

socialist

appeal

issue 50 April 1997 price: one
pound



Vote Labour

**Kick
out the
Tories**

Socialist Appeal
issue 50
April 1997

Trade union laws

Steve Davison analyses what lay behind the Tory attacks on workers rights and what we should be fighting for under Labour *page 8*

Tory decline

With the Tories rock bottom in the opinion polls and staring defeat in the face, *Phil Mitchinson* looks at how they got there *page 10*

Labour's five pledges

We've all read them, but what do they represent, and will they make any difference *page 12*

Socialist policies

Rob Sewell argues the case for real socialist policies *page 15*

Albania

With revolution unfolding in Albania, we look at why its happening and what it means for the former Stalinist states *page 19*

Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ
tel 0171 251 1094
fax 0171 251 1095
e-mail:
socappeal@easynet.co.uk
editor Alan Woods
design Alastair Wilson
business manager Steve Jones

□ **issue 50**

Entering the new era...

Socialist Appeal was launched in 1992 just in time for the general election in April of that year. Now, five years on, to celebrate our fiftieth issue, and as our election '97 special, we are relaunching a new-style magazine.

We hope you agree with us that it's a qualitative step forward in its style and design. But, more importantly, over the next few months we hope to create a sharper, more focussed publication. The election of a new Labour government, the first time in nearly a quarter of a century, is a radical turning point in British politics, meaning new questions and new problems for activists in the labour and trade union movement.

The eighteen years of Tory rule, the setbacks we faced in the 1980s, the draconian anti-union legislation, all set a certain agenda for us. Remember in the wake of the 1987 and 1992 election defeats when the so-called academics queued up to lecture us that Labour had become unelectable, that the working class was disappearing and so on. But rather than Labour disappearing from the face of British politics, it is the Tories that have become the most unpopular government in modern history and face a wipeout in the coming election.

Issues

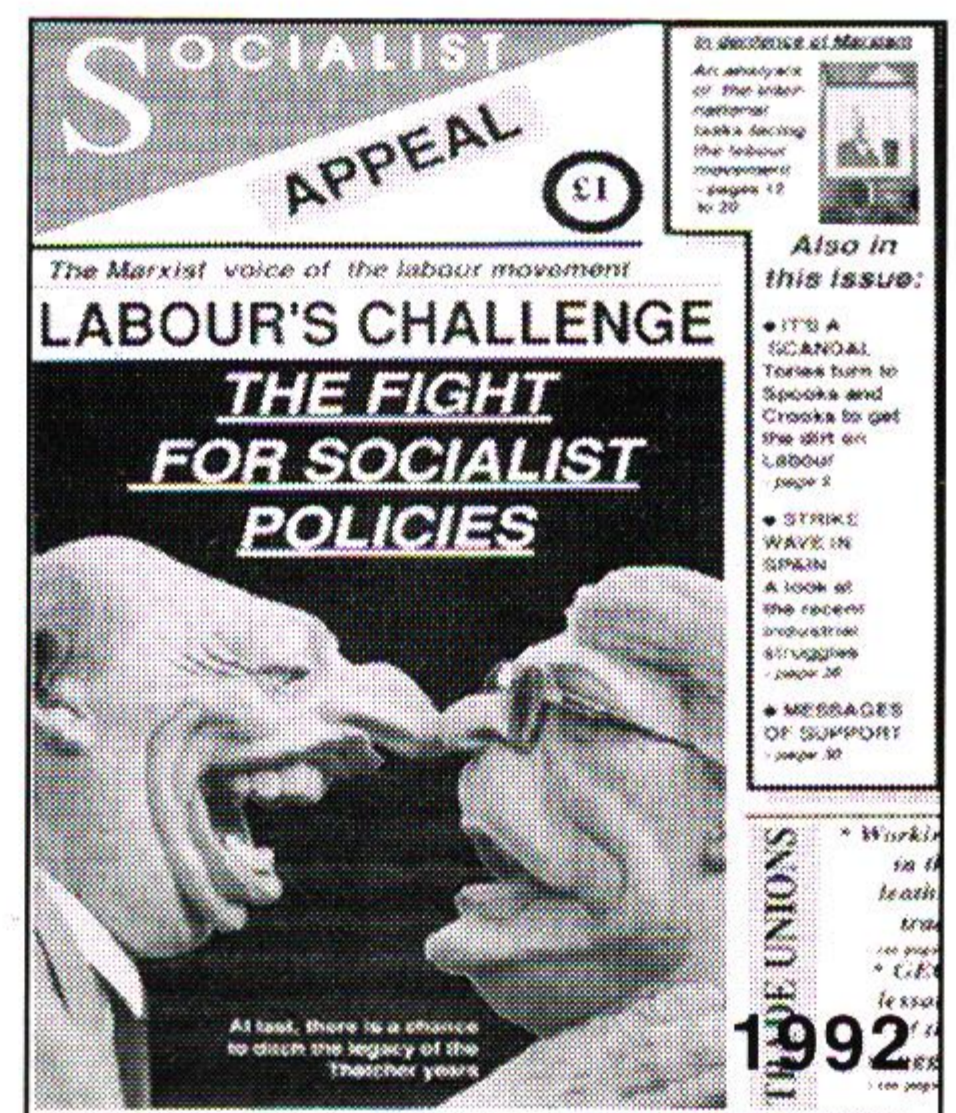
The new Labour government puts a new set of issues before us. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown's insistence that they remain within the restraints of the so-called market will inevitably lead to conflicting interests. People are looking for change, but with the market we will only have more of the same. On trade union law, on the minimum wage, on defence of the welfare state, on unemployment, on virtually every question of the day, we need to build the campaign to ensure that Labour delivers. Our very first issue carried its main article "In defence of Marxism" and this set the tone for the next period. We can be very proud of our first 49 issues. They have defended the fundamental ideas of Marxism as an integral part of the labour and trade union movement. But the election of a Labour government means we need to start to advance. We hope to extend our coverage of trade union and industrial issues, taking up the campaigns and issues as they develop. We

want to be livelier with more people writing, more interviews, comment, letters. We are also establishing a bigger and better reviews section. All in all, we want Socialist Appeal to become essential reading for every activist in the trade union movement, the Labour Party and Young Labour.

For all these changes we need your help. Why not write for us, either an article or letter. What do you like or don't like in Socialist Appeal? What would you like to see in future issues? Let us know.

Finance

We also need your financial help. That's why we're launching a £10,000 appeal for our press fund (see page 30). We need to raise this money in order to take advantage of all the opportunities that arise, to advance both our campaigning and our theoretical material, and, of course, develop the technical resources we so desperately need. Issue 50 is being put together on our new computer equipment, but we need to go a lot further than this. If we are to really take advantage of the situation as it evolves under a Labour government then we need to consciously take our technical capabilities forward, allowing us to produce a more frequent publication. This requires cash! Rush in your donation now. Our first five years have been a tremendous success. But they have only laid the basis for what is to come. The next five years are crucial and we must start preparing for them now.



End of the road for Major and the Tories



Election '97

If the assets of all the big banks and finance companies, and the big monopolies that dominate our economy, were utilised for all our benefits, instead of doleing it out in 'shareholder dividends' then we could have a society we could be proud of.... that means campaigning for a socialist programme of nationalisation. That is the real policy for the twenty first century.

May 1st, international labour day, will be the end of the road for John Major's hated Tory government. It's the day we've all been waiting for.

When the Tories were elected back in 1979 they vowed to change this country for ever. They unleashed a vicious attack on working class people that has made Britain the most unequal and divided country in the advanced industrial world. The Tories have presided over a policy of shifting as much wealth, power and influence away from ordinary working people and into the hands of big business as they could get away with. And they've got away with a lot.

Closures, redundancies, poll tax, privatisation, cutbacks, "competitive tendering," "internal markets," words little heard of before 1979 have become common place and have meant only one thing - an attack on the working class.

First they decimated manufacturing industry, turning the former 'workshop of the world' into the 'sweatshop' of Europe. Then in the drive for increased 'profitability' and 'competitiveness' British workers now work the longest hours in Europe, they have the shortest holidays, they have some of the lowest pay and they definitely have the least employment rights.

Areas like Scotland, South Wales and the north of England, formerly Britain's industrial heartland, have been systematically ground down by poverty and mass unemployment. South Wales now has a GDP per capita on a par with Malta, its average wages lower than South Korea! Welcome to John Major's 'enterprise capital of Europe.'

The Tories have led the way for international capitalism. The British economy, with its "flexible labour market" has become the model for others to emulate. But for us it is a nightmare. The intense pressures at work if you have a job, and the worry that you might not have it for much longer, affects virtually every sector of the workforce. Local authority workers, teachers, health workers, workers in manufacturing and engineering, evryone is treated with the same Tory medicine. To use 'management-speak' we have become a 'lean' economy, and that includes our wages! When John Major went to Luton to launch the Tory election campaign and coined their election catchphrase "safe in our hands," millions must have given a wry smile. We feel anything but.

For millions of people the election has not come soon enough. The last eighteen years have made us all eager for change. The Wirral by-election and all the opinion polls show clearly the hole that the Tories find

themselves. Since autumn 1992, when they were unceremoniously forced out of the European exchange rate mechanism and faced mass demonstrations against their pit closure policy, they have broke every pollsters record for the depth of their unpopularity.

Clearly, they will go. It only remains to see the size of Labour's majority. Tony Blair will take office with a tremendous weight of expectation on his shoulders. He may not like it, but people will be expecting change. His talk of preparing Britain for the twenty first century is more than just soundbite for millions. They will want to see this translated into better healthcare, better education, a decent minimum wage, restoration of workers rights, a job for every young person, more resources for our local authorities, a decent transport system (not more Stagecoaches), and so on.

Can he deliver? Well he and his chancellor, Gordon Brown, have already tied themselves to the strictures of the market, they have even accepted the Tories very own spending limits for the next couple years. How can we prepare a civilised society on this basis? People want change, and people need change. An historic opportunity like this does not come along all that often. Labour must be prepared to seize it.

We need a bold campaign on the issues that affect millions of workers. For full employment. For a proper minimum wage. For the repeal of the Tories anti-union legislation. For the restoration of local authority funding. For a real development of our health and education services - and that means increases in funding.

How would it all be possible? Well, the money is there. Last month Lloyds/TSB announced profits of £2.5 billion. That's your money! Who else do they get it from.

If the assets of all the big banks and finance companies, and the big monopolies that dominate our economy, were utilised for all our benefits, instead of doleing it out in 'shareholder dividends' (25% last year, while we struggled on wage rises little more than inflation if you were lucky), then we could have a society we could be proud of.

Of course, how can you control what you don't own. That means campaigning for a socialist programme of nationalisation. That is the real policy for the twenty first century. *Socialist Appeal* and its supporters in the Labour Party and the trade unions, will be at the forefront of just such a campaign. We must fight to commit the Labour Party to a programme of socialist measures. Why not join us in that fight?

Stop Tory tube sell off plans

The announced Tory plan to sell London Underground has been met with horror and condemnation. The price tag of around £2 billion pounds is a snip.

The Tories will give back a £300 million lump sum for capital investment and a similar amount in government subsidies for the first 5 years of privatisation. It's believed that the entire underground system urgently needs £1.2 billion to repair stations, shore up crumbling foundations and improve the general infrastructure up to modern standard. Once the work is complete the tube is estimated to be worth between £7 billion and £13 billion. Would you sell your car, then give back the money to the buyer because it

needs repairs? That is what the Tories are doing! The Labour leaders have said that with the election of a Labour Government they would immediately stop the sell off of the tube. Great, but another problem then raises its head.

In the last government budget, the Tories placed a two way bet. If they won the election they would privatise the underground as a job lot. But if they lost, they set the underground subsidy to be cut from £900 million per year to only £150 million over three years. £430 million will be cut this year alone. Plus the overspend on the Jubilee extension is going to come from existing underground finances. Privatisation by the back door must be stopped. When you consider that

over the last three years the underground has suffered three major power failures. Sections of the Bakerloo and Northern lines have had to be closed because of essential engineering works. The starvation of funds will mean long overdue station overhauls will be cancelled, trains will not be replaced. Safety could be put at risk.

As a starting point a new Labour government must restore all the subsidies the Tories have taken away. This should be part of a policy to develop a properly funded, nationally integrated, state owned transport system. One we can be proud of.

**Steve Tree
ASLEF**

No more lies - recognise!

Thirty-one members of the Communication Workers Union were recently sacked by bosses at the Critchley Labels plant, Croespenmaen, South Wales, for refusing to give up their union rights. True to form, these cowboy employers tore up written agreements that guaranteed union recognition.

"We are continuing to picket the plant everyday", states Wendy Williams, the local CWU financial secretary who spoke to Socialist Appeal. "Today we had visitors from Manchester CWU and the posties. We have had excellent support from all round the country. Our aim is to get all those sacked reinstated. We have no alternative but to see this thing through to the bitter end."

**Messages of support
and donations to:**

**The Critchley Labels Fund,
c/o Sue Hoskins, CWU secretary,
54 Beechgrove,
Oakdale, Nr. Blackwood,
Gwent**

Fight Benefit Agency cuts

Anybody in Westminster on 25 February would have been impressed by the incredible show of strength mounted against the Tories. At about lunchtime hundreds of protestors from every part of the country descended on Parliament to demonstrate against the Benefits Agency cuts.

The turnout was astounding - with representation from various unions, tenants associations and sympathisers. The demonstration was triggered by Peter Lilley's dangerous proposal to close a number of Benefit Agency offices throughout the Wales, meaning the loss of over 700 jobs. The cuts would especially hit those living in rural communities. I spoke to many of the demonstrators there, and they all

agreed that this could only have been calculated by this vicious capitalist government we are having to cope with. It was obvious that this is a cynical ploy to target the most vulnerable people in our society.

It is common knowledge that over £200 million of benefits has gone unclaimed. This is the way the government likes it. The replacement of offices with phone services can only make the statistics worse, especially as many claimants do not have phones. This, of course, is what Lilley wants.

Frustrated by the lack of positive response from the government, the protestors gathered in London and a mass lobby began. We had considerable press and TV coverage which can only help matters. Our local Labour MPs were very helpful although others were

unable to clarify the Labour Party's intentions regarding the Benefit Agency. Locally, Peter Hain, Don Anderson, Alan Williams and Gareth Wardell have all campaigned strongly against the proposal and have appealed directly to Ian Watson, the director responsible. Once inside we lobbied respective MPs. At one point, to my surprise, I spotted an elderly woman pushing aside a very large policeman in an attempt to get inside the House of Commons for Prime Minister's question time. "I want to speak to Mr. Major," she yelled. This is how strongly people felt about this. It is clear to most people that the government is utilising Wales to test this ludicrous idea because it is likely that they will be wiped out here in the election. After all, if it's such a good idea, why not implement it

nationally.

Thanks to the efforts of all the organisations concerned the plan has not gone unnoticed. The petition handed into Richmond House was nearly 40,000 signatures strong. Hopefully, we have demonstrated that the government cannot sail against the tide of public opinion.

It now seems unlikely that this proposal can run smoothly, considering the amount of pressure we have generated.

It is also unlikely that Peter Lilley will be able to come up with any more damaging proposals before the election - an election where hopefully he will lose his seat.

**Daniel Ward
Swansea Young Labour**

Reinstate Leeds N.E.

Questions about the democratic rights of members and local Labour parties are once again being raised in the light of the treatment of Leeds North East CLP.

This parliamentary seat is described as being a 'critical key seat that Labour must win' by the national LP organisation. The original choice of the local party to be their prospective parliamentary candidate was Liz Davies who was seen as being a popular choice. However, as most readers will remember, Liz was not endorsed by the National Executive Committee, following a campaign by the right wing against her. This event soured relations between the local party and the national party machine.

In the weeks leading up to the AGM of the party on 30th January, it was alleged that paid officials of the party national machine seemed to be organising an attempted coup. A week before the AGM, the EC of Leeds NE CLP met. At that meeting the status of 4 delegates was questioned and their delegateship rejected. One delegate had come from a GPMU branch that was not affiliated. The others were from a GMB branch who were entitled to 2 delegates but had sent 5. The meeting was attended by the Area Organiser who agreed with the rulings on eligibility. Immediately before the AGM, that same official stated that the NEC had ruled that the 4 delegates in question should be admitted and their status accepted.

At the meeting itself, the chair explained the issue and allowed the official to put his case. She then ruled the 4 not valid delegates in accordance with party rules. The ruling was challenged and the meeting voted to support the ruling of the chair. The meeting then pro-

ceeded in the normal fashion. On the following day, members were surprised to learn from the media that the local party had been suspended. This was followed up with the suspension of the Chair, Vice-Chair and later the Secretary and Treasurer also.

A campaign to reinstate the party has been established and funds are being sought to pursue the issue. A letter has been circulated explaining their case and stating that they are "with great reluctance taking legal advice against the possibility that the NEC cannot be brought to realise the unjustified, indeed perverse, nature of the actions of its officials." They are calling for CLPs etc. to move resolutions in defence of the rights of the local party. It should be made clear that, contrary to statements being made from some quarters, no CLP funds are being used to pursue the matter with the NEC or for legal costs.

The case is clear as they themselves have said. "Leeds NE CLP was one of the few constituency parties which bounced straight back into campaigning after the defeat of 1992. We realise that winning a seat requires work week in, week out across several years, not just a burst in the weeks before an election... We merely ask that the national party machinery help us to win it instead of making our task far more difficult."

Donations to the Campaign to Reinstate Leeds North East should be sent to:

24 St Martins Drive, Leeds, LS7 3LR (made payable to Celia Foote, Leeds NE)

You can check them out on the Internet with their Web page: <http://www.riviera.demon.co.uk>

Mick Fallon
Halifax

Campaign against Greenwich cutbacks

The London Borough of Greenwich recently agreed to carry out £9.1 million worth of cuts, a massive £5 million of which was directed at education - 10% coming from the borough's special needs schools.

After having carried out £2 million of cuts in social services, the council announced it would be carrying out 4.5% cuts to each service committee. The worst affected would be education, which accounts for 48% of the council's current expenditure.

The cuts are being carried out in an attempt to keep the council tax down to a 7.6% increase, well below the "legal" figure of 11% - in other words the cuts are self-imposed.

The anger against the council's decision was a shock to many councillors when 1,000 demonstrators turned up outside the education committee meeting on 10th February. Three days later the policy and resources committee met and 220 members of the public were ejected from the public gallery by the police. This was because the leader of the council lost his temper when several headteachers demanded the right to speak and shouted at them to "clear off."

Finally, on 26th February, the full council met to vote on the cuts. The lobby was smaller than before but the police were still called when 150 people occupied the council chamber. The press used this opportunity to report this as a demonstration organised by left wing groups. This was not the case, the lobby was organised by the teaching unions and Unison. The NUT has threatened to ballot for industrial action across the borough once the situation on job losses becomes clear and once again a Labour council will be in conflict with the trade union movement - the very people who support the Labour Party.

During the 1980s, Greenwich council held the distinction of being continually capped, however the current leadership is terrified of being seen as "irresponsible" and are not prepared to risk surcharge to defend the people who elected them in the first place.

The Leader, Len Duvall, talks of "careful housekeeping" and "unpopular decisions" as more people lose their jobs and the neediest in the borough end up with less services.

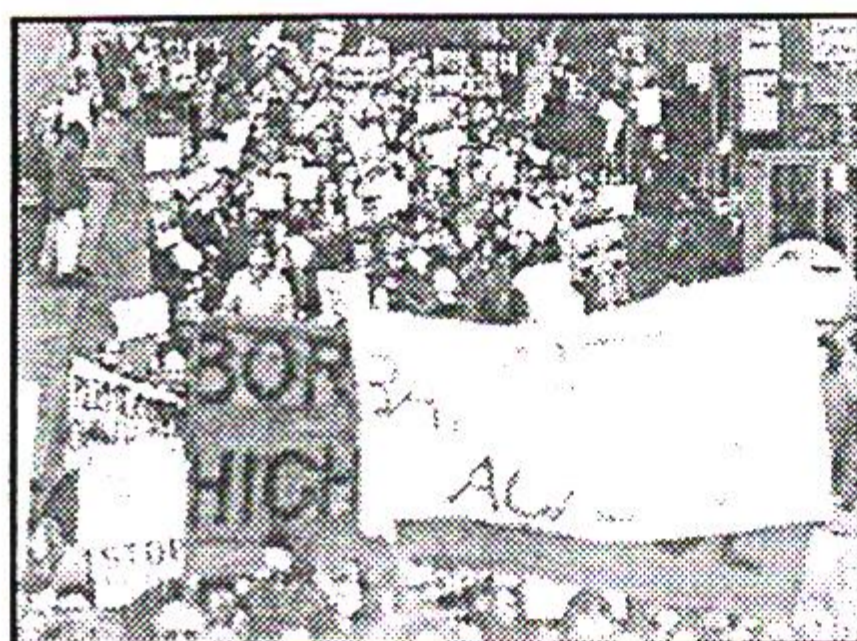
A great many party members both in Unison and in the local constituencies are disgusted with the way the council has acted and if the cuts continue under a Labour government, opposition will grow within the Unison Affiliated Political Forum, Young Labour and the local parties. The campaign to fight the cuts at every level must be stepped up now.

Dave O'Brien
Political officer, Greenwich Unison APF
(personal capacity)

Demo rocks Glasgow as council cuts bite

Glasgow city centre was in chaos on Monday 11th March as trade union members and activists from community groups tried to stop the City councillors from meeting to rubber-stamp the annual budget, where they approved council tax rises of 22%, up to 2,000 redundancies, massive cuts in services and an overall budget cut of £80.7 million.

The demonstration followed the previous week's 20,000 strong turnout of Unison members in Glasgow and Edinburgh, as workers protested against compulsory redundancies.



More job losses for Lanarkshire as clothing firm goes bust

91 jobs have been lost in Airdrie with the announcement that clothing factory Ky-Lin UK is to close with immediate effect.

The company went into receivership in early March and financial experts at receivers KPMG now say it is unlikely that another buyer will be found.

The news comes as another blow to the jobs-starved Lanarkshire area, still reeling from the news that almost 900 will lose their jobs at Marshalls Chunky Chicken factory in Coatbridge, later this month.

Monday's 2,000 turnout was an angry but good natured demonstration according to one Socialist Appeal supporter who was there. He said, "The cuts are all about slashing jobs and services right across the city. Education and social work face cuts of £10 million each, and the Sheltered Housing Warden Scheme mainly serving the elderly and vulnerable will be decimated."

He went on, "Costs for burials and cremations are set to treble and libraries and other leisure facilities will be closed. 2,000 jobs will be lost., many of them through compulsory redundancies. These cuts are unacceptable as the strength of the

demonstration showed."

In the event, the drastic cuts budget meeting went ahead with only 24 of the 83 councillors present, the rest being denied access by the protestors. Police tried to bus in 16 Labour councillors, but the crowd blocked their route.

This was a glorious opportunity for Labour councillors to set a deficit budget, with the working class people they represent coming before the dictats of Scottish Secretary Michael Forsyth. Certainly the vast majority of working class people of Glasgow would have stood behind them.

Scotrail paid strike breakers

Scotrail has admitted making "ex-gratia" payments of between £100 and £300 to staff who worked through recent strikes called by the RMT.

The payments were made from mid-December, when 700 RMT members went on a series of one day strikes. Many of the strikers are now being victimised by Scotrail and face disciplinary action against them. 2 of the 17 strikers at Glasgow Queen Street station have been sacked.

Industrial action taken by the workers centred on new productivity pay demands, and all during the negotiations Scotrail pleaded poverty. Now we learn that the personnel department sent out letters commending the strike-breakers, along with the cheques, thanking them for showing "commitment above and beyond the call of duty" and stating that further payments of £300 would be made.

Special feature on the West of Scotland compiled by Kenny McGuigan

Clyde shipyard jobs blow

Closure of the Kvaerner Govan shipyard on the Clyde and the loss of the 1200 jobs there is now a real possibility, following the announcement that the government have decided not to award the yard a £200 million contract from the Ministry of Defence to supply 2 Royal Fleet Auxiliary tankers.

Instead, the contract has been won by the VSEL yard in Cumbria, which is owned by GEC Marconi, whose chairman is the former Tory minister, Lord Prior! Union officials claim VSEL "deliberately undercut" Kvaerner with a "loss leader" tender, in an attempt to drive the Govan yard out of business.

