

Socialist *appeal*

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Blairites embrace Tory philosophy

At every turn, the Blair government is embracing the ideas of Thatcherism. The most graphic illustration of this is its grovelling before big business and the City of London.

The latest example comes from arch-Blairite Stephen Byers, who burst onto the scene by stating privately over dinner to a group of lobby correspondents at the TUC that New Labour would sever its links with the trade unions. Now Byers is Trade and Industry Secretary, having taken over from the disgraced Peter Mandelson. In his first major speech to City ladies and gents at the Mansion House, Byers told his wealthy audience that "wealth creation is now more important than wealth redistribution."

In a week where some public sector workers were offered a three and half per cent rise, he told his big business listeners the news they wanted to hear. "Governments should not hinder (entrepreneurs) but work to ensure the market functions properly and contributes to creating a strong, just and fair society."

Who present would disagree with this Thatcherite message? It was a plea to them to make more money. After all, this was the culture of enterprise. As a *Guardian* editorial commented: "Such comments could just as easily have been made by the CBI." It continued: "there has seldom been a time of such burgeoning consensus between a Labour administration and business." (3/2/99)

The Blairites have long sought to replace the Tories as the real representatives of British capitalism. To the delight of his wealth-ridden audience, Byers made clear: "There can be no return to the outdated interventionism of the old left." It was clear where his sympathies lay.

Following on from Blair's pronouncement that we are all aspiring to be middle class, Byers put forward his own trickle-down theory of advancement. "I firmly believe," he stated, "that the best way to address inequality and social exclusion is to create a more affluent, more successful Britain with opportunities for everyone to fulfil their potential." His City chums loved every word of it.

The problem is that capitalism, which is a society based upon class division and exploitation, cannot provide opportunities for everyone to "fulfil their potential." The class contradictions of society cannot be eliminated on the basis of capitalism. Under capitalism, although the wealth of society is created by the labour of the working class, it is expropriated by big business, which owns the giant monopolies and banks that dominate the British economy.

The Thatcherite idea that if the rich get richer, the poorer sections will benefit from a 'trickle-down' of wealth is clearly false. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the rich have got richer at the expense of the rest of society. Last year, the *Sunday Times* revealed that the collective wealth of the richest 1,000 in Britain totalled £108 billion - nearly £10 billion up on the previous

year. It now requires at least £103 million to get into the top 200 - compared with £30 million in 1988 - and £250 million to make it into the top 100. There are now 16 billionaires on the British list, which includes Bernie Ecclestone and Lord Sainsbury, who is worth £3.3 billion.

At the same time, the share going to the bottom 10 per cent has declined. The top richest 50 people (1996 figures) have income and wealth totalling over £34 billion, far in excess of the income and wealth of the bottom 5.5 million people. In 1979 the percentage share of income (after housing costs) of the poorest 10 per cent was 4%, while the richest 10 per cent got 20.9%. In 1996, the share of the poorest 10% fell to 2.2%, while the richest 10% rose to 27%.

The Blair government no longer talks about 'equality,' but refers instead to 'equality of opportunity.' But what opportunities really exist in late 90s Britain? The 'opportunity' to wait forever on a health service list? The 'opportunity' to juggle two jobs just to make ends meet? The 'opportunity' to be praised for your work in the public sector but not to be paid a half decent wage for it? 'Equality of opportunity' means nothing in a society where the rich control everything and all we can do is sell our labour.

'Equality of opportunity,' 'targeting' as opposed to universal benefits, 'flexibility' against guaranteed work, 'employability' against job creation; we are being presented with the warmed up leftovers of 1980s Tory philosophy. And this in the name of Labour.

Labour should be fighting for those who put them in office - the millions of working people in this country who wanted real change after eighteen years of Toryism. Instead the leadership proclaim themselves the party of 'enterprise' and the party of 'business.' None of this will put a penny into the cash starved NHS!

There has been one helluva 'wealth creation' over the last two decades - just none of it has come our way! If the Labour government is to really begin to tackle the problems we face then it should not be championing 'business' but its fiercest opponent. It's time to change course. It's time to start fighting for real socialist policies.



Kosovo: No to NATO intervention!

The decision of NATO to send troops to Kosovo marks a decisive turning-point. As we go to print, Defence Secretary George Robertson announces in parliament that the 4th Armoured Brigade will be sent from Germany to the war-torn province of Yugoslavia. Officially, NATO has not yet approved the intervention. But NATO ministers have already agreed to dispatch up to 30,000 if a peace deal is brokered between the Yugoslav government and the rebels of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

As usual, the imperialists present their actions as a "humanitarian peacekeeping operation". In fact, they are pursuing a dirty game of power politics in which the lives and rights of the peoples are just so much small change.

All socialists stand opposed to the cruel oppression of the Albanian Kosovars who make up about 90 per cent of the province's population. Ten years ago the Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic started the problem by arbitrarily abolishing the autonomy of Kosovo. Ever since, the Albanian Kosovars have been treated like pariahs in their own land. Milosevic has sown the winds and is now reaping a whirlwind. The KLA, impatient with the lack of results obtained by moderate leaders like Rugova, have begun a guerrilla war, which has been viciously repressed by the Yugoslav (i.e. Serb) armed forces. Massacre and counter-massacre have plunged the province into a nightmare.

Sympathy

However, the manoeuvrings of NATO and the West are not dictated by sympathy for the sufferings of the Kosovars but by crude self-interest and cold calculation. They are terrified that, if the conflict is not quickly brought to a halt, it can spread to the neighbouring countries and lead to war in the Balkans. If Kosovo succeeds in breaking away from Yugoslavia, it would inevitably tend to fuse with Albania, giving rise to the spectre of Greater Albania. This, in turn, would destabilise Macedonia, a fragile and unstable statelet where Albanians make up about 40 per cent and live in an uneasy co-existence with the Slav majority. The imperialists are indifferent to the sufferings and deaths of ordinary people (witness their

passive complicity in the slaughter in Rwanda) except where their vital interests are concerned. But the break-up of Macedonia would have far-reaching consequences on the Balkans. It would raise the threat of war involving not only Serbia and Albania, but also Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey. It would also upset the fragile "peace" in Bosnia and set Serbs, Croats and Moslems at their throats again. Above all, the prospect of war between two NATO members (Greece and Turkey) fills them with horror. It is no accident that the first NATO troops will be sent to Macedonia to reinforce the 2,400 NATO force already there.

The leaders of the KLA lacking any real understanding or perspectives, have looked to the West for help in their struggle for independence. What blindness! The imperialists fear an independent Kosovo every bit as much as Belgrade does. That is why they constantly harp on the need for a negotiated settlement—i.e., one that would leave Kosovo inside the frontiers of Yugoslavia, albeit with a large (they hope) measure of autonomy. They could never accept an independent Kosovo for the reasons we have stated.

The threat to send troops is not aimed to help the Kosovars but to put pressure on both sides to reach a compromise. But this will be difficult, since every concession Milosevic makes will be seen as too much by the Serb chauvinists, and too little by the KLA. Any move to put pressure on Belgrade by bombing will be fiercely resisted by Russia and France, who are pursuing their own agenda of building points of support in the Balkans. Any deal that is done will be at the expense of the Kosovars who will have to accept the dictates of the imperialists or face the prospect of being attacked themselves.

The US imperialists will send troops, but want its European "partners" to bear the brunt. As always, Washington pulls the strings and London is the first to dance. Tony Blair is trying to show that he is more trigger-happy than his friends in the Pentagon. What this reveals is not toughness, but a pathetic and humiliating dependence on the transatlantic Big Brother.

Socialist Appeal is in favour of the right of the Kosovars to self-determination. But that by no means exhausts the question. Under the concrete circum-



stances, how can this aim be achieved? The KLA has no real answer. Given the actual correlation of forces, their struggle cannot succeed. On the other hand in the long run it could provoke a devastating war in the Balkans which will be against the interests of all the peoples.

National Question

On a capitalist basis the national question in Kosovo has no solution. The only lasting solution to the Kosovo problem lies in the overthrow of the reactionary chauvinist clique in Belgrade and the establishment of a democratic workers' state which will have no interest in oppressing the Kosovars or anyone else. But that is the task of the working people of Yugoslavia themselves and nobody else. Only on the basis of a genuine democratic Socialist Federation can the age-old national hatreds and savagery be finally laid to rest. The involvement of imperialism in the Balkans cannot serve the interests of the Kosovars, or any other oppressed people, but will always play a reactionary role.

The labour movement must cut across the fog of lies and hypocritical propaganda and face the real issues and firmly oppose the use of British troops in Kosovo. No foreign intervention in Yugoslavia! A socialist policy—the only answer!

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Socialist Appeal

Published by
SA Publications,
PO Box 2626,
London N1 7SQ
tel 0171 251 1094
fax 0171 251 1095

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www.socialist.net

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NEWS

Lucas leaves 'town on the dole'

The closure of all but one of South Wales' deep coal mines has devastated the lives of countless families across the valleys. A few redundant miners were able to find work in the engineering or electronics plants opened by foreign multinationals attracted by rate-free green field sites and a pool of unemployed skilled labour. Many more have found only short-term or part-time work as security guards or taxi drivers. Countless others remain unemployed.

The new recession, which Gordon Brown claims to be avoiding, is already taking its toll on what remains of industry in the South Wales' valleys. The BP/Amoco plant near Swansea has closed down, nearby British Steel have announced 850 job losses, and last year the Dewhirst clothing factory in Ystradgynlais closed putting another 300 out of work. Now the town's main employer, Lucas SEI, a car components manufacturer owned jointly by Lucas Verity and Sumitomo of Japan, has announced the closure of its plant, moving production to a new factory in Poland instead.

Try telling the 750 workers losing their jobs, or for that matter the whole town whose economy is dependent on the plant, that there isn't going to be a recession. It's already here, and we're being asked to foot the bill as usual.

Victor Rice, chief Executive of Lucas Verity is to receive a £17 million golden handshake when the firm is sold off to either TRW or Federal-Mogul of the US. He certainly isn't paying for it. Meanwhile workers employed at the plant for ten years will be lucky to walk away with £7000, and no prospect of finding another job.

Jeff Beddow of the AEEU points out that Rice's pay-off would be enough to keep the plant working for another two years. True, but then the plant isn't closing because the bosses can't afford to run it, it's just that they've found cheaper labour in Poland. Adding insult to injury it was a group of workers from the Ystradgynlais plant who visited Poland last year to help train workers at the

new site, unaware they were training their own replacements.

Management have now installed closed circuit cameras on the shopfloor to guard against sabotage by outraged workers. The cameras are pointing in the wrong direction, the only saboteurs here are the bosses.

Local Labour MP and Welsh Office Minister Peter Hain is busily organising another 'action plan,' but as a group of local women who used to work at the plant commented to the Observer (7/2/99) "The MPs must have known something was up months ago. This looks like damage limitation. And 20 years ago the unions would never have let it happen." They summed up the feeling of the local community when they say that the company "take the millions and then fly by night leaving a town on the dole."

As economic recession bites this story will be repeated all around the country. The unions have to start fighting back. The whole labour movement, and that includes the Labour government should demand that these companies open their books. How much subsidy have they received, how much profit are they making, how much are the bosses being paid? If redundancies or closure is threatened then the company should be nationalised and run, far more efficiently, by the workforce themselves.



New welfare proposals must be defeated

"Harsh but justifiable." Not the words of a reactionary Tory grandee announcing a measure during the last government, but Alistair Darling announcing one from this government! The Welfare Reform Bill published this February is nothing short of a disgrace coming from any government let alone a Labour one. It would be fairer to call it the Welfare Counter-reform Bill or perhaps, echoing Frank Field's comments on it, the *Roughing Up of Claimants Bill*.

This bill, if it comes into force, will introduce an organised system of virtual intimidation for claimants in a crude attempt to save money and reduce welfare spending at the expense of single parents, the disabled and others. Is it going to be a well funded system where those on benefit will be assisted in getting good well paid jobs with hours which will help them if they are looking after kids or trying to hold a family together on their own? No, it represents an attempt to push and harass the most vulnerable members of society, those who are often trying to come to terms with particularly difficult problems and crises in their lives, into low paid jobs, working long and unsocial hours for a pittance.

The threat that those who do not attend the required interviews could lose all benefits will simply propel people into making a bad decision at a time when they may not be able to sit back and assess things rationally. Even though lone parents and the disabled will be excused - for now - from having to take a job within a set time if it is offered, the threat is there. Labour MPs have identified those who are suffering from mental illnesses or going through a breakdown in a relationship as being especially at risk from these interviews - particularly since you are required under the terms of this bill to attend an interview within three days of making their first claim. The disabled will also be badly hit - ask any disabled persons organisations what jobs tend to be on offer for the people they represent and they will tell you exactly how little is on offer and how poor the standard is.

Yet what do we get from Darling: "...no unconditional right to benefit", end the "something for nothing culture..." Remarks that wouldn't be amiss coming from the flag waving hordes at a Tory

Party conference. The proposals are designed to appeal to the worst middle class prejudices of claimants as feckless, lazy scroungers who need to be whipped into shape—perhaps we should go the whole hog and bring back the workhouse!

This Bill is simply an attempt to save money at the expense of the poor, about £750 million (according to The Disability Benefits Consortium) is on the table to be clawed back. And this is just the thin edge of the wedge. With Britain moving into recession, pressure will soon start to build up from the City of London and big business for further cuts in state expenditure. These proposals are an attempt to prepare the ground for such future attacks.

Labour Party and trade union branches should start flooding Millbank with resolutions of opposition to this bill. Left Labour MPs have a responsibility also to start organising a campaign against these measures and vote against them in parliament. The government needs to be made aware at the earliest possible opportunity of the degree of opposition which exists to these Tory style attacks. Millions of people voted for Labour at the last election in order to see the welfare state protected. Labour should be reminded that their job is to protect the gains of the movement not to throw them away at the behest of capitalism.

Nationalisation of the monopolies, banks and financial institutions would release tremendous resources from the grasp of the profiteers and return it to those who created it in the first place. That is the sort of "harsh measure" we should be seeing from a Labour government—socialist action not Tory style cuts!

Socialist policies needed to defend welfare state

Blair seems set on emulating the American approach to 'welfare reform,' basing himself on the phony philosophy of 'communitarianism' rather than the real ideas of socialism. "*Work is the best welfare,*" according to the right wing - but has that not been the basis of our long term commitment to full employment. But work on poverty pay, with no rights and in crap conditions can be just as demoralising as being on the dole.

The welfare system is in crisis, and not just in this country. Basically, the capitalist system can no longer afford the meagre benefits we all got used to. The years of the long post war economic upswing when the welfare system was built have long gone.

Welfare reform in the present era is just a smokescreen for real cuts in provision. Poverty and unemployment cannot be cured through the type of schemes on offer. We need a real policy of full employment with a 32 hour week and a decent minimum wage. On healthcare and education we need a massive influx of cash to begin to really develop a system we can be proud of.

Is the money there? Of course it is. That's why such a programme must be linked to the nationalisation of the big monopolies, the banks and financial institutions, to be run under workers control and management. That's the only way we can free all the finance and resources necessary to prepare this country for the twenty first century. That's the only 'welfare reform' that will work.



Organising the fightback on workplace rights

The Employment Bill (based on the Fairness at Work proposals) has finally been published and is currently working its way through Parliament. It is expected to be on the statute book by July. Like any legislation enacted or awards made by New Labour it is designed to minimise the effects on the profitability of big business. Inevitably this also means minimising the benefits available to the workers.

by Stuart McGee

The minimum wage, which is a bare minimum, and the recent wage rise to a small section of nurses and head teachers are typical examples of this kind of approach. The minimum wage is heralded as a significant reform but at £3.60 per hour if you are 22 or over, £3.00 per hour if you are 18 to 21 and exemption if you are 16 or 17 it is indeed a minimum wage that will not harm big business profits and will hardly benefit anyone.

