

SOCIALIST

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Ceasefire can solve nothing without political settlement Northern Ireland still faces impasse

By John O'Mahony

THE ceasefire in Northern Ireland not only holds, but is spreading: the Loyalist paramilitaries have now joined the Provisional IRA in declaring an end to violence. The Dublin government has announced the release of some of its Provisional IRA prisoners. The chances that it will prove to be a long-term ceasefire and a fundamental turning point in Irish history get better with each day the ceasefire lasts. That is to be welcomed unreservedly. So will be the beginning of talks between the British Government and Sinn Fein. Yet the ceasefire solves nothing. Talks are likely to produce impasse and once more to emphasise that there are irreconcilable differences. This came out plainly at the opening of the "Forum for Peace and Reconciliation" at Dublin Castle on 28 October. This is an affair of nationalists, including Provisional Sinn Fein, representing, in fact if not in words, the Provisional IRA. The Unionists are boycotting it.

All the main speakers demanded a united Ireland, or at any rate an Ireland with strong all-island institutions — which to Unionists is the same.

Fianna Fail (constitutional nationalist) prime minister Albert Reynolds said "that one of the 'essential changes' needed for an enduring peace in Ireland was 'the acceptance of substantial links between North and South'." His deputy Dick Spring called for "deep and meaningful all-Ireland structures... The union can no longer be seen as a steel curtain cutting off one part of the island from the other".

Joe Carroll elaborated in the Irish Times (29 October): "Although the Taoiseach [prime minister] did not say cross-Border links should have executive powers, Government sources say that Dublin is still insisting on the need for an executive role for the new structures. According to the Taoiseach, the areas to be covered include 'inward investment, tourism, many elements of agriculture and fisheries, a clean and pure environment, energy and communications'."

Reynolds' comment that "One community cannot unilaterally determine on a majoritarian basis whether or not there will be any links between North and South", sounded a dangerously triumphalist note, based on Reynolds' own "majoritarian basis", and also an unrealistic one.

Irish history says yes, the Northern Protestants can determine whether or not links are made. Plainly, Reynolds hopes that Britain will steamroller the Unionists. There is no sign that they will.

The British Government will not — and without stirring up one million Irish Protestant-Unionists, cannot — concede the united Ireland the Provisional IRA is demanding. Can it concede what the constitutional nationalists in the "pan-nationalist" front want?

The hope that secured many of the rank and file PIRA for the ceasefire was that the "pan-nationalist alliance" of the nationalist parties of all-Ireland can use the USA and the EC to exert enough pressure on Britain to make it deliver a united Ireland.

That will not happen. Can Britain concede strong all-Ireland institutions with executive powers? The attempt to set up a Council of Ireland in May 1974 triggered an Orange general strike.

What happens when it becomes plain to those in the PIRA ranks less enamoured of "politics" than Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness seem to be that there will not be immediate progress to a united Ireland?

Widespread police raids in the Twenty-Six Counties two weeks ago against the breakaway republican group "Republican Sinn Fein" testify to what Dublin and London fear: a split in the ranks of the PIRA/Sinn Fein and a resumption of military action.

Republican Sinn Fein is the group of traditional republicans which left PIRA a decade ago. Its leaders were leaders of the PIRA when it launched its ill-fated military war in Northern Ireland 23 years ago.

The only constitutional settlement that fits Irish reality is a federal United Ireland with closer

links to Britain, with which the one million Irish Unionists identify.

What the constitutional nationalists demand — strong all-Ireland institutions — could be steps towards such a solution if they were accompanied by local self-rule, on whatever basis, in Northern Ireland. There is no evidence that the British will make any such concession. Britain sent no representative to the Dublin Forum, though the official line is that this was not a "boycott" of the forum.

Nevertheless, with every more or less peaceful day that passes, it becomes more difficult for paramilitaries in either community to restart the war and carry a sizeable section of their own people with them.

The longer the ceasefire lasts, therefore, the better the chance that it really is "permanent". "Permanent" here can only mean long-term. There will be no permanent end to violence in Northern Ireland unless there is a political settlement.

Five years since the Wall fell

POLITICAL FRONT

By Rosalind Robson

FIVE years ago, on 9 November 1989, the Berlin Wall came down. It was the start of bourgeois democratic revolutions in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Rumania. Under pressure from a massive revolt from below, the Stalinist bureaucrats who had ruled Eastern Europe for over half a century bowed down and abdicated. Without the backing of the imperial armies of Russian Stalinism, which had raised them to power in the first place, they crumbled and fell apart.

The Wall had long been the hated symbol of German subjugation and division.

Provisionally made of barbed wire, it had been erected in the night of 12-13 August 1961 by the Stalinist regime of Walter Ulbricht. It put an end to any hopes the German people may have harboured for the unification of a Germany — divided since 1945.

Yet the mass demonstrations in East Germany prior to and after 9 November had very few slogans about reunification. At mass rallies in West Berlin the German national anthem was booted. The leaders of the opposition said they wanted a "better socialism" in East Germany.

The German masses desired economic and social reform — on both sides — and answers to

the crises that faced both systems. As well as political liberty the workers wanted answers to unemployment, declining standards of living.

Have they got these things? No, they have not! The story of East and West Germany since the Wall came down is a story of the betrayal of the workers by the capitalists and former bureaucrats.

Since reunification in October 1990 Germany has been ruled by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian-Democrats, a conservative government committed to such policies such as a time-limit on the dole and restriction of immigration. It has presided over a deep recession.

Unemployment in the East is now running at 20% in some cities.

Eastern Germany has not received the massive investment so glibly promised at the time of reunification. It has experienced only the bitterest realities of capitalist rule: economic and social chaos, exploitation and oppression. Many East German workers are bitterly disillusioned and some are turning to the far right. Some are giving their support to the "reformed" Communist Party (the PDS).

Socialist Organiser said at the time: reunify Germany on the basis of workers' liberty east and west; reunify Germany on the basis of the workers overthrowing their rulers east and west. The reality of the last five years has proven how necessary that was — and still is.

Why trade unionists should oppose immigration restrictions

A 36 page handbook for union activists. Why not buy a bundle for your branch? £2.50 per copy and £1 per copy after the first 10 copies ordered.

Order from Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit, 400 Cheetham Hill Road, Manchester, M8 9LE

Alliance for Workers' Liberty Meetings

NOTTINGHAM

Sunday 13 November

Day school: the politics of Workers' Liberty

11-5 Queen's Walk Community Centre, The Meadows

LEICESTER

Tuesday 15 November

"Lenin, Trotsky and 1917"

7.30 Leicester University Students Union

EDINBURGH

Wednesday 16 November

"How to Defend the Welfare State"

Speaker: John O'Mahony
7.30 Lothian Resource Centre

LANCASTER

Wednesday 16 November

"How do we get Socialism?"

1.00 Students Union, Lancaster University.

More meeting details ring: 071-639-7965



The family of a man who was murdered in prison staged a protest rally on Saturday 5 November in Birmingham. Norman Washington Manning was stabbed to death in Long Lartin prison last month. His family are demanding a public enquiry. The march was organised by the Justice Alliance Campaign. Photo: Mark Salmon

relationship. Another one.

Is that all? Not quite. "The worm" turned and denounced the tabloids whose reporters were harrasing him. That is lèse-majesté! So they thump and kick him even more.

Mellor is one of the Tories who crawled out from under wet stones which Mrs Thatcher raised in the 1980s. When he was a minister, he had a reputation for feeding bits of unsavoury gossip about his Labour and Liberal opponents to the tabloids which now hound him.

He is a publicity hounds who squeals when he doesn't find the publicity to his taste. There is an element of contemptuous sadism towards one of their own creatures in the brutal kicking that the tabloids are now giving to Mellor.

Even so, this is like watching someone being stomped on by Hell's Angels outside a pub. We repeat: where do the journalistic pimps and brothel-keepers who run these papers get their self-righteousness from? Who do they think they are?



THE LIE MACHINE

WHERE DO they get the nerve? Where does their mad self-righteousness come from?

The Sun ("Mellor's all mouth and trousers"), the Mirror ("A Mellor drama too far"), and Today ("Worm tries to wriggle free") gave over their lead editorials as well as their front pages to denouncing David Mellor! Why?

And what did Mellor do? He's having an extra-marital sexual



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**Support the Welfare State Network
lobby of Parliament, 29 November**

Lessons from the Tories' Post Office climbdown

IF THE Tory Party's rural vote can do it, why can't the labour movement? The Tory Government has made a humiliating climb-down from its "flagship" policy of selling off the Post Office because of a rebellion by back-bench Tory MPs. The rebellion reflects Tory voters in rural areas who do not believe the Government's assurances that their postal services will be safe after the sell-off.

It is not the first time that the Tories have been forced to

"It is not the first time that the Tories have been forced to back down. They were beaten on the poll tax by a huge grass-roots revolt."

back down. They were beaten on the poll tax by a huge grass-roots revolt.

But for many years now they have not been beaten by the official labour movement, although the petition campaign by the post workers' union UCW and by the Labour Party must have played some part in defeating them over the Post Office sell-off.

The Tories have remained unbeaten by their biggest and best-organised opposition — not because they are unbeatable but because of the feeble leadership of the Labour



Post Office privatisation has been defeated, now we need to fight other cuts in services

opposition.

Right now hundreds of Labour councils, all across the country, are preparing plans for yet more cuts in jobs and services, to comply with Tory-imposed budget limits. What if even a few of those councils refused? What if they said that they would join with local trade unions and communi-

ties in fighting for more cash from central government, as Liverpool council did, briefly, in 1983-4? The Tories could be beaten.

What if the Labour Party and the trade unions started a big campaign of demonstrations, rallies and lobbies with the call to save and rebuild the Welfare State? In a situation

where 72 per cent of all voters think that Tory MPs are "sleazy and disreputable", and even Tory rural voters do not trust the Government's propaganda about privatisation, the campaign would win huge support. The Tories would have to retreat.

Instead, Tony Blair and his friends insist anxiously that

they will have no "tax-and-spend" policies!

The Tories can be beaten. And if the official leaders of the labour movement will not lead, then the rank and file must. Local Labour Parties and trade union branches should rally round the Welfare State Network and its lobby of Parliament on 29 November.

WE SAY

Oppose the fundamentalists Defend free speech!

"HALF ECHO of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core; but always ludicrous in its effect, through its total incapacity to understand the march of modern history". Marx's description of reactionary, feudal "socialists" in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 fits Hizb-ut Tahrir perfectly.

The reactionary Muslim fundamentalist sect Hizb-ut Tahrir (Party of Liberation) is currently locked in a series of campus conflicts with the Union of Jewish Students (UJS). They hate the modern world. The decadence of modern Britain, the racism and the double standards of the bourgeoisie, and the hollowness of "democratic" society give them plenty of excuses.

But their programme is to smash all democratic gains and to turn back to an idealised medieval Islamic society. Rather than go forward from the evils of bourgeois society, they want to go back to the past.

Their Islamic state would kill gay men and lesbians and persecute women who transgress very restrictive rules of behaviour. Hizb-ut Tahrir is comprehensively anti-Jewish. Like so much of the left, Hizb-ut Tahrir deny that their "anti-Zionism" is anti-semitism, but in practice this comes down to something very like asserting that anti-semitism is not now possible because "anti-Zionism" is righteous. And that is just a convoluted pseudo-political way of saying that anti-semitism is justified.

It is understandable that Jewish students call on the state to ban Hizb-ut Tahrir. Understandable, but wrong.

UJS has had some success in getting Hizb-ut Tahrir meetings stopped on college campuses in having them banned by student unions. Two weeks ago police were called to Kings College, London, to "escort" Muslim students from a Jewish students' meeting.

Paul Solomon, President of UJS, is quoted in the *Guardian* as saying "Hizb-ut Tahrir's material is an incitement to violence. There are times when one group's freedom of speech impinges on that of others."

Yet banning Hizb-ut Tahrir is the wrong response. The last thing the student movement needs is new precedents for banning people who hold unpopular views.

In the mid-1980s Jewish Societies under the perennial threat of being banned for "Zionism". At Sunderland Poly the UJS was banned by idiot "anti-imperialists", backed by various types of anti-semites.

Hizb-ut Tahrir have used the attempts to deny them the right to speak (a right they do not agree with for others) to denounce their opponents as hypocrites.

And this whole approach only ties up the real issue — Hizb-ut Tahrir's politics — with another matter: free speech. People who detest free speech and other democratic liberties are given the chance to win sympathy on a spurious basis. Bans and the use of the police against Hizb-ut Tahrir's Asian members is an utterly bureaucratic and counterproductive response. Right now it is possible to deal with this group on the level of ideas. That is how they should be dealt with: by debate, vigorous denunciation, leaflets, lobbies and protest meetings if necessary.

That way they could be isolated and made harmless. There is another obstacle to doing that, however, in addition to the one erected by the call for banning. That is the cover the left gives to the fundamentalists on the question of Israel.

Hizb-ut Tahrir deliberately focus on Israel and the Jews, playing up to popular anti-Israeli prejudice. A Hizb-ut Tahrir speaker at a meeting in the School of Oriental and African Studies justly pointed out that a Student Union Exec member agreed with him on the question of Israel. They can find sympathy on this issue!

Yet this is a group which talks about the "cunning Zionists" and their "plots". Their members say the Holocaust is a "fairly tale". And Hizb-ut Tahrir want to destroy Israel — and leave no one wondering what would happen to the Israeli Jews if they got their way: "we only need to win once!"

Those who find themselves acting as cover for those people and agreeing with them on Israel should take a long cool look at themselves!

Lobby Parliament on Budget Day!

By Jill Mountford,
Secretary Welfare State
Network

ACTIVISTS in many major cities are getting organised in local campaigns to defend our health services, council services, education and benefit rights, in short — defending our Welfare State!

The Welfare State Network aims to draw all these local campaigns together in order to co-ordinate activity. At the same time we are organising national initiatives such as the Lobby of Parliament on 29 November against pension, benefit and education cuts. There will also be a press launch of our newspaper, *Action For Health and Welfare*, prior to the lobby.

Get your local campaign, trade union, Labour Party or student union to affiliate to the campaign! Or why not set up your own local branch of the Network? Affiliates will receive free bundles of *Action*.

