

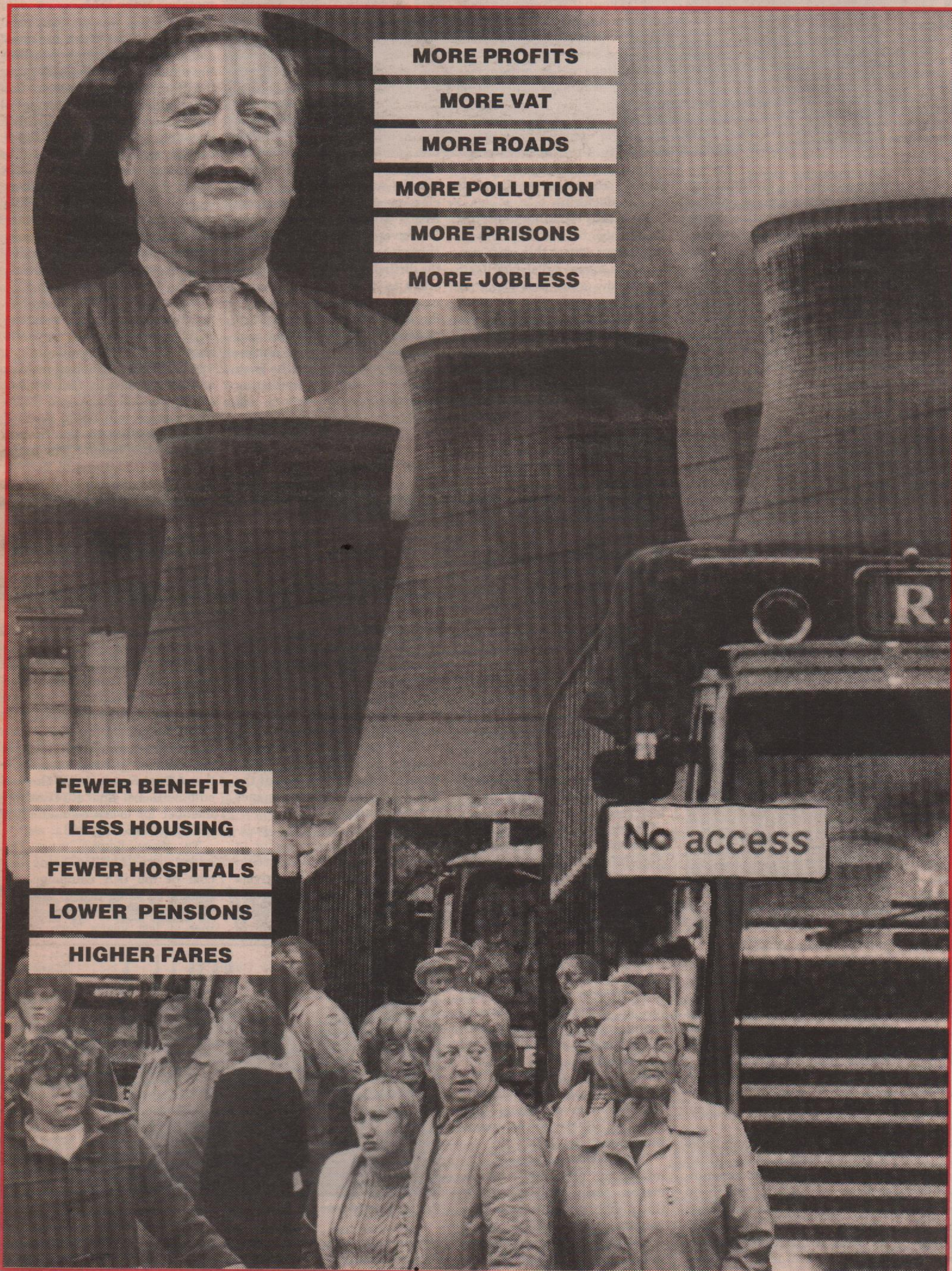
FIGHT RACISMS!

FIGHT IMPERIALISMS!

Revolutionary Communist Group Number 116 December 1993 / January 1994

(unwaged 30p) 50p

ENVIRONMENT OF



MORE PROFITS

MORE VAT

MORE ROADS

MORE POLLUTION

MORE PRISONS

MORE JOBLESS

FEWER BENEFITS

LESS HOUSING

FEWER HOSPITALS

LOWER PENSIONS

HIGHER FARES

GREED

INSIDE

Solidarity
price
£1

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Talks on Ireland: what's peace got to do with it?

SARAH BOND

Peace, if the media and politicians are to be believed, is suddenly possible in Ireland. The Irish PM Albert Reynolds could deliver it by the end of the year. SDLP leader John Hume could bring it in a week. John Major devoted both the important Guildhall speech and the Queen's Speech debate to it. What's going on?

As so often in this period of shifting alliances and secret diplomacy, it is not easy to say. It seems to have been the Hume-Adams initiative which got the speculation rolling. This initiative, which the IRA leadership supports and says 'could provide the basis for lasting peace', has been publicly rejected by the British government. Instead John Major has met with Albert Reynolds to draw up alternative proposals. However it has been confirmed that top government officials from Westminster and Dublin have been in secret contact with senior Republicans. The Major/Reynolds initiative is accompanied by repeated



Gerry Adams - 'a peaceful accommodation of differences'

three of the constitution.

The major problem with this package however is that it offers nothing to the nationalists. Indeed, there is no sign that any of these initiatives contains anything that has not been tried and failed before. So why should they hold out the hope of peace now? What has changed?

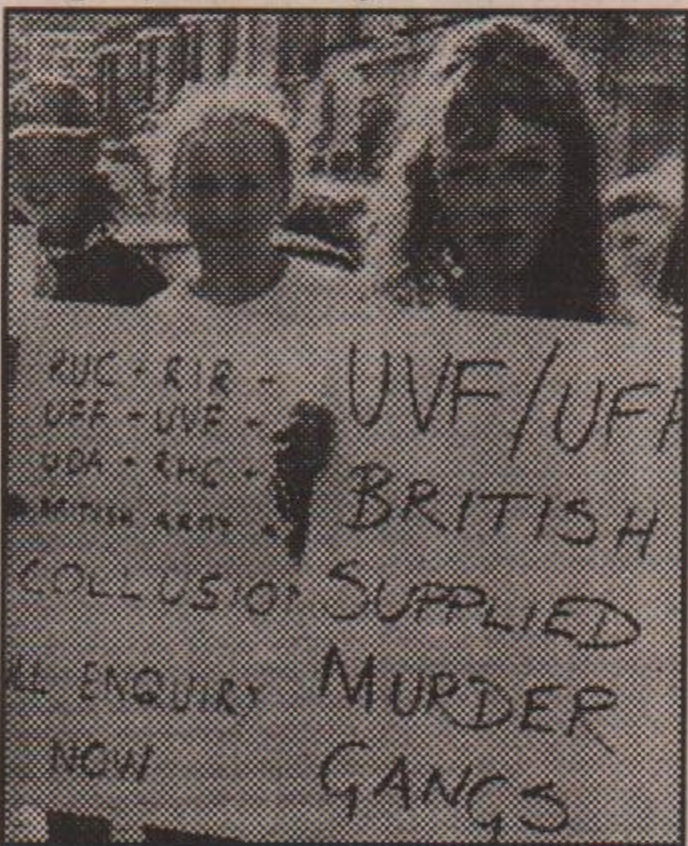
For the nationalist working class, very little. As a recent confidential government report admitted, 'On all the major social and economic indicators Catholics are worse off than Protestants ... Significantly more Catholics than Protestants live in public sector housing and experience overcrowding. Catholic households have a lower income than Protestant households. Almost double the proportion of Catholic households are dependent on social security. Catholics suffer from higher levels of ill-health.'

There have however been some changes which create conditions in which the British ruling class could contemplate a shift in policy in Ireland. First of all, with the turn of the revolutionary tide against anti-imperialist movements internationally and with the Republican movement much weakened and on the defensive, a united Ireland for the moment appears to no longer pose the threat of 'a Cuba a few miles from [Britain's] western shores', as a *Daily Telegraph* leader put it back in 1975. Meanwhile the influence of European capital has strengthened the southern bourgeoisie, placing it in a position of greater influence in the north, where previously it was too weak to play a reliable role.

There have also been important social and economic changes in Ireland. Catholics are no longer in the two-to-one minority engineered by Britain when it established the northern statelet. Catholics today make up 43% of the population - and the percentage continues to grow. In addition, amongst this 43% is a sizeable Catholic middle class, which has carved out a comfortable existence within the framework of partition. Although largely undisturbed by the bombs and bullets, it appears to have been the main beneficiary of concessions that the armed struggle has wrung from Britain. For example, the *Independent* says anti-discrimination laws have ensured that in the civil service and public sector 'more jobs, including

some of the top positions, are going to Catholics'. In contrast there is no sign that the nationalist working class has benefited on any significant scale, with unemployment figures still twice as high as among Protestant workers.

While the Catholic middle class increases its influence through the public sector, the old Orange industrial base of the north's economy has dwindled. It was Orange capital that formed the basis of the Six Counties state and its importance for Britain. It is also this sector that guaranteed the loyalist working class secure employment. Now, according to the *Financial Times*, this is taking second place to the public sector. Last year the north's private sector employed 23.9 per cent of males, compared to a 'UK' average of 28.6 per cent. Meanwhile, the public sector employed nearly one third of



Young nationalists demonstrate

the male workforce, and over half the female workforce.

At the same time, productivity in manufacturing in the north is 83% of the 'UK' average. This means that although wages are lower in the region, actual labour costs are 5-6% higher than in Britain. In a period of economic recession and fierce competition, this constitutes a serious problem for capital.

On top of all this, there is the additional burden on the British government of public expenditure in the north, which in 1991-2 was £4,191 per head compared to £2,963 in England. As well as covering security costs, this level of expenditure has served to protect sections of the population of the north from the worst effects of the recession. Unemployment figures for Protestants in the region are lower than anywhere in Britain except East Anglia. But as the government attempts to slash

public spending, it may wish to make cuts here too.

It may be a concern in ruling class circles that profits are being sacrificed in order to buy the loyalty of a section of the population - the Loyalist working class - whose support is no longer so critically important. Capital may be seeking a new and potentially more reliable ally in the Catholic middle class, which could in alliance with the southern ruling class and sections of the northern ruling class eventually take control of the north. It may be that this would provide a more stable basis from which to conduct a shake-up of the northern economy - cutting back the public sector, increasing productivity in manufacturing.

It is also possible that the leadership of the Republican movement senses this shift and wants to secure a place for itself in the new order. However, it is equally possible that no deal will materialise. Even if one did, enormous problems would stand in its way. How to contain the Loyalists, who stand to lose their privileges and whose unofficial death squads are already

operating to such deadly effect; how to deal with the officially-armed wing of Loyalism - the police and armed forces. Plus, most importantly for capital, how to keep the working class divided. This was the aim of partition - and despite its success, the northern nationalist working class still could be suppressed only with prisons, tanks and guns.

Peace is a fine thing but to talk of peace without reference to the causes of the war is misleading and dangerous. The nationalist working class and the Republican movement have fought for 25 years against partition and for justice and a united Ireland. Peace without justice may be what the British ruling class needs. It is not what the Irish working class wants. Whatever the schemes and conspiracies being prepared by the British ruling class and its allies in Ireland, British communists continue to demand the total withdrawal of British imperialism from Ireland and continue to support unconditionally the right of the Irish people to self determination and unity.

TOM and the Bloody Sunday Organising Committee

PAM ROBINSON

In October, TOM called together a number of individuals and organisations for the annual Bloody Sunday Organising Committee meeting. Having been invited, two RCG comrades attended, as did a member of the IFM.

The meeting was in two sessions, one for TOM to rave about the negotiations process, the other to write the leaflet for the Bloody Sunday march. To TOM's horror the IFM member questioned the whole process of negotiated settlements in light of the events that were still occurring in Palestine and South Africa. The RCG further expanded upon this line. This proved too much for TOM who felt obliged to dispose of such political opposition by immediately expelling both the RCG and the IFM from the meeting.

A protest to TOM elicited a miserable excuse. In a letter TOM informs us that in their haste they had 'accidentally' mailed the RCG. The sad reality of this situation is that whilst such sectarian behaviour continues there will be no significant opposition to the illegal occupation of Ireland. The Irish people will continue to be betrayed by the British on all sides and no serious opposition will be offered to increased attacks on democratic rights of people here in Britain.

What price loyalty?

TREVOR RAYNE

The 1921 Partition of Ireland depended upon the loyalty of the Protestant working class to the British state and that loyalty in turn depended upon the privileges afforded to the Protestants by British rule. Increasingly, this privilege requires a direct transfer of funds from the British government to the Protestant population and takes the form of funding the apparatus of a police state.

The *Economist* (6 November), citing an Institute for Public Policy Research study, states: "Much of the region [the Six Counties - TR] actually benefits from security expenditure and has no economic incentive to see it reduced" ... Moreover, these benefits are concentrated on Protestants since few Catholics want or dare to join the police. This helps explain why Catholic men are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as Protestants.

"The Ulster economy has much to offer the middle classes. Many of them work in the public sector, where they usually enjoy British salary scales. Yet property prices are much lower: £60,000 for a house in Belfast that would cost at least £250,000 in London. Few of the middle classes would gain significantly, in economic terms, from an end to the conflict."

Subsidies from the British government (being the differ-

ence between public expenditure in the Six Counties and receipts from taxation and the European Union) to the Six Counties now run at £4 billion a year. That is a 60 per cent increase in subsidies amounting to £2,370 per inhabitant when average per capita income is £6,567. Thus 36 per cent of the Six Counties' income comes from subsidies.

Output per head of population from the private sector in the Six Counties is 64 per cent of Britain's per capita private sector production, but government expenditure ensures that consumption is 82 per cent of

a year for each Catholic man aged between 15-44 years. Currently, one in ten Protestant men work in the 'security services' in some capacity.

By March 1993 the RUC and army strength in the Six Counties was put at 32,038 and is expected to increase by a further 4.4 per cent in 1994. The result will be one RUC/Army member for every 3.7 Catholic males aged 16-44 years!

To these figures must be added up to £5 billion, being the cost of the IRA campaign in Britain in 1992. Just to protect the Prime Minister and the Cabinet at last year's Tory Party



Part of a Loyalist arms haul

Britain's consumption per head. Approximately 40 per cent of the Six Counties' employment is in the public sector, while for Britain the figure is 22 per cent.

Combined military and 'law and order' costs in the Six Counties exceed £1.5 billion a year. Directly identifiable costs of the conflict amount to £9,200

conference cost £2.5 million.

These are the statistical dimensions of a police state. They are the 'economic cost' that the British state has been willing to pay to buy Protestant loyalty and maintain partition.

Additional figures from *Statewatching the New Europe*, published by Statewatch, price £4.50.



John Hume

offers of talks with Sinn Fein in exchange for the IRA abandoning the armed struggle. Meanwhile John Hume effectively acts as the conduit of information between Sinn Fein and the British government on what concessions a ceasefire would require.

Exactly what John Hume and Gerry Adams have agreed on is a closely-guarded secret. Basic principles are said to be a new flexibility on the goal of a united Irish Republic in return for Britain recognising the right of the Irish people to govern themselves. The initiative is thought to favour an interim deal giving joint authority over the north to Dublin and Westminster, but subject always to majority agreement, an idea backed by Labour's spokesperson on Ireland Kevin Macnamara.

One problem with such a plan is that the Loyalists would never touch it, and Major relies on their support in Parliament. For this reason, his proposals are thought to coincide broadly with those of his favoured Unionist ally, James Molyneux. These include a 'Northern Ireland' assembly elected by proportional representation, with a role for Dublin in affairs such as tourism and farming (and presumably security). Dublin would however have to surrender its territorial claim to the north, as enshrined in Articles two and

October 16: Fighting the racists and the fascists

MAXINE WILLIAMS

The largest march for many years against the growth of fascism and racism was held on 16 October. Over 50,000 people from all over Britain joined the march organised by the Anti-Nazi League and Youth Against Racism in Europe. The aim of the march was to protest outside the headquarters of the British National Party in Plumstead. The police, fearing the militancy and anger of the march, had banned the route which led past the headquarters.

A huge police operation was mounted and as the marchers approached the area, the police sealed off all exits and violently attacked it. Dozens of marchers were injured in the crush or had their heads split open by batons. The Chief Steward of the ANL was batoned as she attempted to negotiate a passage for the march.

Although disorganised, many marchers resisted this attack with great courage, and fighting lasted over two hours. The police used riot forces and horses to disperse the march.

FRFI had a contingent near the head of the march, and we were able to witness what the police did. They have since claimed that they only mobilised riot police when fighting began. This is untrue. From the beginning of the march all side



streets were sealed by riot police. They also claimed that fighting began when a large section of the march tried to fight its way through to the BNP offices. Whilst many marchers did indeed want to do this, the police engineered the conflict by blocking all exits from the area. The fight was primarily a matter of self-defence, and indeed it was only luck that prevented more serious injuries or even deaths. The police have a habit of killing demonstrators on anti-fascist demonstrations: remember Blair Peach and Kevin Gately.

Once again the police had shown that their role is to defend the fascists and to attack anti-racists when they protest or

try to defend themselves. Over thirty people were arrested on the march, and the *Sun* appealed for witnesses to report the identity of those who had fought the police. The *Sun* has never asked for witnesses to turn in fascist attackers of black people. In fact, the *Sun* whips up the climate in which such attacks occur.

The events on the march have led to further debate about the way forward for the anti-fascist movement. Recriminations have been batted back and forth between the ANL and the Anti-Racist Alliance. The ARA chose to take itself off for a march to central London whilst the struggle in Plumstead was going on. Neither side has emerged well

from the debate although the ANL has the slight edge that it does mobilise anti-fascists occasionally.

The ANL, though, led by the SWP, needs its links with Labour politicians and showbiz types, and was no doubt thoroughly alarmed to be identified with such unruly and anti-police scenes as those in Plumstead. It is now less likely than ever to mount a serious, sustained or democratic campaign against racism and fascism.

So 16 October remains an isolated event rather than part of a political campaign. Racist attacks escalate and the fascists continue to recruit. 50,000 marched to the top of the hill and were then ...marched right down again. ■

Labour supports long working week

GAVIN SCOTT

On 6 November the leader of the British Labour Party, John Smith, met with 19 other leaders of the social-democratic parties that make up the 'Party of European Socialists'. They met finally to sign a newly agreed joint manifesto on which to fight the elections to the European Parliament next year. It includes a 'commitment' to the cutting of working hours to 35 per week in an effort to create jobs.

The passage in question actually says: 'Maintaining and creating jobs must be encouraged by reorganisation of work, agreed between the social partners and safeguarding competitiveness.'

'These measures must include a substantial cut in working time to ensure a better division of the available work. Several approaches are possible - a working week of 35 hours or four days, leave for training, voluntary part-time work, etc.' (emphasis added)

It also states that signatories 'must' include this in their own manifestos, but for Labour even this mealy-mouthed position contradicts its own standpoint and there was embarrassment all around. However, someone quickly came to the rescue by claiming that the word 'must' had simply to be a translation error, since the document had been subjected to long, complex negotiations involving over 1,000 amendments. Yes, of course, that had to be the reason, but then what it supposedly really says they neglected to report.

Even so, Smith still felt it necessary further to placate the British ruling class by making it absolutely clear, as he often does, that this commits Labour to nothing. A limit of the hours a person may be required to work will not be on Labour's agenda. Indeed, he made plain that Labour is conducting a battle against any other signatories that may try to draw up legislation by claiming that the European Union (EU) jobs crisis requires more working-time

flexibility, not less. 'No-one is proposing European legislation on such matters,' he said and that the British tradition (which Labour could hardly be firmer supporter) is not to legislate on such matters. He then was silent when others claimed that this new joint manifesto is a great step towards creating a unified Europe-wide party!

David Hunt, Secretary of State for Employment, said that 'John Smith is now admitting openly that socialist policies will never create jobs.' Lord Hanson wrote a letter to *The Independent* (12 November) praising Labour for 'frantically trying to disown the compulsory 35-hour week in the European Socialists' Manifesto'.

All EC countries, except Britain and Denmark, have maximum 48 hour working week. Denmark has a higher limit. Britain is the only one with no limit whatsoever. While working hours fell in most EC countries during the 1970s and 1980s, in Britain they rose. Now, for example, Britain has the longest hours for men at an average of 44 per week. The average in the whole of the EC is 41. 10% of all male workers in Britain work more than 48 hours. 20% of those doing manual jobs work over 48 hours.

Coincidentally, but not simply so, Britain is also the only EC country without a legally enforced minimum wage. Long hours and low pay actually go hand in hand because, for many people in Britain, working long hours is the only way of earning a surviving (never mind living) wage. Despite this, Britain has a larger proportion of its workforce earning poverty wages than any other in the EC.

Britain generally has higher poverty. On 5 November the Child Poverty Action Group published a report revealing that almost 3 million children living on benefits are surviving on levels 25 per cent below that needed for 'basic sustenance'.

Yet the British ruling class and its ever faithful Labour Party are determined to continue on their present course. ■

Local residents occupy ward at UCH

The banner on the wall of ward 2/3 in University College Hospital reads 'TUC = Tory's Unofficial Cops - sabotaging struggles'. The ward, which was closed earlier this year as part of massive cuts by Camden and Islington Health Authority, is being occupied by local residents and activists who have organised the UCH Community Action Committee.

This is the second occupa-

tion; the first was called off after the health workers' union UNISON (a massive part of the TUC) withdrew its backing for a strike by nurses and porters, compelling the occupiers to withdraw or risk endangering the strikers' already precarious situation. This time the union has been quick to announce it does not support the occupation. UCH management has responded to the occupation by cutting

off the electricity to the ward.

So why occupy? Members of the occupation told *FRFI*, 'There are only four wards left in operation in this building and the management plans to close them too in the next few weeks and sell the whole building off to the Wellcome Foundation. We want to draw as much attention as possible to the way in which health care services are being broken down and sold

off. But it isn't just a publicity stunt. We want to build up solidarity with other campaigning groups, using the occupation as a focus. The Anti-Poll Tax movement showed what can be achieved when people unite to resist the attacks on them.'

To join the UCH occupation phone 0374 612521 (a mobile inside the ward). Children are welcome and Christmas will be celebrated!

The Gulf War: Desert Storm and dead Iraqi children

LIZ BENNETT

In January 1993 doctors began to report a serious deterioration of child health in Iraq, including a 'mysterious new illness', which is invariably fatal, and a rise in childhood cancers, especially leukaemia. A report in the *British Medical Journal* in June stated: 'Of the 600,000 American soldiers sent to the Middle East to confront Saddam Hussein, more than 54,000 have since qualified for disability compensation and more than 1600 have died ...'