The 12% rise for new nurses is to be welcomed but this only affects 7% of nurses and they are only one section of health service employees. The much smaller rises of the other 93% of nurses and the rest of the health services employees does virtually nothing to

redress the balance as far as the decline in wages in recent years is concerned. We will continue to see a haemorrhaging of experienced staff from the health service with the subsequent decline in patient care. Still it looks O.K. on the surface and it keeps public spending in check which is a vital concern to those in the business community.

The same could be said in the teaching profession with headteachers receiving significant rises while teacher only receive 3.5%. The principle is the same, make it look like something is being done but don't do anything that might damage the profitability of big business.

The Employment Bill is no different. There are some positive elements which are to be welcomed. However there are elements that are so conditional that the only people set to benefit will be those employed in the legal profession. There are some parts of the bill that will no doubt be used by some employers to implement counter reforms like the de-recognition of unions. First lets look at some of the positive aspects of the bill.

- The minimum length of employment necessary to be eligible to apply to a tribunal for unfair dismissal has been reduced from two years to one.

- The maximum level of an award that a tribunal can award a worker has been raised from £12,500 to £50,000.

- There will be a right to union recognition if more than 40% of a workforce vote in a successful ballot for union recognition.

The right to automatic recognition if it is demonstrable that a union has 50% + 1 of a workforce in membership in a defined bargaining unit has remained as part of the bill, despite pressure from the employers. However this aspect of the bill has now been opened to legal challenge. This is now possible on the basis of a clause that has been inserted stating that the central arbitration committee will have the right to impose a ballot if it accepts an employers contention that "granting automatic union recognition will not be conducive to sustainable and good industrial relations."

An employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a union on "serious" grievance or disciplinary matters. What constitutes "serious" will no doubt be the source of much contention, legal precedents and nice fat wage cheques for the lawyers.

There are also useful clauses in relation to what are being termed "family friendly policies".

- A right to maternity leave after one years employment instead of two.

- An increase in maternity leave to 18 weeks.

- The right to parental leave in emergencies adoption leave and so on.

However when these things are examined in more detail and put into context the spin starts to lose its shine.

As far as the family friendly parts of the bill are concerned it was necessary for the government to introduce this minimum legislation in any event to comply with European directives. The government spin doctors will nevertheless have us believing that this is the initiative of a good and caring government.

What they haven't made too much of is the fact that this is all unpaid. There is also an issue here about employers who give paid parental leave looking to level down.



Demonstrate for union rights

On 2nd February over 250 trade unionists packed a committee room in parliament to hear Tony Benn MP and Arthur Scargill speak on the governments Fairness at Work proposals.

There are other bits and pieces that provide a useful soundbite like ensuring that the blacklisting of trade unionists is dealt with. Unfortunately there are no concrete proposals at this moment in time as to how this will be achieved and we will no doubt be looking with anticipation at the proposals that come forth as the bill makes its way through the legislative process.

Some of the shortcomings with these reforms are glaringly obvious.

- The eligibility to apply to an industrial tribunal after one year instead of two looks positive on the surface but in reality will lead to unscrupulous employers sacking people after 11 months instead of 23. Why is it not possible to give workers employment rights from day one? Surely if someone is dismissed unfairly it shouldn't matter how long they have been employed. Whether they have been unfairly dismissed is the only relevant criteria that should apply.

- The increase in the ceiling for awards is to be welcomed but if you cannot get your job back and are unemployed for years as will be the case for many the £50,000 maximum (and maximum is the word that needs to be stressed) may sound a lot but in reality won't go far. Why can tribunals not be given the right to order reinstatement or at least be able to award the appropriate compensation which of necessity would mean removing the ceiling altogether?

- On the question of recognition the issues such as defining a bargaining unit and establishing how many employees are employed in a bargaining unit is another issue that will give lawyers a field day. If a bargaining unit employs 20 workers or less then the employer will be exempted from the recognition legislation. If there are over 20 and have to have a ballot, the numbers employed in a defined workplace becomes critical in establishing the criteria for what would constitute a successful vote. This will no doubt become a bone of contention.

The bill points out that when defining a bargaining unit it is necessary to ensure that it is "compatible with effective management" and that it does not interfere with "existing national and

local bargaining arrangements."

In the first instance disputes of this nature will be referred to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). This is the body that will adjudicate on disputes arising from implementation of the legislation. Once again the employers are ahead of the game pressurising the government over who will be sitting on this body.

The progressive reforms in the bill are so minimal and so conditional that only a small percentage of workers will benefit. Even then that will be dependent on how well the unions organise to ensure recruitment and the implementation of the reforms within the legislation are put into practice.

There are also many aspects of the bill that will be used by the employers to carry out a counter offensive against the unions. In an article in the Financial Times on 29/1/99 it was pointed out that "The ballot can only go ahead if a significant number of union members in the bargaining unit inform the CAC they do not want the union or unions to conduct collective bargaining on their behalf or to be recognised". At first this appeared somewhat baffling but then the penny dropped. They are advising employers that if they so wish they can use the legislation to de recognise unions. They also went on that even if recognition was forced through there is no compulsion contained within the bill to force employers to negotiate in good faith.

It has already been reported in the press that union busting firms from the USA are approaching British firms to solicit contracts to advise on how to keep the unions out of the workplace.

In the Observer of 24/1/99 it was reported that "the leading union busting law practice in the U.S. Jackson Lewis Schnitzler and Krugman is advising U.S. companies in Britain on how to keep unions out of the workplace. It plans to bring its union free seminars here this year. Martin Payson, senior partner in the firm's New York office said U.K. firms had a lot to learn."

No doubt if effective lobbies and protests are mounted at such events the British trade unions could teach Mr. Payson and his friends that they might have a thing or two to learn as well.

The meeting had been called by the Reclaim Our Rights campaign. It was pointed out by the speakers that the proposed legislation did next to nothing to address the fundamental question of repealing the Tory anti union legislation. The anti union legislation makes it virtually impossible to organise effective 'legal' industrial action in this country and those present at the meeting heard graphic examples from workers in dispute of how they had suffered at the hands of the employers using the anti union legislation.

The Hillingdon workers, representatives from the Magnet dispute and those on strike in the Skychef Lufthansa dispute all told their own stories of how employers had attempted to drive down wages and conditions. When they met with resistance from the workforce, dismissals ensued.

There was another common thread among these and other disputes - in most cases there was a reluctance on the part of national trade union leaders to properly stand up for their members.

Tony Benn pointed out that governments are being increasingly controlled by stock market gamblers in the interests of global capitalism rather than running the country in the interest of the people who elected them.

Arthur Scargill pointed out that ultimately it will be a mass movement from below that will render the anti union laws unworkable.

Trade unionists should be organising industrially and politically in the trade unions and the Labour Party for the repeal of the anti union laws.

The United Campaign for the repeal of the anti union laws (which incorporates the Reclaim our Rights campaign) has the backing of nine national trade unions and hundreds of regional, branch and shop stewards committees from all over the country.

On Mayday they are organising a demonstration in London against the anti union laws, from Clerkenwell Green to Trafalgar Square. *Socialist Appeal* urges all of its readers to make every effort to attend this demonstration bringing along as many sympathetic trade unionists as possible.

However while it is important that battles are waged to improve this legislation and ensure the progressive parts are implemented as effectively as possible we must not lose sight of the bigger picture.

This legislation does nothing to repeal the nine separate pieces of anti union legislation that were enacted under the Tories. It is still virtually impossible to take successful legal industrial action in this country. The inability to take legal solidarity action, the restrictions on picketing and issues of this nature have all been covered in previous issues of Socialist Appeal. It is enough to note that Tony Blair can still brag to his friends in the business community that Britain still has the most deregulated labour market in the industrialised world.

The fact is that Britain under a Labour Government has not seen these laws repealed (despite the fact that in opposition Labour voted against every piece of the Tory's Anti Union legislation) and is still in contravention of International Labour Organisation Conventions.

So what are the unions in Britain going to do about it? It has to be said that if some of the fine words uttered by trade union leaders a year ago about organising demonstrations that would eclipse the quarter of a million strong countryside alliance demonstration had

been acted upon perhaps the bill we are faced with at the moment wouldn't be so weak.

There is no doubt that demonstrations in and of themselves are not enough but an official demonstration in the first instance would be a big step in the right direction.

A demonstration of this nature now coupled with a plan of action targeting non union workplaces for recruitment and recognition drives would be the most effective way forward. In conjunction with this could be a series of public meetings up and down the country to explain the issues and bring the campaign closer to the workplaces, the stewards committees and trade councils where it really matters.

In some areas trades councils and local trade union branches are already organising such meetings and are leafletting local workplaces and shopping centres. This will raise the issue and the profile of the trade union movement.

Hand in hand with the campaign on the industrial front should be the campaign on the political front. For years Labour Party activists have been accepting an ever increasing right wing agenda from the leadership based first of all on a desire to get rid of the Tories. Following this there was a mood of give them a chance. However as time has gone on and it has become more and more

apparent that any reforms are so negligible that pressure has to be mounted within the party to redress the balance.

Already unions like the AEU and the TGWU are campaigning to get their members more involved in the party. Standing outside of the party complaining is increasingly becoming an untenable and impotent position to adopt. If more and more trade unionists and young workers became involved in the party the more difficult it would become for the leadership to pull the party further to the right while conning people that they are implementing reforms that are virtually meaningless.

The Financial Times editorial commenting on the bill summed it up "So how much is there in the legislation for business to fear? Not a lot."

The so called social partnership coveted by some of our right wing trade union leaders has achieved next to nothing in relation to meaningful reforms. It is time for the unions to change course and recognise the fact that in a capitalist society employers and big business will consistently strive to drive down wages and conditions to maximise profit. Unless the unions fight tooth and nail to ensure that workers are properly represented we end up with at best weak legislation of this nature with Tory anti union laws still on the statute book.

Trade unions should:

- Use the progressive parts of the Fairness At Work legislation for a massive union recruitment drive.
- Organise a massive demonstration based on a campaign for the repeal all of the Tories Anti Trade Union Laws.
- Campaign to encourage as many of their members as possible to join and become active in the Labour party.

Shop stewards and other union activists should:

- Put resolutions through union branches and stewards committees pressuring the union leaders to call effective national action to improve on the fairness at work proposals.

- Campaign in the Labour Party through wards, management committees and policy forums for a strengthening of Fairness at Work and the abolition of all the Tory anti union laws.



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There are other bits and pieces that provide a useful soundbite like ensuring that the blacklisting of trade unionists is dealt with. Unfortunately there are no concrete proposals at this moment in time as to how this will be achieved and we will no doubt be looking with anticipation at the proposals that come forth as the bill makes its way through the legislative process.

Some of the shortcomings with these reforms are glaringly obvious.

- The eligibility to apply to an industrial tribunal after one year instead of two looks positive on the surface but in reality will lead to unscrupulous employers sacking people after 11 months instead of 23. Why is it not possible to give workers employment rights from day one? Surely if someone is dismissed unfairly it shouldn't matter how long they have been employed. Whether they have been unfairly dismissed is the only relevant criteria that should apply.

- The increase in the ceiling for awards is to be welcomed but if you cannot get your job back and are unemployed for years as will be the case for many the £50,000 maximum (and maximum is the word that needs to be stressed) may sound a lot but in reality won't go far. Why can tribunals not be given the right to order reinstatement or at least be able to award the appropriate compensation which of necessity would mean removing the ceiling altogether?

- On the question of recognition the issues such as defining a bargaining unit and establishing how many employees are employed in a bargaining unit is another issue that will give lawyers a field day. If a bargaining unit employs 20 workers or less then the employer will be exempted from the recognition legislation. If there are over 20 and have to have a ballot, the numbers employed in a defined workplace becomes critical in establishing the criteria for what would constitute a successful vote. This will no doubt become a bone of contention.

The bill points out that when defining a bargaining unit it is necessary to ensure that it is "compatible with effective management" and that it does not interfere with "existing national and

local bargaining arrangements."

In the first instance disputes of this nature will be referred to the Central Arbitration Committee (CAC). This is the body that will adjudicate on disputes arising from implementation of the legislation. Once again the employers are ahead of the game pressuring the government over who will be sitting on this body.

The progressive reforms in the bill are so minimal and so conditional that only a small percentage of workers will benefit. Even then that will be dependent on how well the unions organise to ensure recruitment and the implementation of the reforms within the legislation are put into practice.

There are also many aspects of the bill that will be used by the employers to carry out a counter offensive against the unions. In an article in the Financial Times on 29/1/99 it was pointed out that "The ballot can only go ahead if a significant number of union members in the bargaining unit inform the CAC they do not want the union or unions to conduct collective bargaining on their behalf or to be recognised". At first this appeared somewhat baffling but then the penny dropped. They are advising employers that if they so wish they can use the legislation to de recognise unions. They also went on that even if recognition was forced through there is no compulsion contained within the bill to force employers to negotiate in good faith.

It has already been reported in the press that union busting firms from the USA are approaching British firms to solicit contracts to advise on how to keep the unions out of the workplace.

In the Observer of 24/1/99 it was reported that "the leading union busting law practice in the U.S. Jackson Lewis Schnitzler and Krugman is advising U.S. companies in Britain on how to keep unions out of the workplace. It plans to bring its union free seminars here this year. Martin Payson, senior partner in the firm's New York office said U.K. firms had a lot to learn."

No doubt if effective lobbies and protests are mounted at such events the British trade unions could teach Mr. Payson and his friends that they might have a thing or two to learn as well.

However while it is important that battles are waged to improve this legislation and ensure the progressive parts are implemented as effectively as possible we must not lose sight of the bigger picture.

This legislation does nothing to repeal the nine separate pieces of anti union legislation that were enacted under the Tories. It is still virtually impossible to take successful legal industrial action in this country. The inability to take legal solidarity action, the restrictions on picketing and issues of this nature have all been covered in previous issues of Socialist Appeal. It is enough to note that Tony Blair can still brag to his friends in the business community that Britain still has the most deregulated labour market in the industrialised world.

The fact is that Britain under a Labour Government has not seen these laws repealed (despite the fact that in opposition Labour voted against every piece of the Tory's Anti Union legislation) and is still in contravention of International Labour Organisation Conventions.

So what are the unions in Britain going to do about it? It has to be said that if some of the fine words uttered by trade union leaders a year ago about organising demonstrations that would eclipse the quarter of a million strong countryside alliance demonstration had

been acted upon perhaps the bill we are faced with at the moment wouldn't be so weak.

There is no doubt that demonstrations in and of themselves are not enough but an official demonstration in the first instance would be a big step in the right direction.

A demonstration of this nature now coupled with a plan of action targeting non union workplaces for recruitment and recognition drives would be the most effective way forward. In conjunction with this could be a series of public meetings up and down the country to explain the issues and bring the campaign closer to the workplaces, the stewards committees and trade councils where it really matters.

In some areas trades councils and local trade union branches are already organising such meetings and are leafletting local workplaces and shopping centres. This will raise the issue and the profile of the trade union movement.

Hand in hand with the campaign on the industrial front should be the campaign on the political front. For years Labour Party activists have been accepting an ever increasing right wing agenda from the leadership based first of all on a desire to get rid of the Tories. Following this there was a mood of give them a chance. However as time has gone on and it has become more and more

apparent that any reforms are so negligible that pressure has to be mounted within the party to redress the balance.