Affiliate to the Welfare State Network

- £25 for trade unions/Labour Parties/other organisations
 - £10 for small organisations/pensioners' groups
 - £5/£2 individual membership
- Members and affiliates will receive free copies of *Action for Health and Welfare*.

Local Action

Manchester

THE ALEXANDER Park Estate health centre has been threatened with closure but residents on the estate are organising a campaign in opposition.

Manchester District Health Authority has a plan to close down many local health centres, aiming to maintain just a few big centres across the city. People in Alexander Park believe this will result in a second rate service. People will have to travel further to get to a health centre which will be over-subscribed and under-resourced.

The Manchester Health Campaign plans to hold a public meeting about the closure on Thursday 24 November at 7.00 at the Church of the Ascension, Hulme, Manchester, where further action will be discussed.

Brighton

HOVE and Brighton Welfare State Campaign recently successfully lobbied a full council

meeting to get it to reverse a plan to close a local nursing home.

Since then the social services committee of the council has voted to close the home. This vote should be illegal as the committee cannot overturn a decision of the full council. In this case, however, the rules are to be waived.

The local Welfare State Campaign is now organising a mass lobby of the full council on Tuesday 29 November from 5pm onwards at Lewes Town Hall.

Sheffield

THE SHEFFIELD Campaign to Defend the Welfare State is organising a public meeting on Wednesday 9 November to highlight the attack on benefits, particularly the plans to introduce Job Seekers allowance. Mark Serwotka, Branch Secretary of the Sheffield CPSA DSS Branch, will address the meeting and explain what this attack will mean. He will also talk about the attacks on the sick and disabled through the replacement of invalidity benefit with incapacity benefit.

The meeting will also discuss organising a picket of Michael Portillo when he visits Sheffield on 19 December 1994.

Benefits Under Attack

Wednesday 9 November
1994 7.30pm

Sheffield Coordinating Centre
Against Unemployment
73 West Street

More information: Sue Highton,
Chairperson Sheffield Campaign to
Defend the Welfare State (0114)
231 3888 or Chris Croome,
Secretary Sheffield Campaign to
Defend the Welfare State (0114)
256 3854

Leicester

A WELL-attended meeting on Wednesday 19 October heard speakers from several campaigns welcome the launch of a Welfare State Network campaign in Leicestershire.

Reuben Reynolds of the Pensioners' Rights Campaign called for intergenerational solidarity in defence of people's rights: "we would like to see young people marching with us on our issues, and pensioners marching with you on your issues." Members of the PRC and the WSN will be joining Leicester students when they travel to London on 9 November to take part in a national demonstration against grant cuts.

The meeting was also

addressed by Dave Brazier of Shelter, Geoff Rawnsley, UNISON activist and Labour County Councillor, and Phil Swift, chair of Leicester City Council.

The Leicester Welfare State Network will be meeting regularly and passing information between groups campaigning on any issue which touches on the welfare state. The group will be organising transport to London for the nation network's lobby of Parliament.

Contact: Ryan Norton, VP Education and Welfare, Leicester University Students' Union, Percy Gee Building, University Road, Leicester or phone 0116 255 6282.

The next meeting of the group will be on Wednesday 23 November, 7.30pm at the Castle Community Rooms, Tower Street, Leicester. The discussion will be: "Pensions, Benefits, Health: the threat from the Tory budget."

Mass lobby of Islington Council, Thursday 17 November 6pm
Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1.

Islington council are proposing closing down two adventure playgrounds, cuts in opening hours, fewer staff, winter closures, up to 22 job losses. The cuts will force children onto the streets and put them at risk. For more info: contact the Campaign for Play on 607-9637.

How to save the Welfare State



95p plus 36 p postage

Tories plan new cuts

FROM THIS week the Tory cabinet is meeting to endorse the public expenditure cuts to be announced in the Budget on 29 November.

One of these plans will be to raise prescription charges from £4.75 to £5. Prescription charges have already been raised by 50p this year — that is by 11% or six times more than the rate of inflation!

Raising prescription charges is one way the Government is aiming to save money in the NHS — the charges subsidise the budget by £292 million a year. The pressure is on to find other subsidies and it is health service users who will pay the price.

Officials at the Department of Health have been studying plans for reducing the number of exemptions on prescription charges, particularly pensioners. However Bottomley has been urged to jettison such plans until after the election.

The government is expected to introduce many other cuts in its budget at the end of this month.

The Welfare State Network is organising a lobby of Parliament on that day to highlight these and the many other injustices the Government is responsible for. The lobby will be addressed by Labour MPs Tony Benn, Alan Simpson,

and Alice Mahon.

Get your student union, trade union, trades council or Labour Party to send a delegation. Transport is going from many major cities. For more details call 071- 639 5068.

Welfare State Network

Lobby Parliament on Budget Day

Defend pensions, benefits and education

29 November

Assemble at the lobby gate outside Parliament from 1.30pm

Meeting in the Grand Committee Room in Westminster

Speakers include: Tony Benn MP, Alice Mahon MP, Alan Simpson MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Jack Jones, Kate Adams (Incapacity Action) and lots more.

1.1 million workers have second jobs We need a minimum wage!

By Martin Thomas

1.1 MILLION people in Britain now do two or more jobs. This official figure has gone up 65 per cent over the last ten years, and it must be an underestimate: a lot of second jobs are casual, cash-in-hand affairs.

Because part-time work is exempted from much of what labour legislation remains in Britain, this growing army of workers have almost no legal rights, little job security, and, often, no living wage either.

A survey by the public services union UNISON showed that 38 per cent of the cleaners working for Newcastle-upon-Tyne council had second jobs — and that these workers with two jobs got an average of about £100 a week before deductions.

In Manchester, a Low Pay Unit survey at 22 Job Centres found that over 40 per cent of jobs in areas previously covered by Wages Councils — which fixed a very low minimum wage for certain jobs before the Tories abolished them last year — were paid below the old Wages Council



"Contracting-out" in the NHS and local government has cut many cleaners' wages and forced them into second jobs

rate. To believe the Tories, this growing number of super-exploited workers is an economic necessity, just like the growing number of bosses raking in over £1 million a year (twice as many last year as the year before).

But they lie. Cleaning work can be done on a decent wage, with decent job security!

Most advanced capitalist countries have a legal minimum wage, and, if anything, it probably cuts unemployment rather than increasing it.

"For all that", as Karl Marx wrote, "capital never becomes reconciled to such changes — and this is admitted over and over again by its own representatives — except under the

pressure of a General Act of Parliament for the compulsory regulation of the hours of labour".

The legal minimum wage of £4.15 an hour demanded by the trade unions is an urgent need for the working class. We cannot afford to let Tony Blair reduce Labour's minimum-wage commitment to a sham.

Mersey campaign conference

MERSEYSIDE activists have set up a local "Defend the Welfare State" campaign, linked to the national Welfare State Network.

A conference on Saturday 5 November was sponsored by the Merseyside Association of Trades Councils, six local Trades Councils, and many other groups, and decided to set up the campaign.

Issues covered by the conference included the defence of Walton Hospital and of the Mersey and North Wales Blood Transfusion Service; pensions; the Child Support Act; and the Tories' new "Jobseeker's Allowance".

Alec McFadden, summing up the conference from the chair, called on all activists to promote and circulate the Welfare State Network paper "Action" — "the best and most informative twelve pages I have read in a long time".

The campaign secretary is Diane Harris. Contact c/o Merseyside Assoc. of Trades Councils, 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool.

"Panorama" exposes NHS nightmare

By Richard Bayley

ANYONE who wanted to know about the nightmare of being old and ill in Tory Britain should have watched last Monday's Panorama on BBC1 (7 November).

There were no statistics, no pie charts, just painful case studies of elderly people caught in limbo between the NHS and local-authority-run "community care".

The picture of today's NHS it portrayed was bleak and heartless, a service providing the easily-costed short-term medical intervention, but evading responsibility for the chronically ill and the dying.

Panorama focused on the

hospital discharges of 70, 80, even 90 year olds, into squalid living conditions and a friendless existence, awaiting a "Community Care package" that just doesn't arrive or is hopelessly inadequate.

There the patients sat, sometimes unable to move from their chairs for days on end, until discovered by neighbours, or Community Nurses or their GP, who on camera, could barely control their anger and frustration.

There was something of the quality of the film "Dr Strangelove" in the warped logic employed by the various managers and doctors (or rather doctors being managers) interviewed to justify the discharges. Discussing a 80 year

old man, virtually paralysed and unable to feed himself, the interviewer pointed out that, by any standards, the patient was acutely ill, the doctor raised an eyebrow and replied that it depends on how you defined it! Indeed! This same man had literally nowhere else to go as no nursing home is equipped to give him the care he needs.

The programme made me extremely angry, a sentiment echoed by every NHS worker I met the next day at work. A sizeable lynch-mob of NHS employees willing to tear Virginia Bottomley limb from limb could have been assembled within minutes.

The gross underfunding of care services, and the brutal system of "contracts", "service

level agreements" and "care packages" used to enforce it, is slowly warping the individuals charged with running it. Those who spoke frankly about the situation — the GPs, the nurses and social workers — were made of stronger stuff, but you feared for how long those people would be able to keep going in such a situation.

Labour's Social Justice Commission promises to "save" the NHS by enshrining the split between medical treatment and long-term care, doing what the Tories have been afraid to do comprehensively for several years.

A campaign to reverse this proposal could be launched, simply by the repeated showing of this programme!

Welfare State News

NEWCASTLE

Thursday 17 November

Launch meeting of Newcastle Welfare State Network

Speakers from local campaigns

7.30 Rossetti Studios (by the Trent pub)

BIRMINGHAM

Saturday 19 November

Community Conference

10-4.30, The Union Club, 723 Pershore Road, Selly Park

ISLINGTON

Thursday 24 November

"Save Our Services" public meeting called by Islington Save the Welfare State campaign

Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP

7.30, Council Chamber, Islington Town Hall

LEWISHAM

Thursday 1 December

"Save Our Services" public meeting called by Lewisham Welfare State Network

7.30 Lewisham Labour Club, Limes Grove

SOUTHWARK

Tuesday 15 November

Launch of Southwark Welfare State Network

Speakers include Cllr Linda Bailey

7.30 Bells Gardens Community Centre, Buller Road, SE5.

It's official: "save our hospital" campaigns work!

DEATH BY A THOUSAND CUTS

GOOD NEWS: hospital closures campaigns are very successful! The Institute of Health Service Management has produced a report admitting that the public wave of protest against the cuts is thwarting the closure of hospitals and casualty departments.

In Bristol, Surrey and Birmingham, Health Authority proposals to close acute hospitals or remove services have been ditched in

favour of less unpopular means of saving cash.

JONATHAN AITKEN — he of the expenses-paid stays in the spacious accommodation at the Paris Ritz — has suggested that claimants should be required to move to smaller accommodation to save on benefit bills.

Aitken should try suggesting this to all those families living in overcrowded conditions, waiting for years on council housing transfer lists, families

in bed and breakfast, people living in hostels...

Aitken, who is a millionaire, has many helpful insights into real life situations such as this one: "dependency culture has made people too comfortable with benefits."

TWO OTHER down to earth, ordinary people in charge of our public services.

The first is Stephen Eames, chief executive of Havering Hospitals Trust. He has just been sent on an £8,000, 19-

day study tour of Europe. Eames insists that this tour, taken in his own time, was not a holiday!

No, of course not... it was an intensive character-building therapy course intended to instill self-reliance and good citizenship... If only!

Our second parasite is Sir Richard Storey, Chair of York Hospital Services Trust. Story, who has unsuccessfully stood as a Tory Parliamentary candidate, used his position to get quick

advice from a consultant about his dislocated shoulder. No waiting around for six months to get an appointment for Storey.

To add insult to injury, Storey used his BUPA scheme to get the shoulder treated. He said: "I do not regret what I did. If BUPA did not exist then the weight on the NHS would be crippling. People should be pleased that a large number of people are being paid for by private health insurance." What a demon-

stration of commitment to an equitable and properly funded health service!

VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY, who is forever telling us how cost-effective and well-managed our health service is these days, was asked how much the GP fund-holding policy was costing the Department of Health. She replied, "I haven't the foggiest". But it's never mind the cost in the case of this scheme. Clearly it's all spend, spend, spend!

The bad new days

SIXTY-FIVE per cent of Russians say life was better under Stalinism, according to a recent survey by the World Bank.

Figures from the International Labour Organisation show why. 35 per cent of workers still nominally in jobs are actually laid off, receiving little or no wages. For those in real jobs, most employers are not paying wages in full: they plead lack of cash, due to their customers not paying them. "Across the board, many workers are taking home much less", reports the ILO, "if they are taking home anything".

Don't the advantages of democracy offset these problems? They might, if Russian workers had real access to those advantages. But for that they would need their own powerful organisations, and their own political party.

"THE more senior the executive, the more likely you are to find them relaxing in business class watching a movie", reports the Official Airlines Guide, blowing the whistle on all the guff about business-class seating in airplanes being necessary for busy bosses to get on with their work. On European flights, passengers pounding laptops were more likely to be found in economy class than in the luxury sections.

THAT the leaders and organisers of Tony Blair's "New Labour Party" are so desperate to ape the thinking, the methods, and the style of the ruling class, is bad enough. That they do it so ineptly adds insult to injury. Just as McDonalds has told its workers to scrap all the stereotype responses ("Have a nice day"), and respond to customers in their own way, labour movement smart-alecs are going for the stereotypes. If you phone the GMBU, the switchboard workers are apparently under orders to reply brightly, "Good morning, GMB, Britain's general union". And in Labour's Dudley West by-election HQ, one message is posted up above all the phones. Every call must be answered, "Hallo, Labour's Dudley West Campaign Headquarters". Any dissident using a shorter greeting will be fined 50p.

AFTER publishing in our last issue (SO 617) a letter from

GRAFFITI

VIVE LA
REVOLUTION

By Cyclops

French sympathisers of the Spartacist League alleging physical attacks on them by leaders and members of the French group GR/JCR (which is linked to Militant Labour in Britain), we have received a copy of a letter from Militant Labour's international secretariat to the French Spartacists.

