

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

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FIGHT FOR A SOCIALIST BRITAIN



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the
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Wipeout

Something big and very dangerous is happening; people in high places are getting scared. Currencies are plunging, banks crashing, sober publications warn of 'global meltdown'. A giant wave of financial speculation is circling the planet, tearing down cities and uprooting populations as it passes. Barings Bank is a splinter in the debris. 'Triumphant capitalism' is in chaos.

Barings is important because it reveals capitalism at its most parasitic, the scale of this parasitism and its fate.

Money moves faster than ever; a City broker transfers billions of pounds from South American government bonds into dollars and on into Japanese stock futures with a couple of telephone calls: speculative money, sucking up interest and profits at the highest rates it can get. Capital flights from their currencies result in extortionate interest rates in Mexico, Venezuela and Argentina as their governments try to prevent banking collapses and entice the speculators back. Scandinavian governments spend \$16bn propping up banks rendered insolvent by speculators. Credit Lyonnaise is to get \$27bn from the French government. These vast transfers of wealth from social provision and useful production feed the appetite for speculative gain.

Every 24 hours, \$1trillion courses through the international currency markets, up from \$600bn in 1990. Fortunes are won and lost on flickers in exchange rates. Just 5 per cent of this market is linked to the trade in goods, the rest is speculation. Nobody knows for sure the value of the world derivatives market, it's growing too fast to count. The Bank of International Settlements put the market at under \$10 trillion in 1992 and \$23 trillion in 1994. Trading in derivatives isn't just speculation, its gambling on the gamblers.

If dealers on the currency and derivatives markets made just a 5 per cent return in a year, they would amass fortunes claiming almost one fifth of the world's annual output.

Derivatives are so called because they derive from underlying assets: commodities, shares, batches of shares called stock market indexes, interest rates, exchange rates. These assets have their own markets and traders. The derivatives dealer buys and sells contracts designed by banks and brokers, predicting price movements in these markets. Barings' Nick Leeson sold contracts giving the buyer the right to sell Nikkei 225 index claims back to Barings at an index rate of around 19,000. If the index had risen above 19,000 Barings would have profited, but on 17 January Kobe was shattered by an earthquake, Leeson gambled on an injection of Japanese government money for repairs. It did not happen: the index fell to 17400 and Barings went bankrupt with losses of £860 million.

Britain's oldest merchant bank, financier of the Red Coats

in the war against US independence, profiteer from countless wars, plunderer of Latin America, banker to arms merchants and the outlaws who built the North American railways, holder of a royal account, with five hereditary peerages to its family name, brought down by someone from a council house in Watford. 'We were a bank with a crest, not a trademark' - very touching. At least Leeson thought it was an entry ticket to Ford open prison rather than the Singapore local.



Baring Senior and Nick Leeson

Explosion of derivatives

As the demand for company loans for investment fell and lending to the Third World declined with the debt crisis, so US and British banks turned to trading to make a profit. It was like the banker in roulette and the bookie at the races abandoning safety for the chance of a bet. The ratio of non-interest income to assets of the 10 leading US banks has doubled since 1985. Bankers Trust of America and Morgan Guaranty have credit risks on the derivatives markets equal to 46 per cent and 37 per cent of their assets respectively. Derivatives is the fastest growing sector of City business. While banks sack people, employment in investment banking in Britain is 14 per cent higher than it was 2 years ago. The volume of contracts traded on the London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange, the biggest derivatives market outside the USA, has increased tenfold in six years. 25,000 City jobs revolve around this casino. Banks, pension funds, insurance companies and multinationals all play.

Losses are growing and they are big losses. From a few million dollars four years ago, publicly-declared losses from derivatives trading in the USA reached \$6 billion in 1994. Procter and Gamble, Allied-Lyons and Glaxo are among the big losers. It is not a matter of a 'rogue trader', the entire capitalist system is careering out of

control with crashes and pile-ups galore looming ahead.

Derivatives were developed as a way of hedging against unavoidable risks, of reducing the amount of possible loss. For example, by taking out a coffee future, the coffee planter can guarantee a future price regardless of whether coffee prices fall before the crop is in. However, the future contract itself can be traded many times over before a single bean is picked. Derivatives have become more profitable than the underlying assets. The derivatives market based on shares is now two-and-half times the size of the share market itself. Derivatives trading now exceeds the hedging business a hundredfold. It is an explosion of credit.

Speed, credit and the potential return are the key to derivatives. Speed is essential in markets, where a change of 0.01 per cent can yield millions. Dealers forge signatures to avoid delay. A relatively small downpayment of \$50,000 can buy a derivative with a face value of \$10m. If the market price rises 5 per cent, the \$50,000 yields \$500,000 additional income. If the market drops 5 per cent the loss is \$500,000. Losses can exceed the stake money many times over. The dealer may have \$50,000 to gamble, but do they have \$500,000 to lose?

In the first seven months of trading in 1994, Leeson made £19.6m profit, a fifth of the Baring Group's worldwide annual profit. In the four weeks before its collapse, Barings transferred \$850m to its Singapore operation. You do not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs - any more than the Bank of England can control this astronomically profitable business. 'It would have been like signing a blank cheque', Eddie George explained as every one per cent drop in the Tokyo markets transferred another \$70m to the speculators.

The dangers are there for all to see. Every major capitalist crisis appears first as a financial crisis. There is a break in the chain of credit; then banks, industries and currencies sink. Barings was small fry in this vast churning sea. Leeson lost balance riding the great wave, but the wave grows as it sucks up the wealth of entire economies, a towering mountain of speculative credit. The big crash is coming. Then - wipeout!

COMMUNIST FORUMS

A series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

LONDON

Sunday 23 April:

The decline of British capitalism

Speaker: David Yaffe

2pm Conway Hall,

Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).

Entrance £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

News

Education - for an elite only

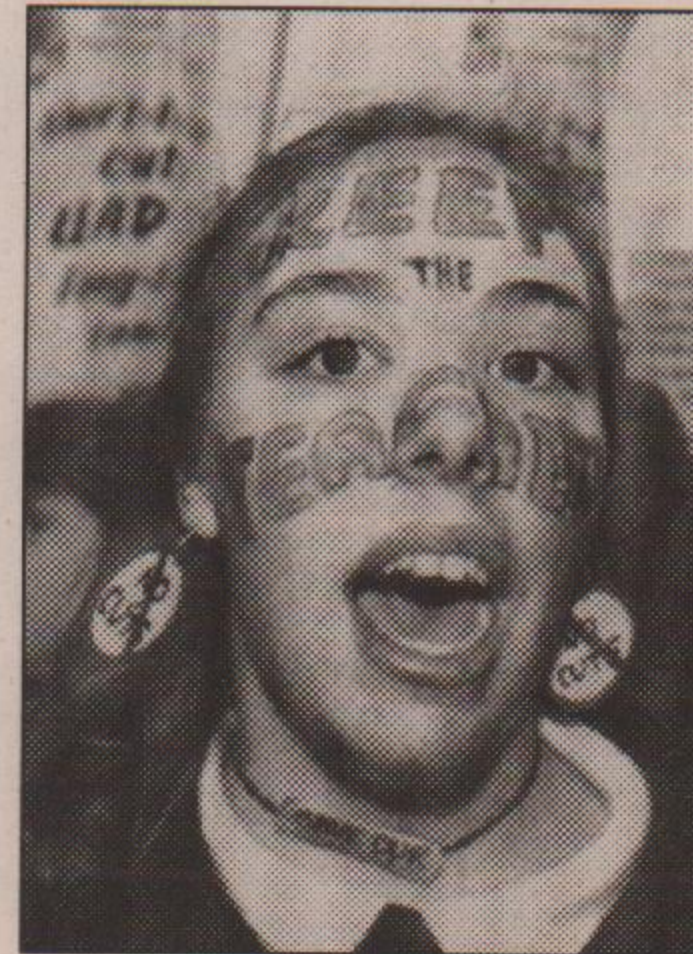
MARY MILLER

The twin effects of market forces and government cuts are devastating every level of education. From primary schools to universities the story is the same - overcrowding, poor facilities, less teaching, lower standards. The government's aim in education as in health - a two-tier system in which only money will give access to a decent service.

In many schools governors facing further spending curbs are now setting illegal budgets. They know there is nothing left to cut except teachers. Already schools routinely only employ newly-qualified and therefore lower paid teachers. The pupils are the losers. Meanwhile, of course, the grant-maintained and public schools to which only the middle classes and rich have access, are doing very well.

In the secondary and post-16 sector the situation is chaotic. The government's much-vaunted General National Vocational Qualifications have proved so disastrous that the qualification they were intended to replace - BTEC - has had its life extended. The thousands of mainly working class students taking GNVQs now know they are doing a third-rate qualification. Meanwhile the children in the grant-maintained and public schools get their three or four A-levels, the passport to a better university.

In the Further Education sector colleges are now independent and funding is based on numbers. The pressure is to admit as many students as possible and by any means get them through a qualification, however degraded and meaningless. FE college managements have imposed new teaching contracts forcing ever-longer teaching hours and redundancies are spreading. At Southwark Col-



A young demonstrator against the cuts

lege in London, 38 lecturers have been made redundant and a strike has begun.

At university level, with a huge increase in the numbers going into Higher Education (to disguise unemployment) over recent years and many former polytechnics elevated to university status, two-tiers have rapidly appeared. A recent report, highly

critical of many universities especially the new ones, found poor teaching, overcrowding, lack of enough computing and library facilities. Universities now validate their own degrees and the pressure is to pass as many students as possible thus degrading the qualification. Many students despair of these conditions and their lack of a living grant, and drop out. Increasingly, especially if those calling for fees succeed, there will be middle and upper-class universities and for the rest - factory farms where working class, ethnic minority and mature students are concentrated.

The state education system is sinking and only those with a cash raft will survive. That is the government's aim and it is considering further plans to formalise this through vouchers and top-up payments. And Labour? At local levels they are imposing the cuts on the governors now setting illegal budgets. At national level they are effectively accepting the two-tier approach with Tony Blair unashamed to send his son to a grant-maintained school. If there is to be a united fight against the decline of education it must base itself on those who face the worst of the system. Its programme must be an end to educational privilege, abolition of the public schools and education for all free at all levels. Any other programme will implicitly abandon those in the bottom tier. ■

Pensioners Notes

Campaigning pays off!

All over Britain pensioners are getting themselves organised for a trip to Blackpool. No, it's not to savour the seaside, but to attend the three-day British Senior Citizens' Parliament organised by the National Pensioners Convention.

The items on the agenda include discussions on the pensioners' attitude to the Borrie Commission Report on Social Justice, 'Solidarity between the generations' and the 'European dimension'.

In addition pensioners themselves will want to discuss a substantial increase in the basic state pension, as well as community care and the future of the National Health Service.

At a time when everybody is preparing for VE day, and mealy-mouthed politicians are congratulating today's generation of pensioners on their contribution to the struggle against fascism and Nazism, pensioners are becoming acutely aware that politicians of all parties are trying to brainwash British citizens in the same way Hitler brainwashed the Germans.

Active pensioners certainly do not accept that the nation is not rich enough to look after its elderly people, and the only way for younger generations to overcome poverty in old age is to prepare for the future by tak-

ing out private pension provision.

One thing that younger generations can learn from their elderly counterparts is that campaigning pays off.

The No VAT on Fuel campaign, with pensioners campaigning alongside other groups,



Pensioners bear the brunt of cuts

has prevented the Chancellor charging 17 per cent VAT on domestic fuel from April.

The National Pensioners' Convention petition to the Queen, with over one million signatures, showed what can be done. In London, campaigning pensioners in partnership with the ALA have now successfully secured an extension of the pensioners' travel permit to free travel on British Rail in the Greater London area from 2 April. In southeast London, pensioners in partnership with health campaigners, particularly the Guy's Hospital Health

Campaign, have forced the Southeast London Health Commission to keep Guy's Accident & Emergency Department open until 1999 at least.

Many pensioners are now discussing and using a new petition emanating from Greenwich, asking the Labour Party to ensure that funds are made available to rebuild the NHS - pensioners in particular are determined that community care should not be means-tested. The petition will be presented to the Labour Party Conference in October.

Whatever your age, wherever you live, ask around your own locality what pensioners are doing. It would be extremely helpful for all generations.

Unfortunately, age and illness have taken their toll on the pensioners' movement. It is with deep regret we report the deaths of two leading London pensioners - Councillor Harry Kay, Chair of London Forum for the Elderly, and Peter James, General Secretary of Greater London Pensioners Association, both of whom made a significant contribution to the pensioners' movement in London and nationally for many years. ■

This article is submitted by a Lewisham pensioner on behalf of Rene Waller, still recovering from a stroke in Dulwich Hospital, Frank Cooksey Rehabilitation Ward.

IRELAND

Framework document – Big Deal!

SARAH BOND

February saw the launch of the Framework Document, a joint publication from Dublin and Westminster setting out the basis for talks on the political future of the Six Counties. From the furore surrounding the document's publication you might think it contained new and radical ideas. In fact it is Sunningdale revisited.



Sinn Fein delegates at Stormont

In 1972, the Republican movement was conducting a highly effective armed struggle which had already brought down the northern government at Stormont. In an attempt to isolate the IRA and the nationalist working class, the Heath government came up with a proposal for a power-sharing executive. This would draw in the Catholic middle class, the more moderate Loyalists and Dublin into an alliance to defeat revolutionary nationalism in Ireland. In addition, a London-Dublin-Belfast conference at Sunningdale in England established a Council

of Ireland and a Consultative Assembly. The problem was that the majority of Loyalists – who were also a majority on the Executive – were resolutely opposed to the whole set-up. It was finally brought down by the Ulster Workers Council Strike in 1974.

The actual proposals in the Framework Document almost mirror Sunningdale and the power-sharing executive. The document envisages a 90-strong assembly, elected by proportional representation. Britain would continue to determine

policy on all important issues such as emergency legislation, law and order, foreign policy and defence. Nationalists would have an effective veto on certain issues such as spending or constitutional questions, as these would require more than a simple majority in favour.

As with Sunningdale, a 'North/South body' is proposed involving 'heads of department on both sides'. It was this proposal which produced allegations that the document was a blueprint for a united Ireland. However, the proposal does not even go as far as Sunningdale, which created in addition to the 'heads of department' body a 60-member Consultative Assembly elected half by the Dail and half by the Assembly in the north. Again as with Sunningdale, the document includes Dublin's explicit acceptance that partition can only end if the majority of the north consents to it.

The Loyalists have predictably condemned the document as 'an eviction notice to leave the United Kingdom'. It is nothing of the sort. Like the Sunningdale agreement, its aim is to break the resistance of the northern nationalist working class where military means have failed. Ruairi O Bradaigh

of Republican Sinn Fein described the Document as 'a programme designed to make the Six Counties statelet work better'.

Why should it work this time round? One reason is that economic developments over the last two decades have strengthened two key elements in the equation – Dublin and the Catholic middle class. Their gain has been, at least to a certain extent, the Loyalists' loss. It is most unlikely that the Loyalists could galvanise the support to pull off another Assembly-breaking strike.

It is a sign of just how reactionary Britain's puppet state in the north of Ireland is that it has taken the Republican movement twenty years of armed struggle to win the offer of another Sunningdale. Now the British government is demanding that arms are decommissioned before talks with ministers even begin – talks which guarantee nothing for peace and justice in Ireland. Clinton backed this demand when he met Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams in the US. Tony Blair says the Framework Document holds the key to 'the house of peace' in Ireland. For the nationalist working class, the door is still firmly closed. ■

PHILIPPINES

Oppose the Ramos dictatorship!

EDDIE ABRAHAMS

On 15 March, General Fidel Ramos, President of the Philippines visited Britain. His aim was to urge British multinationals to invest in the Philippines. In return for a cut, the Filipino ruling class would offer cheap labour and resources to the profit-hungry multinationals. With opportunities for profits, the British press did not mention that Ramos heads a regime responsible for the vilest repression against the Filipino people.

From 1972-86 he was the principal butcher of the Marcos fascist dictatorship. As Defence Minister in the Aquino government from 1986-92, he launched 'total war' against the Communist Party of the Philippines. He is responsible for the death of at least 150,000 people, for four million internal refugees and is guilty of torturing hundreds of thousands. A US State Department 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1994' states that in

the Philippines 'these include extrajudicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture, harassment of civil rights activists, suspected insurgents and their supporters.'

For the sake of profits, the British multinationals and capitalists are happy to have friendly relations with a regime such as that of Ramos. They are totally indifferent to the fact that in Ramos' Philippines 1,277 children die every day from pneumonia; every day 17 children are blinded as a result of Vitamin A deficiency. There are 1.5 million street children in the country, and out of 7.8 million school children, 56.4 per cent are malnourished and underweight. Children are profitable, too – 770,000 of them labour on plantations and in mines.

This is the real face of Ramos' Philippines. All democrats and socialists, everyone who cares about the plight of the Filipino people, should support those fighting against the regime.

Down with the fascist Ramos.

Release all Republican POWs now!

NICKI JAMESON

Despite the continuation of the IRA ceasefire, the British government has made no move whatsoever towards releasing prisoners of war. In addition to the many hostages Britain holds in gaols in the north of Ireland, there are 28 IRA POWs in prisons in England, as well as four INLA prisoners.

There are a further eight prisoners on 'temporary transfer' from Britain to gaols in the Six

Counties; their sentences are still administered by the England and Wales Prison Service, as opposed to the Northern Ireland Office, and therefore they do not receive the same 'privileges' as other POWs in the north.

Conditions for Irish POWs in English gaols have deteriorated since the ceasefire. The gains of the struggle for decent treatment which was waged by Republican prisoners from the mid-1970s until the mid-1980s are now coming under attack, as

are rights for all long-term prisoners.

The five POWs who attempted to break out from White-moor gaol last September are, together with English prisoner Andy Russell, who was also involved in the escape, being held in the Category A 'prison-within-a-prison' unit at Belmarsh in south London. They have refused to accept 'closed visits' through a glass screen and have consequently had no visits for six months. Andy Russell and Dingus Magee have also

refused to wear uniforms or escapee 'patches' and have been 'on the blanket' since 31 December.

All other POWs in England are in Whitemoor, Full Sutton or Frankland prisons. All these are difficult and expensive to travel to from other parts of England and the difficulty is multiplied ten-fold for relatives travelling from Ireland.

The London Saoirse Group was launched on 23 March to campaign for the release of 'all persons convicted as a result of the last 25 years of conflict'. Saoirse can be contacted at PO Box 7247, London E5 OHF. ■

RCG NATIONAL AGGREGATE

The latest national aggregate of the Revolutionary Communist Group was the scene for more lively discussion of major political issues.

The main discussion was led by David Yaffe on the decline of British capitalism. During the course of his introduction, he gave a critique of the subjectivism that underlies the British left's approach – Eric Hobsbawm's recent declaration that capitalism is more than viable.

The comrade dealt with a number of myths about the character of British capitalism. First, he emphasised the historical domination of merchant capital, and its alliance with the land-owning aristocracy. Britain's early domination of the world banking system allowed it to respond in a particular way to the challenge of US and German capitalism at the end of the 19th century – by playing to its strengths. The massive export of British capital that took place from the 1870s onwards represented British imperialism's attempt to fight this challenge on its own terms, rather than engage in a serious restructuring of its industrial base to improve productivity. Overall profitability was sustained; political accommodation could be reached with the privileged upper layers of the working class. In this context, David pointed out that industrial capital had always been the junior partner to banking capital in the history of British capitalism.

Throughout the 20th century, British imperialism has attempted to sustain its position as a key player in international banking. Although it was to become a junior partner of US imperialism after 1945, it nevertheless gained significant concessions which allowed it to retrieve itself from near bank-

ruptcy. David stressed throughout that it was impossible to understand the changing nature of British imperialism without also understanding the division within the working class and the role that was being played by the political representatives of its privileged upper layers – the trade unions and the Labour Party. The comrade will be presenting these positions at a public meeting on 23 April at 2pm in Conway Hall, London. All are welcome.

The aggregate also received an enthusiastic report-back from comrades Cat and Nigel, following their participation in a work brigade to Cuba. Both comrades had been inspired and invigorated by their visit. They also felt that despite the tremendous pressure imposed by the US blockade, the highly literate and conscientised people of Cuba would continue to safeguard the gains of the revolution. For communists in Britain, the oldest imperialist nation, it was a lesson and a demonstration of the superiority of a socialist system which provides for need and not for profit and which equitably distributes the products of society.