Symptoms include chronic fatigue, rashes, eye and ear infections, bleeding gums, hair and weight loss, facial paralysis, headache, memory loss, muscle and joint pain, dyspnoea, cough, chest pains, liver problems, diarrhoea, and in

many cases a collapse of the immune system. In Britain, the Ministry of Defence refuses to admit that any Gulf veterans are suffering unexplained symptoms, and in July refused BBC's *Newsnight* programme permission to talk to hospitalised soldiers and military doctors.

The Iraqi population and soldiers in the Gulf War were exposed to a variety of environmental poisons. Combined with malnutrition, contaminated water and poor disease control, these have contributed to the rise in illness. But some are pointing to the use of Depleted Uranium (DU) weapons by the US Army as the cause of the devastating aftermath. Coalition forces fired about 4,000 DU anti-tank rounds, and US aircraft fired about 940,000 DU bullets.

DU is the non-fissile isotope uranium-238, a by-product of the manufacture of uranium for

nuclear weapons and fuel. It is about half as radioactive as natural uranium, but extremely dense - hence its use in armour piercing weapons. It is probably supplied free or at very low cost as a waste product. External radiation levels are very low, but when DU burns or is exposed to the air or water, it becomes more readily absorbed either directly by the body or indirectly by entering the food-chain. If ingested or inhaled, DU's toxicity could damage the kidneys and, because it is an alpha-emitter, its radioactivity is concentrated in immediate tissue rather than being dispersed more widely in the body.

In November 1991 a leaked Atomic Energy Authority report revealed that 'The DU will be spread around the battlefield ... It would be unwise for people to stay close to large quantities of DU for long periods ... localised

contamination of vehicles and the soil may exceed permissible limits and these could be hazardous to both clean-up teams and the local population.' This report estimated at least 40 tonnes of DU were left in Iraq and Kuwait by Coalition forces, and estimated this as capable of causing '500,000 potential deaths'. Later, documents obtained under the US Freedom of Information Act indicated that the amount of DU left in Iraq could be as much as 300 tonnes.

The United States has invested large sums in recovering contaminated US vehicles from Iraq and disposing of them as nuclear waste, but nothing has been done to recover the DU rounds fired into Iraq and Kuwait.

In Britain, regular test-firing of DU shells started in 1980 at Eskmeals in Cumbria and Kirkcubright in 1981. Firing of DU

by the Ministry of Defence has also occurred at West Freugh near Stranraer, Aberdeen, White Sands, New Mexico, Maryland in the United States and Gramat in France. In June 1993 the MoD denied that there was any problem, claiming 'only very low levels of radioactivity', but serious contamination was disclosed in July outside the controlled area at Eskmeals. Grass and soil samples at Kirkcubright were 'well above acceptable limits'. At Kirkcubright it is claimed that there is no nuclear waste as DU shells are fired into the Solway Firth.

Manufacturing of DU shells probably takes place at Radway Green near Crewe, with development at Fort Halstead near Sevenoaks in Kent. DU has also been imported from the US to Royal Ordnance factories at Wolverhampton and Chorley in

Lancashire. The hazards are unknown, but in the US a DU shell manufacturer was forced to close down after radioactive particles were discovered up to 26 miles from the factory.

It may be the case that DU is 'not a significant contributor to 'Desert Storm Syndrome' or the deaths of Iraqi children. But what is clear is that there is no real knowledge of the environmental effects of DU bullets which were so readily fired and then abandoned. Children in Iraq have been witnessed playing with DU bullets as toys, and they will continue to suffer until there is a real investigation and a real concern about future generations. ■

Information from Medact's bulletin 'Global Security'. A full report *Depleted Uranium, sick soldiers and dead children* (£3) is available from MET, 601 Holloway Road, London N19 4DJ.

South Africa: a ghost at the post-apartheid feast

CAT WIENER

Late on the night of 17 November, after a frantic flurry of last-minute horse-trading between the ANC and National Party, an interim constitution for a future South Africa was finally ratified by the 23 political parties involved in constitutional negotiations. The future of the black working class was signed away in a carnival atmosphere as a smiling Mandela shook hands with each of the 200 unelected delegates.

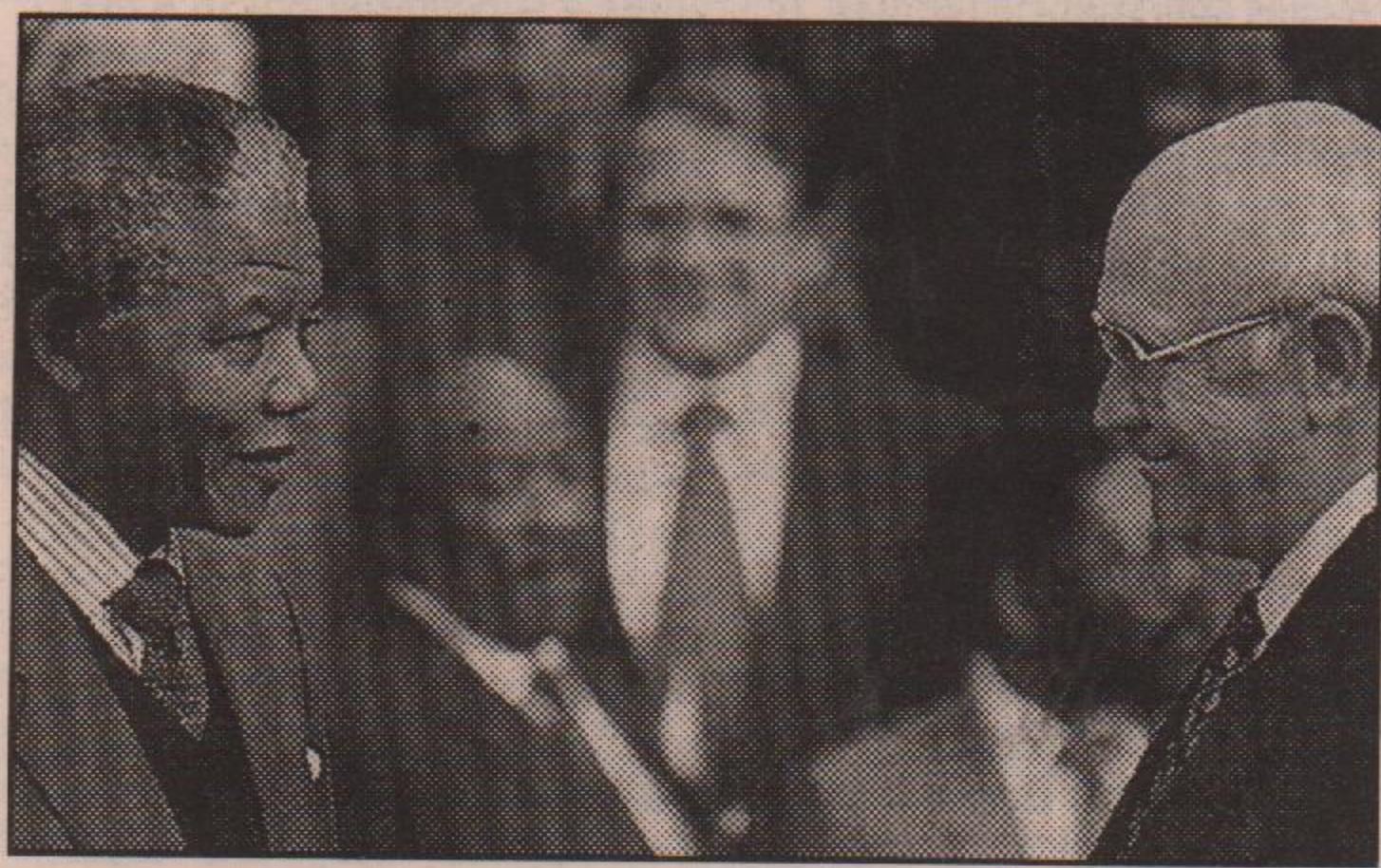
The new constitution lays the basis for five years of power-sharing between the ANC and National Party after the 27 April 1994 elections; it provides for a President (almost certainly Mandela), and two vice-presidents (probably de Klerk and Thabo Mbeki); nine new provinces with their own legislatures, a 400-seat national assembly and 90-seat senate elected by proportional representation. More crucially, it specifies that the cabinet – to be appointed by parties with more than 5 per cent of the vote – will make decisions by 'consensus'. Although this was widely seen as a concession by de Klerk, who wanted a two-thirds majority, it effectively guarantees a veto on decision-making by minority parties in the cabinet – eg the whites.

The interim constitution represents an essential consolidation of the ANC and National Party's interests and was greeted euphorically by the media and political and economic commentators in South Africa and internationally. However, it already faces multiple problems and the triumph looks like being short lived.

The new constitution fulfils the demands of South Africa's imperialist backers for a bourgeois market economy, and will

undoubtedly bring short-term gains for South Africa's middle classes: an \$850m IMF loan has already been negotiated; car companies such as Nissan are already planning to revitalise their South African factories as a platform for exporting into Southern Africa as a whole. South Africa will now be readmitted as a full member of the United Nations.

But already the thieves have fallen out: the signatories to the accord are wrangling over the number of ballots to be held in regional and national elections – the National Party and, more particularly, the smaller Conservative Party, want separate ballots, since they stand to make greater gains in regional elections; the ANC is demand-



Nelson Mandela and FW de Klerk – power-sharing by any means necessary

ing a single ballot, with the excuse of not wanting to confuse an 'inexperienced electorate'.

More seriously – for at this stage there is no doubt that a compromise will be reached between the ANC and the National Party as it has been on everything else – the constitution has been rejected by both Inkatha and the far-right coalition. Buthelezi has threatened to reduce the constitution to 'the rubble of passing history' and has confirmed that Inkatha has set up military training camps. The AWB is preparing

for war – in spite of Mandela's concessions to sections of the far-right for an independent homeland for whites.

Far from being what de Klerk described as 'the distillation of the dreams of generations of the dispossessed', the new South Africa shows no signs of being able to address even the most basic needs of the black working class. And yet this is the nightmare that presses on the consciousness of the politicians and commentators: the 46 per cent unemployed, the 1.2m homeless people, the 10m who have no drinking water in their homes, the 23m who have no electricity – the devastation and human toll that is apartheid's legacy will take years to repair, and, in the words of Finance

Minister Derek Keys: 'I do not think the market is going to do it.' The Independent Development Trust estimates that the country is short of 50,000 classrooms, and expects that figure to double by the year 2000.

The new government of South Africa will be caught in a double bind: the ANC has made it clear to its big business buddies that high taxes, nationalisation etc are not on the cards; at the same time it will be under intense pressure to deliver some kind of 'liberation dividend' to those who have suffered so

long. Even the limited democracy the new constitution appears to offer will be strained – in the words of *Financial Times* writer Patti Waldmeir, democracy may become 'a temporary casualty' (a future she sees as 'unfortunate but bearable'). She continues:

'Popular expectations will soon strain the intentions of even the most benevolent government; at that point it must either give in to populism, or suppress it. The latter now seems more likely.'

The new Bill of Rights will be used not for its ramblings about 'equality' but for the tough emergency powers including unlimited detention without trial that it contains. That they will use these powers there can be no doubt. Both Mandela and de Klerk have made it clear that clamping down on township violence will be a number one post-election priority; this clamp-down will target, first and foremost, those sections of the liberation movement committed to continuing the struggle for liberation. Barely days before a smiling de Klerk accepted the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Mandela, South African defence troops raided a house in the Transkei, killing five schoolboys while they slept – on the grounds that the house had been used as a safe house by APLA, armed wing of the PAC.

There is a ghost at the post-apartheid feast. The absence of any real change, coupled with growing repression, will drive ever-increasing numbers once again into a struggle for liberation. It is these forces that will have to organise together. This time the fight will be, not against the brutal racist facade of apartheid, but against those who have sold out the dreams of generations of the dispossessed in return for the crumbs of imperialism.

The Springbok 9 are innocent!



CAROL BRICKLEY

After a year-long wait, nine people walked free from Nottingham Crown Court following their two-week trial at the beginning of November. The nine were charged with going equipped to commit criminal damage to Leicester Football Ground on the night of 3 November 1992.

Eight of them were members of the Springbok Reception Committee which was formed by City of London Anti-Apartheid Group to oppose the rugby tour by the South African Springbok rugby team – the first for more than 20 years. The ninth was a young black freelance photographer. They were arrested, when their minibus was stopped by police in Leicester City Centre, in possession of 350lbs of broken glass and 80lbs of metal tacks on the eve of the first match of the tour. The police quickly put two and two together and made 20, concluding that the nine were intent on scaling the rugby ground's high walls with 10 sacks of broken glass and distributing it over the pitch to abort the match.

At the trial, the City AA members argued that their intention was to stage a demonstration outside the ground, using the glass and tacks, together with signs, placards and banners to remind the spectators that nothing in South Africa has changed since the last Springbok tour in 1969 which was stopped by

mass demonstrations and direct action. Ken MacDonald, one of the five barristers representing the defendants, described City AA as 'the Saatchi & Saatchi of the Anti-Apartheid Movement' because of its reputation for creative, colourful demonstrations, like the four-year-long non-stop picket outside the South African Embassy.

After more than three hours the jury returned a verdict of not guilty for the photographer, but despite a further two hours was unable to reach a majority verdict on the other eight. The prosecution then stated that he did not wish to proceed to a retrial on the grounds of cost, so a verdict of not guilty was returned on all the defendants. The judge then imposed a bindover on the eight and refused the defence costs. This was completely spiteful and illegal. All the defendants have had their lives disrupted for a year under threat of prison sentences and had repeatedly offered to accept bindovers when the prosecutor insisted that the case came to trial. An appeal on these questions is being considered.

Stop Press: Having agreed to give David Kitson compensation for their appalling treatment of him with the complicity of the London ANC, the trade union MSF has had the effrontery to offer David a £1,000 settlement. David lost all his income as a result of the union's viciousness. £1,000 wouldn't keep Ken Gill (ex General Sec) for a month!

NAFTA – an instrument for monopoly domination

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) extends the monopolists' charter to Mexico and Canada. Endorsed by the US Congress on Wednesday 17 October, it is fundamentally concerned with resolving the crisis of US capitalism and promoting the profitability of US multinational corporations (MNCs) at the expense of the working class both in Mexico and the USA and partially at the expense of the Mexican capitalist class. The agreement, which will come into force in January 1994, will extend the MNCs' control over Mexico's natural resources and productive forces and will facilitate a major assault on working class employment, wages and conditions on both sides of the border.

Additionally NAFTA will help consolidate a US sphere of influence in the Americas in the face of a growing global econo-

mic challenge from Japan and Europe. Along with GATT and other similar institutions, NAFTA is the USA's instrument for inter-imperialist struggles and the capitalist class's struggle against the working class and Third World nations. Ostensibly described as a treaty to create a free-trade zone across the USA, Canada and Mexico, NAFTA will in fact expose the resource-rich Mexican economy to the full force of US capital. Mexican industry will be devastated as it is compelled to eliminate protective tariff barriers and open up to 'free trade' hitherto protected sectors such as cars, car parts, services, banking, government procurement and agriculture. Bob Herbert, writing in the *New York Times* noted that here was:

'a trade agreement that is the delight of Republicans in Congress and the multinational corporations ... It is clear what the corporations want, and NAFTA helps them get it: an expanded market, cheaper labour and less

restrictive health and safety standards.'

According to the World Bank, wages in Mexico are one fifth of those in the USA. The average car worker's wage in Mexico is \$4 per hour. In the USA it is \$20. In agriculture respective wages are 35 cents an hour compared to \$9.50! Not surprisingly US firms are rushing to relocate in Mexico where not only is labour cheaper, but labour conditions are appalling and health, safety and environmental standards virtually non-existent. Already over 2,000 US firms have moved into Mexico. In 1990 the American Medical Association described the Mexican side of the Mexican/US border as a 'virtual cesspool' of poisonous and toxic pollutants. This will now get worse with a renewed rush into Mexico by US corporations.

Whilst US employers avail themselves of cheap and unprotected Mexican labour, the US working class, according to estimates from the University of Massachusetts, will suffer over

450,000 job losses because of NAFTA. General Motors, planning to shut 24 plants in the US, is now the largest private employer in Mexico. NAFTA will also help the US capitalists to further depress US wages, which in real terms today stand at the same level as the mid-1960s. Bob Herbert writes that: 'labour officials have noted that just the threat of a move to Mexico by a US company can have a dampening effect on wages in the United States.'

NAFTA is an extension of the imperialist 'neo-liberal' economic policy of the 1980s when, disguised as 'reforms' or 'structural adjustment programmes' to encourage 'economic growth', the Group of Seven major capitalist powers, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, forced Third World states to abandon all policies which secured them a degree of economic independence from imperialism. By eliminating state control over Third World economies, the main features of neo-liberalism (such as massive privatisation and deregulation of banking and services) will render these nations powerless before imperialist-sponsored

multi-nationals and will block all possibility of independent economic development.

The result of these policies in Mexico is summed up by a left-wing Mexican journalist, Alvaro Neri: 'The booty of privatisation has made multibillionaires of 13 families while the rest of the population – some 80 million Mexicans – has been subjected to the same gradual impoverishment as though they had suffered through a war.'

Since the mid-80s, Mexico has sold over 80 per cent of 1,155 state-controlled businesses. Most of the \$21bn income was spent not on social investments but on repaying the country's debts. The *International Herald Tribune* notes that: 'whittling back government-owned companies has cost 400,000 jobs since 1983, causing widespread social hardship.'

NAFTA will bring no relief. With the collapse of Mexican industry confronted by the US multinational juggernauts, unemployment and poverty are expected to grow dramatically, particularly in agriculture. Mexican peasants and farmers will be wiped out by US agribusiness. They will then flood into

Mexico City's shanty towns in search of non-existent jobs.

Multinationals wield enormous power over governments, states, newspapers and politicians. Despite the fact that the majority of the US population opposed NAFTA, the multinationals spent hundreds of millions of dollars literally buying the votes they needed to secure NAFTA's passage.

To oppose the avalanche of multinational greed will require a lot more than parliamentary resolutions. Capital's capacity to command the best instruments of propaganda is combined with its capacity to command states and their murderous military and police machines. It is the multinationals that finance the death squads that gun down labour leaders. They are the financiers of the armies which devastated Iraq to defend multinational control of Middle East oil. Only an international political movement that unites the working class of the imperialist and oppressed nations can successfully resist the ruthless political and economic power of the multinationals. Building such a movement is the task of the day.

Hard Times

Lloyds Chemists' Chairman got a 42% rise last year, bringing his earnings to a meagre £493,000 – that is £9,480 per week. The current Income Support for a single parent with two children is £4,643 per year, that is £89 per week. Which of these two would you say was in it for the money? Think carefully before you answer.

Fathers are just for Christmas

Whilst accepting that the Child Support Agency's attempt to collect more cash off absent fathers is designed to benefit not children or mothers but the Treasury, it is still fairly sickening to see the fathers' enthusiastic campaign against it. Half of divorced fathers don't ever see their children, whilst even resident fathers spend on average 12 minutes a week talking to their children. They have not campaigned for an improvement in the lot of their deserted wives and children, but reacted like lightning when asked to cough up more money. It is a great shame that single mothers do not organise politically in this way. But they are too busy working more than 80 hours a week bringing up children.

Gym-slip mother

One single mother who is treated with tender concern and propped up with a great deal of public money is of course Princess Diana. The nation (ie the *Sun*) was outraged that the *Daily Mirror* printed photos of her with her legs apart on an 'exercise' machine. This prurient concern with the Royal genitalia (one only hopes she uses a reliable gynaecologist, otherwise it's 'Yes, those Fallopian tubes that incubated our Future King in Full Colour') may now lead to privacy laws designed to protect the wealthy.

Innocence and guilt

Such laws would not have protected the Birmingham 6 when the press helped to shut them away for 15 years. And the *Telegraph* is still at it, with the *Sunday Telegraph* having to pay large damages and print a long apology for again saying that the Birmingham 6 really were guilty.

The hypocritical oath

Doctors are apparently planning to get rid of their night-call service. Oh yes, and not to treat smokers (ie the working class). Um, and to let old people 'die with dignity' (perhaps the model being the elderly lady found dead in a casualty ward having been 'lost', with dignity of course). Do you detect a trend towards doctors only dealing with fully fit people? Perish the thought. They will continue to make an exception of those suffering the chronic complaint of 'largewalletitis'.

Children are to blame

The press has for several weeks reported in revolting detail the court case against two eleven-year-olds accused of killing a two-year-old in Liverpool. The boys' barristers ended this edifying spectacle by saying 'Your boy did it' – 'no he didn't, yours did' – 'no he didn't, yours was worse'. The trial had spent days debating whether the boys knew right from wrong. Shame they didn't ask whether this country's rulers, who have consigned much of its youth to brutalising poverty and a cult of violence, know the distinction.

Russia: a bourgeois dictatorship in the making

EDDIE ABRAHAMS & MAXINE WILLIAMS

Remember when not a day passed without some appeal for Soviet leaders to free a 'prisoner of conscience'? Remember when the Soviet Union was constantly under attack for its 'lack of free elections' and for the 'absence of democratic norms'? When its planned economy was under permanent assault for being 'inefficient and corrupt'? Strange then the absolute silence of the Western press and politicians about the little matter of Yeltsin's artillery blasting the Russian Parliament (elected in Western-sanctioned multi-candidate elections in 1990) out of existence after laying siege to it for 10 days.

You will listen in vain for tributes to the uncounted dead who were murdered by Yeltsin's troops outside the Parliament on 3 October 1993. Or for questions about the fate of the many prisoners now held in Russian prisons. After all, that was then, but this is now; they were communists, but Yeltsin is our boy.

At enormous cost the great grandchildren of those who made the October Revolution in 1917 are now learning something their forbears knew only too well – bourgeois democracy has its limits, it does not mean rule by the many, but rule by the monied. Its limits are those that safeguard profitable private production. Even a nationalist and essentially pro-capitalist Russian parliamentary opposition led by Rutskoi and Khasbulatov breached those limits when it demanded a slackening of the pace of 'capitalist reforms' which are destroying the Russian economy and pauperising the people in accord with the demands of the World Bank. As Yeltsin's close adviser Arkady Vaksberg said when openly admitting the illegality of Yeltsin's actions: 'Law and right are not identical'. Indeed. Laws and parliaments are near fictions in the most stable of bourgeois societies. In the new Wild West era of Russian history such niceties are doomed. The events of September and October proved that.

