

How to save the Welfare State



A handbook for activists

WORKERS' LIBERTY Socialist Organiser

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Solidarity forever!

When the Union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun,
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one?
But the Union makes us strong.

Chorus:

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

Solidarity forever!

For the Union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in common with the greedy parasite
Who would lash us into serfdom and would crush us with his might?
Is there anything left but to organise and fight?
For the Union makes us strong.

Chorus

It is we who ploughed the prairies, built the cities where they trade,
Dug the mines and built the workshops; endless miles of railroad laid.
Now we stand outcast and starving 'midst the wonders we have made
But the Union makes us strong.

Chorus

All the world that's owned by idle drones is ours and ours alone.
We have laid the wide foundations, built it skyward stone by stone.
It is ours, not to slave in, but to master and to own,
While the Union makes us strong.

Chorus

They have taken untold millions that they never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a single wheel can turn.
We can break their haughty power, gain our freedom when we learn
That the Union makes us strong.

Chorus

In our hands is placed a power greater than their hoarded gold.
Greater than the might of armies, magnified a thousand-fold.
We can bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.
For the Union makes us strong.

Return to the founding principles of the Welfare State!



By Alan Simpson MP

The Welfare State was never designed as an alternative to full employment but as an essential underpinning of it. The Welfare State and universal entitlements were to be the civilising framework within which employment and industry connected with the wider obligations of a decent society — that we do not abandon the old, impoverish the young, or short-change the future by ignoring the health, education, housing and transport infrastructures it will depend on.

In today's free-for-all economy we are told that we can no longer afford the Welfare State; that we must move to a more 'targeted' system of benefits. The truth is exactly the opposite.

It is not the Welfare State which is unaffordable, but the recession. And in any serious commitment to full employment, targeted benefits present a far greater problem than universal ones.

As the Tories have forced down pay, reduced job security and held back the value of universal benefits, a new 'dependency culture' has begun to emerge which is entirely the creation of the Tory policies. The 'triumph' of Tory low-pay policies is to trap the poor in circumstances where it becomes almost too expensive to work.

For every pound earned by low paid workers in rented housing, 97p is taken from them in tax and reduced benefits. Any extra costs (food, travel etc) that the workers incurred above 3p in the pound would take them over the 100% tax rate. It is not simply that low pay is a scandal in itself, but that those on it are then trapped within the punitive confines of capitalism's latest variant of the means-test machine.

The same vicious claw-back applies to pensioners, to the unemployed and to lone parents.

To add insult to injury, means testing of benefits is the most costly, divisive and incompetent way of running a Welfare State. But the Tories aren't troubled by this because their agenda is a different one — grind the poor into the ground, divide people between the "deserving" and "undeserving"; turn from a society based on rights and entitlements to one troubled by beggars and paupers.

No mention here of the lavish salaries of the top earners, their share options, the massive dividend payments being handed out to them.

But this is the source of wealth and finance that Labour must focus on in the defence of universal benefits. This is how we should be paying for the Welfare State.

The point of return for socialists is to the founding principles of the Welfare State, where full employment was the starting presumption not an optional possibility.

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This pamphlet (*Socialist Organiser* numbers 606-8) was written by Nik Barstow, Lisa Dainty, Richard Love, Jill Mountford, Dale Street, Martin Thomas, Colin Waugh, Hannah Wood, and John O'Mahony, who also put it together.

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• Health Service hospital beds cut by 31%. One in three hospital or nursing home beds is now private.

• Relative value of dole and basic pension cut by half.

• Council housing stock cut 20%; rents forced up.

• Nearly one million children in classes of over 30.

The Tory assault on the Welfare State

The post-1945 Welfare State was the fruit of 150 years of working-class political activity. The great Labour victory of 1945 made it possible. Without that victory it would not have been possible. By way of the Welfare State the labour movement created barriers against extremes of poverty, against prolonged homelessness, against the grinding down and 'stigmatising' of the poor. Indeed, after 1945, the very term "the poor" — not to speak of the Victorian notion of the "undeserving poor" — disappeared from common parlance for more than three decades.

Capitalists still robbed and exploited workers and tyrannised over them at work. But outside work the labour movement had won new rights for the working class. People who were old or sick or unfortunate no longer starved to death, or slept in large numbers on the street. And people did not die because they could not pay for medical treatment.

The working-class principle of an equal right to life, long proclaimed by the labour movement, was embodied in a National Health Service where money could not buy you, and the lack of money could not deny you, the best available health care. The rich still could and did buy advantages, but nobody now defended the view that poor people were not equally entitled to the best possible health care.

Perhaps for the first time in human history — revolutionary Russia in 1917 was too poor for it — the principle of equality in one important sphere of social life, in health care, came close to being fully realised.

There were of course, great flaws and contradictions in the labour movement's achievement. This Welfare State was set up in a society that was still a class society, and, therefore, it brought the educated middle classes, and even the bourgeoisie, immense advantages too; they could use it with more skill and expertise than working-class people did. But this "class-blindness" ensured its universality, where means-testing would have led to the creation of what we now increasingly have: substandard provision and "welfare ghettos" for the poor. And the labour movement, in 1945

and after, committed the great and fatal error of leaving the capitalist class in possession of the commanding heights of the economy, and in control of the state. Nevertheless, the reformists who led that movement could truly lay claim to great achievements for the working class.

When the Tories came back to government in 1951, they did not dare attack the Welfare State, so overwhelming was the support, even among the middle classes, for what the labour movement had done after 1945.

But today, the Welfare State is in ruins. We have had fifteen years of rule by the filthiest gang of Tory barbarians this century. Hordes of young people sleep on the streets of our cities. There is permanent mass unemployment and inadequate provision for its victims. By way of a thousand lacerating cuts, the Tories are bleeding the Health Service — the heart of the Welfare State Labour built — to death. Like an insidious disease they work away, undermining, sapping, destroying the Welfare State, and its crowning glory, the Health Service.

What is happening to the Health Service is typical of what is happening to the whole Welfare State and what has happened to Britain under Tory rule. More and more openly they now proclaim that the poor do not have the right to equal health care — that is, that the poor do not have an equal right to life.

A recent poll of experts on health care produced a prediction that soon now an attempt will be made to withdraw from sick old people the right to even relatively cheap NHS-provided treatments, like dialysis for those with malfunctioning kidneys.

These stone-age, stone-hearted, pebble-brained barbarians are driving relentlessly to bring about the final breakdown of the Health Service and its formal reorganisation into a two-tier structure, with strict rationing in both quantity and quality for the poor.

Their intention is to force those who can afford it — and, soon, anyone who wants adequate health care — to go private, leaving the Health Service as a slum for the poor and the helpless.

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Health

The poor die young

Among all the Tory claims and statistics about the NHS one, above all, is used to argue that we need to ration the NHS — that people in Britain are healthier and live longer than ever before. The continuing rise of an elderly population, who need health services more than younger people, is seen as a crisis.

Like all figures and claims, the Tories claim tells only part of the story. Working class people in Britain, particularly in Britain's inner cities, are not only more likely to die prematurely but a 'health gap' is widening.

Between 1987-91 in Manchester, for example, in the poorest areas, Hulme, Moss Side and Ancoats, men were 60% more likely to die prematurely than in the middle-class areas, women 93% more likely.

Those figures for early death can be repeated for major city after major city — there have been similar studies in Glasgow and Birmingham showing the same things.

The health divide isn't only about early death. It is also about long-term limiting illness without the means to cope for the elderly, and poor health in childhood which can affect people for

Going private

Between 1981 and 1991-2, the number of beds in private hospitals and nursing homes went up by 115,000 — from 35,000 to 150,000 — while the number of Health Service hospital beds went down by 109,000, from 351,000 to 242,000.

Now one in every three hospital or nursing home beds in England is private (though the vast majority of treatment is still in the Health Service).

More and more people have been pushed into private health insurance: 7.5 million in 1991, as against 2.1 million in 1981.

By 1989-90, Health Service consultants in London were earning more, overall, from private fees than from the Health Service.

Evils of "dog-eat-dog"

"This is just evil. It is how ideology is determining the health service," said Professor Michael Baum, head of surgery at the Royal Marsden Hospital in London, on 5 July 1994.

He was denouncing a leaked plan by the Charing Cross Hospital to "poach" surgeon Nicholas Breach from the Royal Marsden in order to help Charing Cross in the "internal market" and "have the additional benefit of weakening one of our strongest competitors."

Mr Breach himself commented: "What an appalling thing to say. I am not in competition with anybody. I just want to treat my patients well."

But under the Tories' new "internal market", competition rules. Treatment comes second.

life.

Almost half of people aged over 65 in Manchester were found to have a long term, limiting illness. At the other end of the age scale every part of the city was found to have more low birth-weight babies born there than the national average.

At first sight it seems these figures just show a reality of life in capitalist Britain that has been true since Frederick Engels wrote *Condition of the English Working Classes in 1844* about Manchester's slums; but the Tories have presided over a worsening divide between rich and poor.

The link between ill health, early death and poverty has been well documented by health researchers but covered up by the Tories. Their much vaunted 'Health of the Nation' doesn't even mention income or class.

What are the facts?

Between 1981 and 1989 the richest

10% of the population gained £87 a week from tax cuts, while the poorest 10% lost £1 a week and their real income fell. In fact, after housing costs, the poorest 10% lost 14% of income from 1979 to 1990-1.

The idea peddled by the Tories that there is a small 'underclass' incapable of help is disproved by the figures which the shifts in income have produced.

In 1979 only 9% of the population in Britain was on less than half the average income — by 1993 this had leapt to 24%.

Saving the NHS is a vital job for the labour movement, and ensuring that people are treated fairly — that inner cities where ill-health is concentrated don't see the service cut to ribbons. But there is a bigger job — to rebuild a welfare state which protects people from the causes of early death or disabling illness.

The price of blood

Blood donors are public spirited people. The willingness of thousands of people to give a little of their time to help others by the free donation of blood, through a well-managed, universal system is a hall-mark of a decent system and it has worked.

The Tories are changing all that. In April 1992 the National Blood Transfusion Service was abolished and replaced by the National Blood Authority, which is now managing an internal market in

blood products.

The Regional Transfusion Centres which organised collection and distribution — and co-operated to help when regions faced shortages — must now compete for income from hospitals!

The costs of the highly bureaucratic new system means that the centres now have an incentive to get plasma from 'paid donors.' Inevitably corners are cut in testing blood and checking donors' health.

The Tories are murdering the NHS

Briefing

Since the Tories came to power in 1979, they have closed some 500 hospitals — one in every five — and between 1981 and 1991/2 they shut down nearly one in three hospital beds, 109,000 out of 351,000.

By 1990, the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts calculated that spending on the Health Service had fallen short of what was needed to maintain the level of service, by a total of £4.4 billion since 1980.

The Tories say that new medical techniques make it possible to treat more patients as day cases, without long hospital stays. For some conditions, this is true. It is also true that the number of GPs has increased.

But the real reason for the hospital closures is to save money for the Government, and a look at a GP's waiting room in any inner-city area will prove that GPs are not able to make good the shortfall. Hospital waiting lists now have over one million people, and there are another million people waiting for a first appointment prior to getting on waiting lists.

Accident and emergency units have been shut, so that millions of people must now go much further to reach a hospital in an emergency.

The biggest cut has been in hospital beds for long-stay patients, especially old people who are likely to need care for the rest of their lives, and psychiatric patients.

Overall, long-stay Health Service beds have been cut by 40 per cent since 1979. Some Health Service Trusts have shut all their long-stay beds. Frail elderly people have been forced out into private nursing homes, to be paid for by social security or their families. Either they are dumped, for minimal granny-minding on social security money, or their families have to pay for care.

The market research group Mintel estimates that in 1992, no fewer than 40,000 homes were sold to pay bills for long-term nursing.

In February 1994 the Ombudsman ruled that Leeds health authority was going too far when it pushed a 55-year-old stroke victim, doubly incontinent, unable to move, communicate or feed himself, and suffering

from epilepsy, a kidney tumour, and cataracts, into a nursing home where his wife had to pay £6,000 a year. But that is the shape of things to come for frail elderly people — and then for the rest of us.

Under the "internal market", local health authorities and fund-holding GPs "buy" health care from hospitals, many of which are now run as semi-independent "trusts".

So doctors and nurses can stand idle, unable to give desperately-needed treatment, because the health authority has overspent its budget or the "trust" has gone into the red. Surgeons in more than four out of ten hospitals have been told to reduce the number of operations they perform because of a shortage of cash.

"Trusts" can go bust like private businesses do. None have yet, but almost half are running at a loss.

Hospitals, health authorities, and GPs all have an incentive to give priority to the most "profitable" activities — basically, treating relatively well-off people who are going to recover quickly and reliably — and to dump older and poorer people and those in chronic ill-health.

Priorities based on need are displaced by cash priorities. Research in the North Thames region, published in 1994, estimated that patients of fundholding GPs have almost twice as much cash per head available for hospital treatment as patients of non-fundholding GPs; in other words, patients of fundholding GPs jump the queue.

There is a further twist. Researchers have found that fundholding GPs, playing the internal market according to the crazy rules of market economics, push an increasing proportion of their patients in as "emergency" cases — which are always paid for by the health authority — and thus are grossly "underspending" their budgets. Of course, the more they "underspend", the better for them.

Even worse, the "internal market" is a halfway house to a real "market", where all or most hospitals would be profit-making private businesses, and we would usually have to pay for decent and prompt treatment. The Health Service would remain only as a fall-back, patch-up service for the poor, not much better than Medicare and Medicaid in the USA.

The Health Service has been eroded on other fronts, too. Cleaning and laundry services have been put up for bids by private contractors, so that the work is done by fewer people on lower pay. Such is the inevitable resulting decline in standards that by 1991 the National Childbirth Trust was advising all women going into hospital for childbirth to take their Ajax with them and scrub the bathrooms and toilets themselves.

The spread of "multiply-resistant" bacteria, which defy all the usual antibiotics, may well be linked to the decline of cleaning standards in hospitals.

Charges for dental checks and eye tests were introduced in 1989. The number of people having eye tests dropped from 12,500 in 1988 to 4,200 in 1990. Large numbers of dentists have opted out from the Health Service, totally or in part. The Tories now plan to remove all Health Service subsidies for dental treatment except for children, pregnant women, and people on state benefits.

Prescription charges have been raised from 20p in 1979 to £4.75 today.

On one front only, Health Service spending has flowed as freely as water. Nearly 11 per cent of the Health Service budget is now spent on administration, compared to five or six per cent before the Tories came to power. In the three years to 1993, following the Tories' "internal market" drive, hospitals took on 21,000 extra managers, and lost 27,000 nurses.

In 1993 alone, the Health Service's bill for managers' company cars went up by nearly £20 million, to £70 million. The same money could pay for 18,000 hip replacement operations.



More and more people are being pushed into private health insurance.

Don't grow old in Tory Britain

Old people who are both sick and poor are being turned away from NHS hospitals untended, uncured, and without hope of ever getting better!

This April, Fred Stedman, aged 78, was refused heart surgery on the Health Service in North London because he was "too old", and Johnny Gray, aged 73, was refused physiotherapy in Brighton for the same reason. "There has to be a fund cut-off point", a Brighton Healthcare Trust manager said.

One more step in the inbuilt logic of Tory "reform" of the National Health Service reveals itself. It points to the future the Tories plan for health care in Britain. It is barbaric and awful, but there is a logic to it. Consider. One of two things.

Either you can have a universally free health service in which each citizen is entitled to whatever treatment he or she needs. Right to life rules here.

Or you can have it like it is in the USA — healthcare is a straightforward commodity: you can't have what you can't afford to buy. There, money rules.

In Britain now we are in transition between healthcare based on the one principle and a healthcare system that used to be broadly based on the other.

For the well-off everything is straightforward: they can buy the healthcare they need. For the rest — there is a fund-starved NHS which the Tory "internal market" has turned into a gruesome hybrid.

NHS administrators and doctors have each year an inadequate but fixed amount of scarce treatment to dispense, and increasingly they find themselves playing God with it. They decide more or less arbitrarily who will be healed, who allowed to live, who left to suffer, who

Citizen's con

Despite everything, the Tories have been very keen to increase public spending in some areas — like the production of glossy and meaningless "Citizen's Charters."

They put thousands of pounds into a "Citizen's Charter" telephone hotline for complaints about public services. In May 1994 the hotline was shut down. It had cost £68 per call answered.

The health system is collapsing

A recent report on Health Service complaints procedures showed a huge rise in formal complaints about hospital treatment.

In England the annual figure of complaints has more than doubled over a decade, from 16,000 to almost 45,000. Complaints about GPs have risen less, but still by over 50%, and the smaller rise is often put down to how difficult it is to make a complaint.

Most people are desperately unhappy about complaining about over-worked nursing staff, harassed doctors and other staff who they know are trying to help them.

The NHS is falling down because it is over-stretched.

condemned to die prematurely.

Some doctors recently succeeded in establishing a medic's right to refuse NHS treatment to people who would not — in practice it is likely to be could not — stop smoking. Smokers now can be excluded from healthcare — that is, in effect be pronounced morally unfit and undeserving of care. Poor smokers, that is. For rich smokers the issue will never be posed like this. They can pay.

