

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

It will be socialism or barbarism!

Inside this week



Save Clause Four!

pages 3,4 and 5

Students defend the Welfare State centre pages

Does screen

violence kill? pages 12 and 13



Act on Clause Four!
Labour must renationalise!

Stop



the rail

rip-off!

See page 2

Stop the rail rip-off!

By Colin Foster

AFTER privatisation, the companies running the railways will be allowed to sell only local tickets at most stations. Only a few tickets will sell "through" tickets for longer journeys.

This move adds insult to the **Socialist Organiser No. 622 will appear on 9 February and thereafter SO will appear on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month.**

injuries already being inflicted on workers and passengers by the Tories' drive to chop up the railway system and sell it off in bits.

Services such as the trains taking cars to Scotland are already being scrapped. Many more are likely to be scrapped as the system is given over to the rule of greed and profit.

Workers' jobs and conditions are under attack, the system is being starved of investment, and fares are being pushed up, all to fatten up the railways for private profiteers.

So strong is public opposition to rail privatisation, even among Tory voters, that a

clear commitment by the Labour Party to renationalise with only minimum compensation could stop this crazy sell-off.

But Tony Blair is giving clear notice that his drive to scrap Clause Four of Labour's constitution — the one which commits Labour to "common ownership of the means of production" — is no matter of wanting more modern language. He seems determined to throw away Labour's policy of returning the railways to public ownership.

Blair arrogantly told journalists on Monday 9 January that "I am not going to get into the situation where I am

declaring that the Labour government is going to commit sums of money to renationalisation several years down the line".

This statement is in direct opposition to policy overwhelmingly adopted by Labour Party conference, and reaffirmed by Labour's former transport spokesperson Frank Dobson in the Observer in October: that Labour would "reverse the privatisation of Britain's railways".

Blair's statement also contradicts what his deputy John Prescott said in 1993.

"Let me make it crystal clear

that any privatisation which is there on the arrival of a Labour Government will be quickly and effectively, with the full support of the British people, returned to public ownership".

All Labour has to say is that it will renationalise with minimum compensation, and no pension fund or big investor will dare take the risk of trying to buy any part of the railways.

Blair's arrogance and folly has mobilised even the right wing of the rail union RMT against him. Assistant general secretary Vernon Hince has

said that the RMT still expects Labour to renationalise the railways. "I haven't heard anyone in the Labour Party speak otherwise. The Labour Party is committed to fighting privatisation before it happens, and we would see it being returned to public ownership under a Labour government".

It is up to the rank and file of the unions and the Labour Party to build a campaign to ensure that it happens.

Stop privatisation! Act on Clause Four! Labour must pledge to renationalise the railways.

Hands off Chechnya!

By Dale Street

IN MID-DECEMBER Russian troops invaded Chechnya. They are now smashing through the capital, Grozny.

The Russian government claims that the purpose of the invasion is to restore "law and order" in Chechnya, which declared independence from Moscow in 1991. But the real reasons for the invasion are to be found in Russia rather than in Chechnya.

Yeltsin chose war to try to rally his flagging support. Oil also plays a part. Russia wants control of the oil pumped out of the Caspian Sea off the coast of Azerbaijan. But the pipeline which would carry the oil across the Caucasus to the oil terminals in Novorossiysk on the Black Sea runs through Chechnya. Without control of Chechnya Russia has no chance of profiting from the Caspian

oil.

All the signs are that Yeltsin's invasion has backfired politically. Prejudice against Chechens is widespread and intense in Russia; but the invasion has not rallied support round Yeltsin, or created a wave of jingo patriotism. Only 15 per cent of the Russian population back the invasion.

Rather than diverting attention from economic problems, the war has made those economic problems worse. Rather than dampening discontent in the armed forces, the fiasco of the invasion has increased unrest in the military.

The question now is whether the massive discontent in Russia can be rallied by the small socialist forces there, or whether the crisis will usher in an even more authoritarian, military-based regime. Socialists in this country must redouble our efforts to assist the socialists in Russia.



Photo: Mark Salmon

On Christmas Day 1994, the family members and supporters of innocent prisoners — the victims of the many miscarriages of justice that have occurred under Britain's shabby system of criminal justice — took part in a vigil outside West Midlands Police Headquarters in Birmingham.

Ann Whelan (pictured in the centre of the photo), the mother of Michael Hickey of the Bridgewater Four, joined the vigil.

Michael Hickey has been incarcerated for 16 years, a year longer than the specified sentence made at his original trial. The last 9 years of this sentence he has spent in hospital.

Free the Bridgewater Four! Free all innocent prisoners!

● The Bridgewater Four Support Group, 723 Pershore Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham 29.

Stop the torture trade!

By Paul Andrews

THE past couple of weeks have seen large, angry protests at Shoreham Harbour in Sussex against the export of live calves to the continent. Once abroad they are kept in veal crates so small and treated so badly that the conditions they face have been banned in the UK.

18 people have been arrested during the demonstrations after scuffles broke out with heavy handed police in riot gear when protesters attempted to stop the lorries boarding the ships.

The issue has been in the headlines all week and pressure is mounting on Agriculture Minister William Waldegrave to ban the trade



— something he is unlikely to do, not least because calves from his own farm form part of such shipments.

It has been widely recognised that it was the direct action of the demonstrators — physically stopping the lorries — which has highlighted an issue which polite lobbying has been unsuccessful in challenging.

This is a lesson that the labour movement needs to learn from animal rights

activists — direct action is a highly effective campaign tactic.

However direct action alone is not enough despite what some sections of the animal rights movement seem to believe. To be ultimately successful the campaign needs to be taken into the political arena. The fight for animal welfare must be taken into the Labour Party.

Following the protests Labour's Agriculture spokesperson Gavin Strang supported calls for an export ban. This is positive but Tony Blair is sure to try to avoid any commitment by the next Labour Government to banning the live calf trade (it may lose some farmers' votes!) We must not let him.

New coalition in Dublin

By Paddy Dollard

THE LONG pre-Xmas political crisis in Dublin has ended with the formation of a new coalition government. The old coalition had Fianna Fail as its senior partner and Labour as the minority. This one has the other main bosses' party, Fine Gael, as senior partner, Labour as junior and, in addition, the small "Democratic Left" party.

Democratic Left is Ireland's equivalent of the right wing ex-"Communist" parties of, for example, Italy. It is a split off from the Workers' Party, the organisation which emerged from the old "Official IRA" 20 years ago. Long tied to and financially subsidised by international Stalinism, the Workers' Party shattered when Russian Stalinism collapsed.

Fears that the entry of Fine Gael into Government would scupper the Northern Ireland "peace process" have proved groundless. There is no change in policy. Labour's Dick Spring, as Tanaiste (deputy Prime Minister) represents continuity and stability

here. A large number of Republican prisoners in the south were let out on parole over Xmas.

