Turin he will demand the removal of the beef ban. He will get short change on that. So then he will demand special help from the EU to compensate British farmers and food firms. Under the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, he can expect some help if beef prices drop to low levels. But price subsidies are only for bullocks over two years old, and that's not most of the beef that cannot be sold. But he may ask for special help that will drive up the EU budget spending too, and Britain has been the most vociferous in opposing higher EU spending! But when needs must, the devil drives. It's not looking good for the British Tories, roast beef and British capitalism. It's time to hand over to the second eleven.

Britain's economic performance

	1994	1995	1996E	1997E
GDP growth	4.1%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Inflation	2.6%	3.2%	2.5%	3.5%
Unemployment	2.5m	2.2m	2.1m	2.0m
Investment growth	3.1%	-0.7%	3.5%	4.0%
External account	-2bn	-6.7bn	-3bn	-5bn
Budget deficit	36bn	29bn	23bn	20bn
Productivity growth	3.4%	2.0%	2.0%	2.5%

On 17th April 1916 the Irish Citizen Army, together with the Irish Volunteers, rose up in arms against the might of the British Empire to strike a blow for Irish freedom and for the setting up of an Irish Republic. Their blow for freedom was to reverberate round the world, and preceded the first Russian Revolution by almost a year.

The background to the rebellion was the centuries of national oppression suffered by the Irish people in the interests of British landlordism and capitalism. In this they had the support of the Irish landlords and capitalists, of the Catholic hierarchy, who were linked by ties of interest to the Imperialists, and joined with them in fear of the Irish workers and peasants.

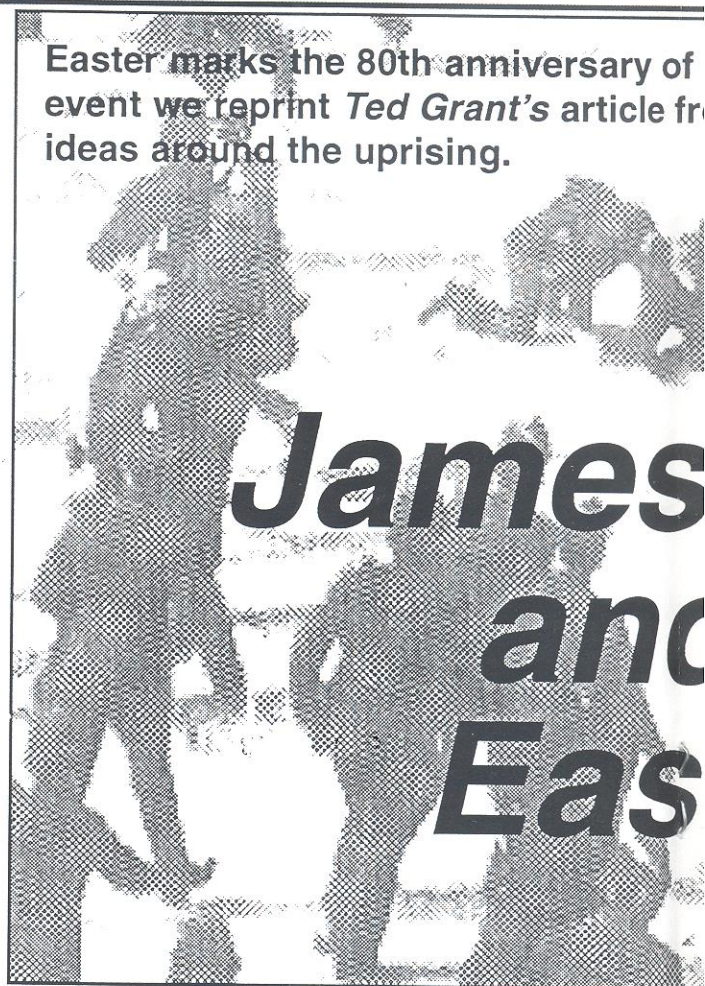
It is impossible to understand the Easter Rising without understanding the ideas of its leader, James Connolly, who considered himself a Marxist and based himself on the ideas of Internationalism and the class struggle. Like MacLean in Britain, Lenin and Trotsky, Liebknecht and Luxemburg and other Internationalists, Connolly regarded with horror the

betrayal by the leaders of the Labour movement in all countries in supporting the Imperialist War. Dealing with the betrayal of the Second International, Connolly declared in his paper *The Workers Republic*: "If these men must die, would it not be better to die in their own country fighting for freedom for their class, and for the abolition of war, than to go forth to strange countries and die slaughtering and slaughtered by their brothers that tyrants and profiteers might live?"

Working class

Protesting against the support by the British TUC of the war, Connolly wrote: "*Time was when the unanimous voice of that Congress declared that the working class had no enemy except the capitalist class - that of its own country at the head of the list!*" Connolly stood for national freedom as a step towards the Irish Socialist Republic. But while the Stalinists and reformists today - 50 years after 1916 still mumble in politically incoherent terms about the need for the "*national revolution against imperialism*", Connolly was particularly clear about the class question that was at the basis of the Irish question. Without being in direct

Easter marks the 80th anniversary of event we reprint *Ted Grant's* article from ideas around the uprising.



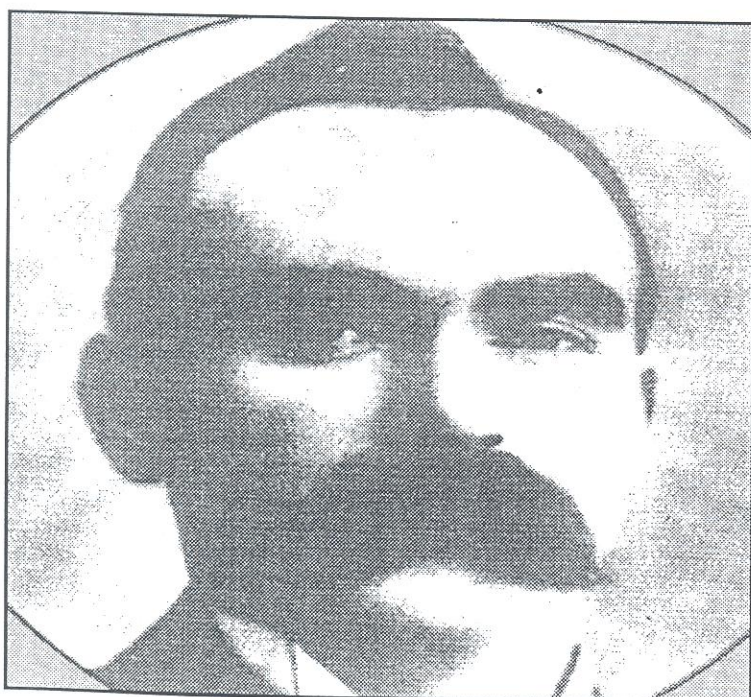
James and Eas

contact with Lenin and Trotsky he had a similar position. "*The cause of Labour is the cause of Ireland, and the cause of Ireland is the cause of Labour*", he wrote. "*They cannot be dissevered, Ireland seeks freedom. Labour seeks that an Ireland free should be the sole mistress of her own destiny, supreme owner of all material things within and upon her soil.*"

No illusions

Connolly had no illusions in the capitalists of any country, least of all Ireland. On International capitalism he wrote: "*If, then, we see a small section of the possessing class prepared to launch into war, to shed oceans of blood and spend millions of treasure, in order to maintain intact a small portion of their privileges, how can we expect the entire propertied class to abstain from using the same weapons, and to submit peacefully when called upon to yield up for-*

ever all their privileges?" And on the Irish capitalists, "*Therefore the stronger I am in my affection for national tradition, literature, language, and sympathies, the more firmly rooted I am in my opposition to that capitalist class which in its soulless lust for power and gold would bray the nations as in a mortar.*" And again, "*We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute pressmen - the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared.*" Writing on the need for an Irish insurrection to expel British imperialism he wrote in relation to the World War: "*Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration.*"



of the Easter Rising in Dublin. To mark this from 1966 which discusses the events and



s Connolly d the 1916 ster Rising

gration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last War lord."

As an answer to the demand for conscription which had been imposed in Britain and which was supported by the Irish capitalists for Ireland too, where the employers were exerting pressure to force Irish workers to volunteer, Connolly wrote: "We want and must have economic conscription in Ireland for Ireland. Not the conscription of men by hunger to compel them to fight for the power that denies them the right to govern their own country, but the conscription by an Irish nation of all the resources of the nation - its land, its railways, its canals, its workshops, its docks, its mines, its mountains, its rivers and streams, its factories and machinery, its horses, its cattle, and its men and women, all co-operating together under one common direction that gather under one common direction that Ireland may live and bear upon her fruitful

bosom the greatest number of the freest people she has ever known."

He looked at the employers who were opposing conscription too from a critical class point of view: "if here and there we find an occasional employer who fought us in 1913 (the Great Dublin lock-out in which the employers tried to break union organisation, but were defeated in this object by the solidarity of the Irish workers and their British comrades too) agreeing with our national policy in 1915 it is not because he has become converted, or is ashamed of the unjust use of his powers, but simply that he does not see in economic conscription the profit he fancied he saw in denying to his followers the right to organise in their own way in 1913."

Objections

Answering objections to the firm working class point of view which he expounded he declared: "Do we find fault with the employer for following his own interests? We do not. But neither are we under any

illusion as to his motives. In the same manner we take our stand with our own class, nakedly upon our class interests, but believing that these interests are the highest interests of the race."

It is in this light that the uprising of 1916 must be viewed. As a consequence of the struggles of the past Connolly who was the General Secretary of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union had organised the Citizens Army for the purpose of defence against capitalist and police attack and for preparing for struggle against British imperialism. The Citizens Army was almost purely working class in composition: dockers, transport workers, building workers, printers and other sections of the Dublin workers being its rank and file.

It was with this force and in alliance with the more middle class Irish volunteers that Connolly prepared for the uprising. He had no illusions about its immediate success. According to William O'Brien, on the day of the insurrection Connolly said to him: "We are going out to be slaughtered." He said "Is there no chance of success?" and Connolly replied "None whatsoever."