This is horrible, but it is, nevertheless, an attempt to make less arbitrary the role of God which NHS administrators are having forced upon them. It is an attempt by men and women forced to play God to give some sort of rationality and uniformity to the utterly inhuman things they have to do.

And it is getting worse. The elderly poor will more and more be excluded from healthcare they now take for granted.

A recent report predicts that an open rationing of healthcare will be formalised

in a two- or three-tier NHS; that certain expensive medical treatments will simply not be made available to large parts of the population; and that elderly patients will be excluded even from less expensive treatments, for example, dialysis for those with defective kidneys.

Eskimos, living in the Arctic had to dispose of the old and feeble by driving them out to starve and freeze. But they lived in stone age scarcity. This Tory savagery takes place in a rich society where immense sums are consumed by a comparatively small group of rich parasites, and on such things as armaments. It is administered by an NHS where vast millions are wasted on unproductive bureaucrats — some of whom are now exercising the power of life and death over the ailing poor.

The only civilised principle for healthcare is this: full, free, comprehensive healthcare — for all or for none!

Toryism is barbarism. Don't get sick, and don't grow old in Tory Britain!

London's bed crisis

The King's Fund Institute — an academic 'management' body whose ideas were used to justify the closure of hospitals in London — has had, belated, second thoughts.

In a new booklet 'London: the key facts' they say that "newly emerging evidence" shows the capital's healthcare needs have been underestimated.

They now say London needs an extra £200 million for health services — the Department of Health says London over-spends by £70 million!

This is hardly news. The Tomlinson review of London's NHS never took account of figures produced by Professor Brian Jarman of St Mary's Hospital — although they had been given to the

Department of Health they were "not made available."

Professor Jarman's figures showed that London has fewer than 10 hospital beds per 1,000 of the population as against 12 for the rest of England — and between 1985 and 1992 the use of the Emergency Bed Service trebled. His conclusion? "Bed closure should take account of London's relatively poorer health and primary health care circumstances, longer hospital waiting lists, poorer provision of residential homes, and evidence from the Emergency Bed Service of increasing pressure on beds."

A survey of hospitals carried out by 9 Community Health Councils on April 25 1994 found 58 patients who had been waiting for treatment on trolleys for over 3 hours.

Trade union rights and the Welfare State

Tory policy is all of a piece. Everything the Tory government has done to destroy the Welfare State became possible only when they had disabled the labour movement, in the first place the trade unions.

Britain's trade unions now languish under the most savagely anti-trade union laws in western Europe. Since 1979 a whole battery of repressive anti-trade union legislation has been put on the statute books. Solidarity action — the heart and soul of trade unionism — is outlawed and banned. In the past

workers not directly connected to the Health Service — miners and carworkers, for example — have come out on strike to back the pay claims of nurses who felt they could not strike for themselves.

They could not legally do that now! In Britain today if a group of workers discovered that another group of workers at the other end of the street were being worked as slave labour they could not legally strike to help them!

The labour movement's drive to create a Welfare State came in the first place from the great general trade unions — the transport workers and municipal workers — which could not provide the social security benefits for their members which the narrower craft unions of an earlier age had provided

for theirs.

In the '80s and '90s the Tory drive to destroy the Welfare State had to first beat down and shackle the unions.

Tory laws against effective trade unionism were the great pin-down operation, the sine qua non for everything else. Without the anti-trade union legislation, the trade unions, even under their present inadequate leaderships, would have fought back in defence of the Welfare State. We say that they should fight back, despite the laws.

That is why the demand that the next Labour government should repeal all the Tory anti-union laws and enact an extensive array of positive rights for the trade unions is a necessary part of the fight to defend and rebuild the Welfare State.

The Tory fraud of Community Care

Thousands of people who suffer from mental illness are being sold short by the Government's Community Care arrangements. Their problems are made even worse by the Government's brutal attack on the rest of the Welfare State.

Changes made in mental health provision when Community Care was formally introduced just over a year ago (many health authorities have been running pilot schemes for some years), should have meant a wide range of supportive community services. But the fact is, the majority of mentally ill people are still left without the support of specialised mental health teams and services.

There are few 24 hour crisis services, vital for maintaining people within their own community and making sure they do not have to be carted off to a hospi-

tal, maybe 10 or 15 miles away, thus causing further distress.

Instead of an increase in appropriate therapies such as Occupational therapy or Art and Drama therapy, posts have been cut from budgets. Such services are seen as "luxuries".

A British Medical Association survey of doctors revealed major problems with Community Care. 85% said that there has been no improvement in services. 40% say services have actually deteriorated since the changes came into operation.

When people do need a hospital admission for a crisis that can't be dealt with in the community they are often taken into old Victorian wards where doors are kept locked. This is because of staff shortages.

People are being discharged into lodgings and hostels which are substandard, intrusive and which compound rather than alleviate their problems.

Often people will live with their families — a hidden area of "community care". There is little professional and financial support for them.

This is because the government has failed to produce enough money for the development of services. Only 23% of the NHS mental health budget was spent on Community Care services. 77% went on hospital administration and medication.

When Community Care was set up it needed a large injection of cash. The money saved by the running down of old asylums should have been spent on

improving Community Care. Neither of these things happened.

Without the chance of a job, adequate benefits and housing, these people can have little hope for the future.

It is argued that the closure of the large asylums is causing an increase in the numbers of people who are homeless. It is more truthful to say that homelessness is caused by the decline in affordable public sector housing and access to benefit. The reason why many homeless people are distressed is because being homeless is bad for your mental health.

Community Care, not the return of asylums, is the way forward. All available evidence shows that — properly funded — community services work better than hospital care.

Users of mental health services are highly dissatisfied staying in institutions. They do not cure, they only contain. They are regimented and degrading. Often they are unsafe places where people can suffer sexual, racial and other kinds of abuse.

The tragedy of Community Care is that a well-conceived philosophy for improving the care of mentally ill people has been used by the Tories as a method for implementing cuts!

There have been a number of highly publicised Community Care failures (e.g. the Clunis case) but subsequent reports have shown that it is not Community Care itself which is at fault but the government's cost-cutting implementation of it.

No cash for psychiatric patients

25,000 psychiatric beds have been cut from the Health Service. There was a real case for having more psychiatric patients cared for in the community rather than shut up in hospitals. But the money allocated for care in the community was grossly inadequate. Only 9,000 new day-centre places were created while the 25,000 Health Service beds were being cut. Thousands of former psychiatric patients have ended up on the streets.



Campaign Against Estate Sales protest in Tower Hamlets

The housing famine

Market madness

Nearly one million homes stand empty. Half a million building workers are jobless. Vast numbers of bricks are stockpiled.

Yet thousands live on the streets, tens of thousands live in grim hostels or temporary housing, and hundreds of thousands of households have to share with others because they cannot find a place of their own.

That is how the capitalist market system works. Your need for shelter counts for nothing unless you can back it up with hard cash. A millionaire's whim for a third or fourth home, or a landlord's wish to keep a place empty to get a higher rent or clear it for redevelopment, is powerful because it is backed up by money.

For thirty or forty years, after World War 2, large-scale council housing opened the way for most working-class people to have a chance of a decent home. That was new; it was a deliberate bending of the laws of capitalism, imposed by labour-movement action.

As late as the 1930s, 30,000 households in London had still lived in cellars; 63 per cent of families in London shared a house or a flat with others.

Something like a third of the working class lived in slums — often a whole family in one or two rooms, with one toilet and one water tap shared by the whole house.

Council housing changed that. But the Tory Government has made it almost impossible for councils to build new housing, difficult for them to maintain the housing they have, and compulsory for them to sell off their best houses and flats cut-price.

Their deliberate aim is to run down public provision and return housing more and more to the free market.

The great increase in joblessness and low pay under the Tories — also partly products of their assault on the Welfare State — has combined with the run-down of council housing to create mass homelessness.

How can young people without jobs, or on low pay, possibly find homes today? There are no council homes available. They cannot even dream of buying a house, or paying a mortgage.

A few straightforward measures could house the homeless. Let local authorities be granted money and legal powers to take over empty dwellings, do them

Driving the poor into the underclass

Tory policies have led to the growth of an "underclass" of people who have little chance of a stable job or a secure home.

Yet the Tories blame everything on the supposed personal failings of the jobless and homeless! John Major blames beggars! As if some sudden increase in idleness and fecklessness has fallen from the sky since 1979 and all the Tory Government is doing is trying to respond to it!

By denouncing and criminalising the "underclass", the Tories hope to rally better-off workers, those with fairly stable jobs and homes, to their side, persuading them that the real class struggle should be one which rallies those workers together with the wealthy classes against the dangerous, destitute, desperate "underclass".

In fact the great majority of workers face a constant danger of themselves, or members of their family, being forced into the "underclass". Tory measures to cut jobs and job security make this worse.

Only by battles against the wealth-owning class to save jobs and conditions, and to rebuild the Welfare State, can the working class protect itself and save the "underclass" from demoralisation.

Despite Tory dogmas, no economy can operate by the free market alone. If it does not have a proper Welfare State, then it will have some degrading and demoralising substitute — begging; crime; charity or patronage handed out by churches, families, and ethnic communities.

Tories in government mean begging and crime on the streets: the result is unavoidable, and no amount of scapegoating and police repression will change it.

up, and rent them out. Let the building industry be nationalised and reorganised as a publicly-owned, worker-controlled enterprise, employing a substantial permanent skilled workforce, to do the repairs and renovations, and new building where essential. Let decent housing at an affordable rent be recognised as a human right, as basic education and health care are.

The facts about Tory housing policy

Tory cuts in housing have been more drastic than in any other area of the Welfare State.

Here — unlike in health, education, or social insurance for the jobless or old — they want to end welfare-state provision more or less completely.

Through their ever-increasing powers over local government finance, they have virtually stopped new council house building. Councils have been forced to sell off their better houses and flats cut-price, and encouraged to sell off the remaining stock for private redevelopment. 1.3 million council homes have been sold off, reducing the stock from 6.6 million (31.5% of the total) in 1979 to 5.3 million (23% of the total) in 1992.

They have also been forced to increase their rents sharply, bringing them closer to "market" rents. Between 1979 and 1990, average council rents increased 72% faster than other prices.

The result: the official homeless figure has increased from 57,000 households in 1979 to 140,000 households (or about 400,000 people) in 1993.

The housing group Shelter reckons that about 8,600 people are sleeping on the streets in England. Uncounted hundreds of thousands are homeless in lesser degrees — on friends' floors, in hostels, in bed-and-breakfast places provided by local authorities. For London alone, the best estimate is 140,000

single homeless people in addition to those officially homeless.

Councils have managed to cut back their use of bed-and-breakfast places for the homeless since its height in 1991, when 13,500 families were in such places. But there were still 5,000 families, or about 14,000 people, in bed-and-breakfast at the end of 1993. 10,700 families were in hostels, and 44,500 in short-life leases, at the end of 1992, compared to 3,500 and 4,200 in 1982.

The Tories eased the law so that landlords could charge high rents or evict tenants more easily.

But privately-rented accommodation has continued to decline. The landlords make more money by evicting their tenants and selling the property for owner-occupation. And housing associations still house only about 3% of households.

The Tories pushed owner-occupation. And for a while it seemed to work. Millions of people bought their own homes in the 1980s. The bubble burst around 1990, as interest rates rocketed (raising mortgage payments), and hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs.

59,000 houses were repossessed in 1993, 68,000 in 1992, and 75,000 in 1991. At the end of 1993 there were 316,000 home-owners six months or more in arrears on their mortgage.

Six hundred people died on the

streets last year. Living on the streets takes maybe 20 years off your life. Yet the Tories are pressing on.

They plan:

- To tell local authorities that they cannot accept families as "homeless" unless and until they are literally roofless.

- To mandate local authorities only to find some short-term accommodation for the homeless. Permanent council housing should be allocated only through the waiting list. One measure of the meaning of this proposal is that a Government survey (1990) found that fully one in six of all single parents living in private rented accommodation suffered harassment or illegal eviction from their landlords.

- To continue to force up council rents.

Pushing people on to the streets

Tory minister Michael Portillo is planning to cut back Housing Benefit. In May 1994 he revealed plans to reduce the maximum rents payable through Housing Benefit and/or make even the unemployed pay a proportion of the rent.

The Housing Benefit system is already a scandal. Thanks to local authority cuts and the complexity of the rules laid down by the Tory Government, claimants routinely suffer huge delays. In Hounslow, in 1993, the average delay in processing Housing Benefit claims was 112 days — and many other local authorities have far longer delays than the 14 days which the Government supposedly sets as a limit.

The long delays lead to many people building up huge arrears and losing their home before their claim is processed.

The system creates a "poverty trap" for the low-paid, who lose 70p in Housing Benefit for each extra £1 in wages: when you take loss of other benefits into account, they often get no gain at all from a pay rise.

The homeless young

According to a report from the Empty Homes Agency, 864,000 homes stand empty in England.

The 140,000 families officially homeless (400,000 people) could be accommodated six times over in those empty houses and flats.

The official figure of 140,000 families (households) homeless is an underestimate; it includes only those "accepted" as homeless by local authorities, and thus excludes all single homeless except pensioners, and all childless couples. The European Community has estimated 688,000 homeless people in the UK.

But 864,000 is also an underestimate of empty homes: it counts only those homes which local authorities have noted down as empty. If all the empty homes are counted in — together with the empty office premises which could readily be adapted for housing — there are certainly more than enough available to accommodate all the homeless.

Of course, not all the empty homes are in the areas where homeless people are looking for accommodation. But plenty are. In London, for example, about 160,000 homes are empty on the official count.

Benefits

Dole and pensions have been cut by half

Eleven million people now live below a poverty line defined as half the average income. In 1977 the figure was only three million.

The poorest one-sixth of the population is worse off than in 1979 not only relatively, but absolutely, in real cash terms.

Tory cuts to Welfare State benefits are far from being the only cause of this drastic increase in inequality. Increased unemployment, a wider spread of very low wages, and tax changes all play major parts.

But benefits have been cut sharply. Basic pensions and dole have been cut by half when their value is measured relative to average earnings.

The flat-rate Unemployment Benefit, available to unemployed people as of right, was 31% of average earnings in November 1979 for someone getting the earnings-related supplement, as most claimants did.

In April 1994 it was just 14%. Its value, in relation to average earnings, had been worse than halved.

Fewer and fewer unemployed people can get Unemployment Benefit. The amount of previous National Insurance contributions needed to get it has been raised. If you left your previous job voluntarily, in 1979 you had to wait six weeks before getting Unemployment Benefit; now you must wait 26 weeks.

In November 1992, only 24% of claimants were getting Unemployment Benefit. In November 1980 it was 50%. Now the Tories want to replace Unemployment Benefit with an even more restricted "Jobseekers' Allowance."

Unemployed people have to rely more and more on Income Support, which used to be called Supplementary Benefit. This is means-tested, so, for example, you can not get it if someone else in your household is working.

Income Support for a single householder aged over 25 is just 14% of average earnings.

The Tories have brought in a special low rate of Income Support for people under 25. They now get only 10% of average

earnings. In 1979 they got 22% of average earnings.

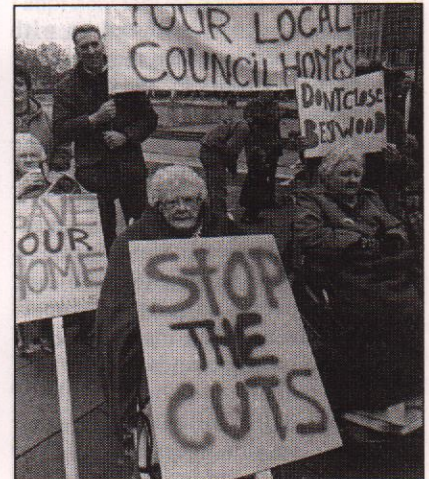
People aged 16 and 17 (bar exceptional cases), and students, have been excluded from Income Support altogether.

A married couple with two young children would have got almost half the average weekly wage in Supplementary Benefit in November 1979. In April 1994 they got only a third.

The National Children's Home did a survey of 354 families in poverty, 60% of them on Income Support. One in five parents had gone hungry in the previous month. Two-thirds of parents and over half the children were not eating enough for proper nutrition.

This problem is made worse by the cuts in school meals. The trade union NUPE (now part of UNISON) estimated that in 1980, school meals met 40% of a child's daily needs for nutrition. In 1993 they met 25%. Between 1979 and 1990 the number of children eating school lunch fell from 4.9 million to 2.8 million.

Unemployed people have also suffered from the abolition of the "Supplementary Payments" which they used to get, for example, to help them put in some minimal furniture and facilities if they got a new home. Now they can only apply for a loan from the "Social Fund". In June 1994



Pensioners protest

homeless charities found that one in four homeless people applying for money from the Social Fund got nothing at all, and the rest often got cash only after long delays. You can be refused money from the "Social Fund", however desperate your need, simply because your local office has spent all its cash limit for the year.

The basic state pension has been cut back, as part of the Government's drive to push people into "personal" pensions (see separate article). It has fallen from 27% to 15% of average earnings.

The rich get richer...