Yeltsin's shock therapy a success – the patient dies

Since Yeltsin was elected Presi-

dent in 1990 he has striven, in partnership with imperialist capital, to thoroughly subordinate the Russian economy to the needs of the imperialist multinationals by means of mass privatisations and the elimination

of his Western backers. They did nothing to discourage him when he began to utter warnings about his intention to get rid of Parliament and declare a State of Emergency, something which Parliament had expressly

acted by defending both itself and the Russian constitution, voting by 636 votes to 2 to impeach Yeltsin. Their water was cut off as were all power and phones in the building and their daily paper *Rossikaya*

was heavily defended and the virtually unarmed crowd was fired on mercilessly. According to Steele, after the crowd's attack was repulsed, the troops carried on firing for 7-8 hours. 'The ensuing reports on government-controlled radio and TV then gave a distorted picture of what was going on, as though a knife-edge struggle ... was underway for hours. This set the scene for the ensuing ten-hour bombardment by the army of the White House Parliament which set the buildings ablaze and marked the defeat of the Parliamentary opposition. Yeltsin promised that the leaders of the 'communist-fascist uprising would be harshly dealt with.'

... When it increases profits

Yeltsin had done his job well. The world's bankers and their political representatives were lavish in their praise and unstinting in their support. The EC governments declared their support for Yeltsin's dissolution of Parliament 'even though it is unconstitutional.' NATO said it would 'support democratic forces (ie Yeltsin) to prevent Russia from falling into chaos'. John Major praised Yeltsin for his 'restraint' and gave 'total and unequivocal support for the action that he has taken.' Meanwhile US President Clinton said that Yeltsin had the USA's 'four-square backing' and that 'democratic governments have to defend themselves against force'. This chorus was echoed in the press where Yeltsin's unconstitutional actions were described as a 'democratic coup'.

Most telling was the response of the IMF and the Group of Seven: 'Mr Yeltsin had appreciably improved his chances of receiving the assistance which had been delayed as the reform process stalled.' However they still felt that the planned shock therapy subsidy cuts would not be enough to get Yeltsin the next instalment of IMF aid of \$970m. It is not enough to burn down Parliament, Yeltsin must go further to please bankers. The mass of Russians must be forced to their knees by privatisation. The poverty and instability which would follow is not compatible with any form of representative democracy.

In such circumstances Yeltsin's actions since the coup are significant. Many opposition papers and parties have been banned. The media is under such tight control that the pro-Yeltsin message is the only one that the electorate will hear. Presidential elections planned for December have been delayed until 1996. Under Yeltsin the new Parliament will have even less powers than the old Tsarist Duma. As the *Financial Times* said: 'the idea that ultimately political power must be allocated by majority vote ... however valuable, is not by itself enough to resolve all conflicts. So much depends on who votes, and when and for what.' The Russian people will not vote for mass poverty so Yeltsin and the bankers have decreed that they cannot vote for anything else.



of subsidies for industry and consumer goods. The result has been wholesale economic disorganisation and poverty. Industrial output in Russia today is 60 per cent of what it was in 1990. Whilst 50 per cent of the Moscow population lives below the poverty line there are 15,000 dollar millionaires, many of whose operations make Al Capone look like a Sunday School teacher.

In the face of this disaster, the Russian Parliament which had in 1991 given Yeltsin 'emergency powers' to 'reform' (ie make capitalist) the economy had latterly been attempting to temper Yeltsin's 'shock therapy'. They were fearful of the social explosion which could result from such 'therapy' and sought a more gradual transition to capitalism. Dreaming of an independent capitalist Russia they object to the country's wholesale subordination to imperialist capital. In 1992 Parliament refused to renew Yeltsin's emergency powers. The West's propaganda machine seized on this to portray Parliament as a Bolshevik throwback, as 'hardliners' who were obstructing the necessary 'reforms'.

Yeltsin, not by nature a democrat, was increasingly enraged by Parliamentary obstruction as

forbidden him to do when they elected him President.

When is a coup not a coup? ...

Yeltsin moved on 20 September, dissolving Parliament and saying that new elections would be held under rules of his own making. His timing was interesting. Fresh Parliamentary elections were anyway due in December when the new Yeltsin constitution was also scheduled to be put to the vote. If the Parliamentary opposition was as unpopular and obstructive as Yeltsin and the West claimed, surely elections would remove the opposition. But there was a problem. The people were also showing signs of being 'obstructive' and there was no guarantee that fresh elections would back 'shock therapy'. After all it took decades of careful manipulation and bribery to get the Western electorate used to voting for a bunch of crooks. The Russian electorate has not reached this stage.

The risk of free elections simply could not be taken. Under the guise of 'defending democracy' Yeltsin had to abolish free elections. Having dissolved Parliament he began the process of isolating it. Parliament re-

Gazeta was seized. On 24 September troops ringed Parliament. But things were not going Yeltsin's way. Thousands of people came out to build barricades in the streets. Regional leaders who Yeltsin tried to buy refused to cooperate. The Constitutional Court ruled Yeltsin's decrees illegal. The St Petersburg council condemned his actions as did many other councils. The military were split, unused as yet to the exercise of shooting hundreds of citizens dead on the streets. Their support was to be vital in the final stages of destroying Parliament and it was no coincidence that on 1 October Victor Yerin, Head of the Police was promoted to General in the Army.

There is considerable evidence that Yeltsin and his backers planned the final provocation that gave them the excuse to fire on Parliament. *Guardian* correspondent Jonathon Steele argues a convincing case for this. When on 3 October about 7,000 demonstrators marched to break the siege of Parliament the ring of police inexplicably vanished leaving their vehicles with keys in them. From Parliament part of the crowd marched to the Mayor's office and took it over and then marched on the TV station. This

Turkey: Socialists reorganise

In the last issue, FRFI 115, we reported that the Turkish Government was preparing to ban the *Sosyalist Turkiye Partisi*. Before the trial to ban the STP came to an end, its comrades had already formed a new organisation to continue the struggle. They declare, 'Our fight to bring socialism into Turkey will now continue under the banner of the SIP' (*Sosyalist İktidar Partisi - The Party For Socialist Power*).

The SIP wasted no time. On 15 October it joined tens of thousands of government workers marching in protest against privatisation. The 23-union Government Workers' Platform which organised the demonstration de-

manded the right to organise independently of state control, and called for 'Government and private sector workers together in a general strike!'. The Platform demanded an 'End to human rights violations! Stop the dirty war in the South-East!' (ie Kurdistan). The SIP promoted the slogan 'Worker, not Civil Servant', arguing that the workers' struggle must turn its face to socialist ideology and a socialist party.

The SIP is conducting a campaign amongst students to get them to commit themselves to the struggle of working people. It held rallies to celebrate the October Revolution in major universities in Ankara and Istanbul. Then the

police arrested 42 student comrades and held them for two days, thus giving practical education in Turkish state repression.

New Prime Minister Tansu Ciller is seeking ways to cloak her government's brutal suppression of the PKK and the Kurdish insurrection behind a constitutional facade. Her recent visit to Spain generated a debate on 'the Basque model' in ruling class circles. But, as the SIP points out, that discussion only showed 'the government feels helpless in the face of the national question'. One thing is for sure, the rebirth of an independent working class movement in Turkey and the continued resistance of the PKK in Kurdistan both point to one common enemy.

Andy Higginbottom

Kurds attacked

A concerted attack by European governments on supporters of the Kurdish national liberation struggle is underway. On 18 November 85 Kurds were arrested by the French police. At dawn on 26 November thousands of police raided Kurdish premises throughout Germany and 35 Kurdish organisations, including the *Kurd-Ha* newsagency and the Kurdish publication *Berxwedan*, have been closed down. In Britain the National Criminal Intelligence Service has accused the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) of extorting £2.5 million from the Turkish population in north London. FRFI calls on readers to oppose these Turkish state-inspired attacks.

Rio Tinto Zinc Stinks



RTZ, as it now dubs itself, is the world's biggest mining company and, justifiably, Britain's most infamous multinational. *The Times* once said it was 'almost patriotic' to own shares in Rio Tinto Zinc. The Queen was cited as a major shareholder; her private secretary sat on the board. The *Financial Times* described RTZ in 1988 as 'the dominant supplier of minerals to the world's manufacturing industries'. It operates some 700 subsidiary companies in over 40 countries. In the name of the 'economic development of the free world' it drives people from their land, poisons the air and the water, injures and kills its employees and supplies the ingredients for chemical and nuclear weapons, and their delivery systems. Rio Tinto Zinc Stinks!

The trumpeting of the virtues of the free market and competition under contemporary capitalism are a deceit. Whether it be privatisation in Britain, neo-liberalism in the Third World or the opening up of the former socialist countries to 'competition', all are examples of the global policies of a handful of transnational monopoly companies. Just 500 companies control 70 per cent of world trade, 80 per cent of foreign investment and 30 per cent of the world's annual product. Fifteen companies, including RTZ, control 21 of the world's key commodities. They plan the poverty on this planet and its pollution. At the 1992 Rio Earth Summit they threw out the proposal for strict controls on hazardous waste.

In his book *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin stated a truth that all apologists for capitalism attempt to evade. 'The rise of monopolies as the result of the concentration of production is a general and fundamental law of the present stage of development of capitalism.' Once this law is recognised then the illusions of the democratic facade of capitalist society and its complement market competition, evaporate and in their place stand the brute power of RTZ and similar concentrations of industrial and banking capital that dominate global resources, production and distribution.

RTZ produces nearly 15 per cent of the world's copper, over 20 per cent of its industrial diamonds and talc, 13 per cent of molybdenum, 33 per cent of titanium dioxide feedstock, 50 per cent of borates and 11 per cent of uranium. RTZ is the world's biggest marketer of uranium. It has substantial holdings in gold, silver, bauxite, coal, zircon and iron ore.

'High quality, low cost mining' is RTZ's avowed philosophy. In his analysis of capitalist production Karl Marx pointed out that 'The rate of profit depends partly on the good quality of the raw material. Good material produces less waste. Less raw materials are then needed to absorb the same quantity of labour ... The labourer needs more time when using bad raw materials to process the same quantity'. Further, given that machinery is composed of former raw materials and consumes raw materials in the process of production, changes in the prices of those

materials affect the rate of profit directly. 'Other conditions being equal, the rate of profit, therefore, falls and rises inversely to the price of raw materials.' *Capital* Volume 3.

RTZ's mining operations are governed by these inescapable features for capitalist production. The wages it pays, the conditions it provides its workers, the mining and leaching methods employed, its treatment of the environment, where it locates,

protesting against RTZ's trampling over land rights in Australia. Events such as this and protests at RTZ's role in South Africa and Namibia have made the company sensitive to the need to 'tidy-up' their image.

Today RTZ sponsors *The Big Issue* magazine for the homeless in London. In 1985 it made a generous donation to the Ethiopian famine appeal. Its magazines and annual reports tell of training schemes and



Aboriginal protest at the violation of their land by RTZ

are all governed by the need to produce high quality, low cost minerals. Hence, its terrible reputation in Third World countries. However, mining today entails high exploration and development costs and large scale investments over a long period when markets are liable to be unpredictable. In these circumstances the tendency towards monopoly and joint-ventures to dilute the burden of the costs is reinforced. Anglo-American Corporation, Union Carbide, Kaiser, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Shell and BP are some of the major transnationals that have undertaken joint-ventures with RTZ. Joint-ventures also allow the participants to control supplies and prevent competition from new entrants into the market. They may be used to co-opt a new entrant into the monopoly structure of the industry, while drawing on their capital which would not otherwise be available to the established dominant firms. RTZ frequently colludes with German and Japanese companies and is a major mineral and energy supplier to these countries.

RTZ is a key component of British imperialism and its operations govern foreign policy thinking. In 1992 it had a turnover of £4.6 billion from a workforce of 68,298, yielding a profit of £537 million. So broad are the range of RTZ's mining operations and so strong its monopoly position that in the first half of 1993 when average metal prices fell 11.5 per cent, RTZ recorded a 15 per cent increase in profits.

Buying goodwill

RTZ has the distinction of being the first British public company to call police to eject participants in an annual general meeting, when, in 1982, an Aboriginal delegate and 30 supporters were thrown out for

overseas scholarships in Namibia, of sponsoring the arts. Such activities neatly project the notion that RTZ is socially responsible, putting something back in, and budget allocations are made accordingly. However, more strategically significant is its policy of appointing local managers in different countries and selling shares locally: buying goodwill where it counts, cutting off potential routes of opposition. Where a local community objects to RTZ's mining proposals RTZ will attempt to buy one section of the opposition off, be they radical student leaders in Namibia co-opted into the management or Aborigines rehoused in Queensland and then presented as examples of how RTZ commands local support. Such are the political skills acquired by a colonial ruling class.

Around 80 per cent of RTZ's shares are British owned. The many subsidiaries are monitored and directed from St James' Square, London. During the 1970s RTZ's board of directors included former Conservative Foreign Secretary and NATO Chief Lord Carrington, Labour's House of Lords leader Lord Shackleton and Liberal Party Chair Lord Byers.

In 1968 RTZ's director, Sir Val Duncan was appointed by the Treasury to report on reforms needed in the diplomatic service. In 1975 Sir Val called together Lord Robens of the National Coal Board, some army officers and a few journalists to plan a takeover of the national power grid, generating plants and media in the event of insurrection in Britain.

Until 1991 Chair of the RTZ board and now a non-executive director Sir Alistair Frame, previously director of the Atomic Energy Agency, was an adviser to Mrs Thatcher. He was her first choice to manage the destruction of the miners and the coal industry, but he declined and McGregor was appointed from the US metal multi-

national Amax instead. Ronald Reagan's 1989 trip to London to deliver the Churchill Lecture was sponsored by RTZ. These are a few samples confirming Lenin's observation that: 'A monopoly, once it is formed and controls thousands of millions, inevitably penetrates into every sphere of public life, regardless of the form of government and all other "details".'

The current directorship reflects the degree of concentration of power and wealth in Britain accomplished by the fusion of banking and industrial capital and expressed through interlocking directorships. A mere handful who dominate the City and industry are represented in RTZ. Sir Alistair Frame is also chair of Wellcome and British Steel. Lord Alexander is chair of National Westminster Bank, Trustee of the National Gallery, Chairman of the Council of Justice and President of the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Lord Armstrong is the former 'economically truthful' Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service and currently a director of Shell, BAT Industries, Incheape and a Trustee of the V & A Museum. Richard Giordano is a director of BOC Group, Reuters and Georgia Pacific Corporation in the USA as well as being Deputy Chairman of Grand Metropolitan. Sir Denys Henderson is Chairman of ICI and director of Barclays Bank. Sir Martin Jacomb is a Deputy Chairman of Barclays and Commercial Union Assurance, a director of Marks and Spencer and the Bank of England. He is also Chairman of the British Council. 'A very close personal union is established between the banks and the biggest industrial and commercial enterprises, the merging of one with another through the acquisition of shares, the appointment of bank directors to the Supervisory Boards ... of industrial and commercial enterprises, and vice versa' Lenin, *Imperialism*.

Substantial shareholdings in RTZ are held by Commercial Union, Norwich Union Insurance, Provincial Insurance, Prudential and Sun Alliance. Historically, RTZ has developed close financial links with Barclays Bank, Rothschilds, Kleinwort Benson, Morgan Stanley and the First Boston Bank. RTZ is finance capital, the merging of industrial and banking capital which Lenin identified in *Imperialism*, that strengthens the domination of a financial oligarchy on all of society.

When the residents of Camelford in Cornwall found their pink towels



RTZ - the international lawbreaker

turning blue and bleached hair going green, with 20,000 people seriously afflicted by aluminium poisoning, the name RTZ barely figured. Yet it was a RTZ subsidiary that had poured 20 tons of aluminium sulphate, accidentally, into the local water supply.

Barely a ripple seems to have been caused by Timothy Renton's revelation to the Scott Inquiry on British arms sales to Iraq that RTZ had sold hydrogen fluoride (HF), a principal ingredient in nerve gas, via Egypt on

to Iraq, in 1986. Renton explained that his original objections on hearing of the proposed deal were overcome by his consideration of RTZ as 'a reputable company' and besides HF was 'widely traded elsewhere'.

In the early 1970s in the context of a global boom in nuclear power station orders, the US Justice Department, inspired by the Westinghouse Corporation, investigated RTZ and a uranium trust designed to push up prices. RTZ executives 'took the Fifth Amendment' at hearings at the US Embassy in London. The Law Lords then ruled that US court orders requiring executives to give evidence were an infringement of British sovereignty. Not surprising, given that RTZ directors occupied commanding positions in the House of Lords and throughout the organs of state.

'Go Forth ... Save Civilisation'

Rio Tinto was formed in 1873 in Britain as a mining finance house to benefit from Andalusian mineral deposits. In the first 10 years of its operation hundreds of Spanish miners died of silicosis, pulmonary disorders and starvation. By the end of the nineteenth century it was Britain's biggest mining company. In 1924 Rio Tinto joined Sir Ernest Oppenheimer, founder of Anglo-American Corporation, in the exploitation of Northern Rhodesian (Zambian) copper. The two collaborated with two other firms to form a copper cartel which raised copper prices and the cartel's income by 84.4 per cent in two years. Thus began a partnership between Rio Tinto and Anglo-American which continues to this day.

The Andalusian mines became a stronghold of Spanish Republicans, with communist and anarcho-syndicalist workers. A workers' rebellion in 1934 was violently crushed and many workers were imprisoned. When Franco's fascists invaded the province, Rio Tinto's chair told the London Annual General Meeting: 'Since the mining region was occupied by General Franco's forces, there have been no further labour problems ... Miners found guilty of troublemaking are court-martialled and shot!'

Franco instructed Rio Tinto to supply ore to the Nazi rearmament programme, which it did.

Sir Val Duncan joined the company in 1954 after serving at the Foreign Office and National Coal Board. He recounted how the head of Rio Tinto was called to the British Atomic Energy Commission and told to 'go forth, find uranium and save civilisation'. Rio Tinto obliged, with government assistance, and bought deposits in Canada, Australia and the infamous Rossing in Namibia.

Before he took control of Lonrho in 1961 (see *FRFI* 112) Tiny Rowland had ties to Rio Tinto, arranging for it the purchase of emerald and gold mines in Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Rowland remained a paid consultant to RTZ from 1961-69.

Rio Tinto merged with Consolidated Zinc in 1962 to form Rio Tinto Zinc and thereby add holdings of Australian iron ore, bauxite and zinc to the portfolio.

By 1983 RTZ had become Britain's fourth largest overseas producer with output valued at £3.44 billion. When RTZ bought up BP's mineral operations in 1989 for \$3.7 billion they accomplished Britain's biggest ever intra-company deal and almost doubled RTZ's size, adding to it the US Kennecott concern. This year RTZ has bought up 5 per cent of the US coal industry with the purchase of Nerco and the Sun Oil Company's Cordero Mining.

RTZ is British imperialism personified.

Trevor Rayne

(This report owes much to *Plunder* by Roger Moody, published by PARTIZANS and CAFCA. PARTIZANS are People Against RTZ and its Subsidiaries, 218 Liverpool Road, London N1 1LE)

To be continued

There is an urgent need for serious discussion about the tactics of today's anti-fascist movement.

MAXINE WILLIAMS analyses aspects of the history of the anti-racist and anti-fascist movements in Britain.

Fighting Racism

Which way are we marching?

The election in September of British National Party councillor Derek Beackon was presented as an upsurge in fascism or 'nazism', as sections of the left like to call it. Since then, the activities of the left and anti-fascist movement have largely concentrated on the issue of no platform for fascists, that is, opposing and chasing out the BNP. These are laudable activities in

their way. But, in isolation, they do little to address the real issues of racism in areas of the East End, racism which is embedded not merely in the BNP but in all the political parties and in the institutions of local and national government.

Nor do they involve taking up the issues which affect all working class people and the poorer sections in particular. In fact, the election of a BNP candidate by a largely work-

ing class constituency should first and foremost have been viewed by the left as an indication of its own failure to build any serious or worthwhile roots in poor working class areas. Such areas have been left prey to right-wing racist organisations because for the British left – as for the Labour Party – the poor, the old, the unemployed, simply do not count. As A Sivanandan wrote recently in the *New Statesman*:

'What emerges from the Tower Hamlets experience is that there is little to choose between national black and left organisations. They neither sustain and support the new protest movements that are springing up in the Bengali community, nor work with the white communities to counter the rights-for-whites movements in areas like the Isle of Dogs. And not till such time as they base themselves in these communities and help them to organise on their own behalf, connecting the fight against racism with the fight against social deprivation, can there be a unified movement or an organic struggle.'

He points out that:

'The left continues to see the fight against racism as subsidiary to the anti-fascist struggle, and itself as the historical repository of that struggle. It ignores state racism and continues to view working class racism as an aberration.'

Racial violence, therefore, is a by-product of fascism. Get rid of the fascists and racial violence will disappear too... But such floating anti-fascism renders local communities mere venues for disconnected actions, and prey to the fascist backlash once the marchers have gone.'

The black communities under racist attack from the state, the government, local councils, local racists – cannot be defended by merely chasing out the BNP as though it alone and not deep-seated racism, were the problem.

A socialist movement cannot be built by national demonstrations against the BNP which leave untouched the conditions of poverty in which racist parties grow. The energies of the 50,000 people who marched on 16 October against the BNP are being frittered away unless a clearer understanding of where the movement should be marching to can be found.

Working class and racism

The East End has a history of right wing, anti-Semitic and racist activity. The British Brothers League was active there early in this century and local agitation aided the process of introducing the anti-Jewish Aliens Act of 1905. In the 1930s Mosley's Blackshirts won popular support there as today the British National Party has done. Often this is explained as a consequence of poverty – the poorest whites/non-Jews seeking a convenient scapegoat – and lack of organisation. Undoubtedly poverty played its part but other factors have been at work, most notably the fact that nationalism, chauvinism and racism were deeply entrenched in the very working class and socialist organisations which were present locally. The Social Democratic Federation, a large socialist organisation, argued: 'Jew moneylenders now control every Foreign Office in Europe'.

The Independent Labour Party said: 'Wherever there is trouble in Europe, whatever rumours of war circulate... a hook-nosed Rothschild is at his games somewhere near the region of the disturbances.' 'England,' they said, 'is for the English.' In the period before 1905 no less than 43 Labour Movement organisations advocated restrictions on Jewish immigration. The campaign against such poison was small and came from the pressure of Jewish trade unionists and a very few principled socialists.

The parallels with the issue of black immigration are obvious. The TUC campaigned for controls in the 1960s, as did many unions. Since 1964 the Labour Party has supported ever greater immigration controls aimed at excluding black people. Local councils where Labour has held control have aided and abetted the perception that housing shortages, for example, are caused by black people.

East End Labour councils have acted in a divisive and racist manner sowing the seeds now being reaped by the Liberals and the British National Party. Tower Hamlets, where a British National Party councillor has been elected on a rights-for-whites ticket, has the highest unemployment in London and 80 per cent of its residents live in council housing. From 1945 to 1986 Tower Hamlets was controlled by the Labour Party, run largely by an ossified clique. Its popular base can be judged by the fact that in 1968 11,000 people voted, out of an electorate of 126,000. The



1937 Cable Street: East-End anti-fascists fought Mosley's British Union of Fascists

extent of dissatisfaction was shown when the Liberals arrived and grew from seven seats in 1978 to control of the council in 1986.