Workers' Liberty

From February

Workers' Liberty will come out monthly

The first issue will contain:

● a symposium on the

International

Socialists/Socialist Workers' Party ● the Comintern and

the Irish Revolution ● twenty

letters by Leon Trotsky from

1916 and many other articles

Write to: WL, PO Box 823, London SE15

A SIGN of the times in last year's local government election was Labour's first-time-ever victory in Barnet, which contains Mrs Thatcher's old constituency of East Finchley. The new Labour Mayor of Barnet is councillor Ellis Hillman, a Marxist for 50 years and one-time London correspondent for the important American left-wing paper Labor Action. Ellis is seen here with the veteran Christian socialist Donald Soper at the unveiling of a bust commemorating Nye Bevan, the founder of the National Health Service, at the Town Hall.



As fightback grows in Labour ranks, Tony Benn puts the arguments

DEFEND SOCIALISM!

DEFEND CLAUSE FOUR!

By Tony Benn

SOMEHOW people imagine that we are an isolated group of dinosaurs who are committed to a particular phrase here or there, totally outdated by events. That is simply not the case.

Capitalism is in a deeper crisis now than any time since the pre-war years. We are part of a very very big movement... millions of people are starting to wake up and the one connecting link — a socialist labour movement — is being systematically and deliberately dismantled.

The Party believes in a competitive market economy. Now that is not just the abandonment of socialism, it is asking ourselves to commit ourselves to capitalism and still call ourselves the Labour Party. But how long that will last I don't know.

When the Labour Party comes forward with a really powerful critique of the society and of the system, people respond.

In 1992, Neil Kinnock must have been really puzzled. He had been praised to the skies throughout that period for hammering the left, then on polling day the *Sun* said: "Will the last person to leave Britain please turn out the lights." I don't think that he understood he had been praised for trying to destroy social-

"There are millions of people who would love to support us if they thought that we were going to defend their interests with courage and commitment. That is really what Clause Four is about."

ism.

If you take out Clause Four you are removing the historical perspective and the vision that alone moves people to make the effort that is needed to defeat the enormous power of capitalism.

I am dead against re-drafting Clause Four. The only credible re-draft that I've heard of is "to secure for the front bench the full fruits of ministe-



Tony Benn speaking and the Unshackle the Unions conference. John Harris

rial office on the basis of the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

Clause Four is a statement of what we are about and it is very, very important that we do not abandon it. The meetings that have taken place around the country on Clause Four have absolutely staggered me. Huge interest and commitment.

I think that it may not be as easy to remove it as they make out. We are not rebels, we represent a wholly differing tradition. The tradition that people are entitled to homes, jobs,

good education, to freedom from discrimination, good health care, for dignity when we are old and for peace.

People have been beaten into believing that there is nothing they can do, there is no alternative, what's the hope, don't try — and that is the ultimate victory of the other side.

I've got the funny feeling that for the first time in a long time the public are a long way ahead of the Labour Party.

There are millions of people who would love to support us if they

thought that we were going to defend their interests with courage and commitment. That is really what Clause Four is about. I am not in favour of a re-draft. I have never believed that Parliament is going to change anything, but I do know that if there is enough pressure on Parliament they will have to change a lot of things. It is the pressure outside that really matters.

If we keep this campaign going we might win. I am never going to commit myself to a competitive market economy. The idea is so utterly ludi-

crous — that the Labour Party was brought into being to support capitalism and run it better. It is an absurd idea. Who is going to go to the stake because they believe in a competitive market economy? People are trying to dismantle the Labour Party at the very moment it is more needed than ever since the time of Keir Hardy who founded it over 100 years ago.

● Tony Benn was speaking at the "Defend Clause Four, Defend Socialism" rally meeting at the House of Commons on 30 November 1994.

A letter to readers of Socialist Organiser

WITH THIS issue, *Socialist Organiser* goes onto a fortnightly production schedule, for the time being. The fortnightly *SO* will work in tandem with the magazine *Workers' Liberty*, which is being relaunched. From February *Workers' Liberty* will come out monthly.

The monthly *Workers' Liberty* will allow us to make *SO* less of the magazine-in-newspaper-format it has been for some time now. Less "heavy" and more simple in its presentation, *SO* will, we hope, be a better tool for the members and supporters of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty in the labour movement.

Today many simple socialist ideas need to be explained, again and again, simply and clearly, taking nothing for granted. Activists and

trade union militants need a voice for their campaigns and struggles, and news about what is going on outside their own areas.

They need to be told the basic facts of working-class history. They need to have an open forum to debate issues of working-class life. They need to have the beginnings of a rounded political anti-capitalist culture presented to them.

They need sustained criticism of capitalist politics, economics, morality, culture. They need to have the affairs and especially the discussions of the left explained to them. These are the things that *Socialist Organiser* will try, with your help, to provide.

Committed socialists too need such a paper, and not fundamentally, as an item for themselves to consume,

but as a tool for use in reaching out to new people.

And the monthly magazine? Committed socialists need all the things listed above, on a higher level of knowledge and experience. They need critical accounts of the left itself and accounts of the historical experience of the Marxist movement. They need a forum for the hammering out of clear ideas to meet the immensely powerful boss-class ideological offensive now going at full blast. That will be the work of *Workers' Liberty*.

Together, two publications will allow us to do both of the jobs described above more rationally and, we hope, better.

New opportunities are beginning to open up for socialists. Things are moving slowly, but they are moving. Tony Blair has kicked up a hornets'

nest with his arrogant proposal to ditch Clause Four, the Labour Party's commitment to general socialism. If he is not to be defeated, it will be because the trade union leaders and the much decried block vote comes to his rescue. He can be defeated! Many socialists have sprung back into action to help stop Blair.

The Welfare State Network too is rousing people into action — in defence of the health service and other welfare provision. Its newspaper *Action for Health and Welfare* will come out monthly in 1995.

With the simplified *SO* and the monthly *Workers' Liberty* we will, we believe, be better equipped to bring revolutionary socialist politics into these and other movements.

John O'Mahony

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Newsdesk 071-639 7965 (Latest reports Monday)

Printed by: Eastway Offset (TU) London E9

Editor: John O'Mahony

Deputy Editor: Cathy Nugent

Sales Organiser: Jill Mountford

Published by: WL Publications Limited

Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of *Socialist Organiser* and are in a personal capacity unless otherwise stated

Registered as a newspaper at the Post Office



WE SAY

Renationalise gas, electric, and water!

FIFTY BOSSES IN the utilities — gas, water, electricity — have made themselves millionaires since privatisation, through huge pay rises, bonuses, and share deals.

Workers and service-users have paid the price. The utility companies have cut some 150,000 jobs since privatisation.

Even more loot has gone to thousands of wealthy shareholders. The utility companies have extracted a huge £45 billion in profits since privatisation.

These utility companies should be renationalised, with minimum compensation to small shareholders only.

British Gas is typical. Top boss Cedric Brown has had a 75 per cent pay rise, to £475,000, at the same time as the company demands pay cuts from showroom workers.

British Gas is closing showrooms, cutting spending on safety checks for gas leaks by ninety per cent, and planning to farm out meter reading to contract workers doing 80-hour work weeks.

Water company bosses have voted themselves pay rises averaging 221 per cent, and going up to 571 per cent, since privatisation four years ago. Five have made themselves millionaires.

Midlands Electricity boss Bryan Townsend got a 50% pay rise last year — to £290,000 — when he went part-time!