Already unions like the AEEU and the TGWU are campaigning to get their members more involved in the party. Standing outside of the party complaining is increasingly becoming an untenable and impotent position to adopt. If more and more trade unionists and young workers became involved in the party the more difficult it would become for the leadership to pull the party further to the right while conning people that they are implementing reforms that are virtually meaningless.

The Financial Times editorial commenting on the bill summed it up "So how much is there in the legislation for business to fear? Not a lot."

The so called social partnership coveted by some of our right wing trade union leaders has achieved next to nothing in relation to meaningful reforms. It is time for the unions to change course and recognise the fact that in a capitalist society employers and big business will consistently strive to drive down wages and conditions to maximise profit. Unless the unions fight tooth and nail to ensure that workers are properly represented we end up with at best weak legislation of this nature with Tory anti union laws still on the statute book.

Trade unions should:

- Use the progressive parts of the Fairness At Work legislation for a massive union recruitment drive.
- Organise a massive demonstration based on a campaign for the repeal all of the Tories Anti Trade Union Laws.
- Campaign to encourage as many of their members as possible to join and become active in the Labour party.

Shop stewards and other union activists should:

- Put resolutions through union branches and stewards committees pressuring the union leaders to call effective national action to improve on the fairness at work proposals.

- Campaign in the Labour Party through wards, management committees and policy forums for a strengthening of Fairness at Work and the abolition of all the Tory anti union laws.



Stop Straw's racist Asylum Bill

Jack Straws racist immigration and asylum bill: ● Removes asylum seekers right to welfare benefit and replaces it with a degrading food voucher system.

- compels asylum seekers to live in designated accommodation which could be in any part of the country (and where it is possible they will not have access to expert legal or interpreting services) with the loss of assistance if they refuse to comply.
- Gives legal powers to immigration officers to arrest, search and detain.
- Extends the use of privately run (for profit) detention centres and increases the power of custody officers employed by the private contractors.

by Richard Smith

The proposed legislation is in response to the alleged influx of asylum seekers and 'economic migrants' arriving in Britain. The reality is somewhat different. Britain is one of the largest and wealthiest countries in Europe and yet it is only 11th in the list in terms of the number of asylum seekers it admits per head of population.

The editorial in the Evening Standard of 9th February gives the game away. In an attempt to whip up discrimination they write "Of the 32,500 people who applied for asylum in 1997, almost 25,000 were found to have abused the system and were turned down. Last year more than 46,000 people applied for asylum, a similar proportion, of whom, will no doubt be in a similar category of illegal immigrants."

The first thing that this reveals is the fact that the system itself is inherently racist and the whole method and approach of dealing with asylum seekers is geared to ensuring that as many applicants as possible are rejected.

What it also shows is that less than 8,000 asylum seekers gained entry to this country in 1997 and only around 12,000 can expect to have gained entry in 1998.

To be forced to flee your home in fear of persecution is horrific enough. The prospect of starting a new life in a different country adjusting to cultural and language difficulties is another enormous

challenge. To have had to justify your presence to an institutionally racist system with only a one in four chance of gaining asylum is a disgrace.

In these circumstances it is entirely reasonable to expect a Labour government to take steps to alleviate the suffering of those seeking asylum in Britain.

Unfortunately the opposite seems to be happening: Pandering to the tabloid press and the prejudices of so called middle England, the immigration and asylum bill makes thing worse for those fleeing persecution.

Jack Straw claims that the legislation will speed up the process of dealing with applications. If this were genuine and based on a fair and non discriminatory process that ensured that asylum seekers were treated properly whilst waiting for their cases to be heard it would be a step in the right direction.

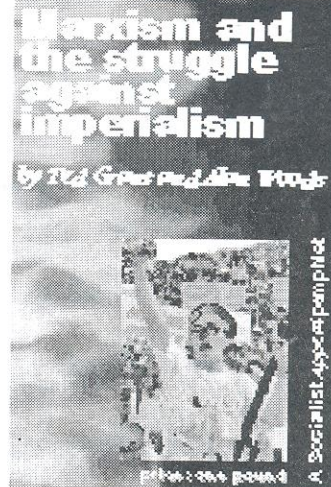
Unfortunately it is not and the plan to have all cases heard within two months, and all appeals within a further four, is merely a ploy to appear to be dealing with a question more fairly and efficiently.

What it is, in reality, is an attempt to reject applications and deport asylum seekers in a shorter period of time.

It is ironic that those who supply the arms and who are responsible for fermenting the conflicts that lead to people seeking asylum in the first place are also those who treat asylum seekers so appallingly when they arrive in countries like Britain.

- Stop Jack Straw's racist Immigration and Asylum Bill.
- Repeal all racist immigration legislation.
- End the arms trade and foreign interference that gives rise to the conflicts that create mass migration in the first instance.
- For the free movement of all people without fear of institutional or overt racism.

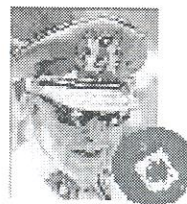
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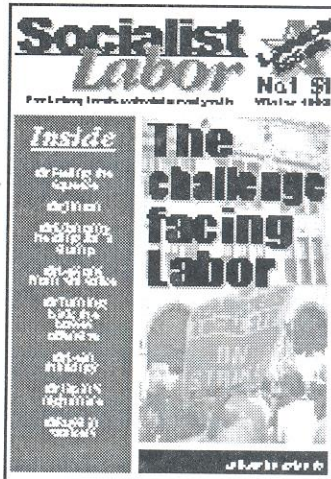
by Alan Woods



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Fighting against the low pay scandal

The national demonstration organised by Unison on Saturday 10th April is beginning to build up a head of steam. In last month's journal we reported that nine national unions had officially backed the demonstration. This has now grown to over twenty and the general council of the TUC has given its official backing. With the National Union of Students and various youth organisations backing the march there should be a massive turnout.

by *Stuart McGee*

If things are organised competently and there is the political will to put the main issues at the forefront it should be a very successful event. Already Unison has launched a national poster campaign to build support for the demonstration and radio advertising is planned to promote the event in the near future.

In many areas of the country unions are booking coaches and trains to take their members to Newcastle.

In London Unison has booked a special train with 550 seats. The GMB has booked 100 seats on a train travelling from London. In Keele and Stafford

Universities the Labour clubs have passed resolutions of support and arrangements are underway to organise transport for the day.

In some areas local trades councils are organising public meetings to raise the issue and build support for the 10th April.

Every trade unionist should be making every effort to get on this demonstration if they possibly can. Socialist Appeal is urging all of its readers to do likewise and to bring along anyone who is sympathetic.

However there is a word of caution. This is the first major trade union demonstration under the Labour Government. There are those in the trade union movement loyal to the leadership of the Labour party who are not happy that this protest is taking place at all. Recognising that it was impossible to stop the demonstration given the amount of pressure that was developing they have now adopted a fall back position that seeks to de politicise the march.

There are a number of contemporary bands and artists who will be performing at the event and it is very good that these people are helping to make this day a success.

However there is a danger of sec-

ondary issues of this nature being promoted to a position of primary importance.

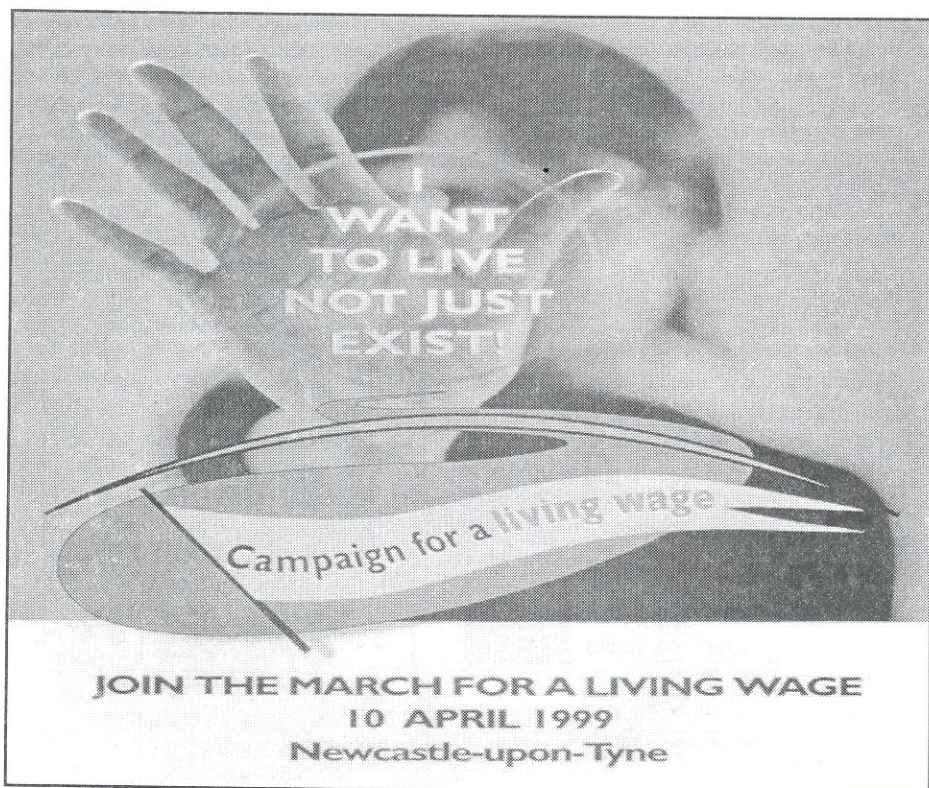
In such circumstances the clear political message to the government that should be coming across as a result of the demonstration could be obscured. This cannot be allowed to happen this demonstration is to protest to the government in the clearest possible terms that:

- The level that the minimum wage has been set at £3.60 per hour is woefully inadequate.
- The discrimination against young people by setting the rate at £3.00 per hour for 18 to 21 year olds and excluding 16 and 17 year olds is totally unacceptable.
- The minimum wage should be set initially at half male median earnings (after last month's rise in the index this now means £4.79 per hour)
- This should rise over a relatively short period of time to two thirds of male median earnings (this would mean approximately £7.20 per hour)
- An effective uprating and enforcement system to ensure that the minimum rate does not lose its value and that employers not abiding by the legislation have effective sanctions levelled against them.

These are of course only minimum demands, if a meaningful minimum wage is to become a reality the whole economic system that basis itself on greed and profit has to be brought into question. If those that own the wealth as opposed to those who created it continue to own the means of production and exchange it is inevitable that they will consistently try and drive down the level of the minimum wage to maximise their profits. In the final analysis they would try to abolish the minimum wage altogether.

Only a Labour government committed to socialist policies could ensure that a minimum wage set at a reasonable level with no age discrimination could be implemented and maintained for any length of time.

- Support the union campaign for a decent minimum wage for all.
- Support the campaign inside of the Labour party for socialist policies. Support the union campaign for a decent minimum wage for all.
- Support the campaign inside of the Labour party for socialist policies.



Abolish the House of Lords!

The announcement that the first steps are being taken to abolish the House of Lords will be welcomed by many in the movement. But what is being proposed to take its place and is the government going far enough?

by Steve Jones

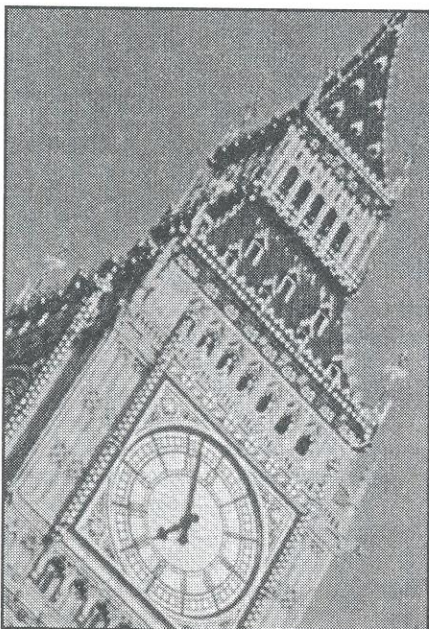
Socialists have long recognised the reactionary role of the House of Lords. But how could it be otherwise? We are talking about an unelected body filled with people who represent the dregs of the old aristocracy alongside a selection of ex-politicians, placemen and show-business relics hiding together under the collective title of 'life peers.' How these people get to be considered our peers and betters is a rather interesting question which tends to be avoided.

For the hereditary peers it is a case of having been given the job by virtue of birth. They owe their right to decide over us to the actions of their feudal ancestors who gained their great titles mainly by murdering and stealing from their colleagues and managing to end up on the winning side in times of conflict. It is an interesting fact about these upper class families that they have largely failed to produce any great writers or artists, despite all their upbringing

and wealth. Could it be that this blue blood is not all it is cracked up to be?

Watching this strange band of characters dozing away at Westminster it is tempting to dismiss them as a joke. But this would be wrong. Like the monarchy, they are there to play a very serious role for capitalism should the need arise. We have seen how they have been used over the last year as a means to disrupt and delay the business of the Labour government, with the threat of more to come. Complete with an unelected in-built Tory majority they have exposed themselves for what they are—a crude device to hamper and protect against any unwelcome measures sneaking through the first chamber, irrespective of the wishes of the voters. The bizarre pomp and ceremony adopted by institutions like this is intended not as a strange example of British humour but rather to attempt to give some mystical credence to what would otherwise be seen as nothing short of a disgrace.

Socialists should stand 100% for the total abolition of the House of Lords (and the monarchy)—no ifs, no buts and especially no exceptions. Much has been said about setting up a replacement second chamber which again seems likely to have a non-elected element. This too should be opposed. It is simply an attempt to replace one body of the state with another one equally equipped to act in the interests of the ruling class. When the representatives of the ruling class talk about the need for "checks and balances in a parliamentary democracy" what they really mean the need to ensure that things remain firmly under their control. The bosses remain quite clear that democracy should only be relative so far as us and them are concerned. We should never forget that we will never really have control over our lives, even under a so-called parliamentary democracy, until we own and control the means of production under socialism. Only then will we see the final removal not only of these Lords and Ladies but also of the system they represent and defend.



Blair 'project': Ashdown tells all

Socialist Appeal has explained that the Blairites' intention is to destroy the Labour Party by breaking the union link and transforming it into a capitalist party. This has been commonly referred to as the 'project.' However, Blair has met with big obstacles in furthering this aim, especially after the resignation of Mandelson from the Cabinet.

Now, according to Ashdown, Blair's secret ambition is to split the Labour Party. "He also claimed," reported the *Financial Times*, "Mr Blair supported a switch to proportional representation for Westminster elections, because it would encourage the Labour schism to take place." (4/2/99)

Ashdown envisaged a 'progressive coalition' after the next election composed of New Labour, Liberal Democrats and a few 'left wing' Conservatives. The Blairites would certainly favour this as politically they all come from the same stable. What is there to choose politically between the likes of Blair, Ashdown and Ken Clarke? They are all pro-big business politicians.

"Under our current voting system, a breakaway of the left (from the Labour Party) is not impossible," Ashdown said in a speech at the Royal Society of Arts. "They could be pushed into it, for Blair would not miss them. But it could only come from desperation, as it would be electorally doomed."

The *Financial Times* commented: "Mr Ashdown's words will send a shudder through many Labour MPs, who fear that this scenario has been discussed at length between the two party leaders over whisky at Number 10."

This should not only alarm Labour MPs, but the whole of the rank and file.

Let us not fool ourselves. Blair and Ashdown have discussed this scenario many times. It is public knowledge they discussed forming a coalition government prior to the 1997 general election, only to be temporarily thwarted by Labour's huge majority.

These comments by Ashdown must be taken as a clear warning by the rank and file of the Labour Party. Blair wants to split the party and become the head of a coalition government. The Blairites have thrown down the gauntlet. The rank and file must take up the challenge!