Labour's policy was to redevelop the borough by allowing free rein to office and property developers. Whilst supposed to be clearing slums, the council had to be forced by tenant action to do so. Often it demolished buildings which tenants wanted renovated, later to unveil its plan for a large office or shop development. Housing land in Wapping was sold by the Labour Council to Citibank to build offices. The land was sold on to developers offering £20m per acre. Council land was also sold to private housing developers in order to entice the middle classes to the area.

The vast majority of new housing in Tower Hamlets is private housing in Docklands – out of the reach of local working class people. Slums condemned in 1944 were still standing in 1989. With a shrinking housing stock the local council steered working class dissatisfaction along racist lines. Areas with white tenants were given priority over black tenants for clearance. When the GLC controlled a large part of the local housing, many estates were kept white and Bengalis offered worse quality housing. The council adopted various methods to circumvent the requirement to house people according to need (often Bengalis were in the worst housing) by such tactics as picking names out of a Bingo drum. These policies are the origin of the rights-for-whites campaign.

The leader of Tower Hamlets under Labour was Paul Beasley who,

when he left the council, set up his own property development company, joined the board of the London Docklands Development Corporation and became a director of the World Trade Centre (a subsidiary of the building giant Taylor Woodrow).

The refusal of the Labour council in Tower Hamlets to provide housing for the working class, and its divisive use of privileged access to housing for white people, set the scene for the triumph of even more racist organisations. The Liberal council for example, gave priority to 'sons and daughters' of the borough, ie whites. It also, as Labour had, claimed that Bengali families arriving in the borough had made themselves intentionally homeless and therefore need not be housed at all. Families have been evicted from local hotels by the council which also, in 1986, said it was going to put homeless families on a ship in the Thames. The current furore over a Liberal leaflet about crime illustrated with a photo of a black man seems to ignore the consistent racism that has been displayed by the Liberals in Tower Hamlets.

The national political parties, especially the Labour Party, are responsible for creating the conditions in which racism breeds and for playing on the racism of white working class people. Only socialist organisation which fights the real enemies of the whole working class, fights for their interests and challenges racism can defend black people against racism and build a united working class movement.

Much information on Tower Hamlets Council is contained in *Spitalfields: A Battle for Land* by Charlie Forman

Lessons from the 1930s

Although the world political situation was very different in the 1930s, there are lessons to be learnt from the experience of communists working in Britain in that period in the East End. The differences between then and now must be borne in mind, especially: the victory of fascist forces in Germany, Italy and later Spain; the existence of strong working class forces organised both in social-democratic and communist parties at an immeasurably higher political level; the backing, including from sections of the ruling class such as the British newspaper owner, Lord Rothermere, for Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

In the East End, the British Union of Fascists made headway amongst sections of the working class through agitation on both social and anti-Semitic issues. Widespread attacks both on leftist meetings and activity, and on Jewish people and property took place. Fascist meetings were protected by the police who were inactive against fascist assaults. The communists had won a significant base in the area, especially amongst Jewish workers. The pressure of local activists, communist and non-communist, forced the pace of anti-fascist activity.

One such East End communist activist was Joe Jacobs, who was expelled from the British Communist Party largely as a result of his political work and views on how to combat fascism. He stressed the need for communist activity on social issues locally, especially amongst the unemployed and unorganised; the need for mass mobilisation and active opposition to fascist activity, including demonstrations, the breaking up of meetings etc; the need to prevent the fascists from spreading their influence into further areas of the East End. He opposed the Communist Party's attempts to restrict the struggle to 'trade union work', which he described as 'trade union parliamentarianism'.

In arguing against his suspension from the Communist Party he wrote:

'In East London, in Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Limehouse, Mosley had succeeded in gaining positions because we have not systematically led the workers on their immediate demands, social and economic, because the labour movement is still split, because the Party in those areas has failed to carry on its propaganda activities in the way that it has in Stepney, because Mosley has been able to take advantage of the latent

anti-Semitic feeling which had existed in many parts.'

Alongside this he argued for the prevention of fascist meetings and rallies: 'the fascists no longer appeared in Newby Place (Poplar) or Stepney Green because whenever there was a rumour to the effect that they would be at these places, thousands of workers who had been called to the streets by the Party were ready to prevent fascist meetings being held.' Jacobs felt that after this the Communist Party line changed locally and nationally and began to sacrifice both work on social issues and against fascism for work that won paper support from existing Labour Movement organisations 'at the expense of our work in the streets and of leading the unorganised and organised masses into action against fascism and war'.

The efforts of local communists and local pressure had forced the Communist Party to play its role in the battle of Cable Street in 1937. Prior to this pressure the CP leadership had intended to ignore Mosley's march through the East End and instead hold a demonstration about Spain in Central London. Jacobs was leading amongst those who fought to reverse this and to ensure that the Party played an active role in the successful mobilisation to stop Mosley's march.

History never exactly repeats itself and it would be crude to simply attempt to apply Jacobs's lessons to today as though nothing had changed. Political trends, however, stubbornly remain. Jacobs was opposing a trend still with us today: to sacrifice the interests of the mass of workers for an alliance with Labour organisations representing a minority, often better off, of the working class. Jacobs represented a trend which has virtually no political existence today: the defence of the most oppressed, the organisation of the unorganised, the mobilisation of people around issues of concern to them in a political form which opposed both fascists and the British ruling class.

Above all, it is clear that none of the work Jacobs describes would have been possible if communists were not active locally and had not won a base amongst local people, Jewish and non-Jewish. Anti-fascist forces were those which were also active in the fight for the working class and for socialism. They were part of the local community, not external to it. Today's anti-fascist activity represents barely any of this work or political tradition.

Joe Jacobs's book, *Out of the Ghetto*, is published by Phoenix Press.

Homes not traffic

In Britain today there are now nearly 24 million cars; one for every 2.4 people. The Government is pressing ahead with its £23 billion road building programme which, if completed, will devastate hundreds of important landscapes and damage many invaluable wildlife habitats. Despite the victory in saving Oxleas Wood in South East London, bulldozers are completing the destruction of Twyford Down and purging Jesmond Dene in Newcastle upon Tyne of its remaining trees. BILL HUGHES reports.

While public transport is being further starved of funding and road traffic is forecast to increase by 142% by the year 2025, the road construction companies are licking their lips at the prospects of future profits. Parts of the M25 are to be widened to 14 lanes. Leaked documents show that the Department of Transport is planning to further widen Britain's motorways and tarmac over more green land with massive expressways and bypasses.

As sections of the middle classes and even Government supporters in the 'Tory heartlands' of the South East (who are almost all car-users) utter their dismay that their quiet backwaters will be blighted, road protesters are being criminalised and threatened with gaol. At Twyford Down, Jesmond Dene and now in East London, defending the environment and resisting roads means defending campaigns from the teams of security ' heavies ' (mainly unemployed men forced to take the jobs on pain of benefits being stopped) and massive police surveillance. The fight against the roads is becoming a

fight for our health, for housing and increasingly for the right to protest itself.

Despite this opposition, the Government is intent on continuing with its road programme. The economic power of the multinational car corporations and road construction firms decides the issue. The 'green' veneer of public relations is only for the gullible. All the major road firms in the UK (Laing, McAlpine, Taylor Woodrow, Wimpey etc) make large financial contributions to the Conservative Party. Between 1979 and 1992 Tarmac gave £400,000. Cecil Parkinson is one of its directors.

The car's assault on the atmosphere

Every year the multinational car manufacturers add 19 million more cars to the half billion already on the planet. Recent research from the Environment and Forecasting Institute in Heidelberg, Germany, has suggested that even before a car reaches the showroom it will have caused significant damage to air, water and

land ecosystems. In its production alone each car creates 1,500 kilos of waste and is responsible for 75 million cubic metres of polluted air.

The Heidelberg researchers further calculate that a single car, even fitted with a catalytic converter and using lead free petrol, will over 10 years produce: 44.3 tonnes of carbon dioxide, 4.8kg of sulphur dioxide, 46.8kg of nitrogen dioxide, 325kg of carbon monoxide and 36kg of hydrocarbons. The air pollution generated by motor vehicles is now a major factor contributing to global warming and the changes this is bringing to the climate of our planet.

Cars versus kids

The expansion in road building and the consequent increase in traffic and vehicle emissions (which have increased in Britain by 72% since 1981), are having deadly repercussions. Nineteen million people in Britain are now exposed to pollution that exceeds EC guidelines. The air is quite simply unfit to breathe. The health of one in five people in the UK

is already at risk from air pollution: children, pregnant women and elderly people are particularly at risk from the cocktail of toxic substances pumped out of car exhausts. Hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides in particular cause eye, nose and throat irritations and, at high concentration, attack and damage lung tissue.

It is now widely accepted that vehicle emissions are the major cause of the asthma epidemic which has hit one in seven children in Britain. The number of young children admitted to hospitals in Britain because of asthma has increased 13-fold since 1960. Children are especially vulnerable to vehicle exhaust pollution because they breathe in twice as much air per pound of body weight. As their lungs are still maturing, this pollution can have permanent effects on their future health.

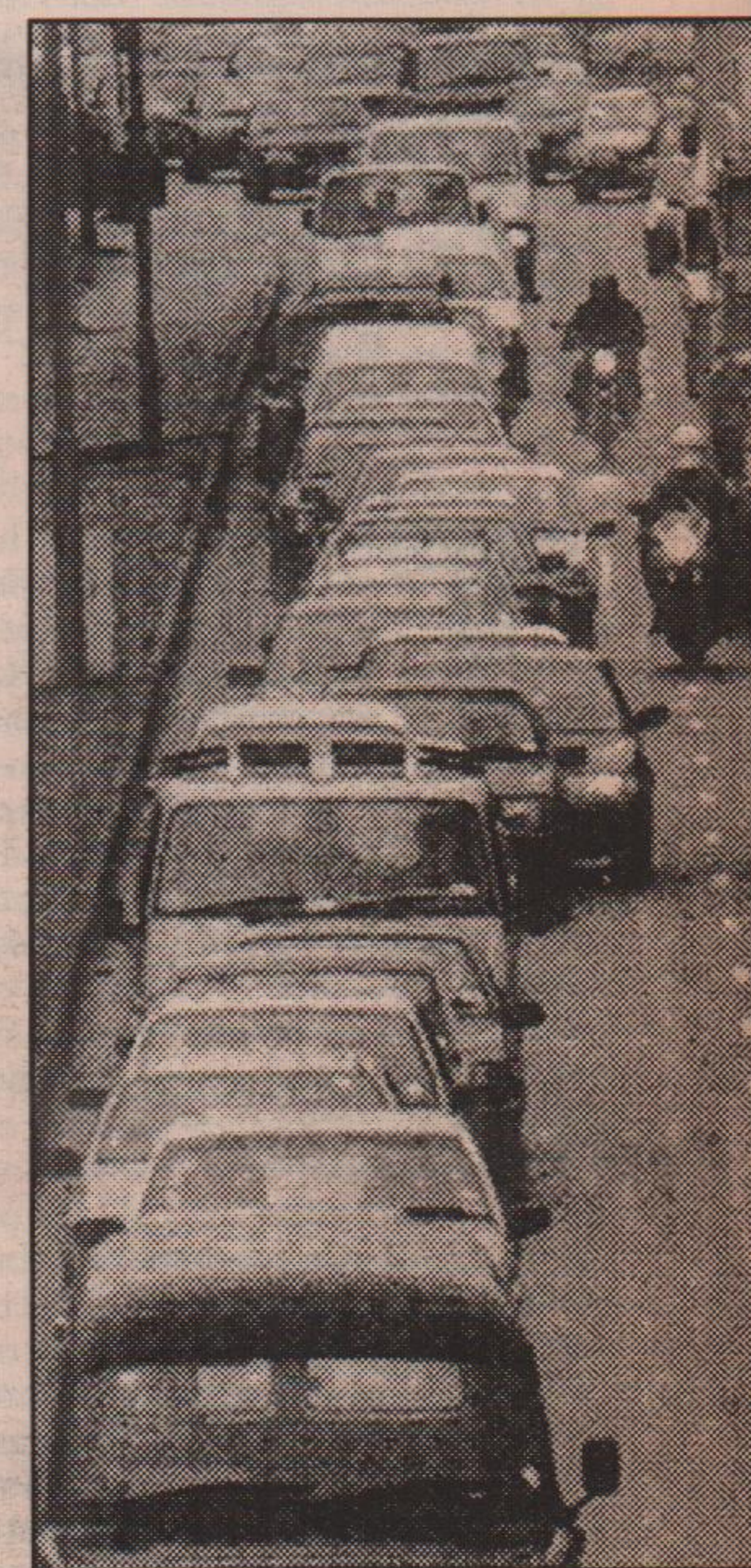
Not content with being callously indifferent to this threat to children's health, the Government has pursued a policy of lying and deception. A recent investigation by the *Independent on Sunday* and Friends of the Earth (FoE) found that pollution monitoring equipment is usually placed in areas which will not record actual pollution levels (eg in side-streets and pedestrian precincts). FoE's own readings on busy streets and main roads showed that levels of pollutants regularly exceeded EC 'safe' levels. The Government is also proposing to further ease control over nitrogen dioxide by not establishing an air-quality standard for it.

One fifth of the area of British cities is now devoted to the car - as it rapaciously consumes even more of our living space. Shops, hospitals and leisure facilities are sited at fur-

ther distances from where people live (unless you own a car that is; and millions of British people don't). Research has shown that cars take over more space than they actually need for moving, as motorists see pedestrians, cyclists and children encroaching on 'their' space. The street as an arena for play and social life has all but disappeared, as traffic forces people to abandon the pavement and even their front gardens to escape the noise and fumes.

Ecologist David Engwight has written that the result of this process is:

'... many people try to abandon their homes completely and become traffic 'refugees' by moving to quieter areas of towns... In their place come the poor who cannot afford to rent or buy elsewhere. For these people, a lack of neighbourhood friendship links is just one more cost they must pay for being poor.'



Food for thought

The food industry today is a multi-billion pound, multi-national concern. It earns enormous salaries for its boards of directors and knighthoods for its executives. Its top companies rank amongst the largest corporations in the world. Its interests and operations stretch to every corner of the globe. In Britain, its various branches employ three in ten of the workforce. It is successful in every respect - except feeding people. While in the third world 40 million children suffer severe malnutrition, in imperialist Britain one person dies every three minutes from heart disease. It is estimated that 35% of cancers are food related. Mice reared on the diet of a Welsh agricultural worker in 1863 have been found to live longer than others fed on a modern Welsh diet. In FRFI 110, we looked at how the food barons starve the third world. In this article, SARAH BOND explains why their profit-making activities mean that, if you are poor in Britain, eating can seriously damage your health.

Making a killing

It is a characteristic of modern monopoly capitalism that key industries are dominated by a few giant corporations. Today's food business is no exception. For example, 64% of the frozen meals market is controlled by three companies: the Anglo-Dutch multinational Unilever, via its Birds Eye brand, Switzerland's Nestlé, via Findus, and the US's United Biscuits, via Ross. In the savoury snacks market, worth £1.5bn, three companies control 70%: the US Pepsico (Smiths and Walkers), United Biscuits (KP), Dalgety (Golden Wonder). It is the boards of directors of these enormously powerful corporations that control what we eat.

Food is big business. As Hamish Maxwell, chair of the biggest US food corporation Phillip Morris (which is also responsible for Marlboro and Benson & Hedges cigarettes), put it, 'People may ultimately stop drinking or smoking, though I don't believe it, but you can bet your life they will keep on eating'. The food processing industry has the fourth highest share of the FT's top 500 European companies. It has also two of the largest multinational corporations in the world - Unilever and Nestlé. Last year Nestlé made sales of \$38,380 million. Based in Switzerland, 98% of its sales are overseas. It has 423 factories in over 60 countries. Nestlé controls 57% of the instant coffee market in Britain, via its brands Nescafé, Gold Blend and Blend 37. Other household brand names under its control include Crosse & Blackwell, Findus, Libby, Chambourcy, Lean Cuisine. Recent acquisitions include Carnation (1985), Buitoni (1988),

Rowntree (1988) and Perrier (1992). Nestlé has gained particular notoriety for its sales of baby-milk in Africa, where it is both expensive and when mixed with unsterilised water has caused the deaths of thousands of children. Undeterred by the resulting international boycott of its goods, Nestlé has now moved into China, where its sales have seen a fall in breastfeeding over the last 15 years from 90% to 56% today. Chair Helmut Maucher reassures us of his commitment to 'feeding the hungry' and adds, 'Of course we expect that we will obtain a return in exchange for our efforts'.

He need not worry on that score. According to a financial adviser at Prudential-Bache Securities, even in the current recession, returns in the food business 'have increased an average of 10% a year'. These are the rich rewards that come from turning cheap raw materials, often procured from poor countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, into commodities for the mass market.

E is for Extraordinarily Large Profits

Particularly profitable - and particularly unhealthy - is processed food, which according to the London Food Commission now makes up around 70% of the British diet. Processing food allows for an enormous expansion of the market and plentiful opportunities for the investment of capital. There is a limit to the profit you can make from selling a whole piece of fish. But pump it full of water, mix it with bread and the parts that usually get thrown away, add a

whole number of bulking agents, flavourings and other additives (all of which are much cheaper than actual fish) and one fish becomes several packets of fish fingers. As an analyst at the Argus Research Corporation, points out, 'the actual food is just 7 to 10% of most of these companies costs'. The rest is the processing, packaging and advertising, all of which is of course passed on to the consumer. In this way, food production is expanded and profits increase.

The food that results is unhealthy because it relies on refined sugar, white flour and hard fats as its staples. These make excellent commodities because they keep well and are extremely cheap. But they have little nutritional value: for example, sugar provides no nutrition at all apart from calories, which, coupled with a sedentary life, cause obesity leading to heart disease, arthritis and diabetes. But processed food is the cheapest source of energy the working class can get. The National Consumer Council found that two custard cream biscuits costing three pence will provide the same amount of energy as three small apples at 28 pence.

Processed food also relies on around 3,000 additives to make it palatable. 93% of these are purely cosmetic, serving simply to modify taste, appearance, texture. Only 10% are regulated by the EC: these are the ones given E numbers (E stands for Europe). The use of these chemicals has increased 10-fold between 1955 and 1985 - precisely the period in which the food multinationals have come to control what we eat. As a result, the average Briton eats 8-10lbs

of additives a year.

There is considerable evidence connecting many such additives with a variety of problems. For example coal-tar dyes, average consumption of which is around the same as for vitamin C, can cause birth defects, mutations, cancer and acute illness. Coal-tar dyes are a bi-product of the petroleum industry (so that's where they dump their waste). Their use is banned in a number of countries, including the USA and Malaysia, and previously in the USSR where the side-effects were first discovered. But not in Britain. After all, as Richard Seal of Dalgety's Lucas Ingredients commented in the *Food Manufacturer*: 'if flavours were banned from foodstuffs, half the food industry would disappear'.

Good enough to eat?

The application of technology to every nook and cranny of food production applies to farms as much as to factories, to chickens as much as to chips. For example, in the poultry trade broiler chickens are raised 100,000 to a shed, with just one worker supervising 150,000 birds. Through the use of genetic tampering, growth hormones and antibiotics, these chickens now reach the same weight in 42 days that they previously reached in 84. But one in 20 dies before reaching slaughter weight. As samples taken over a period by the Central Public Health Laboratory revealed, the majority that survive are infected by salmonella. But the seven or eight companies which control this business ensure that speaking out can be



Mass individual car ownership today stands as a metaphor for the utterly selfish and wasteful consumption of the world's better-off. The health of the planet and the health of its people must daily be sacrificed for the 'freedom' and 'convenience' of the car driver. The world's poor must forfeit their resources so every fetishistic whim and desire of acquisitive car consumers can be catered for.

The things that should be available to all - fresh-air, space for children and adults to play and even silence - have been appropriated by the car whose appetite is never satisfied. Capitalist car culture, a culture which scorns life and idolises things, has spawned a human type that basks in the privileged lifestyle of car ownership; that views unlimited car use as a human right. This lifestyle is founded on the right to waste and, as Eduardo Galeano has written, depends on the perpetuation of injustice.

'The misery of the many makes possible the extravagance of the few. For the few to continue consuming more, many must continue consuming less. And to make sure the many don't cross the line, the system multiplies the weapons of war. Incapable of fighting poverty, the system fights the poor'.

Dreams and nightmares are made of the same material it has been said. The 'dream' of owning a car, is in reality a nightmare for the world's many.

Socialists today must side with the many. This means reclaiming our cities and streets for the people who live in them. It means supporting communities who are fighting to defend their houses and their children's health against road schemes. It means defending those who are arrested and criminalised for doing so.



Mostly: remember the short cabinet career of even an arch-Thatcherite like Edwina Currie.

Cost-cutting in other areas of the meat industry has had similarly devastating effects. Feeding beef cattle sheep carcasses has led to an epidemic of the notorious BSE. An outbreak of botulism amongst cattle in the north of Ireland was traced to the practice of feeding them litter scraped from the floors of chicken battery farms, which contained silage, faeces and chicken carcasses. And having fed herbivorous cows into carnivores, the food companies are using genetic engineering to make other fundamental changes to the commodities they sell. Dalgety actually runs a subsidiary called the Pig Improvement Company. Pigs might feed fly (but only if it was a cheaper way of getting them to market). Meanwhile, the profits roll in. The directors of Hilldown Holdings, Britain's biggest poultry processors and producers of beef, lamb and pork, paid themselves £2,100,000 in 1991. And they still had enough cash left over to renovate a pond in the garden of the then Minister for Agriculture, John Gummer. No strings attached, of course.

to the mouths of babes and children

The food giants spend a lot of money making sure their products are safe. In 1988, a year before the Health Education Authority spent £2 million on its 'Look After Your Heart' campaign, the food giants' advertising bill was £570 million. Particular attention is paid to children's adver-

tising. In 1990 a survey by the Food Commission of children's TV adverts found that a child watching commercial television for one hour after school and all Saturday morning would see 92 advertisements for food and drink, at a rate of nearly ten an hour. 80% were for foods high in fats and/or sugars.

But advertising can also be disguised as education. The Sugar Bureau, a manufacturers' organisation, sent a 75-page 'resource pack' free to every primary school in the country. One of the activities suggested was adding sugar to drinks until they tasted 'right'. Another industry body, The British Eggs Information Service also sent a 'project pack' to schools. This placed eggs at the top of its sections on proteins and on vitamins and minerals. Fruit did not feature in the vitamins section, nor did cereals and grain under the section on fibre.