Unless it wins new orders, Kvaerner will run out of work by March 1998. In preparation for what looks like the inevitable, a planned 500 redundancies are due to begin in May.

Crisis hits further education

The City of Liverpool community college is facing up to 100 redundancies as a result of a £1.6 m budget deficit. This is just the latest in a series of crises to have hit the college directly as a result of the Tories' reform of Further Education.

Even before the latest cuts, the college had suffered a total loss of about £7m in its funding. The result was 210 redundancies. This is part of a widespread crisis in Further Education which has resulted in a 7.6% cut nationally in college budgets.

The re-election of the Tories in 1992 was a disaster for Further Education as almost their first act was to pass the Further and Higher Education Act, a devastating attack on the basis of Further Education as a public service. The Act took colleges out of the control of Local Education Authorities and subjected them to "corporate boards". In the City of Liverpool Community College the board could close a centre of the college in the North East of the city ignoring the objections of the local community.

However, the worst change was subjecting this public service to the "market". The Further Education Funding Council, the quango which funds colleges, makes cuts in colleges using a Funding Methodology. The Funding methodology works by colleges bidding for funds against agreed targets of units. If these targets are not met, cuts of up to 10% are made in the FEFC grant.

This message is clear. The trade unions and students at colleges must unite to campaign against the Tories and to make sure the 'reforms' are withdrawn. The main unions in Further Education, NATFHE and UNISON, have a responsibility to lead a national campaign to defend Further Education. The endemic crisis in Further Education must be tackled by a Labour government. We must abolish the Funding Council and its pernicious funding. Colleges must be run under democratic control by staff, students and local communities. The cuts must be reversed and funding allocated according to local need.

Mike Hogan, Chair Liverpool Community College UNISON



When I decided to come to London to work I knew that it would be very hard. Lots of friends and relatives who were there or had been there, told me about the situation in detail.

But I didn't change my mind because I wanted to go, work hard in order to save some money and build a future in my country for myself and my family. What I didn't expect was that work conditions would be so hard and humiliating. Now I **have 4 jobs, all of them as a cleaner although I am a qualified teacher.**

Every day I get up at 5 in the morning and I work from 6 to 8. The next job is from 10 to 12 or 1, depending on how fast you work. In the afternoon I work from 3.30 to 6 and in the evenings from 7 to 9. I waste 3 hours a day in journeys from one work to another and my average wage is £3.30 per hour. Out of this I have to pay £70 a week to rent my room, where I am living with my daughter who is studying the first course of secondary school. I know it is very expensive but in my situation it is very difficult to find anything better. I have enough unpleasant anecdotes from my work to write a whole book, starting with the shortage of equipment. Many times we have to work without gloves ignoring warnings like "irritant, prevent contact with skin..." that we read on the labels of cleaning products. The plastic bags, although a basic product in our job, are usually in shortage, so we have to take the rubbish from one bag to another to save bags, and this without gloves. We also see how every day the workload increases. Every day we have to clean "one more thing" in the same period of time, and of course we don't see any increase in our wages which remain the same as before. However this is not our main concern. Our fundamental problem is that on numerous occasions, in order to receive our wages, we depend on the boss's goodwill as we are illegal immigrants and if the employer doesn't pay us (not an unusual thing to happen), complaining is quite risky. Therefore, if you suspect that they are not going to pay you, the best thing you can do is forget your money and look for another job. Bosses are another problem. Usually they are very nice and kind because the supervisors are the ones who do the

dirty work. Well, they are kind except when they owe you money, then you can't find them. Two months ago we had a problem with the supervisor in one of my jobs. She was shouting at us like we were animals and she didn't even bring to us the products we needed to clean. She organised a half an hour meeting just to shout at us and humiliate us. After this unfair treatment, the workers had another meeting after work, and we decided to tell the boss (nice and kind) about the situation. We asked him to come to the workplace at 9 o'clock when we have already finished the work. Then we found out the boss's real face as a bourgeois and a businessman that he is. He didn't come at 9 o'clock like we asked him because he knew we would be all together, but at half past eight when every one was working on her own, and he visited every employee individually. He didn't even bother to listen to us, he just shouted, "who do you think you are?! You haven't got a union. You aren't members of a trade union and you haven't got the right to join one. You are not allowed to hold meetings before, during or after work and if you have a problem you have to tell me individually (he underlined very much the word individually) and if you personally (he said pointing to our spokesperson) have a problem you don't need to tell me anything, just leave."

by an 'illegal' worker



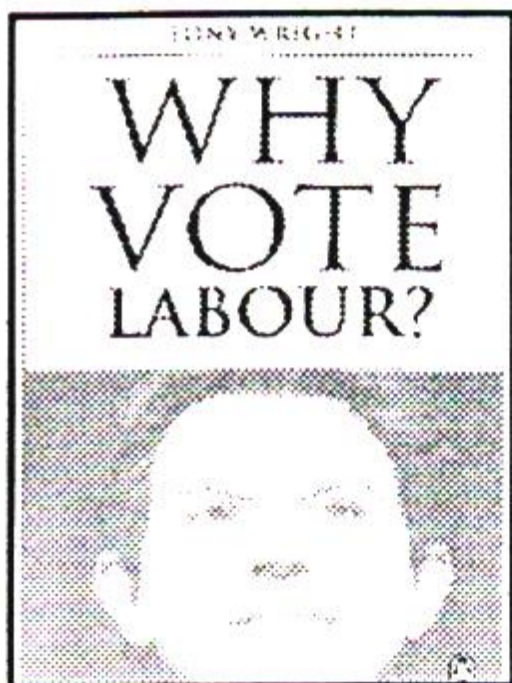
reviews



Why vote?

The imminent arrival of a general election always brings on to the scene a plethora of political guides and summaries intended to help advise the voters in the run up to the fateful day. In the lead up to Mayday, this election will be no different.

Penguin Books have weighed in straight away with three companion booklets, each written by a "prominent politician" seeking to justify a vote for their party. William Wallace has the best job since no-one cares what a Lib-Dem government would do since it will never happen. Willetts' book on the benefits of the Tories sticks to the Central Office line in presenting a picture of the country which will not be recognised by anyone in the real world. Apparently, Britain is an "old country", of "traders and developers, entrepreneurs and speculators, freebooters and buccaneers." He somehow neglects to take up the question of sleaze, not surprising given his own involvement over the issue of "dissembling". Wright's book on Labour naturally has the advantage of having the worst government in living



memory to attack but he fails somewhat when he tries to justify the Blair "reforms" of the party. He may think that the Blairite line represents some new vision of politics but in coming up with the concept of humane capitalism (the stakeholder economy) we are back with a limited version of the old right wing ideas of Gaitskill, Crossland et al.

Wright is also stuck in the mire of having to ape the line of the Labour leaders and promise as little as possible. The same problem affects Layard's book which, although it is intended to represent the author's views only, comes with an introduction by Gordon Brown describing it as "a clarion call for change." The book has a mass of facts, charts etc on the economy and society which activists will find useful particularly in view of the Tories' habit of using facts in a most selective way. However, as with Wright's book on Labour, Layard is reduced to relying on the "good" employers and a push on training skills to see the Labour government through, linked to a lot of talk about managing the economy better than the Tories. Any hint that the capitalist system might decide not to play ball with a Labour government and instead continue to work in their own interests for profit is simply not entertained by the author. He is right to castigate the mood of self interest which is prevalent under the current government and like Wright pours scorn on Thatcher's statement of 1991 that "It's our job to glory in inequality". However it is socialist policies which will provide a real way forward for Labour once elected on May 1st.

'Why Vote Labour?' Tony Wright
'Why Vote Conservative?' David Willetts
'Why Vote Liberal Democrat?' William Wallace
(Penguin, £3.99 each)
'What Labour Can Do' Richard Layard (Warner, £6.99)

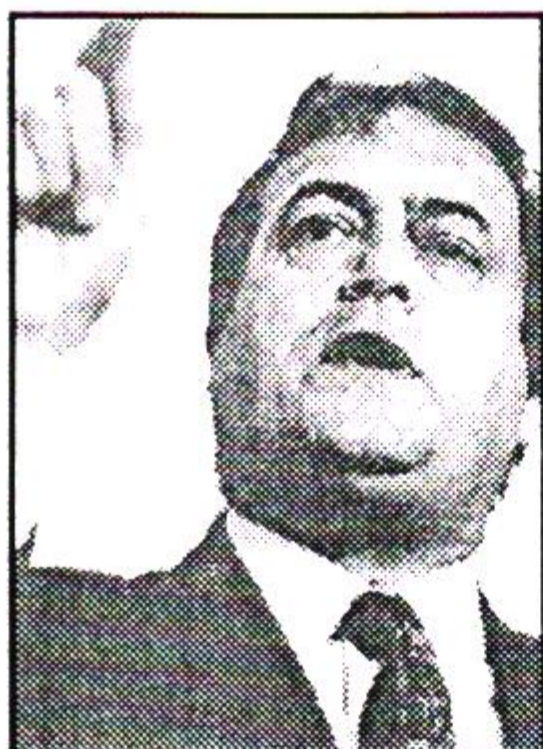
Fighting talk!

This biography is an anecdotal account of John Prescott's life, if somewhat lightweight politically. Prescott was born in Prestatyn in 1938. His parents being strong trade unionists. His socialism came from his grandfather, a miner at Black Park Colliery, who was a union official and a member of the fledgling Labour Party.

Part one of the book details the rise of the 'pragmatic Prescott,' the fight to democratise the NUS, and the seamen's strikes in the 1960's. Here the author attempts to show Prescott's moderniser credentials for calling for secret ballots in the union! Through these experiences plus early set backs when young, such as the stigma of failing his 11+, he became the MP for Hull East in 1970.

Part two is the most interesting as it deals with OMOV and subsequent events. This deals with Prescott's infamous speech at the '93 conference, when John Smith threatened to resign if he lost the vote on OMOV. "Prescott shared Ken Gill's position that the union block vote needed changing but not ending". MSF abstained due to the modernisers in the union delegation who used the argument that the union supported women's quotas which "the conference arrangements committee had cleverly bound the OMOV vote to..."

The death of Smith in May '94 devastated Prescott and brought forward the modernisers in the Party



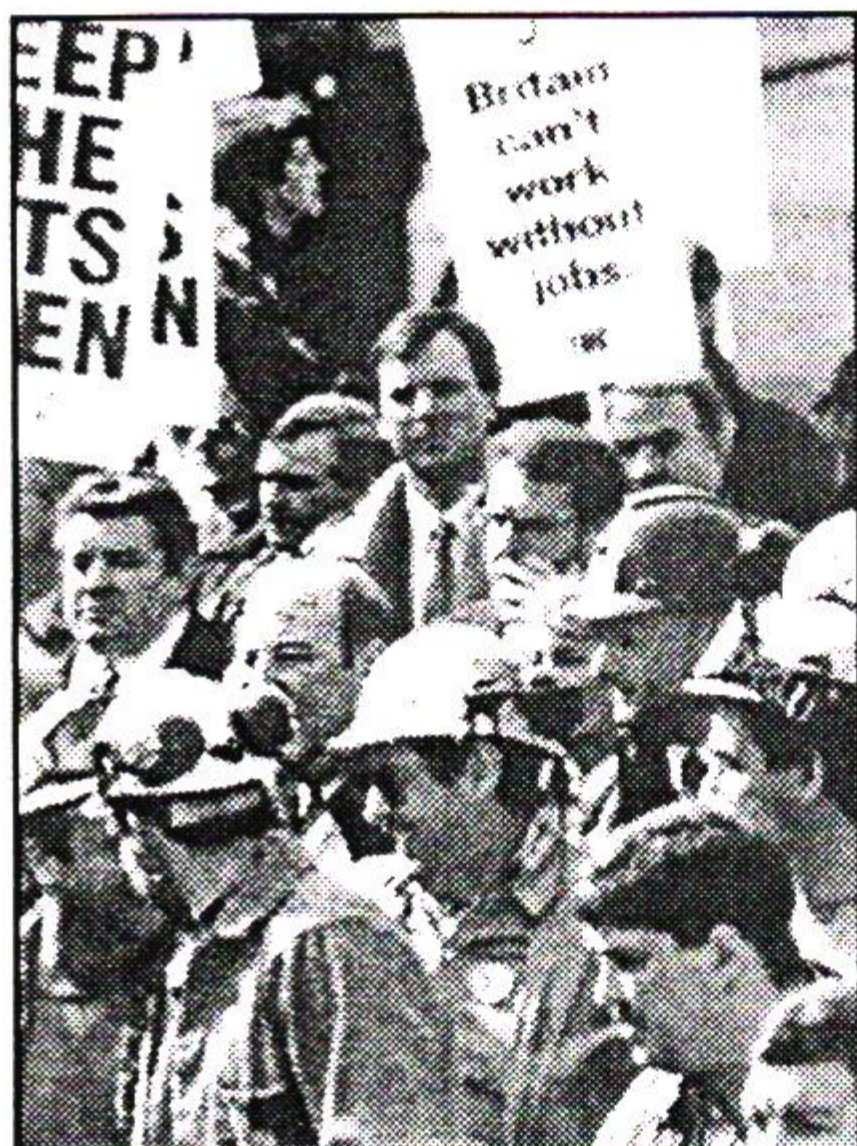
with the election of Blair has leader. At first Prescott was opposed to the abolition of clause 4, but the Blairites understood that to get it through they needed Prescott on board. "Prescott had to be brought in at the earliest opportunity." Prescott could have blocked it at any time, "confirmed one close ally of Blair". Prescott finally agreed on the condition that he could veto the final draft of the new clause 4. The book is quite clear on why the modernisers wanted rid of it. "Ditching old clause 4 was seen as much more than a cosmetic exercise by the modernisers, who were behind the project. More than anything else, this change demonstrates that Labour rejects its past....It finally buried the theoretical support for Marxism...."

What this part of the book exposes are the cracks that are appearing in the shadow cabinet between and amongst the modernisers themselves and the old right wing of the Party over many issues, for instance the Harman debacle over sending her son to a grammar school. Overall it shows that the unity at the top is like a thin layer of veneer and that the counter revolution in the party is not guaranteed to succeed, particularly once in government.

review by Gary Gabbitas

Fighting talk: the biography of John Prescott by Colin Brown
£15.99 Simon and Schuster

Miners and the Labour government



Nigel Pearce, a member of the National Executive Committee of the NUM and a Labour councillor in Wakefield, spoke to Socialist Appeal.

Are you looking forward to the General Election?

Yes. It's going to be a watershed in British politics. After 18 years of attack after attack the Tories' reign of terror is finally coming to an end. A chapter in the history books, a bad chapter for the working class, is being closed. Of course all the problems remain, but now there is the feeling that we can do something about it. We are approaching a new millennium. A few years ago new technology, computers and so on, seemed to open up a wonderful future, with shorter working hours and early retirement. Instead millions live not a life of leisure, but an existence of enforced idleness on the dole. New technology has been used not to improve our lives, but to maximise profits. But it's dawning on people now that they've sold off the family silver, the bosses of the privatised companies have reaped super profits, while on the other hand the Tories are saying they can't afford pensions. What kind of society is it that can't even afford to feed and clothe people who've retired after a lifetime of work contributing to our economy? That's one reason why the Tories are going to be booted out.

Miners must be especially keen to see the back of the Tories, what's the mood like in your pit?

The first thing to say is that there will be a tremendous feeling of relief when Labour win the election. The Tories have destroyed hundreds of thousands of jobs not just in mining, in all sectors of manufacturing. The best young people can hope for is a Mac job, what sort of future is that? There is tremendous support for Labour, the hope is there that they can develop a policy for energy which could rescue our industry, and in general create jobs for our young people. At the same time the enthusiasm for Labour is tempered by a distrust of the leadership. The big issue at the moment is Brown's pledge to stick to Tory spending targets. There may not be any criticism of the Labour leadership reported in the press at the moment, but it is there. Today our priority is to get rid of the Tories, and that has been abused by the party leadership to drive through undemocratic and pro-capitalist policies. But the gags will be removed once Labour's in power. First we'll deal with the Tories, then we'll sort out the Labour Party.

“Scientifically and democratically planning the economy is the only answer. The Labour government shouldn't try to tinker with capitalism, it should ditch it, take over the commanding heights of the economy, and begin to raise people's horizons.”

In what ways are things different now that you're working in pits which are privately owned?

In reality we haven't seen any difference after privatisation, because all the attacks were carried out in advance. The ground was prepared before the industry was privatised so that the new owners would reap the benefits. We have achieved record levels of production, like many other industries, which show the potential for industry to meet the needs of the whole of society if it wasn't for private ownership which only produces for profit.

We've also noticed a big reduction in the amount of management since privatisation, if only we could get rid of those who are left and run the pits ourselves we would be able to produce to meet people's needs.

The people who've really suffered from privatisation are those who have lost their jobs, and even seen their whole communities destroyed.

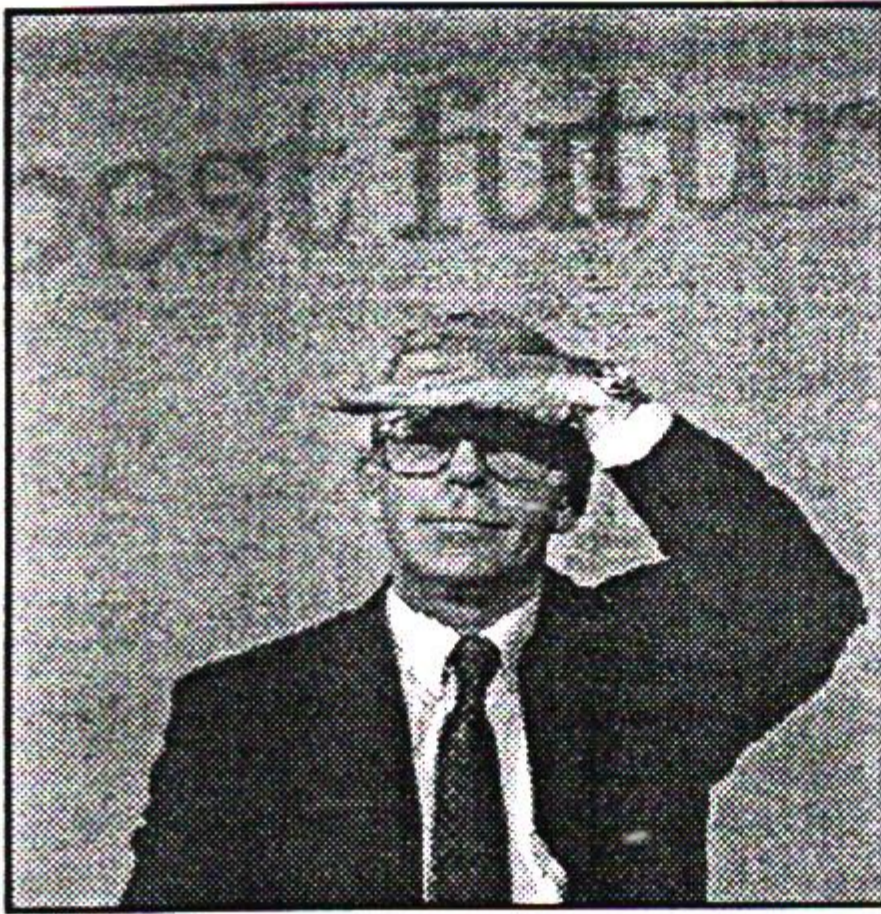
Is the NUM in a strong position today?

Certainly, we still produce a third of the country's energy needs. Our confidence in our strength has returned, especially over local questions. When it comes to pay and other national issues obviously we have to have national action, but now it's against a private owner who doesn't have the resources to throw at us that the government had in 84-85.

What are you looking for from a Labour government?

For most people, I think unemployment is the biggest issue. Our kids need jobs with decent wages. After 18 years of Tory destruction there are a hell of a lot of jobs need doing, building schools and hospitals, employing miners and engineers. If we're going to solve all the problems in society we will need to use the advances in new technology in the interests of people and not profit. The "free market" can't do that, it created the problem in the first place. Scientifically and democratically planning the economy is the only answer. The Labour government shouldn't try to tinker with capitalism, it should ditch it, take over the commanding heights of the economy, and begin to raise people's horizons. Young people have no hope under this system. Socialism can give them hope. With all the productive capacity we have today, it really would be possible to create a society where a shorter working week and early retirement would mean that in the year 2000 the problems of today would be replaced by the problem of what to do with our leisure time. That is a socialist society. ☆

The decline and fall of the Tory Party



"Conservatives feel that it is contrary to the natural order of things for them to be out of power." (Sir Ian Gilmour)

What a destructive eighteen year record the Tories have - the misery of mass unemployment, the destruction of the NHS and our education system, the privatisation of our water, electricity and gas, the poll tax and the miners' strike. As a result we all feel a burning hatred for the Tory Party and everything it stands for, and will take great pleasure in seeing it smashed in this election.

by Phil Mitchinson

We can start with publishing this obituary notice to Major and co. In this case RIP stands for Rest In Pieces, which may well be the fate of the "natural" party of government after it gets a thrashing at the polls. The Tories are hopelessly divided, and you certainly couldn't rule out an actual split taking place in the wake of electoral defeat. That would indeed be historic. The current divisions in the Tory Party are quite unprecedented. In fact they reflect the splits within the ruling class itself over how best to proceed. Indeed, these splits are not confined to Britain, they are an international phenomenon, repeated across the world. There is an important conclusion to be drawn from this: that it is the crisis of the system, and not just the egos and personalities of Tory leaders, which lies behind these splits. The crisis of the system always shakes the tops of the trees first.

It is ludicrous to imagine that the Tories are running the system badly on purpose. They have acted loyally in the best interests of the bosses for the last 18 years. Capitalism is, after all, the bosses system. It can't be run in the interests of ordinary working people. To imagine that it can is really the height of utopian fantasy. The Labour Party wasn't built to manage capitalism better than the Tories, it was built to dismantle it. That their last big idea should be to abolish state pensions demonstrates that the question of retirement is uppermost in the Tories' minds at present. Unlike the majority of us however, those Tory MPs about to be "retired" have no pension worries, with seats on the boards of banks, insurance companies and the privatised companies awaiting them. This represents the pay off for years of loyal service.

During those years, as we know, the Tories have broken many records: record unem-

ployment, record levels of poverty and homelessness, record crime levels. They've also broken some records of which they may be less proud. The level of corruption, sleaze and scandal surrounding this government is unheard of. From Cecil Parkinson to Tim Yeo; from Westminster Council's homes for votes to Teresa Gorman's property dealings; from arms to Iraq to BSE and now the abattoir scandal, this government holds all the records. Not that in the past they were all honest men and true, no doubt the same intrigues and dirty dealings have always gone on, but they've been more successfully covered up.

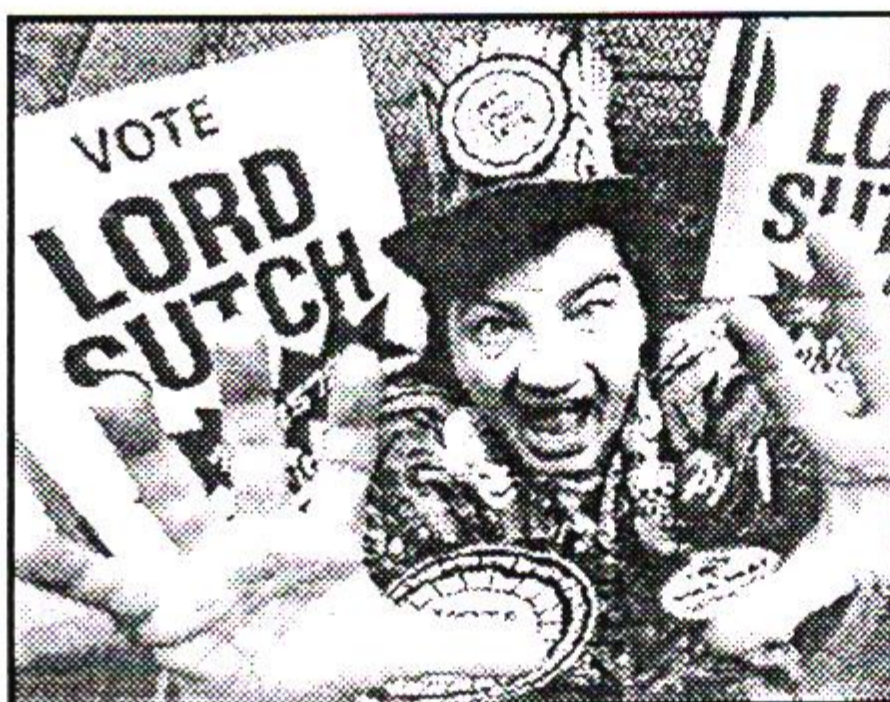
Today, however, the Tories are split to an unparalleled degree; they're at each others throats. We've seen Major condemn "the bastards" in his own cabinet. Describing the right wing of his party he is reported as saying that he would like to "f***ing crucify them." In November 1994, 8 Tory MPs had the whip withdrawn, which is also without precedent. No other party leader has ever had to endure one quarter of their parliamentary candidates issuing private manifestos with conflicting policies on the economy and on Europe. Ted Heath has announced that he supports the idea of a minimum wage, and signing up to the European social chapter, while Lord Tebbit in a recent issue of the Spectator launched into a vitriolic attack on Michael Heseltine. Four MPs have defected, one to Labour, two to the Liberals and now one to the Referendum Party. George Gardiner, deselected by his local party, has become another rat to leave the rapidly sinking ship.