The most wealthy 5% of Britain's population own 37% of all wealth. The top 10% own 50% of all wealth. The bottom 50% own just 8%, on 1991 figures.

Even those figures understate the reality. The wealth owned by anyone outside the top 10% will be little more than the house they live in. The top 5% own and control almost all the wealth that brings power — company shares, privately-owned businesses, large cash fortunes.

In short, they own and control the means of production. And all the rest of us have to sell our labour-power to them in order to live.

That fundamental inequality shapes many inequalities and injustices — long, exhaust-

ing, soul-sapping, servile hours of work by the many in order to feed the wealth of the few.

It also shapes the inequality of income. In 1991 the top 20% of households got about 43% of total income (after taxes and benefits), and the bottom 20% got only 6%.

Both inequality of wealth and inequality of income have increased under the Tories. Between 1979 and 1990-1, the average real income (after housing costs) of the poorest tenth of the population fell by 14%, while the richest tenth became over 50% better off.

Of the £31 billion in tax cuts between 1979 and 1992, £15.2 billion went to the 10% with top incomes. The poor and the averagely-off now pay more in tax (including VAT and other indirect taxes) than in 1979.

From the "nanny state"
to the Tories' robber state

The great pensions rip-off

Millions of people will end up with much less in pensions than they thought, because of a rip-off by the insurance companies.

Many will have no more than the basic state pension, which is only 15% of average wages and decreasing.

In 1985 the Tories brought in measures to run down the State Earnings-Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) and encourage people to start "personal" pension schemes. The insurance companies sent out thousands of sales people. Five million opted out of SERPS, and about half a million out of their employers' pension schemes.

Miners, nurses and teachers were specially targeted. Some 67,000 miners and 27,000 teachers were bamboozled into leaving their employers' pension schemes.

Almost all lost out. Basically, personal pensions pay better than SERPS only for high earners, and better than employers' schemes for almost no-one. For low-earners, almost all they pay in is eaten up by the insurance companies' commission and charges. If they stop payments early and "cash in", as many

have done, they get almost nothing.

Similar problems have been exposed with life-insurance policies. According to the Office of Fair Trading, about 60 per cent of the millions of life insurance policies going at any moment will be cashed in early, because people can not keep up the payments — and what they get back will usually be "derisory."

The people who opted out of employers' schemes into dodgy personal schemes are now due to get compensation, of up to £3 billion — though it is not clear when and exactly how much they will get. It is also not clear whether people who opted out of SERPS will get compensation.

Meanwhile the insurance companies are licking their lips over fat profits — and when they have to pay compensation they can always cover it by increasing their charges still further.

The insurance companies and pension funds should be nationalised, and all the pension schemes brought together into one guaranteed public scheme. And the basic pension should be increased to a decent rate.

Is full employment possible?

Is full employment possible? Could everyone have a decent job? Yes!

Full-time workers in Britain do an average of 43.6 hours a week. It is the longest average work-week in Western Europe.

If the average work-week were cut by 14%, to 37.5 hours — as it could be by a properly-enforced standard 35-hour week — then the same amount of work would employ 14% more workers. In other words, it would create jobs for all the unemployed.

The shorter work-week would obviously have to be coupled with proper training and re-training. In fact, millions of new and worthwhile jobs can and should be created by expanding education, training, and other public services, and rebuilding the Welfare State.

The nett cost of employing the jobless — their wages, less the money saved on state benefit — would be around £14 billion a year. At present wages and "social wages" get about 58% of output in Britain; the wealth-owning class and the State get the other 42%.

Adding another £14 billion to wages would change the split from 58:42 to 61:39. Such a change would be resisted fiercely by the rich who would lose out — but it is not impossible or unimaginable or contrary to any law of nature.

If the extra costs made British production uncompetitive, then that is an argument for international trade-union and socialist action to spread shorter hours and better public services to other countries.

In the good old USA you die if you can't pay

By Karen

When my marriage broke up 18 months ago I went back to the States, where I was born. I'd not been back for 20 years. I had little money and no job.

I am suffering from a terminal illness. Good diet, warm dry accommodation and as little stress as possible are vital to maintain a reasonable level of health for me.

The welfare in the US is awful. I received \$565 a month (around £376).

With this I had to pay the rent for my apartment, bills, clothes and so on. I also received \$135 in food vouchers each month (around £90).

I, like millions of others in the US, was living well below the poverty line. My health deteriorated. The stress of trying to get by was killing me.

I could not manage on US welfare. I was one of the lucky ones as I have dual citizenship and was able to return to Britain. I borrowed the airfare and came back.

Here I receive disability benefits, my rent is paid and I get free health care. My fear is that Britain is moving closer and closer to the US system where you quite literally die if you can't pay.



"As the brunt of the cuts are borne by women, so too is most of the moralising."

Women and the Welfare State

The break up of the Welfare State would have a devastating effect on working-class women.

Childcare provision, the care of the elderly and the sick by the state, and a benefit system that saved those who could not get out to work from going under, freed women, to some extent, from the shackles of domesticity. It gave them some measure of financial independence.

A good welfare system could do more than that. It could give women the opportunity to develop skills, take up education, widen horizons, and take a full part in the workplace and the labour movement on as near to an equal footing as capitalism allows.

The dismantling of the Welfare State — with all its faults — by the Tories means, in effect, that working-class women can know none of these things. It means that the role of caring for the sick, nursing the elderly, rearing children and of domestic slave labour is thrown back onto each, individual, isolated woman in her own family unit.

The only women who will be able to grow, develop and freely choose how to live, free from domestic chores, will be those who can afford it without recourse to the state.

The Tories' dismemberment of the Welfare State also goes hand in hand

with their attacks on things like single parenthood and their moral crusades. The moralising is only directed at the poor and the working classes. The rich can do what they like and live how they please. And just as the brunt of the cuts are borne by women, so too is most of the moralising aimed at women.

The gains of the women's movement of the 1960s and '70s are being whittled away. The right to equal pay, for instance, means little to the woman who can't get a job because there is no affordable nursery provision in the area where she lives.

There is a lesson in this. The gains that are won from the capitalists when the movement — the workers' movement and the women's movement — is strong, can be taken away again as long as the capitalists stay in control.

Ultimately, we need to wrest the power away from the bosses and the state to make the decisions that affect our lives. To do that we need a strong, conscious labour movement. Women comprise half that movement and they are in danger of being silenced and shackled.

Fighting the cuts in the Welfare State will strengthen working-class women and this in turn will strengthen the class that will turf the Tories out of power.

The return to the debtors' prison

The habit of locking up the poor in debtors' prisons was abandoned in Britain 150 years ago. The debtors' prisons were closed or turned to other repressive uses.

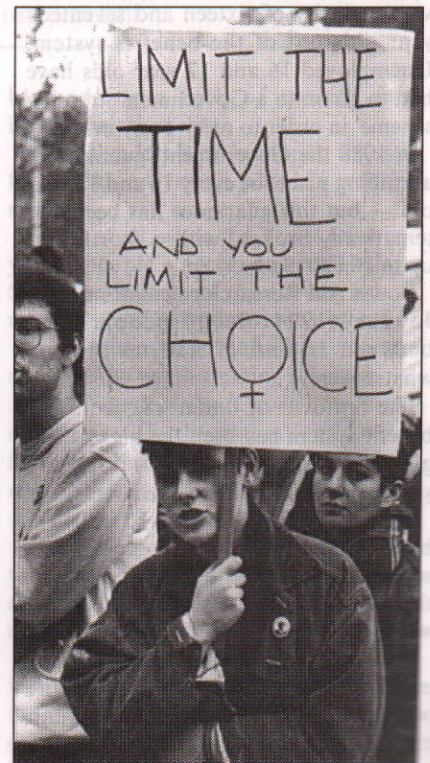
The bringing back of large-scale imprisonment for debt is one of the great Tory contributions to late 20th century British civilisation. It comes along with the impoverishment of millions of people at the bottom of the social heap.

Large numbers have been jailed for not paying the poll tax, by no means all of them people engaged in making a political protest. Many were just too poor to pay without great hardship.

In 1993, 845 people were locked up for 14 days because they owed the cost of a TV licence and consequent £1,000 fine.

Three hundred of those jailed were women, some of them people with young families.

Drive millions of people below the poverty line, and then use the full rigour of the law and the repressive apparatus of the state against them — that is part of the recipe for Tory rule in Britain today.



Youth and education

Cuts hit hard at youth

The true measure of the level of civilisation in any society is that society's treatment of children and young people, and of other helpless and vulnerable groups of people.

By that measurement Tory Britain is a strange place. The hordes of homeless young people who can be seen on the streets of our cities stand as the true symbol of Tory rule. Most of them are on the streets as a direct result of a government decision — the decision to cut benefits for 16 and 17 year olds.

Young people have been in the front line of Tory attacks on the Welfare State. The Government has taken the vast majority of sixteen and seventeen year olds out of the benefits system. Unemployed 16 and 17 year olds have had to go on to a Government 'training scheme' in order to receive any income.

In 1988 the Government 'guaranteed' a training place for every 16 and 17 year old — but this guarantee has been systematically broken, with a shortfall of up to 80,000 places.

Youth Aid Research calculates that in January 1994 68,000 people aged between 16 and 17 had no income whatsoever.

The removal of under 18s from the benefit system has been the biggest single factor that has driven so many young people to a life on the streets.

In fact Youth Training has always been little more than cheap labour schemes and over the last fifteen years the quality of these schemes has become worse and worse.

The 'pay' on the schemes has been eroded. The 1994 equivalent of the wage received on the Youth Opportunities Programme of 1979 would be

£93.44 a week. The current scheme — 'Youth Training' — pays only £29.50 to 16 year olds and £35 to 17 year olds.

Despite its name Youth Training offers very little training. Many YT places are just skivvying for some cheapskate employer. Only a third of YT leavers gain any sort of qualification — after two years' supposed training.

Many youth demonstrate their disgust at the cheap labour schemes by simply walking out; over 52% leave early. A quarter of those who stay the whole stretch end up unemployed.

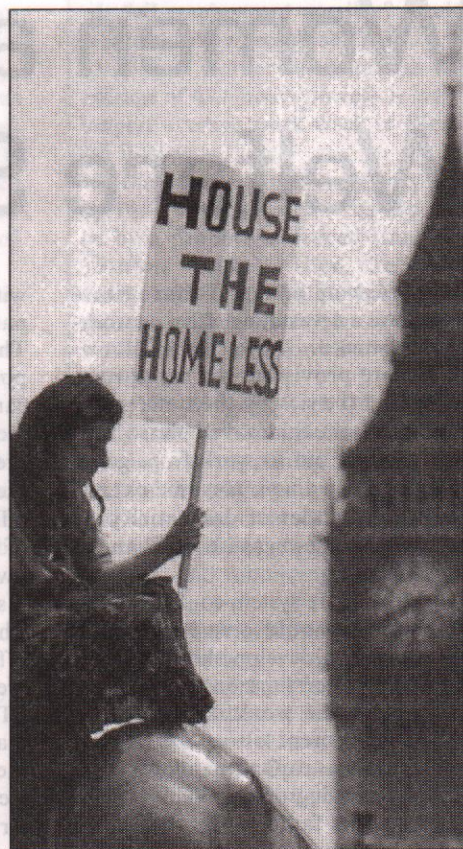
Between 1992 and 1993 the average wage for young men under 18 dropped by 0.9%, and the average wage for young women under 18 dropped by 5.9%.

The erosion of wages is a direct result of mass youth unemployment, the cheap labour YT and the removal of benefits.

These attacks on youth in the 1980s and '90s have coincided with the highest levels of youth unemployment since the 1930s. At no time over the last fifteen years has youth unemployment dropped below half a million.

In many inner city areas young people have little or no chance of getting a job.

At the same time the provision of services has been savagely cut. Most inner-city areas have serious overcrowding problems. Two or even three generations of adults share council flats because council properties have been sold off, and no new properties are being built.



House the homeless

It is now impossible for single young people to get a council house.

Local youth clubs and sports facilities have been cut and entry fees have soared as councils, too timid to take on the Tories, have passed on their cuts to the local communities.

These cuts have added to the boredom and squalor of many young working-class people's lives.

Yet the Tories direct much of their

Racism and the Welfare State

When provision of housing is cut, local services are cut back, hospital waiting lists grow and schools are overcrowded, racists are quick to whip up latent racism by claiming that black people are overloading services. This lets the Tories off the hook. Their cuts create the shortages.

In Tower Hamlets, East London, where in 1993 the fascists won their first council seat for a decade, the issue was the shortage of council housing. Last year in Bermondsey, South London, a youth club was closed and turned into a college. The black students who travelled to this new site of Southwark College were seriously attacked on many occasions by local white youths who had been whipped up by racists about their youth club being shut.

If cuts go through without a fight the bitterness, hostility and racism grows within communities. A battle to defend services will often pull people together in opposition to the real cul-



Welfare State job cuts hit black people disproportionately hard

prit, a council or the Tory Government. A good example is in Tower Hamlets. In the last month a campaign to stop the closure of a local doctor's surgery has united Asian and white residents, in an area where the BNP won thousands of votes. This is an excellent step in the right direction —

away from the race hate message of division pushed by the Liberals, Tories and the media. Unity is the only way that working people can defend the Welfare State, and unity in such struggles will undermine the racists and show the Tories are the real problem.

ble at working-class youth. In a society with mass unemployment, youth have been accused of not wanting to work.

In a country with masses of homeless people, youth are forced to live on the

street and beg for a living and are then accused of 'choosing an offensive way to live.'

In a society collapsing into dog-eat-dog chaos, young people have been

blamed for a lack of morals and increasing crime rates.

These slanders have been used to justify attacks on young people's welfare rights.

Worst of all, while the Tories have cut young people's access to the Welfare State the leaders of the labour movement have stood by and done nothing.

Trade unions have made little effort to unionise the youth training schemes.

Labour leaders won't, even now, commit the party to the restoration of benefit rights. Instead, they propose a three month, £50 a week "alternative" scheme.

Mass unemployment and changes in the labour market have created a real division between the labour movement and the mass of youth.

A vigorous fight by the labour movement for young people's rights, and in defence of the Welfare State, could draw youth into the labour movement. There is no time to lose!

Youth rights charter

The labour movement should campaign for:

1. Scrap YT — Proper training on trade union rates of pay with trade union rights, ending in a guaranteed job.
2. Benefits for all — Return of full benefit rights for students and all youth over 16.
3. Grants for all — A minimum grant of £70 a week for all students over 16.
4. Housing — A legal requirement for councils to house anyone who applies, including single young people, in decent affordable council property. Guaranteed Government funding for the building which is required.
5. Amenities — The provision of free sports and leisure facilities in every area — scrap the charges.

Students fight Tory-imposed misery



Marching to stop cuts

Up to 20,000 students marched in the rain through London in a great national protest against Tory cuts on 23 February 1994. Over fifty colleges backed the demonstration called by the National Student Alliance. Coaches of students came from all over the country and from

as far away as Scotland.

The demonstrators sent this message to the Tory government: "We will rouse up the entire student population of the UK and force you to retreat." The demonstration was a massive show of strength and was a launch pad to a

national campaign.

Students from all over the country attended a fringe meeting after the demonstration and decided to build local and national protests until the Tories backed down.

The National Student Alliance has since organised local action in many colleges around the country. Students this summer will be facing dire poverty with no rights to Income Support or housing benefit. Many will be forced to work in £1.50 an hour jobs simply to get by. For the last few summers we have seen many students become homeless. Reports of students sleeping in tents, caravans and cars are now common. Students and young people between 16 or 17 years are barred from the benefit system.

The National Student Alliance is planning a follow-up national demonstration in London on 9 November 1994. The fight against the Tories' savage cuts continues.

Students face poverty and homelessness

- Les, a student in York, did not receive his parental contribution. Unable to afford to rent a house, Les ended up sleeping in a van in the college car park. College admin kept throwing him out during the night, and he was not even allowed to use the toilet.
- Janet is a single mother who is studying in London. Janet and her three sons lived in one room. Unable to concentrate on her studies, Janet dropped out of her course.
- Keith studied in Liverpool. Even when his parents were made redundant, Keith still did not receive a grant. When he graduated, he owed £5,000 to the bank, £1,600 to the Electricity and Gas Boards, and £1,000 in other debts.

Why the Tories have got away with it so far

Most people in Britain are hostile to what the Tories are doing to the Health Service and to a lesser extent, perhaps, to what they are doing to the Welfare State in general. But still the Tories do it. That is not surprising. The Tories are the party of big money, not the party of the people; they are the party of property, not the party of life.

What is surprising is that the Tories get away with it — and have been getting away with it for fifteen years. Of course they weasel and lie! Of course, they deny the facts about the NHS and throw around obfuscating figures and statistics. Of course, their press covers for them most of the time.

They are slippery, hard to pin down, and harder still to control or bring to book.

After the 1992 election the hypocrite John Major made a public pledge that the Health Service was safe in Tory hands — even while Tory hands continued to tear it apart, piece by piece. You could not find a clearer expression of Tory contempt for the people they claim to represent or of the extent to which transparent official lies now dominate British political life.

The Labour leaders' failure as defenders of the Health Service almost defies belief.