Tradition

Connolly understood that the tradition and the example created would be immortal and would lay the basis for future freedom and a future Irish Socialist Republic. In that lay his greatness. What a difference from the craven traitors of the German Socialist and Communist and Trade Union leaders who despite having three million armed workers supporting them, and with the sympathy and support of the overwhelming majority of the German working class (ready to fight and die) capitulated to Hitler without firing a shot. Having said this, it is necessary to see not only the greatness of Connolly, sprung from the Irish workers, one of the greatest sons of the English speaking working class, and the effect of the uprising in preparing for the expulsion, at least in the Southern part of Ireland, of the direct domina-

tion of British imperialism, but also the faults of both.

There was no attempt to call a general strike and thus paralyse the British Army. There was no real organisation or preparation of the armed struggle. No propaganda was conducted among the British troops to gain their sympathy and support. The leaders of the middle class Irish Volunteers were split. One of the leaders Eoin MacNeill countermanding orders for "mobilisation" and for "manoeuvres" and in the confusion only part of the Volunteers, joined with the Irish Citizens Army in the insurrection. Thus at the last minute the insurrection was betrayed by the vacillation of the middle class leaders, as they have betrayed many times in Irish history and in the history of other countries.

The British occupying troops suppressed the insurrection and then savagely executed its leaders, including the leader of the insurrection James Connolly, who was already badly wounded. Connolly was murdered, but in the last analysis, British imperialism really suffered defeat. Nowadays all sections of Irish society in the 26 counties hypocritically give support to the "brave and undying heroism of Connolly." The Irish capitalists pretend to honour him.

Connolly would have spit contemptuously in their faces. He fought them, ever since he attained manhood, in the interests of the Irish workers and of International Socialism. But his most withered contempt would have been reserved for those in the Labour movement, including the leaders of the Labour Party and of the so-called Communist Parties, and of the various sects claiming to speak in the name of Irish Labour, who fifty years after Easter 1916, have not understood that unity of the Irish workers North and South can only be obtained by conducting the struggle on a class basis for an Irish Socialist Republic, in indissoluble unity with the British workers in their struggle for a British democratic Socialist Republic.

April 1966

Northern Ireland - whatever happened to the peace process?

John Major's unveiling of his Northern Ireland election plans has highlighted the predicament he and the Tories are in.

The official unionists condemned them as a conspiracy hatched by the British, the DUP and the Irish government. Ian Paisley condemned them as a conspiracy hatched by Major, the official unionists and John Bruton. The SDLP condemned them, and Sinn Fein condemned them and would consider a boycott "if the SDLP were to do the same."

Rather than winning support for the proposals because of their "all things to all men" nature, they have galvanised opposition from virtually all sides.

However, because of the lack of any alternative, no one section is likely to be in a strong enough position to stand outside the process. Even Sinn Fein, at its recent conference, agreed to stand in the elections.

The proposal to elect a body based on 90 members on a constituency basis and twenty on a province wide basis appeals to no-one. The main unionist parties are opposed to the province wide elections as it will guarantee representation

not only for Sinn Fein but also the parties close to the loyalist paramilitaries the Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party. These small parties plus Sinn Fein and the SDLP oppose the constituency elections as it will guarantee the main unionist parties their usual majority.

All in all, we have the proverbial dog's dinner.

Problem

Over the eighteen months of the IRA's ceasefire the Tories raised problem after problem in the so-called peace process.

First it was the question of the "permanent," or otherwise, nature of the ceasefire, then it was the decommissioning of weapons, then the question of elections. By continually moving the goalposts all party talks were effectively stalled.

The Tories have been caught in a trap of their own making. Although they stated, in the Downing Street Declaration, that Britain no longer had any "strategic" interest in maintaining a divided Ireland, they have been unable to move on. In fact, Major, by rejecting out of hand the findings of the Mitchell Commission and jumping

wholesale for the Unionists election proposal has taken a position very far removed from the "enlightened" one he adopted in the Declaration and in last spring's Joint Framework document.

This all represents the terrible dilemma the British ruling class finds itself in. The reasons for the partition of Ireland have long since gone.

The main reason for partition was to divide the working class and derail the movement towards socialist revolution. Ireland, along with the rest of Europe, entered a period of unparalleled class struggle in the years immediately following the First World War. On Mayday 1919, in the wake of the famous Belfast engineering strike for shorter working hours, 100,000 workers marched through Belfast. It was this growing radicalism and militancy amongst the labour and trade union movement that the British ruling class sought to break.

Partition succeeded in creating two poverty stricken, sectarian states and the working class movement suffered an enormous setback. In the North, thousands of workers were driven from their jobs. Ostensibly this attack was targeted at Catholic workers, but socialists and labour movement activists were also purged. In fact 25% of those sacked were Protestants. The pogroms against the Catholics that were to follow and the blatant "gerrymandering" of the political system represented a defeat for the workers movement.

In the South partition was followed by civil war and the military defeat of the anti-partition treaty faction of the republican movement. This victory for the right wing of the republicans, alongside the ascendancy of the Catholic church in social and political affairs was to set back the Irish working class for a

whole period.

Now, however, the threat of immediate social revolution in Ireland is not present. Alongside this, the South is now a compliant economic satellite of Britain. Bring these factors together with the immense cost to the UK treasury of maintaining the North, both in military and social spending, and we have good reason why the British ruling class could easily favour a united Ireland at the present time. But stating this does not really take us very far as Major and the Tories have realised. All their fine words in the Declaration have turned to dust because the reality of the situation, created by centuries of conflict by the ruling class, cannot be undone by nice diplomatic sentiments and gestures.

Prop

This, along with Major's increasing reliance on the Ulster Unionist parliamentary votes to prop up his ailing government, meant certain death for the peace process.

The real problem for the British ruling class is not the IRA or the catholic minority in the North. In fact the IRA ceasefire was in reality a capitulation in the face of their failed 25 year long military strategy. Effectively they gave up all their political demands. At the time, in a speech by Gerry Adams he said nothing about their aim of a united Ireland, or even British withdrawal - their only realistic objective was to be invited around a negotiating table. To negotiate *what* was only left to the imagination. Yet in the face of this admission of defeat Major has been proved impotent to capitalise on the situation. Even after the IRA called off its ceasefire, Adams declared that there were two ways to end a war. One was for one side to defeat the other, and this was



Republicans celebrate ceasefire

clearly not on the cards, and the other was through negotiation. This was an open admission that a military victory for the IRA was impossible.

All Major had to do was set up the talks and get Sinn Fein involved, he hoped he could go down in history as a great statesman and peacemaker. But to no avail.

Protestant

The real problem facing the British ruling class is the position of the majority Protestant community. Economically and strategically a united Ireland is the preferred option for the ruling class - but this would be resisted by the Protestant community. In fact, even amongst the Catholic community only a minority favours this option - 27% according to a recent survey for the Guardian. 42% of Catholics favour links with both Britain and Ireland.

The truth is the British ruling class have no solution to resolve the situation. Before the IRA delivered the ceasefire, the British government merely had a policy of containment. That means that they had accepted, for the time being at least, a policy of keeping the lid on the status quo.

Although the IRA ceasefire offered a "window of opportunity," no one was in a position to use it.

After the debacle around the Anglo-Irish agreement in the mid eighties, the Protestant paramilitaries had stepped up their campaign. In the period running up to the IRA ceasefire announcement the UVF and UDA were doing the majority of the killing. The IRA was facing a position of being outmanned and outgunned. This was clearly in their thinking at that time, and it is clearly in their thinking now with the resumption of their so-called military campaign being confined to Britain.

The loyalist paramilitaries would hit the IRA hard if their campaign resumed in the North itself.

The so-called "Protestant veto" is not something confined to the realm of politics and diplomacy, at the end of the day it is a military question. To try and force through a solution against the interests, perceived or otherwise, of the Protestant majority would risk descent into civil war and a possible repartition of

Ireland.

Major, after his initial embrace of the "peace process," has ducked, dived and weaved through the last period, stalling at every opportunity whilst he cultivates the Unionist politicians whose support his government now needs to stop their slide into inevitable chaos.

The bomb at Canary Wharf forced him into action. A date is now set for the all party talks, June 10. The elections will take place beforehand, despite the opposition. And Sinn Fein can be involved as long as the ceasefire is reinstated.

No talk of "permanent" ceasefires, no question of "decommissioning" weapons before talks. This marks something of a retreat for the Tories. But a lurch back to the worst days of the "troubles" would be something for which they could never have been forgiven.

The main unionist parties have done little but gesture and condemn, for they have the most to lose from any process of negotiation. Ironically, it is the small PUP and UDP, the parties representing the views of the paramilitaries, that have embraced the peace process. Although this development will be short-lived if the IRA steps up its "military" campaign once again.

The ceasefire has exposed the strategy of Adams, McGuinness and the Sinn Fein leadership. Although the ceasefire announcement was greeted with celebrations amongst most Republicans, in reality the Adams faction had secured nothing from the British ruling class. It represented a defeat for all they had been fighting for since the 1970s.

Even now, with the calling off of the ceasefire, there is unlikely to be a return to a full blown IRA military campaign. Nothing that forced them into the ceasefire has changed. Rather than the "armalite and ballot box" tactic of old, the London bombs have been used to "ease" the way into "all party talks."

At Sinn Fein's recent conference they agreed that they would have to stand in the forthcoming election unless the SDLP organised a boycott. This is a sad indictment of where 25 years of a so called military campaign against British imperialism has led. Adams view of building a "pan nationalist" front of Sinn Fein, the SDLP, the Irish govern-

ment and the Irish-American lobby has been exposed as a sham. Rather than adopting a policy of boycott and then taking the argument throughout the nationalist movement, Adams has admitted that they have, in reality, become the pale shadows of the SDLP.

The SDLP are a weak petty bourgeois nationalist party. Throughout their history they have done precisely nothing to advance the interests of the Catholic working class. Yet here we see Sinn Fein's leadership following a policy totally subservient to the likes of John Hulme.

Exhausted

Although the IRA army council have called off the ceasefire, the road of the Adams leadership is not yet exhausted. Witness the support for the peace process at the recent conference. As well as this support it would be impossible to go back to the old style military campaign. In the past the combination of repression and poverty turned a generation of Catholic youth into the ranks of the IRA. This time the situation is far different. The divisions within the Republican movement are clear and a split at some time in the future cannot be ruled out. With one strand taking the "democratic" road and the other opting for a "military" one. But the "military" campaign, isolated from any real movement or support, would more likely be akin to the futile IRA campaigns of the 50s and 60s than what we saw during the troubles.