Miner's strike looms

The National Union of Mineworkers is currently balloting for all out industrial action in relation to the derisory pay offer from RJB Mining.

The offer, amounting to a reduction in wages by 1% each year for the next four years, is so derisory that even the UDM has voted in favour of industrial action.

When the NUM ballot is announced it is expected that the majority vote will be translated into action within the first few weeks of March unless there is a substantial improvement in the offer.

This will be the first national industrial action the NUM has been involved in since the 1984/85 strike and it is essential that if action does take place the entire labour and trade union movement gives its backing to the miners.

Nigel Pearce

ROVER CRISIS

Longbridge threatened again

Rover's Longbridge plant is under threat again after a boardroom coup at BMW. Despite the reluctant acceptance of BMW's demands to introduce new 'flexible' working hours last year, management have raised the question of closure yet again.

Bernd Pischetsrieder, the supposedly pro-Rover chairman at BMW, has been forced out. Although his rival and leading proponent for the closure of Longbridge, Wolfgang Reitzle, also went.

Rumours are now rife. Closure, investment tied to substantial government aid or sell-off to Ford. The fact that Reitzle went straight into a job as head of Global Development at Ford would give workers no sense of security. A Ford deal would mean 'rationalisation' of their UK operation with either the closure of Longbridge

or Dagenham a strong possibility.

The government seems likely to try and step in with financial aid to BMW to stave off closure. But as we've seen, no matter what is given management can very rapidly come back for more.

BMW itself is in a very vulnerable position. The global car industry is 'rationalising' like mad, and it's survival as an independent company is seen by many as only temporary. In this sort of climate its boardroom decisions will not be taken in the interests of the 14,000 Longbridge workers and the West Midlands generally.

The bosses have failed at Rover. It's time we raised the question of nationalisation and workers control. It's the only way to safeguard jobs and give car production a secure future in Britain.

Substantial pay rise needed to halt education crisis

The pay award for teachers is an insult. The government claimed that education is their top priority. Last year they paid us little and then staggered the award, which meant not paying us our pay rise for 9 months of the year. This year they have added insult to injury with less than 4%.

*by Bryan Beckingham
Oldham NUT Secretary*

Our members are angry at seeing a head teacher being paid an increase of up to £2700 in Primary and £1600 in Secondary and our members doing the teaching getting a rise of £400 or £500 per year before stoppages! If Blunkett wants teachers to be motivated he is showing a funny way of doing it. Like the philosophy of the Green Paper released recently this pay award says to us: we will pay a few of you a decent rise but the rest will be treated with contempt.

This award pays more to those that have decent pay already and very little to the teachers doing the job in the classroom. The increase in differentials is more

about the government hoping to use heads to run performance related pay next year than about paying people a proper wage for the job we are doing.

We have a recruitment crisis. Applications for postgraduate training are down by 10%. We have a retention crisis. 50% of new entrants to teaching leave within 5 years.

Blair sings the praises one minute of dedicated public servants and then kicks us in the teeth. The NUT will continue to argue for a £2000 rise for all teachers plus 3% for inflation. We have fallen way behind over the last 15 years with comparable jobs and we must have a substantial pay rise. If the government wants to succeed in their aims of driving up standards in education, they need to recruit and motivate teachers.

With this award they have done the opposite. It will prove impossible to achieve the government's aims by bullying or threatening. It can only be achieved by improving our pay and conditions.

According to the local government spokesperson, Graham Lane, the government have even failed to fund the local

authorities sufficient money to pay even this miserable rise. In Oldham we have a budget crisis based on predictions of a 2.5% pay rise. This could mean cuts in education and larger class sizes. The government not only gives us an insulting pay rise they are even refusing to fund it properly.

What schools need are smaller class sizes, more time for teachers to mark and prepare as non class contact time, less bureaucracy and people on our back, and a decent pay rise. Until this happens education standards will not rise the way we want.

We have a committed and dedicated teaching staff. They are working under intense pressure and sometimes difficult conditions. This government is throwing away the opportunity they had to turn education around with the attacks they are making on teachers. This pay insult is one more message to our members that the government does not value them. We would urge parents, governors and teachers to make their views known to their local MPs and the government.

London Mayor: Organise a fighting campaign!

Despite delaying the final decision it still looks very likely that Labour's National Executive will deliver a massive snub to Londoners by voting through a stitch-up arrangement for selecting Labour's candidate for London Mayor. Technically this will mean that a system of self-nomination will be followed by processing by a vetting committee prior to the final shortlist going to a ballot of party members. Everybody knows what this really means—a manoeuvre to stop former GLC leader Ken Livingstone's name going on the ballot paper.

by Dave Bryson

Livingstone is clearly the leading candidate to become Labour's choice as has been confirmed by poll after poll. Yet we are seeing a blatant campaign to stop his name going forward. This has already angered a large number of Labour Party branches and members in London, including those who would not personally support Livingstone but believe their democratic rights have been attacked. The threatened procedure would be going against the decision of the last London Labour Party conference which decided that branches and affiliated organisations should be able to nominate, with any candidate getting the nomination of 10 CLPs or more being automatically shortlisted.

It certainly represents another nail in the coffin of the One Member One Vote (OMOV) system so touted a few years ago. The reality is that this method was always intended by the right wing as nothing more than a sham democracy, at best a rubber stamping device for the edicts of the leadership. Where it has not produced the 'right' results (as with the NEC elections) then the rules have been changed. It's time to demand that the membership is given full democratic rights and controls over our party rather than leaving it in the hands of the spin doctors and SDP carpetbaggers.

Whilst we would have some serious criticisms of Livingstone's record and would certainly not support his silly tactic of writing statements buttering up to Blair, we would nevertheless support his right to be a candidate and, more importantly, the right of party members in London to select him if they so wish.

The attempts of the Millbank machine to dig up an alternative choice for candidate have so far been laughable and show how desperate they are. Indeed there is still the suspicion that they would like to support a 'non-party political' (i.e. pro-capitalist) candidate like Richard Branson. The Blairites seem terrified that the London Mayor and the London Assembly (another body where a stitch-up seems in the offing) will act like the old GLC in the 1980s as a focal point for opposition to the government. We would remind those who have expressed such concerns that if the government were to carry out socialist measures and act in the interests of ordinary people then they would have nothing to fear from Londoners, quite the reverse. Failing that then it should be the duty of any Labour led authority worth its salt to stand up to measures of the government which are seen to be against the working class.

Lets hope that Livingstone and others are serious when they say that they are prepared to organise a fighting campaign over this issue to defend the rights of the London Labour movement against the machinations of the rightwing. Such a campaign, especially if it involved a clear mobilisation of the movement around the defence of socialism, would get a tremendous response from party activists and Londoners alike. We want to see the election campaign for the Mayor and assembly fought on a socialist programme with socialist candidates who will defend the workers of London against the attacks of big business and act as an example to the rest of the movement, as Liverpool did in the 1980s.

A socialist programme for local government

Socialists have always said you can't have socialism in one country. Still less can we build socialism in one city. Thatcher and the Tories presided over a massive centralisation of power at the expense of democratic local government. First they abolished outright the GLC and the Metropolitan Borough Councils because they would not do their bidding. Secondly they farmed out many of the responsibilities of local councils to quangos stuffed with Tory appointees. Finally they hamstrung the remaining local councils with a vicious system of capping and financial control aimed at turning them into little more than local agencies of Tory attacks on the working class and the poor.

A democratic authority for London is a necessary institution for Londoners. We must strive to use it as a lever to make changes at a local level to build a movement for a better London as part of a socialist Britain.

- Billions of pounds were stolen from local authorities by the Tories. Labour must restore the Tory spending cuts. A London Labour Authority must build a campaign among its own workforce and the organised labour and trade union movement of London for the resources necessary to start tackling London's many problems.
- It must restore full democratic decision-making powers snatched from local government by the Tories
- Link up with other Labour councils and campaign for the extra resources needed for local government
- Say no to fat salaries for the mayor! Any Labour candidate should be committed to run on a worker's average wage.
- Assembly members should be subject to recall at any time by their local Labour Party.

Where is the money to come from? Not by getting into arguments with other Labour authorities about our share of a pot that's too small, but by making the pot bigger. After all we have the same problems as workers in other cities in Britain. We all need a change in society. A planned economy, by using the human and material resources that now lie idle, will have no problem in providing the facilities we need and are entitled to in our cities. It is capitalism that is clogging up the roads and polluting our city. It is capitalism that must go.

You may have a job, but how about a life?

The Labour leaders are forever extolling the virtues of the 'new capitalism.' Based on high technology and a flexible labour market, we are being sold the line that Britain can face the future, competing with the best in the global economy, creating more jobs than ever before - even smoothing out the 'old' boom and bust economic cycle. Reality, however, seems strangely different. Instead of the high tech, high wage economy of Blairite mythology, just look around at what the 'new economy' really means - high stress, low pay, redundancy (or 'career change' as it is now known), self employment (no employment protection), short term contracts, part time working and all the rest of it.

by Alastair Wilson

All the old certainties have gone - 'cradle to grave' welfare, free education, decent healthcare, a job for life. Back in the 1970s the bosses decided they couldn't afford these things any longer and unleashed the Thatcherite juggernaut that would 'roll back the frontiers of the state,' 'take on the unions,' 'free the individual,' and so on. Their eighteen year 'counter revolution' is now being carried on by Blair and the right wing labour leaders. In total awe of the 'market' just as the markets head towards a yawning abyss they

have become 'new capitalism's' most eager champions. Peter Mandelson, now 'between jobs,' declared as head of the DTI that he was an 'industrial revolutionary.' This did not mean that he had some new ideas on the steam engine, but rather he was a leading supporter of the bosses long 'workplace offensive.' His successor, Steven Byers, has now declared the 'unthinkable,' that wealth creation is more important than wealth distribution. In other words the bosses get a blank cheque from the Labour leaders. Workers, on the other hand, can expect very little.

Blair himself has echoed these views. From his 'can't buck the market' lecture to the Fujitsu workers in his own constituency, to his pre-christmas 'we're all middle class now' message, the Labour leadership seem blissfully unaware, or cynically blind, to the realities of life in 1990s Britain. They delude themselves that capitalism has changed and that class is no longer relevant. Blair even went so far as to say that 'ambition' was more important than actual economic position. "A middle class characterised by... greater ambition... whose ambitions are far broader than that of their parents or grandparents." So middle class people are ambitious, and the working class... well they must be happy in their state of poverty. But of course the working class no longer exists!

Recent EU statistics paint a very different picture. Britain has the biggest disparity between rich and poor of any European country. It has the richest region of the EU and some of the poorest. Inner London, on an EU average of 100, scores 222% on the wealth index, making it Europe's richest region, while Cornwall scores only 70% and West Wales and the Valleys a mere 71%, just above Greece on the bottom of the table. Over the last 20 years the richest fifth of the population has seen their share of national income rise from 37% to 43%. Britain's richest 500 people have a combined wealth of over £87 billion.

So Britain is a very divided society. One section of the population ghettoised on rapidly diminishing welfare benefits, another living hand to mouth in low paid, often casual work, sometimes having to juggle two or even three jobs to make ends meet. The biggest majority, once considered the working class, have had to put up with an intolerable pressure, working harder and longer for relatively less and less reward. All in order for the 20% to increase their share even further.

Middle class

And the middle class of Blair's dreams? Well, even here, careers like banking, teaching, the media and so on, have joined the endless list of jobs all but transformed in the wake of the bosses workplace offensive. Yes, many of the old divisions have gone between the working class and the middle class. But Blair is wrong to argue that the middle class has come out on top. In fact, the reverse is true - the vast bulk of what was considered the middle class has now joined the rest of us at the sharp end. A recent opinion poll found that even now 68% of the population considered themselves working class. 76% agreed with the statement, "there is a struggle between the classes," compared with 56% in 1974.

In the past a career in banking or insurance was seen as safe and rather comfortable bet. Now, however, most of the people employed in this sector work in 24 hour call centres, packed with clerks, each with a microphone strapped on so they can talk and tap in details at the same time. Clearly, not fundamentally different from a factory or mine. They can hardly be described as middle class.



Capitalism has sought out every career once thought of as safe and secure and transformed it, proletarianised it. Whoever heard of a banker with an industrial injury - yet levels of RSI and other work related illnesses are now commonplace.

Blair may try and kid us that the 'new economy' is represented by vibrant, high tech, creative entrepreneurs, but it is the call centre that really reflects where we really are. There are now over 7,000 of them, employing 600,000 people. Britain already has over half of all Europe's 'telephone agents,' and the number is set to double over the next two years. And these jobs are the real 'flexibility' - the majority of its employees are women, a substantial minority are part time, many are students, or single mothers, or ex-serVICEMEN, squeezing their way into the labour market by coming in at weekends or overnight or early in the morning. According to Marcus Hickman, a telecommunications expert at the Henley Centre, this new 'flexibility' fits well in modern Britain - low labour rates, few regulations, an advanced phone network, a population more at ease with computers than any other outside the US, and the longest working and shopping hours in Europe.

Call centres

In the call centre all calls are recorded, typing speeds are monitored, so is the duration of every ringing telephone, each visit to the toilet, each departure from the script. In the 1890s Frederick Taylor, the founding father of 'time and motion' management, wrote, "each employee should receive every day clear-cut, definite instructions as to just what he is to do and how he is to do it, and these instructions should be exactly carried out, whether they are right or wrong." The call centre is Taylorism taken to its limit. Rather than something new, somehow modern, 'post-Fordist' future, the 'flexibility' of the 'new economy' is the power of the boss run riot. A recent Unison pamphlet described the 'galley slave conditions' in call centres. It warns of RSI, sore throats, strained eyes, and the creeping stress that comes with scrutiny and performance targets. One call centre worker in four stays less than a year. And where the centres lead other employers will follow. Philip Leach, legal director of the civil liberties pressure group Liberty, says, "we're getting more and more inquiries about e-

mail monitoring, and closed circuit TV in the workplace."

Across manufacturing, too, the bosses have attempted to transform the workplace with a vengeance. 'Lean' techniques, outsourcing, new styles of contract, quality management, 'human resources' - all have been used in blatant moves to tip the balance of power more and more in favour of the employer.

'Time and motion' has always been used in manufacturing since the days of Henry Ford, but the new management 'philosophies' have taken it way beyond what was thought possible. On the traditional assembly line workers would receive a time for a certain job, as long as they met this time through achieving their allotted production quota then everything was OK. You could in fact 'save' time - working a bit faster to give yourself longer breaks or allowing yourself to ease off in the afternoon for instance. But the new organisation of the workplace shatters even these fairly simple controls that a worker has over the pace of production. With concepts like 'quality management' and 'teamworking' any capacity for individual control over what he or she does is squeezed out of the system.

It is no accident that teamworking has been introduced almost across the board. From the call centre to the car assembly plant, workers are now expected to work in teams. Why? Surely it goes against the grain of 'individualistic' capitalism to try and engender co-operation? Well the reality is that there are teams, and then there are teams. Richard Sennett, a sociologist at New York University, describes teamworking as 'the work ethic of a flexible political economy,' which relies on the 'fiction of harmony.' The bosses would love us to believe that we were all a team, that the corporation was a community and so on - but we know different.

In a team you no longer have a boss, it is no longer you, or the union, against management. That's the theory! Teamwork is being used, however, to mask the real conflicts that exist and create a form of domination more pernicious than before. In the past when one worker didn't show up for work, you told the supervisor and it would be management's problem - now it's the teams. When quality problems arise, the team has to sort them out. When targets are not reached, the team has to work it through and find

solutions. The team concept denies the existence of the boss - when we all know the boss is alive and well and earning a great deal more than you could ever dream of. With teamworking the bosses try and create a false community of interest that in reality defends their power, privileges and control of the production process.