They could not have an easier or more popular case to argue, yet they mumble apologetically when they should roar

out angry defiance; they squeal in little protests when they should thunder with the indignation felt by many millions of people; they quibble about details where they should take a clear and immovable stand on the great labour movement principle of equal health care for all.

In face of the implacable Tory drive to destroy the Welfare State, the response from the labour movement, Labour and TUC alike, has had neither force nor credibility nor consistency. Why?

Why have the labour movement's leaders made so faltering a response to the destruction by the Tories of Labour's greatest achievements, the National Health Service and the Welfare State?

The answer is as simple as it is shameful.

They can not convincingly defend the NHS because they inwardly accept the basic Tory case against the NHS. In a society which spends vast millions on arms, makes tax cuts to benefit the wealthy, and devotes immense amounts of wealth to sustain the upper classes, the Labour leaders go along with the key Tory idea that the cost of full medical treatment on demand for everyone would be prohibitive!

That is why Labour's leaders have not responded as they should have responded when the Tories have openly said — and it is now one of their central arguments — that modern health care is too expensive to give to everyone, that is, to

the poor, and so can only be made available to those who have the money to pay for it.

The leaders of the Labour Party thus betray the best traditions of their own reformist current of labour movement opinion. And it is not even true that state-of-the-art health care is prohibitively expensive.

The reformist leaders of the 1940s would have responded to the ideas which the Tories now openly proclaim as people stung to action in defence of their most cherished and most basic beliefs — their belief in human equality, in human solidarity and in social justice. But they were convinced reformists. The present leaders are not even reformists. That is why they have not known how to answer the Tories. Accepting the gruesome Tory argument that "we" cannot afford proper health care for the poor, they can only mumble and fumble and set up a "Commission on Social Justice" to formally redefine Labour's politics on welfare. They ask only that the Tories go about it with a little less savagery. The Tories will not oblige them! In the nature of things, the Tories cannot oblige them.

Without the acceptance by the Labour leaders of the basic premise of what the Tories are doing — that "we" cannot afford the Health Service or a proper Welfare State — their fight against the Tories would have been fuelled by righteous, invigorating anger and determination, and propelled forward by the determination of millions of people.

Their denunciations of the Tories would have carried conviction. They would have known what they wanted and asked the labour movement to back them in fighting for it. The labour movement would have rallied the British people against the Tories. The Tories would have been smashed up, not the Welfare State.

Ideas are central here. You cannot fight the Tories if you accept their basic ideas, if you believe that the laws of capitalism and not the needs of the working class are the highest court of appeal.

In order to beat the Tories the labour movement must first reject their ideas — and those leaders of the labour movement who transmit Tory ideas into the labour movement.



To save the Welfare State, we can and must build a movement bigger than the one which defeated the Poll Tax

What to do now

Build a movement to de

Despite Tory lies and hypocrisy, people do know what is happening to the NHS and to the Welfare State in general. There is widespread, and even organised, opposition to the destruction of the Welfare State. There is a great popular hatred of those responsible for it.

There are many campaigns, though they tend to be, or quickly to become, localised.

Despite it all, the Tories have not been stopped, or slowed down, or shamed.

The opposition to the Tories has been ineffective because the natural spinal column around which it could organise itself, the labour movement, has not opted for an all-out fight to stop the Tories.

Yet the Tories must be stopped — and the time for saving the Welfare State has now grown very short. Already, health care as we have known it since Nye Bevan created the Health Service in 1948 is breaking down all over the country — patients are being turned away, wards closed, hospitals destroyed. Time is short!

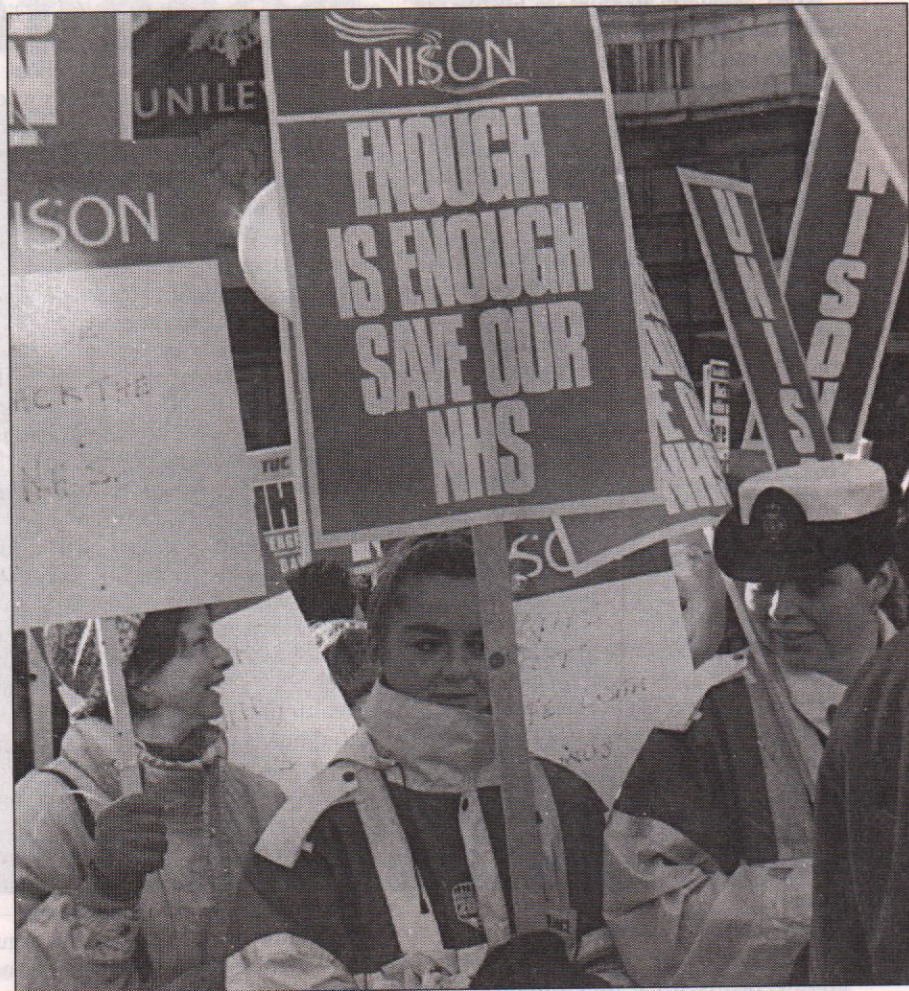
But how can the Tories be stopped? How can the democratic will of the majority of the British people be given effective expression against a government hell-bent on ignoring it?

Ultimately, only the labour movement can stop the Tories. But all we have had from the Labour and TUC leaders is sporadic protests, hangdog opposition, the occasional demonstration, and (in the 1992 election campaign) ill-managed stunts.

As we have argued already (see previous page) the central failure of the Labour leaders in the last 15 years has been a failure of reformist nerve, a moral buckling and bowing-down before the dog-eat-dog philosophy of the Tories.

And yet the Welfare State is the question on which everything could be made to turn around in our favour again. It is the issue on which the Tories and their philosophy are widely discredited already and on which they could be thoroughly routed.

The basic difference in outlook between them and us is most powerfully expressed in the question of health care. On our side we assert, defend and fight for the right to basic state-of-the-art health care for everyone. On their side the Tories brutally deny that right and proclaim that only the



rich and well-off can have it, leaving the poor to die or suffer if they can't afford to pay.

This is the real spirit of Toryism, and by opposing it seriously we could turn the tide against them — not only electorally, but on the level of ideas and basic social outlook — as we did in 1945.

We will never find a more powerful, more clear-cut, more emotion-charged issue than the NHS on which to express the human-beings first philosophy of the labour movement and counterposing it to the savage prattle and practices of the Tories.

The Tories must be challenged! A bold campaign for the Welfare State — for a Health Service based on all-out acceptance of the principles of 1948 — that would rally millions against the Tories. It should be launched immediately.

But what can we do? The labour movement must demand of its leaders — Labour and trade-union alike — that they launch a Crusade for the Right to Life.

We need not a series of odd, ragged, half-hearted, half-serious, dispirited objections and demonstrations, but a radical crusade that dares reassert the basic socialist idea embedded in Nye Bevan's Health Service — that the right to life is greater than the rights of property, that the right to health care for everyone comes before the right of the well-off to pay less tax.

Many millions already agree with us in their guts even though they may be oppressed by the dominant Tory philosophy and not yet know how to answer it or what to do about it. A revived labour movement must give them the answer!

However, the Labour and trade-union

Defend the Welfare State

leaders will not launch a crusading campaign. They will not now claim the moral high ground and indict Toryism and all its works. At best they will continue to protest and sometimes march, ineffectively, as the inexorable drive of the Tories to smash up the Welfare State continues and millions are pushed back into the swamps of social barbarism over which the reformist labour movement for a while built its life-enhancing bridges and causeways.

We can no longer wait for these people to act.

Those determined to defend and restore the Welfare State must gather our forces and fight with every means necessary — propaganda, demonstrations, direct action — to stop the Tories destroying the Health Service and what is left of the Welfare State.

In the past we have seen powerful movements created by ad hoc committees. The most pertinent is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which became an immense force, able even to shape the affairs of the labour movement. It was started by prominent writers like the late JB Priestley and Bertrand Russell, and by left-wing politicians like Michael Foot.

This is a model we can use now.

We must start to build a single-issue campaign to defend and restore the Welfare State and, in the most prominent place, the Health Service.

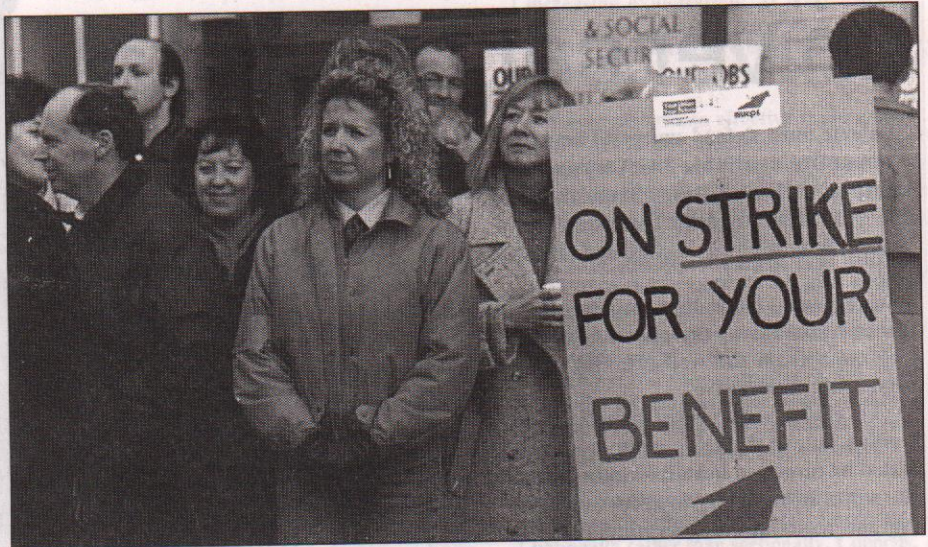
We must rally the labour movement around the principle which here and now most clearly embodies the philosophy of the labour movement: the principle of proper medical care, housing, education, and pensions or benefits as basic social and human rights.

Such a single-issue campaign will begin to mobilise and organise the vast headless opposition that already exists to defend the Health Service and the Welfare State.

It will give integration and coherence and added force to the myriad existing local campaigns.

It will become a force within the unions, adding to the weight and strength of anti-Tory, pro-NHS campaigns such as that of UNISON.

That is what we need — nothing less will do the job now. It can if necessary be done even, initially, without the Labour and trade union leaders. But time is short!



Labour must drive the Tories out

In the May 1994 election to the European Parliament, the Tories received a ringing slap in the face from the electorate. But the electorate is powerless to dismiss them. The party that governs Britain won little more than one vote in every four votes cast, yet it can remain in the government.

The Tories lost all moral or political right to rule the people of Britain, yet they retain the legal right to govern the people who rejected them so resoundingly.

And they can go on governing Britain until 1997, before they are legally obliged to call a British general election.

If the Tories had any real commitment to democracy, they would call a general election. In fact they will hold on, hoping things will get better in the three years before they are obliged to face the electorate again. They pulled it off in '92, remember?

They rose then from what looked like certain defeat — having thrown Mrs Thatcher's political blood in the eyes of the voters — to a comfortable victory.

The situation after the election makes a prize ass out of British democracy, but if the Tory patriots can gain any advantage for themselves from that, be sure they will put party and class advantage above the good name of British democracy.

But it is not only the Tories who are in an awkward dilemma. Labour is discomfited

too. Labour received a tremendous endorsement — little less than one in two of those who voted.

In that election Labour incontestably won the moral right to govern Britain. But Labour will not be forming a government. Labour is still condemned to the impotence and frustration of the opposition benches in the Commons.

Labour is forced to see the Tories go on misruling the country and discrediting existing democracy.

Isn't it ridiculous?

By what right do those Tory thieves, cheats, rip-off specialists and spivs continue to ban trade unions from taking solidarity action, continue to deny benefits to unemployed girls and boys of 16 and 17, continue to loot public property, go on hacking and chopping at a British society which they have already made into the cheap-labour hellhole of western Europe?

They have no right to go on doing these things. They should be stopped.

A serious opposition would systematically withdraw co-operation from the Tories in Parliament. Now that the electorate has taken away the Tories' moral licence to rule, an end to collaboration in the Tory mismanagement of Britain is the least that the Labour leaders should do if they want to keep faith with those who voted Labour in the Euro-elections.

If Labour did that then it would be very difficult for the Tories to go on ruling. They would be forced to call a general election.

What to do now

Defend universal benefits!

Labour must defend universal benefits — benefits available to everyone by right, regardless of their circumstances, like child benefit and the basic state pension — against means-testing and targeting.

Some people claim that targeting can direct resources to the poor and needy and away from the well-off. But other arguments are decisive.

- To claim a universal benefit is to claim a human right. To claim a means-tested or targeted benefit is to beg from the state. It inevitably involves humiliating and wasteful bureaucratic hassle, as anyone who claims Housing Benefit

knows all too well.

- A lot of the people who should be entitled to means-tested or targeted benefits fail to claim them, because of the humiliation and hassle. Child benefit, a universal benefit, is claimed by almost everyone. Family Credit, a means-tested benefit, is claimed by only 60-odd per cent of those entitled, despite a big advertising campaign for it and a claim procedure simpler than that for child benefit.

- A means-tested benefit will inevitably serve a limited number of people and therefore have a limited basis of support. A universal benefit automatically acquires a wide range of support.

Welfare provision by local authorities has been cut drastically, but piecemeal.

Local authorities' revenue income in England and Wales was about the same, in real terms, in 1990-1 as in 1980-1. Since local authorities have been forced to take on many new responsibilities — for "community care" for example — this means resources falling massively short of needs.

Local authorities' capital income dropped 26% in real terms between 1980-1 and 1990-1.

Labour-controlled inner-city areas, with the worst social problems, have suffered more from the cuts than better-off Tory areas: cuts in social services, old people's day centres, education, housing.

We should organise to make Labour councils lead a fight against the Tories, instead of just trying to be less brutal administrators of the Tory cuts.

Unite the left!

Unity in action; honest dialogue about our differences

The Tories are deeply unpopular, but the left is not in a good state either.

As a result of the defeats the working class has suffered over the last twenty years — under both Labour and Tory governments — moods of defeatism and demoralisation grip the bulk of the left, compensated for here and there by hysterical sectarianism.

We are not in the position we should be in if we are to build on the widespread opposition to the Tories that now exists. Senseless disunity — the inability to unite even for limited common goals — is the plainest manifestation of the state the left is in now.

The mood of weary acceptance of this disunity is itself part of the left's demoralisation.

Great possibilities would be opened up if the left could find ways to unite in practical action — in defence of the Welfare State, for example. We would support every struggle that takes place and link up the different battles over individual issues into a generalised political alternative to the Tories and all

they stand for.

That means that the left has to fight for a Labour government and, inside the Labour Party, for socialist policies.

Labour is still the political wing of a multi-million strong mass workers' movement. It is the only alternative government available to that movement.

Either socialists fight inside that party — basing themselves on the struggles outside as well — or we consign ourselves to irrelevance as far as politics, the overall running of society, is concerned.

The vast bulk of the broader, politically active, left is still to be found in the Labour Party and its affiliated trade unions.

After a decade and a half of right-wing political counter-revolution, witch hunts and purges, Tony Benn can still get around 70,000 individual party members to vote for him for Labour's National Executive Committee.

A minimum of 5,000 solid left wingers regularly attend their ward meetings,

while ten times this number still hold party cards. Beyond this layer, there are similar numbers of people who have let their membership lapse but would still define themselves politically as 'Labour Left'. There are even broader layers of shop stewards and active rank and file trade union members who identify politically with Benn, Skinner and Scargill.

The so-called revolutionary left is also important. If the 6,000 or so people who are presently active in the SWP, Militant Labour and the smaller sects could be won to a serious orientation to the working class and to participation in the fight to transform the existing labour movement, then the left would be a far more attractive and effective force than it is at present.

Unity is needed. Unity in action for defined goals is possible.