However, the Republican movement remains "united" at least for the present. The real danger of escalation would be if the

Loyalists were to call off their ceasefire. They have already menacingly threatened the IRA with a "bloody war." However, loyalist spokesman Billy Hutchinson stated his belief that Sinn Fein will be at the talks beginning on June 10.

It is still very early to discern what exactly is going to happen. We do not know the situation either on the IRA army council or the Combined Loyalist Military Command, and we do not know the balance of forces between the various factions. One thing is clear though, not one of these groups, parties or factions has a solution to the problems facing Irish workers. John Major doesn't have a solution either, or John Bruton or Bill Clinton.

One voice is absent from all of this. The voice of the working class. The Irish working class has a proud record of struggle, where Catholic and Protestant workers have united in common struggle against the bosses. Despite the sectarianism, the trade unions are organised across the whole working class, uniting Catholic and Protestant workers in the same organisations. This is the key to the only real solution. The labour movement must take the initiative out of the hands of the sectarians and various strands 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 the sectarians and lay the basis for a socialist united Ireland.

Alastair Wilson



Royal flushed

Phil Mitchinson looks at the crisis facing the downmarket royals and argues that republicanism and socialism are inseparable

"You can't divorce from the continuation of the monarchy the individuals who are likely to succeed to the monarchy. You must focus, for example, on Prince Charles and you must ask yourself the question 'Is this person the fit sort of person to continue the tradition of the monarchy?' and come to the conclusion, 'No, he isn't.'"

Ron Davies MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Wales.

Pity the Royals. They've had a bad time of it recently, annus horribilis after annus horribilis. I wouldn't do their job for all the money on Earth, would you? Leaving aside the fact that that is almost what they get paid, you just couldn't cope, could you, with all those state banquets, foreign holidays, castles, and palaces. The pressure of having to go to all those royal premieres and opening nights is something us mere mortals, who have nothing more to worry about than how to pay the rent, could not possibly comprehend. Imagine being forced to go to the FA Cup

final every year, free! Can you imagine such a "job" on the vacancies board of your local job centre. You walk along reading the usual ads, Burger King staff wanted £1 an hour; Security guards £1.20 an hour (bring your own dog); Queen wanted, tasks include waving, being waited on hand and foot, house, yacht, plane, train, cars, all provided. Qualifications required - none. Hours - flexible. Salary - a bloody fortune.

Of course, you do get the papparazzi following you around, while you're "working" on the ski slopes at Klosters, or meeting your "financial adviser" by the pool.

Degenerate

The degeneracy of this current crop, and their hangers on, is an accurate reflection of the decay of the entire system. That's not to say, of course, that their predecessors were paragons of virtue. On the contrary, they are only keeping up an age old tradition of decadence on the part of the crowned heads of Europe, but today their sickening carryings on

are public knowledge. Daily their affairs and scandals unfold like a soap opera across the pages of our papers and our TV screens. It all seems so unreal, but this is no fiction, and we have to foot the bill.

But what about all their marvellous work for charity? They'll do anything for the homeless, it seems except give them a home. Why then do the capitalist class maintain this costly anachronism and their abhorrent court camarilla? How is it that we've heard no proposal from the Tories for their privatisation? The capitalist class are not generally known for their sentimentality, so there must be some serious reason, hidden away for us to uncover. Where better to look for this than in history, not the history of the so-called Windsor family, but of the Monarchy as an institution.

There is a vulgar view of history which teaches that things are as they always have been and always will be.

Plus ca change, plus ca la meme chose, as the French, whose ruling class have long tried to deny their own revolutionary past, say. In Britain, the classic country of doublethink, of parliamentary cant, our schoolbooks tell us that the events of 1649 represented a rebellion of the rabble, whilst "The Glorious Revolution" of 1688, in reality no more than a palace coup, ensured the peaceful development of capitalism. In reality, the rule of the bourgeoisie was already secure, and furthermore had been secured not by legislation, but by revolution, not by parliament, but by the dictatorship of Cromwell.

The ruling class need to be reminded of their own history, so for that matter do we. It is a vital task of Marxism to sweep away the supernatural fog in which the

capitalist class have shrouded their class rule, and all its institutions, the Law, Democracy, the Houses of Parliament, the Monarchy, all of which have assumed the mantle of the "divine right to rule."

The capitalists need to be reminded that they came to power in this country precisely by overthrowing the monarchy, when Oliver Cromwell's parliamentary (in reality, extra-parliamentary) forces in the shape of the New Model Army, overthrew Charles I.

The "Great Rebellion" of 1649 was no mere mob riot, but a social revolution. Its task was to throw off the shackles of absolutist monarchy and the rule of the feudal lords, who now stood in the way of the development of capitalist economy, and replace them with the rule of the capitalist class through their organ, Parliament. The events of this period, rich in historical lessons, are worthy of an article in themselves.

In the 1640s, Parliament, with a very limited franchise, represented "the nation," in the sense that it represented the bourgeoisie, and thereby national wealth. The King now called, now dissolved parliament, according not to whim, but to financial need.

Parliament created an army for its defence and, consisting of the most resolute sections, it rapidly came to dominate over its creator. Inside Parliament, the Presbyterians, the party of the bourgeoisie were in favour of a limited monarchy, illustrating the contradictory position of the bourgeoisie, standing between the nobility and the plebeians. The Independents, the party of the petty bourgeois masses, were for a republic. By their willingness to carry matters to their conclusion, the Independents naturally displaced the Presbyterians.

As civil war between the forces of Parliament and the forces of the King unfolded, the ardent royalists didn't debate the matter in the Commons chamber, they fled to Charles' headquarters at York. Parliament split as in all great revolutionary periods. The relative strength of the contending class forces now decided matters.

Cromwell

Under the pressure of Cromwell's army, the Presbyterians were expelled from Parliament, and Charles I was executed. Parliament was now a rump of Independents. Cromwell was creating a new, bourgeois society,



Queen exercising

not through parliamentary debate, but by force of arms. Cromwell himself proceeded to purge Parliament time and again where it stood in the way of creating a new social equilibrium. Having crushed the danger from the right, by driving out the Presbyterians, Cromwell turned his attention to the left. The Levellers, the extreme left wing of the petty bourgeoisie, denounced by Cromwell as "lunatics," were crushed. Neither Parliament nor Law were seen as ends in themselves, but they were rather a means to an end, maintaining the class rule of the bourgeoisie.

In 1660 the monarchy was restored in the person of Charles II, but pre-Cromwellian society could not be revived by legislation. What was written with the sword could not be undone with the pen. The bourgeoisie now held power, the restored monarchy was absorbed into its state machine, as an instrument of its class rule, just like Parliament.

Back in the present, what is to become of Charles III? Not fit to rule, says Ron Davies, nor for that matter is anyone else in his family. The desire to appear respectable and respectful in front of these people, to fawn over royalty, is one of the most contemptible characteristics of many on the right of the labour movement. Therefore, for his republican views we applaud Ron Davies, but this doesn't go anywhere near far enough. It is not simply one family, but the whole system they represent which is rotten.

Head

The coincidence of Charles' name with his illustrious ancestors presents us with the opportunity for a neat historical denouement. Of course, we don't have any desire to chop off his head. At the same time we have no desire to keep them in the style to which they're accustomed, even in a truncated form. The idea has been raised of scaling down the royal family to Scandinavian proportions. (Mark Thomas, the comedian, proposes scaling them down to Russian proportions instead!) What exactly that means, other than casting off one or two of the minor hangers on is hard to say. It sounds very much like dieting by drinking Diet Coke with your burger and chips.

The argument runs that although expensive, and outdated, keeping the monarchy is cheaper than creating some new sort of Presidency. Leaving aside the

highly dubious costings involved here, and the fact that a Presidency hasn't solved the problems of France or the US, Trotsky answered this argument in advance when he wrote, "*To proclaim a socialist programme, and at the same time declare that the royal authority 'does not hinder' and works out cheaper, is absolutely the same as, for example, acknowledging materialistic science and making use of the incantation of the sorcerer for toothache, on the ground that the sorcerer is cheaper.*"

A socialist programme is thoroughly inconsistent with the monarchy. Nor is it simply a question of the obscenity of their wealth and privilege. While capitalism depends for its existence on the division of society into classes, a division no more graphically illustrated than by the existence at the end of the 20th century of a Royal Family and a House of Lords, it is the task of socialism to create a classless society. In order to do that it is necessary to do away with all the elements of the capitalist state built up to defend class rule, to consign all these archaic leftovers to the museum of antiquities - in the case of the House of Lords, who would know the difference.

Constitutional monarchy or republic are only two of the many governmental forms by which the capitalist class defends its rule. Why then are the British ruling class so keen on keeping the monarchy? The pomp and ceremony has its uses in adding further mists to those surrounding the state machinery of the bourgeoisie, but in the last analysis that is what the monarchy is, part of the state apparatus of capitalism, a last line of defence for the ruling class.

Constitutionally, they can close down parliament. Outside they can act as a focal point for reaction. As Trotsky explained in the article quoted earlier, "*the bourgeoisie can make use of the royal authority with great success, as the concentration point, for all the extra-parliamentary, that is to say, the real forces directed against the working class...*" But surely this is just typical socialist paranoia. Yet both these things have already happened, not just abroad, nor just in the dim and distant past. There are those who hold that Labour should support a republic, yet do not advance a socialist programme. This is the ultimate fantasy of reformism. They believe it is possible to take capitalism apart piece by piece, cre-

ating first a perfect "democracy," a free press, a democratic army, an accountable police force, a fair judiciary, then inevitably, some years later everyone would see the advantages of socialism. There is no such thing as "perfect democracy" there is either bourgeois democracy, the rule of the minority over the majority, whether in a republic or a monarchy; or workers democracy, the rule of the majority over the minority, which can prepare the way for a genuinely classless society. The press, the army, the police, the legal system, are all part and parcel of the machinery built up to defend capitalist property, no less than the monarchy. While some of these "republicans" are no doubt sincere, others are desperately attempting to sound radical. But look what happened to Paul Keating, after years of a Labour government implementing Thatcherite policies, Keating attempted to win the election by means of support for a republic. While all the polls show that there is overwhelming support for this idea, on its own it offers no solution to unemployment, low pay and the attacks on the welfare state shamefully implemented by Keating himself. For that a socialist programme is required.