Unfortunate

To lose one MP may be considered unfortunate, to lose two seems like carelessness, but four, that's just descending into farce. Condemning Major, he wrote in the Sunday Times (9/3/97) "we have witnessed an abdication of national leadership without parallel in the last 100 years." On the single currency he adds, "Last week we descended into pure pantomime - Widow Twanky Clarke shouting: "Oh, yes we will!" Aladdin Stephen Dorrell shouting: "Oh, no we won't!" This is no way to lead a party, let alone a proud country."

Naturally the Tories have broken all records of unpopularity. This is the most unpopular administration since records began, and Major the most unpopular Prime Minister, even more unpopular than his vile predecessor. The leadership battle to replace him has already begun, with Stephen Dorrell,

Will Tories join the fringe parties?



Tory nightmare scenario?



dubbed "John Major with A levels," flying to the right on Europe assuming, as do his rivals, Portillo, Redwood and Howard, that the Tory Party which emerges from the election will be strongly anti-European, as well as anti-working class.

After the 1992 election Labour edged ahead of the Tories in the polls, but ever since the pound was kicked out of the ERM in September of that year Labour have never been less than 16% ahead in Gallup's monthly poll, reaching a high point of a 30% lead under John Smith. Today Labour remain 18-22% ahead.

The Tories have lost every by-election in this Parliament; in fact they haven't won a by-election since 1989. Does this mean that Labour are guaranteed to win, even guaranteed a landslide? Polls of any kind, even elections themselves, are only a momentary snapshot of opinion. Running a number of these snapshots one after the other, however, can provide us with a moving picture giving us more detail than the still photo. To lead by such a margin for over four years illustrates a deeper process at work in society. In 1992 we explained that the Tory victory was in part due to the triumph of hope over reason, the belief that once the recession was over it would be possible to go back to the "good old days," especially in the absence of an inspiring vision from the Labour leadership. Reality has turned out to be different. The polls represent one indication of consciousness beginning to catch up with this reality.

The Tories seem resigned to defeat. Each new clanger they drop raises the question, are they trying to lose on purpose? Given the state of the economy, and the mess which the next government will inherit, to duck out now would be understandable. However the truth is that the Tories aren't trying to lose, they are just incapable of winning.

Flush

George Gardiner, speaking on the BBC's On The Record (9/3/97) said, "John Major might think they are going to win, but he's about the only one."

Tory seats are going to go down the pan with an almighty flush when the election comes." They are desperately hoping, like Dickens' Mr. Micawber, that "something will turn up." One Tory MP is quoted by the Sunday Times (16/2/97) as saying that "the law of averages means the longer we wait the greater the chance of a Labour wobble." Another added that "we hope that the press

will get bored with the notion that we are bound to lose and Blair is bound to win."

They seem to be reduced to relying on Major's image as a nice man. A long time fan of Stanley Baldwin, Major is relying on the same electoral slogan as his hero, "Safety First." However Major is even less popular than Thatcher. Baldwin too, as Prime Minister during the 1926 General Strike, was a deeply unpopular man. The example of Baldwin's 1929 election campaign is a good one for the Tories, they lost then too.

In a desperate last ditch effort Andrew Lloyd Webber, who has duly been made a Lord for his thirty years support for the Tories, and the recent donation of a vintage Bentley for fundraising purposes, has announced that he will leave the country if Labour win. One more reason, if more were needed, to vote Labour.

So Labour are odds on to win. The swing of 17% in the Wirral South by-election would give Labour a 230 seat majority in the House of Commons. That may be "just a bit of fun" as Newsnight's Peter Snow puts it, but nonetheless a landslide is entirely possible. The inspiration of a programme of socialist policies would guarantee it. For example, there are 400,000 more 18-24 year olds registered to vote in this election than in 1992. In this age group, according to a poll reported in the Independent on Sunday (2/3/97) 59% support Labour; in the 25-34 age bracket 52% say they back Labour. A programme that promised free education on a living grant, proper training with guaranteed jobs at the end, and a national minimum wage of at least half the average, could not only inspire these young people to go out and vote, but also to join the party and go out campaigning to get rid of the Tories.

We have the opportunity to break some more records here. A record Labour victory, and a record Tory defeat. With the election on May 1st, what better way could there be of celebrating May Day.

Labour's biggest victory to date came at the end of the war. In 1945 Labour gained 179 seats from the Tories, winning 392 seats,

up from 154 in the 1935 election.

The Tories, worst defeat came in the 1906 election. In 1900 the Tories had secured 402 seats. In 1906 they were reduced to 157. In the wake of the Taff Vale dispute, Labour's representation went from 2 MPs to 30.

There is a more recent precedent for such a wipeout: the Canadian elections of 1993. The 1988 election gave the ruling Progressive Conservative Party 170 seats. The '93 vote saw them collapse to just 2 MPs. Peter Snow's analysis of the Wirral South election may be just a bit of fun, but with a real campaign based on a programme of socialist policies a landslide could be won. In the absence of such a campaign however, the Tories could well manage a certain recovery, but surely not enough to win.

Devastation

After 18 years of Tory devastation there will be enormous expectations riding on a Labour government. In short, we want our government to act as loyally in the interests of our class as the Tories have done for theirs. The labour movement, and all ordinary working people, are desperate for a Labour victory. Not for its own sake, but in order to improve our lives, to rescue the NHS and education, to create jobs and eradicate low pay and the scandal of homelessness, above all to offer some hope for the future to young people, hope which is denied them within the confines of this system. Any failure to deliver will result in a struggle to transform and retransform the party and the unions until they do represent our interests.

Socialist Appeal supporters will be doing their utmost to ensure not only a Labour victory, but a real rout for the Tories. It's no less than they deserve. However that revenge would be bittersweet indeed, if having cleared away the blue rash from the House of Commons, we allowed the diseased system they represent to continue. ☆

Labour must tackle Tory union law legacy



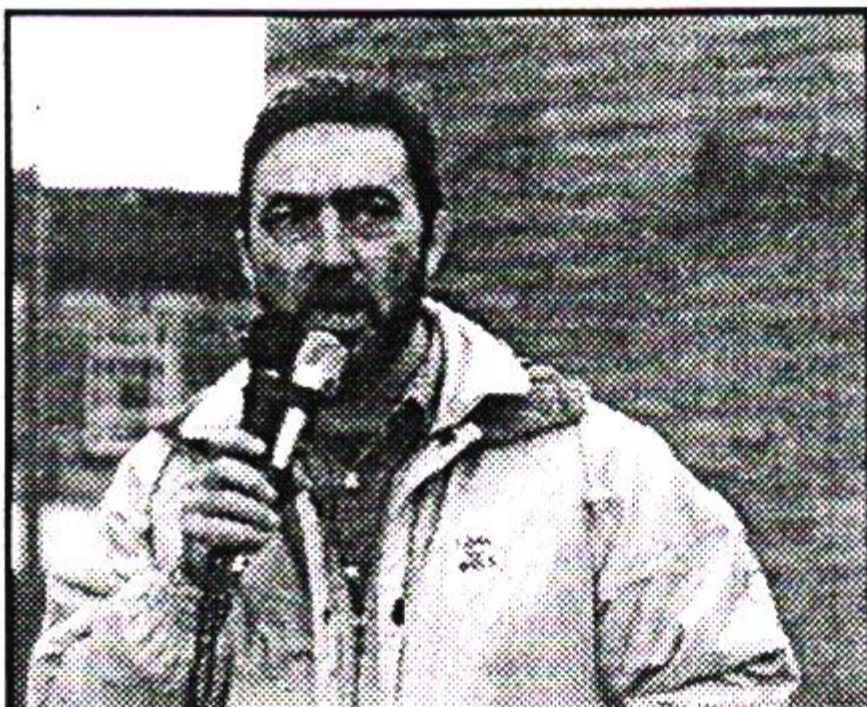
Battle of Orgreave

There are high expectations from workers that a Labour victory in the General Election will result in improvements in their pay and rights at work. What exactly is on offer is less clear. Even experienced trade union activists have great difficulty deciphering Labour's proposed policies.

By Steve Davison

With many leading employers and even Tory politicians backing down on the minimum wage, legislation on this question would appear to be certain. At what level and how it will be enforced are unknown. Labour have consistently said that they support the "Social Chapter" from the European Union, (EU). However this is a very vague policy strategy that is not directly translatable into legislation and again there are '57 varieties' of interpretation. Adoption could lead to legislation on trade union recognition rights, employment protection and rights for part-time workers. What Labour proposes to do is, however, only one side of the equation. The expectation of change from trade unionists will mean, in the absence of clear policy statements, that workers will increasingly put their own interpretation upon what changes they require. If Labour fail to deliver on the issue of employment and trade union rights a stormy period lies ahead with severely strained relationships between trade unions and a Labour government. It looks more and more likely that a Labour Government will attempt a deal with the union leaders by conceding the minimum wage and some employment protection in return for pay restraint and the unions policing their members by restricting industrial action. The struggle to regain trade union rights and win employment protection will begin to open a chasm between militant workers and their officials and rank and file party members and Members of Parliament.

*Steve Davison,
President
Keighley Trades Council*



Trade union immunities

Margaret Thatcher began her assault against the trade unions by claiming that "the unions were above the law". There is of course some truth in this argument. If the trade unions were bound by normal contract law then they could be sued for damages every time they broke a commercial contract. When workers take industrial action in the UK they 'break' their contract

of employment.

Successful industrial action prevents the employer honouring their commercial contract to provide service, components or goods to their customers. This leaves the customer free to sue the supplier for any losses incurred. The supplier's defence is that they are unable to meet the terms of the contract through no fault of their own and the appropriate person(s) to sue are the workers(s). Because the trade union has authorised the action it has legal responsibility for its members. The unions, unlike the individual workers, have funds with which to pay compensation. This was the situation that led to the Taff Vale case against the Railway workers union, the A.S.R.S. in 1900. If a trade union could be sued everytime they broke a commercial contract then they would very quickly be bankrupted. If a trade union is not free to take industrial action then it effectively has no sanctions to apply and therefore cannot function.

This dilemma bedevilled the trade unions throughout the nineteenth century. The matter was effectively resolved in their favour through the Trades Disputes Act 1906. This legislation gave trade unions "immunities" from prosecution if industrial action broke commercial contracts. The strategy of the Tories has been to attempt, by piece-meal measures, to take the legal basis of trade unionism back to the pre-1906 position.

Repeal the anti-union laws

Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Act in 1971 was an attempt to place the unions within a legal straight-jacket that severely narrowed the legal "immunities" enjoyed by trade unions, i.e. by allowing immunity from prosecution only if trade unions registered with the Industrial Relations Court and agreed to its procedures and findings. The I.R.A. was smashed by trade union opposition and the incoming Labour Government of 1974 reverted back to the pre-1970 position, which was in the main the 1906 legislation.

The Tories learned from their mistakes in the 1970's and took a more cautious approach to reversing the legal right for unions to operate freely and lawfully. A whole series of trade union acts have been passed, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1993, as well as supplementary measures that have repealed employment protection, each one building upon the 'opening' creat-

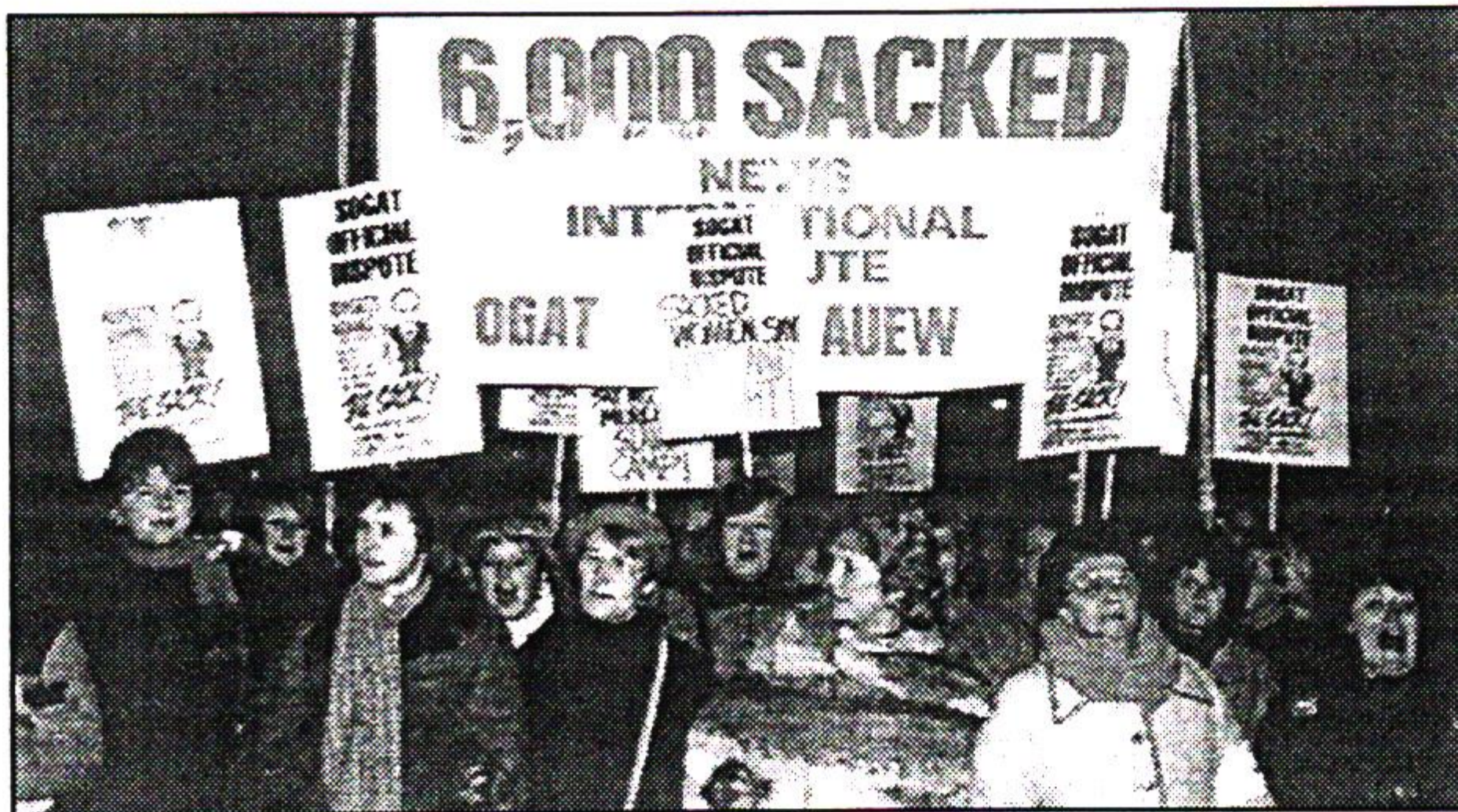
ed by its predecessor.

Step by step the "immunities" have been narrowed so that solidarity action has been outlawed and a 'trade dispute', (the definition of which any action has to meet to remain within the law), can now only be of the most narrow kind. Where there are multi-employer industries it is virtually impossible to conduct lawful industrial action.

The old definition of a trade dispute referred to a "dispute between workers and employers" and "workers and workers". The former definition has been narrowed to a "dispute between workers and their employer". All action in support of workers abroad or of a political nature no longer meets the criteria of a "trade dispute". Without meeting these criteria all industrial action is outside of the law and leaves trade unions open to legal action for damages by employers. The skillfulness of the Tories' strategy was that it would not be the government that would invoke the anti-union laws but would be open to employers to choose to do so. There has been no shortage of volunteers! These are the reasons that all the anti-union laws must be repealed. It is not a question of abolishing this or that piece of legislation, e.g. the closed shop or ballots for elections. The whole legal basis of the rights for trade unions to operate freely, to be above prosecution and to be able to advance the interests of their members, must be regained.

Collective bargaining or legislation?

British workers have the least employment rights of any European country. There is no protective legislation covering wages, maximum working hours, holidays, (paid or otherwise), breaks, of trade union recognition. Such employment protection as exists, such as maternity rights, the right to a redundancy payment and rights against unfair dismissal, are all relatively recent. These rights were inaugurated by the 1974 -79 Labour Government in the context of membership of the EU which has since been the main direction from which employment protection has come. The recent Working Time Directive is the latest example of EU legislation. It follows the Health and Safety Directives, employment protection in the event of transfer, TUPE, and the Collective Redundancies Directive. Further improvements have



been made, particularly in relation to equality laws, as a result of judgments against the UK Government in the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Having given up the fight against the Tory Government the British trade unions have increasingly looked towards Europe for employment protection. Their expectation of a Labour Government at times appears to be no more than the desire to secure the implementation of EU legislation and for a rectification of that legislation that has already been transposed into UK law but not in the spirit or fullest meaning that was intended.

Unions learn to live with anti-union laws

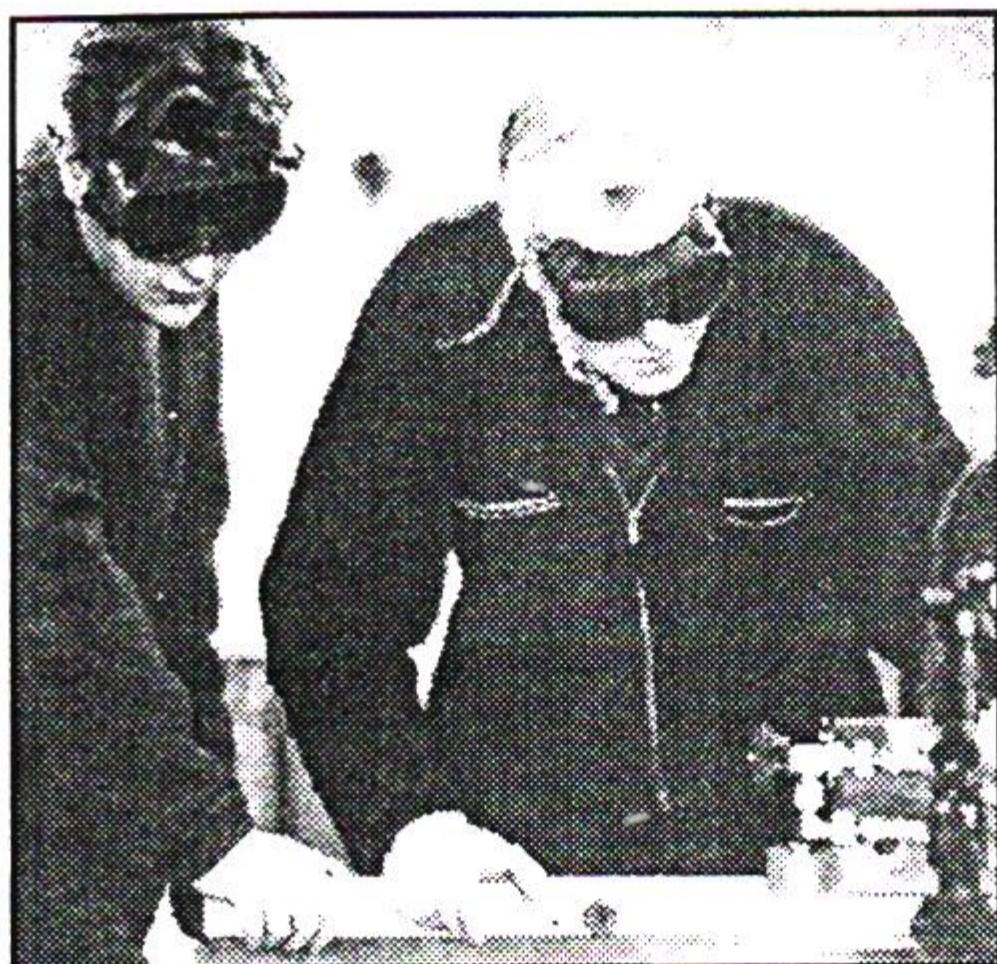
This approach is a dramatic turn from the traditional view that dominated trade union thinking after the Second World War. Right up until the mid-1980's the trade union attitude was to keep the law out of collective bargaining and for trade unions to be the sole determiner of employment contracts for workers. The systematic attack upon the trade unions and the removal of their rights, (immunities), the loss of millions of members and the defeats in the "set-piece" industrial confrontations in the 1980's, have been responsible for this shift. The almost universal support from the TUC affiliated trade unions for the minimum wage marks the weakness that the unions feel rather than an ideological shift from right to left in the movement. There are good reasons for the trade union leaders prevarications on the question of trade union rights and their conversion to employment rights and a legislative approach to workers rights. It is not just a question of "don't rock the boat" before Labour is elected. It is also a question of not rocking the boat for a Labour Government. The trade union leaders have abandoned any desire that they might have had in their youth of achieving socialism. They have accommodated themselves with capitalism and openly talk about "social partners" and class collaboration. They miss the prestige and privileges that they once enjoyed under Labour Governments and will hope to regain

some of this. They have even learned to live with the anti-union laws that allows them to abandon members in struggle as the Liverpool Dockers can testify. However, like all bureaucracies, they need a "base" to ensure their standing and lifestyles. As bureaucrats their number one priority is to secure the repeal of legislation that challenges trade union income from the check-off and forces some of them to periodically stand for election. Their demand for easier trade union recognition is similarly financially motivated as new members mean greater income.

A wholesale repeal of the anti-union laws and changes in the law to prevent dismissal whilst taking industrial action could act as a catalyst to a mighty wave of strike activity, given the pent up anger that workers feel at the present time. Even a partial reform could give the green light to increased industrial action. Britain is on the "upward" curve of increased industrial action.

Students of Labour history will recall that after the introduction of the 1906 Act and following disillusionment with the Liberal Government and the role played by Labour M.P.'s, strikes of revolutionary proportions, led by the Syndicalists, threatened to overthrow capitalism until the outbreak of the Great War cut across developments. Whilst history never repeats itself directly, it is undeniable that workers would be more willing to take action if they lost their fear of dismissal and trade union leaders would have greater problems containing action without the threat of the anti-union laws against their members. With or without the anti-union laws there will be an upsurge of strike activity in Britain. If these laws remain on the statute book workers will begin to confront a Labour Government. They will begin to question the role and purpose of both the trade unions and Labour and begin to draw conclusions. Many will become disillusioned but other will see the need for militant trade unions and a socialist Labour party. The issue of employment rights and trade union rights will not be a secondary question in the struggles ahead. ☆

Labour's five pledges: will they make a difference?