We also took reports on sales of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* and the political work of the organisation as a whole. If you read FRFI and enjoy it, we need you to get extra copies to sell to your friends or at work. Even better, join those of us who sell the paper on the streets and at political meetings and events. We are proud of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!*, the newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Group. If you would like to know more about the RCG and would like to attend these meetings for supporters, get in touch.

Richard Roques

Obituary: Maire O'Shea

Maire O'Shea died in Dublin on 6 March 1995. She was 75 and had been ill for some time. Although well-known in the Irish community in Britain, she came to more widespread prominence when, in 1985, she and five others were arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Five of them were charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. This tiny, elderly woman, already suffering poor health, was held in custody for five weeks, suspended from her job, and denied legal aid. A hard-fought campaign in which her own willingness to take a stand against the PTA was dominant, won her freedom.

Her courage in publicly campaigning both against her own frame-up and the PTA was typical of Maire. She was intensely political. A socialist active over the years in her union, the IBRG, Sinn Fein and on the left, she was still, just weeks before her death, interested in how popular opposition movements could be built both in Ireland and Britain. Following her campaign, in which the RCG took a leading part, she continued to write occasional pieces for FRFI.

The 1985 case against Maire O'Shea was part of a murky British undercover operation involving Pat Daley, a paid MI5 informer from the mid-70s until 1992. MI5 clearly set up a group of Irish people and tricked them into a situation involving military activity. Five people faced trial, two were acquitted including Maire O'Shea. She had unwittingly been associated with those involved by social links. At her trial, whilst denying the charges she vocally supported the right of the Irish people to defend them-

selves against British occupation, which she likened to Nazi occupation of Europe.

Maire often spoke about the case and deeply resented the fact that Pat Daley, although an obvious informer was not denounced and remained at large in Britain and Ireland to cause havoc. Instead, Daley was allowed into INLA in Ireland and the consequences became clear when he appeared at the Old Bailey as chief witness against two INLA supporters in 1993. Having admitted being a paid MI5 agent, Daley's cover was blown and he was then given £400,000 to establish a new identity.



Maire's own political practice was democratic, open and non-sectarian. She had no time for cliques but believed that people interested in progress, self-determination

and socialism should work together. Perhaps that is why she remained vastly unappreciated both in Britain and Ireland. She discussed with me recently, in wry style, the fact that she had been either expelled or suspended from Sinn Fein last year, although never officially notified of the fact. Her quiet persistence about the need to get things done, to work amongst the people, was no doubt a thorn in many sides.

It is impossible to forget just how persistent she was. Once, when her arthritic hip was playing up she asked us to get her a wheelchair so that she could attend a demonstration. We then had to push her around the march as she got people signing petitions for Irish prisoners.

In her professional life she was a psychiatrist, particularly concerned with the rights of mentally-ill prisoners and with the effects of colonialism and racism on the mentally ill. She had pioneered a community psychotherapy service for the Asian communities in Birmingham. In the months before her death she had been approached by some US workers in this field to write a chapter for a book and her main concern was that her recent illness should not interfere with this.

Maire was a remarkable blend of Irish nationalism and socialism. Neither is very fashionable at present. Her own view of the peace process going on in Ireland was that it offered little to the people. And they were always her first concern.

We send our sympathies to her daughter Dierdre and the rest of the family.

Maxine Williams

Nationwide Action against road pollution

Scotland

Drunken Tory minister resigns

On Sunday 5 February Pollok Free State, home to the camp of the anti-M77 motorway protesters, received the first of a few unwelcome visitors. Scottish Office Minister Alan Stewart went staggering about after a full lunch and, using foul language, swung a pickaxe threateningly at the protesters. His son and another youth were also reported for carrying air pistols during the same incident. Needless to say, none of these wealthy thugs have been charged, although Stewart has resigned for a while.

Greenock gaol

Meanwhile, anti-M77 protester John Livingstone lies in Greenock gaol for taking the battle into the enemy camp. He delivered an alternative sermon on social justice and environmental values to the congregation of a church in a well-off suburb of Glasgow. Predictably, there were a couple of chief inspectors amongst the flock who did their Christian duty and arrested Livvy for breach of the peace. Refusing to accept the increasingly common bail conditions which would have

excluded him from the protest site, he remains in gaol until trial. Send cards and letters to John Livingstone, HMP Greenock, Scotland.

The kids are all right, OK?

Wimpey Construction tried to make their first major move on 14 February. Operations began at 9.30am, the police having assisted by creating a virtual exclusion zone with roadblocks around the area. Trees were being felled and cleared, but the local community got organised.

The working class youth of the neighbouring schools marched out in their hundreds and swarmed over Wimpey's diggers and other machinery and brought work to a complete halt! The school students know exactly what they are doing. What's the point, they say, of teachers giving them environmental studies while a huge motorway steams through their areas? They went out and took direct action against this threat to their health. Asthma is endemic to these working class communities which already suffer the worst poverty in western Europe and top the international disease statistics.

The school students have set up a union and demand that they be allowed to join the protests for two hours each day. On 4 March, hearing of a com-



No M77 - local residents campaigned against the destruction of woodland

bined Wimpey/police attack on Corkerhill camp, they voted to march to defend it. Arrests of 12 and 14-year-olds have taken place while the media rehearses the usual accusations about young minds being manipulated.

These youngsters face a future of unemployment or low wages, and know that this yuppie motorway offers them nothing but danger, dirt and noise. By their determined actions and courageous spirit they are leading the fightback.

RCG/FRFI will be supporting the forthcoming Day of Action against the M77 and we urge readers to get involved. For anti-M77 information, call 0141 357 4469.

Lancashire

On the frontline - the Village in the Sky

Having been evicted from Cuerden Valley at the M6 end of the proposed M65 extension (see FRFI 120), the focus of the campaign moved to locations south of Blackburn. The jewel in the crown of the campaign is the Village in the Sky, a group of 17 treehouses in the Stanworth Woods above the river Roddlesworth (see FRFI 123). Not a single nail has been used to fasten the houses to the trees, and many are lashed together with rope walkways which culminate in a huge central net above the river where the occupants can gather for meetings.

If people are standing on the walkways, it will be impossible to fell the trees without endangering life. This fact, together with the steepness of the valley sides, could present to the companies involved (Tarmac, McAlpine, Amec) a very expensive and possibly insurmountable difficulty.

Not far away, villagers in Brindle and Clayton Brook are campaigning against the local quarrying of materials for the M65.



No M65 - Village in the Sky

Nationwide Against CJA

Justice?, the Brighton-based anti-Criminal Justice Act group that occupied an empty courthouse, has now occupied another empty property in protest at the CJA. This time, it's a high street jeans shop turned into a friendly, approachable centre for anti-CJA activity. Outside, a banner proclaims '1.9 million people in Britain are homeless, while 850,000 properties lie empty.'

Illustrating precisely the type of people who are responsible for this insanity, Lloyds Bank took immediate action to evict them. Justice? responded by producing a leaflet contrasting the actions of Lloyds and themselves:

'In 1994 Justice? was formed in defiance of the Criminal Justice Act. We renovated a derelict courthouse and turned it into an arts and action community centre catering for over a thousand people a week. We were evicted and it now stands empty and heavily fortified.

In 1994 the annual report of Lloyds Bank proudly proclaimed that the bank had made a net profit from the third world of £260 million. In the Philippines a child dies every hour to pay the banks that make the profits.'

Groups from Sheffield to Hastings, from Glasgow to Bristol are busy taking similar actions. Along the way, thousands of people are learning that by getting together with others you can change things.

Inevitably, this growing movement is coming under attack - directly from the police and courts. *The SchNews*, Justice?'s weekly newsletter, gives an interesting overview of how the police are treating protesters these days. At a Shoreham protest against animal exports a man was arrested for pressing a button on a traffic light and not crossing; a woman charged with assault for gobbing a half-sucked sweet at a cop who was nearly breaking her arm; and a man arrested for sitting on his own garden wall.

Events are happening all over the country - find out about them and join in!

- The Freedom Network has set up an action line, updated every two days, listing events all over the country - you can phone it on 0171 501 9253.

- A legal defence and monitoring group has been set up by people 'fed up with the police brutalising, arresting and imprisoning protesters'. They can be contacted on 0181 802 9804.

- Lots more - phone Justice? on 01273 685913 or just ask about. Colin Chalmers

Paul Dobson

Colin Chalmers

Lincoln against criminal injustice

So far this year the campaign group has taken part in the Leadenham bypass protest and the demonstration against William Waldegrave's visit to the county, given a public showing of the *Undercurrent* video and linked up with other regional protest groups. Regular street meetings in Lincoln continue to attract support and these will now be held in other parts of the county. Young people are producing a newsletter and meetings have been held in schools.

In May, the CIA Roadshow will begin a tour of the county, playing gigs in towns and villages. Local bands will share the stage with speakers and films about the CIA campaign, a formula already used with great success in a local college.

Clearly the local police are beginning to take notice - they have served us with a ludicrous summons for obstruction and harassed the owners of the hall where one of our public meetings was to be held.

Jim Craven

Red Mole

Fancy a little job?

Ed Wallis, Chief Executive of Powergen gets £36,000 a year for what he describes as three 'little jobs' taking four days a year. In case your arithmetical powers are temporarily overwhelmed by this, it is £9,000 a day or £1,124 per hour. For a 35 hour week that would be over £2 million a year.

Perhaps he needs this little extra. Otherwise he has to struggle by on his Powergen earnings of about £732,000 this year. He justified paying some Powergen workers just £10,000 a year thus: 'You can't compare the lowest paid workers with the people who create value, as senior people do'.

Crash course in Marxist economics Mr Wallis: sitting on your cushioned posterior sacking people may create many things - havoc, misery, higher social security and therefore tax bills, more profits, pigs - yes. Value? - no.

How about living with dignity

Euthanasia is all the rage. Apparently unable to provide pleasant or even bearable conditions of life for many people, this society is getting very keen on bumping them off 'with dignity'. One would have thought the conditions in which the elderly, ill and disabled people are forced to exist constituted a pretty active euthanasia programme already. In Holland, it's an injection - here it's care in the community.

Tony Blair - a duty to the rich

Tony Blair wants us to know that we have social duties as well as rights. And who does he target for these duties? Why the poor of course. Apparently whilst the state must 'try' to house people, those housed should be evicted if they are a nuisance to their neighbours. And parents should be brought to court if their children truant. This went down very well with his *Spectator* audience and brought great praise from middle class toadies who think Blair has invented a new philosophy of community. Well, it's a funny old thing but the terms community and duty only ever get applied to the working class. Don't owner occupiers make nuisances of themselves? Shouldn't their houses be expropriated if they are anti-social? And whilst Blair is keen to punish working class parents for truanting children, the wealthy fulfil their parental obligations via a chequebook. Unlike Blair's dear son who will go to a grant-maintained school, working class children know that their education is usually a fast-track to the dole. On the other hand, new rules against truancy might provide a new and lucrative legal sideline for Blair's wife, the lovely Cherie. Perhaps her normal business of prosecuting the poor who can't pay the poll tax is drying up.

Flogging the young

Elizabeth Peacock, Tory MP, has suggested that young offenders should be beaten on prime time television, perhaps on the Lottery show. Lovely idea Liz and there's plenty of chaps in the House more than ready to do the beating. Usually they have to pay.

Out the rich

Peter Tatchell has come in for grotesque abuse - likened to the Gestapo - for threatening to out various bishops and MPs. He is quite right to pinpoint the hypocrisy of the pontificators who condemn homosexuality whilst privately practising it. There is no right to privacy for poor people in this country. Mothers on benefit are spied on to see who they are sleeping with or forced to give the names of their children's fathers. Why should the privileged have privacy when others cannot? ■

Leadenham

Police chose not to act when a St Valentine's Day protest on the Leadenham bypass (Lincolnshire) site halted work. But it was not the protesters the police decided to turn a blind eye to.

The site manager Neil Oxenbury violently pulled a protester off a steamroller, causing her leg to become trapped. She was lucky not to suffer a more serious injury. Workers were also ordered to continue with laying down tarmac, exposing the protesters to extreme dan-

ger. Hot tarmac was unloaded from the back of a lorry only inches from protesters. As protesters lay down in front of the steamroller preparing to flatten the tarmac, they were snatched up by the workers. Eventually a group of protesters joined arms about six feet in front of a roller. The workers failed to move them out of the way, and the roller stopped just inches from crushing the protesters. After this close escape, the work was halted. It seems that reckless endangerment is no longer a crime, as these incidents occurred after police had arrived. Alf Jones



Leadenham bypass - protesters halting work on the site

A criminally unjust system

Damned if you do, damned if you don't

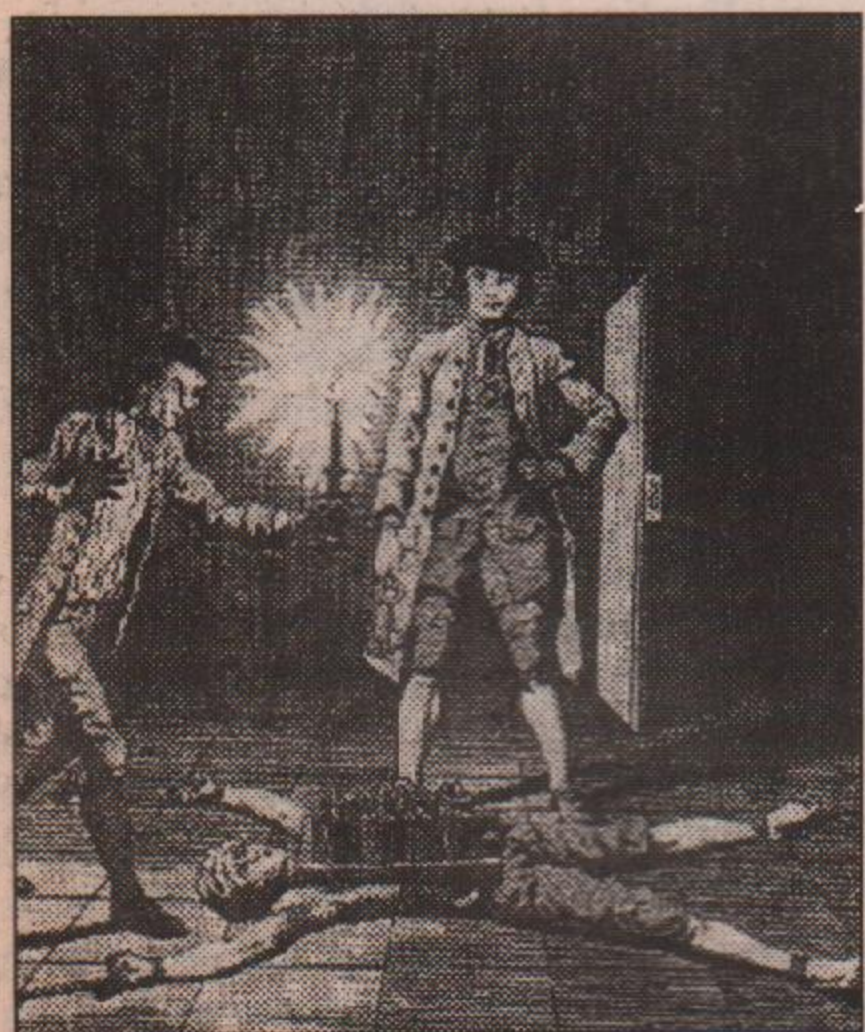
The police have already won a significant victory with the CJA's attack on the right to silence. The right to silence has its origins in the English Civil War and was one of the few lasting gains of the bourgeois revolution. It recognises the reality that under state interrogation people make false confessions. It therefore allows people accused of crimes to remain silent, both in court and in the police station, on the understanding that their silence cannot be interpreted as guilt.

Today's parliamentarians have long forgotten such democratic principles. Under the CJA, silence can now be used as evidence of guilt in the following circumstances:

- if you raise something in your defence at court which you could reasonably have been expected to mention when questioned by police;
- if you are arrested and substances, marks or objects are found on your clothing or in your possession which suggest involvement in a specified crime;
- if you are arrested and have been found at the scene of the crime for which you have been arrested.
- if you fail to give evidence in court.

A court can draw 'such inferences as appear proper' from a person's silence in any of these circumstances. A person cannot be convicted on silence alone. However silence can support other evidence which would otherwise be insufficient to secure a conviction. But the provisions do not abolish the right to silence and there will be many circumstances in which people will still be able to refuse to answer police questions without any inference of guilt. The police are now lobbying to push the restrictions further.

Meanwhile Michael Howard has pledged new legislation restricting the prosecution's duty to disclose material gathered in the course of the police investigation to the defence. This already limited rule was only established following the release of Judith Ward in 1991, when it emerged that the prosecution had hidden from the defence evidence that proved her innocence. There have also been recommendations that the defence should be obliged to disclose



William Spiggott was tortured at Newgate prison after refusing to plead to a charge in 1720

Dangerous developments are afoot in the criminal justice system. Barely were the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (CJA) on the statute book before the police launched a concerted and high profile campaign, led by Met Police Chief Paul Condon, for further attacks on the rights of the accused. With the Labour and Tory parties competing for the affections of the property-owning, crime-fearing, middle class this campaign is meeting with little opposition. The result is the rapid development towards an authoritarian state with virtually no protection for those who come into conflict with it. SARAH BOND reports.



its case before trial. This would allow the police to pick holes in the accused person's account, in place of actually coming up with evidence of their guilt. It would be one more nail in the coffin for the principle that you are innocent until proven guilty.

A policeman's lot

In a carefully placed interview in *The Guardian*, Paul Condon set out the police's case for these changes. He warned of a crisis of police confidence in the criminal justice system. He claimed that, with the help of unscrupulous defence lawyers, 'villains escape time and time again from court hearings' because of all the rights and protections at their disposal. Unable to convict the guilty by fair means, honest coppers are forced into what Condon dubs 'noble cause corruption'. They are made to beat people up, to fabricate evidence against them, in order to secure convictions. The police therefore want to remove the rights and protections and make it easier to convict people.

With a crime clear-up rate of around 20 per cent, the police need excuses. The real problem with Britain's criminal justice system is not the guilty who walk free but the

untold numbers of innocent people wrongly convicted. The vast majority of those passing through police stations and the courts are not villainous masterminds but ordinary poor working class people. As the police know full well, these people have no chance against the vast resources of the state. The limited rights they have are no protection - few know about them and fewer still exercise them. Research for the Royal Commission found that just 5 per cent of those detained in police stations used the most important right - to silence (9 per cent in London).

As for the lawyers, 80 per cent of people in police stations do not get any legal advice. Those who do, unless they are Nick Leeson or Kevin Maxwell, are unlikely to speak to a qualified solicitor. One Royal Commission study of 17 firms doing regular police station work found that 75 per cent of their legal advisors at police stations were unqualified - and 21 per cent were former police officers! Another study found that 45 per cent of advisors failed to ask the police for any information at all about the evidence against their client, before advising on whether to answer police questions. The average time spent alone with the client hearing their side of the story and giving that crucial advice was just fifteen minutes. One third gave no advice at all about the conduct of the interview.

Many advisors expressed views

that a chief constable would be proud to hold. One advisor described people who exercise their right to silence as 'very anti-police, very anti-social in a general sense and pretty bad bastards'. Other advisors actually admitted that they always advise cooperation in police interviews because of 'principled objections to the right to silence'. With defence lawyers like these, who needs prosecutors?

Nor do the accused's chances improve much once they get to court. There is no right to trial by jury for a number of offences, including police assault. Moreover, the right to a trial at all is increasingly undermined by the pressures to plead guilty. The CJA now requires courts to take into account early guilty pleas when sentencing. Most defendants plead guilty. Where a person is gaoled, there is a rule that a guilty plea will mean two-thirds off their sentence. Barristers get paid more for representing several people on quick guilty pleas than for representing one person in a trial taking several days. The result is that most people facing criminal charges plead guilty whether they are or not.

But however bad the standard of justice may be for the working class, it is still too high for the police and their allies. They profoundly resent having to prove at all that those they charge are guilty. As far as they are concerned, their say-so should be ample evidence. They regard it as a scandalous waste of time and money that the poor should have such luxuries as a trial. They want to see a criminal justice system that is little more than a conveyor belt, controlling the poor by picking them up off the street and landing them in gaol (or even better, boot camps).