House of Lords

It goes without saying that we support abolishing the monarchy, and the House of Lords, just as we support any measure of democracy, any reform to, for instance, make the police force more accountable, which could assist the working class in the struggle for socialism. Reversing the Tories anti-union laws would be a good place to start. But for us, too, none of these things are an end in themselves, they are a means to an end, to ending the class rule of capitalism. Incidentally, on the subject of

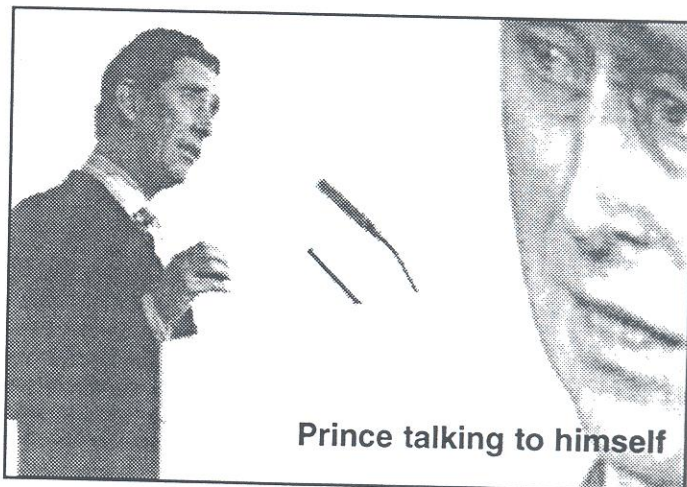
Australia, remember Gough Whitlam's Labour government. Democratically elected, they were ousted in 1975 by the Governor General, Sir John Kerr, on the basis of the Royal Prerogative, ie the right of the state, by means of the monarchy, to overturn election results and dispose of parliamentary democracy where it no longer coincides with the interests of capitalism. In Britain the same was admitted by ex-Tory MP Ian Gilmour, in his book, *Inside Right*.

Ron Davies was slapped over the wrists by the Labour leadership for his comments. But a telephone poll conducted by Wales on Sunday showed that 85% support him. Combined with a socialist programme, abolition of the Lords and the Monarchy could win enormous support, but it is necessary to go further than radical phrasemongering, the real role of these institutions must be exposed.

The Labour leaders' current proposals consist of tinkering with the House of Lords, tinkering with the monarchy, just as they propose tinkering with the privatised monopolies.

Things will take time they tell us, after all, the Tories have wreaked havoc in the last 17 years, there's a lot to be done. There is indeed a great deal of damage to undo, but big problems require big solutions, tinkering will solve nothing. The only solution to these problems is provided by a socialist transformation of society. Standing in the way of such a transformation are all the tentacles of the state, not least the Monarchy.

Stories of Kings and Queens, like the Knights of the round table, may make good bedtime reading for children, but how absurd is it that these people still rule the world at the turn of the 21st century. It is time they were consigned to the pages of fairy tales and history books.



Prince talking to himself

Spanish general election

Right wing fails to win outright majority

by Jordi Martorell

On March 3rd the general election in Spain gave almost everybody a few surprises. All the opinion polls were predicting a crushing victory for the right wing with the Popular Party (PP) being 10% ahead of the Socialist Party (PSOE). The CP-led coalition United Left (IU) was supposed to get around 13/15% of the vote.

This seemed fairly logical after more than 13 years of a PSOE government carrying out, after a few reforms in the beginning, right wing policies. The government had been involved in all kinds of corruption scandals, involving ministers, top civil servants, the former head of

the Civil Guard, etc. On top of that it is now clear that it was the government which organised the GAL (Anti-terrorist Liberation Groups) death squads which during the 80's killed and kidnapped many Basque nationalist militants. Former Home Affairs Minister, Jose Barrionuevo has been accused of masterminding these groups.

"Reform"

From the point of view of the Labour movement, this was the government which introduced "reform" of the Labour Laws increasing massive casualisation, insecurity in the workplace, introducing the "rubbish" contracts for young people, etc. Over the

years the unions have organised 4 general strikes against attacks introduced by the PSOE government. You could expect workers disillusioned with the PSOE government to vote for the IU, as had been the general trend in the last elections. Also some of the younger people had no previous experience of a right wing government and could vote for the right wing in the hope that the PP at least would be something "different". Despite all this, the election results turned out differently. The PP got 9.6 million votes (38.8%); only 300,000 votes and 1.3% ahead of PSOE's 9.3 million votes (37.5%). United Left received only 2.6 million votes, which represents 10.5% of the votes, a mere 0.9% on top of its results in the previous general election in 1993, and down from its 13.5% result in the last European elections in 1994. As the *Financial Times* said on March 11th, in an article called "Decisive poll proves most indecisive": "The centre-right Popular Party won, but looked stunned after securing fewer seats than previous winning parties. The Communist-led United Left also gained, but was down in the dumps. The Socialists were defeated, for the first time since

1979, but were laughing." How can these results be explained? On the one hand the PSOE centred its election campaign in attacking the right wing, clearly exposing its links with the Franco dictatorship, and accused the PP of having a secret agenda of cuts in pensions and benefits and massive privatisation. This fact was clearly understood after the recent example of France. There too, the right wing contested the elections on one programme, only to turn and apply cuts once in government. The left vote rallied around PSOE in order to prevent a victory of a bourgeois party.

Workers

The PSOE, despite the right wing policies it had applied while in government, was able to get the support of the workers. This can be clearly seen in some examples from the election campaign. There was a special meeting for trade unionists in Cornella, an industrial town in the red belt of Barcelona, where 10,000 supporters turned up. Also at the end of the campaign the PSOE called a meeting in Barcelona with 55,000 people (they thought the attendance was going to be smaller and hired a stadium which only seats 33,000, so thousands had



to stand outside). The main slogan at this meeting was "No pasaran" (they shall not pass), the slogan used during the Civil War against the fascists. So, the vote for PSOE was a vote against the right wing, not a vote in favour of the anti-labour policies of the PSOE government.

Sectarian

On the other hand, IU adopted sectarian policies which prevented it from increasing substantially its share of the vote, despite its more left wing programme. They defended the idea that the PSOE was a right wing party and therefore it was the same as the PP, and the main enemy of the left. They didn't understand the difference between the right wing policies of the PSOE government and the working class composition of its social base. The disillusionment with the government led to an important increase of IU vote at the last council elections and in the Andalucía regional elections. But instead of using this support to try and force the PSOE leaders to make an agreement to run the councils and regional Parliament on a socialist policy, they allowed the PP to get control of most of the provincial capitals. Not only that, but the IU leadership reached an agreement with the PP over positions in the regional Parliament. This policy obviously upset a lot of their voters who identified IU as being closer to the PP than to the PSOE. As a result the PSOE increased its vote in the Andalucía regional elections from 38 to 43%, and IU went from 20 to 14%. These results show the healthy class instinct of thousands of workers who clearly rejected the idea put forward by the IU leadership that PSOE and PP were both bourgeois parties. Another problem for IU was its election programme. Instead of offering clear socialist policies to fight unemployment, casual labour, corruption, etc. its programme was to the right of the PSOE's election manifesto in 1982. Its political message was far from clear. While Anguita talks of the need to fight capitalism, he

also stress that the way to solve unemployment is to apply the Spanish Constitution where the right of everybody to have a job is formally recognised (!!), and the "democratisation" of economic relations.

For the Spanish bourgeoisie the results could not have been worse. This was reflected in an important fall in the stock exchange the day after the results were announced. Originally, they had a weak PSOE government trying to carry out bourgeois policies but wanted a strong majority PP government to carry through more drastic measures. But now the PP has not even got enough MPs to form a government and is seeking some kind of agreement with the Catalan bourgeois party, CiU. This is going to be a difficult task, as CiU is based on Catalan nationalist feelings while the PP has a strong Spanish nationalist tradition. Important sections of both parties are opposed to any agreement, but at the end of the day the interests of the bourgeoisie will come before any nationalist interests. The alternative would be early elections which could be won by PSOE, and that is a scenario the bourgeoisie wouldn't like (not even the PSOE leaders would as a matter of fact).

The results of these elections are going to have an important effect on the labour movement. In the PSOE, Felipe Gonzalez appears to have strengthened his position, but this will only be temporary as the workers will demand the left wing campaign speeches to be translated into deeds. In the IU the results have already created an internal debate. They will have to abandon their sectarian approach to PSOE rank and file supporters. However, at the moment this is being used by the right wing within the IU coalition to attack the leadership arguing that it should be closer to the PSOE leadership.

Events also have affected the trade unions. In CCOO (Workers' Commissions) we have seen in the recent months the development of a



left wing opposition headed, among others, by their historical leader Marcelino Camacho. The main aim of this tendency is to fight against the class collaboration policies of the current leadership. They got 35% of the votes at last January's National Conference despite all the manoeuvres against them. The current leadership, led by Antonio Gutierrez, is launching a witch-hunt with expulsions. They are not allowing any of the opposition members in the EC to use union premises. They have even resorted to the police to expel the opposition from the national headquarters. These attacks are having the effect of radicalising the opposition and widening its points of support amongst the rank-and-file which until now had remained largely passive.

Lessons

There are important lessons to draw from these elections. One is that workers are prepared to fight against the right wing particularly when presented with an opportunity to do so. Despite the extreme right wing policies of the PSOE government workers have voted massively for it when its leaders appealed for a left wing vote. This clearly shows that PSOE is not a bourgeois party as some have stated. Another lesson, and this one is very important for

the labour movement in Britain, is that a Socialist or Labour government which is not prepared to challenge capitalism ends up doing the dirty work of the ruling class and can open the way to an extreme right wing government.

In the period ahead Spain will have a weak right wing government trying to implement all kinds of cuts in conditions and social expenditure in order to try and reach the Maastricht criteria. This will provoke important battles in the industrial field as well as in the political organisations of the labour movement. This will be the case especially taking in to account that the mood amongst the workers is not one of defeat. On the contrary, the PSOE even organised a victory celebration in Andalucía, where they won the regional elections, in Linares, attended by 10,000 people. The main task now for the Spanish labour movement is to reclaim its organisations, political parties and trade unions, to fight for the real traditions of socialism. The fact that the PSOE, after years of right wing policies, got such a big response with a left wing approach shows that a joint appeal by IU and PSOE to fight for socialist policies would have a massive response.

Interview with a Mexican activist

Ruben Rivera, a representative of the committee of struggle in the Polytechnic, University of Mexico City, which organises 150,000 students, recently spoke with *Socialist Appeal*.

What is the situation for Mexican youth under the crisis which has affected the country since the devaluation of the peso last year?