In the modern, flexible, re-engineered economy, where we can look forward to an average 11 'career changes' in a typical working life, where we work longer, and harder, and more intensely than before, we have to ask ourselves some serious questions. We may have a job, a car, the occasional holiday. We can shop 24 hours a day and organise a bank loan or a mortgage at 3am. But who gains?

New deal

When the workers at Rover voted for the 'new deal' in 1992 they thought they had a secure future, a job for life, then they were sold off by British Aerospace to BMW. When BMW management demanded more 'flexibility' at the end of 1998, workers reluctantly believed they had no alternative but to accept. Now, one boardroom meeting taking place a long way off from the Midlands has destroyed any hope of a secure future. Not one of the concessions, the new working arrangements or 'flexible' contracts has changed anything. It's still the same old capitalism. Workers will always pay for the bosses problems, pay for the economic crisis until, that is, we change things.

When you hear a Blair or a Mandelson talking about the 'brave new world' of the flexible, modern, creative, high tech economy - switch off. They may have stolen your time, but don't let them take your mind.

Every now and again you get a glimpse of what is possible, of what could be a reality for everyone. Yet under capitalism it seems further and further away.

Only with a democratically drawn up plan of production can we really unleash all the possibilities. A 32 hour week, genuine full employment, decent pay, housing and leisure. There's no reason, as we approach the 21st century, that anyone should be denied these basic essentials. That's why we need to step up the fight for socialism.

1919: Revolution on the Clyde

1999 marks the eightieth anniversary of the events of 1919, when Glasgow and the Clyde area of Scotland were gripped by revolution. A general strike had been called and a huge demonstration congregated in Glasgow's city centre... we reprint Willie Gallacher's vivid eyewitness account of that historic day, the Battle of George Square.

On the morning of Friday 31st, the Clyde district was early astir. From all parts of the area workers came pouring into George Square. Once again we made our platform the plinth of the Gladstone Monument and from this, with one or two comrades up beside me, I addressed the huge gathering while the deputation headed by Shinwell and strengthened by Neil McLean, went in to see the Lord Provost.

The footpath and roadway in front of the monument was packed with strikers. Down towards the post office at the south east corner of the square there was a terrific jam. Lined up in front of the Municipal buildings and therefore right up against the back of the strikers were several rows of policemen.

Suddenly, and without warning of any kind, a signal was given and the police made a savage and totally unexpected assault on the rear of the meeting, smashing right and left with their batons, utterly regardless of whom they hit. Women and children were in the crowd, but this mattered nothing to these 'guardians of the peace.' With brutal ferocity they made their onslaught on defenceless workers.

There was an immediate and irresistible surge forward and before those of us on the platform had time to grasp what had happened, the whole mass was rushing across towards the west

side of the square, with the police maintaining their initial advantage of attacking from the rear.

Rain had fallen during the night and the square was wet and muddy. Men were sprawling all around; and just beneath where I was standing a woman was lying on her side and on her face were the marks of a muddy boot. This is absolutely true.

We all jumped off the the plinth, and as the other comrades stooped to raise the injured woman, I ran across the square to where the Chief Constable was supervising the proceedings, surrounded by a guard of about ten policemen.

Intentions

I rushed through before they were aware of my intentions. I had intended to speak to the Chief Constable and demand he call off his men, but batons were raised all around me, so I struck out. I swung with all the power I had and landed on the Chief Constable. The only thing that saved me then was that too many tried to hit me at once and they got in one another's way. I managed to get in a 'full power' uppercut which caught a constable right on the chin and nearly lifted his head off, before I was battered to the ground. I fell on my back and with my hands pressed to the ground tried to raise myself.

I saw the policeman I had hit with his baton in the air. He was going to smash my face in and I was too weak to get out of his way. Suddenly someone plunged and spread himself over the top of me; and the baton landed, not on my face but on the head of the comrade who had dived in to save me. He was dragged off me semi-conscious and I also was dragged to my feet. Blood was rushing from my head, all over my face and neck; and between blood and mud I was an awful spectacle. We were then half-dragged across the square towards the main entrance to the Municipal Buildings. I had a look at the comrade who had taken the blow that was meant for me. I didn't know him. I hadn't seen him before, but I got to know him well during the trial that followed and through the succeeding years. He was Neil Alexander, a boilermaker, a quiet unas-



suming comrade, the type of worker who makes you feel that faith in the working class is founded on a solid rock.

Now a change was taking place on the west side of the square. After rushing across, the strikers were able to effect a right-about movement. No longer were their backs to the police, they were facing them and fighting back. They had them at a standstill. The noise was deafening and soon penetrated into the quiet of the Council corridor, where the deputation was patiently waiting for a Lord provost who had no intention of seeing them.

Deputation

One of the deputation looked out of a window and discovered to his horror that a battle was raging. This brought the whole delegation out with a rush. Kirkwood was at the front. He got out to the middle of the roadway just as I was being half-dragged towards the Council doorway. He raised his arms in a gesture of protest, when a sergeant, approaching him from the rear, brought down his baton with terrific force on the back of his head. Kirkwood fell flat on his face, unconscious. It was one of the most cowardly and unjustifiable blows I have ever seen struck. Neil McLean who was a pace behind Kirkwood, and who saw the vicious cowardly blow, rushed forward and protested strongly. If it had not been that they were a bit scared by the fact that he was a Member of Parliament, he would have got similar treatment. Kirkwood was picked up unconscious and carried through to the quadrangle of the Municipal Buildings, along with Neil Alexander and myself. Someone gave me a larger piece of white cloth and bound it around my head to stop the bleeding.

While I was standing thus my wife came through to see how I was faring. When she saw that I was all right, that I looked much worse than I really was, she let me have it. "What was that funny story you were telling me last night?" she asked. "The laugh's agin me," I answered.

Yes, the laugh was "agin" me, but it was going "agin" the police outside. Enraged beyond all bounds by the brutal and wanton attack that had been made upon them, the workers were still further infuriated as the word went round about the smashing that Kirkwood and I had received. With a roar of rage they rushed barehanded on the police and drove them back right across the square.

The Sheriff came out of the City Chambers with the Lord Provost and others and read the Riot Act.

When later on we were put on trial in the High Court in Edinburgh for inciting to riot and rioting, the police, one after

another, swore that the trouble started with stone throwing on the part of the strikers. Stones, chunks of iron, bottles, the air was black with them, all aimed at the police while they were still standing in front of the chambers and before they had made any attack on the strikers. Yet the whole front of the City Chambers is one long series of windows, while out from the doorway there stand four medium high lamp-posts, each with a cluster of seven arc globes and not a lamp or a window was broken. Did this affect them in the 'evidence' they were giving? Not a bit. Missiles, thousands of missiles, were thrown before they drew their batons.

Like well trained parrots they kept on repeating what they had been taught to say, no matter how ridiculous it ultimately became. For here were photographs being taken after the demonstration had been broken up and the leaders arrested and those photographs show the whole in front of the chambers, with the Sheriff and his cohorts, but not a sign, not the slightest vestige of a missile anywhere.

Were there missiles later on? There surely were. While the workers were driving the police back towards the east (the Council) side of the square, a big heavy lorry drove along loaded with boxes of aerated waters. It was a gift from the gods. Some of the boys got hold of it and drove it into North Frederick Street, a street that rises on a high gradient from the north east corner of George Square. With the utmost rapidity the boxes were piled up across the streets, piled up on their sides with the necks of the bottles ready to the hands of those who were manning the impromptu barricade. Foot police and mounted police tried to rush the barricade, but were driven back in disorder at every attempt. In the meantime the main body was closing in on the police across the square and forcing them right back into the building.

Battle

Inside, we had been taken from the quadrangle into one of the corridors where we were able to sit down. We didn't know what was happening or how the fight was going, except that, in the early stages, workers were being brought in hurt and bleeding to receive first aid or hospital treatment. Then after a bit, the workers ceased coming and policemen were carried in instead. We knew then that things were not going all the one way... now the battle was coming near the chamber itself. We were removed from the corridor to a room upstairs, where we were shut in with several policemen. These policemen were glad to be out of it and were anxious to be on friendly terms with us. Anyone who wanted could get in to see us. The first visi-

tors were Wheatley and Rosslyn Mitchell. Some remarks were made about our personal condition and then Wheatley informed us that we didn't have to worry about anything, that Mr. Mitchell would take charge of our affairs.

"Not mine," I said. "I've had some. I'll look after my own affairs and if I go to quod I'll know what I'm going for." That was the finish for me and Mr. Mitchell.

Protest

A few minutes later Jock McBain came in to see us with his head bandaged. He informed us that the police had been driven right up against and into the Chambers. They wanted the crowd to march on Glasgow Green for a great protest demonstration there. But they wouldn't leave without word from us. "ould we go out and speak from the balcony?" This we eventually did, and the strikers formed up and marched off to Glasgow Green.

Had we been capable of planning beforehand, or had there been an experienced revolutionary leadership of these great and heroic masses, instead of a march on Glasgow Green there would have been a march on Maryhill Barracks. For while troops, mostly young raw recruits, with tanks, machine guns and barbed wire were being brought forward for the encirclement of Glasgow, the soldiers of Maryhill were confined to barracks and the barrack gates were kept tightly closed. If we had gone there we could easily have persuaded the soldiers to come out and Glasgow would have been in our hands.

That night Shinwell was arrested and during the following days Harry Hopkins, George Ebury of the BSP, young Brennan and several others were brought in. We were all taken to Duke Street Prison.

On the Saturday morning the troops marched with all the paraphernalia of war and took possession of the city. *The Herald* for February 8th commenting on these developments said: "The panic of the civil and national authorities can only be explained thus. They actually believed a Spartacus coup was planned to start in Glasgow, and they were prepared to suppress it at all costs."

This is correct. A rising was expected. A rising should have taken place. The workers were ready and able to effect it; the leadership had never thought of it.

Revolt on the Clyde
by William Gallacher
published by Lawrence and Wishart
ISBN 0 85315 425 2
available from Well Red Books,
PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ
price £7.99 plus £1 postage

Trotsky: on the crisis in the United States

Below is a letter written by Leon Trotsky to James Cannon on 2nd October 1937. The letter deals in particular with the impending economic crisis and its political consequences in the United States. At the present time, given the new slump facing America and the recent launch of the US Labor Party, what Trotsky has to say has obvious relevance today. The letter is reproduced here with the permission of the Houghton Library at Harvard University.

Dear Comrade Cannon (1),

1. Possibly I will write in the near future, an article concerning the probable consequences of the new approaching crisis. As to the crisis itself, I wrote very briefly about it in my article concerning the coming war. The obvious symptoms of the approach of a new crisis are given by the convulsions of stock exchanges, especially in New York but also abroad. The question is intimately connected with the re-armament programs.

A general slump is inevitable, if not during the next year then at least in 1939. We haven't until today sufficiently considered that the flourishing of the Stalinist parties on the basis of a new turn is determined 90% by a semi-real, semi-fictitious prosperity. The Peoples' Fronts in different countries were possible only thanks to the fact that the situation of large masses even of the middle classes became better or, at least, the process of worsening was arrested, and the new big illusions aroused by the reformists on one side and the middle class parties on the other. The new crisis, which promises to be more terrible than the last one, will deliver a terrible blow to all these illusions. (Peoples' Front, democracy vs. fascism, social reforms, new deal, etc.). Even if the crisis should not provoke a new war (and I hold that a war as a result of the end of 'prosperity' is almost inevitable), the crash of the Peoples' Fronts, the pacifist masquerades and the flourishing of the

Stalinist parties and their auxiliaries would be as tremendous as the crash of the prosperity itself.

If the great slump occurs, as it is supposed, during the Roosevelt administration it will compromise the Democratic Party even as the slump of 1929 under Hoover compromised the Republicans. But if nine years ago the Republican administration was compromised in favour of the Democrats, this time the Republicans can have only a partial profit from a new crisis. The masses of the workers and possibly of the farmers will, so it seems to me, under the successive blows, look for a new political orientation. I don't believe that fascism can become an important factor in the States before the creation of and the political experience of a third or farmer-labor party. The crisis will undoubtedly reinforce all the tendencies towards an independent Labor Party. The attitude of John Lewis (2) is very symptomatic in this respect. We do not, of course, have to change our principled position concerning a Labor Party. But this general attitude many times expressed and defended in our papers can become insufficient. A current for a Labor Party can for a period of time absorb all the progressive and semi-revolutionary tendencies in the proletariat. The crash of the Stalinist parties can, under these conditions, signify its dissolution into the Labor Party. We cannot and will not naturally remain aside. This does not signify that we will necessarily enter a Labor Party or that we shall prepare for such a possibility or begin to fight for it:



it would be pure Don Quixotism. A Labor Party would be based naturally upon the trade unions, especially the CIO. Our preparation for this perspective can and must now consist in systematic efforts to penetrate into the trade unions and to participate in mass work.

It seems to me that is our general perspective for the next period. I would be glad to hear the opinion of you and the other comrades upon my hypothetical considerations. The perspective should be developed in a series of articles from an economic, political, national and international point of view in the Socialist Appeal as in the New International. The earlier we orient our cadres to the new perspective, the greater will be our political success.

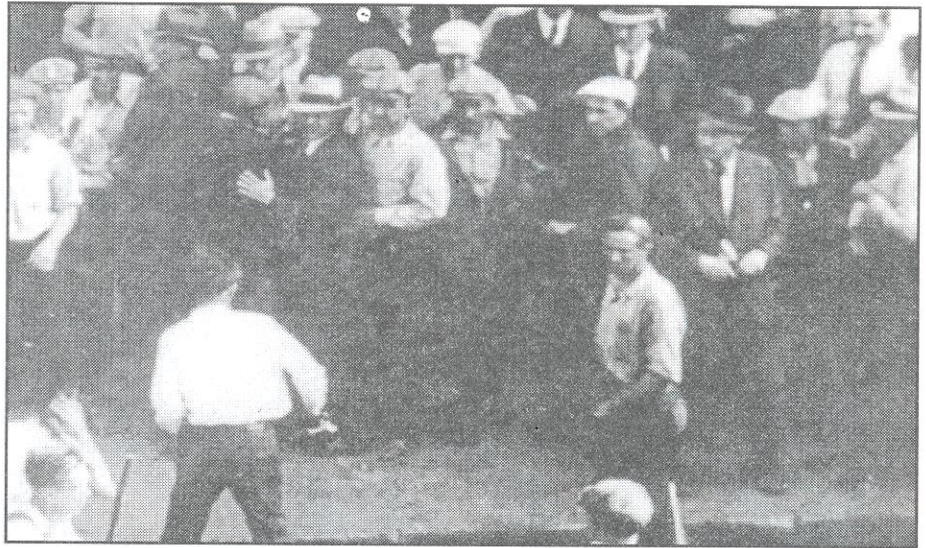
2. Comrade Rae (Spiegel) (3) sent you yesterday a list of articles and letters concerning internal discussions in different sections. I merely wished to know whether they reached you. You will make whatever use you think advisable. I hope you will reestablish an internal bulletin, for which most of them are more or less destined.

3. We had yesterday a discussion of a general character, with the participation of comrade Sterling, Hansen and Granger (4). Comrade Granger was here yesterday for the first time in our house. He will remain here (in Mexico City) for some months. I would like to have some information about him from people who know him well.