In the National Health Service Trusts, too, and everywhere in the new Tory plunder-ground of privatised, contracted-out, and quangoised enterprise, the bosses get millions while the workers and users suffer. NHS Trust directors are paid a total of £141 million — enough to hire 11,000 extra nurses.

The Labour Party leaders have denounced this plunder. That is good. But their proposals to deal with it are feeble.

They want "tougher regulation". But private industry is run for profit, and cannot be otherwise. Any regulation will be within the limits of leaving lush profits — £45 billion to date! — for the shareholders.

The last Labour Government, in 1974-9, tried to impose "planning agreements" on private industry. Only one was ever set up, for the Chrysler car firm, and the government was never able to hold the company to it.

The next Labour Government must take the utilities back into public ownership, with minimum compensation for small shareholders only. Tony Blair opposes this. This shows that his opposition to Labour's Clause Four commitment to "common ownership of the means of production" is very far from being a desire for more modern language: it is an attempt to shackle Labour to the chaotic plunder-system of private profit.

Act on Clause Four! Renationalise the utilities!

Britain's prisons: hells on earth

THE TURMOIL IN some of Britain's prisons shows once more that, despite all the talk of change after Strangeways jail was wrecked by its own insurrectionary inmates, nothing much has changed.

Britain's overcrowded prisons are hells on earth. They are a disgrace to a supposedly civilised society. So is this hard-faced government.

Britain is closing hospitals, condemning young people to a life with little hope — and licensing private enterprise to open new jails. The government's best notion is to tighten the social screws and pile on the repression.

Britain's jails now are a good measure of what the Tories have done to us in the last 15 years.

The leading committee of capitalists

THE GOVERNMENT IS NOTHING but the leading committee of the capitalists, wrote Lenin, following Marx. So, it seems, to a large extent, is Parliament.

The Labour Research Department has published the findings of a survey of MPs' sideline jobs. Out of 243 Tory MPs surveyed, 200 held no fewer than 276 lucrative directorships, and 356 paid consultancies.

Eight Tory ex-ministers hold valuable directorships and consultancies with companies in their former areas of responsibility.

Dennis Skinner is right. The next Labour Government should legislate to stop these unscrupulous MPs from moonlighting. The Labour Party could start now by telling the Labour MPs who have lucrative directorships and consultancies to cut it out.

DEFEND CLAUSE FOUR

Euro-MPs say: save Clause Four!

A GROUP of Euro-MPs have launched a broadside attack on any revision of Clause Four of the Labour constitution.

A front page advertisement in the *Guardian* [10 January] occupied the spot often taken by Labour Party recruitment ads. It explained why a majority of Labour Euro-MPs have signed a statement that calls for keeping the commitment to common ownership which the party prints on every party membership card.

Alex Falconer, MEP for Mid Scotland & Fife, who convenes the regular meetings of the Euro-MPs in Strasbourg said:

"The current debate has been extremely one-sided, with most of the press and television interviews advocating change. We agreed to place adverts in papers that are read by Labour members and supporters, including one in the *Guardian*.

"With Britain and the rest



The Dudley by-election victory shows that the Tories can be beaten. But Labour must not adopt Tory policies

of the world in crisis, this is no time to jettison this powerful weapon for social and economic justice. We oppose privatisation and believe that common ownership should

remain part of Labour's core beliefs and values. That is why we have called for the retention of Clause Four part four in its present form, and for a separate statement

to express the party's aims today.

"We have circulated the signed statement and will consider further campaign tactics at our next meeting."

How Blair promised during his election campaign not to attack Clause Four

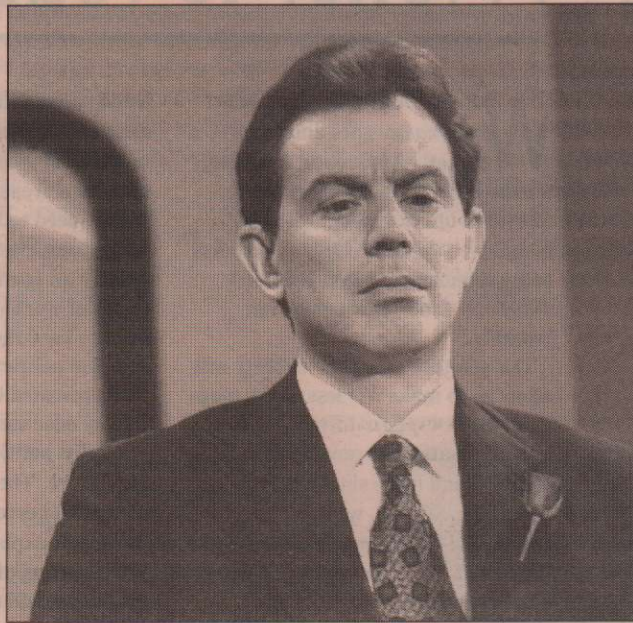
Breakfast With Frost transcript, 23 June 1994

David Frost: If there was a move to get rid of Clause Four, would you actively oppose that?

Tony Blair: I think the most important thing is for the Labour Party to state what its economic priorities are, and there has been discussion about Clause Four over the past couple of years, and I understand why that is, but I think the most important thing at the present time, and I think where everybody in the party wants to see the Labour Party go, is to construct its policies for the next general election and make those clear before the British people.

DF: Do you have your own view on Clause Four? Would you oppose its being dropped?

TB: Well, I don't think that anyone actually wants that to be the priority of the Labour Party at the moment. I mean, I understand why people have raised this, and there are peo-



Blair: two-faced

ple who have raised it across a whole spectrum of the political party.

DF: Jack Straw, Neil Kinnock...

TB: Absolutely right. But I don't think that anyone is saying now, looking ahead to the

next two years in the run-up to an election, that this is what we should focus on. And I think for the vast majority of British people, I don't think they sit out there and debate the intricacies of the Labour Party constitution.

Clause Four meetings • debates • rallies

Wed 18 Jan
Peter Mandelson MP debates Ken Livingstone MP
Willesden Library, 7.30

Thur 19 Jan
Jeremy Corbyn MP debates Margaret Hodge MP, Red Rose
Islington, 7.30

Thur 19 Jan
Alan Simpson MP debates Denis McShane MP
Sheffield

Thur 26 Jan
Jeremy Corbyn MP
Scunthorpe

Fri 27 Jan
Arthur Scargill
Stoke on Trent

Wed 8 Feb
Fabian Society debate — Peter Mandelson MP and Alan Simpson MP
Central Hall, Westminster