The letter, dated 21 October, makes counter-charges without responding to the original charges (dated 12 October) except to say that one alleged attack was "invented". Its chief claim is that a GR/JCR member "was attacked outside his apartment in Paris" by Spartacists on 12 October.

It concludes menacingly, "we have full confidence that our French section will know how to deal with the problem in the appropriate way".

PHIL Hearse, editor of *Socialist Outlook*, has abandoned his organisation — of which, in its various forms, he has been a leading member for some twenty years — to go over to Militant Labour.

According to what *Outlook* supporters have told us, Hearse took part in an *Outlook* conference only a couple of weeks ago, and won a majority for his faction on the crucial committees, without giving any hint of his coming political leap.

A full-page article by Hearse in *Militant* (4 November) enlightens, even if it does not explain.

Militant Labour and the SWP are the only groups worth considering, he says: "smaller groups are also-rans". And he opts for Militant Labour, although disagreeing "on the national question in Ireland and ex-Yugoslavia".

Hearse does not criticise *Outlook's* politics, but says only that it is feeble, "incapable of building itself and reaching out to new layers, especially youth". In an exasperated phrase which may reveal why he gave up on *Outlook*, he says that revolutionaries can reach out "given even a minimum of drive, determination and élan".

It is a pity that he did not try to analyse the political roots of *Outlook's* lack of "drive, determination and élan", instead of giving up.

A load of Tory codswallop

PRESS GANG

THE GUARDIAN TODAY
SUNDAY PRESS
THE WORLD

By Jim Denham

IT IS not necessary to like Peter Preston, the priggish editor of the *Guardian*, in order to take his side against the Tory rabble of hypocrites and crack-pots who've been baying for his blood over the past week. Roger Gale (Con, Thanet North), for instance, described Mr. Preston as "a whore from hell." The Tories' remaining media apologists (notably that preposterous pair William Rees-Mogg and Paul Johnson, both in the *Times*) denounced the *Guardian* editor as a common criminal for whom a custodial sentence might well be in order. Meanwhile, Labour's front bench spokespersons, ever anxious to show how responsible they are, tut-tutted about a "flagrant breach of parliamentary privilege."

So what exactly was the cause of all this outrage? Well, it seems that in the course of his investigations into the mystery of Jonathan Aitken's bill at the Paris Ritz, Mr Preston used House of Commons notepaper to fax the hotel a note purporting to come from Mr Aitken's office. This was done, it seems, not in order to deceive anyone, but to protect the

Guardian's source, Mr Mohammed Al-Fayed. Are you following this? Let me spell it out: The *Guardian* had already been shown Aitken's bill by Fayed but they needed a copy to make the story "stand up". Fayed didn't want to simply hand one over for fear of damaging his hotel's reputation, so he suggested that the paper send him the fax so that Ritz staff could claim to have been tricked into providing the *Guardian* with the bill. Is that clear now?

Anyway, what seems to have particularly enraged Tory MPs and old buffers like Rees-Mogg is Preston's description of the fax as a "cod". According to my dictionary this means "a hoax, joke or parody" (always assuming that Mr Preston was not asking us to believe that his fax was, in

reality, a "large edible sea fish"). This was seized upon as evidence that Preston was trying to pass off his subterfuge as little more than a jolly jape. Everyone knows that mis-using the Commons "logo" is an offense so serious as to warrant a summons to the Committee of Privileges, if not a spell in the Tower.

Of course, the real "cod" in all of this has been the spluttering indignation of the Tories — not to mention their new found concern with journalistic ethics (when did any of them ever express the slightest scruple when the tabloids regularly traduced Labour politicians?)

The notorious secrecy of British public life and the protective old-boy network that shields the Tories and their friends, makes subterfuge an

essential weapon in the armoury of any investigative journalist. The *Guardian*, remember, was investigating a Government minister in charge of defence procurement, who had spent a weekend at the Paris Ritz in the company of two Saudi businessmen with whom he had close commercial links. Saudi Arabia is a major purchaser of British arms.

The minister at first denied meeting the Saudis. Then, when faced with incontrovertible proof, he suddenly changed his story. He suffered similar amnesia over the question of when — and by whom — his hotel had been paid. The Government's own "investigation" into these matters seems to have consisted of the cabinet secretary asking Mr Aitken if he'd done anything wrong and being given the answer "no".

Preston's only mistake has been to have expressed regret. He should have followed the line of the *Sun's* Richard Littlejohn: "Anything that exposes the venality of Tory ministers should be justified". But perhaps that kind of plain-speaking is simply beyond the elliptical Mr Preston.

Getting away with murder



WOMEN'S EYE

By Jean Lane

LAST week a man walked free with a non-custodial sentence after being found guilty of manslaughter. He had strangled his wife to death. His suspended sentence was allowed partly because of a plea from the wife's family who, having got together and discussed their feelings on the issue, wrote to the judge saying that they thought the husband had always been kind and caring and that, while they grieved for their daughter and sister, a custodial sentence would do nothing to alleviate their pain.

This remarkably open-hearted and courageous attitude shown by the murdered woman's family is a gentle and pleasant reminder that victims of wrong-doers do not always bay for blood. This is not a case that the flog 'em and hang 'em brigade could put in their

arsenal.

The history of sentencing in such cases reveals, however, that, firstly, the aforementioned brigade very rarely bay for the blood of wife batterers and killers and, secondly, that the judge's sentence stood a good chance of being lenient with or without the generous word put in by the man's in-laws.

Each year in Britain some 70 men kill their female partners. Between 12 and 15 women kill their male partners. Yet 40% of those women are found guilty of the charge of murder, compared to 25% of men.

The murder charge carries a mandatory life sentence. Any woman trying to get her sentence reduced to manslaughter has to plead temporary insanity or diminished responsibility. But the man in this case, as in so many others, was charged with manslaughter, rather than murder, in the first place.

Sara Thornton, who in 1991 stabbed her husband to death after years of battery and abuse, attempted to get her sentence reduced to manslaughter on the grounds not of diminished

responsibility but of provocation. It was argued by the prosecution, and upheld, that provocation could not happen over a long, drawn-out period of time. It is described instead as a sudden, explosive and temporary loss of self-control.

It was decided in Sara Thornton's case that in the time it took her to run to the kitchen, grab the knife, run back and stab her husband she had the time to cool off. This was a woman who lived in an almost perpetual state of terror and desperation. She lost her appeal. She is still in jail.

Two days after Sara Thornton's appeal a Mr Joseph Negrail received a two-year suspended sentence for battering his wife to death. His defence? Provocation after years of torment and abuse from his wife.

In the case heard last week in Stafford, Judge Kenneth Taylor imposed an 18 month sentence suspended for two years saying: "I am quite satisfied you were outrageously provoked."

At the time of Sara Thornton's appeal, Kenneth Baker, the then Home

Secretary, said that there were no plans to change the law on provocation. He said that "There is a real danger... it will lead to more aggrieved women taking the law into their own hands, declaring open season on loutish lovers and butchering them wholesale."

Not only are these the words of someone with a serious siege mentality, but, in fact, since then and from long before, the law on provocation has been changed. It changes every single time a case comes to court — depending on the sex of the person in the dock.

I think that it is right that the judge be able to take into account the violent and abusive context of a case of murder, i.e. provocation. I do not believe that "nagging" for example constitutes violent abuse, i.e. the excuse by which many men have been let off lightly.

In the light of last week's case and many, many more where "provocation" has been successfully argued, Sara Thornton should be granted another appeal and should walk free having had her sentence massively reduced.



Oppose the Criminal Justice Act!

FIVE protesters squatted on the roof of Westminster Hall after climbing up the walls of Parliament on Friday 4 November. Below them, in the House of Commons, the Criminal Justice Bill became law.

The protesters hung out a banner: 'defy the CJB.'

With the Bill now law, it's our job to turn what has been a massive campaign of opposition into a mass

movement of defiance. The civil rights attacked by the Criminal Justice Act were not handed to us by the bosses. They were fought for by people who had to break the law to win their right to protest to picket and to meet together.

It is vital that today's labour movement takes up the campaign to defy and destroy the Criminal Justice Act. Labour Against the Criminal Justice Bill has been asking Labour sup-

porters to sign a petition that calls on Labour to campaign against the Criminal Justice Act and the next Labour government to repeal it. We will be handing in the petition at a lobby of Labour's National Executive.

Dennis Skinner MP, an National Executive member, who supports the campaign against the Criminal Justice Bill has agreed to accept the petitions at the lobby.

Lobby Labour's National Executive

• **Oppose the Criminal Justice Act**
• **Labour must repeal the Act.**

9am, Wednesday 30 November, outside Labour Party HQ, 150 Walworth Rd. Nearest Tube: Elephant and Castle

Beg, borrow or steal

By David Ball

"BEG Borrow or Steal", the title of a report produced by Nottingham Young People's Benefit Campaign, sums up the choices facing thousands of young people in Britain.

Youth have been driven into poverty by the Tory government's systematic drive against the living standards of working-class people. The report covers — and dramatically proves — the link between crime and youth unemployment in Nottingham.

"Beg Borrow or Steal" was launched at a conference on 20 October of about a hundred people, including young people involved with

Benefit Campaign, probation workers, advice and welfare rights workers, trade unionists, students and Labour councillors.

Speakers described how young people were impoverished by Government policy on benefits, jobs and training and also criminalised. Their desperate situation had driven many to crime as a means of survival.

The report recommends that full benefit rights be restored to 16 to 24 years olds. Training should be of a higher quality and include adequate maintenance grants. There should be investment in jobs and housing provision for the under-25s.

Speakers condemned the stubbornness of the Government in its

refusal to restore equal benefit rights for young people whilst there is so much public pressure to do this. People also criticised the Labour's leadership to make a clear commitment on this issue (although the Labour-backed Social Justice Commission has recommended the restoration of benefit rights to 16 and 17 year olds).

● Copies of "Beg, Borrow or Steal" are available at £2.50 each from: Richard Morfett, Treasurer, NYPBC, Nottingham Hostel Liaison Group, 23a Mansfield Road, Nottingham, NG1 3FB. Cheques payable to Nottingham Young People's Benefit Campaign.

Fight Racism — full employment and homes for all

Saturday 10 December Assemble 1pm Chamberlain Square
Called by Birmingham United Against Racism and Fascism
Call Mick on 021 356 8164

Students organise to defend the Welfare State

By Kevin Sexton, London Area NUS Convenor, personal capacity

ON 29 November, the National Union of Students' London Area will be joining the Welfare State Network in a Lobby of Parliament. Students will be lobbying for the grant cuts to be reversed, and for students to be reinstated into the benefits system.

The Welfare State Network (WSN)

has launched a student bulletin, full of campaign articles and ideas for action. WSN supporters are setting up campaign groups in student unions to build joint work with local and national campaigns in defence of the NHS and universal benefits, and to stop such measures as the Jobseekers' Allowance.

Student activists are supporting local campaign activities against hospital closures and cuts, and campaigns to end student hardship. A

number of colleges are planning pickets of Tory MPs' surgeries, putting pressure on the Tories to stop cuts in the Welfare State.

The Student Welfare State Network is also supporting campaigns against the proposals of the Labour Party's Commission on Social Justice, which recommends a student financial support system worse than the Tories'. We will be organising debates with Labour Party right-wingers, putting on the pressure to stop NUS ditching

its commitment to a full grants system and reinstating students' entitlement to claim benefits.

We want to force the Labour Party leadership not to accept the Commission's recommendations, and to stop Tony Blair selling out students and our demands.

Get your student union, Labour club and/or campaigns group involved in the work we are doing, and affiliate to the Welfare State Network.

7

YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to Youth Fightback c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

the struggle for workers' liberty discussion weekend for students and youth

3-4 Dec, Caxton House, London questions about socialism: what's wrong with capitalism? can the workers make a revolution? why is the left so divided?

what should CJB campaigners do now? how do we get rid of racism?

our history: the truth about the russian revolution. how hitler came to power.

what's wrong with your sociology lectures? what's wrong with your economics courses?

issues: socialists and ireland. can marxism explain violence against women?

should labour ditch clause four? (debate with the labour right). strategies for lesbian/gay/bisexual liberation (debate with stonewall).

Tickets/details from AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Tel: 071-639 7965 £5 (HE students/waged) and £2 (school and FE students/unwaged) Cheques to "WL Publications"

How do we defend Cla

Tony Blair's announcement that he will personally rewrite the Labour Party's aims and objectives has destabilised the Party.

Until Tuesday 4 October the Party was under more or less total right-wing control. Few indeed would have predicted any kind of significant left revival inside the

Party this side of the next general election. But through a mixture of arrogance, conceit and plain bad judgement, Blair has opened up a major debate about what the Labour Party is for. He has done so at a time when the Tories have not looked so weak since 1963 and when the pent-up

hopes and aspirations of millions of people are focussed on the return of a Labour government.

This new situation in the Labour Party requires some serious thinking on the left. On this page we print two contributions to that discussion.

Avoiding Blair's trap

By Vladimir Derer, Secretary, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

THE MAIN question for the Left today is how to respond to the threat to Clause Four. The main danger is that the Left will fall into the "modernisers" trap.

The aim of the "modernisers" — conscious or unconscious — is to turn the Labour Party into another Conservative Party, competing with the Tories for the job of managing British capitalism. Under Kinnock this aim was pursued behind the smoke screen of democratisation. The accountability of Labour MPs to the rank and file was undermined in the name of OMOV [One Member One Vote]. Under Smith the same pretext was used to weaken the Party's trade union links. Blair is continuing the work of his predecessors but in addition he is seeking to "modernise" the Party ideologically. To defend Clause Four the Left must expose the "modernisers'" hidden agenda.

This has to be done at two levels.

First, it is essential to show that the attack on Clause Four is part and parcel of a wider strategy to change the overall character of the Party. What needs to be explained is that the attempt to "update" Clause Four has nothing to do with its wording, and everything to do with the direction the Party is taking. This includes, above all, attempts to weaken, and ultimately sever the links which tie the Party to the unions. Only if presented in this context can Clause Four be successfully defended. A campaign to "Keep the

Party Labour" would highlight the danger that the Party will cease to be "Labour."