New laws for a new movement

These views are gaining currency at a time when increasing numbers of people are being forced into the sort of desperate poverty that makes crime practically a necessary condition of survival. That does not worry the law-and-order-loving Labour Party, whose Shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw observed: 'Sir Paul [Condon] accurately reflects deep public disquiet about the underlying failures of the criminal justice system'.

But though the changes will hit the poor immediately, it is when a new mass movement emerges that their real significance will be felt. Such a movement will very quickly come up against the law and will need all the rights it can lay its hands on. This can be seen in the north of Ireland, where the popular movement against British rule made good use of the right to silence. Introducing in 1988 almost



identical restrictions to those enacted by the CJA, Tom King estimated that a full 50 per cent of people charged with 'serious crimes' in the Six Counties refused to answer police questions.

Here restricting the right to silence proved very effective in convicting opponents to British rule who would previously have been acquitted. In particular the new law has been used to corroborate the evidence of much-used but notoriously unreliable police informers. It was also crucial in convicting Danny Morrison, Sinn Fein's publicity officer, of false imprisonment and conspiracy to murder after being arrested next-door to a house where an RUC informer had been interrogated by the IRA. In court, Morrison said he was there to hold a press conference to expose the RUC's use of informers. However Morrison refused on principle to answer RUC questions at the notorious Castlereagh interrogation centre. The judge (who is also the jury in Diplock courts) rejected Morrison's explanation, both of his presence in the house and his silence. He held that Morrison was silent because he was guilty and wanted to find out the strength of the evidence against him and convicted him. Morrison is still in gaol.

When such a movement emerges in Britain, it can expect the sort of justice meted out to the Birmingham Six and the Tottenham Three. When Condon talks of 'noble cause corruption', it is worth remembering what the police actually got up to in those cases. It is a warning of just how dangerous the proposed reforms will be in the hands of Britain's brutal, racist police. Take just one example: the experience of Frank Johnson, important alibi witness for Carole Richardson of the Guildford Four.

Unable to find out the identity of Richardson's lawyer, Frank Johnson presented himself to the local nick. On telling them the alibi, he was arrested for involvement in the bombing. His parents' home was raided and his disabled mother was told she would not see her son for a long time unless he changed his story. He was flown to Guildford police station, where a chief inspector threatened to throw him off the roof. Another officer asked him if he would 'like to see your mother go up in flames in her wheelchair?' By the end of the ordeal Johnson actually offered to admit to doing the bombing himself '... because I thought...I'm going to be safer in prison than in here with these fellers'. But the police had what they wanted. The credibility of his alibi evidence was destroyed. Richardson was convicted. Frank Johnson has since suffered from what a psychologist diagnoses as 'moderately severe paranoia'.

This is what the police are capable of. Yet a Police Federation ballot on whether officers should routinely carry arms attracts almost no comment. In south-west London an unarmed young man is shot twice by an armed policeman, after refusing to stop in a suspected stolen car. He subsequently dies, without even a murmur of protest. Now that the

Labour Party has thrown down the gauntlet to the Tories on law and order, this is what the working class can expect from Britain's criminal justice system. More state crimes - no justice.

Turkey

Blood-sucking regime

On the evening of 12 March, gunmen with automatic weapons opened fire on four cafés and a pastry shop in the Gazi Osman Pasa district of Istanbul. This is a mainly working class district populated by newly migrated unemployed workers. The cafés and pastry shops were favoured gathering points by left-wing Alewis – a non-orthodox humanistic branch of Islam. GUL ISTAN, director of an Alewi association and civil servant trade unionist, reports.

That same evening protesters marched on the local police station, angry that the police had done nothing to capture the attackers. During the next four days the area witnessed a major protest by local people, women, Alewi youth and revolutionaries. They built barricades and clashed with the police whose ranks include many fascist, pro-Nationalist Action Party elements. The police shot dead 33 civilians, thousands were wounded and some 70 disappeared.

This latest police atrocity is one more link in a long chain of mass murders by Turkey's paramilitary fascist forces, stretching from 1977 to the 1993 Sivas massacre when 38 progressives were burnt to death. The current paramilitary fascist offensive was spearheaded by a police-supported fascist attack at Istanbul university during Ramadan and coincides with a major assault by the Turkish army on the Kurdish people and its invasion of Iraqi-occupied Kurdistan.

The Gazi Osman Pasa attack and subsequent police operations were part of a calculated provocation to entice the working class into a premature battle with the state. By pitting the as yet uncoordinated and disorganised working class against a highly organised and coordinated

police-state apparatus, the ruling class hope to destroy working class revolutionary potential. The popular forces, the unemployed and desperate youth, revolutionaries from all groups fought with great courage. But their actions were also marked by a lack of political coordination, discipline and revolutionary solidarity. Political organisations participating in the mass protests did not utilise their political and organisational experience. Instead they just competed to display their banners and slogans. This attitude led to a reaction against the left by many militants involved in the struggle – all the dead were women and youth from the local, unorganised community. During the clashes barricades were not built properly. No mass meetings to coordinate action were organised. As a result, given the prominence of banners and slogans on socialism and revolution, the left, in the context of a disorganised mass movement, has become the element most prone to pay the bill.

The police in both Istanbul and Ankara organised house-to-house raids to pick up the best-known leftists. Within the mass movement, the impression of the left that remains is not one of a vanguard or an organising revolutionary cadre, but of a



The funeral of five Alewi victims of the fascist and police attacks: the walls are adorned with left-wing banners

competition of slogans and banners; slogans and banners moreover which have no real revolutionary content.

This failure of the revolutionary organisations has enabled social democracy to restore its ties with sections of the Alewi population. The new social democratic leader Hikmet Cetin is now seen as a critic of police violence even though he did not side with the people. The ruling class are now devoting resources to defeat the revolutionary potential displayed in the recent period. Financial aid, jobs with the state and other inducements are being offered to a section of the Alewi community, along with some relaxation of restrictions on Alewi

culture. Meanwhile, the rest of the Alewi population is terrorised.

Yet another cost being paid by the left is the legitimisation of the Turkish army as a 'non-violent' force in comparison with the police. Whilst many soldiers may have prevented the police from murdering even more people, the political result is a naive sympathy among the population for the ruling class army.

The difficult task for the left will be to draw the lessons of the recent

clashes and to overcome the division between the left and the people that has resulted. This can only be done by overcoming inter-factional competition. The revolutionaries must also devote their resources to organising the desperate and unemployed marginalised poor Alewis, leaving aside privileged Alewis. Revolutionaries, instead of engaging in exhibitionist propaganda, must learn how to protect the masses and teach them to fight shoulder to shoulder. ■

Turkish terror unleashed against PKK

'None of this should detract from Europe's support for Turkey's war against the Marxist-Leninist PKK, which is fast emerging as the most violent guerrilla movement in both Europe and the Middle East. But just as Turkish security forces often blur the distinction between Kurdish rebels and civilians, so Ankara tends to mistake the difference between enemies and true friends'. Jonathan Rugman, *The Guardian*, 23 March 1995.

This is the disgraceful defence of the Turkish military's 35-50,000 strong invasion of northern Iraq/South Kurdistan made by the US and majority of European governments, including Britain's. Kill the PKK, but take care not to slaughter so many Kurds that it becomes an embarrassment to us. Besides aiming to deliver a body blow to the PKK, this military

enterprise is designed to distract growing domestic opposition and appease an increasingly restless army.

To conceal the extent of destruction and death, Turkish officers are taking care to prevent press and cameras getting into the new war zone. Turkish forces are operating over a large area, not just where the PKK bases are. Kurdish refugees from Turkey are being subjected to systematic terror, abduction and murder. Turkish bombers and artillery are destroying Iraqi Kurds' homes and villages. In this battle against the PKK, Massoud Barzani's bourgeois Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) is being exposed as a collaborator against its own people. As the Turkish forces prepare for a long stay, they will be engaged by PKK units and more of the southern

Kurds will join a patriotic battle to rid their land of the invader.

'We are determined for a prolonged guerrilla war to turn the South into a rat-trap for the Turkish army...We were well prepared and are of high morale. We have responded in the language they understand and in a way they did not expect. In fierce clashes we have stopped the advance of the enemy and are repelling them...There is no question of our forces being surrounded. It will not happen now or later. We can comfortably state that we have the strength to make the Turkish military solution impossible to work. There will be intensified struggle all over north Kurdistan.' Abdulla Ocalan, General Secretary of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Trevor Rayne

Kani Yilmaz still in custody

On 26 October Kani Yilmaz, European representative of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), was arrested outside Westminster underground station on his way to address MPs and Lords on a political solution to the Kurdish question in Turkey. Kani Yilmaz was initially told that his presence in Britain was 'not conducive to the public good' and he was held pending deportation. The German authorities then made a request for Kani Yilmaz's extradition to face charges of 'conspiracy to cause arson, riot etc.'

The arrest of Kani Yilmaz in the course of carrying out diplomatic responsibilities and on his way to address parliamentarians is scandalous enough, but he has since been subjected to the worst excesses of the British prison system. Since January when he was transferred to the top

security wing of Belmarsh prison in south east London, Kani Yilmaz has been increasingly isolated and denied basic rights, despite the fact that he has committed no crime in Britain.

Kani Yilmaz is now being held in isolation 24 hours a day, he has no access to a telephone and receives very few social visits. My own application to visit has yet to be cleared by the authorities. All social visits are monitored and recorded. This includes a visit made by John Austin-Walker, the Labour MP for Woolwich, who invited Kani Yilmaz to address MPs in the first place.

The extradition hearing is on 4 May in Belmarsh court. The defence is likely to oppose Kani Yilmaz's extradition on the grounds that he will be tried for his political views.

Andrew Penny

Free the framed Kurdish prisoners in English gaols

Interview with Naciye Ozen

In August 1994 Cafer Kovaycin, Hikmet Bozat and Servet Ozen were convicted for a petrol bomb attack on a Turkish bank in the City of London. Kovaycin and Bozat received 15 years imprisonment, Ozen 12 years. All three Kurdish political prisoners claim they are innocent. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* believes the Kurds have been subjected to the kind of frame-up perpetrated against the Guildford 4 and the Birmingham 6. Below is an interview with Naciye Ozen, mother of Servet.

FRFI: Can you tell us about your son's arrest.

Naciye Ozen: The incident took place on 4 November 1993. Servet, who was 18, was arrested a long way from the scene of the petrol bombing. The police found four plastic bags outside the bank but did not find Servet's fingerprints on any of them. On the Saturday he was charged and released on bail and had to sign in at a police station everyday. In court no evidence was produced. There were no fingerprints on the bags and the case was adjourned. Then about 12 days later, the police claimed to have discovered Servet's fingerprints on the bags.

On the same day that Servet was detained, 4 November, nine police came to my house in the evening. They took a lot of things from the children's room, including a plastic bag that had been on Servet's bed. They stayed for nearly an hour. They took the bag, two skirts I was sewing for work, cassettes, newspapers, a children's watch and things that had

been written on word processors.

FRFI: So when the trial took place what was the evidence?

Naciye Ozen: In court a fifth bag appeared out of nowhere. Whereas in the original court appearance there was a photograph showing four bags outside the bank, the police now produced a fifth. There was a palm print on the fifth bag and the police said it was Servet's. Asked where this bag came from the police said, 'Perhaps someone had put this bag inside one of the other bags and that was why it was not in the photograph of the other bags'. Our barrister, pointing out that the photograph showed only four bags, argued that this was a plot, a conspiracy.

FRFI: Servet and the other two prisoners have had their initial appeal application turned down.

Naciye Ozen: Yes, but they are appealing again against the convictions and the sentences. I always stress that Servet was on bail for nine months. Had he been guilty he could easily have absconded. Because he did not and because he is innocent we were shocked at the trial, the verdict and the severity of the sentence.

FRFI: What can we do to help?

Naciye Ozen: From the government and the judiciary I expect them to distinguish between the guilty and the not guilty. I need advice about the law, legal procedure, solicitors, things like that. I expect support from democrats and socialists in Britain. We need publicity and there should be a campaign to release my son. ■



No way to run a solidarity movement

Any solidarity organisation will be an alliance of different forces. Given that no one organisation has a monopoly on work in solidarity with Cuba, what is needed is an open, democratic movement involving all those who support the Cuban revolution. The material aid campaign launched this year by local Cuba Solidarity Groups in support of the Cuban Union of Young Communists (UJC) has brought a much-needed energy and enthusiasm to Cuba solidarity work in this country. Why then has it come under sustained attack from the Cuba Solidarity Campaign leadership? EDDIE ABRAHAMS and CAT WIENER argue that solidarity with Cuba is too vital to be stifled by the sectarianism of a dominant clique.

There is frankly no point having a solidarity organisation with a national executive, annual elections...and democratic accountability if local CSC groups can simply go off and do as they please,' the national leadership argues. What, we might ask, is the point of voting at the 1994 AGM to initiate material aid work for Cuba if a full nine months later all the executive has done is commission a feasibility study? Small wonder Sheffield CSC, fearing 'the membership would once again be facing a year without ... a material aid campaign', launched their initiative. It quickly received widespread support from groups in the northwest and from South London CSC, and other local groups are eager to participate.

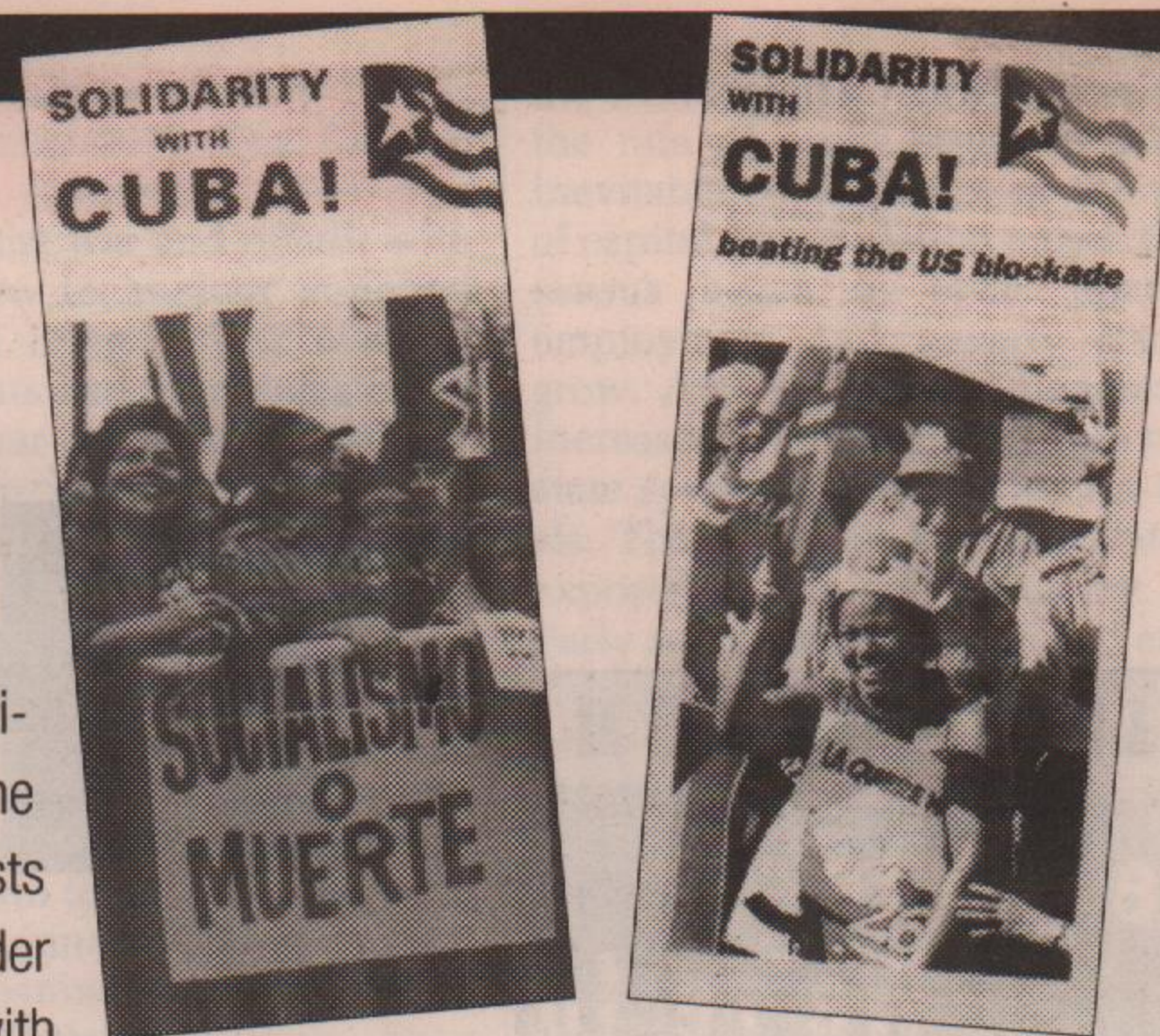
Pressure has been exerted on the organisers by Vice-Chair Tim Young, on behalf of the Executive officers, to accept six conditions. Their arguments are spurious. The initiative, Tim Young argues 'goes beyond the remit of local CSC groups.' Rather than welcoming the new forces drawn into the campaign, he protests that many 'do not appear to even be members of CSC.' Unless the campaign is centrally controlled, Young warns, 'UNISON nationally is not willing to back the container.' The organisers have accepted five of the proposals to pass control of the cam-

paigned to the executive. But the most telling point, still under discussion by the organisers, is that the campaign should be organised not through the UJC but through the broad Cuban solidarity organisation ICAP. In part, this is also an issue of control - the CSC executive has longstanding connections with ICAP, rather than with the UJC. But it goes deeper. At the executive meeting in March, Chair Ken Gill showed the bankruptcy of his Communist Party of Britain politics in stating the CSC did not specifically support the Cuban Communist Party and the Cuban government, and that it would be terrible if, for example, the UJC should use the aid for young communists! Tim Young appealed to members not to alienate valuable trade union support by mentioning the Young Communists - you could not expect major affiliates to participate in a material aid campaign when the receiving organisation is political.

What, then, have these precious links, so carefully nurtured for the past five years, achieved - beyond a few names on a *Guardian* advert and occasional contributions to the CSC's campaigns, which, let's face it, are pretty derisory compared to the millions of dollars worth of aid raised by US and European groups. Have they prevented MI5 and the CIA from planting anti-Cuba propaganda in the press on a regular basis? Come out in

force with their banners on pickets of the US embassy? Built a real, active, mass campaign capable of forcing the British government to vote against the US blockade? The truth is that the net result of the CSC's single-minded orientation towards the labour and trade union movement has been the paralysis of the solidarity movement. No wonder so many local groups and individuals have been so inspired by the Container campaign - the movement has been crying out for an active, dynamic, popular campaign.

The problem is not between ICAP and the UJC. It lies in CSC's willingness to jettison principled support for the Cuban socialists - today facing a crippling blockade and privations precisely because of their refusal to sacrifice their ideals - in favour of a craven alliance with the labour and trade union movement. To this end, over the last five years, every reference to socialism has been excised from their publicity material. To this end, communist organisations such as the RCG and Communist League are vilified. And to this end, the Container appeal is attacked, while the 1995 Campaign Proposals commit the organisation instead to 'shore up and underline Labour Party policy in support of Cuban sovereignty' and seek ways to rebuild links with an increasingly reactionary and right-wing Labour frontbench.



Spot the difference: left, a Britain-Cuba Resource Centre leaflet, c. 1989; right, the leaflet of the born-again, socialism-free, union-friendly Cuba Solidarity Campaign of the 1990s.

Like Tim Young's timorous unions, the Labour Party is opposed to socialism - whether in Cuba or in Britain. At the 1994 Labour Party conference, Shadow Secretary Jack Cunningham made it clear that Labour's opposition to the US blockade is tied to 'democratic change' in Cuba - always a euphemism for the destruction of Cuban communism and the introduction of the capitalist market.



RCG street meeting and material aid collection in support of the Container for Cuba appeal.