In the first place I must say that half of the students have to work. Also a section of the workers are engaged in further and higher education. The crisis has lasted for more than a year and has strongly affected the students in their studies. Purchasing power has fallen by a third in the last year. Also the students face unemployment both at the end of their studies if not after. Two million jobs have been lost during 1995. Since the opening of the Mexican economy (via the NAFTA Free trade agreement

with the United States and Canada) a large part of the productive forces have been destroyed. This is an attack on the structure of the national economy and on industry in particular. The youth who leave school face big problems in finding work. In particular those who leave the polytechnic institute trained as engineers and technicians looking to industry for work find this avenue closed. The education budget has fallen from 4% to 2% of the gross domestic product. It must also be underlined that social expenditure has fallen by 4% of national income. The stated intention of the government is to reduce expenditure in order to reduce public consumption. The limitation of consumption will apparently serve to fight inflation. But in fact this has had no effect on inflation which has now reached a level of 50% per year. In the case of education the government has concentrated its attacks on the public sector. It should be noted that for 6

years the government has attempted to separate secondary education from the universities.

The response of the students was both massive and united. More than 300,000 students participated in demonstrations which successfully pushed back the governments measures.

Then the government changed its tactics. They tried to isolate the different schools in order to dampen a more widespread protest. Through this they tried to implement its reform plan. The problem is that the student leaders are lacking a general strategy and have confined themselves to local action. What a mistake! The problems are not those of one particular school or university. This kind of outlook makes it easier for the government to introduce its plans. One of them is to introduce fees to go to the university. (In Mexico there is at present free access to state universities.) This free access is one of the preconditions for a democratic education. At the Polytechnic we have organised a struggle and have been able to stop the first blow.

At this very same moment the secondary schools are engaged in a struggle to avoid its separation from the university. This struggle has already had its initial local successes. But where the attack couldn't be resisted was in the field of freedom of expression and organisation inside the schools. For instance, one of the schools has been particularly hit by repression with 20 students being expelled. The "localist" conception of the

resistance against repression has led to these measures being implemented. Only through spreading the struggle can we achieve any results.

The Zapatista uprising in January 1994 in Chiapas did inspire and enthuse the movement. Amongst the students the effects included the setting up of a National Student Coordination.

In fact the Zapatista revolt has had two important consequences. A positive one has been to stimulate struggles all over the country. A negative one has been to help to develop a mood of apoliticalisation and in favour of single issue struggles, i.e. let everybody fight in his own way! This idea is counterposed to united struggle and therefore, to a certain extent makes it easier for the government to attack state education.

Have there been any attempts to link together the struggles in Mexico?

Yes. Especially after the Zapatista uprising and the calling of the National Democratic Convention in the Lancandona jungle, the situation was quite favourable to such an expansion. That Convention had an ambition to become a big united front of action. The students tried to create the same sort of thing at their own level—a kind of National Students Convention to coordinate students' struggles. The first students meeting was a great success. Almost a thousand representatives from all the universities in the country were present. There was a motion moved to support the EZLN demands—the right to work, for land, housing for everybody, etc. The support for these demands could have made possible a move beyond the merely student-based demands, and the participation in other social struggles. But unfortunately this wasn't the case, which in fact limited the participation of the students in the social struggles. At the time of the struggle of the Ruta-100 busworkers we saw the beginnings of a real students-workers solidarity. The workers themselves went to these schools and universities and called meetings to raise solidarity and organised joint



demonstrations. This was one of the most advanced forms of solidarity we have seen so far.

A lot of young people try to find an individual solution to their problems and have lost all hope. Then they try to find an artificial heaven in drugs. What is the position of the youth organisations in Mexico on drugs and their legalisation?

In Mexico the majority of the left and student organisations are in favour of legalising soft drugs. Thus, they say, we would prevent corruption, etc. Our position is that the question of drugs is a political one. The bourgeoisie uses them to control young people and to limit their ability to resist and fight. Drugs direct their anger not against the system but towards self-destruction. On the contrary we run a campaign against drugs. In Mexico the most widely spread drug is marijuana. Youth in general don't take heroin or cocaine, these are bourgeois drugs. The reawakening of the movement in 1994-95 has made a lot of youth and some of their organisations begin to reject drugs. This is in contrast with the previous mood amongst left wing youth. For instance in 1993 in a big national students meeting our position on this question was very much in a minority (8 votes out of 800). but only a year after the Zapatista insurrection this same position was passed by a majority of the delegates at the National Students' Convention. Only a minority defended legalisation of soft drugs.

Who are the Zapatistas? What are they fighting for? What has been the effect of the insurrection on the rest of t society?

The EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) was born as a result of the work of a small group of former guerrillas from the '70s. They developed their work for 10 years in Chiapas, one of the poorer provinces of the country. They organised and mobilised the peasants around their demands. Due to the extreme poverty the peasants themselves insisted that the group should arm itself and take the initiative of an armed insurrection in the province. As a result of these pressures the group

began to arm the peasants. On January 1st 1994, the same day Mexico was supposed to enter the 'First World' by joining the NAFTA, they launched the insurrection. This struggle has provoked an enormous interest amongst the population and especially the youth, the workers and the peasants.

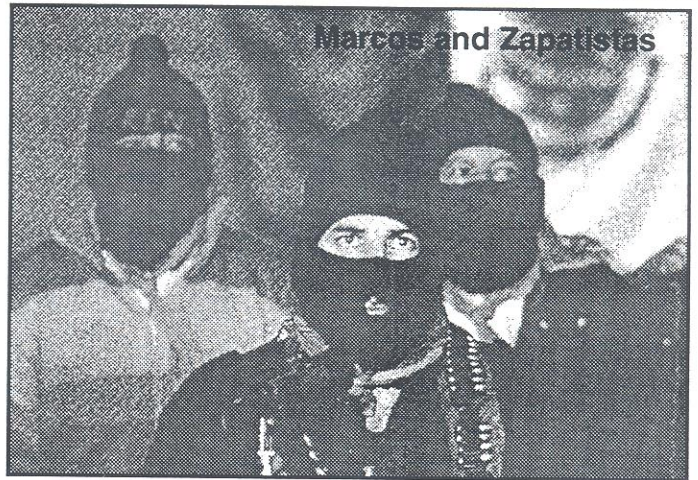
Everybody was pleased because that insurrection played several different roles. First of all it faced up to the official propaganda about joining the 'First World'. The government was arguing: 'there will be no more crises because Mexico is allying itself with the USA'. President Salinas was going to be reelected in glory as the head of the state for a second term.

But suddenly, apparently coming from nowhere, there was a peasant insurrection unmasking all this propaganda. The people identified themselves with the Zapatistas because they were defying the official euphoria. They knew all the positive economic indications were based on attacks on the living standards of the poorer section of the population.

There were massive demonstrations against the repression of the Zapatistas. On January 12th 150,000 marched through the streets of the capital. The army was forced to stop its offensive in Chiapas. It was clear that they were going in to commit genocide. The Zapatistas had no military advantage against the mighty Mexican army and on the purely military field they could have been suppressed without major trouble.

This situation pushed the Zapatista leaders towards talks with the government on the basis of a series of demands and their integration into the political and social life. A bit like in El Salvador but more consciously. They didn't want to take power or to change the existing set up. They see the "dialogue" with the government as the main means to achieve the peasants demands.

What is correct in their position is the fact that they argue that the EZLN cannot succeed without linking itself to a bigger nation-wide movement. But the problem is that their demands and their programme for change don't go much further than just limited democratic reforms.



They do want a more egalitarian society. According to the Zapatistas social differences are a very important moral issue which has to be destroyed bit by bit on the basis of cooperation between rich and poor. Therefore capitalists, have to ally themselves with the workers and the workers with the "good" capitalists. For them the bad capitalists are those linked to imperialism. The main economic problems, they say, are caused by the multinationals and imperialism. But the national bourgeoisie is "good" and has to be defended. Thus, for a year and a half now, the Zapatistas have been appealing to the "dialog of the civil society". This dialog seems to be their only point of attack to achieve their demands. Their insistence on "dialogue" has made them lose some support and dampened the enthusiasm they gave to social movements. The deception is especially noticeable amongst the workers. This way the EZLN has not become a serious alternative and clearly it has no intention of becoming one. Their last initiative has been the launching of a political movement, the Zapatista Front of National Liberation. but this organisation is more like a human rights association than a political party.

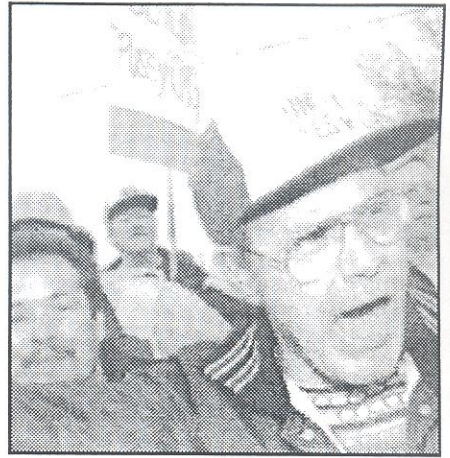
We think that the Zapatistas in the beginning had a very positive effect and on top of that their demands are right. But there is a problem: in order to achieve them you have to transform society. You have to begin by struggling to overthrow the present government. But to achieve their demands would mean going over the limits of the capitalist system. In order to give the land to the peasants you have to expropriate the big

landowners and nationalise the land. In order for the peasants to be able to cultivate the land you have to nationalise the banks to give them cheap credits. To nationalise the banks means to attack the interests of the big bourgeoisie. And this means the struggle to change society, the struggle for socialism.

What is the purpose of your speaking tour in Europe?

Today the struggle against the government and the economic misery is being carried out on all fronts despite the lack of coordination and unification of forces. My purpose is to explain all those struggles and to raise solidarity. The struggle of the Zapatistas is very important and has a good coverage in the media. But besides that there is an increase in the struggles of workers and peasants, The latest one is the struggle of the PEMEX (Mexican oil company) workers against privatisation. The nationalisation of oil was an important revolutionary conquest in the 30s and 40s. I want also to explain the repression against our struggles by the government and paramilitary groups. There is an average of 2 political murders a week in Mexico! The repression is specially directed against peasant and workers' leaders. Some months ago 40 peasants, members of a revolutionary union, were coldbloodedly murdered by the Army in an ambush in Guerrero. All the trade union and political organisations on the left suffer constant harassment against their offices, branches, etc. We need your political and financial help in order to fight repression.