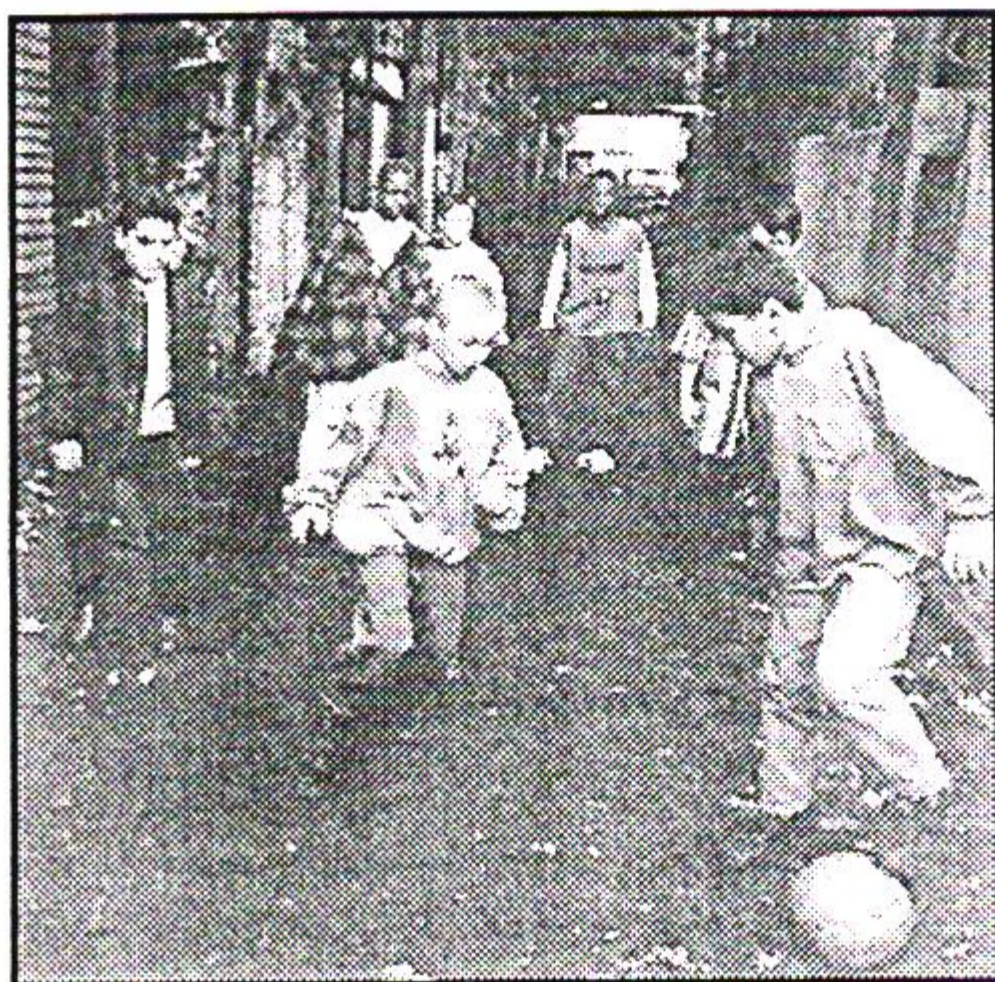


get 250,000 under-25 year olds off benefit and into work

Labour's plan to get a quarter of a million under 25 year olds off benefit and into work is a move in the right direction. We all want to get young people off benefit, but this positive measure alone is not enough.

Tony Blair has recently stated that the young unemployed who turn down a place on a training scheme would forfeit their right to benefit—in other words workfare via the back door. Dead end training schemes are not the answer to youth unemployment—Labour needs to make a commitment to providing youth with real jobs and the real future. The working conditions should be decent and they should have a minimum wage of at least £4.26 an hour.

Labour also intends to give employers a £60 tax rebate if they take on people aged under 25 who have been out of work for more than 6 months. The danger is employers will simply use young people as cheap labour, replacing older employees for whom they get no tax breaks. Similarly, Labour plan to give unemployed youth an extra £20 on top of their benefit if they take work within the voluntary sector. If this plan is implemented expect to see a large increase in the number of 'voluntary' organisations and charities working in the private sector! Once again, all this measure will do is undercut properly paid workers. Labour intends to fund these schemes through its wind-fall tax on the privatised utilities. In reality, a one-off tax on these once publicly owned assets is not nearly enough. By bringing these privatised concerns back into common ownership, Labour could utilise these precious resources to fund a real onslaught on youth unemployment. Labour now has a real opportunity to give back to Britain's youth real hope for the future—but to do so will require more than half measures and fine words.



cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year olds

Labour's major pledge on education is to cut class sizes to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year-olds by using money saved from the abolition of the Assisted Places Scheme - the scheme which provides state funding for less wealthy children (usual-

ly middle-class) to go to private schools.

Whilst this is obviously welcome, it is a drop in the ocean after 18 years of Tory education cuts.

A few months ago Tony Blair stated his priority as "education, education, education" - now even the one pledge above is to be delayed for a year because Labour doesn't want to 'disappoint' those children who have been accepted to go onto the Assisted Places Scheme in September.

Any infant teacher could tell you that Labour's pledge of 30 for infant classes (already the maximum admitted by many schools and the maximum

accepted by the NUT before taking action), alongside all the other problems like crumbling schools, lack of funds for resources and classroom support, is a recipe for stressed out teachers and inadequate teaching.

The NUT estimates there are 1.3 million children in classes over 30 in primary and secondary schools, and 18,000 primary children in classes of over 40 - all of these should immediately be cut to 30 maximum with the aim of reduction over time to the figure of 20 which rich children benefit from in private schools. Labour are ducking the one crucial issue affecting the quality of education in Britain -

funding. They cannot solve the current problems in schools without an injection of serious cash to: repair and build new schools; increase staff pay and improve the morale and health of the workforce; provide necessary resources such as books and information technology; recreate lost teaching posts (10,000 lost last year alone!); provide nursery places for all 3 and 4 year olds; fully fund Special Educational Needs; as well as reducing class sizes. Parents and teachers will see Labour's education pledge as one small step on the way to a decent education for all children.

fast track punishment for persistent young offenders

The Tory government has sought time and time again to deny any real responsibility for rising levels of crime. If they can find someone else to blame they will do it. You would think from some of Michael Howard's mumbblings that he and his gang had only just taken office such are their efforts to avoid their self-created image as the party of law and order being tarnished.

Why? the answer is obvious to all but the Tory so-called experts: poverty, poor housing, unemployment, dead end and short term jobs. Under such conditions it is inevitable that sections of youth should find themselves sucked into crime. A

quarter of known offenders are aged 18 or under. Some city estates have become 'no go' areas. Most criminals start with just petty casual crime, but given the "lock 'em away" attitude of Howard and co we have seen more and more people being sent to one sort of prison or another where they are in effect sent down the only road left to them—that of persistent habitual crime. Instead of trying to provide a real future for people, the call is for further punitive action on the one hand and a cutting back of state support on the other. Where governments have done this, say by cutting or withdrawing unemployment benefit after a period of time out of work, then crime levels have risen.

In the US where benefits have been cut and many never existed in the first place, crime levels are high: 2% of all American men are in prison and a further 5% are on probation or parole. In the US, prisons are now seen as a source of profit—they even talk of it as an industry!

Labour should reject the road which has been taken by the Tories. The pledge to set up a fast track punishment system for young offenders does nothing to solve the root problems that create crime.

cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients

Labour's pledge to cut waiting lists is fine as far as it goes, but we also need a commitment to provide a fully comprehensive and fully funded service at the point of use.

This means rejecting the so-called 'internal market' and the creeping privatisation policies of the Tories. The trend towards a two tier health service, where the rich always get the best treatment, must be reversed. The labour movement fought long and hard to establish the health service. The Labour government should be doing a lot more than just cutting red tape, it should be planning big new investment in the NHS. This issue alone would be an election winner.

set tough rules for government spending and borrowing; ensure low inflation; strengthen the economy

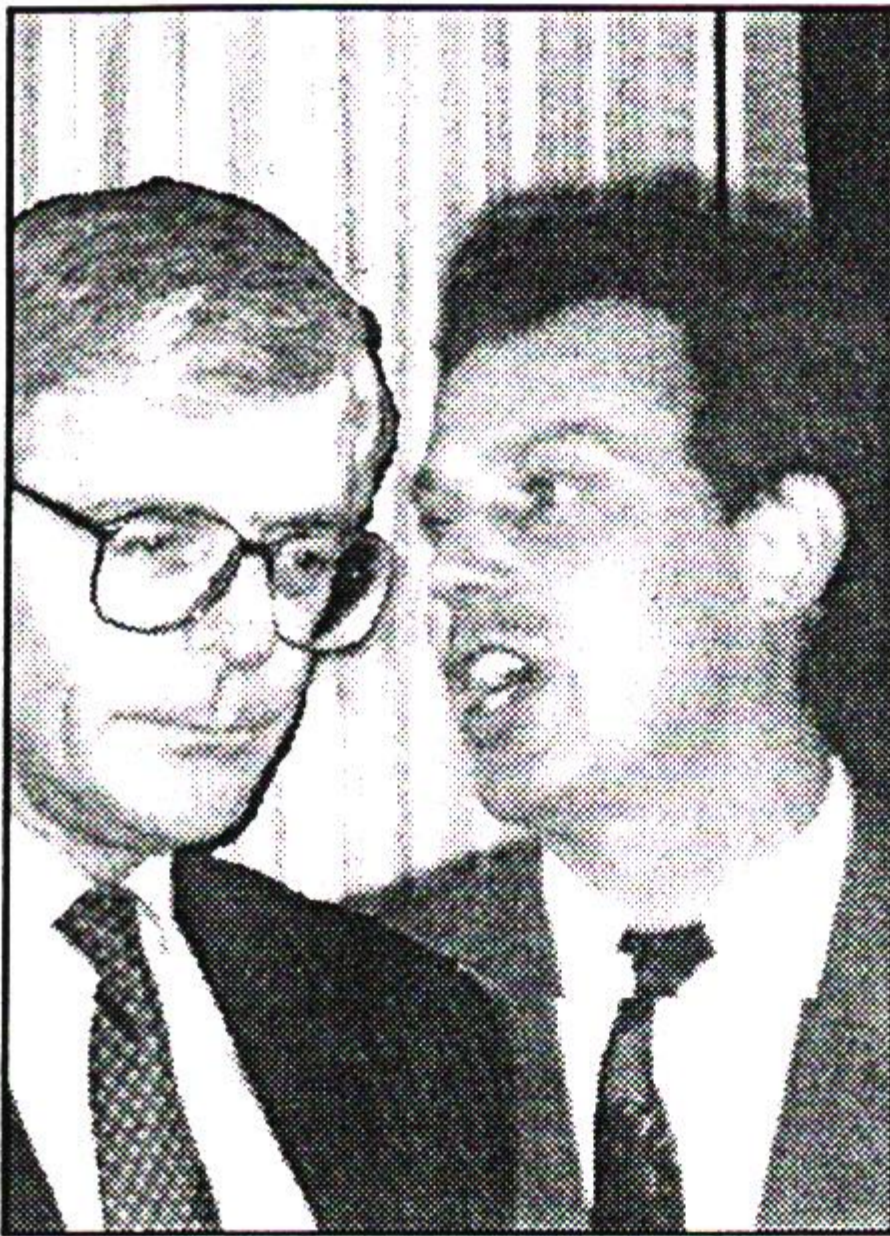
Of all Labour's early pledges, this is probably the worst one. 'Set tough rules' actually means 'set Tory rules,' as Gordon Brown has made clear. For the first two years of a Labour government he has pledged to stick to the Tories' spending and borrowing rules. Wrapping himself in the mantle of Iron Chancellor, Gordon is actually setting out to out-Tory the Tories. For the past five years, government spending has gone up by around 3% a year. Tory plans for the next two years (accepted by Gordon Brown) mean a 'rise' of only one tenth that rate - really an unprecedented fall.

All objective observers agree that these targets are impossible. The words 'time bomb' and 'black hole' are routinely used in the serious papers when discussing the future of the government finances. The National

Institute of Economic and Social Research reckons they require a cut in public spending or rise in tax of £14 billions. The director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies, Andrew Dilnot, comments, "If (these spending cuts) are met, there will be dramatic cuts in public services. If they are not met, the public finances will be in severely bad shape. Either way, the consequences are stark." So Gordon Brown is promising cuts in the health service, cuts in education, and cuts in help for the poor, because that is what the rich want. But they are not the ones turning to Labour. The mass revulsion against eighteen years of the Tories has produced a conversion to Tory vote-losing ideas by the Labour leaders. Labour also promises 'to aim for high and stable employment' (why not full employment?) How do they propose to achieve that - by following the policies of the Tories, the party

of mass unemployment? Labour also pledges to 'ensure low inflation.' Of course everybody's against inflation. But how does Labour intend to keep it down? It seems by spending less money than the Tories. Maybe Blair and the others are trying to dampen down expectations of a future Labour government. But people are not deserting in droves to Labour because they want more of the same. Right wing Labour remains committed to the capitalist system - nothing new here. Expectations have been aroused. If the democratic right to vote means anything at all, it means that you can vote for a change. That is what we all want - and that is why the Labour leaders will be faced with a pressure to tear up their commitment to Tory policies and go for socialist change.

Britain in crisis: the case for socialist policies



Election '97

The 18 years of Tory rule have been nothing short of a nightmare for working class people. Millions of workers—40% of the workforce since 1992—have experienced periods of unemployment, while those in work have faced a new regime of speed-ups, short-term contracts, part-time working, insecurity and ever increasing pressure. Absenteeism from work for stress has reached epidemic proportions. Young people have little if any future in Tory Britain. No wonder millions are looking eagerly towards the prospect of a Labour government to solve their problems.

by Rob Sewell

There have been colossal changes since the last time Labour came to power on 4th March 1974. As in the 1930s, mass unemployment has become a permanent feature of life. Education is in crisis. The National Health Service is facing break-down. Now we are told that we cannot afford the welfare state. Local authority finances are in a critical state, resulting in huge cuts and compulsory redundancies up and down the country. The Tories, if reelected, are proposing to privatise pensions—handing responsibility for our future well-being to profit-hungry insurance companies and finance houses. Given the case of the Maxwell pension fund rip-off, there can be little confidence in such 'schemes'.

In the past few decades, rather than things getting better, they have got far worse for working people and their families. But that is not the full picture. According to the United Nations, Britain has become the most unequal country in the Western world, with the gap between rich and poor wider than many African countries, such as Ghana or Ethiopia. The rich of this country have done extremely well under the Tories. The richest one percent have been given tax cuts worth more than £10 billion since 1979. On the other hand, the poorest 10 percent of the population—mainly those on poverty wages, pensioners, unemployed, single parents and the disabled—have seen their real incomes fall. They now have £13 a week on average less to spend than was the case 20 years ago. Incredibly, given the high levels of indirect taxes, the poor pay a bigger slice of their income in taxes than the rich: 39 percent compared with 23 percent.

There are now more than 100,000 millionaires in Britain. A number of these make up the chiefs of the newly privatised utilities.

The latest Inland Revenue figures show, if you leave out property prices, that the richest 1 percent of the population now own 26 percent of the nation's wealth, the richest 5 per cent own 51 per cent, while the bottom 50 percent own just 7 percent. Four million people struggle to survive on just £49 income support a week.

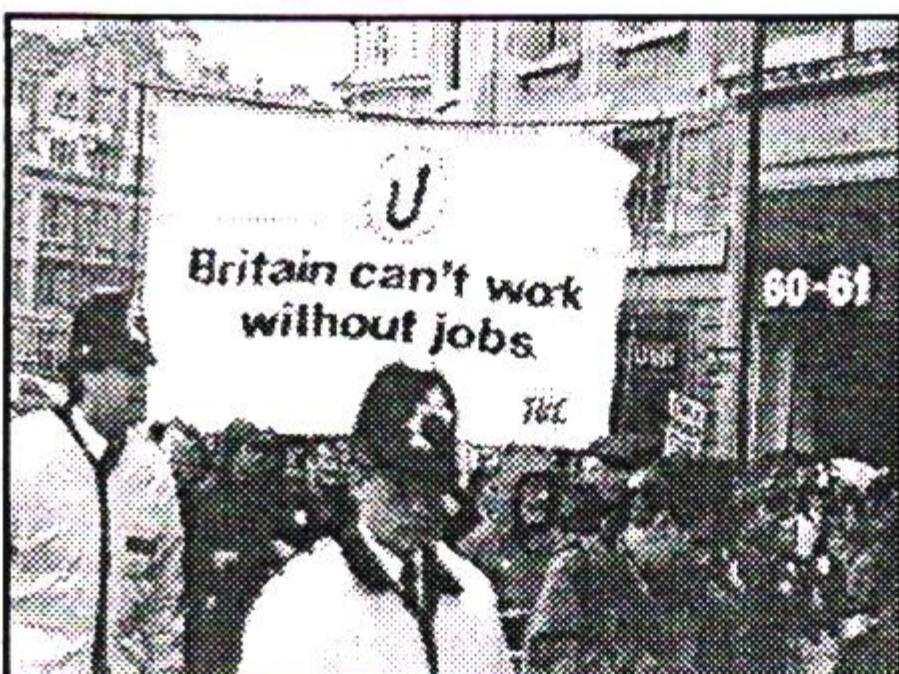
Contrast that with the likes of Mr Andrew Jukes, chief executive of Eversholt, one of the firms servicing the privatised rail franchise companies. He, along with others bought BR assets at knock down prices, sold off by the Tories. After only ONE YEAR, Eversholt sold on the company to Forward Trust for nearly £150 million more than they bought it for. Mr Jukes made £15.9 million profit personally. Other executives, Roger Aylwood and Colin Hapwood netted £11.6 million each, while Peter Harper, who only works one day a week for Eversholt, picked up £2.9 million.

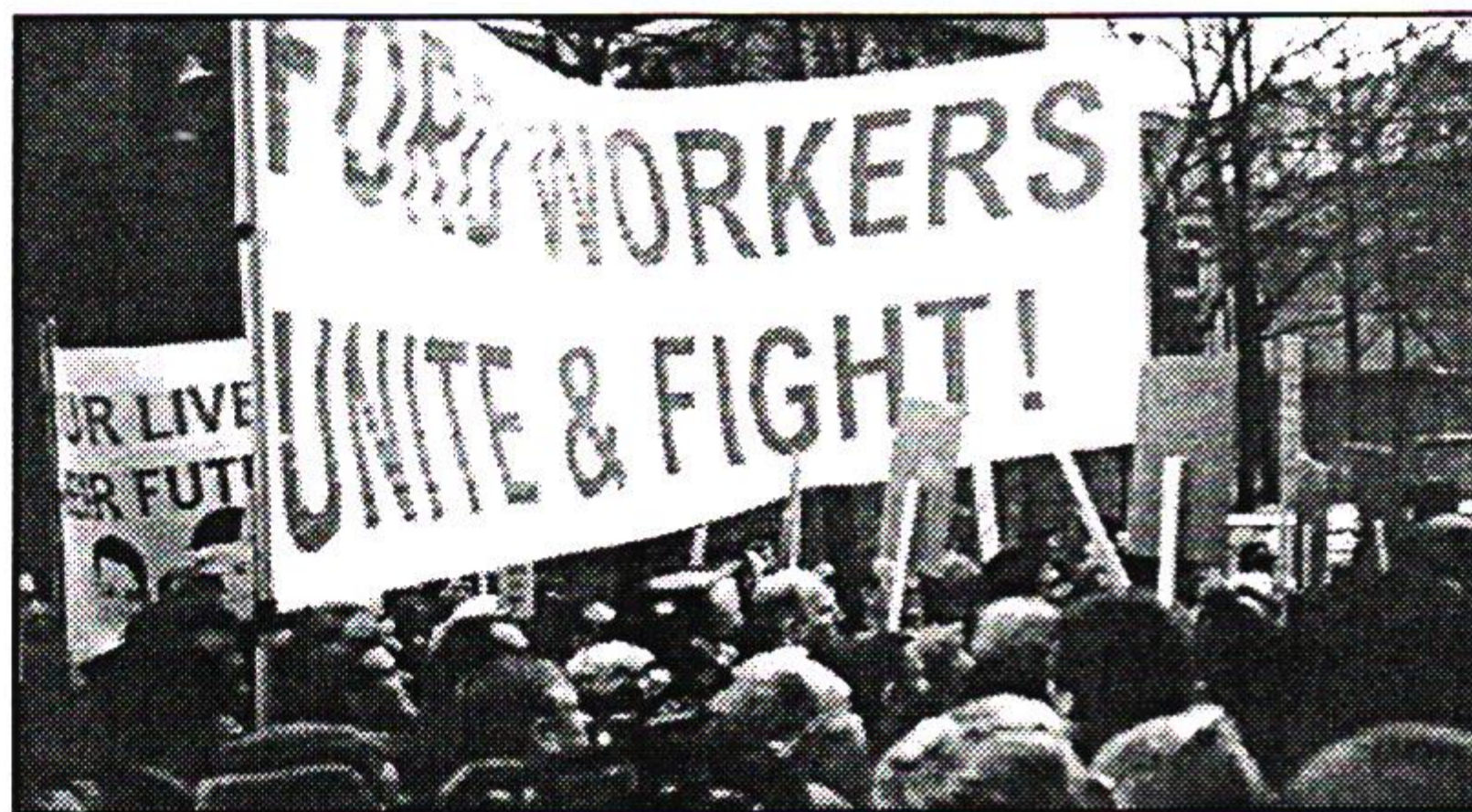
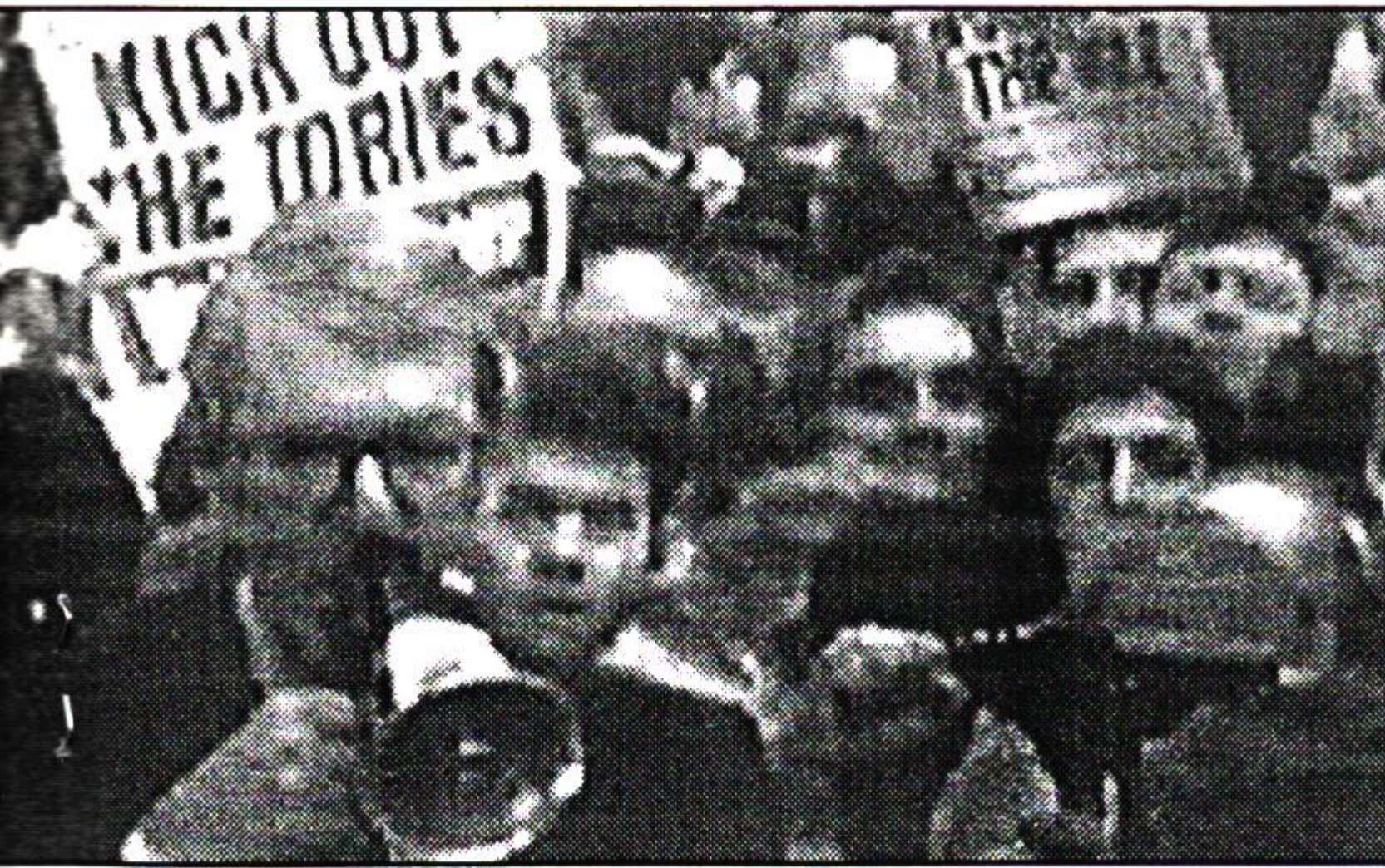
It was only last August that another rail-leasing company, Porterbrook, was sold on to Stagecoach for a cool £825 million, seven months after it was sold by the government for £527 million. Its chief executive, Mr Sandy Anderson, collected a handsome payout of £33 million. Stagecoach, the new owners, hit the headlines last month, as its new company South West Trains, which runs trains into Waterloo, couldn't fulfil its obligations. It discovered that it had sacked so many drivers that it no longer had enough staff to maintain its timetable! The company was forced to cancel 39 trains each day. The privatised rail companies are threatening to sack a further 2,300 workers. According to the pressure group, Save Our Railways, the 25 private franchises could axe up to 40 percent of their workforce over the next two years.