Such tactics may be crude, but they work. A 1992 survey by the consumer magazine *Which?* found that one in four schoolchildren ate more than two packets of crisps a day, nearly half had two or more chocolate bars or sweets a day, and one in four ate no fruit or veg at all.

Buying silence

Few who occupy positions of influence in this society question how the food giants make their profits - because the food industry has helped put them there. The food industry offers a nice line to senior ex-ministers (or wives) in non-executive directorships: Hilldown Holdings has got John Knott on its board;

Elspeth Howe (wife of Geoffrey) and James Prior are at United Biscuits; Mrs Prior is at Tate & Lyle along with Brian Hayes (former permanent secretary at both MAFF and the DTI) and Peter Walker sits on Tate & Lyle and Dalgety's board. Margaret Thatcher is a consultant at Phillip Morris.

Politicians can also be bought in other ways. Michael Shersby, Tory MP for Uxbridge, is the director of the World Sugar Research Organisation Limited, the parliamentary adviser to the Sugar Bureau (previously director-general), and for ten years was the chair of the Tory Food and Drink Industries Committee. Shersby sings shamelessly for his supper in Commons debates. Here is one sample recorded in Hansard: 'Is my right hon and learned Friend ... aware that for many families, especially in Northern Ireland, confectionery is an important part of the diet?'

Then there are the scientists, like Dr Ian Robertson, a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and some time President of the British Hypertension Society. In 1984, Dr Robertson wrote to the *Lancet* denouncing the view that salt and high blood pressure were connected. This was in a period of concerted campaigning by the World Health Organisation, the DHSS and other bodies to reduce salt consumption because of its health implications. A *Times* headline announced 'Advice to cut back on salt "irresponsible and potentially harmful"'. Two years later Dr Robertson resigned, amid revelations in *The Observer* that he had received thousands of pounds in consultancy fees from companies

including ICI, Sandoz, Pfizer and Merck - all companies which share in the multi-million pound market for drugs which treat the hypertension caused by salt.

The food industry has also widely infiltrated public bodies which look at food and health matters. In 1988 Geoffrey Cannon reported in his excellent *The Politics of Food* that of 370 seats on government advisory bodies, over 270 had links with the food industry. Included was Medical Research Council, which was chaired by the former chair of Tate & Lyle.

As intensified rivalries force down the quality of food to sustain profits, existing safeguards for working class health are being eroded. Thatcher's reign saw the abolition of nutritional standards in schools and free school meals for low-pay families. In the 1990s, the NHS is being dismantled. No doubt working class families in imperialist Britain are expected to be grateful that at least they do not starve like the populations of the oppressed nations. The reality is that if they want adequate food, they will have to fight alongside the third world's hungry against the food corporations to get it.

The difference at McDonalds

McDonalds has made a fortune from fast food which is high in animal fat, sugar, salt and additives and low in fibre and nutrients. But don't tell anyone, or you might find yourself in court. Two Greenpeace campaigners, Helen Steel and David Morris, are being sued for defamation after they gave out leaflets about McDonalds. They are calling for support: **The McLibel 2, London Greenpeace, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1.**

No M11 Link Road! Defend Homes! Defend Communities!

Communities in East London are stepping up the fight against the M11 Link Road. If this road is built the Department of Transport and the construction firms will have succeeded in destroying 350 homes, making over 1000 people homeless. Hundreds of mature trees and many acres of precious open space will have been bulldozed.

Linking the M11 at Redbridge to the A102(M) at Hackney at a cost of more than £250 million, this 3.5 mile stretch of concrete, tarmac and hideous 'landscaping' will devastate communities in Wanstead, Leytonstone and Leyton. The real costs will be paid in the years to come by the people of these communities whose lives and health will be ruined by the noise and air pollution that the six lanes of traffic will bring. Pedestrians, cyclists and the elderly will have their mobility further restricted. Children will be at further risk from asthma and respiratory complaints.

Despite the scheme being considered environmentally unsound by the EC and despite massive local opposition, the contractors have begun demolishing homes and trees. For several months perfectly sound houses have been breeze-blocked by the DoT's hired vandals, Squibb and Davies Demolition of Bow, and Hosier and Dickinson of Watford. Toilets, floorboards, joists and staircases are smashed rendering the houses uninhabitable. Every day more residents are served with eviction orders and more homes are destroyed.

The No M11 Link Road Campaign is fighting this destruction of the community and has declared its determination to stop this road ever being built. Their fight is drawing on the experiences and lessons of the many anti-road struggles now mushrooming over Britain, and shows the dynamism and spirit of a campaign that is democratic and rooted in the

community.

The Campaign has emphasised that the fight against the M11 Link is not an isolated environmental issue - it is also about housing and homelessness, and our health. They have estimated that the cost of the road would repair 6,000 schools, construct over 16,000 houses, or build and run six hospitals for a year.



They have organised a series of activities, including public meetings, mass sit-down protests and demonstrations. Most impressive are the creative protest actions aimed at preventing the construction work and rescuing homes from the bulldozers.

Trees are sat in to prevent them from being cut down. Evictions are being resisted and vacant houses occupied to prevent their demolition. Hundreds of people have signed the Campaign's Beat The Bulldozer Pledge. Many houses have been reclaimed and opened up for people to live in. On October 17 a 'House Rebuilding Day' was held. Teams of people put back joists and floorboards in a block of three bricked-up derelict houses, reclaiming three homes for people to live in.

Local people have been joined by many other anti-road activists and members of the Dongas and Flower Pot Tribes, and have so far resisted

the bulldozers and chainsaws of Norwest Holst Construction.

On Saturday 6 November there were amazing scenes on George Green, Wanstead, when people power prevented a much-loved 300-year-old sweet chestnut tree from being felled. The tree was already being continuously occupied by campaigners who built a tree house in its branches. When the contractors' hoardings prevented the planned Tree Dressing Ceremony, 400 school kids, pensioners and mums with prams tore down the fences, and occupied the bulldozer that was tearing up the turf and topsoil. The children formed a human chain to ferry the soil back to its original site, and have created a garden with shrubs and flowers.

This is however only a temporary victory. The police have already taken revenge by suspending the local Lollipop Lady, Jeanette Gosling, who was peacefully demonstrating on George Green. She has already received marvellous support from the children at her school, who chanted 'Down with the Police! Up with Jeanette!' when they came into the school playground.

This campaign needs your support now to defend the homes and trees still in danger. What can you do?

- Write to Stephen Norris MP (Minister for Transport for London) demanding the cancellation of the road.
- Sign the petition demanding the immediate reinstatement of Jeanette Gosling.
- Join the Day of Action on December 4.
- Join the Reclaim and Rebuild Day on December 5.
- Sign the Beat the Bulldozer pledge

You can contact the No M11 Link Road Campaign on their 24 hour information line 081 530 5709.

We want our houses and land returned NOW!

Bill Hughes



Watchdogs of Capitalism

The Reality of the Labour Aristocracy Part 2

Last issue, we showed how Corr and Brown (*International Socialism*, No. 59, Summer 1993) misrepresented Marx and Engels in their efforts to deny the existence of a labour aristocracy in nineteenth-century Britain. With the assertion that neither Marx nor Engels 'had a consistent analysis of such a phenomenon', they concluded 'much less that their use of the term laid the basis for a causal explanation of reformism in the way which Lenin uses it.' (Corr and Brown, p39) This article shows that they have as little basis for their position on Lenin as they did on Marx and Engels.

Although Lenin's analysis of the nature and role of the labour aristocracy was most fully developed during the First Imperialist War, his awareness of the connection between opportunism and imperialism was already evident in his contribution to the debate on 'socialist colonialism' at the 1907 congress of the Second International. The debate, on a proposition that advanced capitalist countries had the right to colonial possessions as part of a broader 'civilising' mission, revealed widespread support for such racism (from German trade unionists to Ramsay MacDonald, an ILP delegate), even though it was eventually out-voted. Reporting the discussion, Lenin wrote:

'Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, can bring about the social revolution. However, as a result of the extensive colonial policy, the European proletarian partly finds himself in a position when it is not his labour, but the labour of the practically enslaved natives in the colonies, that maintains the whole of society ... In certain countries this provides the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism. Of course, this may be only a temporary phenomenon, but the evil must nonetheless be clearly realised and its causes understood.' (*Collected Works* [CW], Vol 13, p77)

Significantly, at the same Congress, Lenin had also opposed the unconditional admission of the Labour Party to the Second International because of its refusal to recognise the existence of the class struggle. Politically, Labour was still tied completely to the Liberal Party as the most effective means of representing the interests of the upper stratum of the working class. The division between this small minority and the mass of the working class was as great as it had been in Engels' day: a study by the Liberal Sir Leo Chiozza-Money in 1905 estimated that 33 million out of a population of 43 million lived in poverty, of whom 13 million lived in destitution. In 1911, it was estimated that it required 30 shillings per week to support a family in minimal comfort: 5 million out of 8 million manual workers earned less than this,

In his continuing analysis of the SWP's position on the labour aristocracy, ROBERT CLOUGH, having shown how Corr and Brown distort Marx and Engels, examines their critique of Lenin's theory



Misery of unemployment in the 1930s

their average income being 22 shillings per week. During this period, the normal wage for skilled workers was some 40 shillings per week.

The Labour Aristocracy and the Working Class

It is impossible to understand Lenin's conception of the role of the labour aristocracy unless we accept his starting point: that the proletariat must be a revolutionary class because of its position within capitalist society. This revolutionary character is expressed first in its actions, and subsequently in its consciousness. This distinction is vital: that is why Lenin spoke of the political work 'that brings closer and merges into a single whole the elemental destructive forces of the masses and the conscious destructive force of the organisation of revolutionaries.' (Lenin, CW, Vol 5 p512) In the beginning was the deed: thus Marx quotes Goethe in Chapter One of *Capital*, giving his

warm approval to this pithy statement of the materialist position. The starting point for the development of revolutionary consciousness within the working class is its 'spontaneous movement' (Lenin, CW, Vol 4 p260), not the other way around.

Given this, it is the role of the labour aristocracy to undermine, fragment and destroy this spontaneous movement in order to prevent the working class acquiring a consciousness of its revolutionary role. Through its control of the organisation of the working class, its privileged access to resources such as finance, the media, meeting halls and so on, the labour aristocracy actively fights to isolate every act of working class resistance to prevent it developing a revolutionary character. Thus there is no single act of betrayal, but a continual process of struggle in which the opportunists pit themselves against the emerging movement of the proletariat, and in which the defeat of the labour aristocracy is

the precondition to the working class achieving self-consciousness.

With this in mind, we can understand how Corr and Brown 'disprove' Lenin: it is by turning the problem back to front. They do not believe the working class is capable of struggling in a revolutionary manner until it has achieved a revolutionary consciousness. Thus they are obsessed with the backwardness of the working class, or as they term it, 'mass reformism'; and this fixation means that they cannot conceive how the proletariat is forced despite itself into the movement which is the precondition for transcending its backwardness. Corr and Brown draw here on their mentor Tony Cliff, who argued in the early years of the boom that the working class in the countries in the West 'show a stubborn adherence to reformism, a belief in the possibility of major improvement in conditions under capitalism'. He continued:

'Why is this so? Why the general apathy and rejection of revolutionary changes in society, when humanity as a whole is in the grip of life and death struggles? Only if we find the correct answer to this question can we answer a further one: for how long can reformism push aside revolutionary aspirations in the working class?' (all quotes drawn from 'The Economic Roots of Reformism', in *Neither Washington Nor Moscow*, 1982)

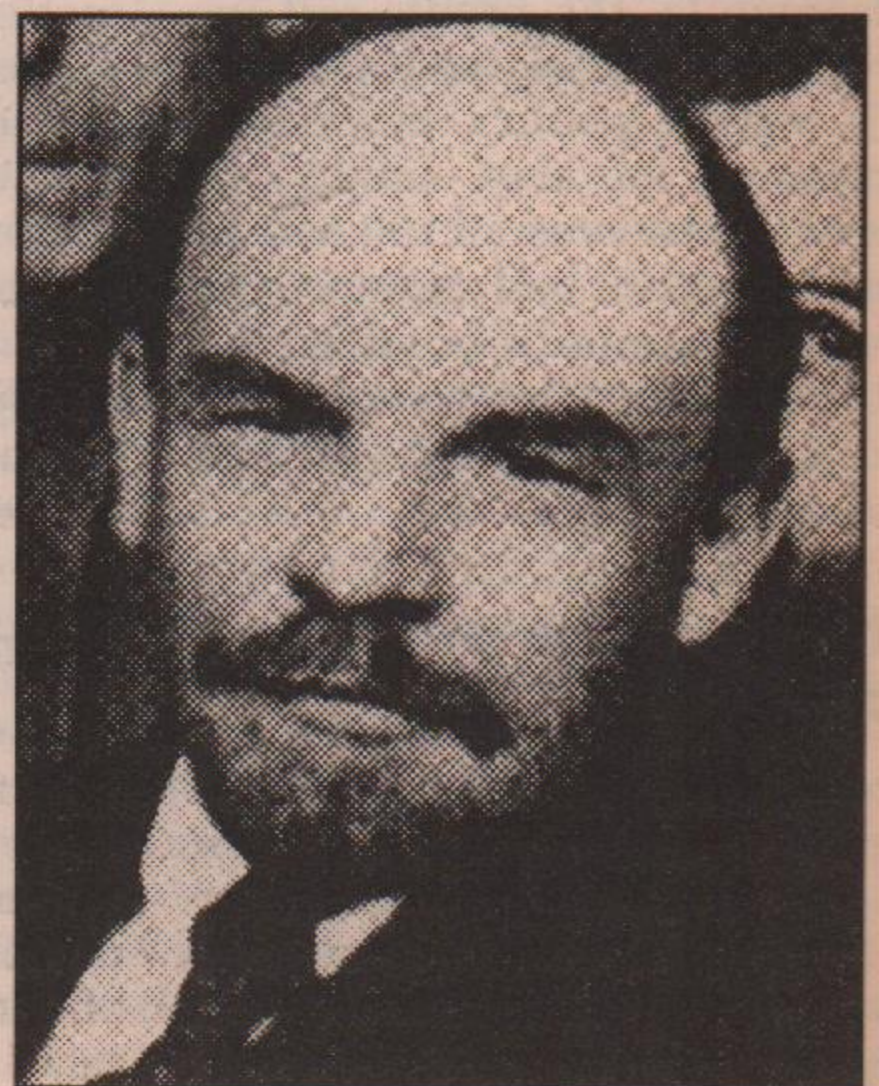
For Cliff, the way Lenin 'explained reformism, or to use the term he coined, opportunism' was inadequate, because 'an inevitable conclusion ... is that a small thin crust hides the urges of the mass of workers. Any break in this crust would reveal a surging revolutionary lava. The role of the revolutionary party is simply to show the mass of the workers that their interests are betrayed by the "infinitesimal minority" of the "aristocracy of labour".' But according to Cliff, this 'is not confirmed by the history of reformism in Britain, the United States and elsewhere over the past half century: its solidity, its spread throughout the working class, frustrating and largely isolating all revolutionary minorities makes it abundantly clear that the economic, social roots of reformism are not in "an infinitesimal minority of the proletariat and working masses" as Lenin had argued.'

So the critical issue is the reformist or backward consciousness of the working class: it is this that explains the absence of revolutionary struggle. However, the social and political conditions of 1957 when Cliff wrote this are a surer guide as to why there

should be no revolutionary struggle: imperialist boom was creating 'full' employment and rising living standards. Lenin was writing in a quite different period of deep social and economic crisis when 'the actuality of proletarian revolution' (Lukacs) was no empty phrase. Conditions in the first quarter of this century threw the working class into constant struggle regardless of its prevailing level of consciousness; and at every stage, the labour aristocracy used its privileged position to frustrate, limit and undermine that struggle, and as a consequence frustrate, limit and undermine the development of an independent class consciousness. Thus Cliff's reference to 'surging revolutionary lava' is a ludicrous and bombastic caricature: the labour aristocracy as the 'class enemy within the camp of the proletariat' was indeed the critical obstacle to the development of communist movements, not as Cliff would have it, 'reformism', or the class enemy of the proletariat within its own mind.

Corr and Brown take Cliff's standpoint and attempt to give it a veneer of scientific respectability by culling numerous quotations from respectable bourgeois labour historians. The only basis on which they choose these academics is their common hostility to Lenin. Thus they can be Eurocommunists, structuralists, avowed revisionists or anti Marxists - Corr and Brown don't particularly care. Hence they see no methodological problem in treating the arguments developed by (say) Henry Pelling or AE Musson, reactionary bourgeois historians the pair of them (sorry: academics with a 'particular Whig interpretation of labour history' - Corr and Brown, p73) as of equal validity to those advanced by Lenin. We can only assume that Corr and Brown believe that these historians are neutral figures whose statements possess a scientific objectivity in and of themselves - a preposterous position for those who claim to recognise the existence of a class-divided society.

For our part, there is a good reason as to why Corr and Brown have no methodological axe to grind with such people: they share the same



Lenin

class position, that of the petit bourgeoisie. And whilst the preconditions for the working class acquiring revolutionary consciousness is its spontaneous movement, it is the other way round for the petit bourgeoisie: they must acquire the consciousness before the commitment to the struggle. The result is that Corr and Brown, along with radical bourgeois historians, project their class position on to the proletariat. The obsession with reformism is none other than an obsession with the problem of the consciousness of the petit bourgeoisie.

Lenin on Opportunism

So what did Lenin really mean by 'opportunism', and how does it differ from the concept of 'reformism' advanced by Corr, Brown, Cliff and the bourgeois academics they cite? Essentially, it is an alliance between the ruling class and a privileged stratum of the working class directed against the mass of the working class. Thus he argued:

'The relative "peaceful" character

revolting slaughter of working class people with the aim of deciding how to re-divide the colonies amongst the major capitalist powers. If Marxism could not keep pace with such changes, it could no longer be the science of revolution.

The war had revealed the existence of three trends within the socialist movement: the open opportunists, who enthusiastically supported 'their' ruling class (in Britain, the entire trade union leadership and the overwhelming majority of the Labour Party), the pacifists, who proclaimed their opposition to the war but refused to organise against it or to break with the opportunists who supported it (in Britain, Ramsay MacDonald, and in Germany, Karl Kautsky), and lastly the revolutionaries, who called for the defeat of 'their' imperialism and organised to achieve this end (in Britain, John Maclean, in Ireland, James Connolly, in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg, and in Russia, Lenin). Marxism had to explain the origin of those trends hostile to the working class, and Lenin alone of the revolutionaries was able to do

for the concept of proletarian revolution, when whole sections of the working class would be castigated as "watchdogs of capitalism and corrupters of the labour movement" (p46) – the implication apparently being that there could not be any proletarian revolution whatsoever. Yet Corr and Brown exaggerate – these 'whole sections' were always a minority in Lenin's view, and might anyway be thrown back into the mass of the working class under the impact of the overall crisis. In other words, the impoverishment of sections of the labour aristocracy was a thesis as uncontentious as the proletarianisation of sections of the petit bourgeoisie (even, possibly, some former academics). This of course happened in the 1920s in Britain; as John Foster observed, 'The previously "aristocratic" sections [skilled engineers, shipbuilders, textile workers and miners – RC] now came under crippling attack. Their local cultural institutions (the backbone of the old "framework" of control) disappeared into the abyss of unemployment'. However, he then continued:

'Yet to see this as the end would be to miss the whole essence of the labour aristocracy, to see it purely descriptively, in just one of its forms, and ignore its historical role and development: as the active process by which labour's class organisation was purged of anti-capitalist elements and made safer for economism and spontaneity.' (in ed J Skelley: *The General Strike*, p31)

And indeed the 'active process' was to continue, with new sections of the working class being elevated in the 1930s to a level of privilege that had been previously enjoyed by skilled workers in those industries on which British capitalist prosperity had been built at the beginning of the century.

But Corr and Brown are adamant: it 'makes no sense to think that Lenin saw the labour aristocracy in these workers. Lenin in fact used the term "labour aristocracy" to refer to reformist leaders (in particular to Kautsky)' (p 46). 'In fact', Lenin did not use the term 'labour aristocracy' to refer to Kautsky – far from it: to Lenin, they were separate trends, and he repeatedly stressed the distinction, right from 1914 through to 1917. As he wrote in a work Corr and Brown claim to have read:

'Kautskyism is not an independent trend, because it has no roots either in the masses or in the privileged stratum which has deserted to the bourgeoisie. But the danger of Kautskyism lies in the fact that, utilising the ideology of the past, it endeavours to reconcile the proletariat with that party and thereby enhance the latter's prestige. The masses no longer follow the avowed social chauvinists ... The Kautskyites' masked defence of the social chauvinists is far more dangerous.' (CW Vol 23, p119)

And in 1917:

'I might remark, in passing, that Souvarine is wrong in maintaining that "they [ie, the Russian comrades who speak of the collapse of the Second International] equate men like Kautsky, Longuet, etc with nationalists of the Scheidemann and Renaudel type". Neither I nor the Party to which I belong (the RSDLP Central Committee) have ever equated the social chauvinist viewpoint with that of the "Centre". In our official Party statements, in the Central Committee manifesto published November 1 1914, and in the resolutions adopted in March 1915 ... we have always drawn a dividing line between the social chauvinists and the "Centre". The former,

in our opinion, have defected to the bourgeoisie. With regard to them we demand not merely struggle, but a split. The latter hesitate, vacillate, and their efforts to unite the socialist masses with the chauvinist leaders causes the greatest damage to the proletariat.' (CW Vol 23, pp195-6)

There is no doubt that Corr and Brown do not know what they are talking about. But this is not a matter of simple ignorance. If Kautsky was no more than a common or garden labour aristocrat as they suggest, then the trend that his position represents *de facto* cannot exist. Life is not so simple, for as Lenin argued, such a trend must and will come into existence in order to reconcile sections of the working class with the open and discredited opportunists. Henderson had to have his MacDonald, and Scheidemann his Kautsky, since on their own Henderson and Scheidemann could no longer command the allegiance of the revolutionary sections of the working class.

Today, it is no different: John

described as revolutionary than spontaneous – especially that of the republican movement; it condemned black and white youth during the 1981 and later uprisings, and it condemned the miners' hit squads during the 1984-85 strike. It is clear then that the issue is not the 'backwardness' of the working class, but the backwardness of the SWP and the class position that its politics represent – that of the petit bourgeoisie.