Historic struggle in Canada



A weekend of struggle saw the steel-working town of Hamilton, Ontario shut down by 25,000 workers on picket lines. The next day over 100,000 people marched against the provincial Tories' program of cuts, layoffs, and attacks on workers' rights.

The movement on February 23rd and 24th was called by the Ontario Federation of Labour and is only the second in a series of demonstrations, the most recent of which brought 40,000 out on strike in London, Ontario. The week after the march, 54,000 public service workers

across Ontario went on all-out strike. Up to 20% of the workforce may face the sack if the Tories' austerity plan is put through. In response to the intended cuts, plans are being laid for a one-day, province-wide general strike. This is no longer a normal movement for better pay and conditions. The Ontario working class is amongst the first to experience the right-wing "*common sense (counter)revolution*" at the hands of premier Mike Harris. The year-old Harris provincial administration intends to crush the Ontario labour movement before pushing through its reactionary program.

This movement, the like of which has never been seen in Canadian history, is vital for the entire North American working class. Harris will not back down or bargain until he is forced to. If Harris is successful, it will send a message to the bosses and their lackeys in office that this is the solution to the crisis in their society. The only way to beat this offensive is to put forward the general strike, not just as a protest point, but as a springboard for further action.

Alex Grant
Vancouver

Philippines: workers fight for rights

During February, I visited the Philippines and was fortunate enough to stay with a working class family in the provincial town of Gua-Gua, which is about 30 miles from Manila.

Firstly, it must be borne in mind that the Philippines possesses a certain amount of natural wealth, mainly in the form of offshore oil, the mining of ore and base metals, as well as the production of food on a vast scale. But with the exception of food, which is available quite cheaply, very little of this wealth finds its way to the people thanks to the close relationship between the government and the multinational monopolies. On the surface, another exception to this is the existence of a developed education system. However the bosses are forced to provide this in order to produce a workforce educated

enough to do the work in the factories etc. Also, within the education system the authorities have put in place certain 'safeguards' against the students taking up a socialist position and have introduced measures which include basic military training. The schools system is also overseen by the ever present other arm of the government—the catholic church who serve to re-enforce the status quo. Within the Philippines there is a certain amount of opposition to the system, the most visible of which is the National Peoples Army (NPA) which conduct small acts of armed action which have no real effect on the political situation. However, the unions through the Trade Union Congress (TUCP) have, when placed under pressure, mounted campaigns against government policy.

Currently, the state is trying to pass an 'anti-terrorism' Act which, in the same way as the Criminal Justice Act in Britain, is correctly seen as a serious curtailment of civil liberties. This proposed legislation has aroused such large scale opposition and demonstrations that not only have the unions raised opposition but even the council of churches has declared against it. President Ramos has declared however that talks with the TUCP and the churches are just a consultation exercise. The government have called an international conference on 'terrorism' with invites being sent out to a carefully selected list of countries. This is nothing less than an attempt to give the proposed bill international credibility and drum up 'moral' support from their friends abroad. Another area of popular opposition is that against the proposed

lifting of government subsidies on petrol and diesel as part of the deregulation of the industry. In a country heavily reliant on the transport of goods this would have a serious effect on living standards. It is clear that big business and the state, acting through a large national police force, corrupt bureaucracy and a largely compliant church, wield immense collective power. However, they are not having it all their own way. Certain sections of the working class are well organised and coupled with the traditional spirit of opposition within the class, will in time and with direction provide the spark which will ignite socialist change.

Mark Davis
Milton Keynes

Trotsky on the US Labor Party

The question now being discussed by activists, such as those involved in Labor Party Advocates, of the need to have a party of Labour to represent the workers in the USA, is of tremendous importance to all workers internationally.

Following on from the interview with a member of Labor Party Activists printed in last months Socialist Appeal, we are taking the opportunity to reprint an extract from an article dated 31 May 1938 ("US and European Labour movements: A comparison") which is a transcript of a discussion between Leon Trotsky and others on the question of the prospects for a Labour Party in the USA. The extract reproduced here covers Trotsky's comments on the different paths taken by the labour movements of the

world in relation to trade union and political activity (and of the direct links between the two) and speculates on the path to be taken by US labour. Trotsky's analysis of the processes driving the workers of America towards a political expression remains valid today, especially in an election year where the masses will once again face a choice between two candidates of capital. His comments on the role of Marxism in this process, made at a time when, like now, sympathy for the formation of a Labour party was growing is certainly of great importance both in the US and in this country also.

I believe that it is necessary to remind ourselves of the most elementary facts from the history of the development of the workers' movement in

general and the trade unions in particular. In this respect we find different types of development of the working class in different countries. Every country has a specific type of development, but we classify them in general.

In Austria and in Russia especially, the workers' movement began as a political movement, as a party movement. That was the first step. The Social Democracy in its first stage hoped that the socialist reconstruction of society was near, but it happened that capitalism was strong enough to last for a time. There was a long period of prosperity, and the Social Democracy was forced to organise trade unions. In such countries as Germany, Austria, and especially Russia, where trade unions were unknown, they were initiated, constructed, and guided by a political party, the Social Democracy.

Development

Another type of development is that disclosed in the Latin countries—in France and especially in Spain. Here the party movement and the trade union movement are almost independent of one another and under different banners—even to a certain degree antagonistic to one another. The party is a parliamentary machine. The trade unions are to a certain degree in France—more in Spain—

under the leadership of anarchists. The third type is provided by Great Britain, the United States, and more or less by the dominions.

Trade unions

England is the classic country of trade unions. They began to build trade unions at the end of the eighteenth century, before the French revolution, and during the so-called industrial revolution. (In the United States, during the rise of the manufacturing system.) In England the working class didn't have its independent party. The trade unions were the organisations of the working class—in reality the organisation of the labour aristocrats, the higher strata. In England there was an aristocratic proletariat, at least in its upper strata, because the British bourgeoisie, enjoying almost monopoly control of the world market, could give a small part of the wealth to the working class and so absorb part of the national income. The trade unions were adequate to extract that from the bourgeoisie. Only after a hundred years did the trade unions begin to build up a political party. This is absolutely contrary to Germany or Austria. There the party awakened the working class and built up the trade unions. In England the trade unions, after centuries of existence and struggle, were forced to



build up a political party. What were the reasons for this change? It was due to the complete decline of English capitalism, which began very sharply. The English party is only a couple of decades old, coming into prominence especially after the World War. What is the reason for this change? It is well known that it was due to the abolishing of England's monopoly control of the world market. It began in the eighties of the nineteenth century with the competition of Germany and of the United States. The bourgeoisie lost its ability to give the leading strata of the proletariat a privileged position. The trade unions lost the possibility to improve the situation of the workers, and they were pushed onto the road of political action because political action is the generalisation of economic action. Political action generalises the needs of the workers and addresses them not to the parts of the bourgeoisie but to the bourgeoisie as a whole, organised in the state.

Concentrated

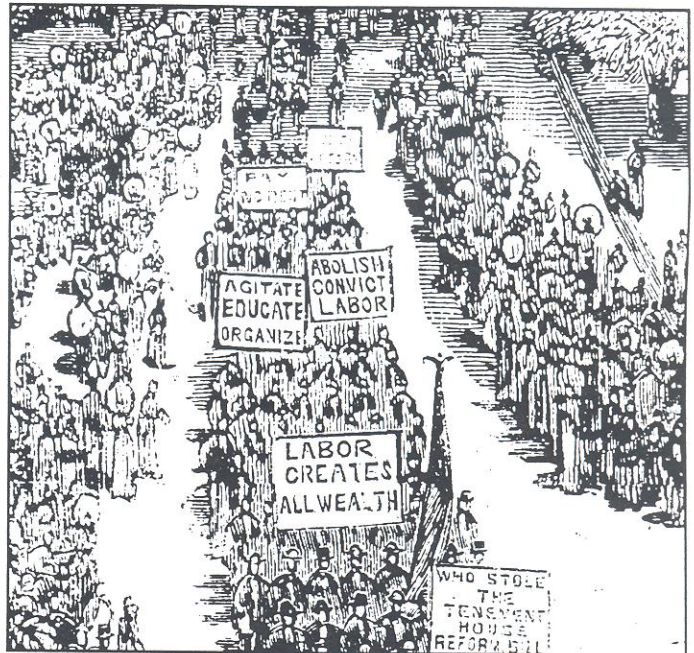
Now in the United States we can say that the characteristic features of English development are presented in even more concentrated form, in a shorter period, because the whole history of the United States is shorter. Practically, the development of the trade unions in the United States began after the Civil War, but these trade unions were very backward even compared with the trade unions of Great Britain. To a great degree they were mixed trade unions of employers and employees, not fighting, militant trade unions. They were sectional and tiny. They were based on the craft system, not [organised] according to industry, and we see that it is only during the last two or three years that the genuine trade unions developed in the United States. This new movement is the CIO.

What is the reason for the appearance of the CIO? It is the decay of American capitalism. In Great Britain the beginning of the decay of the capi-

talist system forced the existing trade unions to unite into a political party. In the United States the same phenomenon—the beginning of the decline—produced only the industrial trade unions; but these trade unions appeared on the scene just in time to meet the new chapter of the decline of capitalism, or—more correctly—we can say that the first crisis of 1929-33 gave the push and ended in the organisation of the CIO. But scarcely organised, the CIO meets the second crisis, 1937-38, which continues and deepens.

Organisation

What does this fact signify? That it was a long time in the United States before the organisation of trade unions, but now that genuine trade unions exist, they must make the same evolution as the English trade unions. That is, on the basis of declining capitalism, they are forced to turn to political action. I believe that this is the most important fact of the whole matter. The question reads, "There is no evidence to indicate any widespread sentiment for such a party." You will remember that when we discussed this question with other comrades there were some divergences on this question. I cannot judge whether sentiment for a labour party exists or not, because I have no personal observations or impressions; but I do not find it decisive as to what degree the leaders of the trade unions, or the rank and file are ready or inclined to build a political party. It is very difficult to establish objective information. We have no machine to take a referendum. We can measure the mood by action only if the slogan is put on the agenda. But what we can say is that the objective situation is absolutely decisive. The trade unions as trade unions can have only a defensive activity, losing members and becoming more and more weak as the crisis deepens, creating more and more unemployed. The treasury becomes poorer and poorer, the tasks, bigger and bigger, while their means, smaller and



smaller. It is a fact; we cannot change it. The trade union bureaucracy becomes more and more disoriented, the rank and file more and more dissatisfied, and this dissatisfaction becomes greater and greater the higher were their hopes in the CIO, and especially in view of the unprecedented growth of the CIO—in two or three years, four million fresh people on the field, facing objective handicaps which cannot be eliminated by the trade unions. In this situation we must give an answer. If the trade union leaders are not ready for political action, we must ask them to develop a new political orientation. If they refuse, we denounce them. That is the objective situation.