4. With comrade Selander (5) we didn't have luck. He was here for about four weeks but he never communicated his address and we never could get in touch with him. Only this morning I learned from Rae that he wished to see me today because he was leaving tomorrow morning. I must admit I was a bit astonished by this attitude. He had the opportunity to write at least a postal card and to ask for the meeting. My time today is taken up and I am not inclined to change my program in order to protect the negligence of a comrade who considered himself, as I understand, too much as a tourist and too little as a Party man. The general situation is now of such a kind that we should ask from every comrade a greater degree of responsibility.

5. I wrote to different comrades about the question of Erwin Wolf (6). I hope that the question will not be neglected in spite of the manifold activities of the Party.

6. I received from the publisher, Harcourt, Brace & co., a book of Eugene Lyons, *Assignment in Utopia*. It seems to me that from all the books written by the disillusioned bourgeois democratic and Communist persons about Russia, this is the best one (though, it is true, I read only



a small part of the book). Do you believe that the man is worthy of attention. The publisher wrote me a letter, asking me to write something about the book. I would do it, naturally, in a cautious manner, if the comrades believe that my conditional approval would not be compromising.

Suzanne LaFollette (7) wrote to me that the liberal and radical press continues to observe a conspiracy of silence concerning all the Stalinist crimes and particularly in Spain. I believe that the real means to break this conspiracy is by publishing a correspondence bulletin for the bourgeois press, with news articles, etc. Possibly Hearst will grab at it. I don't see any disadvantage in this. On the contrary, if the liberal rascals cover up by their silence the assassination of Nin (8), the arrests of Grylewicz (9) and Erwin Wolf, etc., etc., we are obliged to use every means in order to inform public opinion directly or indirectly. It would be absolutely naive, not to say stupid, to stop before the accusation from the Stalinists, who murder our comrades and reproach us with unmasking these crimes in the reactionary press.

7. We are very pleased with the arrival of comrade Hansen and our general impression is that the collaboration will be all right in every respect.

The car he brought is excellent and even too imposing for our courtyard door, which must now be adapted to the dimensions of the vehicle. I am, I confess, a bit embarrassed by the constant attention and generosity of the American friends. I cannot express to each of them Natalia's and my thanks but possibly you will find the opportunity to assure them the gratitude is very real.

Very comradely yours,
Leon Trotsky
2 October, 1937

Notes:

- (1) James P Cannon was the leaders of the American Socialist Workers Party. He died in 1974.
- (2) John Lewis was the leaders of the America mineworkers.
- (3) Rae Spiegel was the name used by Raya Dunayevskaya, Trotsky's Russian-language secretary 1937-38.
- (4) Max Sterling was a member of the American SWP and husband of Rae Spiegel. Joseph Hansen was Trotsky's secretary 1937-40. Peter Granger was a name used for Peter Berlinrut, formerly a member of the American Workers Party in New Jersey.
- (5) Ted Selander was a member of the American SWP.
- (6) Erwin Wolf served as Trotsky's secretary in Norway. In 1937 he was kidnapped by the Stalinists in Spain and murdered.
- (7) Suzanne LaFollette was a writer and secretary to the Dewey commission of inquiry in 1937.
- (8) Andres Nin, formerly a Spanish Trotskyist, but became a leader of the POUM and was murdered by the Stalinists in 1937.
- (9) Anton Grylewicz was a leader of the German Trotskyists living in Czechoslovakia.

Black nationalism or socialism?

The United States is the richest and most powerful country on the planet. Yet despite this, the poison of racism remains an integral part of America. Blacks, together with the other racial minorities, remain the most exploited section of society, mostly employed in the lowest-paid and menial jobs. Racism remains an everyday part of their desperate existence. Today, despite all the "reforms" of the last thirty-odd years, blacks continue to suffer from lynchings and violence at the hands of the state, racist organisations and individuals, as well as being forced to live under conditions of mass poverty and oppression. The recent gruesome murder of a black man in Texas who was dragged to death behind a truck is a vivid reminder of American racism. Black youth are faced with daily harassment and intimidation by the police.

by Rob Sewell

Thirty years ago, a commission headed by Otto Kerner, the governor of Illinois, found that America was "moving towards two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal." Today, despite all the promises from successive Administrations, a follow-up report claims the situation has grown far worse for the mass of blacks.

The new report, which comes from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, while conceding that the black middle class has

grown, and that black high-school graduation rates have risen, points to the fact that unemployment in a large number of black inner-city neighbourhoods is at "depression levels" of 50% or more. Unemployment amongst blacks is twice the rate for whites.

America's child-poverty rate is four times higher than Western Europe, and the rate of incarceration for black men is four times higher than in the days of apartheid South Africa. Figures from the Justice Department show that between 1985 and 1995, as the number of white men sentenced to more than a year in gaol rose by 103%, the number of black male convicts grew by 143%.

In 1997, the number of black Americans in poverty was 9.1 million while the number of poor Hispanics was 8.3 million. For children, the situation is horrific. Black infant mortality is twice that of whites. 45% of black children live below the poverty line compared with 16% of white children. These are the kind of figures you would expect in a third world country.

In the US, blacks earn only 58% of whites' earnings. In 1979, a black worker was likely to earn 10.9% less than a white in a similar job, but by 1989 that differential had grown to 16.4%. According to the book "The State of Working America 1992-93" by Mishel and Bernstein, "This 'black-white earnings gap' jumped up 50 percent from 1979 to 1989... Education-wise, the greatest increase in black-white earnings gap was among college graduates, with minimal 2.5 percent differential

in 1979 exploding to 15.5 percent in 1989." While the black middle class has grown, affirmative action and quotas have not prevented this deterioration for the mass of blacks.

At the same time, the class divide has never been greater. The rich got richer, while the position of the majority has deteriorated. Corporate America has made a bonanza. Bill Gates has an income equal to the combined income of 115 million Americans.

The poison of racism is deliberately fostered by the ruling class as a means of keeping the working class divided, and diverting attention away from the real problems of American capitalism. This policy of "divide and rule" on racial, national or religious lines, has been a common feature of the ruling class internationally. As the Black Panther, Bobby Seale correctly wrote: "Racism and ethnic differences allow the power structure to exploit the masses of workers in this country, because that's the key by which they maintain their control. To divide the people and conquer them is the objective of the power structure..." This situation also confirms the words of Malcolm X, "You cannot have capitalism without racism."

The fact that the ruling class uses racism is also the fear at the rise of a powerful black working class and its inherent tendency to unite in action with its fellow white workers. Thus the working class as a whole is facing deteriorating living standards and attacks from big business. The 80% of the workforce that hold working class jobs saw their real weekly income decline by 18% from 1973 to 1995. With the emigration of blacks to the north (between 1940 and 1970, four million blacks left the country for the towns), they played a major role in the building of the trade unions. By 1983, 27% of black workers were union members compared with 19% for whites.

Years of racism, police harassment and terrible social conditions has produced an explosive mix within the inner cities, especially amongst the black and Latino youth. This has periodically erupted in riots, most recently in Los Angeles, one of the richest cities in the USA. But riots have no perspective and arise spontaneously out of poverty conditions. If the labour leaders offered a real fighting alter-



native, then the energies of these youth could be harnessed in a positive direction.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the revolt of the blacks against their discrimination and social position shook the ruling class to its foundations. Despite the oppression and the violence unleashed against the civil rights movement, the black revolt defeated the Jim Crow laws. This movement, if it had been linked to the struggle of the working class as a whole, could have been a massive force for social change. Unfortunately, the labour leaders, who looked to the pro-capitalist Democratic Party, were incapable of leading this movement against racism and the oppression and of uniting all workers on a class basis.

As a result, the ruling class, in order to control the situation, made some concessions on voting rights and civil rights in the south. It sought to confine the movement within the confines of capitalism by moving in the direction of affirmative action and the quota system. This strategy went hand in hand with the murder of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and a whole number of Black Panther leaders, who sought to go beyond capitalism and the Democratic Party.

Position

Since that time, while the position of the majority of blacks has grown worse, a substantial section of the black middle class has prospered. They have done well out of affirmative action. They have managed to further their careers and carve out a niche for themselves. A layer of political careerists has ended up in the Democratic Party. Some even in the Republicans, such as J.C. Watts, the conservative black congressman from Oklahoma.

Meanwhile, others have promoted black nationalism. This idea has a long history amongst American blacks. It became a mass movement in the 1920s led by Marcus Garvey, which advocated that the blacks return to Africa. In the 1930s, Oscar C. Brown established a movement for the establishment of the "Forty-Ninth State." Before the war, the American Communist Party took up the idea of a separate black state, and came forward with the slogan of the right of black self-determination in the south.

During the height of the black revolt in



the 1960s, Stokely Carmichael, one of the Black Panther leaders, first raised the slogan of "Black Power" as a rallying cry for blacks to unite and challenge white society. In so far as it represented a break at the time from the white liberals of both the Democratic and Republican parties it represented a step forward.

As the black population made up only 13% of the population as a whole, it was clear that blacks by themselves could never transform society. Malcolm X, who began as a black nationalist came to the conclusion that an alliance with white workers was the only way forward. He was murdered before this idea was fully developed. But it was the Black Panthers that arrived at even clearer ideas on class unity and the struggle to transform society. According to Bobby Seale: "We fight racism with solidarity. We do not fight exploitative capitalism with black nationalism. We fight capitalism with basic socialism. And we do not fight imperialism with more imperialism. We fight imperialism with proletarian internationalism."

The only way in which the socialist transformation of America can come about is through the united struggle of black and white workers and youth, and the establishment of a mass workers' party based on the trade unions and committed to a socialist programme. This does not mean that blacks have to wait before engaging in struggle. However, a revolutionary black movement needs to appeal for a united struggle with sections of radicalised white workers. Black liberation is inseparable from the liberation of

the working class as a whole. Marxism has a responsibility to offer a perspective and a way forward for the movement at each stage, explaining its weaknesses and reinforcing its strengths.

Confusions

Unfortunately, there are those on the American left, who even purport to be Marxists, who raise all kinds of confusions in relation to the black question. Some, like the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP), simply bowed before black nationalism, advocating self-determination for blacks and the need for the creation of a separate black party. Rather than class unity, they promote racial separation in an attempt to reinforce black nationalism. Another similar group "gives uncompromising support to Black nationalism and the right of the oppressed to self-determination. We place no conditions on the social movements of oppressed people... The point is that it is up to Black people to decide what their future will be." It then goes on to call for "Black control of the Black community!"

The mistakes of these groups can be traced to a misrepresentation of the writings of Leon Trotsky on black nationalism. These are based upon discussions between Trotsky and the American SWP in the 1930s. Here Trotsky drew upon the rich theoretical heritage of Bolshevism in regard to the national question. Lenin himself fought a battle to defend the right of nations to self-determination as a means of winning the confidence of the oppressed nationalities that made up the

tsarist empire. This did not mean that he advocated separation, on the contrary, he wanted the closest union of peoples, but on a voluntary basis. This can be defined as a socialist federation.

Influence

At the same time, Lenin fought against the influence of bourgeois nationalism in the workers' movement. He emphatically opposed the idea of splitting up the workers' organisations on national lines. The Bolsheviks wanted the maximum unity of the workers and therefore waged a campaign against any taint of nationalism within the movement. They stood for one unified workers' party and trade union organisation throughout the Russian empire. The idea that Marxists would advocate a separate party for blacks would have been considered a crime.

A national minority constitutes a nation with the right of self-determination, if it constitutes a majority in a certain territory, with a common language, national culture and consciousness. The right of self-determination does not apply to groups, religious minorities, races or individuals. It only applies to nations or to those which have the potential to develop into nations.

But when Trotsky discussed with the SWP in the 1930s, three-quarters of American blacks lived in the twelve southern states. In 189 counties of this area, blacks accounted for more than half the population. In two states, Mississippi and Alabama, they comprised more than 50%. This was the so-called 'Black Belt.'

At that time, the American Communist Party put forward the slogan of the right of Negro self-determination in the 'Black Belt.' This idea was originally opposed by the SWP leaders, but Trotsky explained that it was possible, if the fascist movement began to grow in the United States, which would persecute the blacks, that the blacks would demand a separate state in the south. In such conditions Trotsky explained that the Marxists would stand for the right of self-determination of blacks, and this meant their right to form a separate state if they so wished.

He explained that "the Negroes are a race, nations grow out of racial material under definite conditions." However, Trotsky was very careful in his analysis, making it clear that such a development was not at all certain. He also criticised the Communist Party for putting forward this demand when there was no sentiment for it within the black population. In fact, the demand, under those circumstances, could be interpreted as being in favour of segregation.

Trotsky's method and conclusions were absolutely correct at the time. But some of those groups who cling to his formulations today, without considering the colossal changes that have taken place since then, are drawing fundamentally false conclusions. With migration of the black population to the north, together with their absorption into the working class, the tendency towards a separate black state, and a "national" consciousness, has been completely cut across. In 1890, 80% of all blacks and 85% of all southern blacks lived in rural areas. By

1960 the percentage of the black urban population was 72.2% in the US as a whole, 58.4% in the south, and 95.2% in the north and west. By the 1950s and 1960s, the majority of blacks were living in the north. According to the 1960 population census of the five southern states (Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama and Georgia), whites numbered 67.4% and non-whites 32.6%. Blacks were dispersed throughout the cities of the United States, drawn into the workplaces alongside white workers. Indeed, in 1970, blacks were more urbanised than whites.

Movements

"These population movements have produced baffling problems not only for the cities but for black nationalism", states Theodore Draper (The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism). "If the internal black migration has been from South to North and from countryside to the cities, where is the 'black nation' in the United States?" In other words, the idea of a separate black state in the USA - which is the only form self-determination can take - has become completely unviable. Therefore the demand for the right of self-determination for black people is no longer relevant. It is impossible for the blacks in Detroit, Harlem, Los Angeles, etc., to link together in a separate state or nation. It is under present conditions a false idea from beginning to end. The belief that these ghettos could separate themselves off from the rest of American society is both ludicrous and reactionary. "The black ghettos have no viable economic existence apart from their predominantly white hinterlands; they are separated from one another, often by hundreds of miles..." states Draper.

The migration to the north has not solved the problems of blacks. There they face new horrors in the ghettos: racism, police brutality, poverty, unemployment and slum conditions. The problems of black workers are the problems of the working class as a whole, only in a far more acute form. They form a specially oppressed substratum of the working class. The struggle against the double oppression of blacks and other oppressed minorities must be linked to the struggle of the working class as a whole. The only way the American blacks can achieve



their emancipation is through the socialist transformation of society.

When the ghettos exploded in the 1960s, the movement led to the rise of the Black Muslims, the Black Panthers, the League for Revolutionary Black Workers, including the demand for black power. These movements sprang out of the brutal conditions faced by blacks. They were also inspired by the unfolding colonial revolution. Their determination to find a solution to their problems showed the revolutionary potential amongst the most oppressed layers of American society. Many, especially the Panthers, became open to the ideas of Marxism and favoured the creation of a new workers' party. In a short space of time they evolved from a largely black nationalist movement to a revolutionary movement. Unfortunately, the Panther's lack of clear perspectives or a programme served to derail the movement. Subject to vicious state repression, the Panthers went into crisis, and suffered a whole series of splits.

Repression

On top of the policy of state repression, the ruling class made a series of concessions which served to undermine the movement. These became known as affirmative action policies, which set quotas for the number of blacks to be employed in jobs. This system, in reality, has helped only a small minority of blacks, mainly from the middle class. The conditions of the mass of black people have deteriorated, as the above figures testify.