Robbery

Privatisation is legalised robbery. Railtrack (which was hived off from BR in 1994 and floated on the stock market last May) although now in private hands, receives £2 billion a year of public money in subsidies. This is twice the amount that BR was given in 1993-4, the last year before Railtrack was formed. No wonder its profits are booming, and the company now worth more than £3 billion.

The rightwing journal, The Economist, is puzzled by peoples' hostility to privatisation. "Privatisation has been an indisputable success. So why is it unpopular?", it asks. Workers can see that privatisation has been a giant scam, with the nation's assets being





sold off to business sharks at knock-down prices. These new privatised monopolies in their drive for profits have sacked countless numbers of workers. They are ruthless in the pursuit of money. For instance, British Telecom cut off 100,000 customers in one month alone, and electricity companies forced their way into nearly 25,000 homes to cut off the supply. The latest poll, carried out by MORI two years ago, shows that only a fifth of the population want more privatisation, compared with a third who want more nationalisation. Given the huge super profits and salaries of fat cat bosses of the privatised utilities made since then, the hostility against privatisation is much greater today. If, in a nightmare scenario, the Tories win the election, they are proposing to privatise the London Underground and the Post Office. A new Labour government should put an end to this plunder. But they should not simply block future privatisation, or impose a Windfall Tax. They should go much further. All those privatised companies disposed of by the Tories to their rich friends should be brought back into public ownership, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. That is the only real way of ending this day-light robbery. The Tories have cut public spending to the bone, resulting in gross under funding for the health service, education, local authorities, etc. They have destroyed public services by the use of private contractors and tendering, ranging from dust-collection to prisons.

The Tories abolished the Wages Councils in

Around 3 million manufacturing jobs (out of 7 million) have been lost since the Tories came to power. The growth in productivity has been mainly due to the fact that a lot less workers are having to work a lot longer and harder to produce more goods. British workers now work the longest hours in Europe, have the most unsocial hours, the least holidays, and have been stripped of their employment rights and conditions. This is what the bosses call "flexible" working.

1993 to drive down wage levels. Many people have their backs to the wall. "Did you know", asks The Economist, "that the bottom tenth of manual workers earned only 64% of average income in 1991, compared with 68% in 1886?" (11/9/94) Conditions for sections of the population are being pushed back to those of the nineteenth century! According to research from the National Children's Home charity, 1.5 million families in Britain cannot even provide the diet of the Poor Law workhouses. Families on Income Support have an allowance of only £4.15 for a child's weekly diet, which is 30% lower than a 1876 workhouse diet! A new Labour government will face much greater problems than in 1974. Over the last 18 years, the crisis of British capitalism has intensified. Despite all the boasts of John Major about "Britain's booming economy", the truth is a lot different. Once the 'workshop of the world', Britain has suffered a steep decline in comparison to its rivals. One of the key reasons for this is the failure of big business to re-invest the surplus extracted from the labour of the workers into modernising industry. They prefer to rely upon low wages, and have invested their money abroad, where they can make bigger profits. Britain has the lowest investment rate of any of our major competitors. This is due to the short-term, 'quick fix' mentality of big business, which is only interested in swift returns on its investments.

*Investment as percentage of GDP
1980-93*

Japan	29.7
Italy	20.6
W. Germany	20.5
France	20.5
USA	18.2
Britain	17.3

Hence British workers continue to work with less capital at their elbow than workers in other leading countries. Likewise British companies spend in the main less on research and development than their competitors abroad. British capitalism relies upon cheap labour as a means of competition. Thus from 1979 to 1995 growth in manufacturing output was: Britain, 13%; Germany, 29%; Spain, 24%; Italy, 25%; Netherlands, 33%; Sweden, 33%; Japan, 49%; and the USA, 55%. This failure to invest means that Britain now ranks tenth, along with Finland, in the EU in terms of GDP per head as at 1995, the latest year for which reliable data is available. Rather than productive investment, big business is more interested in mergers and takeovers. A record £41 billion of takeovers were completed in 1995. These mergers have ended in asset stripping, cost-cutting, and large-scale redundancies. The latest proposed merger between P&O and Stena ferry fleets is likely to exceed the original 1,000 redundancies the companies announced. Millions of workers have experi-

enced the capitalist policy of 'downsizing', the new term for sackings. Even Stephen Roach of the Morgan Stanley bank, the inventor of the phrase, has been forced to admit workers can be forced too far.

"Tactics of open-ended downsizing and real wage compression are ultimately recipes for industrial extinction."

Those who promoted privatisation, like Thatcher, talked about extending the "property-owning democracy". But this was a pure sham. For example, in 1987 British Gas had 4.4 million shareholders, now it is down to 1.7 million. Not only that, but the small shareholder is totally impotent in face of the big trusts who control the majority of shares. "Popular capitalism" has been shown to be a farce.

Around 3 million manufacturing jobs (out of 7 million) have been lost since the Tories came to power. The growth in productivity has been mainly due to the fact that a lot less workers are having to work a lot longer and harder to produce more goods. British workers now work the longest hours in Europe, have the most unsocial hours, the least holidays, and have been stripped of their employment rights and conditions. This is what the bosses call "flexible" working. But big business is still not satisfied. It is determined to drive down conditions even further, putting the burden of the crisis of British capitalism on to the back of British workers and their families. It is we who are having to pay for the shortsightedness and greed of the bosses. All they are concerned about is their profit margins and their dividends.

Fiddled

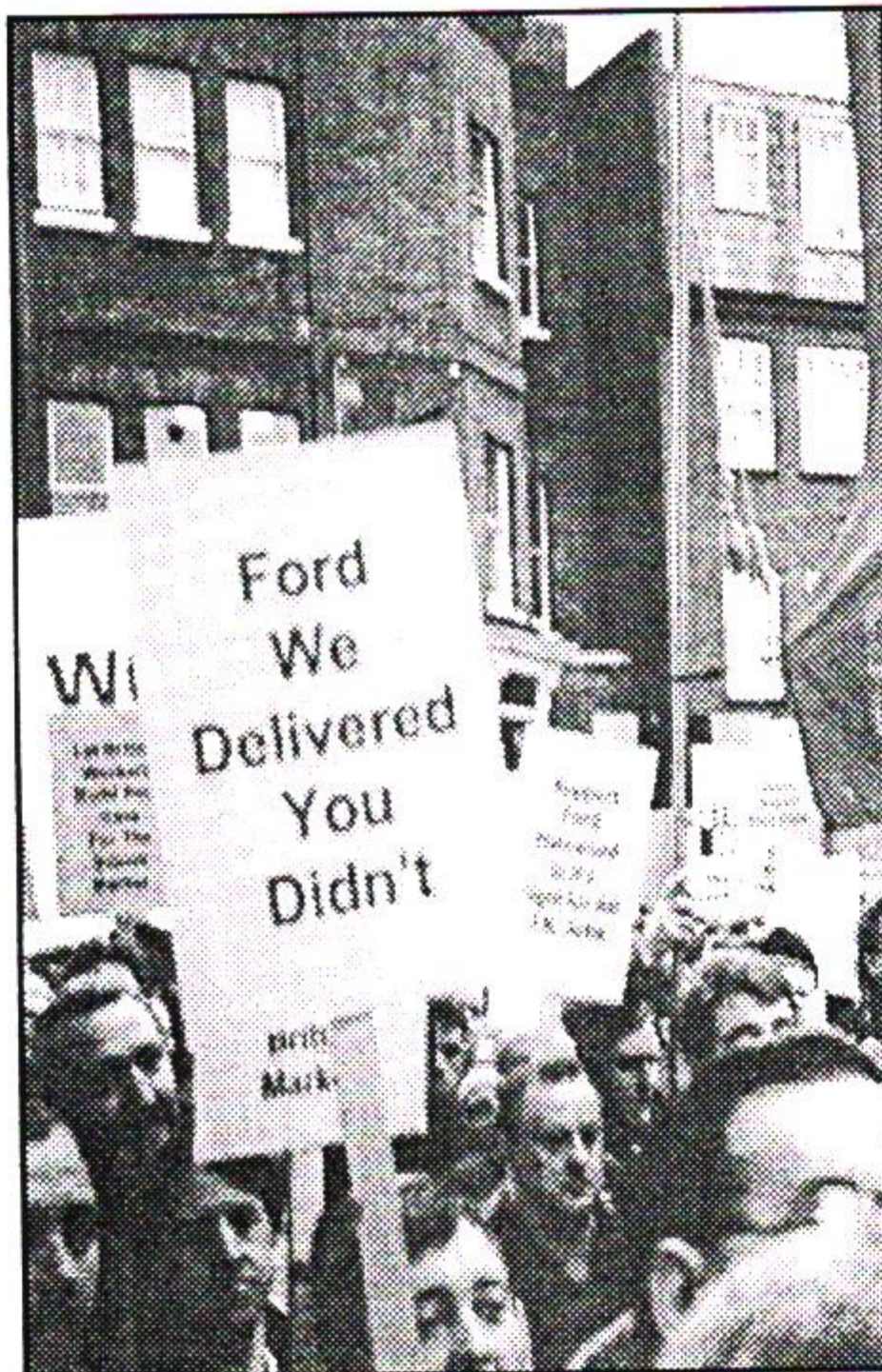
Unemployment is gnawing at the sinews of society. Even in this 'boom', millions are on the dole, despite the figures being fiddled and hundreds of thousands being forced off the register. Even David Hunt, the then Tory government employment secretary, had to admit: *"In addition to the 2.8m unemployment claimants, there are another approximately 2.2m who would like to work if there were jobs for them."*

According to Labour real unemployment today is around 4.5 million. Under the Tories, real unemployment has almost trebled. However, it would be wrong simply to blame Tory policies for this state of affairs. It is not a product of "nasty" people, although the Tories ARE truly "nasty", but arises from the crisis of capitalism itself. Mass unemployment without exception affects all the capitalist countries. In Germany, unemployment now stands at 4.7 million—the highest since January 1933. Real unemployment is around six million, if you add those undergoing retraining. *"When so many people are unemployed it is also a danger for our democracy"*, said Oskar Lafontaine, leader of the SPD. Mass protests against job losses have taken place in Belgium and France. As in the 1930s, capitalism is reaching its limits. The historically high levels of organic unemployment are simply symptoms of this.

We are on the verge of the twenty first century yet large sections of society have been thrown back to the 1930s. The Labour Party was founded by the trade unions to represent the interests of working people in Parliament. Why should ordinary people suffer, while the "captains of industry" live in the lap of luxury? The "market economy" where production is geared to profit and not need, has meant a disaster for working people. On average, British capitalism has only been able to take the economy forward by just over 2% per year. This can never eradicate the mass unemployment which it has created. A new world crisis in the next few years will push unemployment up even higher. It has become endemic to the system. Only through the reorganisation of society on a rational, planned basis can our problems be solved.

We would agree with Gordon Brown, who wrote in 1974, that "vigorous socialist policies" were needed to tackle the "uneven and uncontrolled development of British capitalism." So what has changed? British capitalism is in a far more parlous state than it was more than twenty years ago. The argument of 'Iron Chancellor' Brown today about running capitalism better than the Tories is the road to disaster. All this monetarist language of "sound finance" is to simply repeat the anti-working class policies of the inter-war period. The proposal that public expenditure must be kept down to present (crisis) levels to please the bankers is to tie a Labour government to failed Tory policies. It is these policies that have made the Tory government the most unpopular government this century. We must not go down this path.

We must get rid of the Tories and bring to power a majority Labour government. But we must also learn the lessons of the failures of past Labour governments. We cannot allow the present crisis to be used as an excuse to shelve policies and measures



which are in the interests of the working class. On the contrary, Labour has always been elected to power, not to clear up the mess of the Tories and their system, but to carry through policies that will transform the lives of ordinary people. All attempts to patch up British capitalism must be rejected. To counter the blackmail of big business, mass pressure from the Labour movement must be exerted on the Labour government. In opposition to the demands of the bankers for cuts and austerity, Labour must introduce bold socialist policies.

Only a socialist plan of production can harness the productive potential of society, and create the wealth to solve our problems. Within 24 hours a Labour government could rush through emergency legislation to tackle the crisis in the interests of the working class. The introduction of a 32 hour week could create around 2 million jobs immediately. This should be tied to the introduction of a minimum wage of £200 per week. The retirement age - rather than being increased - should be reduced to 55 years for all. Pensions should also be raised to at least the level of the minimum wage. A massive programme of public works should also be introduced, to build and renovate housing, schools and hospitals, run down by the Tories.

Lost production

According to Richard Layard, of the London School of Economics, if we had no unemployment, *"the Exchequer would be better off by nearly £20 billion a year, through saving on unemployment benefits and collecting taxes. So unemployment 'costs' each income-tax payer something like £1,000 a year."* (What Labour Can Do, London, 1997). When we take into consideration lost production, Layard estimates that the present cost of unemployment to society runs at £60 billion a year. But even this could be an understatement. Another economist, Andrew Glyn, estimated that lost production is around 20 per cent of Britain's GDP. Productivity would rise as well since capacity would be used more efficiently. An increase in production of 25% would certainly be achieved with full employment. Gross domestic production in 1995 was around £604 billion. Full employment would therefore mean additional production worth around £151 billion. Full employment would also save £20 billion from unemployment benefit, etc. In total, this is the equivalent of an extra £56 per week for every man, woman and child in Britain. This could mean:

- 100% increase in pensions
£60 billion
- 200% increase in child benefit
£25 billion
- 100% increase in spending on housing
£11 billion
- 100% increase in spending on education
£36 billion
- 100% increase in NHS spending
£20 billion

As can be seen, if the unemployed were put back to work, we would be able to generate sufficient wealth to increase living standards enormously. So what stands in our way? The system of capitalism only produces for profit, not for need. At the present time, the vast bulk of the resources of this country are in the hands of a rich elite. The wastage and anarchy of capitalism is endured for their benefit alone. If we are to use the productive potential of society to give everyone a decent job, a living wage and a proper roof over their heads - which is very little to ask for - then a Labour government cannot simply tinker with the capitalist system. No amount of pleas or bribes will alter the nature of the system. And workers are sick to death with calls for "sacrifice" to put the country back on its feet. Enough is enough! To solve the problems of working people, a Labour government would have to take emergency measures. You can't plan what you don't control, and you don't control what you don't own. Without question it would have to take over the "commanding heights" of the economy. Only by taking hold of these levers of the economy would it be possible to plan the economy in the interests of the majority of people.

This does not mean taking over every local shop or small business. The British economy is dominated by a small number of companies. In 1959, the election programme of the Labour Party referred to 600 giant firms that controlled two-thirds of the wealth of the country. Through the concentration of capital, these have been reduced considerably. Today, according to figures from the Times 1000 Companies Survey, the top 150 firms own 78% of all productive assets in the UK, and the top 200 firms own 84%. They are the real rulers of Britain. They use their power to dictate policy to elected governments. Even the Labour Party National Executive pointed out in the early Seventies that "the five largest companies in the U.K. now have a combined annual turnover of over £6,000 million; the combined budget of the top 30 firms considerably exceeds that of the National Exchequer." (Labour Economic Strategy document). In other words the top directors of these firms had far more power than the Cabinet itself. It is they who determine the workings of the economy together with the other big monopolies. They are monopolies, not in the sense that each individually dominates the supply of a particular product (though many actually do), but in the sense that as a group they dominate the economy as a whole and practically every sector of it. A socialist plan of production would begin with the nationalisation of these monopolies.

Then there is the finance sector. Far from making the Bank of England "independent", a socialist plan would bring into public ownership the key financial institutions that dominate the credit system. There are around 35 banks and insurance companies that play a crucial role in the economy, it



Just as General Motors or Fords plan their production and investment worldwide, so democratic socialist planning would organise the different branches of industry and the economy. It would be a relatively easy exercise. A Socialist Britain would for the first time involve democratically the mass of the population in decision-making. With computers and other new technologies, the control and running of the economy and the state will become accessible to all.

would be vital to take them over to secure the implementation of plans to expand production and investment. All small savings, pension rights, etc., would be guaranteed by the state. Compensation would only be paid to small shareholders and not those millionaires who have bled these industries. But a nationalised planned economy needs the full involvement of working people at all levels. Instead of the old bureaucratic boards that used to run nationalised industries in the past - we must have in place a system of workers' control and management. A national plan of production would be drawn up at a workplace, industry and national level by committees made up of the workforce, the trade unions and a socialist government. The different sectors of the economy would be dovetailed into the national plan. Just as General Motors or Fords plan their production and investment worldwide, so democratic socialist planning would organise the different branches of industry and the economy. It would be a relatively easy exercise. A Socialist Britain would for the first time involve democratically the mass of the population in decision-making. With computers and other new technologies, the control and running of the economy and the state will become accessible to all. The domination of the almighty and powerful "market" will finally be ended. Production for profit would give way to the production for need. The Socialist transformation of society in Britain would be a beacon to workers internationally.

Over the last 18 years the Tory government has ruthlessly carried out policies in the interests of big business in this country. Thatcher and Major have faithfully done the bidding of their class—the rich and powerful. All their policies have been at the expense of ordinary working people and their families. Now, after this election we must ensure that the boot is on the other foot. We have been waiting long enough for this. Labour must act in the same determined manner as the Tories have done—but this time in our class interests. Our future depends upon it. ☆

Revolution in Albania



The uprising of workers, soldiers, peasants and students in Albania is an inspiration for the working class and youth all over the world. It represents a forceful answer to all those cynics, cowards and sceptics who doubted the revolutionary potential of the working class. After decades of the most terrible oppression—first under Italian fascism, then under German occupation, and then half a century under the world's most vicious Stalinist totalitarian regime—the Albanian workers have shown themselves capable of rising against their oppressors, arms in hand.

by Alan Woods

In this exemplary struggle, we have witnessed the re-emergence of all the classic methods of proletarian revolution—a general strike and an armed insurrection. In scenes which vividly remind us of the 1936 July revolution in Barcelona, men and women, young and old threw themselves into the struggle. Armed only with sticks and knives they assaulted the army barracks and the feared secret police (Shik). It is obvious that rank and file soldiers not only did not resist, but handed their arms over to the people, and in most cases joined them. The same scene was repeated in town after town.

In 1990, the Stalinist regime in Albania collapsed like a pack of cards. In 1991 the ex-Stalinists won the country's first elections, changing their label just four months later to the Socialist Party. The Democratic Party, led by Sali Berisha, won the second elections in March 1992. In April that same year the parliament elected him president.

The Western governments supported Berisha because, despite being a former Stalinist, he was a fervent convert to the "free market". The international bourgeoisie which now throws up its hands in pious horror at the crimes of Berisha, backed him to the hilt. Bourgeois politicians from all the European governments, not to mention the USA, were queuing up to shower compliments on this great "democrat". It also seems that they did not go away empty handed. It has emerged that leading members of the British Conservative Party, enthusiastic backers of Berisha, were rewarded with sumptuous gifts, some of them looted from Albanian museums by "their man in Tirana". But despite all the propaganda, the mass of people were impoverished. The rush towards capitalism led to the collapse of industry and general impoverishment.

The spark which ignited the fire was the bankruptcy of the financial companies which were promising interest rates up to 100 per cent a

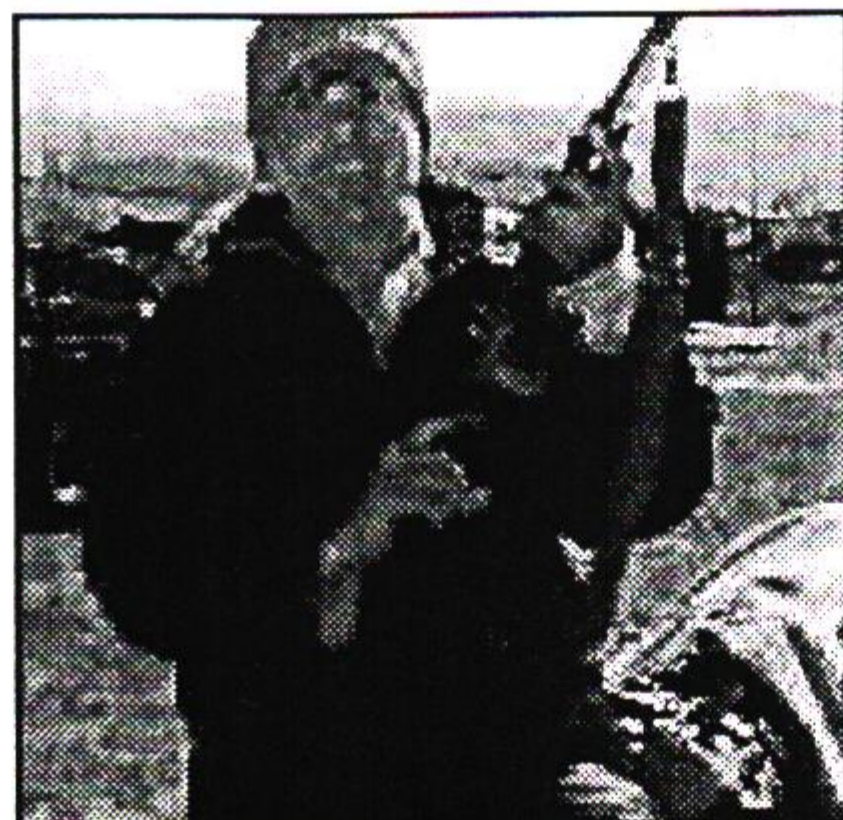
month to people investing their savings. In an act of desperation a large number of humble people invested their limited savings in what happened to be a monstrous fraud. Tens of thousands of Albanians sold all their belongings, including their homes, in order to put their money in the accounts of these fraudsters (over 33 per cent of the population, according to some estimates). They have lost everything. It is clear that the government and Berisha's party were deeply involved in this swindle. Berisha's election slogan—"with me we all win"—became transformed in the popular consciousness to "with me we all get fleeced". After the first bankruptcies were announced Finance Minister, Riouan Bode commented that: "This is capitalism; companies can collapse." When asked would he take any action, he replied that, since the pyramid schemes were "charitable institutions", he had no control over them. These "charitable institutions" have robbed the Albanian people of at least \$2 billion, and made some people fabulously rich in the process.

At the beginning of the Great French Revolution in 1789, there was a famous incident when King Louis asked someone if there had been a riot, and the famous answer came: "No Sire. It is a Revolution." Although the media tried to present the events in Albania as merely the actions of a disorganised rabble, a movement of terrorists and criminals led by local Mafia barons and drug dealers, the images on the TV screens told a different story. What is taking place before our eyes is a Revolution.

Movement

Beginning in Tirana, the movement spreads swiftly through the towns and villages of the South, especially in the port city of Vlore. In all the main squares and markets the news spreads of the fighting in Vlore, which finally exploded. On Saturday, 1st March, when the police tried to oust 42 students on hunger strike from the University in Vlore, they were prevented from doing so by thousands of demonstrators who dispersed the police, some of whom were killed. They burnt down the headquarters of the secret police, assaulted prisons and police stations and distributed arms found there amongst the demonstrators. From Saturday onwards a general strike was declared in the city and in most of the south of the country. The Vlore insurgents, with a remarkable grasp of what was necessary, organised 20 or so cars and went, arms in hand, to rouse the population of the neighbouring cities to revolt. The movement spread through the south like wildfire:

"In Sarande ... some 3,000 demonstrators went round the city without any opposition



brandishing sticks. During the march they burned shops and banks, destroyed six abandoned police cars, assaulted the prison liberating some one hundred prisoners and seized control of the arms. Four hundred Kalashnikov assault rifles are now in the hands of the protesters...