Fri 10 Feb
Arthur Scargill
Birmingham

Wed 15 Feb
Alan Simpson MP
Haywards Heath

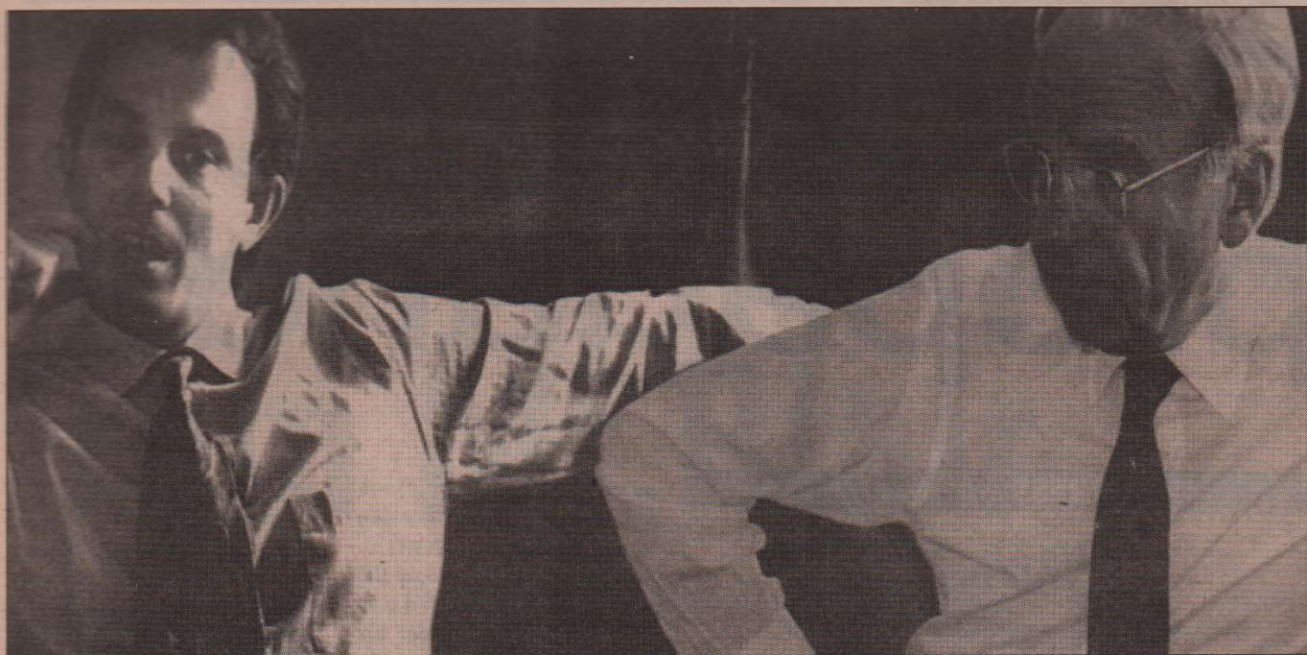
Fri 17 Feb
Arthur Scargill
Cardiff

Thur 23 Feb
Arthur Scargill
Liverpool

Fri 24 Feb
Arthur Scargill
London

For more information about times, speakers and venues phone: 071-708 0511 or 071-582 2955

DEFEND CLAUSE FOUR



Tony Blair conduction politics as he knows it: with media tycoon Rupert Murdoch

The questionnaire from Labour's NEC How to respond

A QUESTIONNAIRE is being circulated to all party members, CLPs and affiliated organisations as part of the "consultation" process. The questions are designed to create answers that give an illusion that there is support amongst the membership to re-write Clause Four. The defend Clause Four campaign recommends.

1. Labour's objects

- 1. (a) No. Clause Four as it stands does this clearly and concisely and should be retained as it stands.
- 1. (b) Clause Four is a comprehensive statement of our Objects and should be retained as it stands.

2. Values

- 2. (a) It should be emphasised that Social Justice will only be achieved by securing for the workers the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof, and that this can only be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.
- 2. (b) We should emphasise Clause Four (5) and retain it as it stands i.e. Generally to promote the political, social and

economic emancipation of the people, and more particularly of those who depend directly on their own exertions by hand or by brain for the means of life.

2. (c) The themes that should be added and emphasised are that there can be no real opportunity without common ownership. This is best expressed in the existing Clause Four (pt 4 and 5) which should be retained.

2. (d) The themes that should be added and emphasised is that there can be no real equality without common ownership. This is best expressed in the existing Clause Four part (4) and (5) which should be retained.

2. (e) The themes that should be added and emphasised are best expressed by the phrase "the best obtainable system of popular administration" in the existing Clause Four which should be retained.

2. (f) The themes that should be added and emphasised are expressed in the existing Clause Four especially parts (6) and (7) which should be retained as they stand.

3. The Economy

- 3. (a) Labour should express its commitment to common

ownership rather than private industry. This is best expressed in Clause IV pt 4 which should be retained as it stands.

4. Labour and the People

4. (a) Labour should campaign on policies that are based on the strategic vision of the existing Clause Four which should be retained.

4. (b) By being seen as a Party that sticks to its convictions and principles of com-

mon ownership and the redistribution of wealth so that workers receive the full fruits of their industry as enshrined in the existing Clause Four which should be retained.

Additional Responses

"This questionnaire should have honestly asked the question: Do you wish to retain Clause Four as it stands. If it had been asked my/our answer would have been 'Yes'."

Join us the Campaign!

The campaign to "Defend Clause Four, Defend Socialism" is gaining ground. A recent survey in *Tribune* found that in 59 out of 61 CLPs that have discussed the issue there was clear majority support for Clause Four. In every affiliated trade union plans are being laid to ensure that this groundswell of opinion is reflected. If you want to help, get your organisation to affiliate, and come to our next committee on Saturday 28 January, Manchester Town Hall, 11am. If you have any reports for our bulletin then phone 071-708 0511.

Name/organisation

Address

Phone/fax

Fee Donation

Affiliation fee: £10/min/£30 regional orgs/£50 national orgs.
Cheques to "Defend Clause Four" c/o the NUM, 2 Huddersfield Road, Barnsley S70 2LS.

Donations please!

Please send us a regular standing order to help finance the campaign over the next year. Payee: "Defend Clause Four", account no. 54006144; branch 086001.

Model motions for Labour Party meetings

I.

"We note that the Tories are in total disarray and cannot command a parliamentary majority. This should give Labour additional incentive to keep them on the run.

Labour should not be deflected from attacking the Tories and campaigning for alternative policies. We therefore deeply regret the NEC proposals to re-examine our constitution. We are particularly concerned that there should be an unnecessary and expensive special conference on the last campaigning weekend before local elections. This

would prevent conferences of affiliated organisations considering the proposals.

We call on the NEC to drop the proposal for a special conference. The Party's annual conference will give ample opportunity to debate any constitutional reforms which will genuinely help unite the Party before the next General Election."

II.

"We support the decision of the '93 and '94 Party Conferences to reaffirm Clause Four. We note that Clause Four (4) states our aims are:

"To secure for the workers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service."

We believe that these principles are still valid. We call on the NEC to abandon their proposal to engage in a debate on the Party's Constitution. Such a debate can only be divisive when maximum effort should be put into campaigning against the Tories."

Tanks on Blair's lawn

THESE ARE EARLY days and a lot of arms remain to be twisted. But one thing is for sure: the Clause Four 'debate' is not proving to be the walk-over for young Blair that his coterie of media advisors promised him and predicted to the rest of us.

For a start, Labour Party Constituency activists have actually *debated* the issue, instead of simply falling into line behind the leadership. Of the 61 Constituency Labour Parties questioned by the soft-left *Tribune* in December, 58 had come out in support of Clause Four. All the signs are that this pattern will continue, despite the blatant attempt to rig the 'consultation process' contained in the Labour NEC's

questionnaire ('Response Sheet') sent out to constituency parties and affiliated organisations.