Many on the left support affirmative action as a step forward. It is regarded as a "practical" measure to overcome years of discrimination. The problem with affirmative action is it attempts to solve a problem within the confines of capitalism. That is why Clinton can give his support for it. It does not challenge the rule of big business, seeking only a fairer division of existing jobs between the working class. Concretely, it serves to divide workers along lines of race and sex and keeps the movement within the limits of capitalism. For example, the school board Piscataway, New Jersey, used the quota system to cut a member of staff. It fired a white teacher, to maintain the racial balance. The school board recently agreed an out of court settlement to pay the

teacher, who took the board to court, \$433,500. Affirmative action takes the issue and puts it in the hands of lawyers, courts and bureaucrats who are controlled by big business and relish the in-fighting over the crumbs from the capitalists' table. The quota system cannot show any way forward. On the contrary, it is used as an excuse by the labour leaders for not taking effective action.

In practice, affirmative action has not worked. During this period, real wages and living standards have declined and the jobs market has shrunk. The position of black workers is no better than before - in fact, it is worse. However, the recent court attacks against affirmative action in Texas, Colorado and Maryland, as well as at a federal level, mean the American capitalists want total flexibility of labour, to fill any job with whom they choose. While we have no illusions in affirmative action, these attacks are part of the general attack by big business on the working class, and therefore must be opposed as such.

The problem of jobs is a central issue. Does the labour movement simply ignore discrimination at work or elsewhere? Absolutely not! It must fight against discrimination over jobs, but link it to a fight against unemployment and better wages as a whole. We must fight for a class alternative to affirmative action, that can draw the ranks of the working class together in common struggle. The fight against discrimination against minorities in hiring must be fought through trade union control over hiring and firing. The labour movement must make it clear at all times that it is not prepared to stand for discrimination against blacks or other minorities.

Labour must fight for equal employment prospects, wages and conditions for all workers. But the special oppression of blacks and other minorities must be linked to the oppression and exploitation of all workers. The bosses strategy of keeping a pool of cheap labour helps to divide and weaken the working class as a whole. This situation must not be simply opposed by words, but must be challenged by a programme of action. For a 32 hour, four day week with no loss of pay! A crash programme of public works! A living wage for all workers! Union control over hiring and firing! Mobilise the labour movement to combat racism!



These must be linked to the creation of a workers' party committed to a socialist programme, as the basis for class unity. A workers' government would take over the corporate monopolies, banks and finance houses under workers' control and management. A socialist planned economy could unleash the resources to give everyone a job, a decent wage, a house and a real education and future for their children. The struggle of blacks and the oppressed minorities for a better life cannot take place in isolation from the working class as a whole and the need to transform society on socialist lines.

Deepening crisis

The general crisis of American capitalism bears down heavily on the blacks and other racial minorities. But the Million Man March and the Million Youth March, despite its leadership, indicate the stirring once again of the black population. With the deepening crisis, it will be the class issues that will inevitably come to the fore. The American working class will take the road of struggle in the same tradition at the mighty battles surrounding the foundation of the CIO. The black working class, as with all the oppressed racial minorities, constitute the most courageous and determined section of the class. It is destined to play a vital role - along with its white brothers and sisters - in the future struggles to transform American society on socialist lines.

Keynsianism: no way forward

So what happened to the New Economic Paradigm, what happened to the end of history, what happened to the best of all possible systems in the best of all possible worlds? To borrow an expression from the football terraces, 'they're not singing any more.'

by Phil Mitchinson

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall, we have had to endure a torrent of propaganda from capitalism internationally, summed up in the expression of the Financial Times' Joe Rogaly "the history of the last 200 years has been the history of the struggle between capital and labour. Capital won."

Globalisation, deregulated labour markets, the miracle economies of South East Asia, information technology, all these factors, we were told, meant that capitalism had solved all of its problems, and looked forward to a rosy future.

It was all too good to be true. Sure enough the New Economic Crisis, beginning in South East Asia, and spreading like wildfire across Russia and Latin America, with Europe and the US already smouldering, has brought their towering edifice tumbling like the house of cards it always was. One third of the world economy is now officially in recession, and as our friend George Soros comments the rest of the world will soon enough join them in a severe slump.

Consequently, the capitalists' unbri-dled optimism has given way to deep

depression, their mood seemingly following the trend set by their economic system. It is a law that the first class to be affected by crisis is always the ruling class. Seeing no way out of the mess they tend to split over how best to continue. This is evident enough in the divisions within the British ruling class, the splits in the Tories over Europe and so on. As the evidence continues to pile up against laissez-faire economics, more and more so-called experts are looking for a return to state intervention in the economy, demand management and all the other nostrums associated with Keynesianism for a solution. Increasingly too there are calls for such policies from within the labour movement, John Prescott's recent speech for example while Blair was away on holiday.

The two questions Marxists need to address are, could such policies resolve the crisis, and could they constitute an alternative programme for the labour movement?

Wisdom

For decades following the Second World War, the ideas of John Maynard Keynes were accepted everywhere as the received wisdom of capitalist economics. In the words of Soros, "In my student days in the early 1950s, laissez-faire was even more unacceptable than state intervention in the economy is today. The idea that it would stage a comeback seemed inconceivable...State intervention in the economy has always produced some neg-

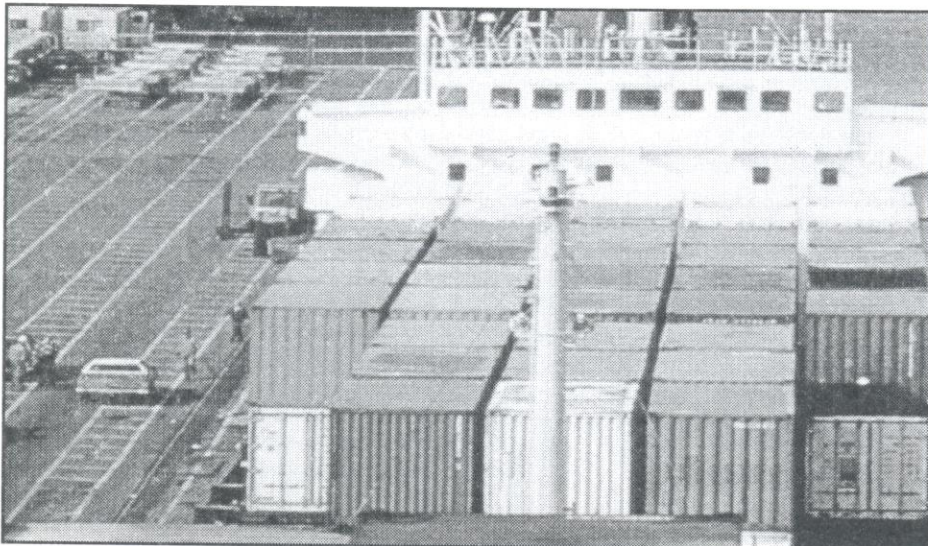
ative results. This has been true not only of central planning but also of the welfare state and of Keynesian demand management. From this banal observation, market fundamentalists jump to a totally illogical conclusion: if state intervention is faulty, free markets must be perfect. Therefore the state must not be allowed to intervene in the economy. It hardly needs pointing out that the logic of this argument is faulty." (George Soros, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, p.127-8.)

They succeeded in a few short decades not in overcoming the contradictions inherent within capitalism, but in storing up those contradictions in the shape of inflation which then burst forth in the 1970s, discrediting the ideas of 'Keynesianism' for a whole generation. State intervention played a role in the post war upswing in partially overcoming the role of private ownership, as the development of world trade helped to partially overcome the straitjacket of the nation state. The key role in the boom however belonged to the explosion of investment in production. This is the motor force for developing the economy. The major contribution of deficit financing and demand management turns out to have been the development of inflation.

At the 1976 Labour Party Conference the Prime Minister James Callaghan publicly abandoned Keynes, "We used to think that you could just spend your way out of recession, and increase employment, by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists, and in so far as it did exist, it worked by injecting inflation into the economy. And each time that happened, the average level of unemployment has risen. Higher inflation followed by higher unemployment. That is the history of the last twenty years." That was the result of Keynesianism

In practice it had failed. It was Labour who abandoned it. The new mantra of Thatcher and Reagan was monetarism, sound finance, cutting government spending, precisely the economic theories which had led to the crisis of the 1930s. Sure enough their policies worsened the economic recession of 1979-81, turning it into a full scale depression in which 25% of British manufacturing industry was destroyed.

For a whole period public expenditure



has been slashed, nationalised industries sold off, and the state withdrawn from the economy. Ironically this does not happen naturally but requires the conscious intervention of a strong state.

This same process is repeated across the world, in other words it is neither an accident nor the responsibility of the policies of a single government. It is an international phenomenon.

Coinciding with the collapse of Stalinism in the east the capitalists' triumphalism reached unheard of proportions, with talk of a 'new paradigm,' a new economic framework of sustained growth, low unemployment, and low inflation. In truth nothing fundamental had changed, and suddenly in the middle of last year reality gave them a sharp slap in the face and history started again. Their new paradigm turned out to be a pipedream, just as politically their New World Order has turned out to be No World Order. Everything that flowed from the boom, closer European integration, the neo-liberal economic agenda will now be turned on its head.

The result of all these years of monetarism, the globalisation of the deregulated free market, has been to return to the deflation of the 1930s. Keynesians like Will Hutton provide us with a good description of this process, but their solutions are woefully inadequate.

Reaction

The reaction of the capitalists in general has been either to bury their heads in the sand and wait for it all to go away, or increasingly to call for a return to state intervention in the economy, reflationary policies, a seance to call Keynesianism back from the dead.

To continue down the path of 'sound finance' in the face of a world slump will be catastrophic. Already based on the unreal expectation that the boom will continue, Labour are proposing to tax child benefit and attack the unemployed. Facing economic crisis the banks will demand Blair and Brown implement a vicious austerity programme. This would lead to sharp divisions in the Labour Party at all levels. The rank and file and trade union activists could never accept such proposals. It is hard to believe that Blair would gain much support for them in the Parliamentary party or even the cabinet. It is under such conditions in 1931 that

Ramsay MacDonald split and formed a 'National' government. That process would not simply be repeated, but it should be remembered that Labour has a 179 majority not Blair, and there would certainly not be 179 majority for a programme of vicious cuts. Similar conditions today could indeed produce similar results. Such a development is inherent in the current situation. Just as in the 30s many of the leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions would throw their weight behind a Keynesian programme to get out of the crisis, rather than mobilise the movement to struggle for socialism. Against the background of recent years such a programme might even have a radical appearance.

Today then, in the midst of another crisis which threatens to re-tie the knot with the crisis ridden Thirties, we find no new answers, instead the bodysnatchers creep out under the cover of darkness to disinter the rotten corpse of Keynesianism.

For these people there is nothing new under the sun, for all their talk of 'modernisation', the answers of the Labour leaders of right and left, as much as the Tories and big business, are nothing more than the reheated leftovers of yesterday's failed prescriptions.

In the past many of these ideas were adopted by leftwingers in the Labour Party, as a substitute for challenging the capitalist system itself. At the present time most of the left in the Labour party still timidly advocate higher taxes and devaluing the pound. Soon enough however, when the crisis bites, they will once again join in the chorus of Keynesianism.

Before looking at the detail of Keynes' ideas, and their consequences, we must ask why they were conceived, whose class interest do they serve? Keynes was never a socialist, he was an adviser to the Lloyd George wing of the Liberals. In his own words at the time, "if it comes to the barricades, you shall find me on the side of the enlightened bourgeoisie."

Many elements of a Keynesian policy would seem at first sight to be progressive. We would certainly support for instance, the idea of increasing public spending to create jobs and reduce unemployment, as a reform in the interests of working people. It is a scandal that Blair and co. have kept to the cruel public spending limits imposed by the Tories before them.

However, it is also our duty to point out the limitations, the consequences, and the temporary nature of such reforms so long as they are linked to the continuation of the capitalist system. The free market is certainly sick, but before swallowing a Keynesian medicine we should read the label closely, and beware of the side effects. Moreover, our objection stems not from a personal dislike of Keynes, but from the fact that ultimately his theories do not work.

Full employment

To begin with they start from a false premise. In the words of Keynes himself, "Let us assume full employment." The days when such an assumption could be made were shortlived and are now long gone. It would be more appropriate to begin by assuming mass unemployment, in other words to start with the premise that the market doesn't work.

The problem as the Keynesians see it is that supply has outstripped demand, their solution therefore consists in artificially stimulating demand. More money must be pumped into the economy somehow, anyhow. Either through borrowing to invest, printing more money, employing more people in programmes of public works. The idea is for the state to intervene in the economy to make up the missing demand for goods.

It is true of course that there is always a shortfall in consumption. Marx explained that underconsumption is a major problem for capitalism since the whole system is based on paying workers less in wages than the value they produce, the surplus being the source of the capitalists' profits. Inevitably since the workers are also the consumers they can't buy back all the goods they produce. The capitalists themselves, although fabulously wealthy are small in number and are therefore unable to consume much of the surplus. The world market is constructed out of exporting this surplus and competing to export. However the system is not in permanent crisis because the capitalists invest not only in the production of consumer goods but also in the production of capital goods, plant, machinery and so on. This is what Marx described as the division of the economy into departments one and two. The capitalists pursued this policy in Brazil for example for twenty years. However in the long run this has its limits

too, the production of capital goods eventually leading to the production of more consumer goods. What the proponents of demand management cannot explain is why more goods are produced than there is demand for, ie why there is overproduction. It is this overproduction, inherent in capitalism, which lies at the heart of their crisis, and therein lies the nub of the problem and the insoluble nature of the systems crisis.

Gordon Brown believes a half a per cent cut in interest rates will halt the slide into recession. The Labour leaders are now almost alone in their faith in their ability to abolish the boom slump cycle. In reality the only way to remove such anarchy from our economy would be to abolish the entire system and replace it with a sane, rational and democratic system of planning. For capitalism booms and slumps are like breathing in and out, as long as it has breath in its body they will continue to wreak havoc on us.

Money supply

Fiddling with prices and money supply are just as hopeless as trying to manage demand. Even without the meteoric impact which a world slump will have on the British economy, such measures could not prevent a recession. If the idea is to increase consumption by convincing savers to spend their money, then they won't be convinced because they fear losing their jobs. If they were convinced they would simply buy up cheap imports, leading to a further trade deficit. Exports meanwhile, we are told, are held back by the strong pound. There is some truth in this. Ken Livingstone and others therefore argue for a devaluation. All this would do, however, would be to make the pound in our pockets worth less, and therefore we would still be paying. Meanwhile exports wouldn't improve for the fundamental reason that what we have here is a crisis of overproduction. The world market is already full up. So, lowering interest rates won't make the bosses invest, since there is no point producing more if you can't sell what you've already got.

In Japan at present it is virtually free to borrow money, so why will capitalists not borrow to invest, because no matter how cheap it is to borrow money there's not a lot of point doing so if there is no market for the ensuing goods.

Marxism's opposition to capitalism is

not merely that it is an immoral system, it is the fact that it does not work. It is an inefficient use of human and material resources, which stands like a roadblock in the path of human progress, and in its senile decay threatens to destroy the entire planet.

The free market is advanced as the most efficient system for running the economy, usually counterposed to the dead hand of Stalinist bureaucracy which suffocated the enormous progress made as a result of state ownership and planning. Yet it was not planning that was at fault here but the absence of oxygen in the form of workers democracy. By itself state ownership and the command economy, with planning in the hands of a centralised bureaucracy, was good enough to drive the economy forward at an enormous rate, from the backwardness of an India to the second power on the planet. Eventually, and inevitably however, as that economy grew and grew it could no longer develop within the confines of bureaucratic rule.