"In Himarar ... hundreds of people took the streets and burned the Council House and the police station. In Gjirokaster there is an all-out general strike. Yesterday the protesters burned down the police station." (El País, Madrid, 2/3/97.)

The Barcelona newspaper *La Vanguardia* (7/3/97) reports: "According to information received from the city on the phone, the rebels had assaulted the city barracks, whose officers did not offer any resistance and joined them with arms. Former officers of the Albanian army had joined the rebels. An officer with the rank of colonel, who vowed no to surrender any arms until president Berisha resigns, declared that 'in the south of Albania, the army has gone over to the side of the people'."

Garrison

An article in *The Times* (10/3/97) described a failed attempt by the government to reinforce the key garrison at Gjirokaster by sending in special élite troops by helicopter: "In the abortive raid on Saturday [8/3/97], three helicopters flew south down the Drinos valley, landing at a military airfield at the edge of Gjirokaster. Up to 60 Special Forces troops disembarked, apparently with the aim of hardening the army's hold on the town and using it as a base from which to attack the nearby rebel strongholds of Delvine and Sarande.

"Their arrival at the town's police station provoked hordes of Albanians to pour into the streets around the building, while other groups surrounded the local barracks, location of the arsenal. The situation grew rapidly out of control as it became apparent that President Berisha's men did not have the support of their police, whom they then threatened with automatic weapons."

The same article confirmed that the rebels were armed not only with small arms but also tanks and heavy weapons:

"As well as tanks, mortars and anti-aircraft guns the base had at least 25 field artillery pieces together with extensive ammunition stocks. All are now under the control of the rebels, whose gunboats patrol the coast, and whose militias dominate virtually the whole of southern Albania."

A very important role in the revolution has been played by the youth. One 14-year-old rebel was quoted by *The Times'* correspon-



dent as saying "When you write, do not say that we are rebels. We are the Albanian people."

Whereas in normal periods, the masses learn only very slowly, in a revolution, the moods of the masses undergo lightning changes. The whole situation can be transformed in 24 hours or less. This can be seen clearly in Albania. For example, if the offer of elections made by Berisha had been made right at the beginning, there would have been no uprising, and the reformist opposition leaders would have had a sufficient margin to show off their parliamentary capabilities, at least for a while. But in the space of one week the entire balance of forces was transformed. Once they had arms in their hands, the masses were able to test their strength against the apparent might of the state apparatus, and saw with incredulity how it crumbled at a touch. They learned by experience the truth of the old French revolutionary verse:

"They only seem so mighty in our eyes
Because we kneel before them. Let us rise!"
According to the Italian paper *Repubblica* (10/3/97) a speaker in Sarande announced: "In the beginning we wanted our money back; now we want much more. We want power." If a conscious leadership existed, it would be a simple matter to unite the movement on the basis of elected committees of workers, peasants, soldiers and youth. The assumption of power could be realised painlessly, without civil war. However, just to destroy the old state is not enough. It is necessary for the working class to develop its own revolutionary organs of power, not just to overcome the resistance of the counter revolution, but also to set about transforming society along socialist lines.

Of course, it is easy to point out the deficiencies of the movement, the lack of a clear programme, the disorganisation and so on. But how could it be otherwise in the absence of a party and a leadership? Maybe the masses do not know exactly what they want. But they know exactly what they do not want, and that is enough to be getting on with. In just a few days they went from petitions to armed uprising, from the demand for reimbursement to "down with the government". They showed tremendous determination from the beginning, and also a mature grasp of politics when they rejected Berisha's offer of an "amnesty". The Albanian state was left suspended in mid-air. Berisha imagined he was moving real forces, when in practice he was

moving phantom armies which melted away at the first real sign of resistance.

The media presents the situation in Albania as "chaos". Of course. For the ruling class, revolution is "chaos" by definition. The masses seek to put an end to an existing "order" which has become intolerable. In the struggle for power, an element of chaos is inevitable. But in the course of the struggle the masses discover the need to get organised. The soviets—broad-based elected committees to direct the struggle—were the expression of this need. In Albania, committees have already begun to appear in the rebel areas, to co-ordinate and direct the struggle, to organise supplies and impose some kind of order.

The Financial Times (12/3/97) reported: "Rebels in southern Albania meanwhile formed a committee for the first time grouping all rebel forces. They rejected the moves in Tirana to form a coalition government, demanding instead that the president resign and that rebel representatives be included in negotiations to set up a new government..." "Rebels in the south, who have seized control of a third of the country, have rejected offers of an amnesty and have refused to lay down their weapons. The fragmented opposition parties in Tirana admit they have little control over the rebels..."

"Mr Genc Pollo, adviser to the president, accused defecting army officers of having more allegiance to the old Communist party that ruled Albania for 47 years. Diplomats pointed out that conscripts were poorly paid and that many had also lost their savings when fraudulent pyramid investment schemes collapsed in January, triggering the mass revolt in the south.

"The rebel leader in Gjirokaster is a retired general, Mr Agim Gozhita, who has organised a defence committee to take weapons from everyone under the age of 18 and stop looting of shops and hospitals."

Insurrection

With the formation of Defence Committees in the south, confirmed by many reports, we see the first attempts to put the insurrection on an organised footing. The exact nature of these committees is not clear from the limited information. From the above extract, it seems that at least in some areas they are composed of the representatives of the political parties, even some dissident members of the Democratic Party. This should not surprise us. The democratic spirit which prevails in

□ Albania

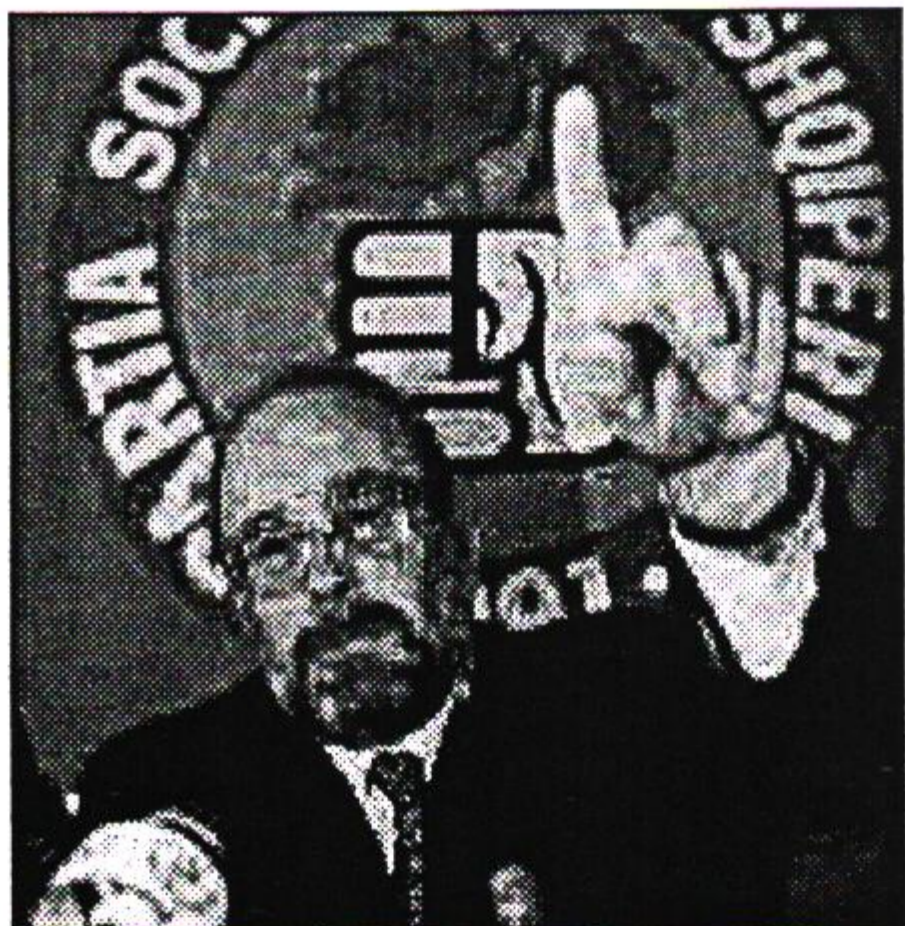
every revolution would encourage the idea that everyone should be allowed a say, with the exception of the most reactionary elements identified with the ruling clique. It should be remembered that in 1917 the bourgeois Cadet Party was represented in the soviets and even got a reasonable number of votes in the early stages.

The press has reported the existence of strike committees have apparently been dissolved into the general Defence Committees. If this is the case (we lack first hand information) it would be a step back. It is better to have elected delegates from workplaces and army barracks rather than committees based on party affiliation alone, which is restrictive by its very nature and not representative of the broad masses, above all in a revolutionary situation.

What will be the future role of these Committees? If a genuine revolutionary leadership existed, the Defence Committees could serve as the starting point for the establishment of real soviets. But no such leadership exists. It is well known that nature abhors a vacuum. In the absence of a genuine revolutionary party, other elements will inevitably come to the fore, old Stalinist leaders purged in recent years, army officers, some with sincere revolutionary intentions, others with Bonapartist ambitions, all kinds of adventurers and local careerists and even more undesirable elements.

Society

Revolution by its very nature stirs up society to the depths. Alongside the workers and peasants there are also lumpenproletarians and even the "dark forces" which exist on the margins of every society, criminal elements who inevitably seek to take advantage of the situation in their own interests. The revolu-



Socialist Party leader, Nano

tion must keep these elements under firm control if it is to succeed. But to imagine that they will not put in an appearance in the early stages is utopian stupidity. The Western media exaggerates precisely this element to blacken the image of the revolution. But so long as the masses are participating actively, the criminal element will be kept firmly in their place. Already the Defence Committees in the south are taking measures, correctly, to introduce order, taking weapons off children and so on.

As we write these lines, reports are coming in that Berisha has fled the country, and that the Socialist Party (SP) leaders are holding discussions on an Italian warship, and are calling for the intervention of "friendly European powers" to restore order. Whether these reports are true or not, it is clear that Berisha is finished. If he does not leave the country, he may end up like Mussolini, on the end of a rope. For their part, the imperialists are looking to the SP leaders to pull the hot chestnuts out of the fire for them. No doubt the latter would be willing to oblige, but is by no means clear that they are in a position to do so. Let us recall that in Hungary in 1956, the "reformist" government of Imre Nagy was in reality suspended in mid-air. It had the power in name only, while real power was in the streets.

Faced with imminent overthrow, the leading clique handed the government over to the SP. However, the first act of the new interim government was to call for foreign military intervention and ask for an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council. *The Independent* (14/3/97) commented ironically: "It may yet go down as one of the shortest-lived governments in history. Yesterday at noon, Bashkim Fino was sworn in as Albania's new prime minister at the head of an emergency all-party administration; but even before his team of ministers had officially taken office, their authority had disintegrated into dust." Geopolitical considerations make it impossible for imperialism to remain with arms folded. Fear of the repercussions in Kosovo and Macedonia, and the general impact of the revolution, will force them to act. They would probably like to use the Greek and may be also the Italian armies in order to crush it ("restore law and order", and of course "humanitarian aid"). The avalanche of propaganda accusing the insurgents of being criminals and Mafiosi, the Greek propaganda about the need to defend the Greek minority in the south of Albania (Epiros) is part of an attempt to psychologically prepare public opinion for a possible military intervention. But how precisely this is going to be done is not at all clear.

The declarations of NATO and all the imperi-

alist governments make it obvious that the prospect of intervention in Albania scares them stiff. The disarray in their ranks creates some amusing situations. NATO spokespersons have stated that, for the time being, there is no point in intervening. In an obviously nervous and confused meeting of EU foreign ministers, the idea was mooted of sending a "small police force" (!). The rebels who have just overturned the Albanian army, navy and airforce, and who possess ample supplies of kalashnikovs, bazookas and anti-aircraft guns, will no doubt be trembling in their shoes at such a prospect! The British foreign minister Malcolm Rifkind, however, thought that even this proposal was too much. He suggested that the intervention be limited to sending "military advisers" to instruct the Tirana government on how to disarm the population!

Impotent

In practice, they are impotent, and they know it. But this situation can change. They will probably wait a while in the hope that the SP leaders will be able to contain the situation. But in the end, they will be forced to go in. However, even military intervention would not be the end of the story. Albania is a classic country for guerrilla warfare. The Albanian people have been fighting foreign occupation for centuries and will not accept submission without a fierce struggle. A guerrilla war in Albania would be bloody and long lasting. It would have enormous consequences for the whole of the area, starting with Greece and Italy.

Can the ex-Stalinist SP leaders control the movement? An interesting article appeared in the Italian paper *Corriere della Sera* (6/3/97) under the headline 'The liberal professor that leads the ex-communists: Government of all the parties'. In it we read: "Sali Berisha had been a Communist all his life. The leader of the ex-Communist opposition has never had a party card of the regime in his pocket and only joined the party a year ago..."

"The Socialist leader is now a respected man in the Western embassies, considered a serious person with whom dialogue is possible. And inside the party there are now many who support his moderate and social democratic positions. Although these have to live side by side with, in a difficult compromise, with layers more linked to the past. "Mejdani admits that he has no direct influence over the rebels, and admits that the situation is out of the control both of the government and the opposition...The organised structures of our party in the South were destroyed, and during the weeks previous to

the revolt nearly all the local secretaries were arrested. We are no longer in a position to co-ordinate our forces..."

A recent report in the *Financial Times* (12/3/97) quoted the words of an opposition leader:

"We political parties are making blah, blah, blah but we are not really representative of the rebels," said Mr Perikly Teta, a former defence minister and leading member of the opposition Democratic Alliance..."

Despite the cowardly policies of the SP leaders, the real power rests with the armed people who, like the French Communards, have "stormed heaven". It is not ruled out that even without a leadership they could take power. But the problem would be what would happen afterwards. In the last few days, it is clear that the regime has crumbled. Tirana is awash with arms. Lorries full of soldiers have broken the curfew, circulating the streets with arms in their hands shouting the slogan "Vlore! Vlore!" The main thrust of all the Western propaganda is the spectre of "chaos" reinforced by the television images of panicky German and Italian citizens clambering aboard military helicopters, in scenes which even bourgeois commentators liken to the evacuation of Saigon at the end of the Vietnam war (a fateful analogy!) Apparently the German helicopters were fired on by unidentified gunmen? Who were they? Which forces would have an interest in provoking an incident which could serve as an excuse for foreign intervention? In law, if one can find a motive for a crime, this can form an important element in the case for the prosecution. The answer is clear. Only the desperate representatives of a dying regime who feel the noose tightening around their necks can have such an interest.

While the Shik provokes the maximum chaos in Tirana, the insurgent forces in the south have put together a unified National Committee for Salvation and Democracy, composed of representatives from Vlore, Sarande, Tepelene, Delvine, Berat and Kucove, that is, all the main towns in the rebel-held areas. It demands the immediate and unconditional resignation of Berisha, a coalition government and elections in the near future. These are demands which can be supported by any democrat. But they fall far short of a coherent programme to solve the burning problems of the Albanian people. Only a democratic socialist programme can do that. That means the radical reconstruction of society, the expropriation of the crooked Mafia capitalists and bankers, the creation of a genuine workers' democracy based on four points:

- 1) Free and democratic elections
- 2) Right of recall of all officials in the state.

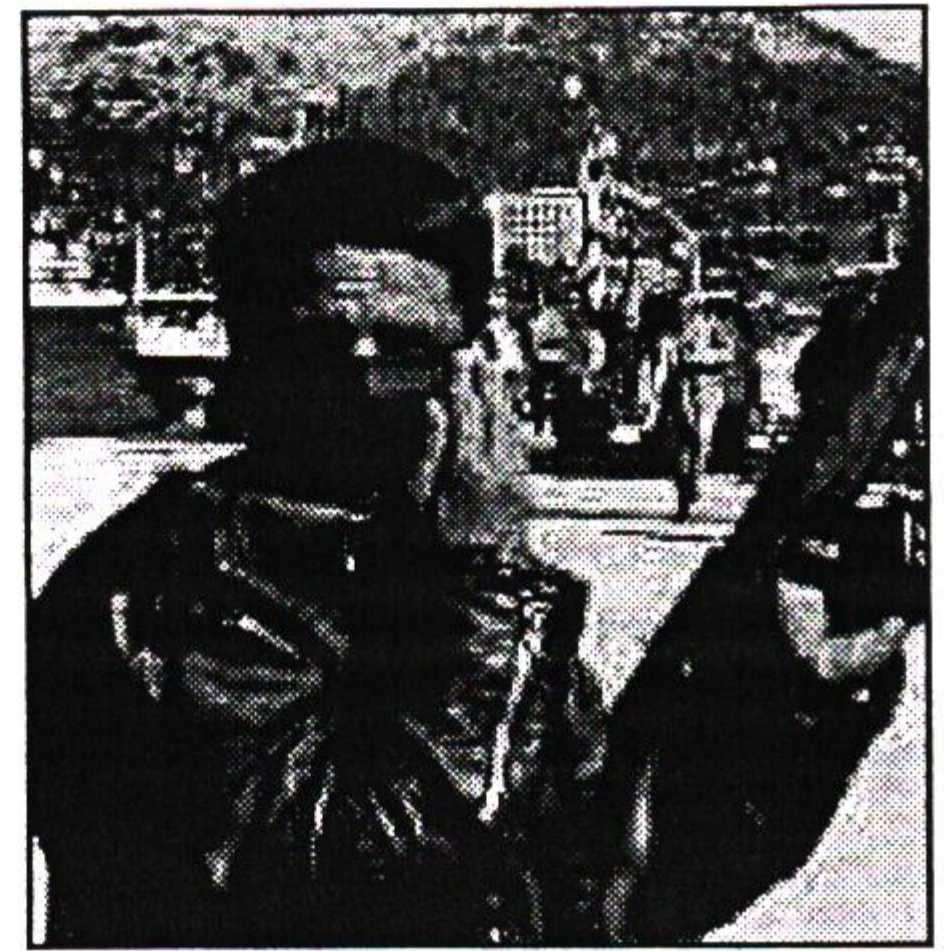
3) No more privileges! No official to receive a higher wage than a skilled worker.

4) Disbandment of Shik and all repressive bodies. No standing army but the armed people!

On a programme of this sort, a start can be made in rebuilding Albania under the democratic control and administration of the working people. The conquest of democratic rights can only lead to a lasting improvement if it goes on to the expropriation of the landlords, bankers and capitalists and the creation of a genuine regime of workers' democracy. To this must be added an internationalist programme to appeal for the support of the oppressed peoples of the rest of the Balkans, raising the central slogan of the Socialist Federation of the Balkans. This is the only way to defeat the threat of intervention and win the militant support and solidarity of the workers of Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Bulgaria. Once power is in the hands of the workers and peasants, it will be possible to work out an amicable settlement to all the old problems that have for so long sown hatred between the peoples and prevented them from living happily together.

Programme

This is the only viable programme for the success of the Albanian revolution. All else is just a mirage. Armed with such a programme, victory is ultimately assured. But here we must strike a note of warning. In the absence of a clear class, revolutionary and internationalist programme, a nightmare can ensue. If the SP leaders were real socialists, of course, there would be no problem. One word would suffice to bring about a peaceful transformation of society. But all the declarations of the SP leaders indicate that they have capitulated to capitalism. On this road lies nothing but disaster for the people. Within a space of time, there would be new crises and convulsions, even bigger than what we have seen to date. Moreover, if the Socialists do not carry out a thorough purge of the state, there will be continuous conspiracies and provocations organised by the supporters of the old regime and the enemies of democracy. True democracy can only be achieved one way—by the working people taking power into their own hands. Unless this happens, the danger of chaos which the bourgeois press constantly harps upon may become a reality. Albania is indeed threatened with terrible chaos—as a result of the crimes of capitalism and imperialism. In order to prevent this from happening, it is necessary to carry the revolution through to the end. No half-way solutions will do.



It is necessary for every thinking worker to meditate on the significance of the events in Albania. We must cut through the fog of lying propaganda and disinformation and distinguish between the essential and secondary features of the situation. We are witnessing a profound change in the world situation. At the same time as the revolution was unfolding in Albania, thousands of miles away another rebel army was advancing to overthrow the hated government of Mobutu in Zaire. Neither foreign mercenaries nor the intrigues of French imperialism can stop them. In Latin America, we have seen in the last month or so revolutionary movements in Ecuador and Colombia. In Russia, too, the unbearable conditions brought about by the movement towards capitalism are creating an explosive situation. That is what frightens the imperialists more than anything else.

The Albanian events show what inexhaustible reserves of energy and revolutionary potential exist within the masses. But they also reveal the limitations of a purely spontaneous movement without a conscious leadership. The task of building such a leadership cannot be postponed until the masses are already moving into action. It must be prepared patiently for years and even decades beforehand. Once the revolution begins, every opportunity that is lost is gone forever, and the situation changes with lightning speed from one day to another, or even from one hour to another. It is the tragedy of the Albanian revolution that, at the decisive moment, no such leadership exists. The movement may pay a terrible price for this missing factor. But at least for the present, the sweep of the revolution carries all before it. What a marvellous confirmation of the ideas of Marxism!

In previous documents, we pointed out that, as a result of the unbearable contradictions caused by the movement towards capitalism, there could be a Paris Commune scenario in Russia. Many doubted that this was possible. Now it is shown to be correct. What is happening today in Albania could happen tomorrow in Russia. We have to be prepared for new sharp turns and sudden changes in the situation. What is clear is that all workers and youth internationally have to defend the Albanian revolution. It marks a new revolutionary reawakening in Europe. The Albanian workers and peasants have written the first chapter. Who will write the last?

Belgian auto workers take to the streets

"Europe is for capital, it is a Europe which does nothing for workers."
Frank Stoffels, Antwerp metal worker.

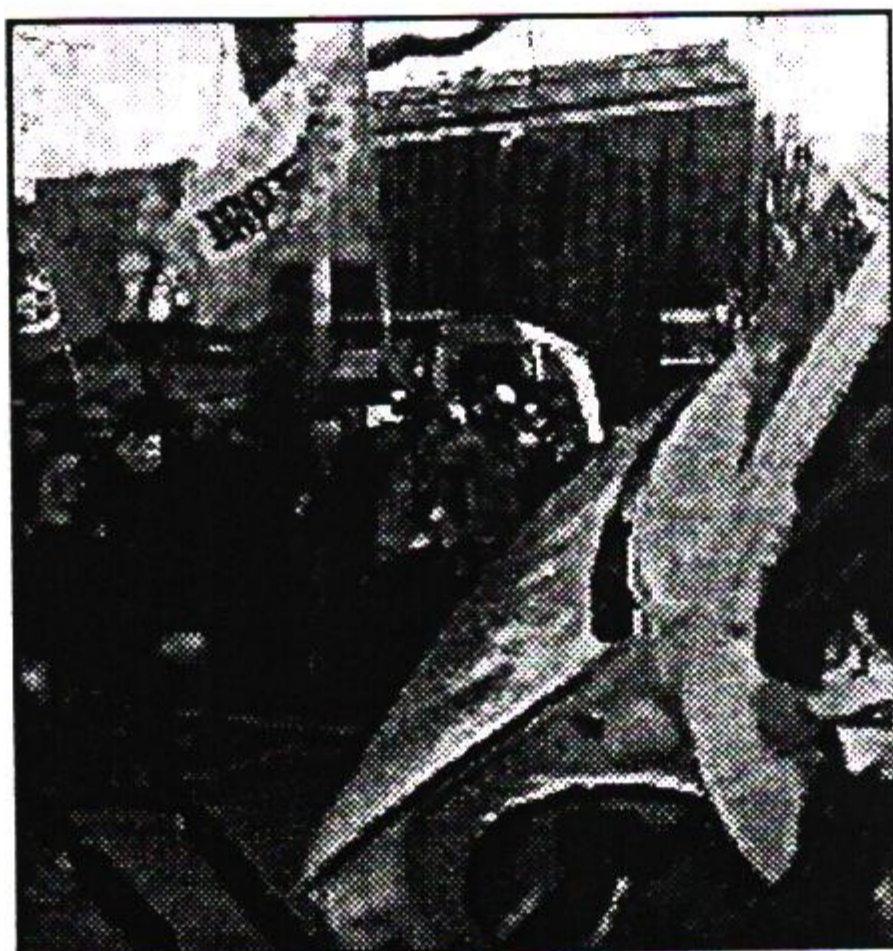
by our Belgium correspondent

As governments across Europe prepare for Monetary Union, pushing ahead with higher taxes and lower spending, thousands of Renault workers in Belgium, Spain and France have gone on strike and taken to the streets in protest at job losses. In Belgium, 10,000 workers marched through Brussels carrying a banner: "Europe, A Social Cemetery". They were met by a cordon of 1,000 riot police and barbed-wire. The police were as a red rag to a bull—violence ensued, forcing the riot police to retreat.