At last year's Blackpool conference, Blair's narrow defeat on Clause Four was due to the votes of the constituency delegates, while the unions mainly supported him. The Boy

Wonder and his clique now find themselves in the acutely embarrassing position of having to court the union 'barons' and the remnants of the block vote if they are to have any chance of winning the day on Clause Four. The master strategists at the court of Prince Tony have thus succeeded in locking 'New Labour' into the embrace of the unions for the foreseeable future. Young Blair may yet rue the day he listened to the likes of Alistair Campbell and Peter Mandelson, urging him ever onwards in the quest to purge Labour of 'old-style' socialism.

The extent of Blair's miscalculation can be gauged by the sound of union tanks rumbling up his drive-way heading for the lawn. Last week's press reports of an agreement between the T&GWU, the GMB and UNISON to withhold support from Blair's redraft unless he gives a commitment to re-nationalise the water industry probably *understate* the extent of union opposition. It is highly unlikely, for instance, that the T&G leadership could persuade their members to back Blair in exchange for a deal on the water industry alone. The union's powerful Passenger Transport group has already made it clear that they won't even look at any deal that doesn't include the re-nationalisation of buses. There is, as yet, no visible evidence of support for Blair's redraft even among the T&G's right-wing.

Any possible deal with UNISON would almost certainly have to go further than a commitment to re-nationalise water: a pledge to end compulsory competitive tendering for council services is the very least that would stand a chance of placating the bulk of the union's rank and file.

Meanwhile, the leaders of both ASLEF and the RMT had publicly stated that a firm commitment to re-nationalise any part of the rail industry the Tories succeed in privatising will be their minimum price for backing Blair. ASLEF's Lew Adams has hinted that even if such a commitment were given, it might not be enough as the union has something very close to Clause Four written into its constitution.

Blair, of course, is denying any suggestion of horse-trading with the unions and his side-kicks like Gordon Brown continue to talk about the re-draft of Clause Four as though it was a foregone conclusion. But there can be no doubt that the Blair clique have painted themselves into a corner: with no constituency support worth talking about, they've no chance of winning the special conference in April without union backing. The union leaders and rank and file know they've got Blair by the short and curlies. Either he starts giving some firm commitments on re-nationalisation or he loses on Clause Four.

Either way, it's a victory for the unions and 'Old Labour' and a kick in the teeth for the yuppies and 'New Labour'. At the very least, the unions look like wiping that irritating grin off Blair's face between now and April 29th.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

Retrograde High Court ruling

Smacking should be banned!


WOMEN'S EYE

By Belinda Weaver

THE HIGH Court has ruled that minders can smack children in their care. It has reversed what was a solid trend towards outlawing physical violence

against children.

Why is this a terrible step backwards?

Most smacking is just that — a smack, a slap. Only a minority of children suffer brutal beatings. But even a light slap can frighten children, especially when combined with other signs of parental anger — frowns, yelling, loss of control, threats, warnings of worse to come.

Obviously adults get angry. That can't be prevented. But adults *can* learn to control what they do, even if they can't control what they feel.

Physical punishment of children should be controlled. Children should not be an outlet for a frustrated parent's or minder's rage. Big people should not tyrannise over small ones. Children, however difficult they may be, deserve the human rights the rest of us expect — to live free from physical violence.

"But it did me no harm!" is the cry of many.

I disagree. The brutal belters get away with it for so long precisely because many think beatings leave no scars, that children "forget".

They don't. Those who think it "did them no harm" have been harmed precisely because they can bear to see smacking of children continue.

Theirs is the law of turn-taking; children become parents, they get their chance to dish it out. From victim to perpetrator in one generation.

BUT FOR those who are unmoved by humane arguments against physical punishment, how about a practical reason to scrap it? It doesn't work.

Firstly because many children do not link the punishment to the "crime"; small children are not sophisticated enough to understand cause and effect.

Second, much punishment is sporadic or arbitrary; what earns a smack one day might not the next.

Third, because punishment that comes from "outside" will not always deter. Some children don't "learn."

The only worthwhile discipline is self-discipline, and that comes best and easiest to children who have been loved and well-treated.

Punishment does not create happy, well-balanced people. Just the opposite. As a child, murderer Gary Gilmore suffered severe, unrelenting punishment; he grew up to punish and to kill.

Children who beat and abuse their children were usually beaten and abused themselves.

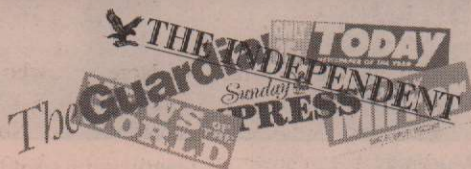
It's a cycle, and it needs to be broken.

This is not a private issue. Domestic violence against women has been recognised as intolerable. So should such violence against children.

Laws against smacking and beating will help to support all children who face violence at home, whether mild or harsh.

Laws might help people discuss or re-examine their own behaviour, and possibly, come to terms with their difficult pasts.

Black's propaganda

PRESS GANG


By Jim Denham

WHILE John Major and his dwindling band of supporters flounder in the mire, one little clique of right-wing ideologues look on with relish, confident that their day will come.

This is the group of journalists employed by Mr Conrad Black. They are characterised by a class-based loathing of John Major and all his works (especially when it comes to Europe) and their vitriolic outpourings can be read every fortnight in the *Spectator* magazine, every week in the *Sunday Telegraph* and most days in the *Daily Telegraph*.

Demoralised they are not. In fact, the worse things get for poor little Major, the more they like it. Portillo seems to be their man but that could change if a new anti-Europe, back-to-Thatcherism hero emerges. At times the *Spectator/Telegraph* clique appears to almost prefer Blair to Major but do not be deceived: these people hate the labour movement and the

left. If they sometimes appear to have given up on the next election, it is merely part of a longer-term gameplan.

The viciousness of the Conrad Black mob was well demonstrated last month with the 'Gott affair'. This bizarre business would have been hilarious if it wasn't quite so sinister.

Richard Gott was (and is) a very silly man. Like a lot of '60s lefties he viewed the world through the prism of Stalinism, even though he was never a card-carrying CP member and his lode-star tended to be Peking rather than Moscow.

Unlike most '60s lefties he was in a position to indulge his fantasies because he was a leading journalist on the *Guardian*. As a foreign correspondent he wrote a series of nauseating paeans to the regimes of Cambodia and China. The main protests, at the time, came from other left-wing journalists like Christopher Hitchens, James Fenton and Neal Ascherson. Gott was known

as a naive, posturing buffoon but tolerated by the *Guardian* as a harmless eccentric. Eventually, he was made the paper's literary editor — a post that gave less scope for his Walter Mitty Stalinism.

However, it turns out that Gott's Walter Mitty predilections ran a little deeper than anyone suspected. He allowed himself to be wined and dined by the KGB and, it seems, revelled in the delusion that by doing so he was undermining the fabric of capitalist society.

"Anyone who attempted to put the 'Gott Affair' into any sort of proportion was depicted as a stooge of Moscow."