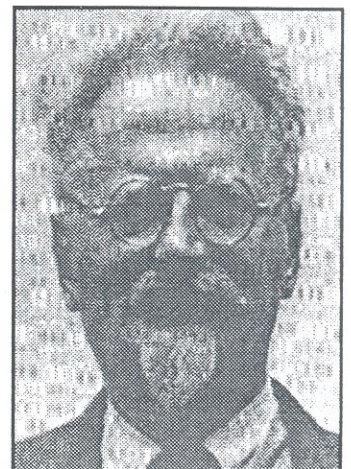
Programme

I say here what I said about the whole programme of transitional demands. The problem is not the mood of the masses but the objective situation, and our job is to confront the backward material of the masses with the tasks which are determined by objective facts and not by psychology. The same is absolutely correct for this specific question on the labour party. If the class struggle is not to be crushed, replaced by demoralisation, then the movement must find a new channel, and this channel is political. That is the fundamen-

tal argument in favour of this slogan.

We claim to have Marxism or scientific socialism. What does scientific socialism signify in reality? It signifies that the party which represents this social science departs, as every science, not from subjective wishes, tendencies, or moods but from objective facts, from the material situation of the different classes and their relationships. Only by this method can we establish demands adequate to the objective situation, and only after this can we adapt these demands and slogans to the given mentality of the masses. But to begin with this mentality as the fundamental fact would signify not a scientific but a conjunctural, demagogic, or adventuristic policy.

31 May 1938



April marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Keynes. Mick Brooks takes a short look at his ideas, past and present, and asks what they have to offer today.

Keynes and the "free market"

In 1932 a leading economics thinker made an address to a select audience at the London School of Economics. In a year when millions throughout the world lived in poverty in the midst of plenty he chose to open with these words: "Let us assume we have full employment."

Keynes was one of his kind. He agreed that if only the capitalist system could deliver full employment of human and material resources, then it would indeed be a wonderful system. But it wasn't delivering. Keynes was a practical man. The task of economics was now to preserve, not just to justify, the system. He is quoted as saying: "If it comes to the barricades, you shall find me on the side of the enlightened bourgeoisie."

Actually if we 'assume' capitalism then we can forget about full employment.

The economic orthodoxy of his time was the same then as now. The 'Treasury view' was that the government can't affect the level of economic activity. Keynes took issue with this as regards government policy on taxing and spending. As the economy slid into the great slump of 1929 the state was getting less in from taxes as firms went bankrupt, but they were paying out more in unemployment benefits. The Treasury view was that the first priority was to balance the budget. The bill was duly handed in to Ramsey MacDonald, then Labour Prime Minister - cut unemployment pay, cut teachers' pay, cut service pay. This was the harsh logic of capitalism.

Split

This demand split the Labour government, with MacDonald and other right wing ministers betraying the movement by joining the Tories in a National Government in 1931. During this time Keynes acted as adviser to the Lloyd George

wing of the declining Liberal Party. He opposed cuts, arguing that this would take purchasing power out of workers' pockets and make the slump worse. In the end this would mean a vicious circle of less jobs, less spending, less taxes coming in, more benefits paid out and more cuts needed. Instead the government should spend more than it got in in the teeth of a slump to put spending money in people's pockets. It didn't actually matter what the money was spent on.

"Ancient Egypt was doubly fortunate...in that it possessed two activities, namely pyramid-building as well as the search for the precious metals, the fruits of which, since they could not serve the needs of man by being consumed, did not stale with abundance..."

The more useless, the better! To dig holes in the ground, paid for out of savings, will increase not only employment, but the real national dividend of goods and services.

Keynes thus argued that by giving people a job, for instance through a public works programme, the government would get more in as tax and have to pay out less in benefits. In the end the budget would balance itself as the economy recovered. This was eagerly seized on by non-socialist reformers, first among them the right wing leaders of the Labour Party, as the salvation of capitalism. The idea that the government could and should aim at a policy of full employment was endorsed by both Labour and the Tories in a Government White Paper in 1944. The long post-War boom was for many years seen as a vindication of Keynes' ideas. The reality was very different. Here is R.C.O. Matthews from an article in the 'Economic Journal' in 1968, "Throughout the post-war period the government, so far from injecting demand into the system, has persistently had a large current

account surplus." In other words they were desperately trying to pay back the huge state debt they had built up during the War. He goes on to declare, "the explanation of the rise in investment must lie at the heart of the explanation of the rise in the level of activity."

With the distance of time the view has been allowed to take root that mad/bad Thatcherites and monetarists tore up the post-War Keynesian consensus and exposed us all to a new age of mass unemployment. No socialist would of course deny that Thatcher was mad, bad or both. But here's James Callaghan, Labour Prime Minister in 1976, speaking to the Labour Party Conference.

"We used to think that you could just spend your way out of a recession, and increase employment, by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and in so far as it did exist, it worked by injecting inflation into the economy. And each time that happened, the average level of unemployment has risen. Higher inflation, followed by higher unemployment. That is the history of the last twenty years."

Keynesianism didn't work. It was Labour that first abandoned the doctrine. Denis Healy was the first monetarist Chancellor from the Wilson-Callaghan government. Two economists, scrutinising the money supply figures in 1983, concluded "It would certainly be hard to guess from the statistics alone whether there had been a change of government, and if so why" (Matthews and Sargent). So Keynesianism doesn't work. The post-War boom had other causes. Does that mean that the sound money people and the policy of the balanced budget works? It didn't work in the 1930s and it hasn't worked for the past twenty years. But this policy represents the logical policy of capitalism in crisis.

"Far from regarding the expenditure of the state as a saving grace and a blessing, the bourgeoisie is constantly groaning at the burden that the state (a necessary Old Man of the Sea it bears on its back) and the increase in state expenditure imposed on it. Every penny taken by the state..MEANS LESS in the pockets of the capitalists themselves." (Ted Grant-Will there be a slump?)

Boom or slump

In truth the capitalists can't decide whether their system will go through boom or slump. Enoch Powell, a lonely guardian of the pre-Keynesian orthodoxy during the post-war boom made this point. "The recovery, like the recession, has taken place in response to other forces of a wider and different character; or, if you like in the immortal words of the steward to the sea-sick lady, Madam, you don't have to do anything, it does itself."

It is inevitable, given the failure of monetarism to deliver, that a new generation of Keynesian critics of the present orthodoxy is emerging. Many of their criticisms of the radical right are correct. Will Hutton from the Guardian quotes a secret Treasury memorandum. "Free market explanations of real business cycles are highly stylised and have a hollow ring.

Keynesian accounts...attempt to mimic reality and contribute to our understanding"

But socialist ideas will only develop and flourish in a sustained engagement with both Keynesian and monetarist schools of bourgeois economics.



Steve Jones reviews Oliver Stone's latest film

Nixon

Oliver Stone's *Nixon* is a powerful piece of film making which may not be to everybody's taste at over 3 hours but is clearly an important political study.

This film covers not only the familiar Watergate period (although it is not so familiar nowadays which may create problems for people trying to follow the action) but also spans the whole of Nixon's career from his childhood onwards. In style this is very much a twin to his earlier *JFK* and employs many of the same methods as that film and the later *Natural Born Killers*. The film flashes backwards and forwards in time with overlapping sound and a constant switching between colour and black and white and between fictional and real footage. However it does serve to build up a sense of tension in a story whose outcome we already know. Despite its epic length and use of widescreen, this is a film shot largely in medium to close up as the camera prowls around its protagonists in claustrophobic hotel rooms and offices. Only in the desert scenes of Nixon's working class childhood and early innocence does

the film come out into the sunlight, even a later sequence where Nixon meets FBI boss Hoover at a race track full of menace seems strangely oppressive. This darkness around Nixon is intentional—at one point a character talks of him saying "he's the darkness reaching out for the darkness". The White House is turned into a combination of Xanadu and that hotel in *The Shining* as the cast creeps down endless labyrinthine corridors and in to darkened rooms whilst rain lashes windows and lightning flashes at every opportunity. Stone is not one to under emphasise a point and he ensures that the three main themes of his story are well and truly hammered home.

Themes

Stone's themes are as follows. Firstly that of The Lie. As a child his Quaker mother catches him lying and cheerfully says "Remember that I see into thy soul as God sees. Thou may fool the world... but not me, Richard. Never me." Later he builds his career by "catching" Alger Hiss out as a liar but is in turn consumed by the consequences of his lies over the Watergate cover-up. Cutting himself off from others he finally runs out of people to lie to. The film also compares Nixon's promises on the war, race etc with the documentary film of the reality—the bombings, riots and demonstrations. The killing of the students at Kent State is still shocking even today. The second theme is that of The Death Of Others.

Repeatedly Nixon and the film itself notes how he achieved success on the backs of the death of firstly two of his brothers (which enables him to go to college) and then the death of the Kennedy brothers which re-opens the chance to become President, a chance which seemed lost after his defeats in the Presidential election of 1960 and then the Californian governorship election of 1962 which prompts his departure from politics: "you won't have Nixon to kick around anymore". The third (and for us most relevant) is that of The Beast. This is Stone's symbol for the military-industrial complex which first backs Nixon and then brings him down. It is expressed in that form by a young anti-war demonstrator who Nixon meets when he visits the Lincoln memorial in the middle of the night to 'talk' to the demonstrators camped there. Nixon talks glibly about being able to change things and control or "tame" the system when a young girl responds by saying: "It sounds like you're talking about a wild animal". As he leaves Nixon comments: "She got it... She understood something it's taken me 25 years in politics to understand. The CIA, The Mafia, The Wall Street bastards...". This nocturnal visit has gone down in history for showing how incapable Nixon was of relating to the demonstrating youth ("Where you from, Son?") however there was no record of this particular conversation taking place and I'm not certain that Nixon would have replied as he did. He always saw things as a personal vendetta by the "liberal establishment" against him. This beast image appears throughout the film (eg. the race-track) and expresses itself in two other ways. Firstly in the scenes where Nixon visits a group of Southern and Cuban "businessmen" headed by a sinister oil tycoon played, presumably as an in-joke by Larry Hagman (JR from Dallas!). This group allude to the fact that they "removed"

Kennedy and could do the same again. Nixon rebuffs the threat but the point is made. Towards the end of the film, Nixon's new chief of staff General Haig refers to the "possibility" that there may be a copy of the famous tapes in "someones" hands. This threat is used to force Nixon's hand finally to go.