Tailoring solidarity work to what is acceptable to the liberal imperialism of the labour and trade union movement will neither build solidarity with Cuban socialism nor advance the struggles of the working class in Britain. It is only outside that narrow, self-interested stratum that the forces can be found to mount a real defence of Cuba. To those today

facing the destruction of the welfare state, poverty and unemployment, the example of Cuban socialism, which despite being under economic siege, is not closing its hospitals or abandoning education, has immediate relevance. Such forces must be drawn into support for Cuba. It is no surprise that the mining community in Yorkshire, with its direct experience of the brutality of British capitalism, should have responded so positively to the Container campaign. It is precisely this that Labour's apologists within the CSC fear, and they will resort to every sectarian and bureaucratic manoeuvre in the book to destroy it - clamping down on the autonomy of local groups, reinterpreting the constitution. Ken Gill tells us that the CSC exists merely to passively defend Cuban sovereignty, persuade British business to ignore the US blockade, and build links with British trade unions. Look again, Ken. The CSC, or Britain Cuba Resource Centre as it then was, was set up to 'develop a better understanding of the struggle for justice and freedom and of the Cuban revolution...build ties of solidarity between the people of Cuba and Britain...and defend the achievements of the Cuban revolution.' Only an open, democratic, non-sectarian movement, embracing all those committed to active campaigning, will advance those aims.

Cuban revolution fights homophobia

As in the rest of the world, there is a high degree of homophobia in Cuba. Recently, however, significant changes have taken place in Cuban society. No longer underground, the Cuban Association of Gays and Lesbians exists to promote visibility, recognition and equal rights for all lesbian and gay men in Cuba. The release of the film *Fresa y Chocolate*, made by Cuba's top director and voted the most popular film in Cuba, reflects the Cuban government's changing position in regard to allowing both open criticism of past policies and a sympathetic portrayal of homosexuality. Activists have been bolstered by Fidel Castro's statement in an interview with Tomas Borge:

'I don't have any phobia against homosexuals. I am absolutely opposed to any form of repression, contempt, scorn or discrimination with regard to homosexuals.'

The head of the FMC, the national women's organisation, has taken a similar stance. Institutional persecution of or discrimination against gays has largely ended. Ministry of Health sexual health information discusses homosexuality as a valid and healthy expression of love and sexuality. Whilst lesbian and gay activists in Britain have to continue the fight for an equal age of consent, no such law discriminates against homosexuals in Cuba. Workers at the Centre for Sex Education in Cuba are chal-

lenging homophobia in public education policy and medical training. They have contributed greatly to the gradual changes in attitudes taking place.

Cuba is also revising its AIDS policy, and is closing most of the controversial sanatoria. The country has one of the lowest incidents of AIDS in the world. 177 Cubans had died of AIDS up to July 1994. New York City, with almost exactly the same population as Cuba, has had over 28,000 deaths from the virus. However, the US blockade has resulted in a severe shortage of AZT and other AIDS medications. Despite this the quality of treatment and care on this isolated Caribbean island is better than treatment available in advanced capitalist countries. There is no comparison with Third World countries where a decent calorie intake cannot be provided let alone expensive AIDS drugs.

The Cuban Lesbian and Gay Association stated at its first open meeting that it was not an anti-revolutionary movement. On the contrary, it expressed a wish to find a space within the revolution, and for many the embracing of gay and lesbian rights is a logical step in Cuba's revolutionary process. A strong lesbian and gay movement, working with a system that provides health care, housing and education for each of its citizens, is becoming a reality in Cuba, a country which is tackling its homophobia and facing up to its past errors.

Terry Dowding

Banned aid - Container for Cuba appeal

This major aid appeal for Cuba, initiated by Sheffield CSC with the support of local groups and church organisations aims to send a container of aid to Cuba this June. A caravan of cars will tour Britain to collect the aid and promote support for Cuba - all agree that waging a political campaign in solidarity with Cuba is as important as the aid itself.

There needs to be a clear understanding that:

- Cuba is under siege from US imperialism because it is a socialist country.
- The great achievements of the Cuban people are due to their socialist revolution.
- The same people who attack Cuba are responsible for the growing poverty, degradation and inequality in the world.
- The enemies of Cuba are the enemies of the British working class.

We should be on the streets, in the schools and colleges, outside factories and supermarkets with this message. Contact the campaign at 8 Backfields, Sheffield S1 4HJ.

Jim Craven

ROCK around the BLOCKade

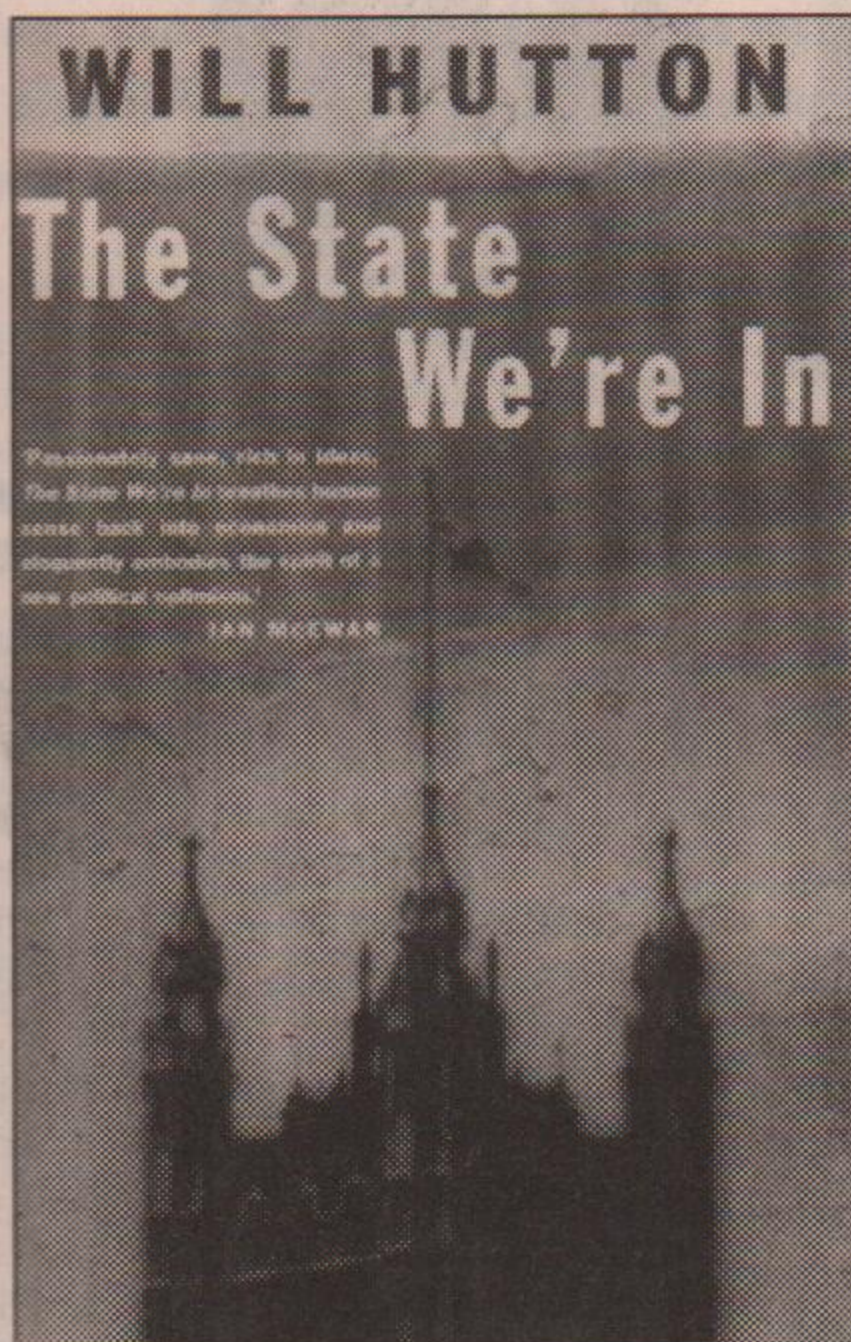
With the support of the UJC's International Department, FRFI's 'Rock around the blockade' campaign - to collect material aid and send a socialist brigade to Cuba in December - is gathering steam.

The campaign aims to raise funds for a sound system for a youth centre in Ciego de Avila in Cuba. Our first planning meeting produced a wealth of ideas - a petition against Britain's refusal to oppose the US blockade at the UN, proposals for a Che Guevara badge and T-shirts, a pamphlet comparing conditions for the working class in capitalist Britain with those in socialist Cuba. Plans were discussed for a benefit concert in the summer, a sponsored bike-ride and video showings. We will also be approaching schools, colleges and youth centres for support. The campaign is being supported by Communist Action who are raising sponsorship for a comrade running the marathon.

Dates are still being finalised, but the brigade will be for a fortnight over Christmas 1995, with the possibility of a third week, and will cost about £600 - if you plan to go, approach us now for fundraising ideas. We need to raise £4,000 to buy amplifiers, tape decks, lights, speakers and a turntable. All donations are welcome, and should be made payable to 'Rock around the Blockade.' Or send in for a petition to take it around work/college/friends etc to raise funds.

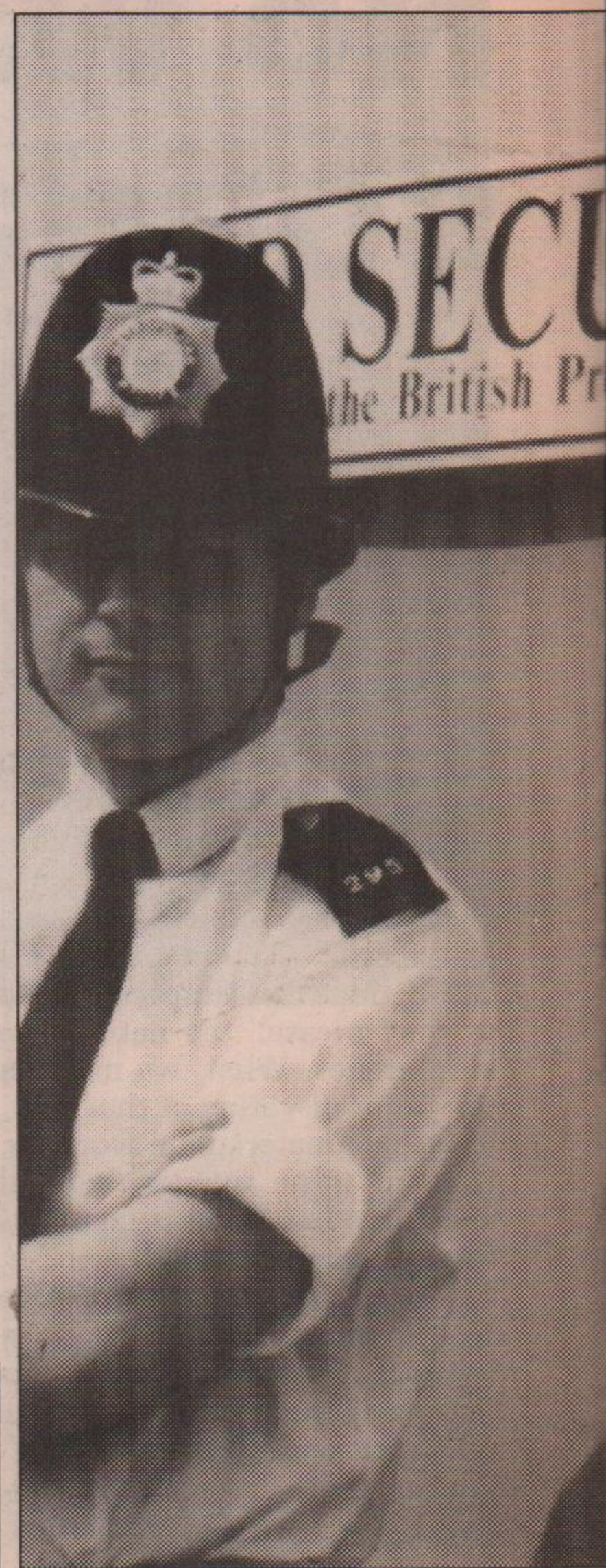
The next planning meeting will be 3pm, Saturday 22 April, Marchmont Centre, Marchmont Street, London WC1N. Whether you plan to come on the brigade, or just want to be involved in the solidarity work - your contribution is vital!

For details tel: 0171 837 1688 or write to Rock around the Blockade, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N



The state we are in

The political economy of the new middle class



'Order is breaking down in the towns and cities'

'The starting point of the English revolution... the nearest we will get to a Keynes for our time', said Labour MP Denis MacShane in the *New Statesman and Society*

'Heady, dangerous stuff... provides powerful ammunition for Labour spokesmen with no new ideas of their own' warned the *Daily Telegraph*

a 'ferocious polemic... too bleak to please or persuade' cautioned the *London Evening Standard*.

All are speaking of *The State We're In**, a new book by *The Guardian's* economic editor Will Hutton. DAVID YAFFE reviews Hutton's position as ideologue of the New Labour Party

The success of Hutton's book is of political significance. Some call it a manifesto for a future Labour government. Hutton denies this but states: 'if a Labour government is to be as serious about raising investment levels and reinventing British democracy as it says, both it and the book are pulling in the same direction.' (*The Guardian* 17 February 1995)

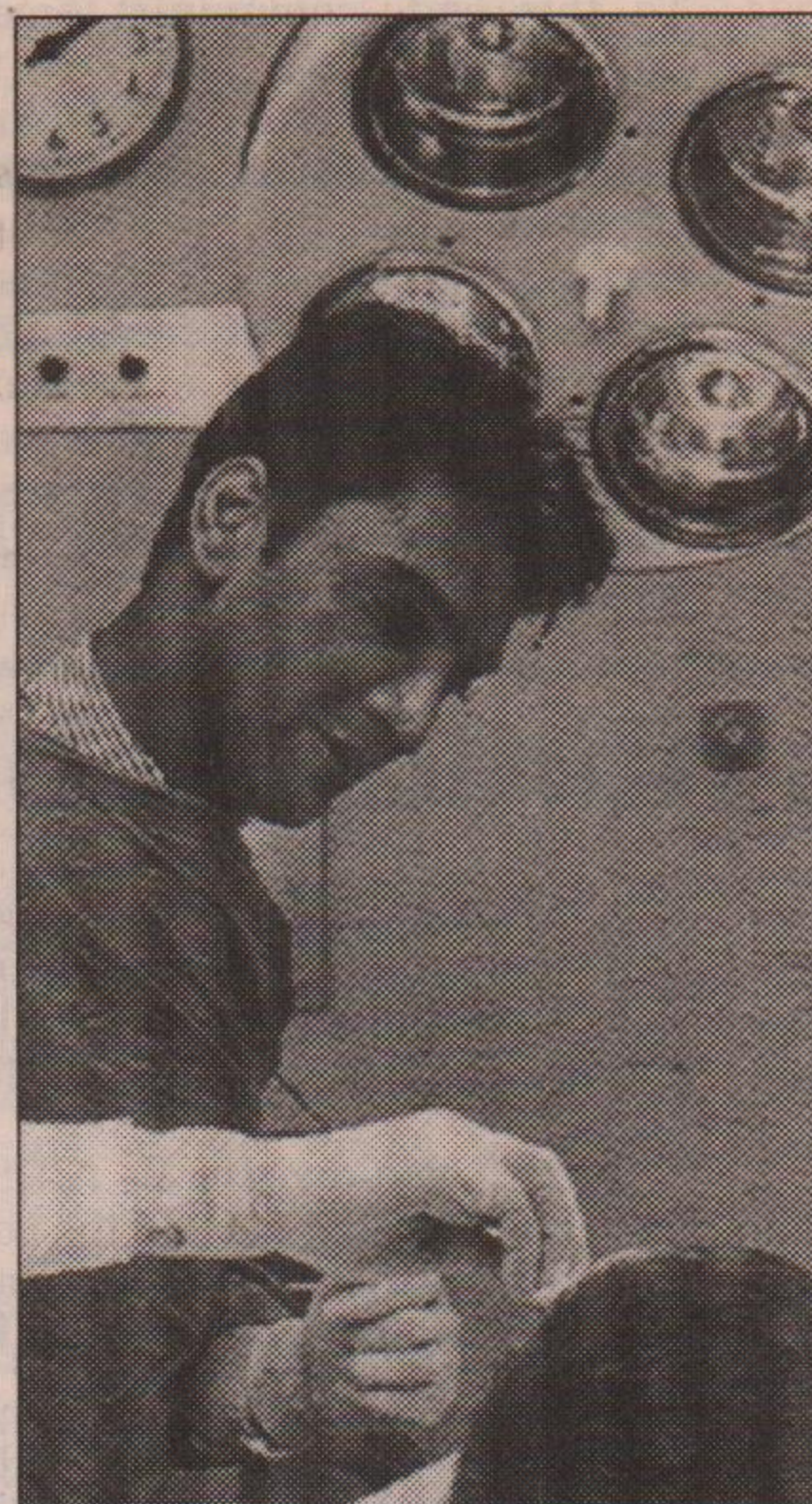
The book's appeal lies in its passionate criticism of Tory Britain and the urgency of its call to transform Britain into a high investment, high growth economy which could sustain social welfare. It goes much further than any Labour spokesperson would consider wise. Yet for all this the book is fundamentally reactionary. Hutton's position is driven by fear of social breakdown, of what he calls 'desperate authoritarian attempts' of the right or left to repair it (p26). It is a plea for one-nation conservatism, for the social consensus of the 1950s and 1960s without the policies of that period. He wants to institutionalise inequality and bring it into the state sector. The middle classes must be given, he says, 'a vested interest in the entire system' by 'incorporating inequality into the public domain' by 'nationalising inequality' in health and education (p309-311). In short his book is a forceful defence of the narrow concerns of the professional middle classes. It is the political economy of the new middle class.

The state we're in

In describing contemporary Britain Hutton pulls no punches. Britain's great industrial cities are decaying and in new industries and technologies Britain is barely represented. The state has developed a rentier culture. Footloose institutional shareholders and company boards demand business strategies which boost short-term share prices. Britain's unique economic asset, the City of London, is a by-word for speculation, inefficiency and cheating. Some of the most famous names in British insurance have been shown to be 'shysters and tricksters'. Privatised utilities make massive profits by laying off thousands of workers and exploiting their monopoly position. Personal enrichment at any price appears the aim of financial and corporate life. Inequality is rampant and growing. The gap between low and high wages is the highest since records began.

A privileged class at one pole is favoured with education, jobs, housing and pensions while at the other pole millions have become the new working

poor or live off the state in semi-poverty. In the middle are those with insecure 'contract' work, temporary and part-time jobs; always facing the threat of unemployment. A quarter of men of working age are either officially unemployed or idle. A third of the nation's children live in poverty. Life expectancy for those at the bottom of the income scale has fallen.



A better deal for the new middle class

The National Health Service is rapidly turning into a two-tier structure, with a third tier for those who can pay for private treatment. Education has become a creator of class division, having opted-out schools in the state sector and public (private) schools offering privileged access to qualifications, prestigious universities and lucrative careers.

Easy access to mortgages in the 1980s has meant repossessions and 'negative equity' in the 1990s, as recession and high interest rates forced tens of thousands to default. Sales of 20 per cent of the best council houses at substantial discounts have left estates of the least desirable housing in public hands. Privatisation of housing has intensified the breakdown of urban life.

The concentration and centralisation of power in Britain resembles that of a one-party state. Having no constitution, monarchical power has passed to the majority party of the House of Commons. Parliament is a charade. There is no formal independence of the judi-

ciary. Honours and contracts are awarded to government supporters in industry and the City. By 1996, 7,700 quangos run by an oligarchy of conservative placemen will spend some £54bn of public money with little or no accountability. Press partisanship at election times and lack of journalistic integrity and independence is rewarded with knighthoods.

Order is breaking down in the towns and cities. Britain's national affairs are reaching explosive levels of stress. Hutton articulates the fear of the middle classes at what might occur. If the New Right agenda succeeds:

'if there are no real economic and political choices... the way is open for the return of totalitarian parties of right and left.'

It has fallen to Will Hutton to provide the middle classes with a sustained theoretical and political standpoint which, he argues, offers the possibility of escaping such a 'baleful prospect' - 'a call to arms in a world in which time is running short'. (p26)

How we got there

Hutton sees the appalling state of Britain as the result of an entrenched 'conservative hegemony' whose roots go back to the late seventeenth century.

'From the late-seventeenth century a unique political, social and economic constellation has held together, and it remains the foundation of contemporary Conservatism. Court, land and finance - extending towards the military - have become the apex of the social and political pyramid and the focus of economic endeavour.' (p114-5)

What binds it together is a 'gentlemanly capitalism' - which places high social status on the less risky, 'invisible' sources of income from commercial and financial activity rather than industrial production.