In December 1994, the *Spectator* named Gott as a KGB informant and he immediately tendered his resignation to the *Guardian's* editor Peter Preston. The *Spectator's* "revelations" were immediately followed up in the *Sunday Telegraph* by pious articles

denouncing the *Guardian* and, indeed, the "left" as a whole. Anyone who attempted to put the 'Gott Affair' into any sort of proportion was depicted as a stooge of Moscow. Never mind that the *Spectator's* "revelations" emanated from the notoriously unreliable KGB defector Oleg Gordievsky (now a pensioner of MI6); never mind that left-wing journalists were on record as protesting against Gott's Stalinist nonsense long before the Conrad Black gang became interested: Gott's stupidity implicated the *Guardian* and, by extension the entire left. It also happened to follow hard on the heels of the *Guardian's* exposure of Tory "sleaze" and gave Black's clique the excuse to accuse Peter Preston (already under fire over the "cod fax" affair) of hypocrisy.

Christopher Hitchens summed matters up perfectly in a furious *Guardian* tirade:

"Nothing he (Gott) has done by playing silly buggers with the KGB could have revolted me more than what he wrote and said, for free, about Cambodia and China. The argument has always been at its fiercest on the left and was going on when Lawson, Alisdair Palmer and Anne Applebaum were in the short pants that they have yet to outgrow."

We have the right to speak out

STAMP OUT HOMOPHOBIA

By Janine Booth

IHAVE often been critical of Outrage!'s tactic of "outing" closet cases (most recently, bishops). But criticism is one thing — censorship is another matter entirely.

The BBC has banned Outrage! from making any live comments on its TV or radio broadcasts. The reason, they say, is that Outrage! might "out" someone on air — thus inviting libel action against the BBC.



Freedom of speech, it seems, must be sacrificed in favour of that most overridingly important of human rights — the right not to have anyone suggest that you might be a homo.

It strikes me that there is an underlying assumption here that somehow it is an insult to have someone suggest that you might be gay.

I might not think that Outrage!'s tactic is particularly helpful, but I'll defend their right to do it, and their right to freedom of speech. The BBC's action is truly outrageous.

MEANWHILE... Michael Howard was leafing through a Civil Service manual on benefits policy and found something that he didn't like — rights for same-sex couples.

Civil servants are entitled to be relocated if their partner's job moves to another town. This right specifically applies to unmarried, as well as married, couples, and (in brackets) to same-sex partners.

Howard has decided that the parenthesised rights for lesbian and gay people must go.

Civil Service spokespeople have given assurances, but you don't have to be paranoid to disbelieve them. Lesbian, gay and bisexual groups and Civil Service trade union NUCPS are demanding that the wording is not changed.

Youth Fightback editor to be expelled by Labour Party

A Christmas present from Mr Blair



By Mark Sandell

I HAD A Christmas present from the Labour Party leadership this year. It was a letter informing

me of their intention to expel me from the Party!

Why? "The National Executive Committee, today received a report on your party membership, and that you are the editor of the 'Socialist Youth' page in Socialist Organiser."

This is of course wrong as the page is called Youth Fightback. However, "the National Constitutional Officer has been instructed to formulate charges against you... to exclude you from membership."

When I first joined the Labour Party the media was full of articles saying Labour was dead, that the Social Democratic Party was going to wipe us out. News of Labour's death was of course much exagger-

ated, but the departure of a large part of the right-wing of Labour's leadership undoubtedly helped the Tories stay in government and caused a massive crisis for Labour.

"Labour Party democrats should oppose the expulsion of Labour activists like myself."

It is with good reason that loyal Labour supporters despise those

who split from Labour to form the SDP.

Now Blair is openly trying to woo back SDP members. He is even saying he can 'understand' why they left. At the same time Blair is attacking Clause Four and expelling socialists.

But there is huge support for retention of Clause Four among the Party rank-and-file, and Socialist Organiser is an important tool in the battle to save Labour's soul. Socialists or even fair-minded Labour Party democrats should oppose the Labour Party ban on Socialist Organiser and the expulsion of Labour activists like myself whose only crime is being a revolutionary socialist.

YOUTH FIGHTBACK

Rebellion

... 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.

Youth Fightback is...

Satpal Ram: self-defence is no offence

By Mick

ON WEDNESDAY 21 December, Satpal Ram had his judicial review rejected. However, the judges have recommended that the Home Secretary should look at the case again, under Section 17 of the Criminal Justice Act. We are all hoping that he will then send Satpal's case back to the Court of Appeal.

Satpal is serving a life sentence for murder. In November 1986, Satpal went for an Indian meal in Lozells, Birmingham. A group of white men at another table started shouting that they wanted the music changed, calling it "wog music" and "black crap." When Satpal objected, they turned their racist abuse at him and one of them attacked him with a broken glass. In defending himself, Satpal picked up a knife and stabbed his attacker.

Both men went to hospital for treatment. The racist who attacked Satpal abused the staff and refused to let them treat him and died two hours later.

There were a number of irregularities at the trial. The jury that convicted Satpal was all white, his solicitor didn't plead self-defence, and no translators were supplied for the three Bengali-speaking waiters who were key witnesses.

If Satpal hadn't fought back he might have been killed. For defending himself, the British justice system has given him a life sentence. Satpal should be freed now! Self-defence is no offence!

The campaign asks people to write to the Home Secretary, Home Office,



Demonstrators support Satpal Ram. Photo: Mark Salmon

Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1 and urge that he sends Satpal's case to the Court of Appeal.

● If you want to contact the Free Satpal Campaign or send a message of support, please write to Free Satpal

Campaign, c/o 101 Villa Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B191 NHT. ● Telephone: 021-551 4518.

Prat of the week

OUR PRAT OF the week is Stephen Pollard, the Fabian Society's research officer. He told a conference of educationalists in Oxford that "teachers and Heads should be on five-year rolling contracts and performance related pay." He also argued that a Labour

Government should keep grant maintained schools.

The Fabian Society is a nasty little middle class clique who for 16 years up to the start of the Labour Party in 1900 thought the Liberal Party could be won to managerial "socialism". They hated the 1917 Russian revolution, but, later — when the bureaucratic counter-revolution had buried it — grew to love Stalin's despotic Russian Empire. Now they are the mouthpiece of the yuppies in the Labour Party.

Pollard is only saying openly what Blair would like to make into Labour education policy.

Pollard clearly does not care a jot for working-class kids' education or the rights of teachers forced to work longer hours with bigger classes. Teachers should be able to look to Labour to oppose the Tories' attacks. Instead Pollard wants Labour to attack teachers even more than the Tories. Well, if Pollard is so keen on Tory policies, why doesn't he join the other prats in the Tory Party!

Building the left in Young Labour

"Labour will never win the election unless it can attract the loyalty and enthusiasm of young people..."

Tony Benn MP

The youth section of the Campaign Group Supporters Network has called a conference to build a united left in Young Labour.

The conference will give Young Labour activists an important opportunity to organise for the Young Labour Conference on 3-5 February 1995 in Brighton.

If you are a serious young Labour activist you will be there.