These workers fear that no job is safe in a Europe dominated by big business interests. The catalyst was the announcement by Renault of the closure of its Belgian plant at Vilvoorde, an industrial suburb north of Brussels. In a town already badly hit by factory closures, this action will have catastrophic consequences. A figure of 3,150 are to be declared redundant, and a further 1,500 in the supplier plants will lose their jobs. Workers in other plants see this as the thin end of the wedge, given a 25% slump in car sales in February.

The announcement pushed workers to occupy the Vilvoorde plant. They were disgusted at the fact that many heard the news just from the radio or on the bus on the way home from work. The management deliberately kept the workers in the

dark. The militant demonstration in Brussels drew together workers from Vilvoorde, Renault workers from the Douai plant in France, and Walloon steelworkers. The steelworkers were from the Forges de Clabecq, where 1,800 jobs are threatened. It was a march of solidarity. The Vilvoorde plant was considered the most productive, but Renault decided it was the easiest option to close - as it was situated in Belgium not France. The feeling is that if they can close the modern plant there, then no worker in Europe can feel secure in their job. Not only that, but the Belgian workers have given concessions to the bosses over "flexible" working. Out have gone the eight-hour shifts and the five day week. In have come nine-hour shifts, and a variable number of days of working per month. But these sacrifices are not enough for the bosses. As one marcher explained: "They are closing our plant because they fear a revolution in France if they close one there." It is clear (as in the case of Ford in Britain in relation to Halewood) that the bosses see it as easier at present to cut jobs in one country than another. As the Financial Times commented: "in a single-market Europe, multinational companies will ruthlessly exploit differences not just in wage costs, but employment laws." (6/3/97). But there is growing concern that this will not be the end but rather the start of an all-out assault on jobs. Another marcher from the Bundy plant in Nivelles that supplies Vilvoorde said his factory could also close. "But it is the whole of Belgium that is at stake now. There are possibly 3,500 jobs to go at Begacom, hundreds more have gone in steel, and no car plant here is now safe." He added: "It's shameful; we must react." Despite the workers' demonstrations, Renault management have declared that "the closure is definite". But workers are drawing broader conclusions. In the words of Jean Pas, a Renault worker and shop steward of the CSC, the Christian socialist union: "I am pro-European. But this is not the Europe we wanted. It is not the Europe of the workers." The occupation at Vilvoorde goes on. Management want to get their cars out. The workers are clear: "If they get them out it will be over our dead bodies."



the **Global**
view

German miners force government retreat

German miners were protesting against the possible loss of 50,000 mining jobs and 70,000 others related to them as a result of cuts in the government coal subsidy. On March 8, tens of thousands of miners started their protests with demonstrations, road blockades, town hall occupations, etc. But as they had no answer from the government they radicalised the protest. Thousands of miners shut down Bonn on March 11 and laid a siege of the headquarters of the governing parties. Despite appeals from the leaders of the powerful IGBE miners' unions to stay calm they refused to lift the siege until an agreement was reached on March 14 and even then they only left after staging a victory parade through Bonn during which they were greeted by passers by and even policemen.

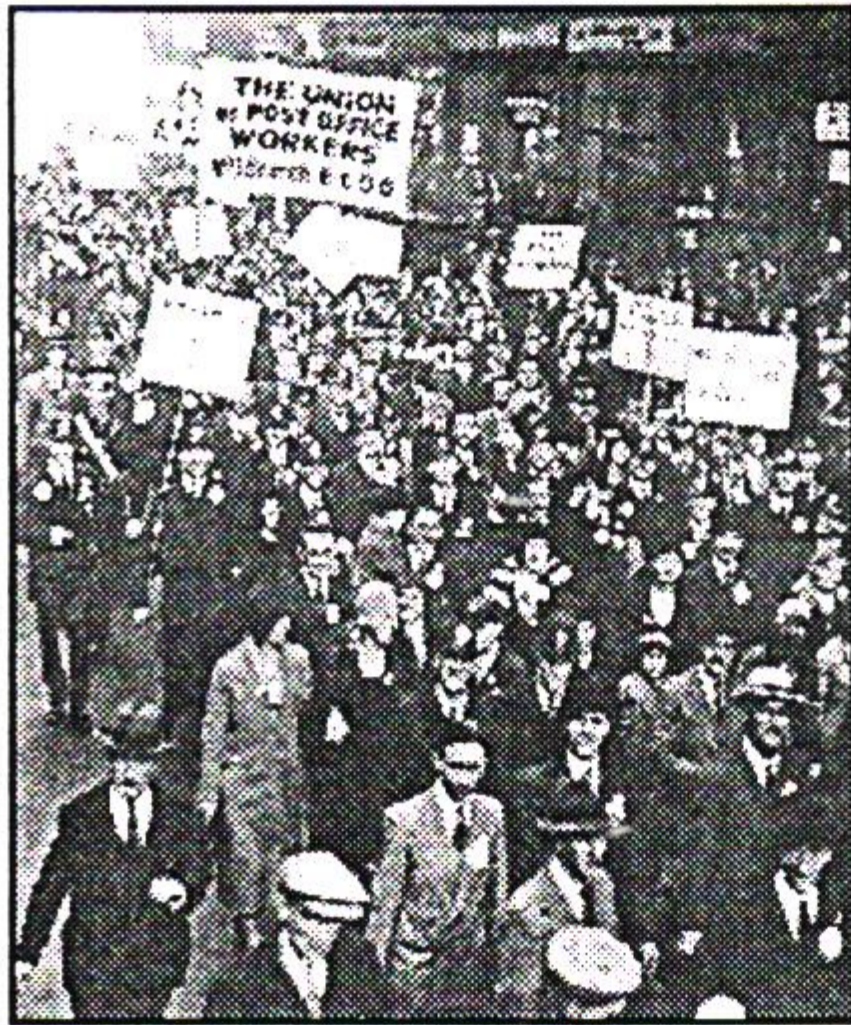
The agreement means basically postponing the problem until the year 2000 but reflects the fear of a social explosion on the part of Kohl's government. The massive amount of money the German government will have to put into subsidising coal could be the last stroke to break any possibilities of Germany reaching the Maastricht criteria.

Colombia victory

The public sector strike we reported in last month's Socialist Appeal ended in a victory when workers were granted the wage increase they were demanding. After seven days of an all out strike of 800,000 public sector workers, with mass demonstrations and street fighting with riot police the government gave in.

At the same time violence against trade unionists is increasing in this country. On March 7, Victor Julio Garzon, 38, one of the national leaders of FENSUAGRO, the main peasants' union, was shot dead at his office in the capital Bogota. Five other peasant union leaders had been assassinated by paramilitary organisations in the north of the country in the previous weeks.

Labour in the thirties



The Labour Party and the trade unions remained defiant in the face of the 1931 general election defeat. The 1932 Annual Conference of the Party was told that *“when the dust of battle had settled, an army of nearly 7 million men and women had rallied with unflinching loyalty and resolute determination to withstand the supreme attack of the combined forces of reaction..Labour refused to yield and at the end remained on the battleground a united formidable compact force that was the admiration of the working class movements of all countries. This augurs well for the future.”*

by *Barbara Humphries*

Labour was able to withstand the betrayal of Ramsay Macdonald and the victory of the National government because it had a programme, a vision of socialism and because it was rooted in the working class. Although the Labour Party was not to win a general election victory for over a decade, the Party's organisation was not affected at grassroots level. It made significant gains in the 1930s in local government and the membership continued to grow. The trade unions, an integral part of the Party, also made progress in the latter half of the 1930s. In 1938 Labour Party annual conference rejected an appeal to form a Popular Front type alliance, because in the words of the author of the annual conference report *“members of the Party should withhold support for movements, which are bound to weaken the Party's organisation and electoral power.”* It added *“the growth of our Party has been the most significant achievement of modern times.”*

Analogies have been made between the 1930s and 1980s by Labour activists and historians. They were times of defeats for the labour movement. Times when the working class was divided between the 'soft south' in the 1980s, where workers still had jobs, benefitted from rising house prices and low inflation generally and seemed to have little in common with miners losing their jobs and all prospects of employment, and the unemployed 'underclass' living on run-down council estates.

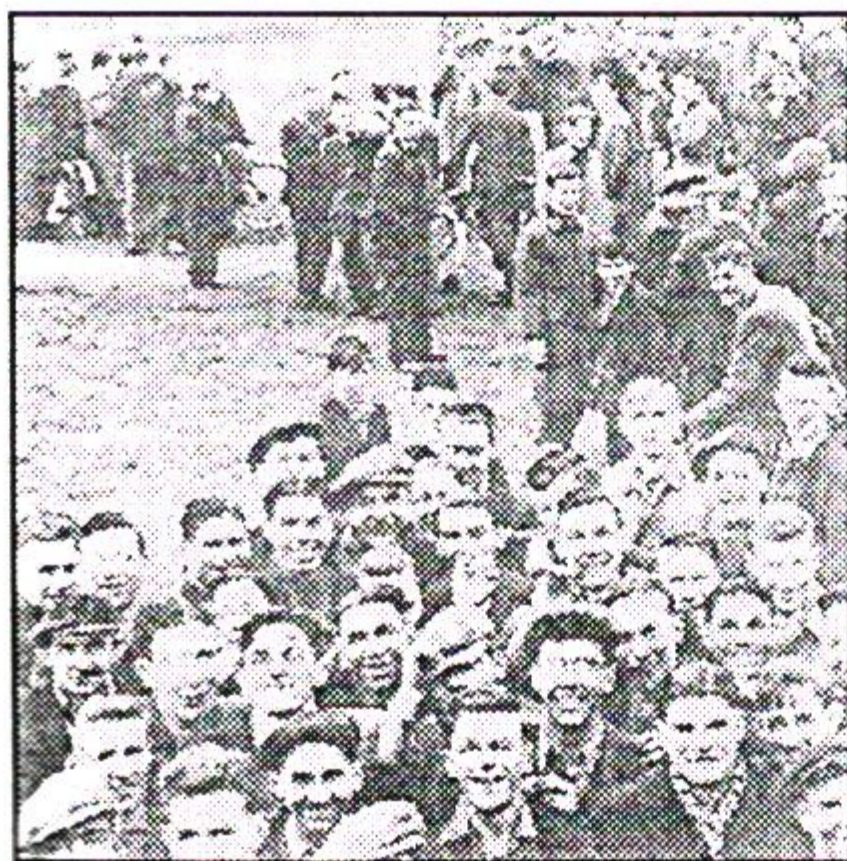
In the 1930s the differentials were even starker. The 'distressed areas' as they came to be called were like a foreign country for the rest of Britain. In areas like South Wales unemployment was as high as 70%, whereas in West London it was as low as 3%. For workers who had jobs living standards actually increased in the 1930s.

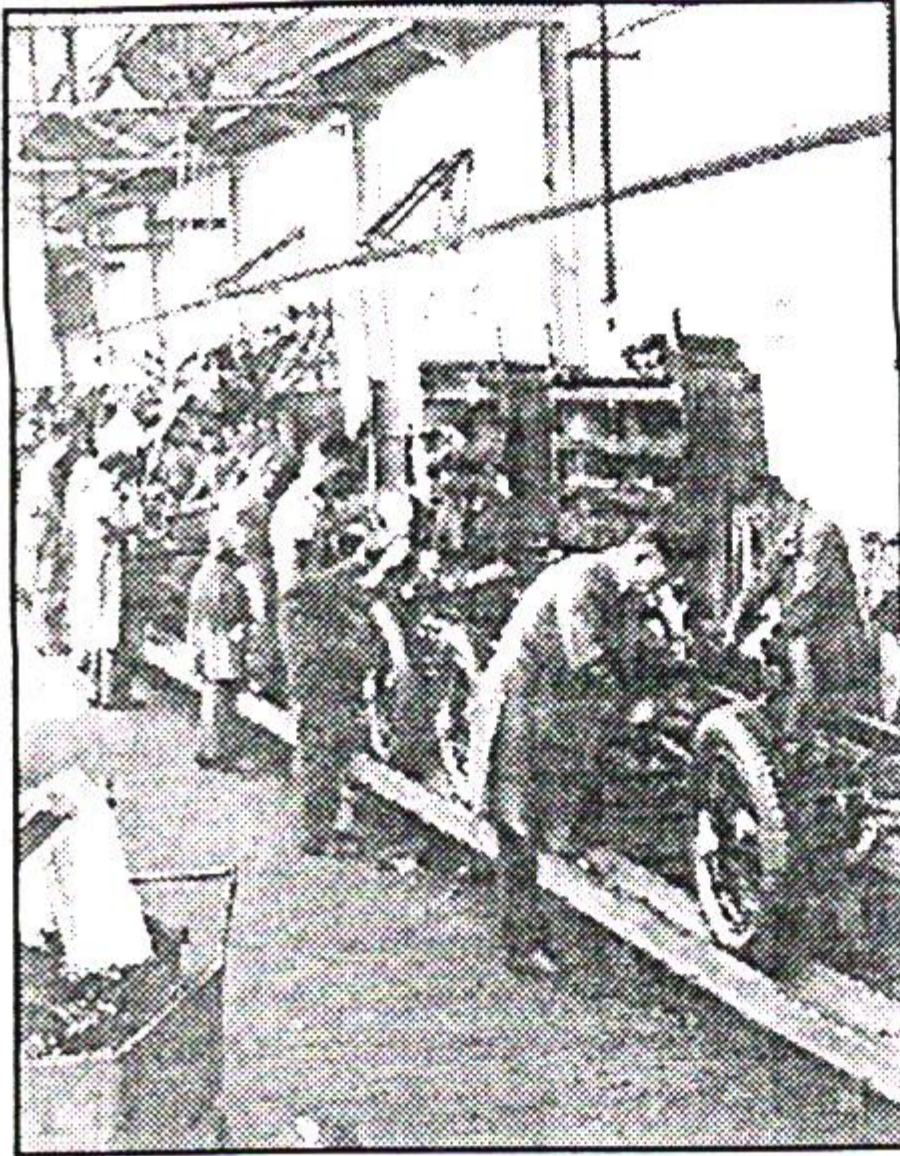
Prices of commodities were falling, faster even for those who had taken wage cuts. Many homes had electricity for the first time. This had more of an impact on home life than the consumer craze of the 1980s which included videos, personal stereos and DIY. Workers moving into new industrial areas such as West London were able to buy their homes for the first time, on a much lower percentage of their income than in the 1980s. Also councils had the money to embark on public housing schemes. This was particularly taken up by Labour Councils such as the London County Council, and council estates in suburbia (much to the horror of the local Conservatives) were built for workers who were in steady jobs and could be relied upon to keep the gardens watered and the rents paid. For the first time millions of workers had paid holidays. This was fought for by the labour movement. So the image of the 1930s as a time of unemployed men on street corners and hunger marches was only part of the story.

Historians such as Pimlott have given a lot of publicity to the 'splits' in the Labour Party in the 1930s. His book which draws crass analogies between the 1930s and 1980s gives the impression that Labour was hopelessly split, and tied up with internal wrangling between left and right and therefore not electable. He also implies that alliances with other parties, such as the Liberals would have helped Labour. The experience of 1929-31 had shown that the Liberals were not reliable allies and the Lib-Lab pact had finished. Labour had no need of electoral alliances to win power. Its downfall had been its position of a minority government in both 1924 and 1929.

Influence

On the question of the influence of the left, the facts were that the left was largely not involved in the Labour Party at this time on an organised basis. Why had this come about? The Communist Party's attempts to affiliate to the Labour Party had failed. The Communist Party had inherited many of the sectarian attitudes of its predecessor, the Social Democratic Federation, and although committed to work in the Labour Party as part of the policy of the Communist International, it had never been very successful. After the defeat of the general strike the Labour leadership consolidated its position and proscribed parties supporting the Left Wing movement, which had the backing of the Communist Party. However by 1928 the Communist Party of Great Britain, like





the rest of the Communist International, carried out the sectarian policies associated with the 'Third Period.' This was a period when the CP denounced Labour and Social Democratic party members as 'social fascists'. All united front work was abandoned, trade unions were split and the CP organised front organisations, substituting itself for the Labour movement. In Germany this led to the break up of joint work between the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party to fight fascism. In a grotesque twist of policy the German KPD even organised joint strikes with the Nazis! When Hitler came to power the leader of the German Communist Party, Thaelman, said 'it will be our turn next.' The reality was that many workers from both parties died together in the concentration camps, the tragic consequences of the sectarian policy of the Communist International. The defeat of the German labour movement, the strongest workers movement in Europe overshadowed the 1930s and led to the Second World War.

CPGB

Because of the relatively small size of the Communist Party of Great Britain this sectarianism had less impact on the British labour movement, than in other countries but it meant that initiatives taken by the left, the hunger marches, the Left Book Club and even aid for Spain, remained outside of the official Labour movement. Furthermore the influence of the CP led to the defection of the Independent Labour Party from the Labour Party. The ILP had become the organised left in the Party and after 1931 was posed to become influential in party policy. But it disaffiliated in 1932 on a procedural issue, at a time when Labour was moving to the left and building its strength. This defection had more of an impact on the organisation of the Labour Party than the defeat inflicted by the formation of the National Government and the defection of Ramsay MacDonald. In some of the old industrial areas, Labour Party branches collapsed on a wholesale basis as ILPers abandoned the Party. This was the case in traditional areas such as Scotland. However

in the new industrial areas where the Labour Party was to make the most rapid gains in the 1930s this impact was minimal. A new left group within the Party was set up, called the Socialist League, led by Stafford Cripps MP. It had 3,000 members, and not much of an industrial base. It tended to attract intellectuals. Although its policies were radical, calling for an enabling act to carry out nationalisation, a policy which was echoed by the Labour leadership (Atlee himself), its impact upon the party was not decisive. In fact it was not very significant at all.

It was disaffiliated from the Labour Party over the issue of support for the Popular Front, a policy pursued by the Communist International and the Communist Party of Great Britain, which called on all workers and 'progressive' bourgeois parties to sink their differences to form an alliance against fascism. The Young Communist League had links with the Labour League of Youth causing the Labour leadership to intervene and disaffiliate branches. However it cannot be said that in-fighting dominated the life of the Labour Party in the 1930s. Leaders such as Bevin took a hard line against any campaign linked to the Communist Party at party conferences but this had little impact on the grassroots of the Party.

So was Labour's policy too left in the 1930s for the Party to be elected? Labour's policy in the 1930s did not change fundamentally from the 1929 election manifesto, *Labour and the nation*. This called for selective nationalisation. Its programme was not substantially different to *Let us face the future* which was to lead the Party to a landslide victory in 1945. Labour remained committed to nationalisation, equality, the establishment of a minimum wage and the extension of planning and public works. In the 1930s this programme became more fleshed out, with the publishing of documents on how industries would be run under Labour. Programmes were drawn up for the agricultural worker, the 'blackcoated worker' (as clerical and professional workers were then called), for mothers and so on. Labour was gaining a blueprint for running society. The policy of the 'living wage' campaigned for by the ILP in the 1920s, now became respectable as part of an 'alternative economic policy.' The financial orthodoxy of people like Snowden was replaced by the economic thinking of Ernest Bevin who did more than any other individual to convert the Labour Party to 'Keynesianism.' Balanced budgets no longer had to be the

order of the day. Exchange controls were in. The National Government itself even started to go down those lines. But the main inspiration for Bevin came from the New Deal implemented by the Roosevelt Government in the USA. The USA now seen as the home of the free market economy, in the 1930s pioneered economic controls and planning under capitalism. Not that the Labour Party called itself 'Keynesianist.' No - Keynes was just another bourgeois economist. But policies which advocated higher wages, higher consumption and public works to solve the crisis and create jobs could only be popular with the labour movement.

Policy

This was the change to Labour's policy in the 1930s. Still committed to a socialist future, it argued that this was the way forward on a practical basis to solve the crisis. In practice capitalism did not have to be overthrown. It was very attractive because it could accommodate the socialist aspirations of the rank and file with the desire of the Labour leadership for office. Labour was swimming with the tide, but on the basis of respectability, without abandoning any of its fundamental principles. The role of the left was only to argue for more and swifter nationalisation, workers' control, more public works, and higher wages. The argument against private ownership had been won. This was a different reality from the 1980s and indeed from the 1990s.

The organisation of the Labour Party went ahead in the 1930s. The decade saw one of the highest movements of population ever seen in the UK as workers migrated from the old industrial areas to the new areas of West London and the West Midlands. Employment in the mines and the shipyards was replaced with employment in electrical engineering, service industries such as films, and cars. This was even before the armaments led boom took off in the mid 1930s. Areas like the Great West Road in London had the heaviest concentration of industry per square mile than anywhere else in Europe. The unions turned their campaigning to these new industries, campaigning on wages and productivity—against the Bedaux system, a time and motion regime popular with employers. There are analogies here with the 1990s as workers in jobs were often super-exploited for the wages that they earned. Contrary to popular belief today it was difficult to organise these new plants and there were often

□ Labour history

battles at factories, like Firestones. Employers were hostile, and workers were often glad to have jobs. New factories had canteens, works sports facilities were available and a Christmas party for the kids. The new employers had taken a leaf out of the books of German and American employers and resorted to paternalism. So in spite of the campaigning activities of the unions organised through trades councils, many of these factories did not become bastions of the trades union movement until after 1945. Nevertheless progress was made and by 1936, 9 million workers were covered by trades union agreements. The main unions to gain were the Transport and General Workers Union and the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. However the level of strikes in the 1930s remained comparatively low. One famous dispute took place on the London buses, for a shorter working week.

Influence

The unions gaining in membership continued to exercise an important influence upon the Labour Party. The membership of the Labour Party doubled between 1928-1936. In 1936 Labour had more members than it has today, 90% of whom were active! 1932 recorded the largest increase in Party membership of all time. It is interesting to note that 50% of the membership were women. Labour won by-elections with massive swings against the National Government. For instance in Fulham in 1934 a 20% swing overturned a Conservative majority of over 14,000 votes. Labour won control of important local authorities such as London and Glasgow. In spite of the defeat of 1931, Labour was on course to win the 1935 election. In fact it won 8,376,131 votes, as many as in 1929 but only 154 seats. The election however was fought under unusual circumstances with the war scare over Abyssinia, helping the Conservative Party. The League of Nations failed to stop Italian aggression against Abyssinia (Ethiopia), putting the peace of Europe again in jeopardy. The League of Nations had support from all parties in the 1920s and 1930s, but the peace movement had been more enthusiastically embraced by Labour. This had reflected the mood of the times, with the mushrooming of peace organisations both in Britain and internationally in the 1920s and 1930s. Labour had captured the mood, when Ramsay Macdonald addressed a rally in the Albert Hall in 1926, with the words 'We will

not fight.' This mood had persisted up to 1934, to the Fulham bye-election. In 1933 the Oxford Union had passed its famous resolution-'we will not fight for King and Country.' However the activities of the dictators such as Mussolini and Hitler, the rise of fascism in Spain put the peace movement into retreat. Labour's leader in 1935, George Lansbury, rather like Michael Foot during the Falklands Crisis was wrongfooted on the issue of pacifism as war panic gripped the country. The Tories were duly elected. But the issue of peace was not clear cut. The Conservative Party had supported the League of Nations. More critically the Conservative Party had its appeasers—the 'Clivedon Set' who supported Hitler. The Labour left had difficulties in generating a policy for peace which would not be dependent upon the League of Nations. However Labour began winning by-elections again in 1936 and 1937 and had there been a general election in 1939, it is possible that Labour would have won. The war cut across that. Labour's victory in 1945 has been put down purely to the experience of war and the services vote. This surely helped Labour to win. But it was also the experience of the 1930s and the rebuilding of the Party both organisationally and politically which provided the ground work. The movement of population meant that Labour was no longer confined to the industrial heartlands. Workers moving into new areas of London and the South East took their socialist traditions with them, and were often the backbone of the Party in the 1930s and 1940s. Labour was no longer a sectional party. Votes could be transferred into seats.