Once we understand the interests that Corr and Brown's arguments serve, we can appreciate the full measure of their shallowness. The ambiguous class position of the petit bourgeoisie expresses itself in their reluctance to adopt a partisan position – hence Corr and Brown's pseudo-objectivity, their willingness to accept at face value the positions of bourgeois academia, the 'on the one hand on the other' presentation of their views. Indeed, it is partisanship that they criticise in Lenin when they suggest that 'disillusion at the collapse of the Second International probably made it very diffi-



Lenin on Red Square after inspecting troops leaving for the front to defend the Soviet republic

of the period between 1871 and 1914 served to foster opportunism first as a mood, then as a trend, until finally it formed a group or stratum among the labour bureaucracy and petty bourgeois fellow travellers. These elements were able to gain control of the labour movement only by paying lip-service to revolutionary aims.' (CW Vol 22, p111)

And later on:

'A few crumbs of the bourgeoisie's huge profits may come the way of the small group of labour bureaucrats, labour aristocrats, and petty bourgeois fellow-travellers. Social chauvinism and opportunism have the same class basis, namely, the alliance of a small section of privileged workers with their national bourgeoisie against the working class masses; the alliance between the lackeys of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the class the latter is exploiting.' (ibid, p112)

so. But he then went further and translated this understanding into the practical political position which led to the defeat of Russian opportunism and the triumph of the October revolution. What we are discussing therefore is not Lenin's so-called crudeness or one-sidedness, but quite the opposite: his complete theoretical superiority to any other living socialist.

Now Corr and Brown find themselves in all sorts of trouble as they try to develop their criticisms of Lenin. On the one hand, they declare that Lenin talked a lot about the labour aristocracy, but had no consistent idea as to who it encompassed. On the other, they say he could not have been thinking of any section of the working class such as Engels' carpenters and engineers, for if he were, 'there were enormous implications



Rosa Luxemburg

An alliance against the working class: hence Lenin's fondness for the phrase 'labour lieutenants of the capitalist class' as a description of the labour aristocracy. Yes, this represents a considerable development of Marx' and Engels' arguments, but there is no call for criticism on this account (see Corr and Brown p45). Events had moved on since the 1880s and 1890s: Lenin was writing in the midst of an imperialist war, where despite its earlier protestations, the leadership of the Second International were either openly or tacitly supporting 'their' ruling class in a



Massive assembly of dockers on Tower Hill in support of the 1912 Dock Strike

Smith must have his Kautsky or MacDonald whose task it is to reconcile radicalised sections of the working class with the rotten traditions of the Labour Party. And how might we expect that trend to act? In the 1980s, it would form an uncritical alliance with the Labour left in pacifist opposition to the Falklands War; in the 1990s, it would renew that alliance in an equally pacifist opposition to the Gulf War. It might offer occasional criticisms of individual Labour leaders as they revealed in the slaughter of the Iraqi people, but not of the Party as a whole – indeed, the trend would remind its supporters that they should still vote for Labour despite its barbarity. And how would it justify this? Why, by explaining that Labour is despite everything a 'workers party' – 'capitalist' maybe, with a 'reformist' leadership certainly, but at the end of the day, still a workers party. And what organisation has adopted these positions and arguments? Corr and Brown will know – the SWP!

The correspondence between the Kautsky of 1914-17 and the SWP of today runs deeper. They share the notion that the problem for socialists is the backwardness of the working class – Kautsky used this to justify his refusal to break from the chauvinists since he would thereby break from the 'masses'. The corollary of this is that both Kautsky and the SWP condemn the spontaneous struggles of the working class since it exposes their alliance with opportunism. Thus the SWP has consistently opposed armed liberation struggles – which should be more properly

cult to avoid a certain amount of moralism, even among the finest revolutionaries' (p48). The inference is clear: Lenin allowed his judgement to be clouded by subjective feelings. 'Moralism' here is a pejorative 'moralistic' elsewhere in the article – but we must remember that only the privileged can afford the luxury of amorality and pretend that morality and objectivity are polar opposites. Communist and revolutionaries reject this: there is a very definite working class morality, and that morality condemned the leadership of the Second International with scientific objectivity in 1914, just as it would condemn those who defended the Labour Party during the slaughter of the Gulf War.

To sum up: Lenin's position is comprehensible only if you start from 'the actuality of proletarian revolution' – that is, from a partisan standpoint. Any other approach must lapse into sociology or psychology, the fate of a bourgeois academia which wants anything but a proletarian revolution. But the labour aristocracy as Lenin understood is not a sociological concept describing a stratum within, or without, or in some kind of juxtaposition to the working class, but a historical process connected to the development of imperialism. Corr and Brown cannot understand this since they have not broken from the standpoint of the radical petit bourgeoisie, a standpoint which has to deny the existence of the labour aristocracy in order to ally with its political representatives.

To be continued in next issue

The naked state violence which was used against anti-fascists on 16 October will not be forgotten. Like Grunwicks in 1977 where one quarter of the Metropolitan Police were used to break the mass picket; like the police occupation of Southall in 1979; like the brutal suppression of the 1980, 1981 and 1985 uprisings led by black youth, like the 1984-85 miners strike; like the 1990 anti-Poll Tax street fighting, the 16 October anti-fascist demonstration 1993 revealed the stark truth: behind the charade of parliament there stands special bodies of armed men, specially equipped and trained, to enforce capitalist interests through organised violence. 16 October showed that the British state is nothing other than the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie.

Lenin, as Marx and Engels before him, argued that the real political power of a ruling class rests in its control of a coercive state apparatus. All those opposed to the growing authoritarianism of the British state should read his celebrated and utterly relevant *State and Revolution*.

The bourgeois state must be smashed

State and Revolution answers two fundamental questions. Firstly, why must the old state machine be smashed? And secondly, what should be put in its place?

Lenin did not start from abstract definitions but reached his conclusions about the state and revolution by summing up the experience of class struggle. Lenin follows the analysis by Marx and Engels of two revolutions. He shows that the 1848 French Revolution, and more especially the negative experience of its counter-revolution where the bourgeoisie turned traitor to democracy rather than share political power with the working class, led Marx to conclude: "The next attempt of the French Revolution will be no longer, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it..."

In a 1852 letter to J Weydemeyer Marx stated that no credit was due to him for discovering the class struggle:

'What I did that was new was to prove: 1) that the *existence of classes* is only bound up with *particular historical phases in the development of production*, 2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, 3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a *classless society*...'

Note that while in 1852 he posed the dictatorship of the proletariat as an historical necessity, it was not yet possible for Marx to give a precise positive content to it.

Then in 1871 the heroic workers of the Paris Commune actually took a decisive step further on the road to socialism, before they too were defeated. Albeit briefly, the Communards demonstrated for the first time in history that the proletariat can smash bourgeois rule and organise its *own forms* of state power.

Marx and Engels thought this experience so important that they wrote in the 1872 preface to the *Communist Manifesto*, originally written on the eve of 1848, that changes were necessary in the programme in view of the practical experience of the 1848 Revolution and, still more, of the Paris Commune:

'One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz, that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery, and wield it for its own purposes..."'

Marx and Engels learnt from the class struggle and were able to re-examine their theory in the light of it. Hence-

The State and Revolution

forth anyone who wanted to learn what the dictatorship of the proletariat looks like could look to the Commune.

The state is a class power

Human society began without classes and without a state. The state 'is a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. The state arises where, when and insofar as class antagonisms cannot be reconciled. And, conversely, the evidence of the state proves that the class antagonisms are irreconcilable.'

The state is 'a power which arose from society but places itself above it and alienates itself more and more from it. What does this power mainly consist of? It consists of special bodies of armed men having prisons etc. at their command'.

The state is a class instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class. The capitalist class rules through its state apparatus. The state is tied to the ruling class by a thousand threads, by direct corruption of its officials and by an alliance between the government and the Stock Exchange which 'imperialism and the domination of the banks have developed into an exceptional art'.

'Every revolution, by destroying the state apparatus, shows us the naked class struggle, clearly shows us how the ruling class tries to restore the special bodies of armed men which serve it, and how the oppressed class strives to create a new organisation of this kind, capable of serving the exploited instead of the exploiters'.

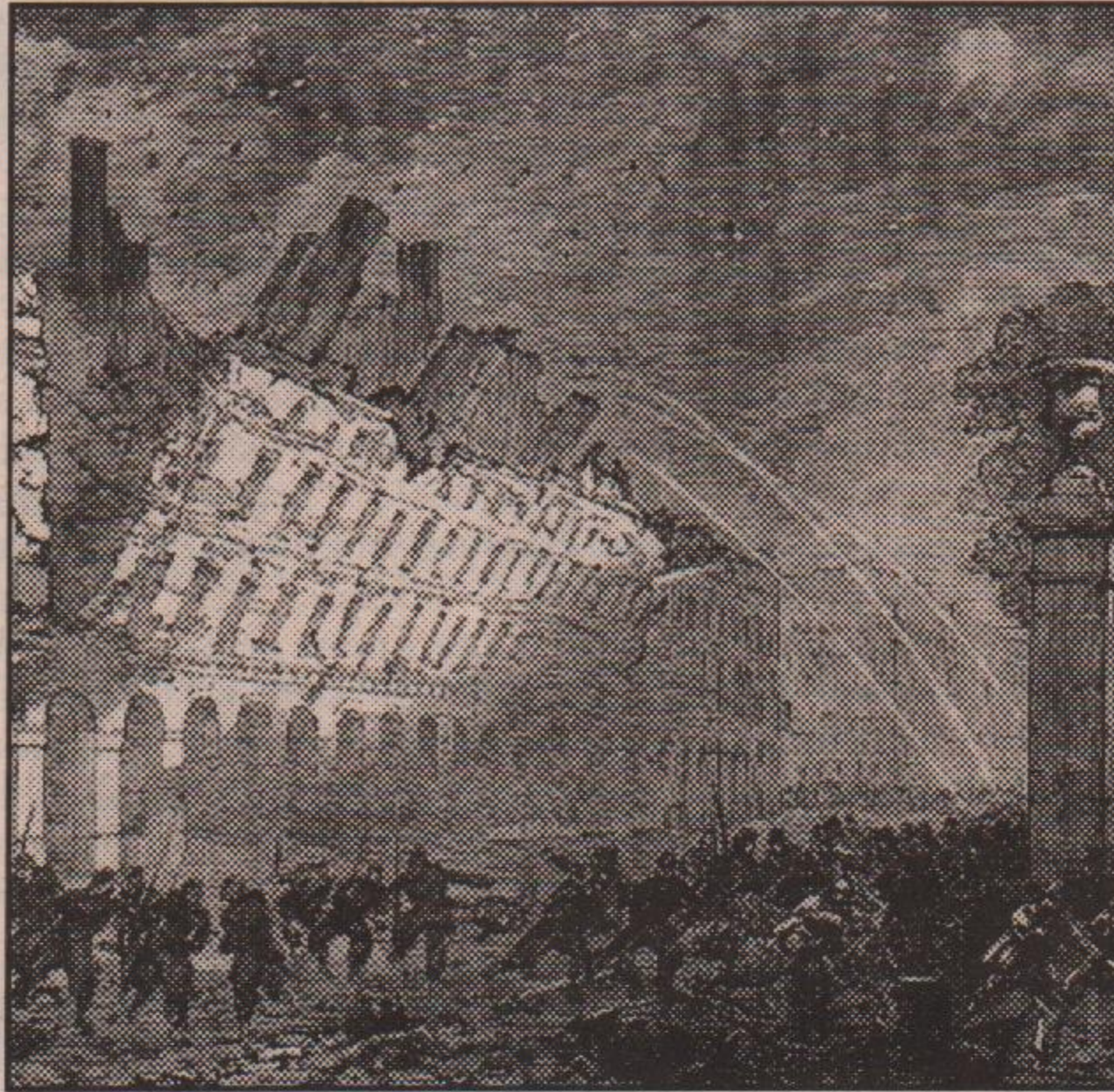
The state is 'a "special coercive force" for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich; it must be replaced by a "special coercive force" for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat ... which is impossible without a violent revolution.'

What is meant by 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'?

The Paris Commune had shown in its practical measures what is meant by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

'The workers, after winning political power, will smash the old bureaucratic apparatus, shatter it to its very foundations, and raze it to the ground; they will replace it by a new one, consisting of the very same workers and other employees, *against* whose transformation into bureaucrats the measures will at once be taken which were specified in detail by Marx and Engels [ie from the Commune]: (1) not only election, but also recall at any time; (2) pay not to exceed that of a workman; (3) immediate introduction of control and suppression by *all*, so that *all* may become "bureaucrats" for a time and that, therefore, *nobody* may be able to become a "bureaucrat".'

Marx's genius lay in articulating the essence of the Commune, thus making it available for the whole move-



Paris in flames: the Paris Commune

ment. Instead of the fake capitalist democracy where 'the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representative of the oppressing class shall represent them in parliament', the Commune was a working body, it broke down the divisions between legislature, executive and judiciary. It was a real democracy which was defended by the workers, i.e. by all the workers, men, women and youth, organised in arms.

The economic and political strength of the working class stems



Petrograd 1917: workers seize power

from a conscious, organised collectivity. That is why Marx was a centralist. Critics of Marxism cannot understand this, for they 'simply cannot conceive of voluntary centralism'.

Marx's analysis of 1871 celebrated the direct proletarian democracy whilst at the same time pointing to the Communards' weakness in organising for a national, people's revolution:

'History has no like example of like greatness! If they are defeated only their "good nature" will be to blame. They should have marched at once on Versailles ... [the national centre of the reactionaries] ... They missed their opportunity because of conscientious scruples. They did not want to *start a civil war* ...'

The sombre truth was that as soon as it regained the upper hand the counter-revolution resorted to butchering tens of thousands of workers. This was a fundamental lesson for the future.

In summary the dictatorship of the proletariat, the proletarian state, is 'the organisation of the armed people'.

The withering away of the proletarian state

The new proletarian state is a necessary stage in the transition from capitalism to communism. Lenin considered the political and economic conditions in which this new state will start 'dying down of itself' will be, firstly, when there is no longer capitalist resistance and the threat of a bourgeois counter-revolution. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a new class rule 'the proletariat needs the state, not in the interests of freedom but in order to hold down its adversaries'.

State and Revolution also examines the economic basis to the withering away of the state. A proletarian state is not only necessary for the suppression of counter-revolution, its *economic* role is indispensable in a society which has just broken from capitalism. The proletarian state must centralise the accounting and control of production and distribution; it must plan the economy.

Bourgeois rights, law and habits will linger for a period. For how long a period, Lenin insists, *cannot be determined in advance*. The people would have to learn new habits, to educate themselves through the prac-

Due to the Tsarist censor, Lenin's *Imperialism* only deals obliquely with consequences for political action against the state. As Lenin argued elsewhere the war had transformed capitalism to *state monopoly capitalism*. We see this today: everywhere democracy is subverted to suit the needs of the multinational companies.

The primary purpose of *State and Revolution* was to wage war, 'against opportunist prejudices concerning the "state"'. Lenin realised that the *subjective* conditions for a socialist revolution were rapidly maturing as well. Ever since his return to Russia in April 1917, Lenin had conducted a campaign urging the workers to take power based on their own mass organisations, the Soviets. He spoke thus to a soldiers meeting:

'Not the police, not the bureaucracy, who are unanswerable to the people and placed above the people, not the standing army, separated from the people, but the people themselves, universally armed and united in the Soviets, must run the state ...'

The Marxists and the anarchists

From April to October 1917 the Bolsheviks and anarchists fought as revolutionary allies against the bourgeois state and bourgeois socialists. Although there were tactical disputes in those turbulent months, they were differences *within the revolution* and Lenin never tired of trying to win the anarchist revolutionaries to Marxism. Both trends opposed the Provisional Government because it continued the imperialist war, both trends realised that the only way to end the slaughter would be to smash the Russian military apparatus, and both sought to organise the masses on the streets.

Concrete experience backed Lenin's carefully drawn 'distinction between the Marxists and the anarchists':

'(1) The former, while aiming at the complete abolition of the state, recognise that this aim can only be achieved after classes have been abolished by the socialist revolution, as the result of the establishment of socialism, which leads to the withering away of the state. The latter want to abolish the state completely overnight, not understanding the conditions under which the state can be abolished.'

(2) The former recognise that after the proletariat has won political power it must completely destroy the old state machine and replace it by a new one consisting of an organisation of the armed workers, after the type of the Commune. The latter, while insisting on the destruction of the state machine, have a very vague idea of *what* the proletariat will put in its place and *how* it will use its revolutionary power. The anarchists even deny that the revolutionary proletariat should use the state power, they reject its revolutionary dictatorship.'

Lenin was determined to learn from the weaknesses of the Commune as well as its strengths. There was no possibility that the state could be abolished overnight. Lenin, who saw that 'socialism is now gazing at us from all the windows of modern capitalism' also saw that the proletarian revolution, in whatever country it first broke out, would *have to create a new type of state* capable of fighting defensive wars against imperialist intervention and capitalist restoration.

State and Revolution was written for the socialist revolution, not about the socialist revolution. That is what shines through even today, and is why it should be read and reread by all seeking to oppose the British state and fight for socialist revolution in Britain.

Andy Higginbottom

Prisons reach bursting point

Just two years after Kenneth Baker's White Paper 'Custody, Control and Justice' stated, 'Imprisonment can lessen people's sense of responsibility for their actions and reduce their self-respect ... Imprisonment is costly for the individual, for the prisoner's family and for the community', we are in the throes of an almighty backlash. Out go the conclusions of the Woolf Inquiry and the concern for prisoners' welfare which followed Strangeways; in comes a new drive towards punishment.



Riot police at Wymott Prison recently

The sheer stupidity, not to mention short-sightedness of Michael Howard's (and Major's) 'Prison works' outbursts is breathtaking. The Home Office's own research shows that it would take a 25 per cent increase in the prison population to achieve a one per cent reduction in crime.

The prison population is rising at an alarming rate with each week seeing 250-500 more prisoners incarcerated. There are already 1,000 more prisoners in the system than the official capacity allows. It is most acute in the Midlands and North West; Preston and Leeds prisons are 170

and 160 per cent overcrowded.

British gaols were last this overcrowded, and indeed more so, in 1986-8. In 1987 Leeds topped the list at 203 per cent overcrowding; its Certified Normal Accommodation was 630 prisoners, the average daily population 1,281 and the peak figure a barely imaginable 1,420. That means that for every three places, there were usually six men to be fitted in and at the peak there were seven. The following year was even worse with the same prison 213 per cent overcrowded on average.

The prison population has risen

from 41,000 to 47,250 since January 1993; it won't be long before the 1986-8 scenario is repeated. One of Douglas Hurd's former researchers (under Hurd the prison population fell considerably) predicts 'concentration camps on Salisbury Plain' and indeed the Prison Service has outlined and is preparing the usual range of unpalatable overflow options: disused army camps, police cells and prison ships.

Now, in terms of 'cutting crime', prison clearly doesn't work and Major's 'two simple facts', that 'while criminals are in prison they cannot commit crimes' and 'prison ... deters many others from committing crime', as well as being definitely untrue in the first case and highly debatable in the second, do not even pretend to address the issues of crime prevention, rehabilitation etc which former Home Secretaries and Prime Ministers have at least paid lip-service to.

But Howard and Major know that punishing criminals is a vote-winner. They have no interest in 'rehabilitation' because the myth of a 'criminal class' suits this purpose. They know, although they would never admit it, that a tiny percentage of crime is violent or sexual and that the vast majority of 'crime' is a response to poverty. They probably know too (or at least their researchers do) that the prison population has always risen in Western capitalist countries in times of recession and that what they are doing is not new but that it is part of an advance declaration of war, not on 'crime' but on the working class.

Nicki Jameson

Jamaican death row - Britain still has the final say

On 2 November seven Law Lords ruled there had been a 'wholly unacceptable delay' since the passing of death sentences on Jamaican prisoners Earl Pratt and Ivan Morgan and to hang them now would constitute 'inhuman or degrading punishment' contrary to the Jamaican constitution.

Jamaica, like many ex-British colonies, has its own constitution, laws and penal system but the highest court of appeal remains in London. And the irony is that it gives Britain the opportunity to play the civilised paternalist, righting the wrongs of its nasty offspring in the neo-colonial ruling classes.

The treatment of the Jamaican prisoners certainly is inhuman and degrading. They were on death row for 14 years and were moved to condem-

ned cells next to the gallows on three occasions but given stays of execution at the last minute. Twenty-three prisoners have been on death row for more than ten years; 82 for more than five years. This judgement will have an effect on all their cases as well as many in other 'ex-colonies' where the final say still rests in Britain.

All the prisoners listed below were on death row before the Pratt-Morgan judgement. Their sentences will presumably now be commuted to life imprisonment, but this does not mean their struggle is over as they were all either framed by the police or acted in self-defence.

Everett Parkinson, Clarence Marshall, Levi Grey, George Lindom, Egbert White, Gilbert Hyde, Andy Williams, Dudley Smith. Please send them letters of support to Saint Catherine Correctional Centre, 1 White Church Street, Spanish Town PO, St Catherine, Jamaica.

Media attack on prisoners

On 21 October Carlton TV screened a half-hour documentary called 'Killer at Large' produced by Twenty-Two Television, an independent company producing 'current affairs' programmes for a series called 'The Big Story'. The programme purported to examine the prison home leave system, but in fact amounted to little more than a piece of cheap sensationalist rubbish designed to whip up hostility against 'criminal misfits' and their temporary release into the community under any circumstances.

Completely unaware of this agenda, I was approached by Emma Whitlock, a researcher I had met while in Maidstone prison when she was conducting research for another programme. She asked if it would be possible to meet and interview me for a programme on home leave and sentencing policy, 'issues which I know you feel strongly about.' I met her and her colleague, Mark Lewis, and discussed with them at length both my views on the topics and how they

were to be portrayed in the programme. I was assured my contribution would be used to balance those of reactionary system spokespeople and the accounts from victims of crimes committed by prisoners on home leave. They would attack home leave; I would defend it and put it in the context of the regime's overall failure to rehabilitate.

Following the meeting which lasted about two hours, we went to another location where I was interviewed on film. The interview lasted over two hours and dealt at length with home leave, prison conditions and prisoners' rights. I was asked very briefly about my original conviction for murder, my taking hostage a governor at Parkhurst and my escape, though only, I was assured, to put my contribution 'in context'. In fact the only material actually used from the interview dealt with these three matters and was used as a sort of voice-over to a tacky and often wildly inaccurate 'reconstruction' of these events.

Far from my contribution being used to present the alternative or prisoners' perspective on home leave, it was in fact used, after massive 'editing', to support the exactly opposite perspective and the only one presented in the programme - that home leave and any other form of compassionate leave constitute a danger to the public and should therefore be strenuously clamped down on, if not abolished altogether. I had been duped into co-operating with a programme that sought simply to whip up public hysteria favourable to increased repression and increased denial of prisoners' rights.

My mistake lay in believing, or hoping, that 'journalists' of Emma Whitlock's ilk might possibly possess some modicum of integrity. I was, of course, wrong. I understand that Whitlock and her colleagues intend to produce more anti-prisoner programmes; prisoners and their supporters should be warned of the consequences of trusting these people and have nothing to do with Emma Whitlock, Twenty-Two Television or 'The Big Story'.