Sunday 22 January 1995, 12 to 5pm
Manchester Lesbian and Gay Centre, Sidney Street, All Saints, Manchester

Registration £2
 waged/with grant; £1 unwaged/without grant
 Cheques to Socialist Youth
 Send to Socialist Youth, c/o 25 Howard Court, London SE15

**PROTEST
and
SURVIVE**
get unionised!

Kevin Sexton, London National Union of Students convenor and Welfare State Network student co-ordinator, explains why students and young people should get involved in the campaign to defend the Welfare State

GOVERNMENT ATTACKS on students and other young people are part of a broad, sustained offensive against the Welfare State and against social provision and benefit rights. This is why you should get involved in the campaign to defend the Welfare State!

By linking the struggles of students and young people with those of trade unionists, pensioners, the disabled and the unemployed, we can build a vibrant, powerful movement and an effective opposition to the Tories.

We can thereby put pressure on the leaders of the Labour Party to commit themselves to restore grants, rescind cuts in education and to properly fund the Welfare State.

This is why the Welfare State Network has launched its campaign, Protest and Survive. Students and young people must get involved in this campaign. We have produced leaflets on

- benefits
- incorporation
- grants
- housing
- health
- the effect of cuts on women
- and what the cuts mean for lesbian, gay and bisexual students.

Petitions have been produced on student grants and the Job Seeker's Allowance.

Students in York are planning to organise a rally in the city centre. In Morecambe a picket is planned of local Tory MP Mark Lennox Boyd in protest at grant cuts.

In Manchester students are organising a picket of Winston Churchill, Tory MP.

London students will be picketing the Department for Education.

Action is planned in Sheffield around the proposals made by Labour and the Social Justice Commission.

Street stalls, leafleting, petitions and above all action are central to building this campaign. Young people can be involved in the fight to defend the Welfare State! Go out and fight to get them involved.

Protest and survive!

Student and young people to defend the Welfare State

Protest and survive: issues for students

By Alison Brown, National Union of Students Executive

Money to study

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP as a result of grant and benefit cuts is now an enormous fact of student life.

Drop-out rates from courses in higher education are at an all-time high. To stay on their course, many students take part-time jobs — usually jobs with low pay and dreadful conditions, and sometimes jobs which are dangerous, illegal or both.

In further education very few courses carry mandatory grant entitlement. Discretionary grants are pitifully small or non-existent. Allowances for young trainees have been cut by more than a half in real terms.

Studying on the dole

FOR MANY students, particularly those in further education, the only option is to study part-time while signing on as unemployed. Students have been able to do this under the 21-hour rule. If they study fewer than 21 hours per week, they remain entitled to claim the dole (subject to the decision of an adjudication panel).

The Tories plan to reduce the number of hours allowed for study to the unemployed to 15. They don't want people to get an education while pushing up the unemployed statistics! The clampdown which the Tories plan will be used in harness with the proposed Job Seeker's Allowance to harass students, and to drive people off worthwhile courses into worthless,

dead-end jobs.

Education in crisis

FE COLLEGES are in fact no longer colleges but 'corporations'. They are run by self-appointed boards of local business people and 'compete' with other colleges for funding and for students. Lecturers are having new contracts of employment imposed on them, which threaten their job conditions and security.

In higher education student numbers have increased, but resources have not been increased to match. Libraries are under-stocked, child-care provision inadequate, and lectures overcrowded. The watchword is: never mind the standards, feel the profits!

Housing

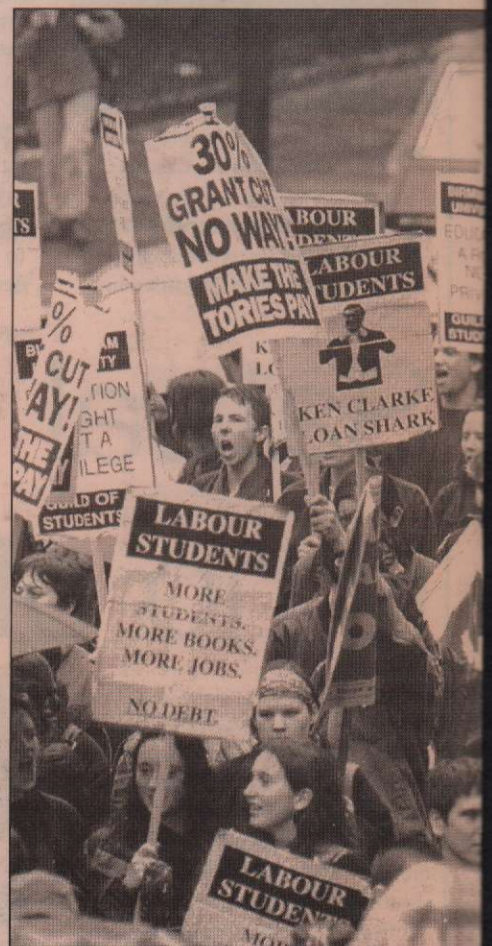
STUDENTS ARE falling prey to a market-dominated housing system which is pushing rents up and standards down. College residences are often cramped, cheaply built and sometimes unfinished, but rents often exceed the student grant. Private sector rents are just as high, often for housing which is insecure, unsafe, damp, infested, and in winter freezing cold.

With short-term tenancies and no system for licensing landlords, students find it impossible to force a fair deal.

Students and health

INCREASING FINANCIAL hardship has led to some documented cases of malnutrition. It also causes stress, which can be compounded by academic and social pressures.

Students need information and advice about



It's action, not words we need from Labour

sexual health. About

- HIV/AIDS
- contraception, Hepatitis B
- pregnancy
- sexuality
- and sexually transmitted diseases.

The information we get is wholly inadequate and often coy and moralistic.

And there are many issues of women's health that are overlooked and not provided for.

Many students find that even if they have a college-based health service, it is usually under-resourced and ill-equipped to respond to their needs.

London loan entitlement: stop the cut!

YOUNG, 'DEPENDENT' students who go to college within 'convenient' travelling distance of their parents' home are expected to live there and, accordingly, they get a lower grant. They are, however, entitled to the same level of student loan as other students (and they need it).

Now the Tories are cutting the loan entitle-



Young people, the biggest victims of homelessness

Plug in to the Welfare State Network!

Affiliation is £25 for student unions and £10 for Labour Clubs. Individual subscriptions £5/£3. Affiliates receive ten copies of each issue of ACTION. Bundles of 25 are available at £6 (unions)/£4 (Labour Clubs).

Please affiliate our organisation to the Welfare State Network. I enclose a cheque for £25/£10, plus a donation of £

Please also send 25 copies of the next issue of ACTION. I enclose £6/£4.

Please add my name as a subscriber. I enclose £5/£3.

Name

Address

..... Organisation

Cheque total: £

Send to: WSN, c/o Southwark TUSU, 42 Braganza Street, London SE17.