"Modernisers" have adopted "salami tactics." One by one they are slicing off those features which make Labour the party of the British working class and social change. Each year a different section of the Party has come under attack. But so long as each particular section limits its opposition to those aspects which immediately affect it, the modernisers will continue to get their way. Successful resistance can be mustered only if all those under threat unite in a concerted opposition.

The problem here is to convince them that theirs is not a particular case but part of a general pattern. Thus to be successful the defence of Clause Four must be linked to the defence of the trade union role within the Party and the rights of individual members. After all, the whole of Clause Four is to be "reworded", not just Clause Four (4) [the clause on common ownership]. Clause Four (2) ("...to cooperate with the General Council of the TUC...") would also go. What is under threat is the working-class character of the Party, its democratic structure and its socialist aims. A campaign to "Keep the Party Labour" would have the advantage of focussing on the Party's trade union roots as well as its tradition of seeking the transformation of society.

This, however, may not be enough to halt the "modernisers'" advance. Alongside it we should launch a broad-based counter-offensive behind a single demand: that the leadership simply drop its attempt to "change" Clause Four.

The leadership's action is clearly divisive and damages the Party's prospects in the pre-election period we are entering. For two consecutive years Conference has reaffirmed its support for Clause Four. Many members, not just the Left, are deeply concerned about the leadership's bombshell. They are opposed to the issue of Clause Four being raised at this time, irrespective of what they may think about its present wording.

A campaign asking the leadership simply to drop its proposal would enjoy wide support. This demand should be taken up immediately at the grass roots of the organised labour movement. It is the only way to draw in Party members who don't agree with us but are concerned about a divisive internal debate.

The campaign proposed by the sponsors of the "Defend Clause Four — Defend Socialism" is far too narrow to frustrate the "modernisers." It would limit the defence of Clause Four to arguments about its wording. When put to the wider membership we would lose if not the debate then the vote.

The argument that a debate on Clause Four would provide us with an opportunity to explain the benefits of public ownership and socialism in general may be true, but wouldn't affect the vote. Year after year CLPD-sponsored resolutions on this very subject have been defeated at Conference.



Blair threatens the "working-class character of the Party, its democratic structure, and its socialist aims"

Mobilise the ranks!

By Tom Rigby, Defend Clause Four Campaign Organising Committee

I AGREE with the great bulk of what Vladimir Derer has to say. Vladimir is quite right to point to the need "to show that the attack on Clause Four is part and parcel of a wider strategy to change the overall character of the Party." But he is wrong to believe that the main thrust of the left's activity should be directed towards "a campaign asking the leadership simply to drop its proposal."

Such a focus would be far too narrow and would leave us high and dry in the (extremely likely) event that the leadership does decide to press ahead with its proposals.

Remember, Prescott and Blair have already talked about putting a new statement of aims to the National Executive *this month*.

Once the Executive has approved a new statement of aims, and launched a "consultation exercise" — whatever form that may take — then the idea of *stopping* a discussion which has *already* started will lose all purchase.

What Vladimir is proposing is a strategy which has great value for the next couple of weeks in the run-up to this month's Executive meeting, but after that point loses its grip.

It is not a strategy for the next year that

WHAT THEY SAY:

"It is important that the Party fights the issues of the day in the language of the day but always in a socialist framework, a framework delineated by Clause Four."

**Jim Mearns,
Glasgow Maryhill CLP,
mover of successful resolution
reaffirming Clause Four at this year's
conference**

can take us through any "consultation" ballot and on to the 1995 conference.

The left cannot rely on the force of inertia to defend Clause Four. We need to show that:

- a. Clause Four is worth defending; and
- b. it is the "modernisers" who are dividing the Party.

Let's look at (a) first. It should be taken as read that the right have big advantages against the left — they control the Party apparatus and have many significant friends in the media who will do everything they can to ensure that defence of Clause Four is equated with a desire to frustrate and embarrass the leadership, help the Tories and lose the next election!

Nevertheless, what has been surprising so far is that despite a decade or more of the right-wing offensive the support for Clause Four inside the Party and in the affiliated unions is still very strong.

The vote at conference to reaffirm Clause Four was a major victory for the left. There was intense lobbying and arm twisting deployed to stop the debate happening, yet the motion was passed. Even unions like UNISON, which have tended to support the leadership on key questions, voted to reaffirm Clause Four. Tom Sawyer — one of the main fixers for the soft left — opted not to push the issue for fear of defeat. The situation in other unions points to a major rank and file revolt on this issue.

The modernisers have miscalculated. They have chosen to take on the socialist left on the terrain on which we are strongest. They seem to think that they can push

WHAT THEY SAY:

"Clause Four has growing relevance today as capitalism moves into decline. It must, for these reasons, remain at the core of our work."

Tony Benn MP



Debating Clause Four

The Battle for Labour's Soul

80p/40p + 25p p&p from:

Socialist Campaign Group Youth, 25 Howard Court, Peckham Rye, London SE15.

WHAT THEY SAY:

"That half the European Parliamentary Labour Party have signed a statement supporting the retention of Clause Four is an important contribution to the debate opened at Labour Party conference on the Party's constitutional goals. It is a signal of the depth of commitment in the Labour Party to the fundamental socialist goal of extending common ownership."

Stan Newens MEP

Clause Four?

WHAT THEY SAY:

"It will be argued that all that the arch modernisers want to do is update Clause Four. Does anyone seriously believe that to be the case? Surely the whole purpose of the exercise is to signal that the Party has dropped the whole idea of substantially extending public ownership."

David Winnick MP Walsall North

whatever they like through the Party. This is a serious mistake on their part. It flows from the fact that many of Blair's team have little experience and do not really understand that the labour movement includes many thousands of people who have values and aspirations of their own and will not just jump when the leadership says jump.

Interestingly, of Blair's allies it was John Prescott and Robin Cook — "soft lefts" with some feel for the labour movement — who were reported to be the most sceptical about the proposal to abolish Clause Four.

The left also needs to remember that Blair only won 56% of the total vote in the leadership contest. Of the 44% who voted for either Prescott or Beckett hardly anyone would be positively in favour of the abolition of Clause Four. That also goes for quite a few people who voted for Blair on the grounds that he was the most "electable" candidate but not because they necessarily agreed with his politics.

Blair's victory was nothing like the landslide by which John Smith won in 1992 — and remember how close Smith came to defeat over the issue of the trade union link. A major survey of Labour Party members' opinions before the last election found that 64% agreed that: "The central issue in British politics is the class struggle between capital and labour."

This provides an accurate gauge of the extent of grassroots support we can hope to mobilise if the left campaigns aggressively in defence of Clause Four and links the issue to the question of what the next Labour government is going to do in office.

If we can do that we can also hope to mobilise on our side most of the 81% or so of Party members who, in the survey quoted above, said that they supported "the return to the public sector of all those industries and services privatised by the Tories."

This is the point that Vladimir misses. Defending Clause Four is not "all or nothing." We can still defend socialism and defend Clause Four without insisting that everyone who wants to do so with us must also be in favour of its immediate implementation.

The immediate battle is between Blair and his friends, wanting to excise the principles of common ownership, industrial democracy and equality altogether, and those wanting to keep them as long-term ideals. If we can draw people with us by linking Clause Four to the question of renationalisation of the utilities then we can gain the initiative.

The other task facing the left is to relate to the debate on Clause Four in such a way that it is the "modernisers" who appear divisive to the bulk of Party members.

The statement written by Stan Newens and Ken Coates and signed by half the Labour MEPs provides an excellent way of doing this.

Its main theme is to say to the "modernisers": "If you don't want to revise our basic beliefs then why does accepting a new statement from the leadership have to mean abandoning Clause Four?"

The Newens/Coates initiative has put the hard right on the defensive.

It robs them of the opportunity of presenting themselves as the people who just want to change the language and style of Clause Four but not its content.

It provides a far better way of relating to the centre ground in the Party than Vladimir Derer's strategy of simply saying a debate will be divisive. What the MEPs' statement does is force the right to spell out

why they think Clause Four has to be repudiated and why they think no compromise is possible.

This is politically important because many right wingers and soft leftists are not exactly champing at the bit on this issue.

The Newens/Coates initiative also shows far more tactical sophistication than the stance taken by those at Westminster like Roger Berry and Peter Hain who have argued that we can rewrite Clause Four. As was inevitable, this tactic has simply led to the right wing's friends in the media portraying their actions as "The Left Abandons Clause Four." All they have done is to unintentionally add momentum to Blair's drive to gut Labour of class politics.

As any experienced trade union negotiator will tell you, you don't start a fight with some "clever" fallback position. If you concede ground at the first stage then you are already on the road to defeat.

The message that needs to echo round the labour movement is this: if the left can remain united and disciplined, if we can focus all our energies on the common cause of the retention of Clause Four, then we can win a major victory which will strengthen the left at a crucial time on the eve of the election of the next Labour government. That is what the Defend Clause Four campaign is all about.

The odds may be against us, but we have no choice but to fight.

WHAT THEY SAY:

"All of us must work together to build a united fightback in defence of Clause Four, against anti-trade union laws and the Criminal Justice Bill, against privatisation of all industries and services; that's the only way to speed the election of a Labour government committed to socialist policies."

Arthur Scargill,
President National Union of
Mineworkers



Campaign to Defend
Clause Four

Campaign
launch

12 November, 1pm

St Aloysius Social Club,
Phoenix Road,
Euston, London

Commission on Social Justice

No way to win

By Colin Foster

TONY BLAIR'S "New Labour" is doing worse than putting expediency before principle. It is hacking down the principles themselves, reducing "socialist" aspirations to such blandness that they would be acceptable to most Tories and Liberal Democrats.

The "principles of social justice" on which the Commission for Social Justice was based are the best indication so far of what Blair and his friends want. A devastating analysis by G A Cohen in the latest *New Left Review* shows how feeble they are.

"In its ideologically self-confident phase", writes Cohen, "when its relationship to its values was forthright rather than furtive, the Labour Party affirmed a principle of community and a principle of equality."

By "community", Cohen means the idea in the slogans "People before Profit", or "Need before Greed." By "equality", he means that there should be no rich or poor, but "rough similarity of amenity and burden."

"These... were, indeed, the only values which the Left affirmed as a matter of principle and which the Centre and Right reject as a matter of principle." And they are the ideas which Blair wants to chop out of Labour politics.

But "Labour cannot cherish its independence as a party, believe in a politics of principle, and affirm nothing but the 'four principles of social justice'... No Liberal Democrat or progressive Tory need reject those principles."

Those four principles are: "1. The foundation of a free society is the equal worth of all citizens. "2. All citizens should be able as a right of citizenship to meet their basic needs for income, shelter, education, nutrition and health care.

"3. Self-respect and personal autonomy depend on the widest possible spread of opportunities and life-chances.

"4. Inequalities are not necessarily unjust but unjustified inequalities should be reduced and where possible eliminated."

All the language is mushy, but the first principle evidently means no more than that laws should not discriminate on grounds of race, sex, or whatever. "Equal worth" does not mean equality. Explaining point four, the Commission for Social Justice asserts that inequalities can be justified by "need, merit or reward."

The second means no more than a social safety-net for paupers to stop them starving on the streets. Who could disagree with the third? As for the fourth, "those who are eager to declare their support for unjust inequalities will oppose" it, remarks Cohen.

The New Labour ideologues' "stout opposition to equality and redistribution as matters of principle" is confirmed by further statements. "Redistribution of income is a means of social justice and not an end in itself; social justice demands sufficient revenue to meet basic needs and extend opportunities, but there are limits of

principle as well as practice to levels of taxation." In other words: *on principle* we should not interfere too much with the market.

Taxing the rich in order to stop them being rich, and stop the poor being poor, is ruled out *on principle*. The Commission, as it said in its final report, is opposed to a "Levellers' Britain."

The nearest it can get to an argument for equality is this: "Contrary to the 'trickle-down' theory of the 1980s, making the rich richer does not make the poor richer too. Indeed, because the great majority pay the costs of unemployment, crime and ill-health, making the poor poorer makes us all poorer too. Common interests demand social cohesion rather than polarisation."

But this argument, so Cohen points out, rejects any *principle* of equality in favour of an appeal to the self-interest of the well-off (dressed up as an interest which they have in common with the poor).

Its effect "depends on whether they will reckon that higher taxation is a smaller price to pay for their own health and security than what they'd have to shell out on BUPA, improved anti-burglary systems, a house in the suburbs, and so on. But however they figure those sums, inviting them to consider the issue primarily in that framework, under a pretence of common interest, is a cop-out at the level of principle."

Labour's leaders argue that they must reject any suggestion of "tax-and-spend" in order to win votes. Cohen retorts: "You can ask what our principles are, what, this is, we believe with passion, and you can ask what is the best way to win the next election. But you cannot ask what principles we should have, what we should believe with passion, as a *means* of winning the next election.

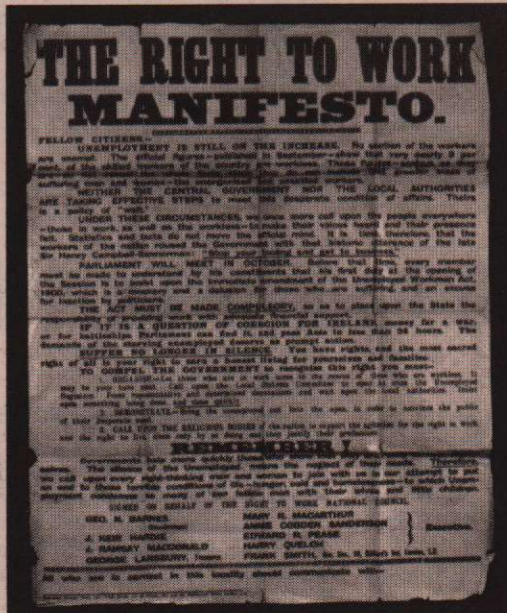
"For the answer won't be principles you can really believe in... To massage one's beliefs for the sake of electoral gain can, moreover, be electorally counter-productive." Labour comes across not as "responsible" but as shifty and untrustworthy.

Cohen does not argue as a revolutionary. He believes that "socialist values have lost their moorings in capitalist social structure", and that the socialist values he advocates are "a hundred miles from the horizon of present possibility."

But even from a cautious, reformist point of view, so Cohen argues, the Labour leaders' betrayal of principles is a disaster.