John Bowden

INSIDE NEWS

Charlie McGhee

Charlie McGhee was acquitted at Birmingham Crown Court of all but one of a huge stack of charges of assault, ABH, GBH and wounding against prison officers at Long Lartin in April 1992. Charlie successfully pleaded duress due to the treatment he himself had received. His witnesses, Kevin Brown and Chris Haigh, backed him up with accounts of their own and Charlie's treatment as long-term prisoners. Tony McCann was also acquitted on similar charges.

Chris Haigh has now been released and is suing over his treatment at Charlie's court case; he was taken to court in three sets of handcuffs, two more pairs than he had worn on any of the 14 times he was moved during his sentence as a Category A prisoner.

Hull Special Unit

While the prison system is bursting at the seams, there are just four prisoners in the Hull Special Unit in accommodation for 20. In this 'liberal' corner of the system new absurdities have been introduced to try prisoners' patience. When the card-phones broke down, prisoners were allowed to phone from an office - with the proviso they don't leave messages on answer-phones!

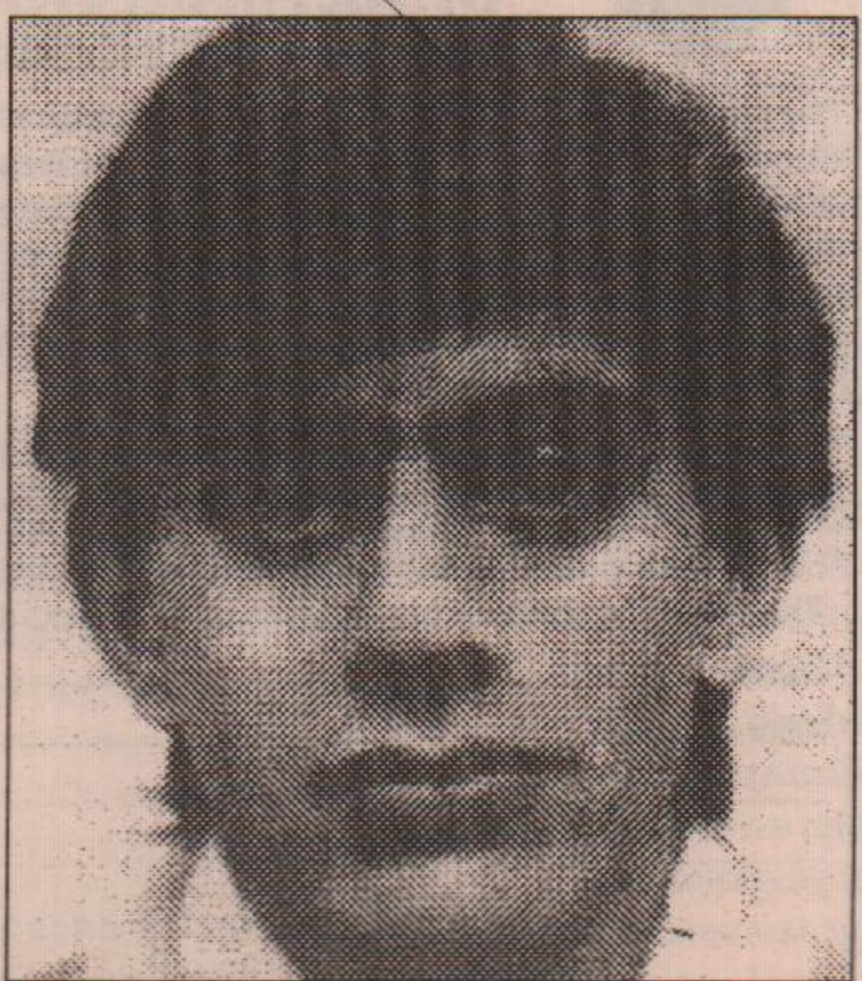
The Unit boasts silk-screen printing facilities which prisoners may use with the proviso that nothing is produced which carries the

names of other prisoners. Kenny Carter is now being told that under this 'regulation' he cannot print T-shirts and posters to highlight his own case.

FRAMED PRISONERS

Mohammed Riaz

Mohammed Riaz is serving life for the kidnap and murder of an Indian diplomat. His part in the kidnap was minimal and in the killing virtually non-existent but he has been scapegoated because the main protagonists managed to flee the country and escape prosecution. Further information on this case is available from the 'Friends of Mohammed Riaz', c/o Londec, Instrument House, 205-217 Kings Cross Road, London WC1. Send messages of support to Mohammed Riaz, HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambs, PE15 0SR.



Mohammed Riaz

Free Darren Southward!

Darren Southward was forced to plead guilty to murder on the understanding that if he did so, charges against his mother (the dead man was her violent former lover) would be dropped. It was a cynical trick and appears to have been cooked up by prosecution and 'defence' lawyers to save them time and effort. Darren's mother's charges were not dropped and she herself was persuaded to plead guilty to manslaughter despite having nothing to do with the killing.

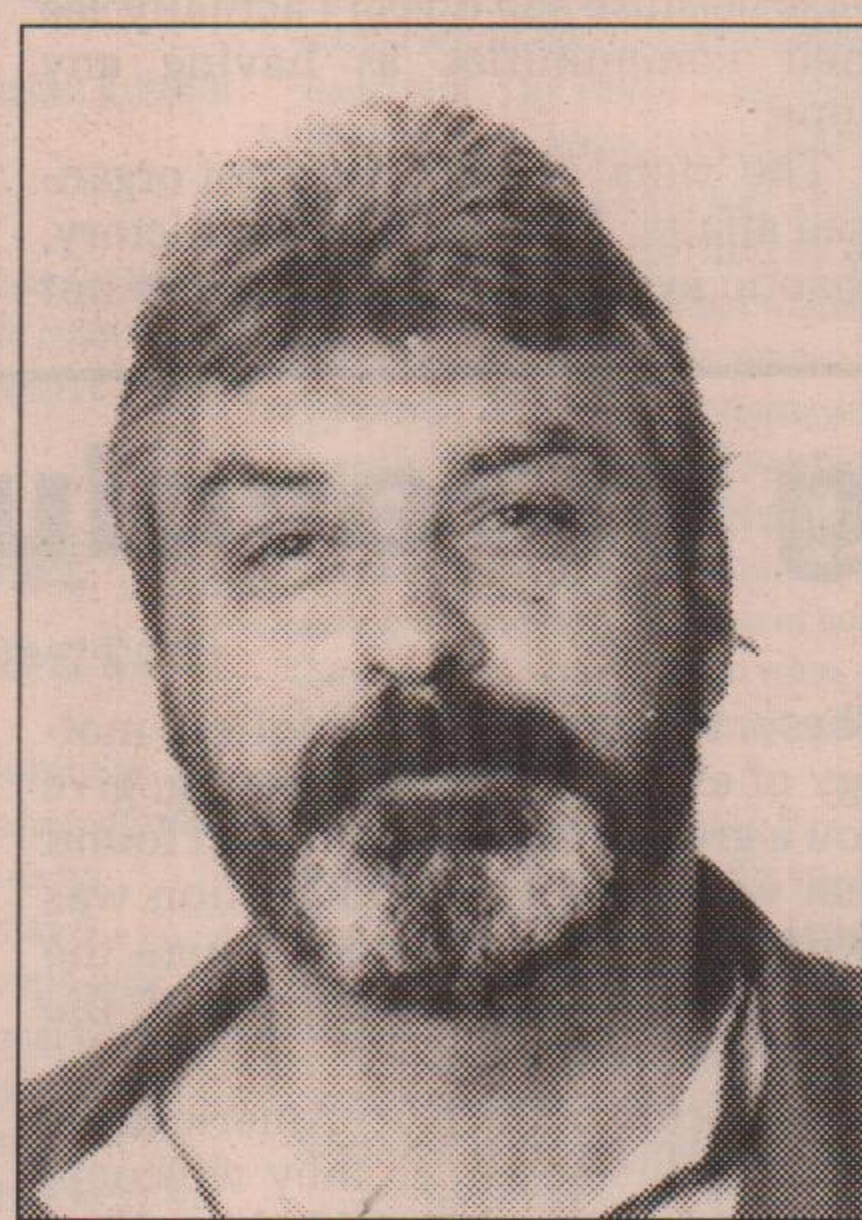
Mrs Southward is now free and campaigning, with the support of Conviction, for her son's release. Darren is in his fifth year of a life sentence. Send messages of support to: Darren Southward AK3761, HMP Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs, WR11 5TZ.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

Serge Mandelier

Serge is a Belgian political prisoner who has served 12 years of his 15 year sentence and is being denied all parole (including temporary home leave). In July he went on hunger strike to protest against his treatment and received international support from prisoners and activists. Belgium, like Britain, is undergoing extreme 'law and order' hysteria. A double murder committed in 1992 by two prisoners, one on parole, the other on home leave, has been cynically exploited by the Ministry of 'Justice' and the media to deny virtually all parole or home leave applications.

Messages of solidarity can be sent to Serge (preferably in French or



Serge Mandelier

Spanish) at Prison de Verviers, Verviers, Belgium.

Action Directe

FRFI sends solidarity to the militant activists of Action Directe who are serving life sentences for 'terrorism'. They have been in solitary confinement since their arrest in 1987 and have mounted numerous hunger-strikes and protests. Their treatment has taken a heavy toll on one of the four, Georges Cipriani, who was forcibly transferred to a mental hospital in June. The other three are Joëlle Aubron, Nathalie Ménignon and Jean-Marc Rouillan. Messages of solidarity can be sent to them at Prison de Fresnes, 1 allée des Thuyas, 34261 Fresnes cedex, France.

■ No way out from the ghetto

■ **Goliath – Britain's Dangerous Places**
Beatrix Campbell, Methuen 1993, £9.99

A lot of young people growing up today do not have a very rosy future to look forward to. Under Thatcher, we effectively achieved a two-third/one-third society where a third of the population are confined to poverty. But Thatcher had North Sea oil and privatisation receipts to fall back on – massive revenues quickly drying up. As politicians talk grimly about 'difficult decisions', we should be in no doubt that they are preparing to unleash on us. Already a quarter of all British children grow up in poverty. The NHS is on the ropes, social services often a joke. Legal aid and basic rights going back to the middle ages are under attack – and all against a background of grinding unemployment and poverty for many communities in Britain.

So how do you deal with it? What do you do if you are growing up on an estate where it's a novelty to have a job and the place is falling to bits? You can try to 'escape the ghetto' by 'being all you can be' in the go-getting 90s but most kids know that's just a fairy tale for them. How do you live in a society that consistently excludes you and tells you it's your own fault that you're excluded?

Beatrix Campbell's *Goliath* looks at how people in some of Britain's poorest estates have reacted to the chronic poverty they have been subjected to. In particular she looks at the riots that spread through some of Britain's poorest communities in 1991 as the police invaded 'lawless' estates from Tyneside to Cardiff.

Unfortunately Campbell subjects us to what she calls a 'feminist analysis' of the events that tell us a lot more about Beatrix Campbell than about the people on the estates. Her 'probing' of 'lawless masculinity' leads her quickly to a condemnation of unemployed, 'lawless' young men that would not be out of place at a Tory party conference. As she puts it:

'The argument of this book is that neither manners nor mothers are to blame, but that there is an economic emergency in many neighbourhoods where the difference between what women and men do

with their troubles and with their anger shapes their strategies of survival and solidarity on the one hand, danger and destruction on the other'.

Or more straightforwardly,

'Crime and coercion are sustained by men. Solidarity and self-help are sustained by women. It is as stark as that.'

This is if anything clear – when things get bad women cope and men go mental. Now there is of course quite a lot of truth in this; women are the backbone of poor, working class communities, they do ensure that the communities survive, that the chil-



dren eat, often with little help from their men. This would be a useful observation if it was used as a basis for trying to understand how communities are better able to stand up for themselves, turn anger into organisation and bitterness into action. But this is not Campbell's agenda – the poverty is a given for her, she offers no way of challenging it. It is all about coping, managing, containing protest into channels that change nothing. Her seemingly pro-women standpoint offers nothing to the women whose oppression she dissects because she doesn't actually see their communities as having any hope.

The 'riots' of 1991 were not organised affairs. They were contradictory, chaotic events that usually arose out

of police actions against young people on rundown estates. The 'riots' did, however, at some level, give voice to the anger of communities destroyed by poverty, communities with no say in the system that has consigned them to the state they are in.

Campbell completely misunderstands the nature of riots. For her, 'historically, riots express a crisis – the impossibility of politics and of protest. They are the moment when challenge becomes chaos, when disorder becomes danger.' In fact, riots are historically the messy, often aimless, precursor to protest, politics and challenge. They are a sign that a community is in some way challenging the oppression it suffers under. Often

they achieve nothing, or worse. But they are a sign that people want a voice, a voice they have been denied.

The events of 1991 largely took the form of conflict between young men on the estates and the police. The police, after all, are the most visible and most obvious representatives of those-who-have-against these communities of those-who-have-not. The police do not live in these areas; they are comparatively well off; their purpose, when all is said and done, is to protect the status quo against those who would change it. If you are young, poor, male, and worst of all black, you will find it very difficult to be in frequent conflict with them.

Campbell doesn't see it this way, of course. She does not side with

poor communities against a hostile police force but with women in both camps against the men. So the SUS laws, used by the police to systematically harass black youth are not about state racism; rather they 'gave young white men many opportunities to overpower black men.'

Goliath offers an improved, 'feminist' approach to keeping the poor in their place. Campbell shows less concern for the underlying pain of communities destroyed by poverty than about the way that these communities might react to their plight. The subtitle of the book – *Britain's Dangerous Places* – gives a clue to Campbell's worry that things are getting out of hand. If only they would suffer in silence; if only they would cope! The riots, not the everyday suffering of the poor, are what worries the likes of Campbell.

Look at what she says about Broadwater Farm, an estate in North London that suffered appalling police racism for years and eventually, after the police murdered a black woman, Cynthia Jarrett, erupted into anger at the police:

'By then Cynthia Jarrett was dead. Almost immediately the police surrounded the estate, and so began the swift descent into disaster that night when, in a massive confrontation between the police and the youths, a white constable, Colin Blakelock, was murdered, hacked to death.'

The disaster was not the day to day racism, poverty and police harassment on the estate. The disaster was not Cynthia Jarrett's murder. It is only when local youth fight back against the police that there is a disaster.

Her criticisms of unemployed male youngsters at times conflict markedly with the views of the people she talks to from the estates. On one Oxford estate which was invaded by the police in a supposed attempt to stop joyriding, Campbell quotes some local people's views on the joyriders: 'There's nothing else for the kids to do'; 'The kids were just interested in cars, they weren't breaking into houses'; 'He doesn't rob banks, he doesn't hurt old people, and he doesn't do it for profit'. She patronisingly describes these views as 'pragmatic rather than moral', simply because the residents seemed less concerned about the illegality of stealing cars than about the police's

attitude to their community.

Campbell's middle class feminism is not really concerned with doing anything to end the oppression that the women of the estates have to put up with. Its main aim is to show that a more 'female' approach to problems is what is needed and that agencies working in these communities, notably the police, need to listen more to people like Campbell. At times the book reads like a police training manual.

Beatrix Campbell's is the voice of respectable 'radicalism' in Britain today. She challenges nothing, but is always there to play the 'left-wing' balance on endless chat shows with Andrew Neill, David Mellor and other right-wing talkalots. Her kind of opposition is quite acceptable because it appears very radical while offering nothing to those who are actually trying to make things better.

Not surprisingly, Campbell can see no way out of the problems faced by the men and women she writes about. 'There is nothing in the political economy of Britain that will make any difference to the people living in a state of emergency on the edges of the cities ... By the end of the century the children who entered society when they started school during the riots will be entering their *dangerous* [my italics] years when they become teenagers ... Their futures are already ancient history.'

Goliath – Britain's Dangerous Places does not identify with the communities it looks at. It is one thing to recognise the cruelty, viciousness and backwardness that exists amongst the oppressed in any society – be it a Newcastle housing estate, a South American shanty town or a South African township – and quite another to write off the future by denying the possibility of resistance and change. Campbell, of course, does just that – giving this book an unsavoury flavour of voyeurism.

Campbell, who helped lead the Communist Party in this country into self-destruction, once said that 'It's only nutcases in ever declining political organisations who think the only political act is to go to a meeting'. Her contempt for the idea that people can actually challenge oppression runs through her book. I'm sure she'll make a lot of money from it; I doubt that those she writes about will have much to thank her for.

Colin Chalmers

■ A meeting of revolutionaries

■ **Fidel and Malcolm X: Memories of a Meeting**
Rosemary Mealy, Ocean Press 1993, £7.95

With a plethora of books out presently detailing aspects of the era of Malcolm X, it is with relief that a book such as this shows that there were other smaller parts throughout Malcolm X's life, which are not as accounted for as those he was famous for. The author of this book is writing of recollections of Afro-Americans and of Cubans who remember in great detail the meeting between Fidel Castro and Malcolm X in September 1960.

The idea for this book came about after a symposium in 1990 in Cuba on Malcolm X and how he still speaks to everyone with a desire to abolish racism. The book vividly shows us similarities between Malcolm X and Fidel Castro, the one the leader of a new revolutionary country, Cuba, and the other promoting such a land at the time for Afro-Americans through his teachings in the Nation of Islam.

Having read the introduction, we appreciate the lengths Mealy went to in organising the symposium for the American delegates, and her arduous task, after the event, of collating all the accounts of the 1960 meeting.

These, together with a brief chronology of events up to the meeting, give you a great hunger to read on. I found that where anger or indignation was expressed, I felt likewise; where the mood is buoyant, you move with the happiness of the text.

The pride of the Afro-Americans is powerfully shown, as they welcome the Cuban delegates to Harlem. Here was a world leader, amongst their homes and their poverty, accepting and embracing them, the ordinary people of Harlem. The Cuban delegates were vilified by the media and others, but the Harlemites saw through the press propaganda. Fidel and his delegates were sure of a welcome stay amongst oppressed people, who knew full well what it was like to live under American imperialism and wished their country could be like Cuba, where racism was virtually non-existent. When Castro spoke at the UN buildings and said he and his delegates would stay at the Hotel Theresa, unlike the other foreign delegates who stayed in other areas, the Cuban struggle was set in cement in the hearts and minds of the black people of Harlem.

Castro and the Cuban delegates created a carnival atmosphere in Har-

lem. Each contributor's account is different, but the general feeling is one of warmth and hospitality towards the whole Cuban group – photos in the book reflect the enthusiasm that accompanied the Cubans' stay. One of the delegates was Juan Almeida, who, being black, was a source of great joy to the Afro-American activists then, representing for them the equality given to all in Cuba, regardless of colour.

In reports of the meeting itself, the reader feels the emotional links between the Afro-Americans and the Cubans, especially noticeable in Castro's remarks to Malcolm X, when he spoke to the oppressed as he and his country folk had once been.

For me, the best part of the book was Amiri Baraka's essay, 'Cuba Libre'. It tells of his journey as a young reporter to a mass anniversary rally in the Sierra Maestra, attended by Castro and many delegates from around the world. He set out as an apolitical person trying futilely to explain American life, to coming back as a young American with more radical ideas than he could have imagined. He saw the lives of the people, lived among them, and knew change from his old ways was neces-

sary. I found it inspiring to read how one person can see the reality of all he has been taught to accept as normal and believe in, and within the space of three days, have his eyes opened so as to see how life really is and want to change it for the better.

This book is an excellent read,

and a powerful account of a rarely discussed event in modern world history. I only wish I could have attended the 'Malcolm X speaks in the 1990s' Symposium, as this book leaves you with a wanting for more.

Traolach Hollywood
H-Block B, Long Kesh

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Tuesday 14 December 7.30pm

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Tuesday 18 January 7.30pm

Venue for both South London meetings to be confirmed.

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£1/50p

LETTERS

write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

Last words on prison escapes:

To oppose is to stay and fight

On the question of escapes, I must say that I don't agree with it, unless it is purely for personal reasons. Nicki Jameson's letter (FRFI 115) poses the question: 'are we opposed to brutal, oppressive jails, or are we opposed to prisons?' Well, I'm not opposed to prisons as such, I'm just opposed to the means by which we fill them and use them. There are thousands of people who need never have been sent to jails, but there are a couple of hundred who should never be let out, in my opinion. The only realistic alternative to prison is brainwashing, and I can't see that happening. What can we do with the child-molester, the granny basher, etc? Change them. That's what jail is supposed to be for, but as it is in reality, they are warehouses of discarded humanity, and any pretence of helping people lead better lives has long been dropped. The prison system does not work, cannot work, but until we have an alternative...

We won't get any changes by running away, we must stay and fight from a position of power. Prisoners have a lot of power, if only they would take the trouble to learn. Why is the Home Office now pushing to get toilets in our cells? Why are we now being left unlocked longer? Why is there such a high profile of public concern right now about prisons? Because some beautiful men found the courage to put their liberty on the line for us, by destroying Manchester in such a spectacular fashion. There's a lot more to it than that, of course, but that is the result of their action, and no matter what the initial motivation was, we all owe those people a great debt. They didn't escape, they stayed and fought the evil. And in spite of the full force of

the law being used against them, there can be no doubt that they won't... Escaping from jail is not an act of opposition, it's a retreat. To oppose is to face and fight, not run away.

The editorial piece at the bottom of the page made more sense than any of the above. That American saying we are all prisoners of war is absolute crap of the great romantic tradition. That may well apply to the lads of the IRA but it certainly doesn't apply to me or any other prisoner.

Prisons are only run with the consent and cooperation of the prisoners. If all prisoners acted in unity, the management would be impotent. While we fight each other, we are abdicating, giving the prisons to the jailers. We need solidarity to regain control, then we can sort out our own problems with one voice, one powerful unit, not the diaspora we are now.

Escaping from prison does not affect the running of that prison, neither does it cost the prison department anything, and no one gives a shit. But then it doesn't hurt a lot either, is nice for the chap concerned, and gives a momentary little thrill to those left behind. But I don't think it merits long discussions either. It's a matter for the individual concerned, and having made the choice, it is the business of everyone else to support that choice on an individual basis, not as a matter of general policy.

GRAHAM GALLOWAY
HMP Nottingham

Furore about escapes 'overblown'

The furore in the last two issues of FRFI about escape and prisoners'

rights to me is overblown. There is a solid enough basis for agreeing, actually.

There are just two lots of people in jails - the first of these should be free - they're a majority. These are class war prisoners, you know the score. Naturally, they have the right to escape. If under threat of their lives, prisoner activists are duty-bound to escape, also. A duty to escape possibly will follow in other instances.

The second lot, who are fewer, present a problem - to socialist order, which overcomes unusual illness and criminal mentality in advancing scientifically and rationally. Stateless, classless society will definitely prove 'prisons are pointless' in practice, and explain these rare deviations.