This does not mean being silent about our differences. It means unity in action combined with clarity in debate and discussion. It would be a giant step forward from where we are now.

What to do now

Occupy to win!

Every attack on the Welfare State is also an attack on the workers who provide the services. The best way to defend both services and jobs is for workers and service users to unite, take control and occupy.

Rebecca Waterman, a member of UNISON, draws out some of the lessons from the occupation of University College Hospital London in 1993.

"When it was announced that UCH would close, our union, UNISON, had a ballot for indefinite strike action. Nurses and doctors came out on strike to force the Tories to keep the hospital open.

We wanted the hospital to be under workers' control and provide emergency cover, but management said it was a lock-out and banned us from entering the hospital. This was a deciding point for us.

Many nurses felt guilty, as patient care was suffering. Had we run the hospital, more nurses would have joined our action.

The union should have supported us on this. If we'd won workers' control over emergency cover the strike would have been a lot stronger.

Workers in Manchester occupied a ward in solidarity with us.

Activists in the rail unions provided human barricades to prevent beds and patients being moved from wards.

The UCW refused to deliver post at the hospital, and the ambulance workers refused to transfer patients from UCH to the Middlesex hospital. This led to management putting patients' lives at risk by moving them, alongside drips and other equipment, to other hospitals in private cars.

During the strike there was an occupation of one ward, not only by staff but by the local community as well.

Many student nurses, like myself, became politicised during the strike, and increased our awareness of what was happening in the world. There was a feeling of being part of a community that kept us alive.

The strike ended when the UNISON bureaucrats withdrew their support and did a secret deal with management whereby they dropped disciplinary charges against six strikers who had been charged with gross professional misconduct for entering the building — and we went back to work. We all felt so angry — we did not go on strike to defeat farcical disciplinary charges. We went on strike to save UCH."

Since 1983 Contracting Out (the hiving off of public sector work to private profiteers) has been at the centre of the Tories' strategy for undermining the Welfare State and attacking public sector workers.

The Tories say that Contracting Out saves money and increases quality.

Contracting Out "saves money" by increasing exploitation. At least 250,000 public sector jobs have gone as a result of Contracting Out. There is no evidence that Contracting Out increases the quality of services.

It does undermine effective trade unionism. This is how the bosses' paper, the *Financial Times*, put it: "In the 1991 Liverpool council strike, the council's manual workers abandoned their action before the white-collar staff, after losing some contracts to outside companies. It is unlikely that white-collar staff will be able to hold out as long as they did in Liverpool with the imminent extension of compulsory competitive tendering to their jobs. The formation of UNISON, increasing as it does the potential for abuse of union power, makes it essential that compulsory competitive tendering should continue in public services."

We must fight for:

- Within particular areas of the public sector, a serious fightback to be co-ordinated nationally rather than sectionally. Councils, hospitals and Civil Service departments and Agencies should not be left to fight alone.
- Unity of public service workers, and of workers with service users.
- A determined and clearly defined political/industrial strategy, including a commitment to a national demonstration and a national public sector day of action to kick-start the campaign.
- A conference of militants in the public sector to build up rank-and-file pressure on this issue.
- A commitment to abolition of Contracting Out and a return to direct employment in the public sector by the next Labour government.

What we stand for

This pamphlet is published by people whose openly stated goal is to convince the working class that it must overthrow capitalism. We organise ourselves to assist, promote, learn from and lead the working class to do this.

But in Britain now the immediate task of socialists is to unite the labour movement in a battle to stop the Tories completely destroying the Welfare State.

The labour movement must once more impose what Karl Marx called elements of "the political economy of the working class," against the ruling class. Once more we must assert the priority of life against the inhuman priorities of profit,

and against the Tory party which represents those priorities.

In the fight for the Welfare State millions of workers will become convinced of the need for real socialism.

We say:

- Rebuild the Welfare State! Labour must make good all the cuts imposed by the Tories since 1979. Decent public services can be paid for by taxing the rich.
- Good health care, education, and housing, and a decent job or upkeep when unable to work, are fundamental human rights for everyone.
- Public ownership and control of the suppliers and ancillary activities of the public services is essential — for example, nationalisation of the drug companies which draw such huge profits from the Health Service.
- Public services should be run under

democratic workers' and community control, not by unelected and unaccountable quangos and managers. We believe that such democratic control would bring changes in the substance as well as the organisation of services like health and education — shifts, for example, towards positive and preventive health policies and towards continuing lifetime education.

• The labour movement must support public-service workers' battle to defend their jobs, conditions, and pay against Tory cuts and "contracting-out."

We aim not to create a new labour movement, but to transform the existing workers' movement, trade unions and Labour Party.

We stand for the extension of the Welfare-State principle of provision for human need from a restricted set of basic services to the whole economy.

Education for barbarism

Towards two tier education

More and more children in working-class areas go to schools where the buildings are in poor repair, books and equipment are inadequate, and the teachers are demoralised. Often they are people who have been pushed into teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach.

Then an extra strain is added by the daft government-imposed tests, the constantly chopped-about National Curriculum, and Tory minister John Patten's neurotic drive to have children taught to fear God and Hellfire.

In London, matters have been made worse by cuts and disorganisation when the Tories chopped up the Inner London Education Authority and made the boroughs run the schools.

The Tories' change in school budgeting, so that schools effectively have to compete to get more students and more money, pushes the education system further towards a two-tier structure, where an increasing number will go into higher education but many children get little more than institutionalised child-minding. In 1991 it was estimated that one in five of those aged 21 (nine years old when the Tories came in) was innumerate, and one in seven was illiterate. Schools now have a financial incentive to exclude students who cause difficulty, and more and more are excluded.

Further Education colleges have been taken out of local authority control, and made into market-driven businesses. The universities are being made more market-driven, too — "pile them high and teach them cheap" — while student grants are cut and they move

towards charging tuition fees.

Money for adult education has been cut. Fewer than ten per cent of people aged over 25 do any study; compare Sweden, where nearly one half of all adults take part in study circles or courses.

What's the logic? It is to scrap any idea of education as a basic right for every child and every adult to equip them to understand their world and develop their talents.

Instead some children will get minimal childminding, to prepare them for life on the dole; some will get basic rote learning and a dose of discipline, to prepare them for low-wage jobs; a minority will get cheap-and-quick higher training, to prepare for more skilled jobs; and a smaller minority will be trained to rule in the elite universities.

Cash squeeze on the schools

Since 1979 the Tories have attacked every facet of public education.

Economically, through cuts, bringing in market forces and rewarding private providers.

Politically, through transferring power from Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to quangos and central government.

And ideologically, through rhetoric about 'basics', 'standards', 'parent power' and 'the needs of industry'.

Despite research showing that £1000 spent on good nursery education saves at least £4,000 in future public spending on social problems, Britain has the lowest level of pre-school provision in the European Community, along with

Greece and Portugal. In this country, one child in five gets nursery schooling (usually about two and a half hours a day), whereas in countries like Belgium, France and Italy nearly all children get a full day.

Local authority nursery places were cut from 32,000 in 1980-1 to 30,000 in 1990-1 despite a huge increase in demand for child-care. Private provision boomed. Registered childminders went from 110,000 to 297,000, private and voluntary-sector nurseries from 23,000 to 105,000 places.

In mainstream schooling real spending per pupil fell by an average of 1.8 per cent per year between 1980 and 1988. Education spending as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product fell from 5.5 per cent in 1979 to 4.8 per cent in 1992.

Over the same period, the number of teachers in UK schools dropped by 30,000. In 1989 the government estimated that, for example, 3,000 primary schools were without a qualified maths teacher, and only one in seven had a qualified science teacher. The majority of science teachers taking "A" level classes have not studied the subject they are teaching at degree level. One half of all professionally qualified teachers have left teaching. In 1989 there were 495,000 people who were qualified but not working as teachers. The starting salary for a new teacher was £8,394 whereas the average for all new graduates was around £10,000.

By 1992 the ratio of pupils to teachers in British primary schools was worse than in 20 of the 24 OECD countries and class sizes were increasing, even on Government figures, with 900,000 children in classes of over 30, and at least

Nowadays pre-school child care and education should go beyond keeping babies and young children dry and fed.

We know that all children benefit from pre-school education. The evidence shows that those who get it stand a better chance in life. They do better at school, are more confident and less likely to get into trouble with the police.

In other words pre-school education is a necessity.

Yet, when myself and 63 other nursery nurse students in my year leave college this week [July 1994] no-one will have a job in a nursery. And this is not for the want of trying!

Skills and training are not enough. We need jobs to put these skills to good use. Money or the lack of it cannot be allowed to stand in the way of all children getting a good start in life.

Alice, Nursery Nurse

The number of public libraries in Britain open full-time (45 hours a week or more) dropped by nearly one-third between 1980 and 1992.

1,174 out of 5,590 public libraries were open full-time in 1980; 840 out of 5,253 in 1992.

9,000 in classes of over 41. Funding changes since then have made this situation worse.

Between 1982 and 1991 the percentage of primary school children in classes of fewer than 20 children fell by almost half, from 20 per cent to 12 per cent. More than one in four primary school children are taught in classes of more than 30 by a single teacher.

The cuts have put teachers and school buildings under increasing strain. The backlog of repairs needed to school buildings totals £3 billion.

The big stick increases inequality

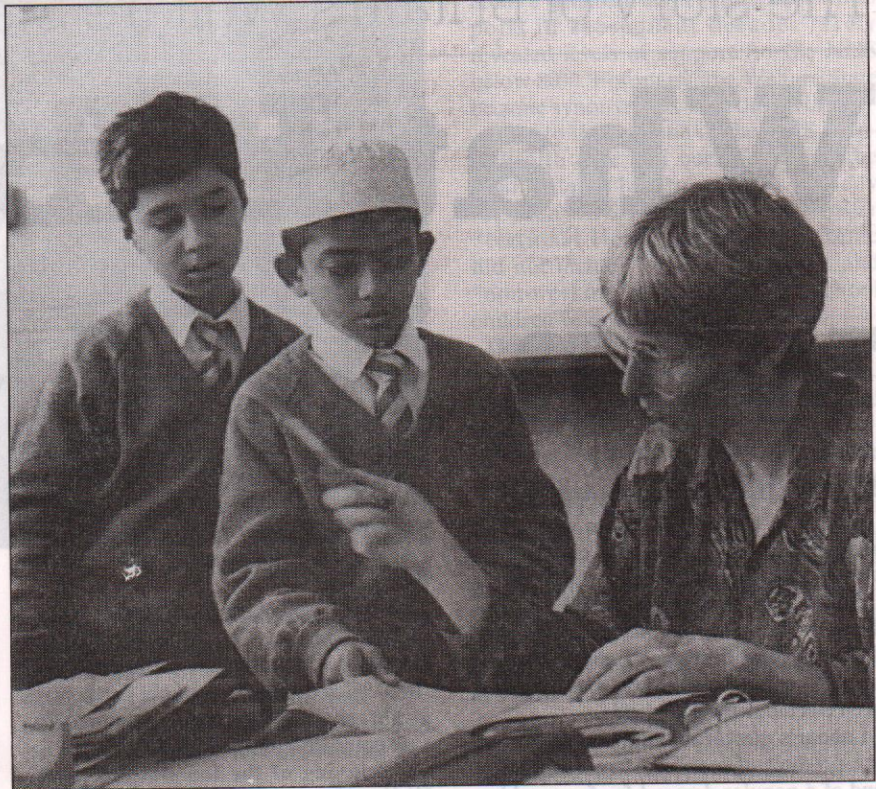
Alongside cuts, the Tories have also used a series of Acts of Parliament to intervene in state schooling and change its character. Barriers to market forces have been scrapped, increasing existing inequalities and setting up new ones.

The 1980 Education Act, for example, set out to save the £390 million spent by LEAs on school meals, by lifting their legal obligations to provide meals, milk and transport. It also enshrined in law the right of LEAs to select children at 11 and empowered LEAs doing this to recoup in full the costs of children attending their schools from neighbouring boroughs. The 1986 Act weakened the influence of LEA and teacher reps in governing bodies in relation to that of employers and parents. It also provided for City Technology Colleges (i.e. selective secondary schools) to be set up outside local authority control.

In 1989, under this Act, the Government put up £7.8 million towards the capital cost of starting a CTC in Nottingham, to take 1,000 selected pupils. By comparison, the capital grant to Nottinghamshire LEA to cover 560 schools and colleges, with 170,000 students, was £2.5 million.

The Pay and Conditions of Teachers Act 1987 abolished collective bargaining and substituted a statutory Review Body. In April that year, a Government Order laid down in detail the duties of teachers and heads.

The 1988 Education Reform Act gave schools the right to opt out of LEA control and become 'grant maintained' (i.e. funded directly by the state). For schools staying under LEA control, Local Management of Schools (LMS) was introduced, with councils forced to devolve budgets to governing bodies,



which must now compete with other schools for pupils to keep their funding up. And now there was to be a legally binding National Curriculum which laid down in detail what all schools must teach, with compulsory tests at the 'key stages' of 7, 11, 14 and 16.

The 1988 Act also gave the Secretary of State a mass of reserve powers which are still being used in the drive towards marketisation while yet another Bill is going through Parliament. There has been the Parents' Charter, the decision to publish 'league tables' of exam results, the moves towards open enrolment, the replacement of the inspectorate by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), and the introduction of the Funding Agency for Schools, which is to get planning powers within a LEA area once a few schools have opted out. There have also been ideological measures, for example:

- the replacement of the Schools Council which had teacher representation with the National Curriculum Council and School Examinations and Assessment Council which had virtually none;
- the legal requirement for schools to provide a daily act of worship of a mainly Christian character;
- the rundown of Section 11 funding (money for areas with significant black populations);
- changes in the control of funding for

staff development which restrict it to 'national priorities';

- moves towards appraisal and performance-related pay;
- media-orchestrated attacks on progressive forms of sex education;
- restrictions on assessment via coursework as opposed to exams.

At the same time, the Tories have begun to undermine pre-service teacher education training, for example by piloting cut-price forms of it such as the Licensed Teachers scheme and the attempt to use unqualified helpers in place of teachers (the so-called 'mum's army').

In contrast, the Tories have boosted private provision. For example in 1980 they brought in the Assisted Places Scheme by which public money was used to send middle class children to private schools. The private schools have not only kept the tax exemptions they enjoy by virtue of being charities but have also gained from changes in the way school property is assessed for rates. The number of pupils in private schools grew from 527,600 in 1979/80 (5.9 per cent of all children) to 566,500 in 1991/92 (7.4 per cent). To help sell the whole scam, the DFE by 1992 was spending on its own publicity £28 for every £1 spent in 1979. Recently it has spent £3 million delivering to every household a glossy leaflet intended to counteract resistance to testing.

The story of Britain's Welfare State

What Labour won in 1945

1. 1945, the turning point

After the General Election of 1945 it seemed to many as if the citadels of power had finally fallen to the army of labour. War leader Churchill and the Tory Party he led had been resoundingly defeated. The first ever Labour government to enjoy an absolute majority had been elected, with a landslide.

Labour's electoral victory in 1945 was the product of a wave of radicalisation and of a popular demand for far-reaching social reforms which had been unleashed by the ending of the war.

Many of those voting in 1945 had been born during the barbarism of the First World War, grew up during the bosses' offensive of the 1920s, searched for work in vain during the slump of the 1930s, and were then conscripted to fight during the Second World War.

They were determined that the return of peace should not bring with it a return to the poverty and humiliations of the 1930s: slum housing, mass unemployment, poor health, the means test, and minimal educational opportunities.

Workers who had defeated fascism abroad were not prepared to return home to a country where those who had inflicted such poverty and humiliation on them were allowed again to take up the reins of power.

Labour's landslide victory, its policies of nationalisation, and its establishment of what subsequently became known as "the Welfare State", seemed to mark the beginnings of a new epoch.

Workers greeted nationalisation with scarcely restrained enthusiasm. As one reporter described "vesting day" in the Rhondda Valley:

"An hour before dawn today miners' wives took their children, some still asleep, and carried them up the starlit road to the Penallta Colliery to show them something they would remember the rest of their lives.

"They saw chains of 'glow-worms', hun-

dreds of miners in steel helmets and pit clothes, fathers, brothers, cousins, each carrying his lamp, winding out of the colliery yard.

"A band was playing under the shadow of a pit-shaft. The blue flag of the National Coal Board was hoisted and 'Bob' Silcox, wearing a khaki battle dress jacket, shouted into a microphone: 'Private enterprise has had it!'"

The laying of the foundations of the Welfare State, allied with a commitment to the maintenance of full employment, also seemed to hold out the prospect of a better future, and not without a certain justification.

2. The Beveridge Report

The development of the post-war social security system was based upon the Beveridge Report ("Social Insurance and Allied Services") of 1942. Such was the popularity of the Report that people had queued up to buy it on its publication. Copies of it were parachuted into the Nazi-occupied territories as evidence of the ideals for which the Allies were supposedly fighting.

The Report promised "a scheme of social insurance against interruption and destruction of earning power, and for special expenditure arising at birth, marriage or death... (in order) to make want under any circumstances unnecessary."