Britain's commercial and financial interests were global, driven by the search for the highest rate of return to bond holders and merchants. Industrialisation was a byproduct of this development and not central to it. When recession struck industry in the late 1870s, the Bank of England refused to supply cash to the City of Glasgow Bank against the security of loans made to Glasgow shipbuilders and it collapsed in 1878. From that period on, banks would no longer become willingly involved in the long-term financing of industry. Faced with the need for institutional reform and state initiative to allow industry to respond to the

growing competition from US and German industry in the latter part of the nineteenth century, no action was taken.

'By the First World War a pattern was clearly established: a national banking system disengaged from production; a risk-averse London stock market based on international investment; equity finance made available on the most onerous terms, heaping large dividend demands on British producers; a Bank of England concerned to preserve price stability and the international value of sterling; and an industrial base losing ground to foreign manufacturers with higher productivity - and having to respond by bidding down wages to maximise retained profits, the only reliable and cheap form of finance.' (p123)

Britain's 'quasi-feudal state' has developed a rentier culture that complements 'gentlemanly capitalism' (p22). Free trade and sound finance became the dual orthodoxies of the government and the City, with minimum state involvement and a free market ideology which Hutton claims 'lasted from the 1870s through to the 1930s and then re-emerged in the 1980s' with Thatcherism (p124).

A less degenerate capitalism

Hutton's solution follows from his diagnosis. If the dominant role of financial and commercial capital and the rentier culture of the British state results from the entrenched interests of the dominant 'conservative hegemony' or 'gentlemanly class', then what is required is clearly a political revolution to remove it from power. And that is what Hutton proposes.

'The urgent necessity is to construct an independent institutional structure in Britain that will permit commitment and co-operation in the context of the competitive market. And that... implies nothing less than a British revolution.' (p256)

His intention, however, is not to start a social revolution to overthrow capitalism. On the contrary:

'The great challenge of the twentieth

*Published by Jonathan Cape 1995 price £16.95 hb

SECURITIES

Property Federation



the Conservative government promised in 1979' (p10). To do this requires revolutionising British institutional structures. What is wrong is not the capitalist system but the way it is being run.

However, if the degeneration of capitalism into a parasitic and rentier form is part of a necessary trend of capitalism as it matures and stagnates, then Hutton's position is an idealist and reactionary position. It reflects only the unrealisable hopes and aspirations of a part of the British middle class which wants to remove the ruling class without a social revolution. It is to this we now turn.

Capitalism and imperialism

Hutton's failure to understand capitalism underlies both his incorrect reading of history and his idealist programme.

Hutton's use of basic concepts is very imprecise. The basic actor in the market economy, he says, is the firm (p111). Here there are two confusions. There is no such thing as a market economy. The economy we are dealing with is a capitalist economy and the market reflects the social relations of capitalism through the movement of the price of commodities and the exchange of commodities for money. To talk of markets working well or badly (p218) is nonsense. They reflect and reproduce the social inequalities inherent in capitalist production.

The basic actor in a capitalist economy is capital. Capital is a social relation. It is the exploitation of the working class by the ruling capitalist class to reproduce and expand capital – to return the existing money capital together with additional capital or profit – and in so doing sustain the capitalist social relation. Capital has to expand to survive. Hutton rejects the view that profits arise from the exploitation of labour – he thinks this a primitive view, but never tells us how profits arise (p111). In fact he does not understand the nature of capital, so his understanding of the capitalist system is flawed.

Financial capital makes a claim to part of the profits produced by productive capital by investing in securities etc and other financial and commercial operations. By putting money capital into British and overseas government debt, and into domestic and foreign shares, it is seeking both secure and flexible high returns. The more distant it is from the operation of productive capital in Britain, from the need to invest long-term and be subject to the volatility of the economic cycle and class conflict, the more certain it is of receiving secure, liquid, and high returns. This appears amoral to Will Hutton because it will, in the long-run, undermine the wealth-generating process in the form of productive capital (p24). But capital is not concerned to produce wealth as such, but wealth in the form of capital, and as long as the returns are high and secure, how this is achieved is of little concern. A fact that Hutton is well aware of, but whose rationale he cannot accept.

Hutton's characterisation of the dominant ruling bloc in the middle of the nineteenth century is not in dispute. In the nineteenth century, British capitalism had already expanded into new developing areas outside its formal control, in particular Latin America, as protectionism in US and Germany restricted access to major markets. The profits this generated helped to service the national debt and contribute to employment and political stability at home. In the mid-nineteenth century the main area of growth was the service sector and the most rapidly developing region in Britain was the South-East. The City was at the centre of both.

When British industry was challenged in the latter part of the nineteenth century by the growing industrial powers of US and Germany with larger domestic markets and newer stocks of fixed capital, British

capitalism responded to the challenge where it was strongest – through the international expansion of the financial and commercial activities of the City, with British industry drawing on the assets of and exporting to the Empire. Exports to Europe and US fell while those to Empire rose by an equal amount. 'Invisible' earnings from trade in services and returns on overseas investment rapidly grew and compensated for the fall in visible exports – a fall which was inevitable as a result of the increased international competition in the staple industries such as iron and steel.

Contrary to Hutton's protestations, it was quite rational for the British ruling class to respond in the way it did. Capital is concerned not with production as such but with making the highest possible profits, and the highest returns were to be made from capital expanding overseas because of Britain's still dominant position globally. The fall in the profits of industry were compensated by the the invisible earnings and rising profits from Britain's overseas investments and commercial activities, which in turn allowed the ruling class to buy social peace, and contain class conflict in the turbulent years before the First World War.

Hutton took the term 'gentlemanly capitalism' from Cain and Hopkins' two volume history of British imperialism (see review in FRFI 114 August/September 1993), yet the term imperialism does not figure in Hutton's vocabulary. It is easy to see why. If capitalist nations as they develop are forced to expand overseas, to conquer new markets and to secure ever higher returns, as the rate of profit declines at home, then Britain, as the first imperialist power, showed other mature capitalist nations the path they too must take. And, as Cain and Hopkins argue, grudgingly admitting the relevance of the classical Marxist tradition, it was the growing economic conflicts between the major capitalist powers as they fought to 'redivide the world' that led to the first imperialist war.

'However hesitant Britain was to enter the war it offered the opportunity to destroy Germany's burgeoning overseas power, at least temporarily, and to preserve Britain's economic dominance overseas – a dominance without which she was of little account in the world.' (Vol 1 p456-465)

This conflict between the major capitalist powers was not finally resolved until the end of the Second World War, when the US emerged as the dominant imperialist power with Britain as the junior partner.

Hutton's position that somehow this imperialist culture was put in abeyance in Britain in the 1930s to re-emerge with Thatcher in the 1980s does not survive the most cursory examination. Is it because Hutton sees a modernised Labour Party as a potential vehicle for his programme that he covers up Labour's appalling historical role in defending Britain's imperialist interests and the City as the dominant world financial centre? Indeed, in a section called 'The weakness of Labour' he talks of the 'political innocence of the Labour Party and the poverty of its strategic thinking' in allowing the entire (imperialist) structure to remain in place. It was anything but innocence. It was after all Bevin, Labour's Foreign Secretary after the World War II, who said:

'I am not prepared to sacrifice the British Empire because I know if the British Empire fell... it would mean the standard of life of our constituents would fall considerably.' (House of Commons 21 February 1946)

Britain's strategic position under a Labour government was the same as under the Tories – to maintain Britain as a major imperialist power and sterling as an international currency.

Finally, to treat the development of German and Japanese capitalism after the war, as Hutton does, as some kind

of example for Britain to follow now is ahistorical (pp262-267). The German and Japanese economies were destroyed during the war and rebuilt with capital and new technology supplied by the United States. Their working class movements had been defeated by fascism and war and capital had the most favourable conditions in which to expand profitability. Japan has very little state social security and Germany's high social spending is now regarded as a major problem by the Bundesbank. What is, however, significant is that since the end of the 1970s there has been a massive increase in the export of capital from both these countries, with Japanese and German banks and multinational companies becoming major players on the global markets. Even Hutton is forced to admit that in present day conditions German banks 'are, allegedly (sic) becoming more short-term in their time horizons' and 'that the international system is finding it difficult to accommodate the instabilities caused by the relative strength and weakness of rival capitalisms' (p267, p280). As globalisation proceeds apace, Japanese and German capitalism will follow the same path to rentier capitalism as Britain and the US did before them.

The political economy of the new middle class

After 1945 Britain was still a major industrial power with a strong manufacturing base, its European competitors weakened by the effects of the war. It was a major imperialist power with access to the protected markets of the British Empire and the flow of super-profits from its overseas investments. The world economy was relatively stable under the hegemony of US imperialism. The latter became the international banker for the rest of the capitalist world. Its loans and investments became the driving force behind the post-war boom. The post-war boom was caused by a unique set of circumstances which ended in the mid-1970s with the re-emergence of the challenge from German and Japanese capitalism.

The relative prosperity in Britain during the post-war boom gave rise to new privileged sections of the working class – a new middle class. This layer of predominantly educated, salaried white collar workers grew with the expansion



The fight back – a middle-class nightmare

of the state and services sector and, in the more recent period, with the information technology revolution.

As long as sufficient profits were produced to return an adequate rate of profit on capital invested and to finance state welfare then the social democratic consensus of the post war years could be maintained. It was possible to guarantee the relatively privileged conditions of higher paid workers and the middle classes while sustaining adequate living standards for the mass of

the working class. However, as soon as the rate of profit began to fall – an inevitable consequence of the process of capital accumulation – then the consensus began to break apart. Unemployment and poverty started to grow. And at the very moment when increased state spending was needed, state spending was blamed for the crisis. The myths of Keynesianism were exposed. In the mid-1970s the Labour Party set monetary targets and cut state spending. The low-paid workers fought back and the 'winter of discontent' drove the higher paid skilled workers and the middle classes into the arms of the Tory Party.

Thatcher embraced this new constituency and, as Hutton says, 'the liberal professions, affluent council house tenants and homeowners all benefited from her tax cuts, credit boom and privatisation programme' (p28). The price was growing inequality as state welfare was cut and millions of working class people were driven into poverty to pay for Thatcher's programme.

With the failure of Thatcher's economic policies at the end of the 1980s, and with inequality accelerating, the crisis started to make inroads into the standard of living of sections of the middle class. It is the explosive social consequences of this development which worry Hutton.

It is to the middle classes that he turns in seeking a solution, and it is their interests and prejudices that his programme addresses. This will not be easy. The years of prosperity have taken a toll on their moral fibre.

'Rising prosperity was bound to make a growing proportion of the electorate attempt to express themselves like the gentleman class; to try to attend similar schools, live similar lifestyles and... adopt the same disdainful attitude to those beneath them.' (p49)

Britain, he says, had poor laws and means-tested benefits before and could easily revert to type unless the coalition supporting social welfare is rebuilt. To rebuild this we must win back the allegiance of the middle class. The middle class must opt in, rather than opt-out into the privatised provision of the New Right agenda.

'There is on the one hand, the hard, political requirement that the middle classes and the top third of the income parade must have good reason for accepting the progressive taxation upon which a welfare system depends. They need to get enough out of the system directly in terms of provision and indirectly in terms of social cohesion to make them support the principle of universal benefit to which they are disproportionately heavy contributors. That requires well-designed and high quality welfare services that meet their needs as well.'

The implication here is that second best is good enough for the majority of the working class. Quality and choice are the preserve of the middle classes.

In health this might mean a 'tiered system of contributions above the core contribution, assuring enhanced care for non-life-threatening treatment' (p310). In education 'grammar schools and grammar school streams in comprehensives need to be revived to attract members of the middle class back to the state system.' Public schools should be allowed to keep charitable status as long as they take in a high (not specified) proportion of non-fee-paying children (p311). In short Hutton wants to 'nationalise inequality' within the state system.

This, then, is the British revolution that Hutton proposes. A revolution, led by the middle classes, with a middle class programme which aims to remove from power an entrenched ruling class that has governed Britain since the late seventeenth century and at the same time preserve its own privileged position over the working class. Such are the reactionary, utopian ideas which inform the political economy of the new middle class. And this is Hutton's manifesto for the new Labour Party. ■

Where did the link
between going to Harrow
and being in
in government arise?

Genetics: the crimes of science

At the same time, as science forges ahead at a breathless speed, its products are imposed on a society that lags far behind in its ability to use them beneficially. Thus the discovery of a test for predicting the sex of the unborn child is overwhelmingly used to get rid of girl babies. Advances in satellite communications technology are used to beam pornography around a world in which half the inhabitants remain illiterate. Advances in food technology are used to produce mountains of junk food while two thirds of the world starves. And remember the great debate about progress in machine technology liberating us all for a leisured existence? Millions of people in Britain now experience enforced idleness on £45 per week in the new Leisure Society.

Blood will out

But the question of social responsibility in science is being raised most insistently by the recent rise of the human gene technology industry. A fast and expanding field of research into genetics including the Human Genome Project which will ultimately map the whole of the human gene line, is now forcing itself to public attention. Scientists eager for the publicity which assists their quest for funding are announcing breakthroughs every week. Hence the announcements over the past year of the discovery of the gene for schizophrenia, for alcoholism, for homosexuality. And now researchers tell us that aggressive anti-social behaviour has a genetic basis.

Once the question of gene research leaves such fields as the genetic basis of inherited diseases and enters the realm of behaviour then the entire weight of a backward society's prejudices comes into play. We immediately enter the sphere beloved by fundamentalists and reactionaries - human nature as a fixed and unchangeable entity. Already this argument has reached the US courts with lawyers mounting a defence of a convicted murderer based on the recurrence of violent behaviour in his family tree. The defendant, Stephen Mobley, they argue, could not prevent himself following his genetic fate any more than Oedipus could stop himself bedding his mother and killing his father. The Gods had ordained it for Oedipus, the genes for Mobley. We appear not to have advanced very far in considering these questions since the ancient Greeks.

The dangers of this research being used for reactionary purposes (indeed it is unclear that it could be used otherwise) are obvious. A recent Ciba Foundation conference in London brought scientists together to discuss the genetics of criminal and anti-social behaviour. Progressive scientists in this field, such as Professor Stephen Rose, condemned the conference as 'troublesome, disturbing and unbalanced'. The chair of the conference, Sir Michael Rutter, presented himself as occupying the middle ground of the debate. Crime arises from the 'complex interaction between nature and nurture...'. 'All human behaviour has a genetic component. The question is, how might it work? Through impulsive attention seeking behaviour... Through poor behaviour control?' He went on to claim that research shows little genetic influence on violent crime but important genetic influence on petty crime. (What next, breathless scientists claiming discovery of a gene for taking and driving away?)

He speculated that finding genetic predisposition towards crime might enable the targeting of 'more accurate measures such as probation orders'. Nor did he entirely rule out the removal of genes that tended towards criminality. 'It would only make sense - and only be feasible - if one particular gene had a strong effect'.

One of the most dangerous gulfs in the modern world is that between the level of scientific achievement and popular understanding. It is not a gap which either education or culture tries very hard to bridge. Yet surveys regularly find that, for example, a majority of people have yet to grasp the fact that the earth orbits the sun, a discovery in defence of which poor old Galileo nearly surrendered his life to the Inquisition 400 years ago.

But while the population, whose democratic involvement would be the only real check on the social applications of science, is prevented both technically and politically from applying such supervision, the profit makers happily fill the vacuum. The contradiction between production for profit and social production achieves its most hazardous expression in the field of science. Money now dominates scientific research and application. The dominant philosophy is, if it can be done - and more crucially if it is profitable to do it - it will be done, regardless of consequences. MAXINE WILLIAMS examines the politics of genetics.

Don't toffs have genes?

This standpoint is riddled with reactionary assumptions. We have to recognise that scientists always tend to imagine that they have at last arrived at value-free rationality. They did so when they were in this century poking scalpels into the eyes of 'mentally ill' US citizens in order to cut out part of the front lobes of their brains. Today's oh-so-rational geneticists are no more value free. Announcing a link between genes and crime entirely begs the question of what is criminal and anti-social behaviour. Such behaviour is deemed to be what is in this society regarded as criminal behaviour - the crimes of the poor. That this is the case is proved by the fact that minutes after such a debate begins two questions inevitably arise - poverty and crime, race and crime/intelligence. It is obvious that the unspoken issue is working class, often black, criminality. Yet who defines what is criminal and anti-social? Should a Martian arrive on earth and impartially examine its social systems he would be most likely to conclude that successful criminality is concentrated most heavily in the upper elites of society. Where did the hereditary peers of the House of Lords get their land and titles? By stealing land from poor peasants. Where did the apparent link between going to Harrow and being in the British government arise? By rich people deciding selfishly to hog the educational resources of society. Indeed amongst the titled and royal parasites of Europe a genetic line unfolds of extraordinarily murderous and unscrupulous behaviour.

So is there a gene for being happy to have all your menial work done by other people? Is there a gene for setting up factories producing pesticides in Bhopal and then refusing to compensate those maimed and ruined when it blows up? Is there a gene predisposing some people to remain happily eating pheasant while other humans starve to death? There is nothing more absurd about these questions than there is about announcing a genetic basis for petty crime. They only sound ridiculous because it is an unspoken assumption of the debate that 'good genes' congregate in the upper echelons of society and 'bad genes' at the bottom.

That the rich are rich because they are more able, the poor are poor because they are stupid or feckless. The rich pass on their genetic and material wealth, the poor pass on their incapacity and lawlessness.

The genetics debate is really always about control (and sometimes the destruction) of the troublesome poor. And this remains the case whether it is presented as the basis of measures forcibly to sterilise people

The combination of an elite determined to hang on at all costs to its power and a science that appears to give credibility to their vile programmes to keep down the poor is a deadly one.

or to 'target social assistance' to them. Sir Michael Rutter, for example, links criminal behaviour to impulsive behaviour. And we all know what he is picturing - young working class lad passes open window, can't control himself and bang, he's pinched a video. Yet the reality is that the poor lead rigidly controlled lives compared to the heroes and heroines depicted in the gilded interiors of *Hello!* magazine. The latter are unlikely however to be the targets of social and genetic researchers. They can, after all, satisfy their inexplicably vulgar impulses without upsetting the status quo.

The hidden agenda

There are, happily, scientific voices raised which reveal the hidden agenda which lies under scientific neutrality. In his excellent book *The Doctrine of DNA*, leading geneticist RC Lewontin argues:

'Despite its claims to be above society, science, like the Church before it, is a supremely social institution, reflecting and reinforcing the dominant values and views of a society at each historical epoch.' (p9)

He shows the vast extent of capitalist penetration into biotechnology re-

search and its ideological penetration, something which legitimises the existing unjust and unequal society. The editor of the highly-regarded US journal *Science* was, says Lewontin, challenged that the vast billions being spent on the Human Genome Project might be better spent on the homeless. 'What these people don't realise' he replied 'is that the homeless are impaired... Indeed no group will benefit more from the application of human genetics.' Apparently he is also optimistic about finding the genes for alcoholism, unemployment, domestic and social violence, and drug addiction.

Stephen Rose criticises the current US research obsession with defining the origins of violence in terms of the genotypes of poor blacks and whites, the problems of 'temperament' in toddlers and deficiencies in chemical balances amongst prisoners. Measures to reduce the estimated 280 million handguns would have more effect.

And when the 'reputable' scientists in this field (of whom Lewontin says, none is without a financial stake in the biotechnology business) finally seriously announce their discovered genes for crime etc, what then? Will the poor be prevented from breeding other than by earning the right to do so? Will they be sterilised? Will their children be removed to conditions in which their genetic predispositions are not allowed to develop? This is not at all far-fetched. Indeed many of these programmes are under active discussion in the US under the heading of dealing with welfare mothers and their children. Women are already denied welfare for additional children born whilst on welfare in some states. There is talk of orphanages for children on welfare.