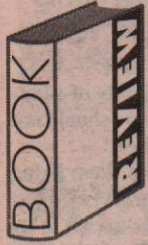
"All change in modern conditions... is perforce incremental, two per cent here, five per cent there." But "fundamental socialist values which point to a form of society a hundred miles from the horizon of present possibility are needed to defend every half-mile of territory gained and to mount an attempt to regain each bit that has been lost." If we start off demanding only half-a-mile, and that apologetically, we will win nothing.

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"In its self-confident phase, the Labour Party affirmed principles of community and equality"

When Trotskyism was not so easy



Mark Osborn
reviews *Harry Ratner,*
Reluctant Revolutionary

£5.95

Socialist Platform

1st man: Who are those people?
2nd man: Not one of them
Cared only for himself
They ran without rest
To get bread for strangers
1st man: Why without bread?
2nd man: The unjust man may cross the street in
the open
But the just man hides.
1st man: What's being done to them?
2nd man: Although they work for low wages and
are useful to many men
Not one of them lives the years of his life
Eats his bread, dies contented
And is honourably buried, but
They end before their time
Struck down and trampled on and heaped with
shame.
1st man: Why don't we ever hear about them?
2nd man: If you read in the papers that certain
criminals have been
Shot or thrown into prison they are the ones
1st man: Will it always be like that?
2nd man: No

(Brecht, *St. Joan of the Stockyards*, Sc11)
FOR A quarter of a century, Harry Ratner was one of those described in these lines by Berthold Brecht (though Brecht had not Trotskyists but members of the Stalinist movement in mind). Son of a Russian Jew and a French mother, Harry Ratner was born in 1919 and spent his childhood going back and forth between France and England. He became a Trotskyist in 1936, and remained a Trotskyist until 1960.

During the quarter century of his activity as a Trotskyist militant, Ratner was active in both France and Britain; he fought for socialism in the Labour Party and in the trade unions, at the Renault plant outside Paris, famous for the militancy of its workers, and in engineering works in Salford. He was in France in 1944 when the Nazis were beaten and the French working class could have taken power. (On Stalin's orders, the French CP — playing an

indispensable role — helped the discredited French bourgeoisie to restore its political control).

In the Trotskyist movement, Ratner's connections were with the Molinier-Frank-Lambert people in France and with the Cannon/Healy tendency in Britain. He gives a pretty detailed account of the history of the Trotskyist movement in Britain from the 1940s up to the point, early in 1960, when he threw in the towel and retired to private life, maintaining a peripheral individual involvement in the labour movement.

His retirement from revolutionary politics was, on the evidence of this book, a loss to us all, for he is plainly a thoughtful, capable man still loyal to the labour movement and to the socialist goals he spent 25 years as a Trotskyist fighting for.

It was no easy thing to become a Trotskyist when the 17 year old Harry Ratner took his place in the ranks of the rearguard of Bolshevism. 1936 was the year of the first Moscow Trial in which leaders of the October Revolution — the most prominent of them Zinoviev and Kamenev, Lenin's close co-workers — were sentenced to be shot as fascist and Trotskyist agents.

Everywhere Stalinism was a growing movement. Its police spread terror in the labour movement against those who criticised them from the left, and in the first place against the "Trotsky-fascists." Trotsky's son, Leon Sedov, was murdered in Paris. In 1938, as the Trotskyists prepared the founding conference of the Fourth International, the movement's Secretary, Rudolf Klement, was kidnapped by Stalin's police in Paris. Later his headless body was found floating in the Seine.

Worse than the terror, was the political pressure of Stalinism. This was a powerful mass movement deceitfully marching under the banner of the October Revolution, even though it had nothing any longer in common with the October Revolution. It overshadowed and all but crushed the Trotskyist movement, which stood for the real and not the counterfeit policies of 'October'.

But it was to that persecuted movement that the young Ratner adhered, attracted by its ideas.

Things did not get better for that movement. Indeed they got worse. Trotsky was murdered by Stalin's agent in August 1940. So too were many Trotskyists all over Europe — slaughtered by both Nazis and Stalinists. Then, after the war,



Ratner addresses striking workers

a now Stalinist empire spread across Europe. Mass Communist parties dominated the French and Italian labour movements. The Stalinists were a power even in Britain (where the CP at its peak during World War 2 numbered perhaps 60,000; by contrast the Trotskyist movement, at its peak in the same period, was not more than 500 strong).

In Britain, the Labour victory of 1945 inaugurated a long period of dominance of the labour movement by a reborn and relatively successful reformism. The Trotskyist movement began to fall apart. Central to the Trotskyist movement's problems were two questions. One was how to relate to the mass reformist workers' movement, and the other concerned the nature of Stalinism and the attitude to be adopted to the system by Trotskyists who remained mortally hostile to the Stalin regime.

The problem was that that regime maintained nationalised property and where it expanded expropriated the East European bourgeoisie. Therefore, decided the majority of the Trotskyists, it remained "progressive" compared to capitalism and deserved critical support against capitalism. They continued to advocate a working-class revolution against Stalin. Nonetheless, the idea that the Russian empire (which they insisted was not an empire) was progressive, made them most of the time into reluctant satellites of that empire.

The organisation Harry Ratner joined related to the mass reformist movement by working in the Labour Party from 1948 onwards. Despite

having its papers banned by the Labour Party (*Socialist Outlook*, banned 1954; *Newsletter*, banned 1959) the group continued to work in the Labour Party, and worked very successfully for a long time.

Just one example of the sort of work they did then is the resolution advocating unilateral nuclear disarmament which they moved at the 1957 Labour Party conference. It was defeated there but helped generate the mass movement against nuclear weapons that won over the Labour Party conference three years later. Things like that are the model for today's campaigns such as the Welfare State Network.

Harry Ratner no longer considers himself a Trotskyist and says here that he is not sure that he is a Marxist. His account of why he gave it all up is the least convincing thing in the book — apart, that is, from a strange introduction by Peter Fryer. Fryer came out of the CP in 1957 and spent some two and a half years in the Trotskyist movement. On all available evidence he was the most talented of those who came from the CP to Trotskyism then. After a long sabbatical Fryer 'returned' a few years ago. In this introduction he seems to say that the continuity of the living forces of Trotskyism is to be found in that WRP splinter which produces *Workers' Press*! But this idiocy is just trimming. The core of the book is Ratner's account of his political and industrial experiences.

Read the book for Harry Ratner's account of what it was like to be a militant in a bleak political world, compared to which our own is a more sunny and fruitful place.)

The value of working-class politics

LETTERS

I WAS PERTURBED by the letter written by John Laurence (SO 617) concerning the actions of South African socialists in WOSA and their standing against the ANC in April's South African elections.

Of course, who am I to disagree with the sharp analytical phrase "complete

wallies", written from a comfortable Wembley armchair? However, I do think there are some things you forget.

One: independent working class politics is a necessary part of the class struggle, and WOSA were politically correct to stand on those politics in the election.

Two: WOSA activists are amongst the bravest socialists in the world for

standing in an election against an organisation with a history of violent suppression of independent politics.

It seems to me that your letter was simply a cheap attack, devoid of political content. Your reference to supporting Militant suggests that you should know a lot about groups which discredit Trotskyism, yet you incorrectly claim that WOSA have done this, supposedly because opportunis-

tically falling-in behind bourgeois non-working class organisations is more in line with Trotskyism than advocating a workers' party and promoting working-class politics. If this is true, then I am surprised you find "hackneyed sloganising" irritating. I would have thought it was right up your street.

Also, although I'm sure South African workers would appreciate a

lecture from you sometime on how to go forward they may at the moment appreciate more than your present dismissive attitude towards their day-to-day economic battles.

Finally, the fact that South African workers may be in dispute with the ANC government as well as their bosses can only be a positive thing.

Rachael Winters
Lancaster

Satire is better than piety

JOHN LAURENCE (letters, SO 617) should loosen up a bit.

Why ridicule the SWP's "Stuff the Grant cuts! Wreck the pay freeze! Kill the Criminal Justice Bill! Smash the BNP!" student poster?

Because a. it is absurd, b. it is the SWP in a nutshell, c. it is counter-productive — making all socialists look like morons, d. ridicule may well be a more effective way of stopping

this sort of stupidity than a pious ticking off.

John Laurence writes: "Frankly [the SO article] could have appeared in the *New Statesman* or *Tribune* without alteration. Possibly even in the bourgeois press." Yes, maybe. So what? It is stupid, isn't it? So why not say so?

Finally, it is worth thinking about how counter-productive that poster is. Sure, it sounds dead radical, and

probably has some affect on a small layer of inexperienced students. But what about the majority? What do normal students think about? "Stab the Queen!", "Fuck the Pope!" perhaps? These kind of politics (quite reasonably) alienate them!

A socialist majority cannot be won by using this sort of childish gimmickry.
Mark Osborn
London

Violence for "entertainment"

PULP FICTION is a "wonderously slick and competent piece of cinema. Most of all, it is thoroughly entertaining." (SO 617)

With that recommendation from your reviewer I saw *Pulp Fiction* at the Peckham Premier. And you were right — it is very slick. Quentin Tarantino is a very talented man.

And so it is a pity that Tarantino does not make better use of his ability.

A good part of the film consists of

violence which exists for its "entertainment" value alone. No one takes any responsibility for the violence — not the characters, nor Tarantino. The purpose of blowing someone's head off is to make the audience laugh — which a lot of people, in the cinema where I saw it, did.

Sure Tarantino is a stylish director. But Salvador Dali was technically a good painter. It did not stop him being banal.

Dan Katz, Southwark

A stay-at-home Frankenstein



Matt Cooper

reviews

Mary Shelley's
Frankenstein

Directed by
Kenneth Branagh

THERE IS A OBVIOUS danger in setting yourself up as a high profile actor-director and then making yourself the lead in the story of Frankenstein, the obsessed creator of something intended to benefit humanity which turns out to be an ugly reviled monster.

When the film-making Dr Frankenstein (Branagh) is asked by Robert De Niro's monster, "A soul, did you remember to give me one of those?" he has to be pretty sure the answer, as a director at least, is yes.

In fact the film created is not even like a soulless monster, just a mess of bloody and badly stitched together parts that twitches occasionally on the slab. Branagh's attempt to capture the spirit of Mary Shelley's gothic horror on the screen is a lifeless and directionless mess, not even saved by De Niro's portrayal of the creature.

By calling his film *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* Branagh has tried to suggest that his is the authoritative and faithful rendition of Shelley's novel on the screen. In this conceit he was preceded by Francis Ford Coppola when Coppla made his film entitled *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.

Coppola turned his *Dracula* into a vehicle for modern concerns about sexuality and AIDS, disregarding the original story but producing good cinema.

Branagh has stuck faithfully to the details and form of the original story whilst losing its essence and meaning. In the process he has proved that he knows little of how to make a good film.

Very few novels are films waiting to happen. Novels are usually far too long, rely too much on the charac-



Branagh's Frankenstein: "Mary Shelley would turn in her grave"

ters' subjective experience, evoke emotions through means other than dialogue and visual representation, and so on. But Branagh simply tries to outline each section of the novel. The story moves so quickly that scenes become inexplicable and characters never stand a chance of developing. The film is curiously flat.

The only truly rounded scene is the creature's birth, but even that is flawed. Branagh focuses on Frankenstein as the obsessed scientist who cannot foresee the consequences of his actions, and this reduces Shelley's story to a reactionary diatribe against science. Visually, the scene of the birth of

the monster is quite brilliant, but it cannot carry the film.

De Niro's talents are wasted. In the novel the creature is a central character — given life by Frankenstein and then abandoned, to be vilified by all those who come in contact with him. The creature eventually finding meaning in his life through reading Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

This is one of the great creations of fiction. But Branagh is so fixated with Frankenstein's character as an irresponsible scientist that he fails to develop the character of the creature.

At the end of the film the story is

turned inside out. First — but this is the least of the problems — new material is introduced. Frankenstein reanimates his dead wife for no discernible reason, apart from reprising the glories of the original creation scene and creating some schlock horror.

Second — and this is a far worse failing — whereas Shelley's creation proves itself capable of outgrowing rejection by his creator, Branagh's "new Adam" is a dependent creature that would rather throw itself on Frankenstein's funeral pyre.

For Shelley, Frankenstein's problem is not that he created life but that he was incapable of cherishing

it after it was created. Branagh displays his ignorance of the source of Mary Shelley's inspiration. She, like her poet husband, was a supporter of radical democracy and the political forces unleashed by the French Revolution. These forces, like the creature, had to be nurtured into a new and mature form of society, and not left to grow wild.

Branagh's epilogue to the film is banal: he suggests to Arctic explorers that staying at home in front of the fire in the bosom of the family is better than conquering new frontiers. Mary Shelley would turn in her grave to have her name put to such a conclusion.

How 16th century propaganda shapes our minds



Tom Macara

reviews

Timewatch

BBC 2
Sunday 8.00pm

HISTORY SHAPES us all; socialists, shaped by history, try to shape future history. For much of this century millions of socialists got lost because they related to reality in terms of false, imaginary maps of future history.

But what is "history"? It is not something fixed and solid and defined, like archaeological findings. It is our knowledge of and perception about the past.

Like things seen through a mist from the back of a moving lorry, it is always unclear, always changing, always being constructed anew, its shape recomposed in the mind of the observer and of successive observers.

It is — written down or otherwise — our collective memory. And, like individual memory, it is always being reshaped and reinterpreted from shifting standpoints.

It is not only that much is not known, or not "available" in comprehensible fashion, about even the recent past. The fundamental difficulty is that of flux and standpoint, and what flux and standpoint does to the apprehending and shaping of the past.

At any given moment, "history" is nothing but a tale agreed upon by a community, a nation, or a cluster of nations. For example, look at the way that perceptions of the two World Wars of the twentieth century have changed in the last few decades.

"Timewatch" (BBC2, 6 November) illustrated this once more by demolishing the picture of the Spanish Inquisition held for four centuries by Protestant Europe and America, and in much of the Catholic world too. The Inquisition was an institution of fanatical persecuting Catholic monks. It tortured and burned vast numbers of "heretics", and thereby sterilised Spain intellectually for hundreds of years, contributing to its backwardness and decline.