The basic principles of the Report, albeit in a diluted form, were introduced in successive pieces of legislation adopted by the post-war Labour government:

- the Family Allowances Act (1945);
- the National Insurance Act (1946);
- the National Assistance Act (1948).

Between 1945 and 1975 the real value of benefits, with the exception of child support, virtually doubled. Absolute poverty, and the fear of absolute poverty which had been a hall-mark of working-class life in the 1930s, was effectively eliminated.

The disappearance of absolute poverty was a product of full employment rather than the development of the social security system. This maintenance of full employment was however a break with government policies of the 1930s and was itself an expression of welfare stateism.

The wartime coalition government's "Employment Policy" White Paper explicitly rejected the idea that "every trade depression would automatically bring its own corrective", and instead declared that "the government accepts as one of their primary aims and responsibilities the maintenance of a high and stable level of employment."

In the 1945 election Labour committed itself to the maintenance of full employment, which, by the early 1950s, was understood to mean an unemployment level of no more than 3% (whereas in the 1940s full employment had been equated with 5% or even 8.5% unemployment).

Reflationary measures were adopted by successive post-war governments, both Labour and Tory, in order to "soak up" unemployed workers by stimulating demand when unemployment reached 2.5%.

Between 1945 and 1975 the annual average for unemployment exceeded 3% on only four occasions (1947, 1971, 1972 and 1975). By comparison, annual average unemployment in the inter-war years had been 11%, reaching 17% during the years of economic depression. How far post-war full employment was a product of government economic policies and how far it was a spontaneous consequence of an expanding economy both nationally and internationally, however, was a question in itself.

3. Education

The post-war expansion of education had already been set in motion before the end of the war by the 1944 Education



Jarrow crusade

Act. Moreover, in the context of full employment, education came to be seen increasingly as an opportunity to secure a decent future rather than a short-term financial loss.

The 1944 Act made state education, for the first time ever, entirely free. The school leaving age was raised to 15, a clear break was introduced between primary and secondary education, and free school meals, milk and medical inspections were introduced.

Labour pledged itself in the following year's election to ensure implementation of the Act. It is important to grasp that without Labour's election it probably would not have been implemented. (Education Reform enacted at the end of the First World War remained a dead letter.) On election Labour began a crash school rebuilding programme, recruited and trained another 35,000 teachers, scrapped grammar school fees, and raised the school-leaving age to 15.

The Tories maintained this momentum

after they returned to power in 1951. The remaining "all-age" schools were transformed into primary or secondary schools, over 200 new schools were built, university colleges were upgraded, and the building of seven new universities was commenced.

Within two decades of the end of the war the average reading age for 15 year-olds had improved by some 25 months. By the early 1970s the number of children leaving school with no academic qualifications had plunged to 19%.

4. The National Health Service is set up

Even more popular than the post-war Labour government's education reforms was its establishment of the National Health Service, created by the Health Service Act of 1946 and inaugurated in July of 1948.

Within three months of the creation of the NHS opinion polls recorded a clear majority describing it as the govern-

ment's greatest achievement. Opinion polls in subsequent decades rarely revealed levels of support for the NHS below 80%. For many, the Welfare State became synonymous with the NHS.

Prior to the creation of the NHS proper health care had been for many the unaffordable luxury which it is today for many US workers. The interwar "National Health Insurance" scheme did not include hospital treatment, and "non-working" mothers and pre-school children were excluded from it.

Only 7% of those covered by the scheme received any dental treatment, and only 25% of the population had access to free ophthalmic care.

"A free health service," proclaimed the left-wing Labour minister Aneurin Bevan, the architect of the NHS, "is a triumphant example of the superiority of collective action and public initiative applied to a segment of society where commercial principles are seen at their worst."

The NHS provided millions of workers and their families with access to healthcare which they had previously been denied. During the first five years of its existence over 26 million pairs of glasses and six million sets of false teeth were dispensed as the NHS began to tackle the accumulated backlog of ill-health.

As was the case with other aspects of the Welfare State, such as social security, full employment, and improved educational opportunities, the NHS marked a real advance for the working class in comparison with the pre-war years.

5. Why the capitalists accepted the Welfare State

But the emergence of the post-war Welfare State was not simply a matter of the labour movement beginning to re-shape society to its own needs. Beveridge was a Liberal.

We need democratic control

What's left of the Welfare State is increasingly run by unelected "quangos".

73,000 "quangocrats", appointed by the Government, run vast areas of the public sector without elections, accountability, or any democratic control. The 5,521 boards, committees, commissions, Agencies, and Health Service Trusts are stuffed full of Tory bigwigs, failed Tory election candidates, and business people. Yet no quango has to release its policy papers to the public.

Only 7 per cent of them have to organise even one public meeting a year. Half of them have no public register of their members' private business interests. All but 14 per cent are exempt from scrutiny by ombudsmen. Only one-third have their accounts examined by the Audit Commission or the National Audit Office.

Repeated scandals, especially in the Health Service Trusts, have shown that they are nests of corruption and patronage. What's left of the funds of the Health Service is increasingly siphoned off into big payments for the Trust bigwigs and the managers.

The labour movement must campaign for democracy. In the first place, we should demand that hospitals, schools, and colleges be put back under the control of elected local councillors.

Elected local authorities, however, can only decide the broad outlines of the running of these institutions. In day-to-day detail hospitals, schools, and colleges remain dictatorships, ruled by the managers, consultants, head teachers, and principals. They should instead be democratically controlled by the workers and, in education, the students.

Such workers' and community control could reshape the services to the needs of the majority.

The proposals of the Beveridge Report of 1942, although subsequently watered down, did not have to be implemented in the face of determined opposition on the part of the ruling classes. On the contrary, *The Times* hailed its contents as:

"An opportunity for marking this decisive epoch with a great social measure which would go far towards restoring the faith of ordinary men and women throughout the world in the power of democracy to answer the imperious needs of a new age."

Moreover, the manifesto upon which the Tories fought the 1945 election, which called for a massive extension of state control of industry and a major increase in public spending, was well to the left of the Labour Party's current policies. What the Tories would actually have done if they'd won the election is another question. Nothing came of Tory promises after World War One.

The 1947 Tory Party conference approved an "Industrial Charter", which committed them to the maintenance of full employment and the Welfare State, increased public spending, and acceptance of the irreversibility of nationalisation. Again, the Tories of the late 1940s were well to the left of Labour of the 1990s.

Why did the Tories adopt this benevolent attitude towards the Welfare State in the post-war years? Welfare stateism can bring real gains for the working class. But, as the Tories of the 1940s and 1950s recognised, it can also be of benefit to capitalism.

In his analysis of the Factory Acts of the nineteenth century which limited working hours, for example, Marx described such legislation as an example of the "political economy of the working class" and as "the result of centuries of struggle between the capitalist and the worker."

At the same time he recognised that such legislation served the longer-term interest of capitalism, by preventing the over-exploitation and exhaustion of the labour force: "Capital takes no account of the health and length of life of the worker, unless society forces it to do so."

The School Meals Act of 1906 was likewise double-sided in its benefits. On the one hand the provision of free school meals for some working-class children was socially progressive. On the other hand, the legislation was motivated by concerns amongst members of the ruling classes about the need for a well-fed and fit working class to fight on their behalf in future wars. Half those recruited to fight in the Boer war at the turn of the century had been judged unfit.

These contradictions within social reforms — and, on a much larger scale, within the post-war Welfare State as a

whole — are themselves a reflection of the contradictory position of the working class within capitalist society.

The working class is a living class of human beings, struggling to meet its social needs and to maintain and improve its living standards both materially and culturally. It shares in the basic human drive for self-improvement.

But the working class also provides an element of capital. In Marxist terminology, it is "variable capital", as opposed to "constant capital" (machinery and raw materials). The labour power which the worker sells to the capitalist is the basic source of capitalist profit.

Individual pieces of social reform, like the Welfare State as a whole, can thus simultaneously improve the situation of the working class as human beings and also improve the conditions for the reproduction of capital; it can increase the rate at which surplus value can be pumped out of a fitter and better educated workforce.

On the level of ideas, social reforms and the Welfare State in general can likewise

perform a similar dual function. On the one hand they can be seen as the imposition of the "political economy of the working class" onto capitalism. On the other hand they can be presented as "proof" that capitalism is capable of meeting basic social needs, and thereby legitimise the existence of capitalism as a system.

The post-war Welfare State in Britain was an embodiment of such contradictions. It was a response to the demands of the labour movement for far-reaching social reforms and a direct consequence of a political victory of the reform-orientated Labour movement in the 1945 election. It brought real benefits to the working class. But it was also shaped and determined by the needs and ideas of capitalism. The contradictions were at their starkest in the post-war social security system which emerged from the original Beveridge Report of 1942.

As an individual, Beveridge genuinely abhorred poverty. But he argued for a social security system as a means to high-

1976: Labour's "IMF cuts"

The Tories did not start the cuts in the Welfare State. The Labour Party leaders did.

In February 1976 the then Labour Government announced £3 billion cuts in planned public spending over the next three years. The Health Service was cut by £150 million, and plans were set to close 130 hospitals in London. £1 billion was cut from education budgets. Minister Tony Crosland told local authorities: "The party's over."

The Labour leaders claimed that the cuts were necessary in order to secure a loan from the International Monetary Fund and save Britain's economy from collapse. In fact, British millionaires were more immediately responsible for the pressure on the Labour Government.

The Bank of England had been agitating about the Government's budget deficit being too big and the City institutions were refusing to buy government bonds. The Labour leaders never dreamed of nationalising those City institutions in order to get control of credit into its own hands. Instead, they did the bosses' and bankers' bidding. Labour chancellor Dennis Healey pioneered monetarism.

Labour's 1976 cuts were not as immediately devastating as the Tories' later efforts, because they were primarily

cuts in planned "capital" spending — i.e. spending on buildings, equipment, and so on. Their effects were felt over the years rather than immediately. But they halted progress in crucial areas — Labour, for example, had started a big nursery-building programme in 1974-5, and that was stopped in its tracks — and made a big beginning to the rundown of the Welfare State.

The labour movement responded angrily. Anti-cuts committees sprang up all across the country. In November 1976, 60,000 people marched on a weekday protest against the cuts sponsored by NUPE (now part of UNISON) and the Labour Party's own National Executive.

But the anti-cuts movement lacked decisive leadership from the official Left. 37 left Labour MPs abstained on the cuts programme in Parliament on 10 March 1976, so that the cuts went down to defeat (the Tories voting against because they wanted *more* cuts) — but those MPs fell into line when Prime Minister Harold Wilson re-ran it as a vote of confidence, and the parliamentary Left never again acted as a real force. Left-wing trade union leaders called on the labour movement to "close ranks" behind the Government.

Any future Labour Government must be committed to a policy of cutting into the wealth of the bosses and the bankers rather than into public services. And the Left must be armed with policy and determination to lead the fight.

er economic growth. The elimination of poverty, he argued, would improve workers' physical and mental well-being and thereby increase productivity.

Nor would the introduction of a social security system sap the "work ethic" and discourage independence. In deciding the level of the basic flat-rate benefit for the unemployed, Beveridge first calculated the lowest normal manual worker's income, and then fixed the benefit rate below it.

"To give by compulsory insurance," argued Beveridge, "more than is needed for subsistence is an unnecessary interference with individual responsibilities." If people wanted to maintain their customary standard of living in the event of unemployment, they should take out private insurance.

For those ineligible for benefits because they had not paid sufficient national insurance contributions, Beveridge recommended a "national assistance" scheme (today's Income Support). The scheme was deliberately designed to be minimal and stigmatising. In Beveridge's own words:

"It must be felt to be something less desirable than insurance benefit, otherwise the insured persons get nothing for their contributions. Assistance, therefore, will be given always subject to proof of needs and examination of means."

The maintenance of full employment, as far as Beveridge was concerned, was not simply a matter of human dignity. It also made sound economic and political sense. Full employment maximised the state's income from taxation, and minimised its expenditure on social security. It also increased social stability.

6. Women and the post-1945 Welfare State

But when Beveridge talked of full employment, he meant full male employment. A woman's place, especially a married woman's place, was in the home: "The attitude of the housewife to gainful employment outside the home is not and should not be the same as that of a single woman. She has other duties."

Married women should therefore have no independent access to social security. Instead access to benefits would be dependent on their husband's insurance contributions: "On marriage a woman gains a legal right to maintenance by her husband as a first line of defence against risks which fall directly on the solitary woman."

Specific benefits for women, such as a furniture grant upon marriage or free domestic help when ill, were dependent on women acting their "natural" role as wives and mothers. Similarly, the pay-

Sweden or America?

Sweden has the best Welfare State of any rich capitalist country, the US the meanest. Both countries have great natural resources and advanced industry.

Babies in Sweden run a risk of five per thousand of dying before they are one year old; in the US, the risk is ten per thousand, 17 per thousand for black babies.

Swedish parents get 18 months' parental leave at 90% of wages, to be shared between the mother and father, as they wish. They are entitled to work a six-hour day until their children are eight, and to time off at 90% of wages when their children are sick at any age. American parents get no paid leave at all.

Nurseries are available to all Swedish children, but few Americans. Nearly half of all pre-school Swedish children have places in publicly-funded day-care centres or kindergartens; but only about 12 per cent of US children have any organised day-care places (and there are very loose regulations about the quality of care).

18 per cent of American students drop out before the end of secondary school, and many others learn little; the government reckons that only one in five has "basic competence" in maths. Swedes, by contrast, not only finish school but continue education afterwards; three million out of a population of fewer than seven million adults take part in adult education.

Swedes read 525 daily newspapers per 1,000 population, Americans only 249.

Sweden has 174 murders and manslaughters a year, the US 22,000; Sweden has 5,200 people in jail, the US 745,000. Murder and jail are both five times more common (in proportion to population) in the US than in Sweden.

Sweden has an extensive system of housing subsidies, and half its housing stock is owned publicly or by cooperatives; practically no-one is homeless. 75,000 are homeless in New York alone.

Everyone in Sweden is covered by national health insurance. 35 million people in the US have no health insurance.

Swedes drink 5.6 litres of alcohol per year, Americans 8.4 litres; and Americans consume a lot more of other harmful drugs.

Up to the last few years, Sweden has

had almost full employment, thanks to its big public services and effective adult education and retraining programmes. The US has had permanent high unemployment, especially in its black ghettos.

Yes, Sweden's suicide rate (1,471 in a year) is about 40% higher than the US's (30,200). But how many of the US's drug, gang-warfare, and dangerous-driving deaths should really be counted as suicides?

Sweden's reforms were not just handed down from on high. An exceptionally powerful trade-union movement was central. Sweden's rich natural resources, its good position near the big export markets of Europe, its starting-point of relative social equality and widespread education when it was a smallholding peasant country, and its escape from damage in two world wars, made progress easier.

In September 1991, a semi-Thatcherite right-wing alliance won Sweden's elections. And the Social Democrats, too, now accept cuts.

So even Sweden has had to admit that welfare is a luxury we can't afford? No: even Sweden has had to admit that we can not get socialism, or even comprehensive social welfare, by piecemeal progress in a single country.

Sweden's "social democracy in one country" depended on being able to insulate its economy partly from the rest of the world. The capitalist world of the 1980s and 1990s, with increasing integration and ever-faster capital flows, changed the rules of the game.

As the *Financial Times* put it (29 October 1990): "Under intense pressure from overseas financial opinion that forced up interest rates... and led to a huge outflow of capital from Sweden, the Swedish government is having to abandon a long-held... commitment to full employment and... the Welfare State..."

"The international money markets have become the arbiters of Sweden's future, not the Social Democratic ideologues..."

Because Sweden's Social Democrats always remained social democrats — people committed to softening capitalism rather than helping the working class to replace capitalism — they have gone along with the international financiers rather than mobilising the working class to fight back.

ment of a separation allowance in the event of marriage breakdown was dependent upon the woman being "not personally at fault."

Such proposals were never implemented.

7. Beveridge scaled down

The history of the beginnings of the social security system is a history of successive cutbacks, including those proposed by Beveridge himself.

Beveridge dropped plans to pay family allowance for the first child, in order to save £100 millions. Family allowance paid for other children was fixed at a level lower than that originally proposed by Beveridge. The payment of pensions at full subsistence level was also delayed for 20 years as another cost-cutting exercise.

As a result of such "economy measures" the final cost of the introduction of the social security system was just 20% of what Beveridge's original proposals (flawed as they were themselves) would have cost if implemented in full.

The limitations imposed on the financing of the social security system in the immediate post-war years were not simply a product of economic budgetary considerations. They were also a reflection of the role allocated to a social security system in a capitalist society.

Certainly, its role was to prevent absolute poverty. But it had nothing to do with preventing relative poverty. And still less so was it concerned with creating social and economic equality. It provided a basic subsistence level. Everything beyond that was left to the forces of the "free market."

8. Education and class after 1945

Just as the social security system was shaped by the priorities and ideology of capitalism, so too was the post-war expansion of education. And, given that such expansion took place not in a vacuum but within the framework of capitalist society, it could not have been otherwise.

The Education Act of 1944 which was drawn up by Butler, a Tory, also set up the Fleming Committee in order to minimise public discussion of — and, inevitably, hostility to — the public schools.