Genetics as murder

The combination of an elite determined to hang on at all costs to its power and a science that appears to give credibility to their vile programmes to keep down the poor, is a deadly one. We do not have to look far back to see the consequences. In Nazi Germany young people held to be anti-social were incarcerated in Moringen Concentration Camp. There they were used for research in

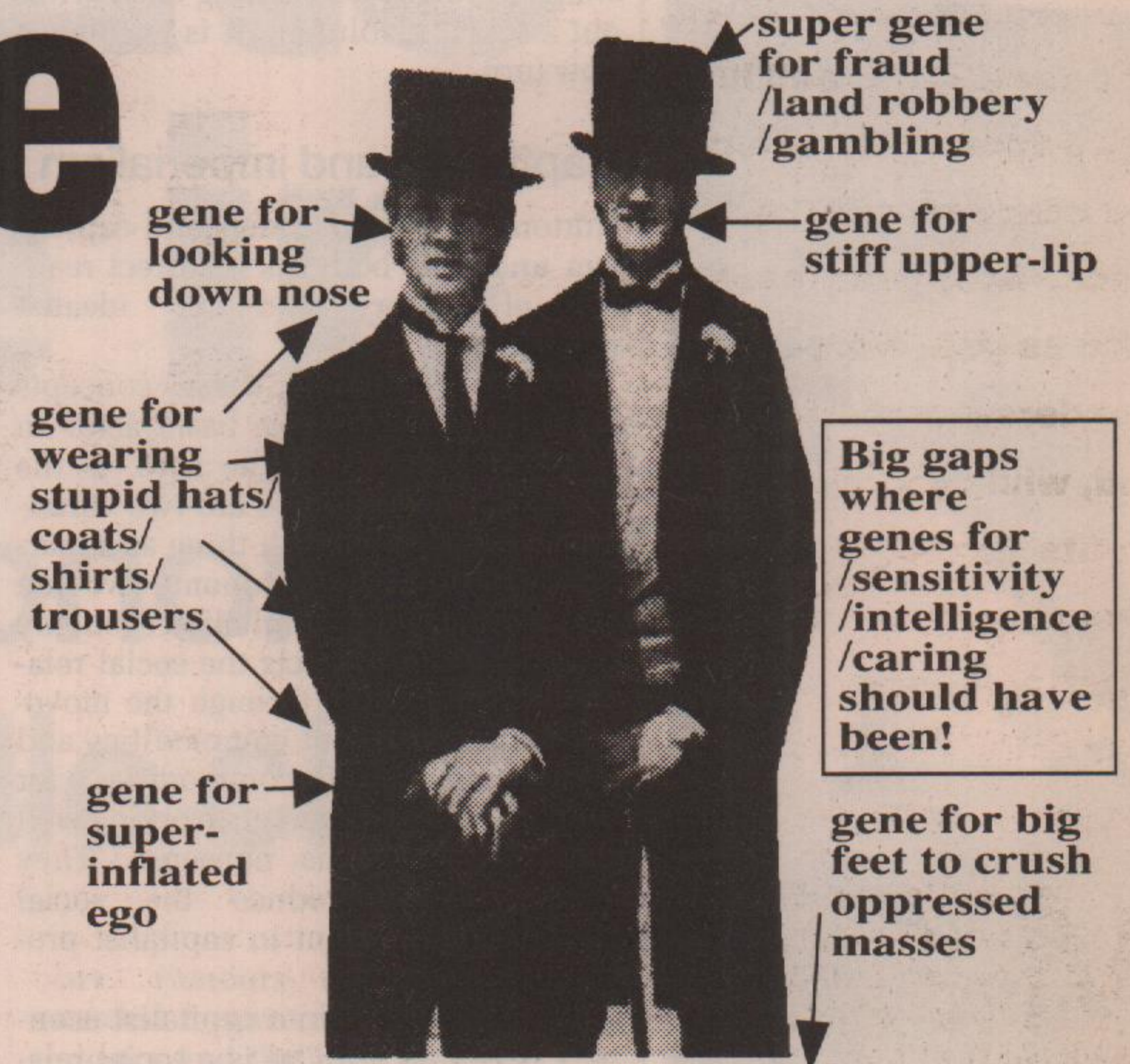
'racial biology'. Most were later killed. A senior judge wrote approvingly of the research:

'The negative human material detained in Moringen... provides valuable data for educational purposes, in the sense that it displays its coarse and, in some instances, unadulterated form the defects which can be found... in young people who although not yet depraved are at risk, in so far as risk is biologically determined.'

The regime at Moringen was designed by the Institute of Criminal Biology. The mentally ill were dealt with under the 1933 Law for the Prevention of the Genetically Unhealthy. They were simply murdered - 70,000 died. This law was proclaimed by the minister responsible: 'We must once more have the courage to classify our people according to their hereditary value.' All Jews and Gypsies were by definition genetically unhealthy. Married women regarded as genetically healthy were given loans paid off by the arrival of children. Those who were unhealthy were refused loans and could be compulsorily sterilised. Genetic Health Courts were set up which could order sterilisation (200,000-350,000 were sterilised) or imprisonment. The Nazis too felt that social behaviour was inborn. The judgement on one victim of a Genetic Health Court was:

'In addition there is the appellant's behaviour, both in life in general and towards the legal system. He has twice been sentenced for larceny and once for aggravated larceny and is at present in detention on strong suspicion of grand larceny. That his feeble-mindedness is inborn is proved by its having appeared in early youth [failure at school] and in virtue of the fact that there are no external circumstances that might have induced it.'

Eminent scientists and 'reputable' research in Germany sanctioned the belief in inherited behavioural traits which was used to justify these measures. Unless scientists today recognise the dangerous waters they have entered, they collude with reaction. And unless these questions start to get informed debate on the left and more widely, the field is left open to those who use science as yet another set of shackles. ■



Biopiracy – the new way to plunder the third world that exceeds the dreams of El Dorado of the raiders of the past. Go to an exotic area; take whatever genetic resources you can lay your hands on – plants, animals, micro-organisms; breed them conventionally or using genetic engineering to produce new varieties or cell lines that you can reproduce ad infinitum; patent whatever you can; and sell the new seed strains, animal breeds or resulting products such as pharmaceuticals back to the plundered countries at a ransom. And, while you sit back and rake in the profits on your booty, sue anybody who tries to copy you for infringement of your ‘intellectual property rights’.

ZOE GREEN writes on this new form of imperialist plunder.

The capitalist stranglehold on bioscience

More than 90 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity is located in Asia, Africa and South America. The global seed industry, dependent on the genetic resources of these countries, is worth \$15bn a year. Third world plant species are worth \$30bn a year to the pharmaceutical industry alone.

Stealing from the poor

In the 1950s, a system of International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs) was set up by such US-dominated organisations as the World Bank to generate higher yielding crops. These centres helped produce the improved crops of the so-called Green Revolution. The IARCs built up large collections of crop varieties in seed banks that became essential to crop breeders and hence extremely valuable. Crop breeders could freely use these seed banks, develop new varieties and sell seed at great profit. Genes from the centres incorporated into the US rice crop boost its value by \$200m a year, Italy's durum wheat crop is upped by \$300m a year, and Australia has benefited by \$2.2bn over 20 years in increased grain yields. Not a cent has gone to the mainly third world countries that supplied the original seeds. Genetic engineering further increases the value of the seeds to breeders. New improved crops can be quickly developed by incorporating genes for desirable traits from one species into another. These crops can then be patented and sold for vast monopoly profits.

The bitter struggle over the Biodiversity Convention has been on this question: would the multinationals and their ‘intellectual property rights’ triumph over the rights of the poor nations who supply the raw materials of biodiversity? It remains to be seen how much of the \$15bn a year in global seed sales will go to the countries that provided much of the genetic resource.

Patenting life

Patents play an important role in the capitalists' grip on bioscience. Patents give the holder exclusive rights to sell their inventions for up to 20 years; no one else may make use of the technology without paying a licence fee set by the patent holder. Anyone using a patented idea, knowingly or not, can be sued for patent infringement if they do not hold a

licence. Thus once one organisation gains a patent, other organisations abandon research in that field for fear of being sued or having to pay punitive licence fees.

With patents, companies have an enshrined monopoly and can charge what they like for their products. Profits on sales of pharmaceuticals are typically 80 per cent, something even the free market evangelist Clintons are wanting to cap. Even for pesticides, profits on this scale are not unusual. And this is for products made using conventional technologies. With advances in genetic engineering, even greater profits are up for grabs.

Take the case of the gene for human erythropoietin (EPO). EPO is a natural hormone that stimulates the production of red blood cells and is used to treat kidney dialysis patients with anaemia and patients undergoing chemotherapy for AIDS or cancer. The world market is worth \$1bn a year and one company alone earns \$587m a year from the drug simply because it holds the patents in the US and Europe on EPO and the methods for producing it. Such is the potential for other companies to profit from

selling this drug in countries not covered by the patent that cells genetically engineered to produce human EPO were recently stolen and offered for sale at \$300,000.

The high value of patents leads to races to be the first to file for a patent. In order to beat the competition, even huge multinational conglomerates see the need for cooperation on their terms. Rhone Poulenc Rorer has set up a ‘gene superclub’ to share data and technology on gene therapy. This technique could be used to repair or block faulty genes that cause diseases such as cancer, heart disease and nervous system disorders. Members of the club share their diverse approaches and have access to all the necessary techniques, but RPR has the right to delay publication of results from any of the members while it claims patents on their discoveries and inventions.

To exploit a patent fully, applicants try to cover as broad an area as possible. Stanford University holds a patent that covers all genetic engineering, based on a method that its researchers developed for inserting genes into bacteria. Researchers who use this method must hold a licence from the University. One company, Mycogen, holds a patent covering any plant carrying a gene inserted using a particular, but now commonly used, bacterium and another that covers any plant that contains a gene for insect resistance. A patent application has been made for a test to identify one of the genes that predisposes women to breast cancer; the patent covers not just the gene that they have found but all possible mutations, including those yet to be discovered and even yet to occur!

There is also a race to ‘bank’ genes themselves – the codes to life – by listing their DNA sequences. The Human Genome Project, an international collaborative venture by which research scientists aim to sequence the entire human DNA, was at the point of collapse recently when US National Institutes of Health filed for patents on 6,000 DNA fragments and the British Medical Research Council (MRC) retaliated by applying for patents on 1,100 fragments. The MRC also prevented its researchers from publishing their work in the meantime, since knowledge in the public domain would not be patentable. Previously, research establishments had collaborated, with scientists having free access to all the data from the project. This new gold rush was brought to an end by the ruling that DNA fragments



cannot be patented when their biological function is not known.

One company, Human Genome Sciences, has gone ahead and ‘banked’ details of DNA strands that could identify more than one third of all human genes thought to exist. Anybody wishing to use the information for academic research may do so but HGS has rights to negotiate a marketing contract on any commercial products developed. Since they will only be able to identify and patent 100 genes a year, issuing contracts to other researchers could lead to marketable products that HGS could not find alone. Thus HGS could gain a large proportion of the human gene product market simply by sitting back and letting others make developments from their information.

This profit-making formula has been taken to its logical parasitic extreme by some companies: they exist solely through owning patents and suing for patent infringement. They produce nothing, not even research results or the patents themselves. Knowledge has been redefined as intellectual property and is simply another tradeable commodity.

Technology – for use or profit?

So what has biotechnology produced after all this frenzied effort? Low water quick fry potatoes, tomatoes with a longer shelf life and

better ketchup-making qualities, fruit that doesn't discolour when processed and, shortly, perhaps, ice cream-flavoured bananas. All that McDonalds needs now is a chicken genetically engineered to lay Golden McNuggets.

Genetic engineering of crops has been directed, not surprisingly, towards the benefit of the oppressor nations. Tropical crops are being engineered to grow at higher latitudes so that they can be produced closer to the northern hemisphere markets, robbing the third world of its meagre income from cash crops. Effort has been concentrated on improving food quality, not quantity, to meet the demands of Sainsbury, Safeway, Waitrose et al. Far from feeding the world, genetic engineering is feeding the idle fancies of the rich and pushing the prices of new seed varieties and their growing techniques even further beyond the reach of third world farmers.

In medical biotechnology, there have been many advances, but again they have been focused on the needs or wishes of the multinationals. A major target of biotechnology companies is cystic fibrosis, a disease confined to white Europeans and their descendants. There is now a test for HIV, but no effective treatments or vaccines. The preliminary vaccines that have been developed are for a strain of HIV common to North America; they would be useless in African countries such as Uganda with a high incidence of HIV but of a different strain. Tuberculosis is widespread in underdeveloped countries yet was virtually eradicated elsewhere due to comprehensive immunisation programmes. Research into TB was abandoned until recently when drug-resistant TB started to spread rapidly in cities such as New York. Malaria kills 3 million people a year, most of them children in sub-Saharan Africa, and 500 million more suffer from the disease, yet existing medication against the disease is expensive, has many side effects and is at best 40-60 per cent effective. The development of a vaccination against malaria is being led by a biochemist in Bogota.

Rinderpest is a disease that kills 50-80 per cent of cattle in the Horn of Africa. An eradication programme in the 1960s used a live vaccine that was difficult to administer in remote areas without the necessary refrigeration. An epidemic broke out again in the 1980s but lack of funds, vaccine production facilities and trained veterinary staff have prevented containment of the disease using the original vaccine. A new genetically engineered vaccine that is easy to administer and produce has now been developed by an Ethiopian vet.

Determined to find a solution to the disease that was crippling his country, he persuaded a biotechnology company in the US to teach him molecular biology techniques as payment for work he had done. After fighting for research funding, he developed a vaccine in a year. It took five more years of battling with international regulatory authorities before being allowed to carry out trials in Africa. With the advances in biotechnology directed to line the coffers of the multinationals, it took the dogged determination of one man to produce a solution of major importance to the destitute countries of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia.

Humanity has the tools that will enable it to eradicate or cure many of the world's major diseases. It has the tools to engineer crops with better yields, greater resistance to fungal and insect attack and ability to grow in hostile drought-stricken regions. It could ensure that everybody is fed and healthy. But the tools are in the hands of the multinationals; preventing deaths is no concern of theirs.

English Revolution

1640-1660

- its legacy for today -

Today the conception of an English Revolution in 1640-1660 is widely dismissed as a 'Marxist' invention. The academic establishment is zealously rewriting history in order to expunge all evidence of class struggle and revolution and to present egalitarian or communist aspirations as alien to Britain's historical traditions. Yet the British capitalist ruling class established itself through the revolution of 1640-1660. It first defeated the old feudal order and then turned on the democratic and egalitarian forces – the Levellers and Diggers among them – without whose support its victory would have been unattainable. EDDIE ABRAHAMS argues that, in the struggle against capitalism today, a new communist movement will profit by recovering the rich legacy of the Levellers, and in particular the Diggers.

constitution The Agreement of the People, Colonel Rainsborough argued for the extension of the franchise declaring that 'the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he.' Expressing the interests of the 'middling sort' Sexby, a leading Leveller, said: 'There are many thousands of us soldiers that have ventured our lives... But it seems now, except a man hath a fixed estate in this kingdom, he hath no right in this kingdom.'

But the English bourgeoisie was never interested in democracy. The civil war was waged essentially between two privileged and propertied minorities. The Levellers represented a threat to capitalist property so Cromwell warned: 'You must cut these people to pieces or they will cut you in pieces.' Colonel Ireton warned: 'If you admit (to the vote) any man that hath a breath and being... this will destroy property. Why may not those men vote against all property.' Political power should be limited to men of property:

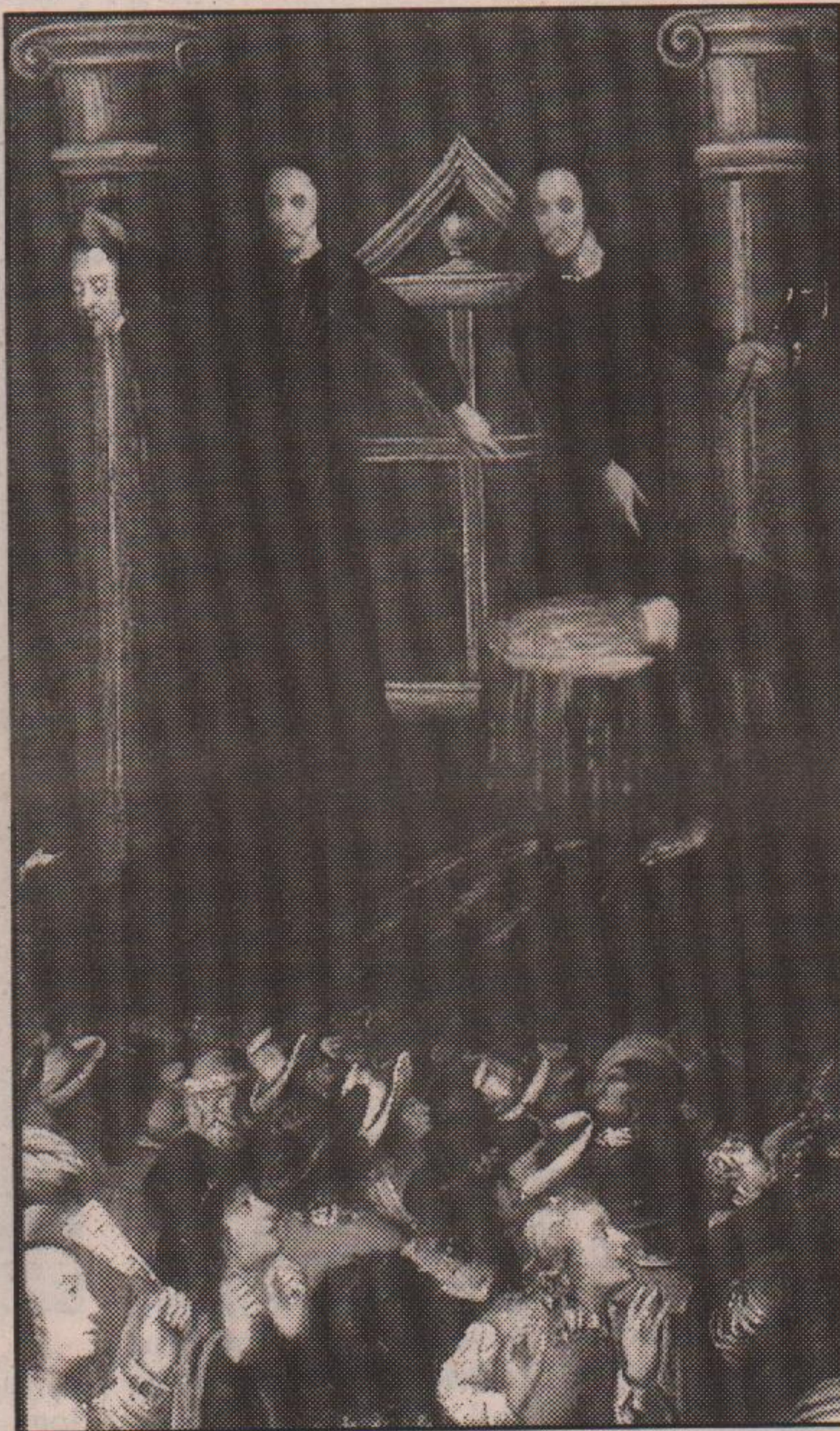
'No person hath a right... in determining or choosing those that shall determine what laws we shall be ruled by here... that hath not a permanent fixed interest in this kingdom.'

The Levellers, who were organised throughout the army, made an attempt to capture the army but were defeated at Ware in November 1647. However the decisive clash between them and Cromwell came after the execution of Charles, following the second stage of the civil war. Then Cromwell destroyed the Levellers, defeating their most dangerous insurrection in Burford in May 1649.