The image of the Inquisition as something like religious Nazism

entered into popular history and popular culture. Generations of the boys who grew up to staff the British Empire were weaned on tales of British seamen in Drake's time and after fighting "the Dons" for liberty. No worse fate could befall those heroes than to fall into the hands of the torturers of the inquisition.

Recent research into the enormous archives of the Inquisition is, according to Timewatch, establishing a radically revised picture of the Spanish Inquisition. It was staffed not by fanatical monks but often by career lawyers, who would go on to other things. It did not torture and burn on a vast scale.

Only two per cent of its prisoners, according to a survey of the records for one Spanish province, suffered any torture at all, in an era when the torture of prisoners was routine practice throughout Europe. Very few people were burned by the Inquisition.

The surveying of the forbiddingly voluminous records of the Inquisition is at an early stage. And we should not rush to exonerate this inquisition of repression.

Yet Timewatch made a convincing

case that the "image" of the Inquisition which we have is one created by combatants in the propaganda war between Catholics and Protestants from the 16th century onwards.

Most telling of all was the contrast Timewatch drew between religious persecution in the rest of Europe and in the Spain of the Inquisition. Hundreds of thousands of women were burned alive as witches in Europe (including Britain) between 1450 and 1750, but only a handful of them were burned in Spain, where the Inquisition took a more sophisticated and therefore more tolerant view of such things.

This sort of historical revision should impose no perturbation on Marxists. Frederick Engels long ago (in "Dialectics of Nature") poured scorn on Protestant Europe's identification of the Renaissance with the Reformation. He pointed out that if the Catholic Church burned the scientific heretic Giordano Bruno at Rome in 1600, so too did the Protestant Reformer Jean Calvin roast the Protestant "heretic" Servetus over a slow fire in Geneva a little earlier.

The point for us is that "history" is part of the ideological struggle — part of the class struggle. Of course we must approach historical fact with incorruptible scrupulousness. The realisation that conventional history, as it is shaped and reshaped in society, contains a large element of "current politics read backwards", as one Stalinist historian put it, cannot be a recommendation to substitute convenient fairy stories for attempts at true history. That is to put out our eyes.

Within that framework, however, we must fight for our version — for a working-class version — of events, if we are to prevent the ruling-class lies and myths from overwhelming and suppressing the truth (about the 1984-5 miners' strike, to take a recent example), and entering as an element into the consciousness of those who will shape future history.

It remains true that the victors write history, in the main. One of the functions of socialists and of socialist organisations which function as "the memory of the class" is here and now to contest the writing — just as we contest the making — of history with them.

Victor Serge on Leon Trotsky

A man who did not

L EON TROTSKY was a revolutionary activist in the Russian Empire when it was still a combination of kingly power from the Middle Ages and the most brutal modern capitalist exploitation. He was one of the key leaders of the Russian workers' revolution in 1917, and the creator and commander of the Red Army which saved the revolution by fighting off the armies of Russia's wealthy classes and 14 invading powers. He then became, after 1923, the foremost leader of the socialist resistance to the bureaucratic degeneration of the Russian workers' state. Exiled from Russia in 1929, as Stalin gained complete power, he continued to fight

for the original ideals of the 1917 revolution. Despite harassment and persecution by capitalists and Stalinists alike, he strove to build a network of revolutionaries who would give force to those ideals. He was murdered by a Stalinist agent in 1940. The chaos and misery of capitalism today, and the collapse from internal rotteness of the USSR, vindicate his struggle and point to the continued relevance of his ideas. This article commemorating Trotsky was written by Victor Serge, a considerable revolutionary activist in his own right. Of Russian parentage, he was active as an anarchist in Belgium, France and Spain before 1917. After 1917 he rallied to Lenin's

and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party, as did many other revolutionary anarchists. He joined Trotsky's Left Opposition, and in the late 1920s was the last Left Oppositionist allowed to remain publicly active in Moscow. Rescued in 1934 by an international campaign from the labour camp and death where Stalin sent almost all other leading Left Oppositionists, he returned to the West, but soon parted ways politically with Trotsky on important questions of tactics, while remaining close to Trotsky's general ideas. He died politically isolated in 1947.

Pictured right: Victor Serge with his family



H E WAS not quite forty-five and was already called The Old Man, as before him Lenin had been called at the same age. In popular Russian usage this meant oldest in understanding, deserving of the utmost confidence. And this was really the feeling which he inspired in all those who came into contact with him during his lifetime; a man in whom thought, action, "personal life" formed one solid whole, without fissures, who pursued his road to the very end, without faltering; a man who could be relied upon under any circumstances, who did not change in essence, who did not weaken in defeat, did not recoil before responsibility, before danger, and who remained level-headed under stress.

He dominated circumstance, sure of himself; he contained an inner pride so great that it made him simply and truly modest; he contained the pride of being the local instrument of history. In prison, in exile, in the furnished rooms of an emigre, on the field of battle, at the height of power, he was, with total disinterestedness, simply the one to do exactly what was necessary to serve people on the march.

Having convinced himself at an early age of his capacity to serve (at twenty-seven, in 1905, he was chairman of the first Soviet in Petersburg), he never doubted himself and came to view glory, burdens of state, the most absolute power, with neither attachment nor disdain, but as a matter of necessity.

Given to analysis, to contemplation, he had a great lyric sentiment for life which made him akin to the poets. On the flight from Siberia he admired the snow-covered fields; in the midst of the most arduous task of insurrection, he conceived a work of creative imagination; surrounded by assassins, in the solitude of Coyoacan, he admired the sombre plants of Mexico, those cacti which to the European reveal an impressive form of vital energy; beset by the frenzy of the life, in the deliberation of the Dewey Commission on the Moscow trials, he advanced a hypothesis on the birth of a new religion when future revolutions will have come to an end and humanity will have tired of the struggles which opened up a new future before it. He was an unbeliever, but he believed in the worth of life, in the greatness of men, in the duty to serve and was no more capable of doubting this than of believing in the old faiths which are a poor remedy for doubt. The certainty of possessing the truth made him intractable at the end of his life and blurred his scientific spirit. He was authoritarian.

Nevertheless, in 1924-25, when he had the forces, he refused to take power, believing that a socialist regime cannot resort to rule by



Trotsky led the Red Army — but regarded his work of building small revolutionary groups to fight both capitalism and Stalinism as even more crucial

decree without entering into major complications (and being basically convinced, no doubt, that since history imposes ignoble tasks, it is preferable to leave them to others born for them and to reserve oneself for the defence of a more distant future).

I never knew him more great, he never was dearer to me, than in those miserable workers' quarters of Leningrad or Moscow, where, having been

one of the two indisputable leaders of the victorious revolution, I saw him many times speaking for hours on end to some few people

from the shop or street. He was still a member of the Political Committee and was on the point of losing power and perhaps his life (a fact which we all understood as well as he and of which he spoke to me on one occasion). He believed that the time had come to struggle to gain the proletarians, one by one — as before, in illegality, under the old regime — to save or to create the revolutionary democracy. Some thirty or forty workers would listen to him and some woman sitting on the floor at his feet would ask questions and weigh his answers... (1927). We knew

that the probability of our being defeated was much greater than of our being victorious; but this, too, was useful. Without our valiant defeat, the revolution would have been vanquished a hundred times worse.

His personality was only an exceptional phenomenon within a common social grouping. All the traits of his character, of his spirit, of his "Weltanschauung" belonged to that of the revolutionary Russian intelligentsia of more than a half a century. This consisted of tens of thousands of militants, among them many who fought at his side — not excluding from this number a great part of his adversaries. As with Lenin and in the case of others whom the chances of battle left in lesser prominence or threw into obscurity, the characteristics of these generations were brought to the greatest degree of individual perfection. The generations which engendered and formed him, lived in him; and his generation, the product of the same historical circumstances, was, as a whole, identical with him, though individually its members were in one form or another, inferior to him.

In writing these lines there come before me so many faces, so many names, that I see it as an incontestable truth that a whole generation had to be destroyed to lower the level of our times; it approached more the man of tomorrow and was therefore separated from the majority the moment the masses began to yearn for a respite.

The end of his life was a drama of solitude. He paced rapidly, alone, his study in Coyoacan, talking to himself (like Chernyshevsky, the first great thinker of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia, who transcribed the language of the Yakubs among whom he spent twenty years of imprisonment "talking to himself while gazing at the stars," according to his jailers). A Peruvian poet sent him a poem entitled "Solitude of Solitudes". The Old Man had it translated word by word; struck by the title, he found it most beautiful...

Alone, thus, holding discourse with the shot Kamenev, he was heard on several occasions to mention his name. Still he remained at the height of his intellectual power. His latest writings are of no less worth than his works of other periods.

At times one forgets that intelligence is not an individual gift. What would Beethoven have done among the deaf? The intelligence of an individual even that of a genius, needs air. The intellectual greatness of Trotsky remained a function of his entire generation.

He needed the direct contact of men of his own mental calibre, capable of understanding him even before his ideas were expressed, of opposing him on the same plane. He needed a Bukharin, a Pyatakov, a Preobrazhensky,

"I saw him many times speaking for hours on end to some few people from the shop or street."

"The intellectual greatness of Trotsky remained a function of his entire generation."

weaken in defeat



"In the solitude of Coyoacan he admired the cacti"

a Rakovsky, an Ivan Smirnov, he need a Lenin to be truly himself. Already even we younger ones — and there were among our generation illustrious figures like Eltzin, Solntzeff, Yakovin, Dingelstadt, Pankratov (living, or among the dead!) — could not remain on an equal footing with him; we lacked ten years of exceptional experience and thought. Some of his most fertile ideas were jotted down on simple discussion postcards as was almost the entire theory of permanent revolution.

He was murdered at the moment the entire world was entering through the insensate paths of war into a new phase of the permanent revolution. He was murdered precisely because he could once again have become the greatest by entering into direct contact with his land and the people of Russia for whom he possessed an

extraordinary intuition. They tried first to kill his legend, an epic legend, completely founded on truth.

The logic of his passion and of secondary errors flowing therefrom also contributed to his murder; to gain and to try once more to convince some obscure person whose existence was nothing but simulation and perfidy, he permitted such a one to enter his study of solitude, and that someone carrying out orders, drove a pickaxe into the back of his head while he was bent over a worthless manuscript. The pickaxe entered his brain, making a wound six centimetres deep.

(Originally published in the Chilean magazine *Babel, Review of Art and Criticism*, July-August, 1947. Translation reproduced from the US socialist paper *Labor Action*, 1 December 1947.)

Glossary

"Not yet 45":

This would be in the first years of the Left Opposition, 1923-4. Trotsky was born on 26 October 1879.

Soviet in Petersburg:

In 1905 there was a wave of strikes in Russia, especially Petersburg, and the strikers formed "councils" — or, in Russian, "soviets" — of workers' delegates to co-ordinate their struggle. In 1917 now "soviets" would become the means of workers' rule in society. Trotsky was in fact 25, not 27 in 1905.

Flight from Siberia:

Trotsky was condemned to exile in Siberia for his revolutionary activity, but escaped.

Coyoacan:

The Mexican suburb where Trotsky spent his last years in exile.

Dewey Commission:

In 1936-7 Stalin organised a series of show trials of prominent revolutionaries (the "Moscow Trials"), accusing them of being secret counter-revolutionaries and fascists. Trotsky was condemned in his absence. His sympathisers organised a Commission of prominent figures, headed by the philosopher John Dewey, to examine the evidence (or lack of it) in public.

"In those miserable workers'

quarters":

Here Serge describes the struggle of the Left Opposition against Stalin, especially in 1926-7. Although nominally Trotsky still stood high in the regime, he had to resort to small secret meetings to get his ideas across.

Weltanschauung:

World-view, outlook on life.

Intelligentsia:

In Russia before 1917 the educated youth formed a special social group, alienated from the ruling landlord and capitalist classes socially and, almost always, politically. A lot of them became dedicated and courageous revolutionaries, Marxist or otherwise.

Kamenev:

A Bolshevik leader, Trotsky's brother-in-law, and an ally in the Left Opposition in 1926-7. Capitulated to Stalin in 1927; condemned and killed by Stalin in the Moscow Trials.

Bukharin, etc.:

All Bolshevik leaders. Bukharin was an ally of Stalin against the Left Opposition, though later he too came into conflict with Stalin; the others named were all Left Oppositionists.

"Some obscure person":

The Stalinist agent who murdered Trotsky got access to him by pretending to be a sympathiser and asking Trotsky to read something he had written.

Where does Clause Four come from?

By Mark Sandell

BEFORE 1900 there was no Clause Four, and no Labour Party. Most politically active workers backed the Liberals.

The socialists of the Independent Labour Party and other groups campaigned for an independent workers' party, and made their first breakthrough in 1900, when the Labour Representation Committee was set up, as an alliance of trade unions and socialist groups.

The employers' offensive in the 1880s and 1890s culminated in the "Taff Vale" ruling by the House of Lords in 1901, which made trade unions liable for a company's loss of income during a strike.

Still it took some time for the Labour Representation Committee to break electoral alliances with the Liberals and stand against both Liberals and Tories as an independent party.

The LRC was not socialist. It was still dominated by a pressure group mentality, working in Parliament to get a better deal for unions in an unofficial alliance with the Liberals.

Socialists in the LRC had a long and hard battle to challenge that approach.

In 1908 Lenin supported the Labour Party's membership of the Socialist International, saying "it represents the first step on the part of the really proletarian organisations of Britain towards a conscious class policy and towards a socialist workers' party."

Yet the battle to get the Labour Party to

adopt socialism even as its formal aim continued for another decade.

In the First World War the Labour Party joined the blood-soaked Liberal-Tory coalition government, while the trade union leaders attempted to suspend the class struggle as part of the war effort. But the largest Marxist group, the British Socialist Party, affiliated to the Labour Party, and argued against the war.

As with the formation of the LRC, the adoption of socialism as the formal aim of the Labour Party was a result of the sharpening of the class struggle.

With the battlefields of the First World War strewn with the smashed bodies of millions of workers killed in an inter-imperialist war, the 1917 Russian Revolution attracted millions of workers world-wide to revolutionary socialism.

The Labour Party leaders had to move to the left or risk isolation.