The Act failed to secularise state education. On the contrary, it consolidated the place of religion in schools by obliging all schools to hold daily corporate acts of worship.

"Diversity" within secondary education was maintained by the Act. In practice, this meant a two-tier system of secondary education in which grammar schools (together with public schools) maintained a tradition of educational elitism whilst the rest of the school population was relegated to secondary modern schools.

The Act, as already noted made a clear break between primary and secondary education. But the decision to choose eleven as the age at which the break would take place was taken in opposition to advice from educational psychologists. Eleven was chosen simply because it suited the needs of the traditional structure and curriculum of the grammar schools.

The implementation of the 1944 Act certainly expanded the education system in Britain. But the expanded education system which it created was one geared towards the reproduction of social and economic inequality. Grammar and public schools prepared the future leaders of society, whilst secondary moderns trained the future hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The curriculum of schools retained its conservative character. In the words of David Eccles, Minister of Education in the first post-war Tory government, "education is a service marked out as peculiarly Conservative in purpose." Eccles, however, held an overly optimistic view of the value, for his class, of education: "Problems such as forestalling inflation, preventing and settling strikes, and abandoning restrictive practices will, in the end, only be solved by better education."

The "limitations" of the 1944 Act ensured that existing class and gender inequalities in British society were reproduced within and perpetuated by the education system. Two decades after the Act was passed a middle-class boy from Cardiganshire was still 160 more times likely than a working-class girl from West Ham to complete full-time secondary education. Such "limitations" were not a matter of chance or misjudgement on the part of the architects of the post-war education system. What they created was what they wanted to create: an expanded education system

The drug companies rip you off

The Tories aim to privatise as much of the health service as possible. One large part of the health service has, however, always been part of the private sector, the drugs industry. This huge part of the health service should come under public ownership and control.

A handful of multinational drug companies manufacture and sell most drugs used in the health service. They make huge profits from public money spent on prescriptions.

Such profiteering makes the drug industry a special case for nationalisation. Profit comes first; human need is just a marketing tool used by the industry. Where people's health and lives are at stake this arrangement is unacceptable. Not only socialists, but anyone who cares about the health of humanity, knows this is a monstrous system that puts healthy balance sheets above the health of people.

Drug companies' profits rely on a small number of star products. *Wellcome*, for example, relies heavily on two drugs, *AZT* (for AIDS) and *Zovirax* (for Herpes). If either or both these drugs went off the market their profits and shares would nose dive. These drugs are ruthlessly marketed even though it is well known that both drugs are almost completely useless. *Wellcome's* adverts for these products play on people's fears and prejudices about the diseases, lowering patients' self-esteem to make them more desperate for

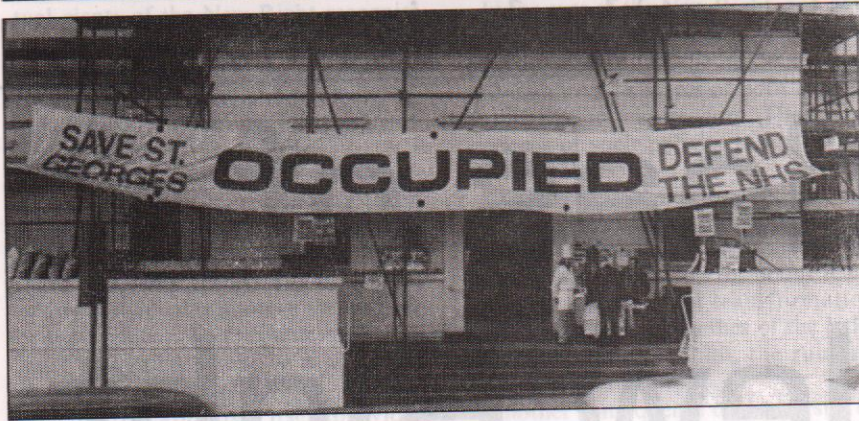
a cure.

Wellcome is not unique. All the drug companies make false claims, use ruthless marketing, overprice their products and spend huge amounts on marketing (often aimed at buttering up doctors). Free holidays are often laid on for medical practitioners. Such promotions are in the end paid for out of the public purse, helping to starve the health service of much needed cash.

Regulations? All companies get round regulations! *Thalidomide* is, for example, still sold in many countries, despite the well-known facts about its gross side effects. Even in drug-regulated countries the companies will do anything to cover up details of side effects and ineffectiveness of their products. Cases of drug companies using bribes, blackmail, threats, theft of information etc. to defend their products are not rare.

There are a whole host of other ways in which the drug companies' obsession with profits works against the well-being of the patients. The most obvious is industrial secrecy. Information from drug research should be freely available to the whole health service so that it can be used for the maximum benefit. It is of course kept secret by the individual companies; if a 'wonder drug' is developed all the profit is theirs and theirs alone.

Such practices are common through all of industry, but here the effect is needless suffering and death. Socialise the drug companies!



which catered to the economic and social needs of capitalism.

9. The limitations of the NHS

The achievements of the post-war NHS, real as they were, were likewise limited and twisted by the nature of the capitalist society in which the NHS operated.

By international standards, improvements in health in Britain continued to be slow despite the existence of the NHS. Although infant mortality, for example, decreased in the post-war years, it remained relatively high.

Women were amongst the biggest gainers from the creation of the NHS. At the same time, however, their health needs were determined according to what a male-dominated medical profession thought they should be. Thus, infertility treatment was given a far greater priority (because a woman's "natural role" is to reproduce) than abortion and family planning (which are expressions of a woman's demand for control over her own body).

Class inequalities continued to be a determining factor in health and life expectancy despite the establishment of the NHS.

In 1970, over two decades after the creation of the NHS, the child of an unskilled worker was twice as likely to die within a month of birth, and three times as likely to die within a year of birth, as the child of a middle-class professional. Unskilled manual workers were also two and a half times more likely to die before retirement than middle-class professionals.

The NHS was rooted in a "medical model" of healthcare. As such, it served the prejudices and interests of the established medical profession. Its role was to attempt to cure the individual of his/her illness, rather than to seek to prevent the illness occurring in the first place.

The latter could have been undertaken only by challenging the priorities and values of capitalism which result in ill health and inequalities in health: maximum production rather than healthy working con-

ditions, increased output rather than the preservation of a healthy environment, and the commercialisation of leisure time rather than the promotion of health-improving leisure activities.

With varying degrees of effectiveness the NHS tackled illness as a purely biological phenomenon. But it did nothing to challenge illness as a social phenomenon, rooted in the capitalist society of which the NHS was a part, and of which it shared the values and norms.

10. The middle class and the Welfare State

In absolute terms the working class benefited immensely from the post 1945 Welfare State, yet the greatest beneficiaries of the creation of the Welfare State as a whole were arguably the middle classes (using the term loosely) rather than the working class.

In the late 1970s, for example, it was estimated that the top 20% of income-earners' families enjoyed educational services three times greater in value than the educational services enjoyed by the bottom 20%. Similarly, the top 20% received health services 40% greater in value than those received by the bottom 20%.

These figures were not a result of the top 20% being less intelligent and needing more education, or less healthy and requiring more medical treatment. They were a reflection of unequal availability of, and access to, educational and health services.

The cost of university education, for example, is far higher than the cost of pre-16 education. But university education remains predominantly a preserve of the middle classes. In terms of healthcare, the middle class have easier access to better facilities (given the preference of most GPs for middle-class areas) and enjoy longer periods of consultation with doctors (due to greater articulacy and social affinities).

Insofar as the post-war Welfare State produced any redistribution of personal income, it was again predominantly to

the benefit of the middle class. Between 1949 and 1976 the share of post-tax income enjoyed by the wealthiest 1% fell by nearly 3%. But the poorest 50% of the population saw their share of post-tax income increase by just 0.9%, whereas the real gainers were those sandwiched between the bottom 50% and the top 10% of the population.

A similar unequal pattern emerged in housing. Despite the imagery of the post-war housing policies being primarily concerned with the provision of housing for low-income families, the biggest gainers were again the middle classes. In 1983, for example, the average government subsidy for a council tenant was £79, whereas the average owner-occupier received over £300 in Mortgage Interest Tax Relief.

11. Defend, rebuild and change the Welfare State!

Because the Welfare State was constructed on top of a class-stratified society it was therefore always an inherently contradictory phenomenon.

In part it was a response to working-class struggle and represented genuine, though often only limited, gains for the working class. At the same time it is also shaped and formed, and constantly recast, by the demands of the capitalist society to which it belongs.

None of this invalidates slogans such as "Defend the Welfare State!" Such slogans represent in a form of political shorthand the demand that government should pursue policies which meet human needs and reduce inequalities, rather than policies which increase human suffering and increase inequalities.

In fighting to "Defend the Welfare State" against the Tory onslaught, socialists must simultaneously fight to challenge the assumptions upon which the post-1945 Welfare State was based.

Mass unemployment, slum housing, poverty, and ill health are generated by the operations of capitalism as a system of production. In a society geared to the maximisation of profits and the reproduction of economic and social inequalities, such evils are constantly reproduced on a daily basis.

The struggle against them cannot be separated off from the struggle to overthrow capitalism itself.

A bigger, better-financed, more democratic Welfare State would certainly represent a major step forward. But the only lasting solution to the problems of poverty and social inequalities lies in the destruction of the capitalist society which breeds them and the construction of a socialist society.

The philosophy of social barbarism

The ideas of the New Right

In the decades immediately following the Second World War Labour Party leaders argued — and honestly believed — that the Welfare State brought into being by the 1945 Labour government was safe from attack by the Tories.

Tory governments of the 1950s and early 1960s, they pointed out, had left the Welfare State virtually untouched. Moreover, they argued, the Tories lacked the will to attack the Welfare State. According to Anthony Crosland, a leading revisionist (or “moderniser”, as he would be called today) of the 1950s:

“A wholesale counter-revolution is not in the nature of the British Conservative Party — it lacks the essential attributes of a counter-revolutionary party — a faith, a dogma, even a theory.”

Fundamental criticisms of the very idea of a Welfare State, such as Friedrich Von Hayek’s *The Road to Serfdom*, Milton Friedman’s *Capitalism and Freedom*, and the outpourings of the Institute of Economic Affairs, could be safely dismissed as the bigoted bile of a few fringe cranks.

But by the end of the 1970s it was precisely the dog-eat-dog vision of society peddled by the likes of Hayek and Friedman which provided the Tory Party’s new leadership with “a faith, a dogma, and even a theory” that “justified” the Tory onslaught on the Welfare State.

In the Tory Party itself the “New Right”, as it quickly became known, found its most outspoken advocates in Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph. Backing them up was a motley array of self-styled intellectual gurus and second-rate pamphleteers whose political past was often at odds with their espousal of the philosophy of the New Right.



The first chairperson of the Centre for Policy Studies was Alfred Sherman, a former Stalinist and republican volunteer in the Spanish Civil War. Director of the Centre for Policy Studies was Kenneth Minogue, a self-styled Marxist in his student days. In the sphere of education the voice of New Right bigotry belonged to a former Labour councillor by the name of Rhodes Boyson.

The philosophy of the New Right consists of a few basic principles combined with many envenomed prejudices.

At the core of the philosophy of the New Right — or, at least, so it advocates would have us believe — is the principle of freedom. “We take freedom of the individual, or perhaps the family, as our ultimate goal in judging social arrangements,” writes Friedman.

Freedom is defined as the absence of external coercion, itself, in turn, defined as “such control of the environment or circumstances of a person by another that he (sic) is forced to act not according to a coherent plan of his own but to

serve the ends of another.”

But coercion is coercion only if it is consciously carried out by a human agency. Thus, argues, Hayek, a starving person who takes a job at a pittance of a wage is *not* a victim of coercion, because (allegedly) no-one intended that that person’s hunger should force him/her to take such a job.

By the same “logic” the homeless who sleep on the streets are not victims of coercion either. If they sleep on the streets, it is a matter of choice, not coercion. In the words of John Major: “They are not on the streets because they have to be on the streets. It is a strange way of life that some of them choose to live.”

Support for the freedom of the individual and opposition to external constraint leads the ideologues of the New Right to support free and unfettered competition in the economy.

The “free market” of capitalism, claims Hayek, is “the only method by which our activities can be adjusted to each other without coercive or arbitrary intervention of authority.”

Friedman likewise equates the capitalist market with freedom: “The great advantage of the market is that it permits diversity. Each man can vote, as it were, for the colour of the tie he wants and get it.” (But only, he might have added, if he can afford to pay for it, if he has the “dollar votes”.)

Not everyone, it turns out on closer inspection, has an equal right to enjoy the freedom of labouring in the capitalist marketplace. According to the former Tory MP Patrick Jenkin: “I don’t think that mothers have the same right to work as fathers. If the good Lord had intended us to have equal rights to go out to work, he wouldn’t have created man and woman.”

The razor-sharp minds of the intellec-

tual giants of the New Right recognise that the virtues of the freedom of competition of capitalism do not include equality or even a reduction in inequalities. They have three — albeit completely contradictory — responses.

Firstly, success and failure, and equality and inequality, are nothing to do with the workings of capitalism. "All human differences create unfair advantages. But since the chief contribution of any individual is to make the best use of the accidents he encounters, success must to a great extent be a matter of chance," writes Hayek.

Secondly, capitalism itself provides the best prospect of advancement for "disadvantaged" sections of the population. According to Friedman:

"The groups in our society that have the most stake in the preservation and strengthening of competitive capitalism are those minority groups which can most easily become the object of the distrust and enmity of the majority."

Thirdly, inequality is a good thing. In the blunt words of Margaret Thatcher: "The pursuit of equality is a mirage. Opportunity means nothing unless it includes the right to be unequal."

In the eyes of the New Right, any government which seeks to promote greater equality is guilty of the cardinal sin of coercion in the spheres of both individual and economic freedom. The consequences of such policies scarcely bear thinking about.

"The pursuit of income equality will turn this country into a totalitarian slum," claimed Keith Joseph, just three years before the Tories set about inaugurating the national transformation that has made vast swathes of the U.K. into a free-market slum, the running sore of Western Europe.

Another consequence of the pursuit of equality is a growth in the crime rate: "Hard as it may be to believe," claims Friedman, "the growth of crude criminality in Britain in recent decades may well be one consequence of the drive for equality."

(How this theory can be applied in order to explain the record of Dame Shirley Porter and Westminster Council remains to be worked out: her lawyers are probably working on it now.)

It is not just the pursuit of equality which is rejected by the New Right, but the very idea of social justice itself. You

do not have to have been brought up by the Jesuits to understand the New Right's rationalisation for rejecting the concept of social justice, but it certainly helps.

According to the New Right, a state of affairs can be described as just or unjust only if it is consciously and deliberately brought about by a human agency. If the existing allocation of wealth and services in society was the product of human planning, then it would be extremely unjust they admit.

But what people receive (or fail to receive) is not the outcome of a planned process but of the free market. The free market is, by definition, spontaneous and unplanned. It therefore makes no sense to apply concepts such as "just" or "unjust" to the outcome of the blind workings of the market.

The pursuit of social justice, like the pursuit of equality, is therefore a crime against the free and god like workings of the capitalist market. It is, claims Hayek, "the Trojan Horse through which totalitarianism has entered" and "probably the gravest threat to most other values of a free civilisation."

Having rejected the notion of social justice, the New Right inevitably finds no place in its vision of how society should be for welfare. The Welfare State is, "an instrument of political repression unequalled in British history" according to the Institute of Economic Affairs.

If one defines the Welfare State as a redistribution of wealth, however minimal, by the state for the benefit of the poor, then every aspect of that definition (redistribution, state, benefit of the poor) sticks in the throats, to say nothing of the wallets, of the New Right ideologues and their political masters.

Redistribution of wealth is an act of coercion against minorities and individuals. Through taxation, the individual is denied the right to spend money as the individual sees fit to spend it. Instead, a proportion of their wealth is confiscated from them and used to finance the Welfare State.

For the state to pursue such policies is the beginnings of totalitarianism — the right of the individual to choose is over-ridden by the power of the state bureaucracy. State control of services provided by the Welfare State also means state monopoly and an absence of free market competition.

To re-direct resources towards the poor is to reward sloth. If the poor are poor, then it must be their own fault — given that, according to the New Right, the freedom of capitalism guarantees success to anyone who tries hard enough — and the workings of the Wel-

It's all relative?

According to New Right ideologues, real poverty no longer exists. The only real poverty is absolute poverty. When people have enough to eat they are not really poor. If they also have fridges, TVs, and central heating — as many poor people in Britain do — then they are certainly not poor.

"Relative poverty", they say, is only another term for inequality. And for them inequality is an inevitable and desirable part of human society.

When we complain that the value of the dole and pensions has halved relative to average earnings, the Tories reply that their value has kept pace with prices, and so poverty has not increased.

In fact some benefits — Unemployment Benefit for married people with children, for example — have not even kept pace with prices. But the argument is more fundamentally wrong.

Relative poverty is not the same as inequality. A millionaire is unequal to a billionaire, but not poor.

The absolute poverty of starving to death is indeed something different from any degree of relative poverty. But it is ridiculous to say that you are poor only if you are starving to death.

Human beings are not just machines

needing fuel to keep going. We are social animals. We need to be able to live in — and "relative to" — society.