Forces for the future, the Diggers, Winstanley and communism

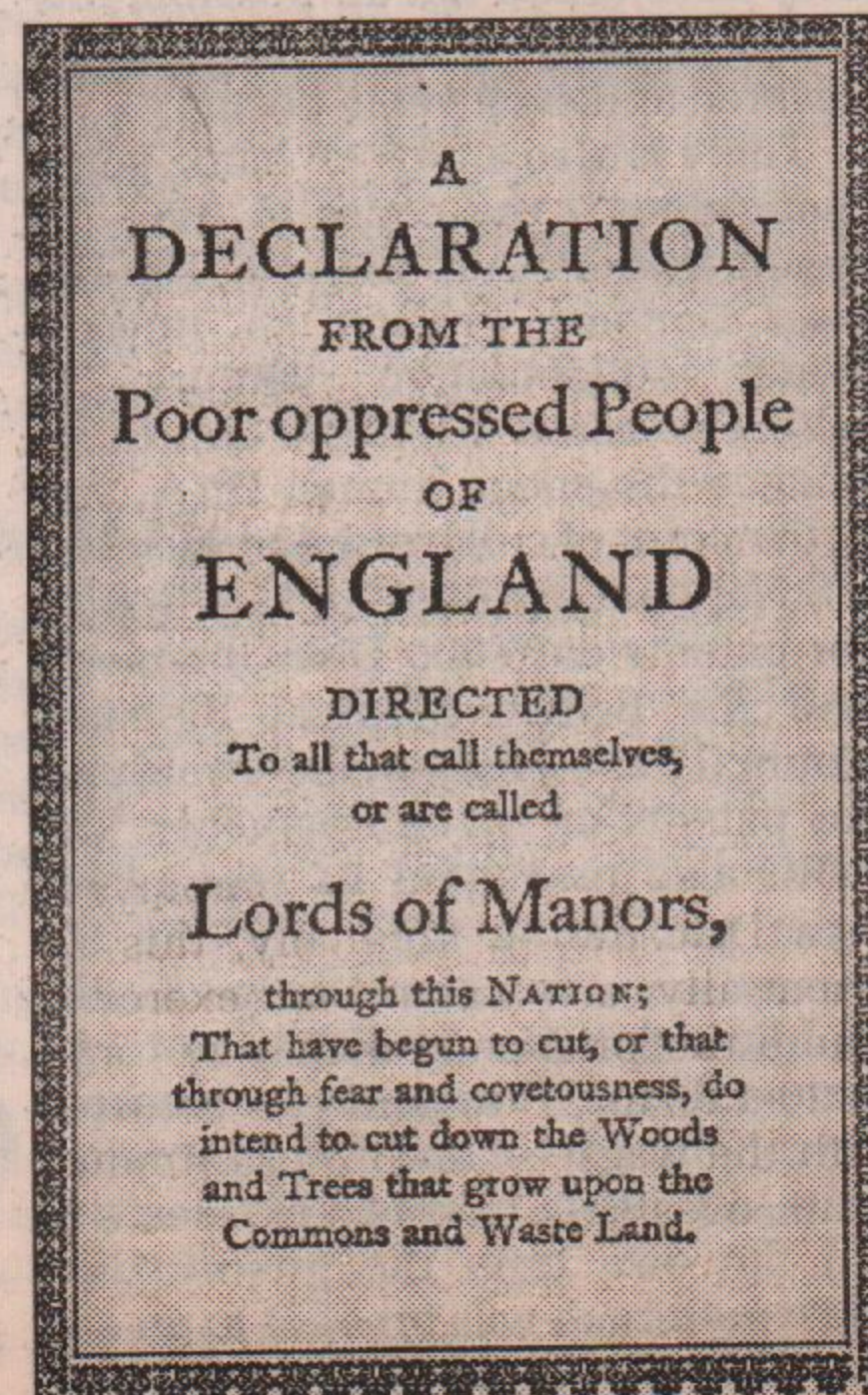
The Levellers' defeat did not exhaust the progressive potential of the revolution. Indeed 1649 witnessed the emergence of the revolution's most significant trend – the Diggers led by Gerard Winstanley. Unlike the Levellers, who spoke for the individual, small property owner, the Diggers spoke consciously for the propertyless offering them a communist, collective solution to problems of poverty and hunger.

In 1649, two months after the King's execution, a group of Diggers established themselves on waste-



Execution of Charles I

land on St George's Hill in Surrey and started 'digging' – cultivating the land in common – to 'work together and eat bread together'. They soon inspired 10 other such communities throughout Britain. Though they remained small and were defeated, their legacy represents a powerful critique of the limited nature of the



common people 'are still oppressed by thy courts, sizes, sessions, by thy justices and clerks of the peace (so called), bailiffs, committees, are imprisoned and forced to spend that bread that should save their lives from famine.'

Winstanley advanced a profound and radical explanation for the failure of the English revolution – it did not abolish private property which is the source of all class division, injustice, violence and war:

'wherefore is it that there is such wars and rumours of wars in the nations of the earth? And wherefore are men so mad to destroy one another? but to uphold civil property of honour, dominion and riches one over another, which is the curse the creation groans under, waiting for delivery. But when once the earth becomes a common treasury again, and it must... Then this enmity in all lands will cease.'

In Winstanley we can detect the incipient voices of Rousseau and Marx. Winstanley rejected the view that private property and social inequality is a natural, eternal form:

'We... in the name of all the poor oppressed people in England declare unto you that call yourselves

lords of manors and lords of the land that... the earth was not made purposely for you to be lords of it, and we to be your slaves, servants and beggars; but it was made to be a common livelihood to all, without respect of persons...'

Indeed nature has not ordained that:

'one branch of mankind should rule over another. And the reason is this, every single man, male or female, is a perfect creature of himself.'

Far from being 'natural', private property and oppression are historical and therefore transitory forms brought about by violence. The 'power of enclosing land and owning property was brought into the creation by your ancestors by the sword...' The rich and wealthy 'live in breach of the seventh and eighth commandments, Thou shalt not steal or kill...' Having asserted the historical character of private property, Winstanley explains why the rich are so determined to keep hold of it.

Private property ensures that the rich 'receive all they have from the labourer's hand, and what they give, they give away other men's labours, not their own.' The poor 'by their labour lift up tyrants to rule over them.' This radical insight into the origin of wealth was coupled by a sharp attack on commodity production. Buying and selling 'is the great cheat that robs and steals the earth one from another. It is that which makes some lords, others beggars, some rulers, others to be ruled...'

In a world in which private property is dominant, the state exists to defend the wealthy. 'For what are prisons, and putting others to death, but the power of the sword to enforce people to that government which was got by conquest and sword and cannot stand of itself, but by the same murdering power.'

Liberation from the 'murdering power' is possible. But only if the poor act for themselves. Those who advise the poor to slow, postpone or curtail the task of building a communist society here on earth are deceivers, for:

'While men are gazing up to heaven, imagining after a happiness or fearing a hell after they are dead, their eyes are put out, that they see not what is their birthrights, and what is to be done by them while they are living.'

And what can be done now is to build a society in which:

'we may work in righteousness and lay the foundations of making the earth a common treasury for all... (so) that everyone that is born in the land may be fed by the earth his mother that brought him forth... Not enclosing any part into any particular hand, but all as one man working together and feeding together as sons of one father, members of one family...'

Some three hundred and fifty years after Winstanley, this most elementary of tasks is still to be accomplished. Winstanley wrote well before the full development of capitalism and the working class. Yet his systematic critique of private property and his call for collective action by the propertyless and poor has a powerful relevance in our own century of 'wars and rumours of wars' when 'men are so mad to destroy one another' and when a society fit for all remains a dream.

On 30 January 1649 King Charles was beheaded. With his head went the effective power of the old feudal order. The Church and Crown had kept in place a landed feudal aristocracy which was fast losing its economic predominance to a rising class of capitalist landlords, merchants and traders. Before 1640 the Church was a vast apparatus of control, coercion and taxation. Its Court of Ecclesiastical Commission was an instrument of government and bishops acted as royal civil servants and ministers of state. After 1640 it was subordinated to Parliament which represented the new capitalist class's interests. Many of the Crown's powers – over taxation, foreign policy and the armed forces – were also transferred to Parliament as the Star Chamber, Court of High Commission and Court of Wards were all abolished. The victorious bourgeoisie also amassed even greater fortunes by confiscating and selling feudal lands for over £1.4m, Crown lands for over £2.5m and Church lands at nearly £2m.

The democratic movement – the Levellers

This struggle between the old order and the bourgeoisie was decided by civil war (1642-49) in which the New Model Army was instrumental. To secure victory Cromwell and his faction of the bourgeoisie needed to mobilise the support of the 'middling sort' – small property owners, artisans and craftsmen. The Army became the agency for this alliance. Cromwell declared: 'I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for and loves what he knows, than that which you call "a gentleman" and is nothing else.'

The Army was both a military and political force. To incorporate the 'middling sort' it was democratically organised, with county and revolutionary committees across the country. It thus became a forum for the Levellers, the political representatives of small property. These sectors wanted the revolution to go beyond the narrow needs of the big bourgeoisie. At the height of their influence between 1646 and 1649 their programme demanded complete free trade for small producers, not just for the big merchants for whom Parliament had already abolished monopolies.

The revolution had granted security of tenure to large capitalist landowners but not to small-holders. The Levellers demanded such security and safeguards against evictions and enclosures by expanding capitalist farmers. They also called for reform of the debtors' laws, the abolition of tithes and the disestablishment of the Church. To secure this they demanded a republic and an extension of the franchise to men over 21.

All these demands were rejected by Cromwell and the English bourgeoisie. While willing to use the Levellers, under no conditions would they countenance any concessions to them. For the English bourgeoisie the revolution ended with the King's capture in 1646. They had secured the supremacy of Parliament, title to land, broken up the monopolies and done away with old feudal dues. They now wanted to dismantle the revolutionary army and arrange a compromise with a subdued Crown.

The Levellers insisted on pushing the revolution further. In the 1647 Army Council debates on a Leveller

Slaves of the state

per capita prison population in Europe, the US has the highest in the world (five times that of Britain). So, it is important that activists in Britain are informed of developments in the US, both in terms of repression and of resistance to it. We reproduce here an article by US prisoner PAUL WRIGHT on prison slave labour. In Britain prisoners are already making garments for private companies such as Joe Bloggs Jeans.

Many people have the mistaken impression that slavery was abolished after the Civil War by the passage of the 13th amendment. Unfortunately, that was not the case. The 13th amendment reads: 'Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.'

The reality was made apparent in the aftermath of the Civil War when large numbers of newly freed black slaves found themselves 'duly convicted' of crimes and in state prisons where, once again, they laboured without pay. Until the last 20 years it was common practice for state prisons to 'rent' prison labour out to private contractors in a modern form of chattel slavery. This led the Virginia Supreme Court to remark in 1871 that prisoners were 'slaves of the state'. All that has changed since is that the state is less honest about its slave-holding practices.

Until the 1930s most state and federal prisons were largely self-sufficient, producing most of the goods and food they consumed, and even a surplus, for sale, of some products. Prisoners even served as armed guards (until the mid-1970s Arkansas held 3,000 prisoners with only 27 civilian employees) and other functions which required minimal investment by the state. Self-sufficiency and excess production for profit largely ended in the Depression when both unions and manufacturers complained about competing against prison-made products on the open market.

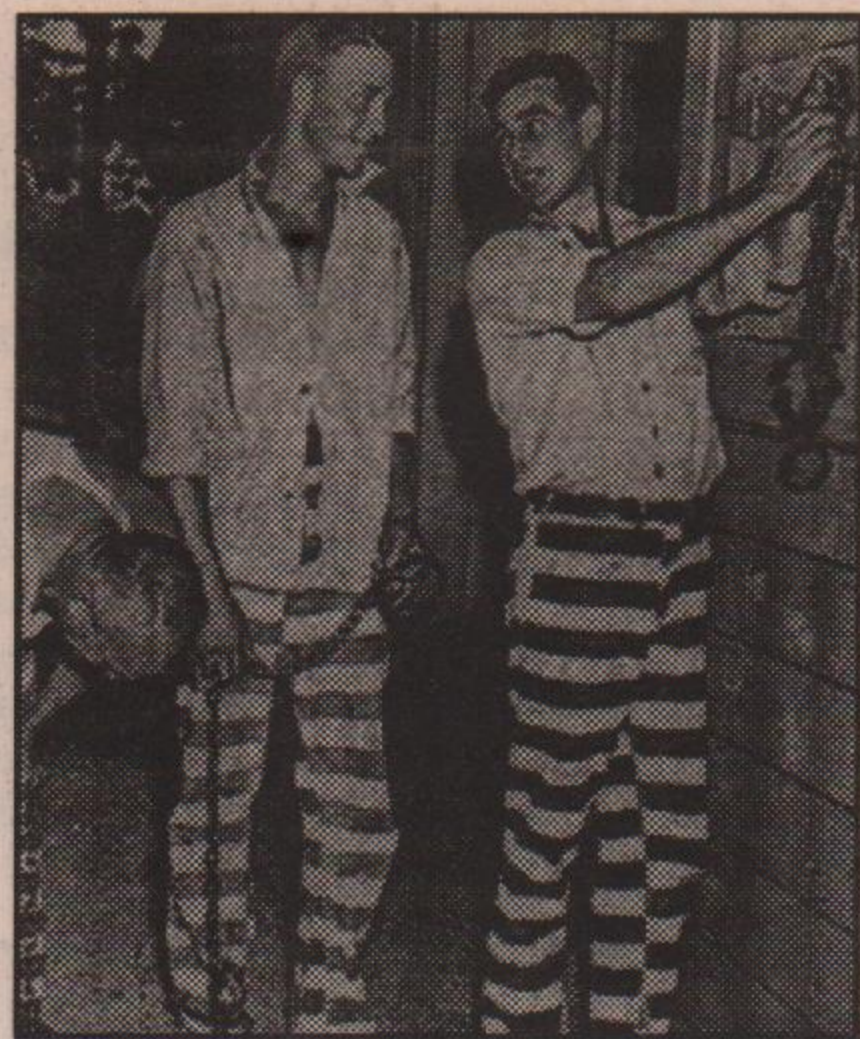
In most manufactured products labour is the most expensive component. Cut labour costs and the profit margin increases. With a prison labour force working at no cost, state and federal prisons could easily compete against private manufacturers and workers. One of the laws passed was the Ashhurst-Summers Act, which prohibited the transport in interstate commerce of prison-made goods unless the prisoners were paid at least a minimum wage.

Prison labour did not become a major issue again until the 1980s. Until then most prison-produced goods were either for use within the system or sale to other state agencies; licence plates being the most famous example. This began to change when the massive prison-building and incarceration binge began to gather steam. In a 1986 study designed to reduce the cost to the government of its prison policies, former Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger issued the call for transforming prisons into 'factories with fences'.

While some think unpaid, forced labour offers enormous profit potential, there are historic reasons why slavery is no longer the dominant

mode of production. First, the slave-owner has a capital investment in the slave; regardless of whether the slave is working or producing profit, he must be fed, housed, etc in minimal conditions to ensure his value as a labour producer remains. With the rise of industrial capitalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, capitalists discovered that capitalism has boom and bust cycles, characterised by over-

production. Thus, idle slaves would become a drain on the owner's finance because they would still require feeding etc. However, if the slave were 'free' he could be employed at low wages and laid off when not producing profit. The wage slave was free to starve, free to be homeless etc, with no consequences for the owner.



Prisoners hang up their ankle shackles for the last time after chain gangs were banned in Georgia in the 1930s

Another reason chattel slavery was inefficient compared to wage slavery was that slaves would occasionally revolt, destroying the means of production and killing the slave owner. More common and less dramatic were acts of sabotage and destruction that made machinery, with its attendant capital investment, impractical for use by slaves. So, by the mid-19th century wage-slaves using machines could out-produce, at greater profit for the factory owner, chattel slaves who were using less easily damaged, more primitive machinery.

The problem slave-owners of old faced was what to do with non-producing slaves. Today's slave-owner, the state, faces the opposite problem of idle slaves who must be fed, clothed and housed, whether or not they produce anything of value. The current thinking goes that any potential profit is better than none.

Some proponents of prison slavery try to disguise it as a 'rehabilitation' or 'vocational' programme designed to give prisoners job skills or a trade which can be used upon release. This is not the case. First, almost without exception, the jobs available are labour-intensive, menial, low-skill jobs which tend to be performed by



Thorn Cross - expected to become Britain's first 'boot camp'

exploited workers who are in Third World dictatorships, illegal immigrants in the US or prisoners. Clothes and textile manufacturing is the biggest and most obvious example. Second, because jobs don't exist, the job skills acquired are hardly useful. Does anyone expect a released prisoner to go to Guatemala or El Salvador to get a job sewing clothes for the US market at a dollar a day? Third, if it is rehabilitational then why not pay the prisoner at least the minimum wage? Fourth, it ignores the reality that the US has at least 8-9 million unemployed workers, many highly skilled, who cannot find jobs that pay a meaningful wage. 'Job-training' programmes are a failure because all the training in the world won't create jobs with decent wages. In pursuit of higher profits, ie lower salaries, US and multinational corporations have transferred virtually all labour-intensive production jobs to Third World countries. If prisoners are going to be exploited as slave labour, it should be called just that.

The US has little problem condemning the export of prison-made goods from China. What makes this rank hypocrisy is that the same criticisms levelled by the US against China can be levelled at the US. According to a March 1994 story in the Seattle Times prison-made goods from California and Oregon are being exported for retail sales. In a supreme irony, the California Department of Corrections (DOC) is marketing its clothing lines in Asia, competing against the sweatshops of Indonesia, Hong Kong, Thailand and, of course, China. The 'Prison Blues' brand of clothes, made by prisoners in Oregon, has projected sales of over \$1.2 million in export revenues. US State Department officials were quoted saying they wished prison-made goods were not exported by state DOCs because it is being raised as an issue by other governments - namely China, which has cited US practices in response to criticisms. The Chinese have now announced a ban on the export of prison-made goods, while the US is stepping up such exports.

California prisoners making goods for export are paid between 35 cents and \$1 an hour. Oregon prisoners are paid \$6-8 an hour, but have to pay back up to 80% to cover the cost of their captivity. As they are employed by a DOC-owned company, this is essentially an accounting exercise where the prisoners' real wages are \$1.20-1.80 an hour. Still competitive with the wages paid to illegal immigrant sweatshop workers in the US and garment workers in the Far East and Central America.

Fred Nichols of Unigroup, the

The British government has conveniently concealed the findings of a report into the effectiveness of 'boot-camps': the current US incarnation of the 'short, sharp, shock'. The report revealed they were completely ineffective at preventing crime but continued to be popular with policy-makers because of the 'good television clips' they provided. Britain is hell-bent on importing every feature of US crime policy. 'New Generation' prisons, privatisation and electronic tagging are in operation or in the pipeline. If the rantings of Tory MP Elizabeth Peacock about flogging offenders on the Lottery TV slot seem ludicrous, remember that Bills introducing corporal punishment are being seriously debated throughout the US. And the governor of Alabama is currently taking steps to reintroduce the chain-gang. Not content with the infamous Californian 'three strikes and you're out' law whereby anyone convicted of three felonies receives a mandatory minimum of 25 years some southern states have serious proponents of 'three strikes and you're dead' legislation. While Britain has the highest

Oregon DOC prison industries, was quoted, saying: 'We want them to work in the same environment as on the outside,' in terms of hiring interviews and such. Yet, obviously this does not include the right to collective bargaining and union representation, which are common to the labour process outside prisons and would teach important rehabilitational values such as collective dispute resolution, the principle of a fair wage for work etc.

While the particulars may change, the trend continues towards increased exploitation of prison slave labour. Some states, especially in the South, still have unpaid prisoners labouring in fields, supervised by armed guards on horseback, with no pretence of 'rehabilitation' or 'job-training'. In those states, labour is mandatory; refusal to work brings harsh punishment and increased sentences.

In 1977 the Supreme Court decision in *Jones v North Carolina Prisoners' Labour Union* removed the notion that the courts will offer any protection for prisoner union organising. Efforts to obtain the minimum wage through litigation have been largely unsuccessful, with courts bending over backwards to read exemptions (which are not written) into the Federal Fair Labor and Standards Act.

The problem that slave owners of old faced is still faced by modern slave-owners: namely resistance by slaves. To the extent that private-run slave operations exist in prisons, there is the massive state subsidy that they receive. And for state-run enterprises there are hidden costs: enormous 'security' expenses associated with guards, checkpoints, controls, that are not present with wage-slaves on the outside. The occasional mutiny by irate slaves with concomitant

loss of production, capital investment in machinery etc, is likely to deter private ventures.

In Washington the state offers incentives for private businesses to employ prison slaves. Class I venture industries pay no rent, electricity, water or similar costs. They are exempt from workplace safety standards, pay no medical, unemployment or vacation/sick leave to slaves who have no right of collective organising or bargaining. We are seeing welfare capitalism where private business is getting a handout from the state at taxpayer expense. One which, I suspect, will largely swallow the profit paid back to the state under guise of taxes, room, board etc, by the prisoner. To the extent that prison slaves are forced to pay taxes there arises the question, linked to the right to vote, of taxation without representation. If forced to pay taxes, under guise of rehabilitative or vocational employment, then why not the right to vote given to other taxpayers?