DAVID GANDOLFI
Kingston-upon-Thames

John Bowden replies

I am grateful that FRFI has given space to the debate on escapes initiated by an earlier article of mine, and published contributions that challenge the apparent position of the paper on this question. I admire very much FRFI's continuing commitment to providing an open forum on the prison struggle. I would also like to thank comrades Nicki Jameson, Bill Dunne and Rickie Maguire for their contributions.

FRFI maintains that prisons, albeit a lot fewer of them, are necessary and inevitable, and that any demand for their complete abolition amounts to nothing more than 'empty rhetoric'. Then, while evoking the authority of Lenin, FRFI claims that any demand for more than a purely physical

improvement in conditions is counterproductive because 'abstract demands' (eg a call for the smashing of the prison system) inevitably places one 'ten steps ahead' of the 'current struggle'. I would suggest a careful rereading of Lenin's *State and Revolution* by comrade Carol Brickley and a clarification of what Lenin actually wrote about the impossibility of reforming the state and its 'bodies of armed men'. If the capitalist state is ultimately irreformable and something to be seized and then smashed, as Lenin argued, then this applies especially so to its prison system.

In terms of jumping 'ten steps' ahead of the 'current struggle' I wonder exactly which current struggle is being referred to. Certainly not the struggle of prisoners themselves which is always motivated by a desire to overthrow completely the whole repressive machinery of the prison system. In fact, it seems to me that FRFI's response to this debate has ignored the perspective of prisoners themselves. I particularly resent the assumption that prisoners themselves are incapable of defining the political objectives of their struggle and how it is to be conducted.

FRFI claims that under 'today's conditions' only limited reform of the prison system is possible. There are two distinct types of reform. Positive reforms collectively empower prisoners and correspondingly undermine the power of the prison system, such as the formation of prisoners' unions and the right of prisoners to engage in political activity etc. Such positive reforms, that the system is usually unable to accommodate, are always carefully tied into a strategy that seeks the ultimate abolition of the prison system within the context of the wider political struggle against the

capitalist state. Negative reforms ultimately legitimise and consolidate it, and as a consequence weaken and disempower prisoners. FRFI, by its apparent ignorance of the consequence of negative reforms, actually concedes legitimacy to the apparatus of repression. This position is neither revolutionary nor communist.

What I found particularly objectionable was the way in which the existence of prisons, and indeed the entire capitalist criminal justice system, was defended as being actually capable of defending the working class and black community! It's completely nonsensical to, on the one hand, concede that the police, courts and prisons are inherently racist and anti-working class, and then on the other claim that such institutions might be capable of defending the very people and communities that they deliberately target. In reality, of course, black and working class people can never depend on their class enemies to protect them. The only real defence against racist violence is the mobilisation and organisation of the black community on its own behalf. This will never be achieved unless all cooperation and recognition is withdrawn from the institutions of capitalist law and order.

JOHN BOWDEN

Carol Brickley thanks John for his reading suggestion and can assure him that she fully understands State and Revolution. She has also read Left-wing Communism: an infantile disorder.

These letters have been shortened for reasons of space.

Kenya: a class-divided society

Having returned from a brief visit to Kenya, I would like to add some observations to the pieces in recent issues, by Juma Abbas on the MuraKenya movement, and the booklet review about Kimaathi, Mau Mau leader.

Nairobi exhibits great extremes of wealth, from international skyscrapers to shanty towns, demonstrating the successful neo-colonialism over the last 30 years. But on sale in the bookshops is a new publication - interviews with the Mau Mau Field Marshals stressing the memory of that anti-colonial rebellion is still alive; and casual conversation with taxi drivers can soon elicit the comment that 'Moi is mud'.

Mombasa, too, an exotic stopover on the tourist circuit, displays the disparities of a class-divided society. Yuppies spawned from the Kenyan bourgeoisie hang out at the newly opened Hard Rock café (also of London and New York). But walk five minutes further into Mombasa's Old Town, leaving the gift shops behind and prominent graffiti announces 'Red Square'; IPK (Islamic Party of Kenya) slogans trash Moi and KANU; posters of Malcolm X signal a growing consciousness. I spoke with a young student who'd seen the Malcolm X film on a recent trip to London and he explained that video copies were now being shown and were generating debate amongst the youth.

FRFI should continue to provide coverage and analysis of anti-imperialist class struggles in countries like Kenya, crippled by the debt burden, depending on tourism as the main income earner, and continuing to repress the growing population of workers and peasants.

ROB TRUEBLOOD
Prestwich, Manchester

Supporting the NUM

FRFI readers may be interested to know that the National Union of Mineworkers has an Associate Membership category which allows people not directly connected with the mining industry to become members for an annual subscription of £10. In return for this a person receives a free copy of the newspaper *The Miner*, together with any other papers or briefing documents which the NUM may produce.

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FLORENCE KENNA
London

From behind the walls

I have recently received the October/November issue. I was glad to see your article on the history of the Black Panther Party. You named several former Panther comrades who have been imprisoned for many years. There are a number of others as well, stalwart comrades who carry on from behind the walls; not so well-known, but they were revolutionaries from the base. I indicate a list of who they are as well as all the New Afrikan-Black political prisoners and POWs inside the US.

This past weekend we saw on the news a brief on the demonstration against the British National Party, with the ensuing attack by the state's repressive apparatus. It was encouraging to see a strong response - a statement against fascism and racism. Here in the US that kind of mobilisation is woefully lacking.

Small protests in different places but no movement as such. The heart of 20th century imperialism continues to beat with impunity.

Thank you for sending me your paper. Hasta la victoria siempre!

MARILYN BUCK, anti-imperialist prisoner
PO Box 7006 Shawnee
Marianna FL 32447

A copy of the list of prisoners referred to in this letter is available from FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX. Please send SAE.

Police arrest East End doctor

The police raided Dr Mohinder Singh at dawn. A police photographer was on hand to snap him as he opened the door, alarmed and unturbaned - the photograph was duly reproduced in the local paper. Dr Singh was arrested, questioned and released on police bail.

The raid was masterminded by the Family Health Service Authority, an NHS management outfit that oversees family doctors like Dr Singh and pays for their surgeries and NHS fees. They have leaked their explanation of the raid to every newspaper they can get hold of: Dr Singh has been fiddling, they hint. Something smells. With all the documentation the state holds, a fraudulent claim for non-persons should be easy to nail. But Dr Singh wasn't charged. He was initially told to report to the police station on 4 November. He wasn't charged then: simply told to report again on 27 January 1994. Now the FHSA story is that the investigation could take up to 18 months - especially since the dawn raiders carried, allegedly, eight sacks of documents away from Dr Singh's surgery - in other words they are looking for something to pin on Dr Singh. Meanwhile he is being harassed in other ways: the FHSA has suspended payment of his practice

manager and is refusing to let him take on a partner which he desperately needs.

Dr Singh is a popular hardworking family doctor. He has practised in East London for 22 years. He has three surgeries, in Ilford, Forest Gate and East Ham. The FHSA is short of cash; if they close down Dr Singh's three surgeries - what a saving! That's one possible explanation. Racism too, perhaps. Would they have tried this on a white doctor with white patients? Dr Singh's patients are mostly black. We are all worried. Dr Singh is a good doctor. He takes time; he takes care. We're damned if we're going to lose him because of some bureaucrats who want to earn brownie points for balancing the books.

We've called a meeting for Thursday 9 December at 7.15pm at the Trinity Community Centre in East Avenue E12. We say: Defend Dr Singh; stop the harassment. End the smear campaign. Everyone who believes in health and justice will be welcome at the meeting.

PAULINE AND FRANK ROWE
Dr Singh Defence Committee
East London

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HMP Albany, Newport,
Isle of Wight PO30 5RS
7 December

Noel Gibson 879225
HMP Long Lartin, South
Littleton, Evesham, Worcs
WR11 5TZ
11 December

Gerard McDonnell B75882
HMP Whitmoor,
Longhill Road, March,
Cambridge PE15 0PR
19 December

Nat Vella B71644
HMP Albany
24 December

Back to basics...

...Defend single mothers

A draft Cabinet paper, leaked to the press on 8 November, lays out the battle plan for the latest round of attacks on the poorest sections of society. Today's targets are single mothers on benefit and it is clearly spelled out that this is a financial not a moral offensive. Suggested measures include cuts in benefits, forcing single mothers under 21 to be financially dependent on their parents, limiting their access to council housing and requiring single mothers to register as available for work. Home Secretary Michael Howard has praised a scheme in New Jersey where there is no increase at all in benefit paid to a mother who has a second child 'out of wedlock'.

The drive to save money by destroying the Welfare State is central to the government's current plans. Michael Portillo has publicly stated, for example, that people under 40 should be thinking about funding their own pensions. Single mothers are a 'soft target'. It is not hard to whip up moral outrage against 'loose women' and in defence of 'family values'; ripping off the elderly is a longer term plan involving far more complicated ground work. Single mothers can be depicted as scroungers, as the 'undeserving poor'. Clawing back the money paid to pensioners involves undermining the very notion of universal benefits as a right for any section of society. The offensive on this front has already begun but will not be complete for several years yet.

The softest target of all is teenage single mothers and the most repressive measures are directed at them; however they form just eight per cent of all lone parents. Divorced, separated, and widowed lone parents form 60 per cent of the total but are too easily defensible as the 'deserv-

ing poor' and many right-wing Ministers, such as John Redwood, are now deliberately drawing distinctions. So what most worries the government is the growing number of never-married, adult women who have consciously decided to remain single but to have children. Their decision to avoid economic dependence on men and retain control over their own fertility and the upbringing of their children is perceived as a threat to the 'established order'.

There are currently 1.3 million lone parent families in the UK and by the year 2000 this will have risen to 1.7 million, 1.4 million of whom, according to the government's projections, will be claiming benefit to the tune of £4.9 billion.

The 'nuclear family' and accompanying 'Christian values' are only of interest to the ruling class in so far as they control the working class. Witness the behaviour of Cecil Parkinson, David Mellor, Steven Norris, the Royal Family, to name but a few. What genuinely concerns it, however, is the perpetuation of the family as an economic unit. We are in a recession and there are no jobs for single mothers so they must be grafted back either on to the men whose children they have borne or on to their own parents. Capitalism has destroyed the extended family but as the 'nuclear family' too fragments before its eyes it is bent on reinventing it by force. It is the same perverse logic which informs 'Care in the Community'.

The current onslaught began with the setting up of the Child Support Agency (CSA). While supposedly helping women to gain maintenance from 'absent fathers' it was obvious from the outset that the CSA would undermine the independence of single mothers, compelling them to con-

tinue to depend on former partners. Women fleeing violent husbands or lovers or simply trying to lead their own lives would be shackled into financial arrangements with their children's fathers; arrangements which in the vast majority of cases would make them financially no better off. The sole beneficiary would be the state which would save on benefit payments.

The Campaign Against The Child Support Act did achieve some bad publicity for the Act, but it is only since a new set of 'victims' have begun protesting that concern has been voiced in high places. Women on low wages or benefit can suffer until the cows come home but touch middle class men's incomes and the resultant protest sends shock waves through the system.

The not so hidden agenda of the CSA was to save the government

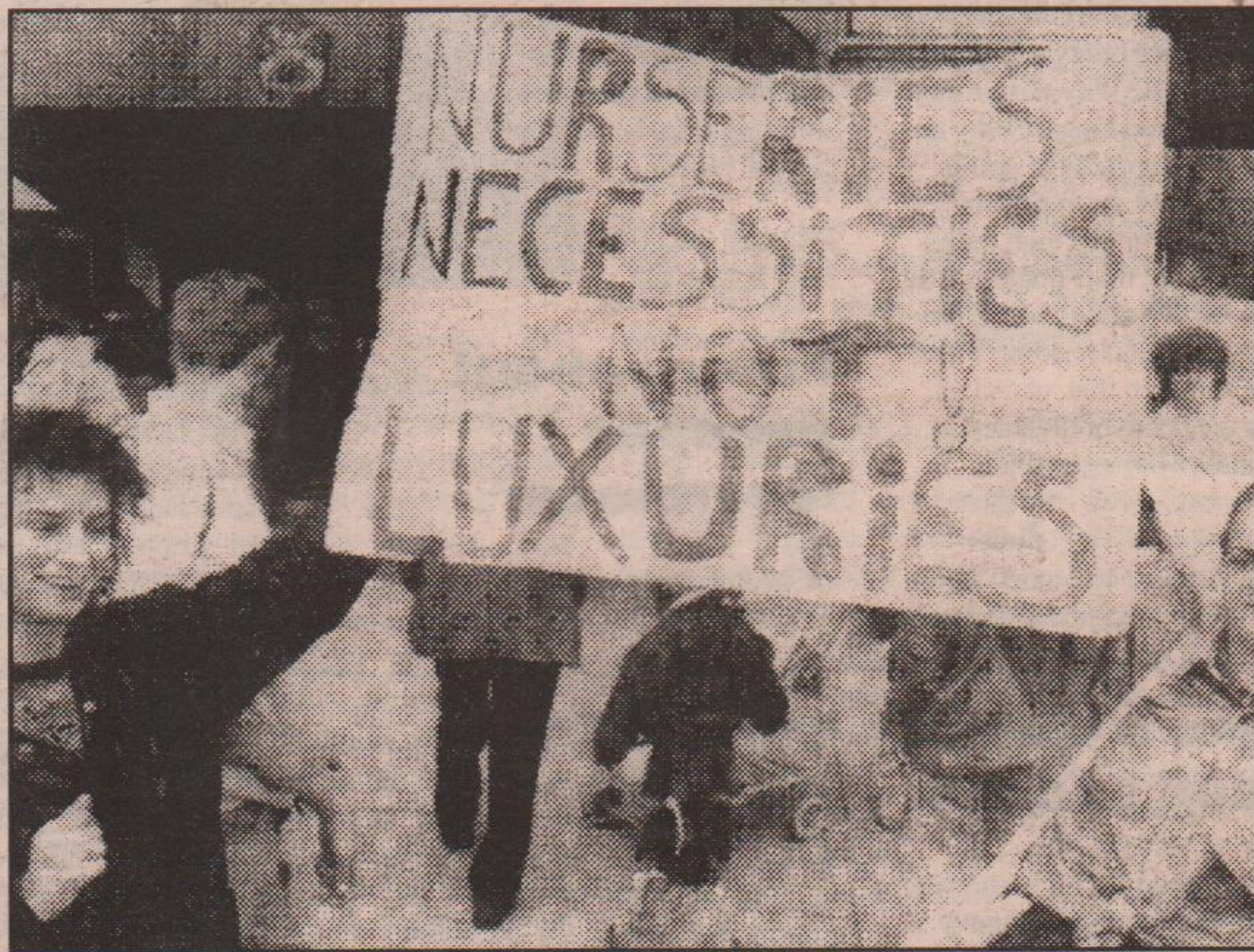
£900m a year in benefit. By making its first targets absent fathers paying no maintenance at all, it would have been too slow in reaching this figure, so it switched instead to men already paying maintenance who could be forced to pay more. In 1993-4 the CSA will deliver only £50m of extra maintenance to mothers caring for children but will recover £480m for the state in reduced benefit payments. For every pound of maintenance paid by the absent father, the state recoups a pound from the mother's benefit. The mother is no better off, the father is worse off, the Treasury is much better off.

The government's own research, contained in the leaked paper, has demonstrated there is 'no evidence' that teenagers become pregnant to get council houses, there is 'little clear evidence' that higher benefits for lone parents encourage women to

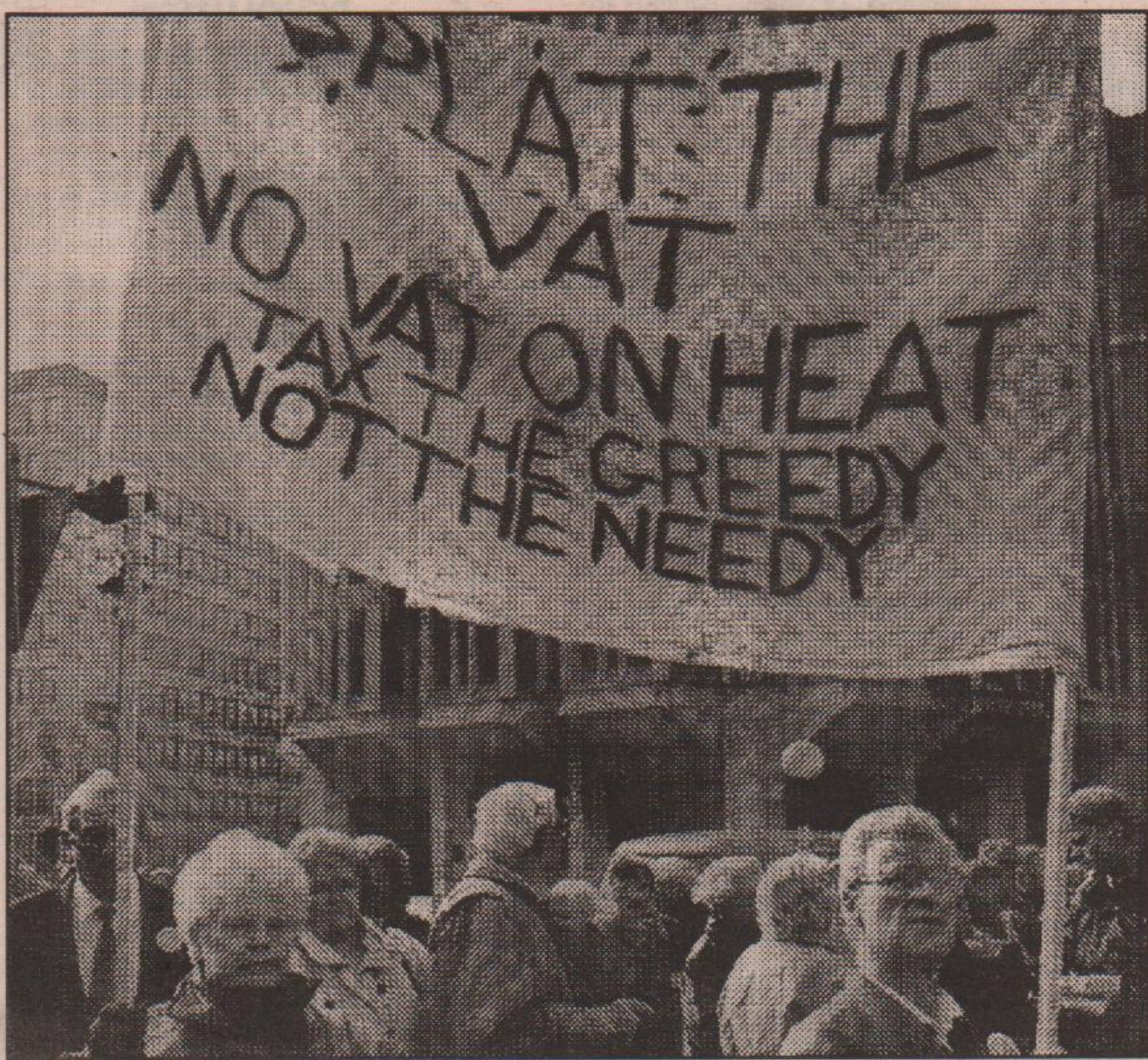
bring up children on their own and it 'does not appear' that there is any direct link between lone parent families and criminality. Indeed, the paper goes so far as to state that if the children of lone parents are 'delinquent' it is not because they lack fathers but because they are poor. Yo Michael Howard continues to claim that there is 'careful, authoritative and respectable research' which proves the crime connection while Social Security Minister Peter Lilley has not stopped repeating the myth about council housing. He would do well to look at the reality: local Councils do house pregnant homeless women, single or otherwise. They provide accommodation only towards the end of a pregnancy and sometimes later than that with new mothers waiting in hospital to find out where they will be living. Once housed the chance of 'moving up' the scale of accommodation is considerably worse for single parents than for couples. A one-bedroom flat is considered overcrowded by two adults and a baby; a mother and child, particularly if the child is a girl, can be left in the same size flat virtually indefinitely.

The Labour Party's response to the witch-hunt is to argue for more child care to 'get women back into the labour market'. More child care is certainly a valid and not a controversial demand - for example, in the period of post-war reconstruction, while Britain produced the NHS, France charged for health care but brought in universal free nursery schools. But with three million unemployed, the ruling class doesn't want women 'back in the labour market', any more than it wants them on state benefit. What it wants is women to be financially dependent on men, to consume but not to produce anything other than children and then only when their cost too can be borne on an individual basis by their fathers and does not require any input from the state.

Nicki Jameson



...Support the pensioners



Some people feel that the fight against the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel is already lost and wonder why pensioners all over the country are continuing to demonstrate. I think it's because for many of us this is not an academic issue in a game to be played out in Parliament but one which will actually determine whether or not we'll have the resources both to purchase a balanced diet and heat our homes adequately. This is why on 20 October over 5,000 pensioners from all over the country assembled again to lobby our MPs and show our serious concern.

Starting at noon from Trafalgar Square pensioners streamed down Whitehall to hand in completed petitions to Downing Street. My local group had collected over 10,000 signatures against VAT on domestic fuel and a further 10,000 against any attempt to 'target' (ie means test) basic pensions. We had to walk on the pavement without banners to satisfy police regulations but it was clearly an organised demon-

stration all the same.

After a brief stop we continued on down Parliament Street to Westminster Central Hall where coaches from the north of England delayed by motorway hold ups were unloading more and more demonstrators. I just managed to get into the packed hall to hear speakers from all sections of the pensioners movement.

John Smith was speaking on behalf of the Labour Party. Well I don't think many of us felt that he was prepared to lead a meaningful campaign on the streets. Oh yes, he was prepared to put forward parliamentary motions and questions but would he try to rouse the sort of defiant uncompromising campaign needed like that waged against the poll tax? I didn't feel he ever wanted such a development. I get the same impression from the Lewisham Labour MPs we later lobbied.

As a pensioners rally it was great. Everywhere you looked there were groups of pensioners determined to make their voices heard but I also think it showed that the government

is in no mood to listen and that we must seek allies among the other sections of the population that will be hard hit: low paid workers, one parent families, unemployed people etc - perhaps we need a weekend demonstration aimed at mobilising these forces and demonstrations in other parts of the country, particularly the north of England and Scotland where the weather is likely to be even colder.

Meanwhile, I'm happy to relate, pensioners groups are carrying on the campaign collecting yet more signatures, popularising our slogans and attracting new people. In particular we have got some publicity because one of our most devoted workers is named Ken Clarke - our Ken Clarke doesn't want VAT on fuel.

See what your local pensioners group is doing and if you're too young to join see if there is any help you can give - maybe you could lend a folding table - and don't forget it's not only pensioners who will suffer from higher heating costs.

Rene Waller

...FIGHTBACK