Even in Britain in the 19th century, and even in most Third World countries now, not many people directly starve to death. Even in those conditions, poverty is "relative."

Someone who has no roof over their head is poor — and thousands are like that in Britain. It is estimated that your lifespan is made 20 years shorter by life on the streets.

Someone who can find a roof, and can avoid starving to death, but lives so meagrely that their health is damaged and their lifespan is shortened, is poor. By that measure, many millions in Britain are poor. Unemployed people, and people on low wages, live fewer years than the well-off, and the gap is increasing.

Someone who can eat, shelter themselves, and rest well enough to keep fairly healthy, but still cannot afford the ordinary amusements and social contacts of the society around them, is poor.

Someone who lives in a world of great luxuries and marvellous technologies, yet is shut out from most of what those technologies can produce, is poor.

Poverty is still widespread, and increasing.

fare State consequently provide a financial recompense for laziness.

The New Right objects to the proportion of state expenditure consumed by welfare provision — “We are now on a road to serfdom with a speedometer marked by the percentages of the Gross National Product devoted to state welfare services,” as Hayek put it.

On a more fundamental level, the New Right is opposed to the Welfare State as a matter of principle, irrespective of the proportion of state expenditure which it consumes. In attacking the consequences of the Welfare State, the New Right ideologues have not shown any moderation in the accusations they level against it.

“The sexual constitution of welfare is particularly disastrous for young men,” claims American New Rightist George Gilder, “it indirectly deprives them of the example of a male provider in the home.”

“The man has the gradually sinking feeling that his role of provider, the definitive male activity from the primeval days of the hunt through the industrial revolution and on to modern

life, has largely been seized from him. He has been cuckolded by the compassionate state.”

On this side of the Atlantic Rhodes Boyson has portrayed the consequences of the Welfare State in equally cataclysmic terms:

“The moral fibre of our people has been weakened. The state which does for its citizens what they can do for themselves is an evil state. No-one cares, no-one saves, no-one bothers — why should they when the state spends all its energies taking money from the energetic, successful and thrifty and gives it to the idle, the failures, and the feckless?”

A similar concern for the moral fibre of the nation was expressed by Keith Joseph in his reasoned critique of the failings of the state provision of education:

“Teenage pregnancies are rising; so are drunkenness, sexual offences, and crimes of sadism. The decline is spreading. If equality in education is sought at the expense of quality, how can the poisons created help but filter down?”

Given that services provided by the

Welfare State are, by definition, provided by the state, they must inevitably be inferior to the services on offer from the private sector. According to Friedman:

“Music or dance, secretarial skills, automobile driving, aeroplane piloting, technical skills — all are taught best when they are taught privately. Try talking French with someone who has studied it in public (state) school, then with a Berlitz graduate.”

The solution proposed by the New Right to what they see as the problem of the Welfare State (i.e. its very existence, apart from a few residual leftovers which they would be prepared to tolerate) is to open it up to private enterprise and freedom of competition, and sell off substantial sections of it to the highest bidder.

Fifteen years of the creeping privatisation of the Welfare State have already wreaked havoc on its services and brought added misery to millions of people. But, whatever else the Tories may be accused of, no-one can accuse them of allowing reality to come between them and “a faith, a dogma, and even a theory.”

The New Right talks nonsense

A Welfare State is a necessary underpinning for a society where people meet, talk, compete or cooperate, with reasonable trust and confidence, as real equals. It is a necessary underpinning for human rights — to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — to have real meaning rather than being hollow formalities.

By giving basic guarantees of health care, education, housing and upkeep for all, it provides people with a secure base from which to develop their talents, relate to others, and contribute what they can. Without it, life is dog-eat-dog. People constantly need to elbow others out — grab their jobs, evict them from their houses, buy their places in the health-care queue — in order to survive.

A Welfare State can be afforded. In Britain in 1990-1, health care had 1,467,000 workers, education 1,741,000, agriculture 254,000, food processing 221,000, food distribution 864,000, and

construction (of all sorts, not just housing) 939,000. Add in 886,000 workers producing machines (of all sorts) plus an extra million as a rough figure for the labour required to produce the equipment and supplies for those basic industries and services, and you have a generous rough total of 7.4 million workers needed to produce the basics — about a quarter of the potential workforce.

Right-wingers say that the Welfare State cannot be afforded because of the huge amounts spent on social security for the jobless. But the answer is to create decent, useful jobs for the jobless!

The alternative to a Welfare State is not, despite what right-wing ideologues pretend, a free-market economy of individuals each relying only on their own efforts. Human beings are not the economic billiard-balls of free-market dogma. We are social animals. Dependency is a fact.

We are all dependent on human society and on the quality of that society, ruthless rat-race or friendly community. We are all economically dependent when we are very young, old, sick, disabled or studying. In capitalist society the great majority of us are dependent on the capitalists, the owners of the means of production, to employ us.

To deny a Welfare State is not to abolish dependence but to make it degrading, miserable, even murderous. Where legal markets fail, black markets grow; where the legal welfare system is lacking, people go for “black welfare” — crime; begging; welfare provided by churches, charities, gangs, ethnic community groups, and families. The poor prey on the slightly less poor, through crime, debase themselves to seek favours from passers-by, priests or patrons — or die.

Does a Welfare State mean that people

sink into selfish idleness, knowing that the State will provide even if they make no effort? No. The short answer is that the Welfare State established in 1945 did not produce such results.

Plainly a community can create a Welfare State only if it also enforces some social discipline for work. But work is not necessarily a hated imposition. Free-market capitalist work discipline is not the only possible form of work discipline.

Capitalism tells the majority: "Work in degrading conditions under the dictatorship of a capitalist, or starve — or turn to crime, or 'black welfare'." It tells a minority: "You need not work. You are rich. You can live in luxury on the dividends and interest from your wealth." It breeds selfishness, social irresponsibility, despair, dependency.

Social provision can and should make individuals more able and confident to take self-responsibility. This happens even in present-day society, in the trade-union movement. The trade-union movement is collectivist. Yet it generates, and depends on, vast numbers of individuals taking individual responsibility to be shop stewards, strikers, pickets, and so on.

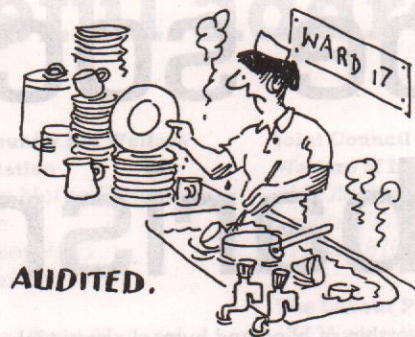
A sense of social responsibility, and a desire to learn and use skills, developed as they grew up, was enough to get people to work in the household or communal economy of many pre-capitalist societies. It will be enough to get people to work in a socialist society.

Even under capitalism, the evidence is clear. Western Europe, in the heyday of its Welfare States, had low unemployment. The growth of mass unemployment in Western Europe has not been produced by the Welfare State — it has gone along with an erosion of the Welfare State, both being products of the decay of capitalism.

Does a comprehensive free Health Service make people unwilling to take individual responsibility for their own health? No. People in the West European societies with good state-provided health insurance generally take better care of their health than elsewhere — than, for example, in the United States, with its patchy health insurance. 27.5% of all Americans are over 20% overweight, and millions destroy their health with drugs.

Do Welfare State services become bureaucratic empires, run more as feed-troughs for their managers and workers than as real public services? This is only a quarter, or one-tenth, truth.

In a capitalist society, welfare services are run on the model of capitalist corporations — bureaucratically. Especially since the changes introduced by the



Tories, their management committees have become nests of corruption. No socialist defends that. No socialist is responsible for it either.

In the Health Service, no socialist defends the privileges arising from the fact that the 1945 Labour Government felt obliged to buy off doctors' opposition by "stuffing their mouths with gold"; no socialist defends the ridiculous hierarchy, or the bias towards "glamorous" specialist branches of care.

Yet compare even this National Health Service, shaped as it is by its capitalist and bureaucratic environment, with the US's "free-market" system. The US spends three times as much on health, per head, as Britain. The results, measured by infant mortality or life expectancy, are poorer.

Some specialist treatments are done very well in the US, for those who have money; but 35 million people have no health insurance, and many of those who have insurance get "over-treated" to increase medical profits. Women giving birth are much more likely to have a Caesarian in the US than in Britain. For back troubles, five times as many operations are done in the US as in Britain (in proportion to population); the extra operations probably do more harm than good. Admin takes 25% of the US health budget, as against 6% of the NHS budget before the Tories' recent changes. The "free market" is more bureaucratic!

Does the stagnation and stifling tyranny of Stalinism show the inevitable result of pushing Welfare State provision too far? No. The argument is that no-one can know exactly what the total of social needs is, and thus any system which aims to regulate the economy by

social need must in fact end up run by the arbitrary, and inevitably self-interested, directives of a bureaucratic elite.

But Stalinism was not the result of an idealistic misunderstanding. The bureaucrats seized power and drove their economic plans in order to exploit the workers and build up their national industries for world competition. Talk about social needs was all garnishing and mainly lies.

We cannot precisely calculate the total of social needs. But we can do better than just observe people's choices in the marketplace. The market system where a rich person's whim counts for more than a poor person's desperate need is not the only system, nor the best one! We know we need health care, housing, education, food and clothing. We can plan for them, democratically. We need not and should not try to plan in detail for more complex needs and wants.

The Stalinist systems were very far from being Welfare States. A lot of the welfare provision — housing, for example — was provided not through legal rights which could be claimed by any citizen, but as favours dispensed by employers. It was so organised as not to increase workers' independence and security, but to increase the factory bosses' control over them. Where welfare services were notionally available to all equally, often the provision was so mean that no-one could get decent service without paying bribes (in health care in the ex-USSR, for example).

In the Stalinist societies, you needed bribes, personal favours, and jobs on the side to survive. They were not Welfare States.

Does the Welfare State benefit the "middle class" who staff its professions and use its services more? Yes, it does. Capitalism needs the working class to be insecure to some degree, and the poor to be miserable, dependent, and willing to cringe: otherwise it would break down. In a rat-race society, some rats must lose the race.

A Welfare State in a capitalist society can do no more than provide more security and opportunity to the better-off sections of the working class, and lessen the misery of the worst-off. Even that is well worth defending.

What its inadequacies mean is that a Welfare State in a capitalist society always falls short of its principles. To defend those principles is to demand that the Welfare State be not just restored, but extended — that its capitalist limits be broken, and that the principle of democratic social provision should rule the whole economy.

It will be socialism or barbarism!

We live in a capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private. Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour-power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation of capital decrees that all things in existence must be judged by their relationship to productivity and profitability.

From that come such horrors as the savage exploitation of Brazilian gold-miners, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years, and the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of some of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism. From this comes the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" places like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

From that also comes the cultural blight and barbarism of our own society, force-fed on profitable pap. From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" in a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos, and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the ruling classes around the principle of profitable anarchy and the barbarous

worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides: twice this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produce societies like British society now, where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes this society of ours where the rich — who through their servants and agents hold state power — fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a mental condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and prevent real democratic self-control developing within the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-85 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence — whatever they need to use. They have used fascist gangs when they needed to, and they will use them again, if necessary.

Against this system we seek to convince the working class — the wage slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism. Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the full realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can and should win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Nevertheless, neither socialism nor even effective trade unionism can be built in one country alone. Capital is moved freely around the globe in search of cheap labour and to undercut strong labour movements. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide; we back the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China.

What are the alternatives now? Poverty, inequality and misery are growing. We are deep in the worst capitalist slump for 60 years. Fascism is once more a power in European politics. We may, in the years ahead, face new wars as European, Japanese and US capitalism confront each other.

Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will be dragged down by the new fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. It will be socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth and with oppressed communities.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Some useful addresses

Advisory Service for Squatters

2 St Paul's Road
London N1 2QN
071-359 8814

Campaign for Bedsit Rights

7 Whitechapel Road
London E1 1DU
071-377 0027

Campaign for State Education

158 Durham Road
London SW20 ODG
081-944 8206

Campaign for Work

Annex B
Tottenham Town Hall
London N15 4RX
071-735 0777

Care and Resources for People Living with Aids (CARA)

The Basement
178 Lancaster Road
London W11 1QU

CHAR (Housing rights campaign)

5-15 Cromer Street
London WC1H 8LS
071-833 2071

Child Poverty Action Group

4th Floor
1-5 Bath Street
London EC1V 9PY
071-253 6569

Community Aid Welfare Association

William Morris Community Centre
Greenley Road
London E17

Daycare Trust/National Childcare Campaign

Wesley House
4 Wild Court
London WC2B 5AU
071-405 5617

Defend the Welfare State Campaign

c/o PO Box 188
London SW1A 0SG

Disability Action (Northern Ireland)

2 Annadale Avenue
Belfast BF7 9UR
0232-491011

Disability Alliance

Welfare Rights Issues
1st Floor East
Universal House
88-94 Wentworth Street
London E1 7SA
071-247 8776

Family Welfare Association

501 Kingsland Road
London E8 4AA
071-254 6251

Health Rights Limited

Unit 110
Bon Marché Building
London SW9 8EJ

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

116 Old Street
London EC1V 9JR
071-251 8706

The Labour Party

150 Walworth Road
London SE17 1JL
071-701 1234

London Health Emergency

446 Uxbridge Road
London W12 0NS

National Abortion Campaign

Print House
Ashwin Street
London E8 3DL
071-923 4926

National Council for One-Parent Families

255 Kentish Town Road
London NW5
071-267 1631

National Union of Teachers

Hamilton House
Mabledon Place
London WC1H 9BD
071-388 6191

Shelter

88 Old Street
London EC1V 9HU
071-253 0202

Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee

3 Blades House

Kennington
SE11 5TW

Socialist Teachers Alliance

Pat Crick
1 Sumburge Road
London SW12 8AJ

Trades Union Congress

Great Russell Street
London
071-636 4030

Trade Union News

28c Barnsbury Park
London N1 1HQ

Transport and General Workers Union (T&G)

Transport House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3JB
071-828 7788

UNISON

Holborn Tower
137 High Holborn
London WC1V 6PL
071-404 1884

UNITY in UNISON

c/o 40 College Drive
Manchester M16 0AE

Workable (employment campaign for disabled workers)

Room C05, Victoria House
98 Victoria Street
London SW1E 5JL
071-931 8937

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Cheques payable to "Workers' Liberty."

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What Labour should be campaigning for

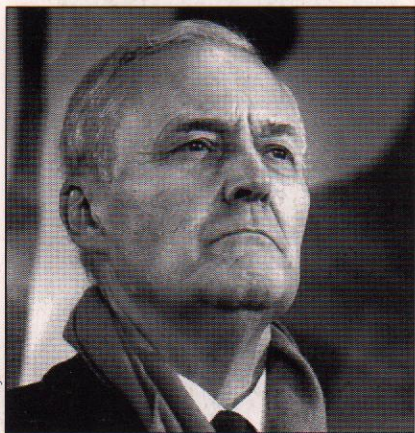


Photo: John Harris

By Tony Benn MP

The greatest danger facing the new Labour Party leadership will come if it continues to rely on the unpopularity of the Conservative government to carry it into office when the general election comes.

Everyone in the Labour Party desperately wanted to see the present government removed from office at the earliest possible moment but, if we are serious about it, we have to present ourselves as a real alternative with clear ideas about what we should do if the people entrust us with a majority in the next parliament.

That means that we have to explain precisely what has gone wrong, and expose the philosophy of greed which lies at the heart of modern capitalism, putting profit before people and deliberately using unemployment and homelessness as weapons of fear to secure obedience to the will of the rich and the powerful so that they can retain their privileges.

Labour must translate its long-held principles into solemn commitments to deal, at once, with the most pressing problems that face most people today.

These commitments can easily be summarised:

- The restoration of full employment, harnessing the nation's savings to



Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL

rebuild our manufacturing base, renew our infrastructure, improve our environment and build the homes that the nation needs.

- The protection and extension of our public services in health, education and welfare, retaining universal benefits and introducing a minimum wage.
- The restoration of the link between pensions and average earnings, and a move towards an earlier retirement age for those who wish to take advantage of it.
- A major defence conversion programme to release resources for civil re-construction and international aid programmes to strengthen world peace.
- The establishment of democratic control in all privatised public utilities and quangos to make them fully accountable to those whom they serve and those who work in them.
- The repeal of anti-trade union legislation and moves to bring it into line with the UN International Labour Organisation convention.
- The return to all local authorities of the right to serve the communities

they represent and be truly accountable to them.

- Constitutional reform to end discrimination of all kinds, extend democracy at every level, and restore the power of parliament to approve, amend and repeal all the laws under which we are governed.
- The closest possible co-operation across the whole of Europe, harmonising our policies at our own pace in accordance with the decisions taken in each country.
- A fair tax system that takes full account of the ability to pay.
- A new world order based upon a reformed and democratic United Nations free from super-power domination.

If the Labour Party were to campaign actively for support for these policies it would be surprised to find the extent of the backing it would get, as the public are now well ahead of the party leadership and are just waiting for Labour to articulate these aspirations.

• *This statement was first issued by the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs in June 1994.*