Workers outside should also be aware of the consequences prison slave labour has for their jobs. Ironically, as unemployment increases, crime and the concomitant incarceration rate increases. It may be that before too long people can only find menial labour - intensive production jobs in prisons, or Third World countries, where people labour under similar conditions. The factory with fences meets the prison without walls.

Paul Wright is editor of *Prisoners' Legal News*, a monthly bulletin produced by US prisoners, dealing mainly with litigation by prisoners against the state, but also containing political, analytical and informative articles about prisons in the US and world-wide, and other related matters. European subscriptions are available from: Solidarieta Proletaria, CP 17030, 20170 Milan, Italy.

SAVE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

Political prisoners throughout Europe and the US have joined forces with activists outside prison to mount a high-profile eleventh hour attempt to save the life of black political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is on death row in Pennsylvania.



Mumia Abu-Jamal is a former spokesman for the Black Panther Party, a supporter of the Philadelphia MOVE organisation, and an award-winning journalist who was framed in 1982 for the killing of a police officer. The danger is imminent. Pennsyl-

vania Governor Tom Ridge came to power in January on a pro-death penalty platform and has already signed three death warrants. The Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police openly boasts of its campaign to kill Mumia and is also trying to prevent the publication of his book *Live from Death Row*. Publishers Addison-Wesley have refused to be intimidated and say the book will be on sale in May.

The campaign to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal is being coordinated in Britain by the Partisan Defence Committee. As we go to press they are organising a rally in London to raise support. Leaflets, petitions and up-to-date information can be obtained from PDC at BCM Box 4986, London WC1N 3XX, telephone 0171 485 1396. Donations are urgently needed and can also be sent to this address, clearly marked 'Jamal Legal Defence'. Letters of solidarity can be sent to Mumia Abu-Jamal #AM-9335, 1040 East Roy Furman Highway, Waynesburg, PA 15370-8090, USA.

5 Years on

Defend the Strangeways Protestors

Five years ago prisoners in Manchester took action against the oppressive conditions and daily brutality in one of Britain's largest and most overcrowded local gaols. The uprising that began at Strangeways on 1 April 1990 sparked a wave of revolt in over 20 gaols.

Following the revolt two inquiries took place. The first, the Woolf Inquiry, was the most far-reaching inquiry ever conducted into British prisons and recommended substantial improvements to prison conditions. The government was forced to implement a few of the Inquiry's recommendations, but deliberately ignored the majority of them, while publicly appearing to embrace Woolf's conclusions. Those improvements which were made were a victory, not for the reformers who debated with Woolf, but for the prisoners who had stood up against their oppression. These hard-won concessions are now coming under systematic attack as the Tory and Labour Parties vie for the 'law and order' vote, assisted by a media which is even more compliant than it was five years ago.

The second inquiry was conducted by Manchester Serious Crime Squad,

and resulted in a series of trials in 1992-93 of those who had taken part in the protest. All talk of the conditions and brutality which were the background to the riot was excluded from *this* inquiry; its sole purpose was to criminalise the protesters.

Twenty-three men were convicted of riot and conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm in a series of show-trials, and are now serving sentences of between four and 13 years as a result. Most of them have appeals against conviction or sentence length due to be heard this year.

The final trial connected with the Strangeways uprising opens on 12 June at Nottingham Crown Court. David Bowen is charged with escaping from custody on the way to Manchester Crown Court to be tried for riot. David is currently serving 13 years' imprisonment for charges

arising from the revolt, charges of which he strongly maintains his innocence; on 1 April 1990 he was in Strangeways on remand, charged with shoplifting. The RCG will be supporting a picket outside Nottingham Crown Court when David's trial opens. And we ask FRFI readers to continue supporting all the convicted Strange-

ways protesters by sending them letters and cards. To the best of our knowledge, their whereabouts are as follows:

Glyn Williams and Mark Azzopardi (DA0147) HMP Full Sutton, Moor Lane, York YO4 1PS; Tony Bush (CD0405) and John Spencer (AL0532) HMP Parkhurst, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5NX; Alan Lord (K80382) HMP Hull - Special Unit, Hedon Road, Hull HU9 5LS; David Bowen (DA0146) HMP Liverpool, 68 Hornby Road, Liverpool L9

3DF; Kevin Gee and John Murray HMP Frankland, Brasside, Durham DH1 5YD; Ian Allen (AL3435) and Nathan Gaynor (CX1145) HMP Garth, Ulmes Walton Lane, Leyland, Preston PR5 3NE; Mark Williams Ashworth Secure Hospital, Maghull, Liverpool; Barry Morton (CV0221) HMP Wakefield, 5 Love Lane, Wakefield, W Yorks WF2 5AG; Paul Taylor (AN0564) HMP Gartree, Market Harborough, Leics LE16 7RP.

Nicki Jameson



Why did it take so long?

Billy Power of the Birmingham Six speaks out

I was delighted to hear that someone was actually writing a book about the disturbances at Manchester. Strangeways has always had a bad name among prisoners and afterwards while everyone else was asking, 'Why did this happen?' the prisoners were asking 'Why did it take so long?'

Here is a true account of what happens in prisons, written in a balanced and realistic way, that ordinary people on the outside will be able to grasp. It will become a reference book and anyone with a bit of sense of justice for prisoners will be able to get an insight into their plight. Unless prisoners are able to stick together in mass protests, nothing is ever done. And when you are reading their story, you could be up on the roof with them.

Reading the book brought back so many emotions; it isn't easy sometimes trying to remember. I've seen a number of protests over the years and one of the

things which always happens is that when they are over the prisoners are victimised. They go for those they reckon are the ring-leaders. Reading the book I could have been there on the roof, I could have been there when they came down. When they came out of that little cherry-picker we were glued to the television in Gartree. Your heart goes out to them but you know that the long haul of punishment is just beginning for them.

There are very few books that really explain what goes on in prison. Irish political prisoners have supporters who highlight the abuses but the prisoners of this country have no one to speak out for them. For the ordinary person being brutalised in prison, there is no one to take up their case, except someone like the authors of this book, who are prepared to research and write and sell this book.

This is essential reading for anyone who is in any way interested in justice. Anyone who wants to know about the prison system, what it's really like, what it can do to you, has to read this book.

Billy Power

Strangeways 1990: A serious disturbance by Nicki Jameson and Eric Allison Larkin Publications ISBN 0 905400 18 6 192pp Paperback Price £7.95 Publication date 6 April 1995

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Strangeways 1990: A serious disturbance

by Nicki Jameson and Eric Allison

With a foreword by Michael Mansfield QC
Photographs by Ged Murray
ISBN 0 905400 18 6 192pp
Paperback Price £7.95
Publication date 6 April 1995

This unique publication features first-hand accounts from prisoners involved in the longest protest in the history of the British prison system and describes in detail not only the Strangeways revolt, but also the protests which took place at other gaols, the Woolf Inquiry which followed the protests, and the trials of the protesters.

'This book ... makes a vital contribution to the continuing campaign for change. It does so because it has the insight of an insider and because it tells a story so far untold, in untrammelled fashion.' - Michael Mansfield QC

We are extending our special advance order offer to FRFI readers until the end of April. With this offer £10 buys you two copies of the book: one for yourself and a second one which is sent to one of the 200 prisoners who receive FRFI. (Please make cheques payable to Larkin Publications)

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Strangeways 1990: a serious disturbance LAUNCH MEETING
Thursday 6 April, 7pm at Frontline Books, 1 Newton Street, Manchester.

Fighting immigration controls

Workers' control not immigration controls - why trade unionists should oppose immigration restrictions

Still fighting after all these years - a century of international struggles against immigration controls 1895-1995

Both by Steve Cohen, Greater Manchester Immigration Unit, 1995. Both £2.50 (orders over 10 copies, £1 each)

These two pamphlets by Steve Cohen have two things to recommend them. The first is that they give some idea of the struggles of immigrant workers against immigration controls, from Jewish refugees at the beginning of the century to black workers today. The second is that they (particularly

Workers' control) give some history of trade union support for immigration controls, from the TUC resolution passed in 1892 to 'prevent the landing of foreign pauper aliens on our shores' to the 1990 TUC Statement on Immigration and Racism which called for more legislation against 'illegal labour trafficking'.

The pamphlets recognise that it is imperialism that forces people from the oppressed nations to migrate to Britain, and that immigration controls are used to regulate this labour. As Steve Cohen points out, the call for 'non-racist' immigration controls is a sham, and a diversion from the only principled position of opposition to all immigration controls.

The major failing of both pamphlets is Steve Cohen's belief that

growing sections of the labour movement are opposed to immigration controls. The evidence for this is, to say the least, thin on the ground and is, I would suggest, wishful thinking on Cohen's part. A reflection of this is his conclusion to *Workers' control*, where he states:

'Trade unions in this country are powerful. If the labour movement had the political will it could pull the plug on immigration controls and close them down.'

The trade union movement doesn't have the will, and as Cohen shows in both pamphlets, has never had the will. The question is why, and what do we do about it?



The photograph of the demonstration on the cover of *Still fighting after all these years* gives part of an answer to what we can do about it. It shows the biggest anti-racist demonstration in Manchester's history in June 1987, as 4,000 people marched to defend Viraj Mendis, a black communist and member of the RCG, from deportation back to Sri Lanka. The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign won support from communists, anarchists, miners, church members, Labour and Liberal Party members and many others through its principled opposition to Britain's immigration laws, creating, in the words of the *Sunday Telegraph* '... the British renaissance of a movement which directly challenges the authority of government.'

Bob Shepherd

Working class pays the price

The changing face of Blackburn and Darwen published by the Borough of Blackburn, 1994

This is the third edition of a publication which shows graphically how the working class of Blackburn has suffered under 15 years of Tory rule.

Blackburn is a former mill town built around the cotton industry. In 1911, its population was 133,052; by 1991, it had fallen to 101,577, as its decline mirrored the fortunes of the industry on which its prosperity at the turn of the century had been founded. That the industry was able to prolong its existence into the post-war period depended heavily on its recruitment of Asian workers. Its profitability during this period depended not on significant re-investment, but in employing cheap labour to work the surviving mills around the clock. In 1977, whilst 10.3% of Blackburn's working population were employed in textiles, the proportion of immigrant adults was 54.1%. At that time, 45% of all black workers in the North West were on shift work, compared with 15% of white workers (see *Revolutionary Communist No 9: 'Racism, Imperialism and the Working Class'*).

Unemployment in Blackburn in June 1993 was 11.2% compared with a national average of 9.8%. But this is of course unevenly spread. Of the borough's 21 wards, 5 have unemployment rates greater than 20% (Brookhouse, Queen's Park, Higher Croft, Bank Top and Cathedral). In Higher Croft, it is 36.2%. Youth unemployment in these wards approaches 40%. Although Asians make up 13% of the work force, they occupy just 7% of all jobs, and only 4% of unskilled jobs. Asians are a majority of the population of Brookhouse (about 70%), and a substantial proportion of Queen's Park (22%); they are however in a tiny minority in Higher Croft. These figures suggest that white workers are now being

forced to take the lowest paid jobs, and therefore competing directly with black workers for those which are available.

Housing: a total of 19,720 houses in Blackburn in 1993/94 were in need of renovation out of a total housing stock of 55,000 - over 30%. This is an official estimate; other, unofficial ones suggest the proportion (including those unfit for habitation) is 72%. The same source (*Papering over the cracks*, National Housing Forum 1994) estimates that the national proportion is one in six in need of repair and one in 13 unfit for habitation - about 25%. There are over 4,000 people on the council waiting list, and with little private rented accommodation, the amount of homelessness is increasing: in 1992/93 it stood at 1,306, a 15% increase on the previous year.

The health of the borough is deteriorating. Infant mortality in the first year is 15.6 per thousand - compared with Cuba's 9.9. This is 2.1 times the UK national average, and 31% higher than the 1989 figure. Blackburn as a whole has a higher Standardised Mortality and Comparative Death Rate than the national average: in other words, Blackburn people die younger. Differing scores of deprivation show that Brookhouse and Cathedral are two of the unhealthiest wards in the country. One index, the Jarman Index of Health Deprivation, scores Brookhouse at 70, Queen's Park at 50 and Higher Croft at 48. The national mean is zero on this index. The Department of Environment 13-point deprivation model again uses a mean of zero; whereas a wealthy ward such as West Rural scores minus 16.8, Higher Croft scores 50.3 and Brookhouse 70.4.

The value of this publication lies in the fact that it shows how all sections of the working class are suffering, with black people suffering even more. Large sections of the working class are now facing a steady decline in living standards, with young working class people facing no future at all.

Paul Dobson

NHS

Workers and patients must fight back

The NHS is being killed off. As real funding declines, the people who are suffering most are the working class, in particular the elderly and their carers, because they receive the largest proportion of healthcare expenditure. 'Cradle to grave' care no longer exists, since the right to continuing care under the NHS has been quietly and surreptitiously abandoned. ROBERT CLOUGH surveys the damage.

The NHS was set up in 1948 as part of the post-war political settlement with the privileged sections of the working class. There have been suggestions on the left that it was set up to ensure the availability of a healthy workforce for capitalism. This is misleading. The NHS has had little to do with ensuring good health which depends on an adequate and varied diet, decent housing, sanitation and living conditions. For the more privileged sections of the working class, these problems had been solved. What was a constant threat was the need to pay for healthcare as a result of injury or illness.

Hence the major objectives in establishing the NHS were the nationalisation of the hospital system and making it free at the point of delivery. The benefit for capitalism was that a nationalised system could provide cheap health care, since it did not have to produce any profit. Whatever its inadequacies, the NHS also represented a significant gain for the mass of the working class, the more so as a rising proportion started to live beyond the age of retirement.

The onset of the crisis in the mid-1970s brought the first significant health service cuts, and with them working class resistance. At various points during the 1980s, attempts to undermine the NHS threatened to bring some form of united working class response, most especially during the dispute over nurses' pay in 1982. But in 1989/90, the Tories devised a strategy that they hoped would ease the process of instigating significant cuts in NHS funding. This involved the introduction of the internal market, the separation between purchasers (health authorities and GP fundholders) and providers (hospitals and community units, organised as independent trusts). At the same time, the government moved to cut back expenditure on the elderly through the formulation of a means-tested 'community care' policy which forced elderly people out of hospital beds and into private residential and nursing homes where they would have to contribute towards their upkeep.

The market reforms aimed to fragment workers in the NHS so that they

would be less able to take united action against the cuts. The lack of significant union action against hospital closures, especially in London, shows how effective this policy has been. It also aimed to cheapen hospital care - overwhelmingly short-stay - by a process of intensifying the work process in the name of competition. This involved the creation of new tiers of management, especially

vent any organised protest. Secondly, this tier provides a social base on which the success of the reforms depend, and to whom in fact Labour increasingly looks for its 'alternative' policy.

The relative efficiency of a nationalised healthcare system can be seen in the fact that although this year the UK will spend £808 per person on healthcare, the OECD average was



amongst nurses. The sole purpose of these new managers would be to make other people work harder. This simple application of the principles of Taylorism, a management philosophy which underlay production line control in the early part of this century, has again been misunderstood. In capitalist terms, more managers means higher productivity and therefore lower unit costs as they force the workers to work harder, and provide an atmosphere of intimidation to pre-

£1,229; 6.7% against 10.4% as a proportion of GDP. But even this level will not be maintained. The fruits of the internal market are now to be seen in the attempt to get NHS trusts to adopt local pay policies, spelling the end of any national pay negotiations. The 1% award to nurses is a foretaste of what is to come.

In the meantime, the end of the duty of continuing care is aimed at slashing expenditure on healthcare for the elderly. Per person, spending

Under-staffing, under-funding The reality of the NHS

The situation in the NHS is a scandal both for patients and workers. The recommended NHS pay increases are 2.5 per cent for salaried doctors in hospitals, 3 per cent for general practitioners and 1 per cent for nurses and midwives. Meanwhile NHS trust chief executive pay rose 6.6 per cent last year, four times the public sector pay limit.

The Royal College of Nursing and the Health Visitors Association are reconsidering their no-strike policy; 82 per cent of the Royal College of Midwifery membership recently voted to allow strikes. Demonstrations are to be held in all hospitals on 30 March. There is the possibility of action by over 790,000 health service workers.

Many junior doctors still work 48-65 hours continuous duty over weekends and some are doing 80 hour stretches. It is frightening to imagine what happens to their practical skills, decision-making powers and patience.

A domestic at a London hospital, who has worked for the NHS for 17 years, found herself re-employed by Mediclean. Paid £3.85 per hour, she is now required to do the same work in two hours less per day. She has lost her pension, her London

weighting, is now non-unionised and lives at the mercy of being given one-week's notice.

The portering services at a London hospital have recently been privatised with Mediclean winning the tender. Porters' pay will go down from £160 to approximately £80 per week, including weekend work. They will be required to undertake cleaning and domestic tasks as well. They will lose sick pay, pensions and holiday pay. 24 out of 26 porters have resigned.

With the 1 per cent pay rise allocated from central funds, a staff nurse can expect to see their salary increase by £115 per year to £11,435. From 1 April, the most junior doctor will be on a minimum of £13,930 per year, increasing through the grades to a consultant's pay of £40,620 - £52,440.

Understaffing, underfunding and under-resourcing is the reality behind the man transferred to Leeds because there were no neurosurgical beds in the whole of the South East; behind the young boy with an arrow in his eye, who was transferred between three different hospitals over a period of eight hours before receiving treatment.

Terry Baxter and
Hannah Caller

on healthcare for the elderly is 7 to 11 times that for a person of working age. Although only 15% of the population, the over 65s accounted for 47% of hospital bed occupancy in 1993/94, whilst in the same year, the 7% of the population who are aged more than 75 consumed 25% of NHS expenditure. This is unacceptable from capitalism's point of view: not only do such people consume more,

homes has gone on apace: whereas there were over 100,000 local authority residential homes and less than 80,000 in private hands in 1986, in 1992 there were 70,000 and 130,000 respectively.

Another way to recover money has been by increasing prescription charges. Patients contributed 36% of the cost of all prescriptions in 1979, this will reach 51% in 1995. Over the same period, the average number of items prescribed per paying patient fell from 5.2 items to 2.2. People can no longer afford the medicines they need.

Rationalisation of the hospital system is set to continue for the remainder of this century. All major cities are suffering extensive closures: it is not just London, but Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow as well. A favourite target at the moment is accident and emergency services. In 1991-2, there were 238 hospitals with A&E departments; two years later this had fallen to 218. Another area of acute shortages is all forms of intensive care, and especially paediatric and neurosurgical intensive care. The recent case of a victim of a car accident in Kent having to be flown to Leeds for intensive neurosurgical care because there were no beds in London is not an extreme: consultants report that it is common for all such London beds to be full. What was different was they were also full in Oxford and Birmingham as well - although this was largely unreported.

Is the defence of the NHS going to become a rallying point for working class resistance? The recent decision of the midwives to end their ban on industrial action may be a pointer to the future. Yet we must remember that middle class unionism predominates in the NHS. Even Unison, which organises the ancillary workers who used to belong to NUPE, is controlled by the middle class managers who came to it from NALGO. These organisations are not going to be the driving force to defend the NHS: that must come from the mass of the working class organised within their communities. They, after all, are the ones who will suffer the most.

After being unemployed for some time I was obliged by the dole office to take a job as a trainee health care assistant in a London hospital. My wages are £120 take-home for a 37½ hour week, including nights and weekends. On my first day, with no training whatsoever, I clocked on at 8am and was straight into an operating theatre where my job was to pass materials to the team doing a brain operation. That afternoon I was sent into a leg amputation. I was asked to hold the leg while they cut it off and later to hold a bag while the leg was dropped into it.

I have had four days college study and no other training. Yet I am asked to cover theatre duties at night with only two trained nurses. Poorly paid, with no medical knowledge, untrained, I have to take life and death lab reports over the phone and pass them to the surgeon. Do you think your life is safe in my hands?

Health Care Assistant, London

but they neither pay nor are they exploitable as workers.

The government's way round this problem has been to shift elderly people out of NHS beds as fast as possible and into nursing or residential homes. The number of geriatric long-stay beds has fallen by 40% since 1988. Once in residential care, people have to pay if they have assets over £8,000 - this includes anyone who owns a house. In the meantime, privatisation of nursing and residential