It is to this perversion of socialism and not to the ideas of Marxism that the 'experts' compare the free market. In reality capitalism is an enormously wasteful and inefficient system. It wastes the talents of people, one billion are today unemployed or underemployed according to the United Nations. Think what a contribution they could be making to the world. Furthermore the idea that the modern dogma of deregulated labour markets is supposed to have made capitalism even more efficient, is based on what Marx called increasing absolute and relative surplus value, using new technology not to make our lives easier but to make less of us produce more, and more quickly. For example, after Thatcher had vandalised British industry, one million less workers were still achieving the same output. Leaving aside the effect this inevitably has in cutting the market (less workers employed means less consumers), it may at first sight appear to be an increase in efficiency, until you examine the toll exacted in terms of stress and strain at work. As a consequence of such increased pressure in 1997 175 million working days were lost through ill health. That is a graphic expression of the extent to which we are all being squeezed in the interests of profit. It is also an extremely inefficient use of resources.

If capitalism could be made to work, to increase the wealth of the world, to act as a motor driving society forward, then we would surely support it. Similarly, if Keynesianism were the means by which such a radical transformation of capitalism could be achieved, then we could not oppose it. The lesson of the last hundred years however is that the free market has had its day, it is no longer capable of playing such a role, and that Keynes' ideas, the tried and failed policies of the past, are only designed to prolong its agony.

In the end all their solutions come down to the state tinkering with the economy, spending money it hasn't got to overcome the crisis in the short term. However as we all know when you spend tomorrow's money today, when tomorrow comes around not only are you skint, but someone has to pay the debt off, guess who gets that honour?

If the extra money is generated through taxes, we pay them. If they simply print more money, you get inflation, ie, we have to pay higher prices. Similarly, devaluing the currency means that the pound in our pockets is worth less, we can't buy as much, ie, we pay.

In the end Keynes himself proposed the ultimate public works programme, digging a big hole and burying a load of cash in it. While one can see that this is not meant to be serious, what else does Keynesianism amount to. Milton Friedman advocated in just such a frivolous moment flying around throwing cash out of the window. In reality monetarism and Keynesianism are just two sides of the capitalist coin, the whole currency is worthless.

Decaying

The capitalist system has no more to offer us. Keynesianism was designed to prop it up in its decaying years - now it's time to put it out of its misery.

The labour movement was not created or built to defend the capitalist system, but to replace it altogether. Keynes' ideas don't work, they represent the interests of the bosses, and in reality have no more place in the labour movement than Blair's Third Way or any other variant of capitalism. Neither Keynesianism nor monetarism offer us any way forward. Not capitalism but socialism is the future for humanity.

Bolshevism

the road to revolution

There have been many books and potted histories of Russia, either written from an anti-Bolshevik perspective, or its Stalinist mirror image, which paint a false account of the rise of Bolshevism. For them, Bolshevism is either an historical "accident" or "tragedy," or is portrayed erroneously as the work of one great man (Lenin) who marched single-mindedly towards the October Revolution. Alan Woods, in rejecting these "theses", reveals the real evolution of Bolshevism as a living struggle to apply the methods of Marxism to the peculiarities of Russia.

Using a wealth of primary sources, Alan Woods uncovers the fascinating growth and development of Bolshevism in pre-revolutionary Russia. The author deals with the birth of Russian Marxism and its ideological struggle against the Narodniks and the trend of economism.

The book looks at the development of Russian Social Democracy, from its real founding congress in 1903, which ended with the split between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, through to the 'dress rehearsal' of the 1905 revolution. Here the rise of the Soviet form of organisation is explored, together with the transformation of the party (RSDLP) from an underground organisation to one with a mass workers following. However, the defeat of the revolution led to four years of political reaction within Russia and the near disintegration of the party. Alan Woods traces the ebb and follow of the party and the



role of Lenin as its principal guiding force.

The author then explores the eventual revival of the party's fortunes from 1910 onwards, the creation of the independent Bolshevik Party two years later, and the isolation of Marxism during the first world war. The final section of the book deals with the Bolsheviks' emergence during the February Revolution and, after a deep internal struggle, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, the party's eventual conquest of power in October.

Bolshevism: the road to revolution is intended as a companion volume to Ted Grant's *Russia: from revolution to counter revolution*, which is also available from Wellred.

Bolshevism: the road to revolution by Alan Woods

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Publication date
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by Ted Grant

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The book's foreword was written by Leon Trotsky's grandson, Vsievobod Volkov, who has long campaigned for the political rehabilitation of his grandfather.

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Art's great Monet spinner

So the Monet exhibition has finally arrived on the British stage of its mini-world tour. The greatest—and richest—show on earth! Monet In The 20th Century at the Royal Academy Of Arts in Piccadilly, London until the 18th of April, brings together a selection of Claude Monet's works painted in the last period of his life. As the exhibition name suggests this is a follow up to the earlier RA exhibition on Monet in the 90s. Given the financial success of that exhibition it is not hard to see why this one has been staged.

by Steve Jones

Monet is big business. His paintings sell for millions and represent the ultimate success symbol for the rich and wealthy. Companies see paintings by artists such as Monet as a good and reliable alternative way of investing cash and accruing some sort of glory to themselves. Indeed the last 10 years have been marked by an ever increasing competition between institutions such as museums and the so-called private buyers over great works of art as they come onto the market. Given the limits in funding available to public bodies like museums and galleries there is often only one winner in the auction room.

Prices

So prices have been forced up and paintings like Sunflowers by Van Gogh have ended up on the walls of Japanese banks (a snip at £24.75 million at 1987 prices). Indeed many of the paintings on show this time have come from 'private'

collections—so much for the 'universality' of art. No wonder some have said that Monet should be spelt Money. At least one art dealer has been quoted as saying that every time he looks at a Monet painting of two intertwined trees, he cannot help but see a giant dollar sign! The paintings themselves are nice and safe and are therefore easily adaptable to a corporate use. For example, the London store Dickens & Jones have a shopfront display linked to the exhibition—congratulations Claude, you have got into advertising!

Naturally now it is the turn of the RA and the other bodies involved in this exhibition to make some cash. Museums cannot usually sell paintings to other museums or bodies but they can loan them out in return for an arrangement. Private owners too can reduce their guilt about holding great works of art by loaning them out on a temporary basis to special exhibitions—and save a bit on the insurance as well. So now we have Monet in London, along with Ingres at the National Gallery and Jackson Pollock coming later in the year. Get your credit cards ready!

In return for your £9 (itself a record high admission charge) what do you actually get to see? Yes there are some great paintings here which British viewers would not have seen in this country before, but alongside it are a number of, to be honest, lesser works in dubious condition. Towards the end of his life Monet was having trouble with his eyesight, this meant he was having problems seeing details and the correct colours. The result was that many paintings were either destroyed by him or left unfinished as he

was clearly concerned about the quality of the product. Rather than own up to this (and therefore devalue some of these late works) the exhibition propaganda has suggested that Monet was looking stylistically ahead to abstract painting. This is debatable to say the least.

Of course, the exhibition does not stop at just showing you the paintings—they want you to spend, spend, spend on the exhibition merchandise. It has been estimated that London museums alone would have generated over £2 million from entrance fees and sales per year—this figure as of 1991, now it would be much higher.

Almost all museum renovations now involve creating new and larger areas for shops and sales. For example check out the new shop in the Salisbury Wing of the National Gallery and the new basement shop at the National Portrait Gallery. Often sales areas are closely linked to the displays themselves so as to blur the difference in the minds of the punters. The original high moral intentions of our museums are being steadily eroded as the need for cash becomes evermore paramount.

Commodity

Marxism has always pointed out that art is in the final analysis a product; a commodity produced by people for people in the context of the real world and its struggles. That is why art can reveal so much about society as an active and reactive part of the cultural process. This may seem a harsh statement but we should remember, for example, that the great Italian renaissance masterpieces were produced to order in workshops, to precise and legally binding specifications, for paying patrons, rather than at the behest of any divine inspiration. This is not to deny the great talents, skills and imagination of painters like Monet but rather to recognise that to make these works they needed to be in the right place at the right time and with the right sort of support to keep working and be recognised. Monet was lucky; unlike some of the other so-called Impressionist painters he actually made some money out of his work whilst he was still alive. But nothing he made can compare to the sums now being generated by his paintings. Enjoy the show but just remember that you are still in a capitalist world where Monet is just another brand name.



Bulworth uses the S-word

The expression 'it is the exception which proves the rule' is apt when it comes to looking at 'Bulworth,' the new film from Hollywood, which is on fairly general release in cinemas now. You realise when you start to watch this new comedy from Warren Beatty, that Hollywood films are the most heavily politicised in the world. Not that they are overtly propaganda films, but that they, in general, peddle the philosophy of the American capitalists; portraying a picture of America as a land of opportunity, where, despite some corruption, crime etc., individuals can succeed—if they work hard enough and on their own.

by Mark Turner

In the world of Hollywood (this is not a metaphor—most American films are now made and set in the Los Angeles area, and cinema goes the world over could be forgiven for thinking that American film makers believe you fall off the edge of the world if you go beyond LA city limits) all's for the best in the best of all possible worlds, don't worry about changing things, just succeed yourself.

Warren Beatty is a rich liberal who has been involved with the Democratic Party for 30 years. In this film, which he co-wrote, co-produced, directed and stars in, it looks as though, for him at least, the penny has finally dropped—the Democrats are as much a party of the rich and of big business as are the Republicans.

In a recent interview in the Sunday Times he referred to Clinton's Democratic Party as "Republican Lite". In 'Bulworth' he plays an aging ex-liberal Senator up for reelection, who has moved far to the right and has become a Clinton like supporter of big business, taking bribes from big insurance companies to oppose health care measures etc. In a fit of depression he arranges a massive life insurance policy and then hires a hit man to have himself killed. With nothing to lose Bulworth upsets his spin doctors by addressing an African-American rally at a church and telling them some home truths about the reality of the political/social system—that they have no voice, that the main political parties serve only the interests of big business. This,

and later scenes, where he attacks big business even more explicitly, are all the more startling because of the context, a mainstream Hollywood comedy. In fact, not since Beatty, as John Reed (Bolshevik sympathiser and author of '10 days that shook the world') in 'Reds' stood before a gathering of the rich and powerful, and in answer to the question "what is the (first world) war about?" declared "Profit!". has such an open and savage attack on capitalism been heard on screen.

The film has its weaknesses of course, both politically (it does not expressly present an alternative to capitalism) and in terms of the plot (the relationship between Bulworth and a young black activist played by Halle Berry strains credulity). But it is funny; Beatty/Bulworth is to Rap what Clinton is to the saxophone and Blair to the guitar and you cringe and laugh in turn at this aging lothario trying to be hip. But it is what he raps that makes you cheer! The 'dirty word' is obviously 'socialism'.

Entertainment is, of course, big business. The commodity is the film, and the big media companies are only prepared to invest capital for production, promotion etc. if they believe they will make a whacking profit as a result. For that reason, films which they believe will not be popular are not made, or are made to fit into a proven formula, and those which do have a grain of originality and have somehow slipped through, rarely get a general release; distribution being owned by the same media giants.

So it has become increasingly rare for films such as 'Bulworth' to see the light of day. Warren Beatty can afford to do it because he is a wealthy man and has a reputation within the industry, and still has a certain star pulling power. Other film makers, like John Sayles, have to struggle to finance their own films to escape the big companies' straitjacket. However it is to Beatty's credit that he has now made two of the three best Left sympathetic films of the last two decades; 'Reds' and 'Bulworth', the other (in my opinion) being John Sayles' 'Matewan'. Socialists will probably enjoy 'Bulworth', if for no other reason than for the come uppance given to its spin doctors.

Postscript to Gray's 'False Dawn'

Last year we published a review of Professor John Gray's book *False Dawn*. A paperback edition has just been published by Granta at £8.99, with a new postscript which opens with the same dire warning as the original book, "*Unless it is reformed radically, the world economy risks falling apart in a replay, at once tragic and farcical, of the trade wars, competitive devaluations, economic collapses and political upheavals of the 1930s.*"

The main purpose of this PS is to recapitulate the central arguments of the book dealing with the crisis of, and dangers flowing from, the global free market and to demonstrate how the current crisis is a confirmation of his earlier arguments, adding that the old Keynesian methods are incompatible with the global market and particularly out of place in Japan, where stimulating demand will trigger competitive devaluations in Asia and protection in the US and Europe. The attempt to foist the US model on each capitalist economy has proved more difficult than simply opening a chain of McDonalds, and it is in the US itself that this model will suffer its greatest defeat.

From all quarters of the financial press this book has been lambasted, and yet no-one has been able to challenge the facts, figures and descriptions Gray provides. Where he falls short however is in offering a solution. Once again we are given only the vain hope of some kind of global reform. Gray's success is to show the current world economic situation in a truer light than those who persist in clinging on to the false dawn of a new paradigm. The sun is setting for capitalism. A real New Dawn will see the sun rise on a socialist society.

Subscriptions and extra sales vital

Up and down the country public sales have been taking place of the *Socialist Appeal*—at meetings, Labour Party branches, unions and on the streets. 15 copies were sold at a Reclaim Our Rights meeting in London.

Sales also took place in Peterborough (where 10 have been sold already and a regular Saturday sale started), outside the UCL in London, at meetings on Indonesia in London, Liverpool and Glasgow, at street sales in Woolwich, Andover, Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow and elsewhere. A sale also took place at the Ken Livingstone For Mayor rally. With the purchase of our new printer, extra copies have been sent to our sellers to ensure that more people are able to buy the *Socialist Appeal* and read about the case for socialism. If you want to help sell as well then contact our office straight away—even a small regular order to

sell at your local LP or union branch, or to your friends, can help. If you already sell now is the time to increase your order and lay plans for new sales. At the end of February we will also be selling at the London demo on asylum seekers rights and of course we will be looking ahead to the April 10th demo in Newcastle and the May Day events throughout the country. We are also looking for anyone who is attending a union conference this year and would be interested in helping us sell the journal and distribute our leaflets. If this applies to you please phone us and help in the fight for socialism. We are also launching a push for extra subscriptions. So why not show the subscription box to someone you know and invite them to sign up and both help us and help themselves by ensuring that they get *Socialist Appeal* regularly. Remember, you will be making a spin doctor very unhappy!

Keep up drive for press fund

With over £6,300 raised so far towards the printer drive it is clear that one final push will enable us to reach our target.

It would be impossible to individually thank everybody who has donated already but a special note of thanks goes to readers in Stoke, Manchester, Yorkshire, Edinburgh, London and Southampton and others who have organised collections as well as a number of comrades who have made special individual donations. Thank you all and keep up the good work! If every reader now helps us out by chipping something in, if they haven't already done so, then we can get there. Groups of readers are already looking at ways to raise cash to help develop the resources which are needed to produce *Socialist Appeal*. The purchase of the new press has already enabled us to increase our print run and produce material such as promotional posters. With things hotting up in the movement we will need to produce more such stuff. Lets try and hit the £10,000 mark in the next month. Send what you can to *Socialist Appeal*, PO Box 2626, London N1 7SQ (cheques/PO's made payable to *Socialist Appeal*)

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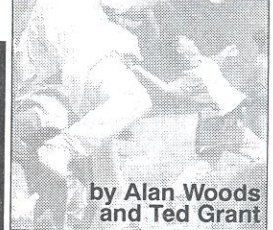
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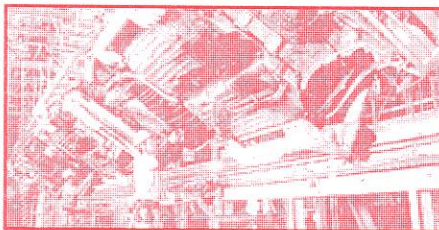
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