At its 1918 conference, Labour adopted a new constitution. Individual membership and local constituency organisation were introduced for the first time; before then, you could join the Labour Party only through joining a trade union or a socialist group, and the local Labour Party organisation was usually the Trades Council or the ILP.

It also increased the power of the unions and weakened the power of the affiliated socialist societies.

It was this new constitution which for the first time made a commitment to socialism and

common ownership in Clause Four.

This combination of tightening up of the Party now with a commitment to introduce socialism for the workers some day in the future was aimed at catching the mood without losing control of the Party to the left.

Clause Four was far from a clear statement of how to win socialism. It did not accept the need to overthrow the capitalist state. It talked of carrying out social change for the workers, rather than the workers liberating themselves.

Labour's 1918 manifesto "Labour and the New Social Order", stated that: "The view of the Labour Party is that what has to be reconstructed after the war is not this or that government department, or this or that piece of social machinery; but, so far as Britain is concerned, society itself."

But the first Labour government of 1924 would soon prove how hollow the promises were.

Clause Four was written by Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Fabian-elitist socialists who had a horror of revolutionary socialism and militant workers' action. It was accepted by Labour and trade union leaders, but only because they felt they had to.

Ever since then Labour's leaders and Labour governments have ignored the commitments in Clause Four.

Since Tony Blair's political ancestors only accepted Clause Four after 18 years and under massive pressure from the left, we should not now be surprised that Blair wants to scrap Clause Four.



Sydney Webb, the originator of Clause Four

By trying to wipe out Clause Four, Tony Blair has stirred up a debate in the Labour Party over what Labour stands for.

He has taken the dry and ignored words of Clause Four and breathed new life into them. This gives socialists the chance to argue why Labour should keep its commitment to socialism — and should fight for it as well.

Life for sale

AGAINST THE TIDE

By Sean Matgamna

WHY NOT, asked Jonathan Swift, an Anglican priest of Dublin, making his "modest proposal" for solving two of eighteenth-century Ireland's great problems, 'over-population' and mass starvation — why not eat your small children?

That would keep down the population, he argued, and ensure that those who lived were well nourished. Much of Swift's text — one of the most effective satires ever written — was then given over after the fashion of a cookery book to a gruesomely detailed discussion of how best to dress and cook, and when best to serve, the various parts of a child butchered for the table.

He sustained it, grimly serious, for page after page, in terrifying detail.

Even in 18th century Ireland, reality never caught up with the nightmare of Swift's imagining. But twentieth century China has come very close to it.

In China, large numbers of "criminals" — for example, people who forge VAT invoices or steal cars — are killed by the state so that their organs can be removed and either used by well-off Chinese or sold abroad for hard international currency. Human Rights Watch/Asia estimates that between two and three thousand organs are 'harvested' annually in China from people killed by the state. And the Chinese state kills a lot of people.

According to Amnesty International, 696 official killings were mentioned in the Chinese press in the first half of 1994. But most "executions" are not mentioned, and the number of killings could, Amnesty thinks, have been ten times that many, in the first six months of this year alone.

Capital punishment is normal for petty offences in "socialist" China. The lucrative market in human spare parts, so observers report, now ensures that cases are hurried along, that guilt or innocence is often a matter of indifference, and that many are killed who might otherwise be spared because their limbs and organs are needed. This is not too far from what happened when the wife of the commandant of one of the Nazi concentration camps had inmates killed so that their tattooed skin could make pretty shades for her household lamps.

Perhaps the Chinese executioners have quotas to fill? Certainly it seems that orders can be accepted for particular body parts belonging to still-living people who are then killed to order in the way most appropriate for preserving the bespoke organs. Thus, if hearts are needed, the alleged car thief or petty forger is shot in the head; if corneas are needed, the victim is shot through the heart, to make sure the eyes are not damaged.

Who decides what pieces of which criminal are to be preserved? Is there a manual to guide the master butchers? A wall chart, perhaps, like those you see in butchers' shops, showing you where the different meats come from?

Certainly, there is a carefully worked-out set of procedures, spelled out in a secret 1984 legal directive which Teresa Poole — from whom the details above are taken — quoted in the *Independent on Sunday* (30 October):

"Where it is genuinely necessary... a surgical vehicle from the health department may be permitted to drive on to the execution grounds to remove the organs, but it is not permissible to use a vehicle bearing health department insignia, or to wear white clothing.

"Guards must remain posted around the execution grounds while... organ removal is going on."

The collecting of Third World blood plasma for

the US market, bought from hungry, undernourished people in places like Haiti, was long a gruesome symbol of the vampirism that sustains our civilisation. Folk legends about vampire nobles in castles who drink the blood of 'their' peasants, are themselves representations of exploitation — folk versions, shaped by generations of the exploited people, of what Swift did in his study. But you do not necessarily have to kill people to drain their blood.

The new trade in body parts — and it is not limited to China, though there it is an industry run by a totalitarian state able to ensure an adequate supply of raw material — is privatised medicine gone mad. Doctors take life — at second hand, but they know — from the poor and give it to the rich.

As I write this, I remember an article in the *Daily Worker* (now the *Morning Star*) in 1959, triumphantly reporting on one of the early achievements of replacement medicine in "socialist" China. A man whose hand had been torn off by a combine harvester had it sewn back on again, so that he had the use of it when it healed.

This was great progress for China. But in class society, technical progress is not always the same thing as social or human progress. Frequently, it is their enemy.

There is no shortage of examples. In the Southern states of America, for example, the savage working to death of black slaves, and the vast increase in the slave trade that went with it, were stimulated not by agrarian backwardness in the USA of that age but by the wonderful technological innovations out of which grew the British cotton industry 200 years ago, inaugurating the Industrial Revolution which would transform human society all over the globe. In Britain itself, women and children were, of course, also exploited savagely in the cotton factories run by the owners of the splendid new technology.

Class society is by its very nature socially cannibalistic. It is organised so that some people can rob, exploit and "consume" the capacities and lives of others.

In an oft-quoted early essay, Karl Marx described this feature of all class society in its most fluid and developed form. He is describing "the power of money":

"By possessing the property of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, money is thus the object of eminent possession. The universality of its property is the omnipotence of its being. It is therefore regarded as omnipotent... Money is the procurer between man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But that which mediates my life for me, also mediates the existence of other people for me. For me it is the other person..."

"That which is for me through the medium of money — that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy) — that am I myself, the possessor of the money. The extent of the power of money is the extent of my power. Money's properties are my — the possessor's — properties and essential powers. Thus, what I am and am capable of is by no means determined by my individuality. I am ugly, but I can buy for myself the most beautiful of women. Therefore I am not ugly, for the effect of ugliness — its deterrent power — is nullified by money.

"What is it but social cannibalism when scarce health care is distributed by being bought and sold, so that the rich buy health and the poor suffer."



Modern China combines many of the evils of the free market with those of totalitarianism. Above workers sleeping in Beijing's rail station

I, according to my individual characteristics, am lame, but money furnishes me with twenty-four feet. Therefore I am not lame. I am bad, dishonest, unscrupulous, stupid; but money is honoured, and hence its possessor. Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good.

Money, besides, saves me the trouble of being dishonest: I am therefore presumed honest. I am brainless, but money is the real brain of all things and how then should its possessor be brainless? Besides, he can buy clever people for himself, and is he who has power over the clever not more clever than the clever?

Do not I, who thanks to money am capable of all that the human heart longs for, possess all human capacities? Does not my money, therefore, transform all my incapacities into their contrary? ...

"That which I am unable to do as a man, and of which therefore all my individual essential powers are incapable, I am able to do by means of money."

The rich have always appropriated the speed, strength, cunning, enterprise, skill, bravery, artistry, intelligence, creativity, etc., of others. The only limits to it are the limits of what is physically possible. Not all the money in the world can appropriate the life potential of one person to give it to another with an incurable disease. But that is a matter only of what is technically possible at a given moment. And if technique sets the limit to what is possible in

the way of one person appropriating the bodily qualities of another, the expansion of medical technique and the invention of new techniques — the first heart transplant was made a mere quarter of a century ago — enlarges those possibilities. The possibilities are expanding all the time.

If my heart is diseased to the point of death, I can now buy a healthy new human heart and skilled technicians and doctors to put it in the place of my own. If my liver is rotten, I can buy someone else's liver. I can buy murderers to get me the organ I need for the prolongation of my own life. I can find states and state functionaries — in China, but not only in China — to legally kill people possessing good organs so that I can buy those I need from them. If I am blind, I can buy good eyes, if not from the person whose eyes they are, then from a murderer, or a murdering state.

The possibilities enlarge as medical technique expands. The possibilities for the rich to do what they have always done, but in a new way, is thus enormously enlarged; and the rich are not dependent on organs made available by unavoidable death, nor are they forced to take a place in a democratic queue. Money decides.

"If life was a thing money could buy, then the rich would live and the poor would die", went the old song, in the days before technology and class oppression could combine to make it possible for the rich

literally to take life and limb from the poor and the unfortunate and to bestow it on themselves. Vampirism and cannibalism is no longer folk metaphor for extreme exploitation, or deliberate satire such as Swift's. We arrive at a new form of organised cannibalism: some people now consume, though no longer orally, other people.

Of course, no light is shed on anything by equating this monstrous Chinese industry in the body parts of people freshly killed to order and the state that organises and profits from it, with what happens in bourgeois-democratic Britain.

In Britain or in the USA the rich and their governments do not capture poor people — car stealing youths who go for joy rides in someone else's car, for instance — put them through a travesty of 'justice' and then render down their carcasses for direct implantation in the rich.

Yet what is happening in China does bear a terrible family resemblance to what is happening — in a less "administrative" and less overtly barbarous form, but happening nonetheless — in capitalist societies like those of Britain and the USA.

What else is it but social cannibalism when scarce health care is distributed by being bought and sold, so that the rich buy health and life and increasingly the poor suffer and die?

What else is it, when money is allowed to buy you health and the lack of it condemns you to premature sickness and death?

What else is it when, as in the USA now, desperate poor people sell — they do! — a kidney or an eye to other people rich enough to buy the right to cannibalise their bodies? It is already a subject for popular TV — *LA Law*, and *Casualty* for instance. This is likely to be a growth industry. There are reports of enterprising private gangsters illegally doing what the Chinese state does legally.

In China, the state does it directly; in the USA, and increasingly in Britain, the liberal state holds the ring for the free market, and its God, money, to do it.

What is happening in China is all too nightmarishly real. Yet it is so plainly no more than one or two stages along our road, that it could, like Swift's "modest proposal," be an imaginary, satirical, extrapolation from what is happening to the poor here.

It bears the same relationship to what is happening in Britain and the USA as Swift's proposal to cook and eat children did to the system which ate up their lives without literally consuming their bodies.

Primitive people ate their war captives in the mistaken belief that they would thereby acquire their strength. Civilised people passed that stage millennia ago. Now the miracles of medical technology take us full circle. Wonder-working technology under the control of ruling-class barbarians, farmers of the people, makes it possible for the victors in the class struggle physically to annex and acquire as their own bodily attributes the lives and strength of the defeated poor — to consume them. That is what some of the ruling cannibals are doing. And not only in China.



Deng Xiaoping's regime carries out more official killings than any other on earth

Post Office privatisation: a battle won but the war still goes on

By a UCW member

THE DECISION BY the Tory cabinet to abandon Post Office privatisation is a big victory. It gives the lie to those who say that the Tories can't be beaten and that nothing can be done.

We have proved that they can be beaten. But it's important to understand why they were beaten.

To read the *Guardian* you would think that just three people did it — General Secretary Alan Johnson and two press officers. But the reality is that it was the activity of tens of thousands of ordinary UCW members that built up a head of steam behind the campaign.

The other major factor in our success was that the overall political climate has changed dramatically. The backdown on privatisation reflects the fact that the Tories have lost momentum. There's nothing special about the Post Office, as such — the Tories have succeeded in the past despite being even less popular than on the Post Office. Think of the recent pit closures for instance. If they had tried this five years ago they would probably have got away with it but what is different today is the overall political climate. Things are different now.

We also have to prepare for what's coming next. There's a lot of disgruntled managers out there — Bill Cockburn's executive jet has taken off and disappeared over the horizon. Many managers have taken out second mortgages to buy up shares and now they'll be saying: "If we can't privatise, let's screw this!"

Attacks will intensify. Job cuts, office closures, attacks on the second delivery and on full time jobs are all in the pipeline.

Management will be looking to go for the things that they — in an attempt to smooth the way for privatisation — have held back from.

The gloves will be taken off.

So that's why we have to say that we've won a battle but not the war. We've scored a major political battle but on the industrial front, we would say to other postal workers "fasten your safety belt you're in for a bumpy ride".

Strike to defend services

By a Post Office Counters Worker

A MASSIVE YES VOTE for strikes must be recorded in the ballot for action against further Crown Office closures. In the last five years 750 Crown Offices have been closed down out of 1,500.

So far the UCW tactics have been to hold regional and local strikes against specific Crown Office closures. This tactic has clearly failed to save these Offices and the jobs of those who worked in them.

But unfortunately the ballot is being held on a branch basis so that branches which vote yes for strike action will be the ones which are called out on strike. This is destructive to the unity of the union.

The only clear fighting strategy would be for nationwide action with the aim of closing down the whole network of Crown Offices.

If a yes vote is recorded which looks very likely the strike is likely to drag on for some time with one day closures perhaps on a weekly basis but the union will probably work it so that a particular Office is only closed down once a month. The strike looks likely to drag on

because these tactics will take a long time to take effect, and as the strike drags on management will change things to suit them.

Many Crown Office workers which are facing closure are feeling that this will be an opportunity that has been missed. But activists on the ground will need to take the fight into the union.

It may well be worth thinking about setting up a strike committee to run the strike instead of the Executive. Other demands should also be taken up in the closures campaign such as shorter working weeks and pay.

Royal Mail: reject 2.8%

ROYAL MAIL MANAGEMENT are trying to push through a pay deal supposedly worth 2.8% but with a month lost.

The union executive are putting the deal to an individual ballot, rather than putting it to the branches — and are recommending acceptance.

According to reports the deal went through the postal grades management committee on the nod without any discussion.