It is clear that once nobody else on his staff is left to be sacrificed then Nixon himself has to be sacrificed. By seeking to overreach the powers of the Presidency as against the rest of the state he had pushed things to a point (for example with the illegal bombing of Cambodia) where he had to be removed to protect the system as a whole. No President after Nixon has had the same power in his hands as Nixon did. Clinton found that out even before he had taken office!

Watergate

The film is at pains to note that the dirty dealings are not confined to Nixon and the Watergate period. It shows that the clandestine activities, the set-ups, the buggings and so on go right back both with Nixon and others. Nixon is repeatedly shown to be terrified about events linked to the Bay of Pigs period coming out. He talks about a "track two" operation being run during this period and continuing from one president to the next involving "Chile, Congo, Guatemala, Cuba. Wherever there's a need for an Executive Action capability..." Nixon is dominated by its central character. He appears in virtually every scene and Anthony Hopkins as Nixon just about manages to pull it off without sinking into simple impressions or pastiche. The supporting cast is very strong, containing less well-known names than say *JFK* but more impressive for that. Mary Steenburgen manages, despite being lumbered with dialogue that makes her sound like one of those Amish folk from *Witness*, to turn Nixon's mother into a powerful and moving presence. All the characters come across as real people rather than just caricatures—James Woods manages to even make Haldeman seem human! Political films are a rarity nowadays—*Nixon* bombed (if you will excuse the pun) in America but is still worth a visit as it raises some interesting questions and intelligent films are a rarity at best.



The Great British Tradition

by Beatrice Windsor



Steakholder of the month



If ever there was a victim of Tory policies, it must be Roy Thomason, Conservative MP for Bromsgrove.

Things had been going so well for him. Stalwart of the local Bournemouth community, he made his money with a string of private nursing homes. He then moved into buying up properties - which is where it all started to go horribly wrong.

Thanks to the Tories' mismanagement of the economy in the mid-1980s, which allowed inflation to run rampant on property prices until 1988, Thomason saw all his assets devalued in the subsequent property crash.

Then the government brought in cutbacks on social security payments to the elderly, which damaged income from his nursing homes.

By the time he was elected a Tory MP in 1992, his business was on the verge of collapse, with three of his companies owing a total of £10.1 million.

According to the *Sunday Times* (25.2.96), one solution Thomason considered was to "persuade" Dorset County Council to put their elderly clients into his homes. But this of course would have broken local government CCT rules introduced by, you guessed it, the Tories - so that was dropped.

Even his hope of paying some of his debts off through lucrative consultancy work was blocked by the recommendations of the Nolan report, introduced by John Major. Under bankruptcy rules, Thomason should have officially been declared bankrupt last October. But it is one thing to be a failed businessman staring bankruptcy in the face, and another to be a Tory MP for a government with a majority of one holding onto power by its fingernails.

Understanding that bankrupts cannot sit in Parliament, the banks to whom Thomason owes the money have been remarkably helpful.

Lloyds, Barclays, Midland, NatWest and TSB have agreed to hold off pursuing the £6.2 million debt personally underwritten by Thomason. A french owned bank, UCB, were less pliable, but - again according to the *Sunday Times* - the Royal Bank of Scotland may come to Thomason's rescue and relieve UCB of his debts. (*Fact: the chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland is none other than former Tory cabinet minister, Lord Younger*).

So the next time you receive a rude letter from any of the above banks complaining that you are overdrawn, you now know where to tell them to stick it.

The Luddites fight for the right to work

Luddite has become a term of abuse that remains with us to this day. But the home based weavers and knitters had little choice but to strike out in a violent way against the new machines that were forcing them into starvation.

The Luddites were actually trying to defend the law of the land. Charles II had given the Framework Knitting Company a Royal Charter in the 17th century, which set quality standards. Indeed, in the initial Luddite attacks, only those machines which produced shoddy goods were destroyed.

The weavers and knitters had also attempted peaceful means to defend their meagre living standards. In 1799, the knit workers of Nottingham presented a petition demanding a minimum rate - only when it was rejected were there several days of rioting, which was only subdued after the army were sent in to patrol the streets of the city.

However, through the local council, a minimum rate was agreed by the mill owners; a lesson weavers and knit workers throughout the country took to heart.

New pressures were put on the workers at the turn of the century, as Napoleon's victories in Europe cut off Britain's European markets.

Once again a petition was launched in 1811, but was contemptuously rejected out of hand by Parliament. The domestic workers had little choice but to take direct action.

It is unclear from whom the Luddites took their name - it was either from the Ancient Briton, King Ludd, who conquered London (hence Ludgate), or a young boy called Ned Ludd who, according to popular legend of the time, smashed up stocking frames in a fit of temper.

But the Luddites were highly organised, with particular strength in Nottinghamshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire.

History books today give the impression that the pioneers of the industrial revolution were popular if eccentric inventors - they were in fact hard-nosed "entrepreneurs" despised by the local populace. The house of James Hargreaves, inventor of the Spinning Jenny, was ransacked and his machines destroyed.

Richard Arkwright, inventor of the wool carding machine, had his factory burnt down, while the first Cartwright power looms were destroyed in a riot.

However, the Luddites were fighting against the tide of history. As historian Charles Poulsen puts it, in his book "The English Rebels," "It was the last desperate struggle of a doomed class, the free domestic producers. The future belonged to the machines - and to their owners."

The 'doomed class' were helped on their way by new repressive measures which included transportation to Australia and the death penalty for ring leaders.

The turning point against the Luddites came at the battle of Rawford's Mill in Spen Valley. Here the mill owner, William Cartwright (not to be confused with Edmund Cartwright, the inventor of the power loom) turned the factory into a fortress guarded by soldiers - he even installed a tub of boiling oil over the main gate!

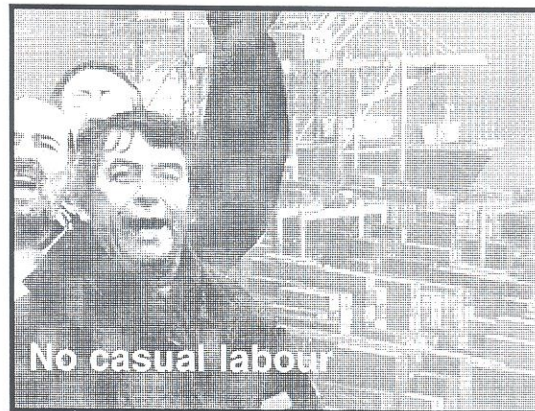
When the expected attack came by a group of 150 Luddites, the attackers were repulsed and Cartwright became the heroic darling of the Tories and the ruling class.

Luddite actions continued sporadically afterwards but were on the wain. The workers - being driven into the factories as collective groups - were to look towards new tactics to fight the bosses.

Next month: the great British tradition of... rioting!

socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement



Mad cows and corporate killers

As the concern over the BSE crisis and British beef continues to roll on with most of the world doing the safe thing and banning beef imports from Britain, the Tories have decided to adopt a "see no evil, hear no evil" approach.

The only evil they are prepared to listen to is the calls from the big companies to 'do something' to restore confidence. They say that other beef is just as risky, which may be true, but this sounds like passing the buck. The question of whether to adopt a mass slaughter policy is tied in, as usual, with cost. The more cattle you kill, the more compensation you pay out, the less tax cuts you can carry out... Such is the logic of the Tories. Of course, the big companies are not waiting and have been moving out of this area of agriculture for some time, like rats leaving the sinking ship. So long as their profits are protected they don't carry who gets hurt. But is this attitude just confined to farming?

We have seen how the privatised utilities have hit the headlines with news of mass sackings and huge salary increases for the bosses. Banks such as Barclays are sacking thousands whilst making heavy profits. Similar news has hit the American press with a cover story in Newsweek

entitled "Corporate Killers", and the New York Times running a seven-part series called "The Downsizing of America". For example, Robert Allen, chief executive of AT&T, the telecoms giant, announced 40,000 redundancies while taking home \$3.4 m (£2.2 m). There are many other cases of this kind.



However, a recent article appeared in the *Financial Times* by Michael Prowse, attempting to justify mass unemployment and huge profits made by these huge corporations against some critics, mainly the trade unions. It says that criticisms, "while popular, reveal a misunderstanding of market capitalism. Chief executives certainly enjoy the trappings of power. They fly in personal jets and work in lavish offices. They give orders to subordinates.

They announce plant closures and redundancies.. They cannot indulge their personal whims because they are rigidly constrained by the need to make profits." He goes on to say that they are only following the dictates of consumer demand: "It is we, not they, who are saying the skills of some of our fellows are

now redundant." So it is all our fault! "The glory of market capitalism is that individuals have a free choice", he continues. But don't you need money to exercise this choice? Capitalism is not based on the needs of people, but on the maximisation of profits. If it is not profitable to produce the things we actually need, then factories will be shut down and workers thrown on the scrap heap. According to our sage, "We

should recognise that, far from being anti-social, the reviled 'corporate killers' are actually serving the community." What community?

For him, the worker who loses his job should be grateful. "In an average year 2 to 3 per cent of Americans are fired or made redundant. This is surely a reasonable price to pay for the benefits of market capitalism." Who can argue with that? He goes on, "too often people assume their job should be safe provided they are conscientious and provided the economy does not slip into a bad recession. This is not, and never has been, true of capitalism... None of us should count on having a job for life - or indeed for any set period."

What a jolly prospect for millions of workers who are worried sick about their family's future. So much for "market capitalism". It is clear that this system offers nothing for working people, except insecurity, unemployment and poor pay and conditions. That is why we must consign capitalism to the scrap heap. A democratic socialist planned economy can use the resources of society rationally, not for the profits of a few, but for the well-being of the majority. Make the bosses' system redundant and say good riddance to the "corporate killers".

Labour to power on a socialist programme