Labour rebuilt in the 1930s, on the basis of maintaining its programme and independence. Some would say that it was moving with the tide and was able to take over in 1945 purely because the Labour leadership had the only programme which 'could modernise Britain' for the capitalist class. The Tories were in disarray, still tinged with the mass unemployment image of the 1930s and many were still wedded to unrestrained free enterprise. This was only part of the story. Labour remained a party rooted in the working class, based on the trade union movement and with a commitment to socialism on behalf of its rank and file. Without that it would have withered on the vine and would not have survived the 1930s to get elected with a landslide victory in 1945. The successes, opportunities and limitations of the 1945 Labour Government and beyond will be discussed in the next issue.

Russia: from revolution to counter revolution

by Ted Grant

intro by Vsevolod Volkov

**new book from Wellred
available late April**



Following on from the publication of *Reason In Revolt* in 1995, this month sees the publication by Wellred books of a new book written by Ted Grant on Russia.

This book, which is now at the printers, will be around 500 pages long and covers the key developments in Russia from the period following the revolution of 1917 right up to the present day. It is a unique book tracing the elimination of workers' democracy, the rise of Stalinism, the direction of the USSR before and after the Second World War through to the collapse of the bureaucratic system during the 1980s. Using the method of Marxism, Ted Grant analyses the contradictory developments which shaped the Soviet Union and led to its downfall. He also deals with the current situation and assesses the possibility for a successful restoration of capitalism. This book represents a comprehensive defence of the ideals of the October revolution. It is not simply a "history" but also a thorough explanation of Stalinism which can serve to politically re-arm a new generation of militants and labour movement activists. Not since the publication of Trotsky's book *Revolution Betrayed* in 1936 has such a detailed and comprehensive Marxist study of Russia been undertaken.

Copies can be ordered now at a cost of £14 each (£12 if order is sent before April 30th 1997) including postage for immediate despatch when the book is delivered back from the printers. Order from Wellred Books, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ. Make cheques/POs payable to Wellred.

Letters Matters

correspondence

Socialist Appeal
PO Box 2626
London N1 7SQ

tel: 0171 251 1094
fax: 0171 251 1095

e-mail:

socappeal@easynet.co.uk

This month we introduce a new letters and comment page to Socialist Appeal. Why not write? Maybe you want to take up a point in one of the articles, either to agree or disagree. Maybe you think one of the letters needs a reply.

Whatever you want to say, don't hesitate. Write, fax or e-mail us with your views and comments.



**From Kenny McGuigan,
Airdrie**

Dear comrades,

First, a confession. I have never bought a lottery ticket. Never even been tempted. So, naturally, I have absolutely no chance of winning.

I have on occasion, squirmed uncomfortably in my seat on a Saturday night as I watched the oily Bob Monkhouse, or others, host the draw in a blaze of wholesome razamataz using popular guests or even national heroes to press the button releasing the balls.

As an entertainment package, the 10 minute slot is in the same league as watching a Tory Party conference.

Call me a cynic, but in reality the lottery is nothing more than a slick distraction for millions of working class people who are being conned into believing they have a serious chance of becoming a multi-millionaire by gambling.

Research has confirmed that it is the poorest in society who spend more of a percentage of their disposable income on lottery tickets and scratch cards. This suggests one of two things: either the experience of buying a ticket, then sitting down with the family to enjoy the National Lottery Live Draw is such an exhilarating, exciting and pleasurable experience that millions can't resist it. Or, the participants are so unhappy with their poverty stricken existence and their total inability to obtain even the most basic of life's necessities, that they are willing to spend a large portion of their pittance on tickets in the forlorn hope that they might win the big prize. Personally, I favour the second proposition. Every week all these people pour money into the worst bet in the world (14 million to one) ensuring mega profits for Camelot and the only certainty being that they are all right back in there next week with the chance to lose again! ☆



**From Julianna Grant,
Brighton**

Dear comrades,

I have been meaning to make this point for years, but an article written by Veronica Patterson in the December/January edition makes me put pen to paper. While I agree with many of her points, especially the demand for Labour to fully fund the education service instead of a "me-too" system of imitating Tory moral claptrap, I feel that in parts,

the article put too much emphasis on the shortcomings of one particular union in education. While it was the NAS/UWT leadership that has recently played into the hands of the Tories by implying that the main cause of education's troubles are unruly children, I think that far too often we make the mistake of criticising another union that organises in our own sector and leave an analysis of the nature of unions in general and union leaders in particular out of the equation. The article mentions the NAS/UWT twice, as if the union itself was one amorphous mass. The membership has not been consulted on the implications of this campaign, and it is precisely this issue of democracy and accountability that is a vital point which is missing from this article.

I feel that the main point is never the tactics of this or that particular union or union leader. In fact, if you ask NAS/UWT members in my school they are pleased that their union will stand up for their rights of not being abused, although quite a few are understandably uncomfortable with the reactionary undertones of some of Nigel de Gruchy's pronouncements.

This article seemed to me that through a lack of clarity was setting one teaching union against another, which is hardly in the interest of the teaching profession as a whole. Moreover, it made little or no reference to how the high salaried union bosses of all the teaching unions have been avoiding a real struggle over the most important concerns of teachers: ie. overwork, eroded pay and low morale that goes with the first two.

A recent survey carried out by the Times Educational Supplement reported that 41% of primary teachers would leave the profession if they could afford it. That is a tragic indictment of education today and would need the maximum unity of all teachers, regardless of which union they belong to, to overcome. I do not wish to attack what was an excellent article, and which quite rightly exposed the crass hypocrisy of both Tory and Labour politicians, but I believe that we must be very careful when more than one union organises in a sector of industry or service, so as not to fall into the trap of pandering to already existing divisions. We must at all times promote and put forward ideas which unite us and pose them in a way that is not divisive! Division can only work against the unity we need, in order to win the fight for a better future. A future that will have an education service worth having, or indeed a socialist society that is fast becoming a life and death question for many. ☆

□ What is Marxism?

Why Marxism?

"The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is, to change it." (Marx)

'Socialist Appeal' is proud of its commitment to Marxist theory. Our journal is aimed above all at the active sections of the labour movement. The very first book we were able to publish, 'Reason in revolt,' deals with modern science. A sceptic might feel that it was not obvious how this was going to help the class struggle of the working class. Yet think again. 'Reason in revolt' has a chapter on genetics - 'Not in our genes.' The oldest argument in the world against the possibility of a socialist reconstruction of society is that "human nature wouldn't allow it." It needs to be answered - and we'll be doing just that next month. But this ancient prejudice draws sustenance from a modern interpretation of the science of genetics. It had to be taken up - and that is what we did. So the world of science is not a community of disinterested scholars, but has an ideological background. Here, too, the class struggle casts a shadow, just as much as it does on the shop floor.

In fact Marxism is nothing else but the compressed experience of the working class in theoretical form. In the 'Communist Manifesto,' in many respects the founding document of Marxism, Marx and Engels say of themselves and their co-thinkers, "The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand practically the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others. On the other hand, theoretically, they have

over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate results of the proletarian movement."

That is what we mean when we describe Marxism as the science of perspectives. We know what stage the movement is at and where it is going.

The 'Manifesto' describes the development of consciousness among the working class in theoretical form. In fact it draws upon the experience of the British working class movement in particular, the only really developed movement at that time. When it asserts that to begin with, "they direct their attacks not against the bourgeois conditions of production, but against the instruments of production themselves," this refers to the Luddite movement. By analysing material interests, Marx knows how the movement will develop further, for "It is not a question of what this or that proletariat or even the whole proletariat regards as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is and what in accordance with this being it will historically be compelled to do."

The Marxists "do not form a separate party opposed to other working class parties." They go with their class. Marxism is a science of combat.

The quote at the top of this column then yields this meaning. First you can't change society for the better without understanding it. And you can't understand society at all unless you are committed to change it.

Mick Brooks



Double trouble? the dispute over Dolly

Last month, with the advent of Dolly the sheep, cloning hit the headlines with a bang. The media was full of fantasies. The "moralists" were aghast. The Vatican was deeply shocked, and Bill Clinton was deeply troubled.

The august Times quoted Patrick Dixon, author of the book "The Genetic Revolution", who outlined the potential: making spare parts for transplant; insurance against assassination; photocopy a child in case yours died; or even recreate a famous pop star. You could almost see the thousands of Elvis Presley's on tour. Fears are understandable when scientists come forward with such tripe. There may be concern about cloning as it interferes with the natural order of things, but this is to underestimate how much has already changed, and for the better. Mankind has done this for thousands of years. Agriculture, hunting and the domestication of animals have drastically altered environment and species, much more than any cloning of Dolly.

The fact that cloning seems strange should not put us off. The application of biotechnology to plants and animals is bringing benefits: better health, understanding disease, new drug treatments, etc.

In genetics, we are exploring gene therapy and genetic screening, which will see great advances. In any case science is a long way from cloning humans. But what if it could? Firstly, a clone is an organism that is genetically identical to another. Human clones already exist as identical twins. But it is clear that these are not "identical". Environment and upbringing will always have a decisive effect on the development of different personalities with as much individuality as anyone else. Beethoven's twin would not necessarily be a brilliant musician; Einstein's twin a genius.

Despite this, should human cloning be universally acclaimed? No. It is likely to have detrimental consequences if introduced successfully. It would be suicidal for humankind to give up sexual reproduction for cloning. Sex creates new gene combinations that add new strengths, especially resistance to disease. Asexual reproduction - copying - is extremely limiting. Asexual lineages have appeared but few have lasted very long.

In any case the technology that produced Dolly is far from perfect. Even if it could be applied to humans - which is doubtful - it could produce people who age quicker, fall victim to diseases of old age prematurely; and could even turn out infertile. With such defects, can we really contemplate cloning another human being?



Sales drive on issue 50... £10,000 appeal launched

Our supporters in Coatbridge, Scotland, have energetically taken up regular Saturday sales. In just over an hour on one sale, they managed to sell-out of everything they had: 19 copies of Socialist Appeal, 6 Youth for Socialism and 8 Defend Clause Four pamphlets. Using a petition, they also managed to raise over £50 for our press fund. This sale followed a very successful public meeting, where 27 people heard Ted Grant speak on the situation Britain. To continue their public work, they had to order an *extra 40 copies until the new April issue arrived.*

On Merseyside, too, sales have been going ahead. In just over one week, 33 copies were sold on different public sales. This shows the need to organise sales not just at your local labour movement meetings, but out on the street. With the general election campaign now underway, every area should be taking

advantage to boost our sales. With the heightened political mood, what better opportunity is there? We need to organise regular public sales of the new-look general election issue. Socialist Appeal should be sold on canvasses, street stalls and on the public activity around the election itself. Where possible workplace sales should be organised. Every reader should be encouraged to take some magazines to sell in their workplace, union meeting, or to their friends. It is time to adopt an audacious sales drive in every area!

Press fund

If we are to meet our press fund targets, then every reader should be asked to make a donation. We have already made a good start with a collection of £330 in a London meeting. Coatbridge has sent down £57 from its public meeting, and is determined to raise a lot more through its public sales. We have no rich backers.

We have to rely solely upon our readers and sympathisers. Sell Socialist Appeal! Donate to our press fund!

Targets

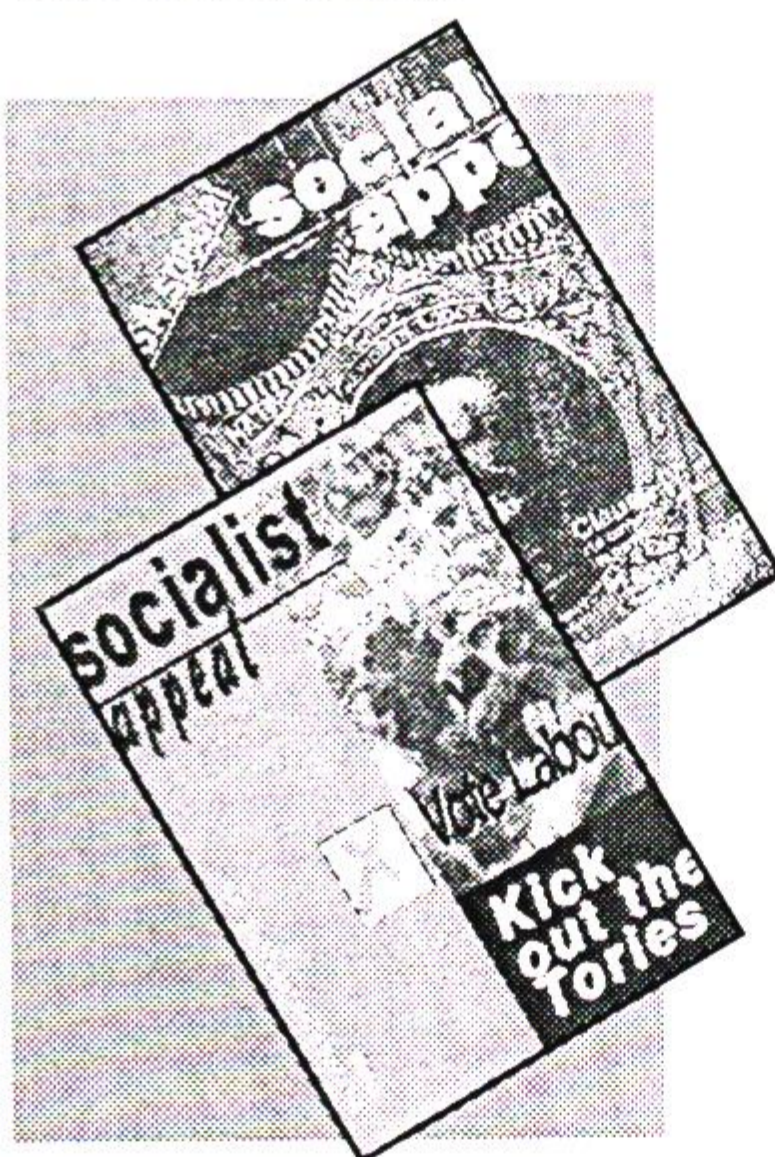
We want to raise £10,000 by June 20th and from the next issue we will be charting our progress towards this goal. The target has been broken down regionally:

Scotland	£1,300
Northern	£1,000
Yorkshire	£800
Manchester/ Lancs	£500
Merseyside	£600
Midlands	£400
London	£3,600
Wales/South West	£800
Eastern	£300
Southern	£800

Subscribe to Socialist Appeal *the Marxist magazine for labour, trade unionists and youth*

Socialist Appeal was launched in April 1992 to provide trade unionists, Labour Party members and youth with a Marxist analysis of events.

The likely election of a labour government will mark a real turning point in British politics. That's why we have launched a new style magazine. If you want to keep abreast of what's happening inside the labour and trade union movement, in the workplace and in society at large, as well as key international coverage, then subscribe today!



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

I want more information about Socialist Appeal's activities

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

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

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

..... Tel.....

Return to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ

A socialist programme for Labour



✧ Get the Tories out. A Labour government must adopt socialist policies that can really answer the needs and aspirations of working people.



✧ For full employment. No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits - abolish the JSA. An immediate introduction of a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. Reduction of the age of retirement to 55 with a decent full pension for all.

✧ A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage. Support for £4.26 per hour as an immediate step toward this goal.

✧ Outlaw all forms of discrimination. Equal pay for equal work. The development of quality childcare facilities available to all. Scrap all racist immigration and asylum controls. Abolish the Criminal Justice Act and other repressive legislation.

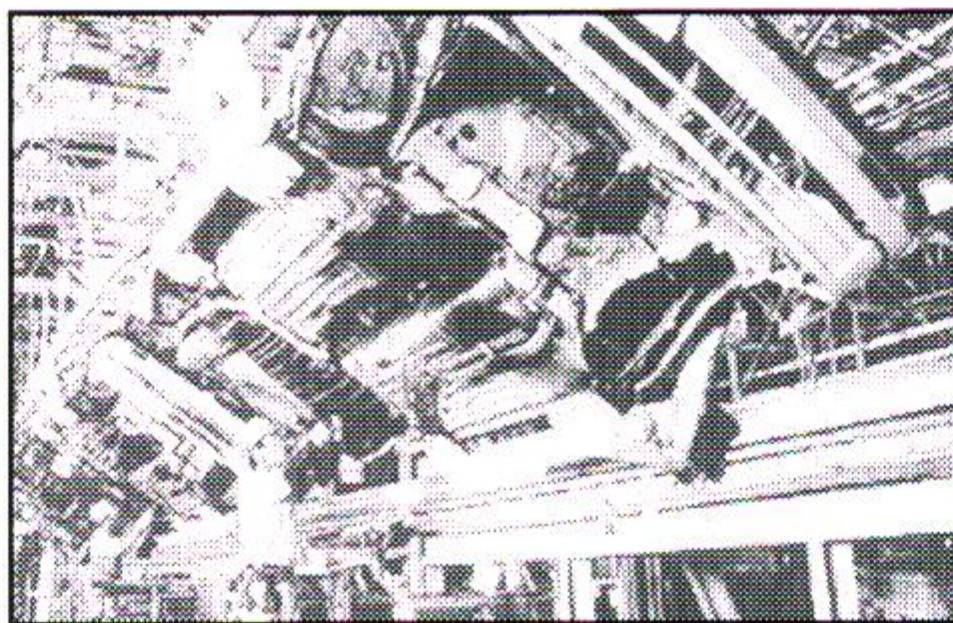
✧ Repeal all the Tories anti-union legislation. Full rights for all workers from day one of their employment. For the right to strike and the right to union representation and collective bargaining. Stop casualisation. Part time work only for those who want it. End the zero-hours contract scandal.

✧ A Labour government must bring in stringent environmental controls and regulations under the supervision of the relevant workforces, consumers and representatives of effected communities. These measures, along with nationalisation of the land, the big petro-chemical enterprises and the major food companies, can form the basis of a genuine socialist approach to the environment.



✧ Reverse all the cuts in the health service. End the trusts and the internal market. Abolish private health care. A properly funded health service must be available to all. Nationalisation of the big drug companies that squeeze their profits out of the health of working people.

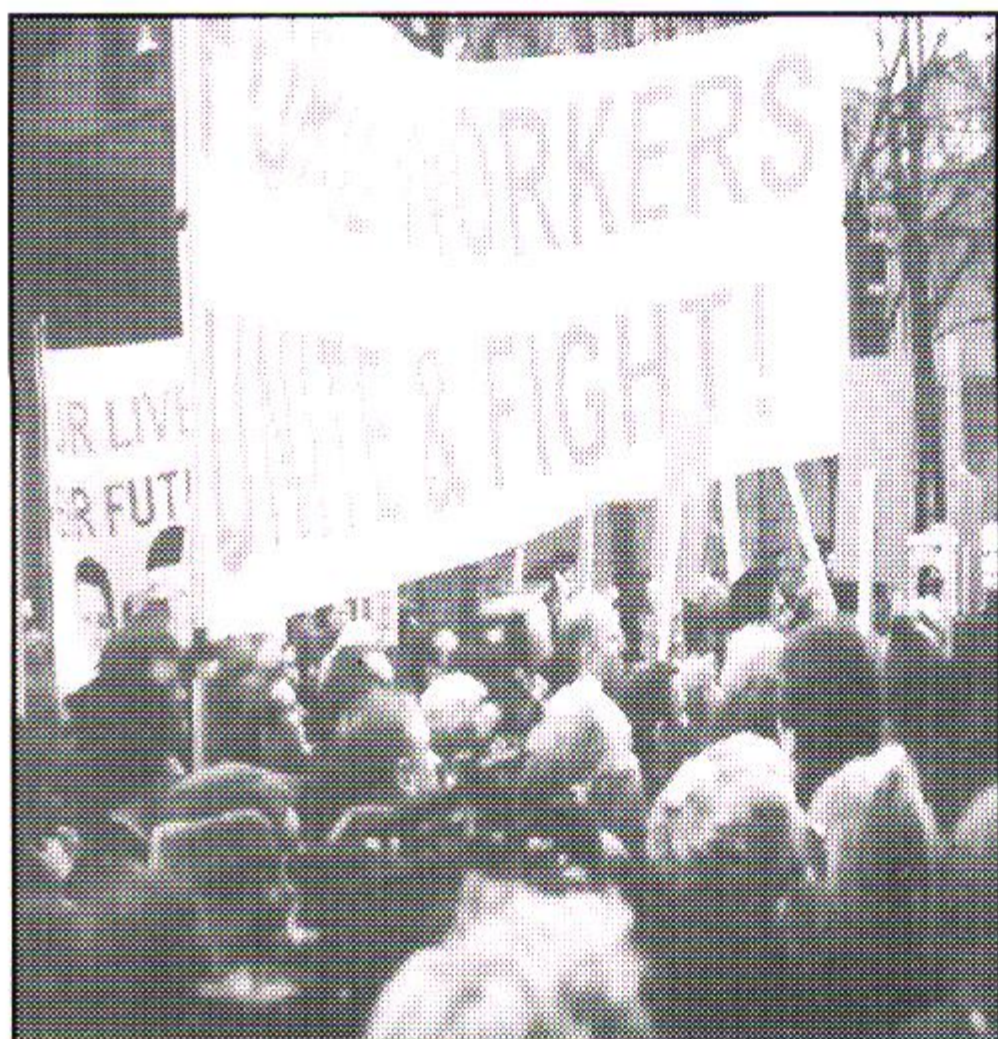
✧ Return education to real democratic control through the local authorities. For a fully funded and resourced, fully comprehensive education system. ✧ For a properly funded extension of higher education. No to student loans - for a decent living grant for all over 16. A guaranteed job, apprenticeship or place in further/higher education for all young people.



✧ Reverse the Tories privatisation strategy. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities with minimum compensation according to need - not on the market price of shares.

✧ For real internationalism. No to the bosses European Union. Yes to a socialist united states of Europe, as part of a world socialist federation.

✧ Labour must immediately take over the "commanding heights of the economy." Nationalise the big monopolies, the banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.



Join us in the fight for socialism!

Socialist Appeal supporters will be in the forefront of fighting to get the Tories out and a Labour government elected. We are also campaigning on the above programme as the only solution for working people. Why not join us in this fight? For more details:

Name.....

Address.....

.....tel.....

return to: Socialist Appeal, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ

socialist appeal

The Marxist voice of the labour movement no.50 April 1997

Warning: Tories damage your health

Anyone looking for a single reason to throw this Conservative government out of office need look no further than the National Health Service.

A stranger visiting this country for the first time could be forgiven for believing that the full name of the health service is "NHS crisis" so often does that phrase appear in the news. And what a crisis it is. A

recent BBC Breakfast News series on the NHS revealed a system which is in critical decline. The mood of those doctors, nurses and administrators interviewed was universally gloomy. Many could see this only getting drastically worse during the next 12 months. Doctors working to breaking point, wards shut, whole hospitals under threat, life saving operations cancelled because the budgets have been

exceeded, patients dying because they have had to be transported to other hospitals hundreds of miles away. Demoralisation and despair are widespread. What a condemnation of the Tories' stewardship. Their reliance on the so-called internal market is now seen by all for what it is - an excuse for profiteering and "jobs for the boys" on a grand scale. Drug and medical companies have made millions on the backs of our health service. Only the Tories seem to think things are getting better but their use of creative accountancy to argue their case has no basis in reality. Anyone who works for or uses the NHS sees things as they are and are demanding change.

Commitment

Labour's rejection of the internal market system and the GP fund-holding fiasco alongside their commitment to cut waiting lists by using cash wasted on management bureaucracy is to be welcomed. However this does not go nearly far enough. The need to ensure a fully funded service which is free at the point of use is essential. We need to reverse the trend towards a two tier health service where the rich can have proper health care but the poor and those with health problems too "expensive" for the likes of Bupa cannot.

It was the labour movement which fought for the establishment of a decent free health service. It was not given to us as a gift. We need to be ready to fight for it again. Firstly by throwing the Tories out of office and secondly by fighting for a labour government committed to carry out socialist policies central to which should be the establishment of a real health service which will benefit everybody and not just the wealthy few. 50 years ago our grandparents thought they had achieved this, now we need to finish the job.



Labour to power on a socialist programme