But most union reps are against it. We need to get over the case for rejection. This is no time for us to be giving succour to Royal Mail. They've screwed far more than 2.8% out of us recently.

We also need to see rejection of the pay deal linked to some action on the shorter working week.

So far the executive had just sat on our claim for a 35 hour week. People are going to be asking questions about this at our special conference later this month.

Moves towards uniting the left in the CPSA

by a CPSA member

THE MAIN ISSUE at this year's CPSA Broad Left Conference, held on 5 November in Blackpool, was the prospect and possibility of the left in the union uniting.

The dominant faction in the Broad Left, Militant Labour, have finally agreed that there needs to be one united left organisation in the union (something which Socialist Organiser supporters in CPSA have been advocating for years) and the Broad Left is committed to work towards this objective.

However, the way Militant Labour is going about this process could still be very damaging for the left in the union. While the Broad Left is willing to talk with Broad Left 84 (with which it formed the UNITY slate for the National Executive elections) about the terms on which they would merge and set up a new organisation, the BL leadership's attitude to the Socialist Caucus — whose supporting branches delivered more votes for the UNITY slate than BL84 branches, despite the fact that Socialist Caucus was excluded from the UNITY slate — is still "join the Broad Left or else."

Socialist Organiser supporters have long argued that the existing left organisations should jointly organise an open, democratic conference of left activists in the union which should decide the policies for a joint election campaign and elect a left election slate by a system of proportional representation.

One of the motions at BL conference called for the Broad Left to approach BL84, Socialist Caucus and leading independent activists with a view to organising such a conference. Militant Labour members ensured that this motion was defeated.

Militant Labour has consistently opposed this idea. In previous years, their members accused Socialist Organiser supporters of wanting to dissolve the Broad Left, and argued that it would not be possible to hold election candidates to account. Now they seem to accept the need for an open left conference in principle but still opposed the motion because BL84 would never agree to it. But if Militant Labour can change their minds, so can BL84. Such a change of mind would be more likely if BL makes it clear that it wants such a conference.

Militant Labour members also signalled their disregard for democracy (and especially representation of minority viewpoints) within the left by dismissing out of hand the idea that left slates should be elected by a system of proportional representation. They told the conference that proportional representation was "alien to the trade union movement" and that independent candidates (not aligned to any faction) would be marginalised.

This second argument is especially bogus. The current system in the Broad Left for electing slates means

that any faction which has 50%+1 support at the conference can decide 100% of the elected positions. No-one is elected to any slate or position in the Broad Left without the agreement of Militant Labour. If independent candidates become marginalised it will be because Militant Labour choose to marginalise them, not because of the electoral system.

The conference also agreed to support and affiliate to the Defend Clause Four, Defend Socialism campaign. The motion called for BL members to use all the democratic structures of the labour movement to defend Clause Four, Labour Party democracy and the union link, including, where possible, joining the Labour Party and participating in its structures to defend Labour's constitution against the attack on it from Tony Blair.

Only the SWP members present opposed the motion. They seemed to think that the campaign should be confined to the trade unions, thus reducing its chance of success.

This year's conference was the smallest for many years (about 100 people), perhaps one reason why Militant Labour have finally agreed that the left in the union must unite. What Broad Left members will have to realise is that only a genuinely open, democratic, united left organisation free from factional domination and bureaucratic carve-ups is capable of revitalising, re-enthusing and building the left in the CPSA.

Tobacco's smoking gun



BACK in 1950, Dr (now Sir) Richard Doll and a fellow researcher showed that lung cancer victims were more likely to be smokers. Impressed by this evidence of the lethal effects of tobacco, Doll gave up smoking. He also started one of the longest epidemiology research projects to find out what the long term effects of smoking were.

In 1951, he enrolled over 34,000 male British doctors in the study, their ages ranging for their twenties to nearing retirement. By 1971, about 10,000 had died; by 1991, another 10,000 had died. Doll and his team, including another world-famous researcher into the effects of smoking, Dr Richard Peto, analysed these deaths according to whether, how and how much the doctors smoked.

By 1971, they found that smokers had twice the death rate of non-smokers. Their latest findings, published recently, showed that the death rate of smokers ran at three times the rate of non-smokers between 1971 and 1991. They speculate that this is because of a greater length of smoking in the lifetime of these people. People in the earlier part of the study were less likely to have been smoking for such a great part of their lives as cigarettes had not caught on in a big way until the 1940s and 1950s.

Previously, Doll's team had found tobacco smoking to be linked to cancers of the lung, mouth, throat, gullet, stomach, pancreas and bladder, as well as heart disease, strokes, asthma and bronchitis. Their latest findings also include a link with can-

cer of the rectum and myeloid leukaemia. The death rate from asthma, a disease which is on the increase perhaps because of air pollution, is twice as high among those who have smoked at some time as among those who have never smoked.

Peto says that the damage caused by smoking can be completely avoided by giving up before the age of 35, while substantial reductions in risk occur among those who give up between 45 and 54. The loss in life expectancy caused by smoking is a substantial one. Nearly one third of non-smokers can expect to survive to 85, compared to only 1 in 9 of 20-a-day smokers.

The lessons are clearer than ever: smoking is an addiction with far more serious consequences than any other. The truth, not even suspected before Doll's work, has been known now for more than 40 years, despite the efforts of tobacco companies to deny it. And yet, the government does virtually nothing to try to discourage it. That would reduce its revenues from tax (and to the Tory party from the tobacco companies). The EC also encourages the tobacco industry through subsidies.

Rates of smoking are falling in Britain, the US and other Western countries, but the tobacco companies are assured of continued profits as smoking rates shoot up in the former Stalinist states. Richard Peto estimates that the proportion of deaths of men in Eastern Europe due to smoking will reach two fifths next year, up from one fifth in 1950. With the explosion in smoking in the Third World, the world is heading towards what *New Scientist* calls a "smoking catastrophe". What should be the socialist response to this? Calling for a ban on tobacco advertising in Britain and more health education here would seem less than adequate to start dealing with a world problem.

UNISON ducks NHS pay fight

By a UNISON member

AT THE VERY MOMENT when the BMA and the RCN began a high profile campaign which united doctors and nurses against government plans for local pay bargaining, and performance related pay, in the health service, UNISON officials ditched the pay campaign for admin. staff in the NHS.

With a pay settlement outstanding since April UNISON's membership in the low paid admin. jobs in the NHS had refused to settle on a national pay offer of just over 1.5% because the Tories wanted strings on the deal to force workers off national pay settlements and onto pay scales worked out locally by the, unelected, Trusts who now control hospitals and other services.

The decision to duck the fight was made despite members' opposition, a decision by UNISON's own Health Conference, and decisions made by the union's lay leadership only weeks before.

In September a national "consultation exercise" among UNISON members in the NHS was carried out - and the results showed a majority wanted to reject the pay offers and go for a strike ballot. In September, and in October UNISON's Service Group Executive in the NHS had voted to instruct officials to work to build alliances with other NHS workers, and to refer the proposal for action to the union's Industrial Action Committee. The officials did nothing.

What officials did do was wait till the first meeting of a newly elected Service Group executive on 31 October, and then pushed through a U-turn on the union's policy. To do this they made

sure that the minutes of the previous meetings were not available and argued that it was impossible to call a ballot because of the anti-union laws.

The officials didn't just say that it would be hard to run a legal ballot because some NHS admin. staff have already been forced onto local "Trust contracts" and are already outside the national agreements (which is true) but that it would be impossible to call a ballot on any national action in the NHS.

Despite all the pressure the decision to refuse to to a ballot on industrial action was close with 16 against balloting, 12 for and 1 abstention.

This has left UNISON — the largest TUC affiliated union representing NHS workers (nurses and technical staff as well as admin. staff and ancillaries) — being the first to cave in to Tory pressure to break up NHS pay bargaining while the British Medical Association and Royal College of Nursing are actually putting up a fight and stand a chance of beating the government.

This is a disgrace. UNISON was created to give workers in the NHS greater industrial strength by merging the forces of NUPE, CoHSE and NALGO — not to let officials throw it away. The break up of national pay bargaining in the NHS is another part of the Tories' policy of breaking-up the NHS into a set of competing "business units" ripe, in the longer term, for closure or sell-off.

UNISON members in the NHS need to call their elected officials to account, and the paid officials need to be made to realise that they only have a job to carry out the members' wishes, not force their decisions on us.

SOCIALIST

Forty-five days

ORGANISER

Clause Four campaign takes off

By Tom Rigby

THIS weekend, 12 November, sees the first national meeting of the Defend Clause Four campaign. The campaign was launched at a packed fringe meeting at Labour Party conference last month, called in response to Tony Blair's speech at the conference on 4 October when he said he would "rewrite" Labour's aims.

It aims to unite everyone in the labour movement who wants to retain Clause Four of the Labour Party's constitution, the clause that defines the party as a political party of labour, linked to the trade unions and committed to common ownership.

Every socialist and trade union activist who wants a real alternative to the Tories should support this campaign.

Defence of Clause Four is about much more than a form of words. It is about the whole purpose of the Labour Party. And it is about what the next Labour Government will do.

Tony Blair sees the abolition of Clause Four as a kind of symbolic offering to the bankers and bosses. It is a gesture to big busi-

ness and the Establishment, to show that his New Labour is just as much a party of the status quo as the Tories are.

Blair wants to have written into Labour's constitution the idea that capitalism is here for ever, and that it is the purpose of the Labour Party to manage and "modernise" it. He wants to say openly and triumphantly what previous Labour leaders have quietly done. He wants to ram down the throats of Labour's working-class rank and file what many of them have either grudgingly accepted or rebelled against in the past: the fact that Labour in office is committed to capitalism.

Blair wants to abolish the aspiration shared by many millions of workers of more or less rapid progress towards what they — and the Oxford English Dictionary — understand as socialism: "A political and economic theory which advocates that the community as a whole should own and control the means of production, distribution, and exchange".

Blair also wants to abolish the Labour Party as a party of *working-class* reform. His "radicalism" does not even dare to impose limits on the workings of dog-eat-dog capitalism derived from the working-class principles of solidarity and economic equality.

Blair rejects the idea that people should come before profit. Instead, in a speech to business people, he has defined his goal as "the transformation of educational standards, a drive to boost the competitiveness of Europe's industries with Britain taking the lead, and the modernisation of the country's infrastructure".

Such goals have nothing to do with socialism. And when translated into policy — as by the Social Justice Commission — they mean nothing but benefit cuts, workfare, and slave wages. Or, as they say in America, "war on the poor".

Support the Campaign!

● The Defend Clause Four campaign can be contacted c/o the National Union of Mineworkers, Miners' Offices, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley, Yorkshire S70 2LS. Phone: 071-708 0511 or 071-582 2955.

● In Scotland a "Campaign for Socialism" has been launched to support Clause Four and the principles it enshrines. Information from the secretary, councillor Bill Butler, Flat 1/1, 485 St George's Road, Glasgow G3 6JY.

By Joan Trevor

SHOPPING DAYS before Christmas, that is. Everywhere it is proclaimed — on Good Morning Britain and in the windows of Woolworth's — so no apologies for joining in the general alarm while it still has the power to shock you.

Christmas, of course, means different things to different people and is probably a concept about which socialists have more mixed feelings than most.

Few of us go to church of any kind, and few, hopefully, indulge in the superstitious nonsense that reclaims Christmas as a pagan festival nicked from us ancient Britons by the Christians.

Yet, while rejecting the religious aspects, many good atheists still cite some hankering after a lost spirituality to justify joining in.

What they probably mean is that they get a few days off to contemplate the meaning of their existence, to regret the fact that they didn't believe sufficiently in the future to buy this year's Christmas cards in last January's sales, and to resolve to get it right next year.

You might well not get any time off at Christmas. At least you can look forward to a reduction in traffic on the roads and crowds on public transport on your lonely journey to work over the festive season.

Christmas means for some a few days to spend with relatives they don't see from one year's end to the next... and for precisely this reason it is a time of the year many other people could do without.

Christmas means a chance to buy presents for someone you love, even if that is only you buying a gift for yourself.

It is a time of year when all the goods that life and leisure have to offer, all the fruits of labour, your own and other people's, are displayed. A time to appreciate warmth, the fireside, shelter, gifts, fine wines and foods, entertainment of all varieties on TV, at the cinema and even, still, just, at the theatre.

And it is a time of year when you can most easily scent in all the woodsmoke and roasting chestnut smells what it might be like to be without those things. A time of year to imagine what it is like to be homeless, too poor to have the fire on, too poor to eat well or buy a gift, too lonely to enjoy company.

It is a time of year to realise that everyone could have a roof over their heads, enough money to buy heat and food and extras, and enough leisure to enjoy them, time to go to the pictures and the theatre and to see good films and plays when they go. To see that people need not be isolated in their homes but could have available infinite ways to enjoy company. That people on their own need not be too embarrassed to seek company.

Tramping round the shops in the next few weeks you will get a glimpse of how close that vision is, latent in all the goodies and all the marvels of organisation and creation even wasteful, flawed, chaotic capitalist society can mobilise for the big day.

Take the time to marvel that others don't see it; take time to join in the fight to point it out to them.

If you wish it could be Christmas every day, and that everyone could enjoy the best it has to offer, send a donation to the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, or take out a subscription to our newspaper, Socialist Organiser.

Cheques/postal orders payable to "WL Publications" to: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Local campaign meetings

MANCHESTER

Thursday 10 November

"The Battle for Labour's Soul"

Speaker: Tony Benn

6.00 Manchester Metropolitan University

Friday 18 November

Defend Clause Four rally

Speakers include Arthur Scargill and Alan Simpson MP

7.30 Mechanics Institute

NOTTINGHAM

Friday 25 November

Defend Clause Four rally

Speakers include Arthur Scargill

7.30 Congregational Hall, Castlegate

LUTON

Thursday 1 December

"Defend Clause Four!"

8.00, Socialist Club, Union Street

LEEDS

Wednesday 7 December

"Defend Clause Four!"

Speakers include Arthur Scargill

7.30, Civic Hall

Campaign launch
12 November
1pm
St Aloysius Social Club,
Phoenix Road,
Euston, London

Name

Address

Enclosed (tick as appropriate):

£5 for 10 issues £25 for a year

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