**PROTEST
and
SURVIVE**
get unionised!

Action and the State!

an invitation to
student
activists ...

working conference

**Saturday
18 February**

12am til 5pm

University of London Union, Malet St, London

INVITED SPEAKERS include Tony Benn MP, Alan Simpson MP, Sarah Wellings NUS Women's Officer, Jill Mountford Welfare State Network, John Lister London Health Emergency, Kevin Sexton NUS London, Joe Irvin T&GWU, Richard Exell TUC

★ Benefits for youth and students ★ 21 hour rule ★ Job Seeker's Allowance ★ Incapacity Benefit

£5 waged; £3 low-waged; £2 claimants/students with grant; £1 students without grant

A national conference of the Welfare State Network will be held on 8 April in London

• Workshops • Discussions • Debates
Speakers from national and local campaigns
Creche available • Food and bar

For further details please phone 071-639 5068



Students leaders of NUS. Photo: John Harris

What should Labour Students do?

By Mick Duncan

WITH SO many attacks by the Government on students and young people's rights you would imagine that Labour Students (the official organisation of Labour Party students) would be at the forefront of the campaign to defend the Welfare State. But, like the leadership of the Labour Party, they have done nothing.

Labour Students are the biggest group on the Executive of the National Union of Students. In the first term of the current academic year they organised a demonstration — after much pressure from socialists in NUS. Since then they have done nothing.

Why? Because they accept the Tory argument that it is too expensive to provide modern health care, proper education and full benefit and pension rights for everyone. This is rubbish!

The Tories have created a society where million of pounds are spent on arms, where tax cuts are made to benefit the rich and wealthy, a society where the powerful get more wealthy and powerful at the expense of the poor and the

helpless.

The Labour Party leaders do not even believe it is possible to defend and improve basic services. That is why they backed a report made recently by the Social Justice Commission. In some areas this report advocates policies worse than those of the Tories.

It says students in higher education should be charged up to 20% of their tuition fees and that grants should be scrapped completely, in favour of loans. The leaders of Labour Students should clearly state that they are against this proposal and that they will fight it.

Are you in favour of the Labour Party retaining its commitment to socialism and Clause Four? Do you believe that we should have a society where education is free, a society that is not organised around production for profit? Then you should get involved in the Welfare State Network now!

Labour students should send motions to Labour Students Conference later this year criticising the Social Justice Commission report on grants and cuts, and defending Clause Four.

ment of London students assessed as living at their parents' home. 'Convenient' travelling distance is decided by the college, advised by the student's Local Education Authority (who pay their grant). One student was told she should live with her parents in Morden in the far south of London while travelling daily to college in Luton!

This move is a cut in the financial support available to a section of students. And London is a particularly difficult place in which to survive. It is also a step toward the notion that young people should have no choice except to live in their parents' home.

Students should organise to campaign against it. Contact Kevin Sexton at NUS London, c/o ULU, Malet Street, 071-637 1181.

Mature Students Allowance

IN THE Government Budget at the end of last year they announced the 'phasing out' (that is abolition) of the Mature Student's Allowance. This is an extra amount of money included in the grant for students over 26, reflecting additional financial responsibilities they may have. From next academic year, the Allowance will not be awarded to new students.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual students

YOUNG PEOPLE who are lesbian, gay or bisexual or who are exploring their sexuality often find getting away from their parents' home a very helpful and liberating move. Tory Government policies are making this more difficult — cuts in student grants, removal of benefit entitlement during holidays, high youth unem-

ployment, low pay for young workers, the proposed cut in London loan entitlement. Increased dependence on parents is bad news for young people's right to a self-defined, assertive sexuality.

In addition, discrimination against lesbian, gay and bisexual people exists in both health care and education provision.

The NUS Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual campaign is taking up these issues as part of its Stamp Out Homophobia campaign. Contact Alison Brown, NUS, 461 Holloway Road, London N7 6LJ, 071-272 8900.

Women and the Welfare State

WOMEN REMAIN under-represented in further and higher education. Stereotypes, discrimination and harassment are still thriving. Attacks on student financial support hit hardest at those people who are already disadvantaged in the employment market, such as women.

For single parents — 90% of whom are women — the education system puts up huge obstacles. Poor childcare facilities, inflexible study hours, lack of accommodation, few facilities, together with the financial stresses of caring for kids on a student income, make life difficult for student parents.

Additionally, women's health issues are not adequately addressed, and facilities not provided. Women need to get involved in fighting back to defend education and the Welfare State. Contact: Sarah Wellings, NUS Women's Officer, 461 Holloway Road, London N7 6LJ, 071-272 8900.

Ideas for building the Welfare State Network

- Set up a Welfare State campaign group which co-ordinates with local groups and organises local action.
- Run a regular stall with leaflets, petitions and copies of *Action for Health and Welfare*.
- Organise local action, for example, a picket of your local Tory MP or Education Department. Organise a rally. Do a press stunt.
- Book transport to the Working Conference on Fighting the Job Seeker's Allowance and Student Benefit Rights, 18 February. Sell tickets!
- Pass a motion through your student union and Labour Club to affiliate to the Welfare State Network. Send a motion to NUS conference.
- Contact all existing local groups which campaign on hospital closures, council cuts, benefit rights. Involve students and young people in these campaigns.
- Launch a campaign against the Job Seeker's Allowance
- Raise issues which particularly affect the students at your college. For instance, in the further education sector the most immediate issues are the Job Seeker's Allowance and the 21-hour rule. In higher education, grant cuts and access to benefits should be agitated around.
- Target particular groups and societies who might want to get involved:
 - anti-racist groups
 - women's groups
 - lesbian, gay and bisexual groups
 - mature students
 - disabled students.

**PROTEST
and SURVIVE
get unionised!**

The early days of Trotskyism

“All my preconceptions and prejudices were exploded out of my mind”

“The revolution was made by those who began with books, not those who began with bombs”, Leon Trotsky once commented.

He was looking back on the arguments in the Russian revolutionary movement before the workers took power in 1917. The “Social Revolutionaries”, who went off to throw bombs at hated officials of the old regime, had sneered at the Marxists who insisted on studying books to develop a theory which could link up with and guide the social explosive material of the working class.

After 1917 the revolution degenerated. From 1923 Trotsky and his comrades, the determined fighters for workers’ democracy, were much harassed by the increasingly privileged bureaucracy round Josef Stalin.

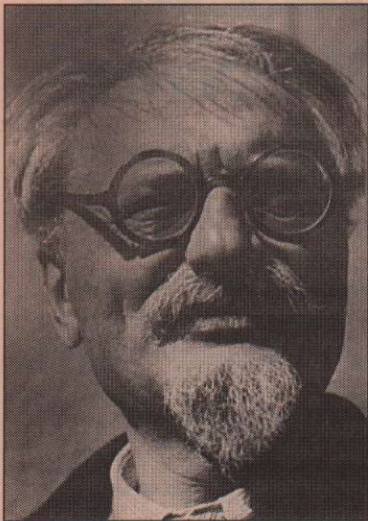
The Trotskyist movement in the USA — and in all English-speaking countries — started with a book, one book which had the impact of a bomb on the thinking of a few determined revolutionaries. It was Trotsky’s “Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International”.

Trotsky and his comrades had by then been forced into exile in remote areas of the USSR, but, through some bureaucratic quirk, his critique was translated and distributed to some of the delegates to the world congress of Communist Parties in 1928.

The Draft Programme had been written by Nikolai Bukharin, who would himself fall victim to Stalinist repression in 1929. In 1928 he was still Stalin’s ally in the fight against Trotsky. His task in the Draft Programme was to weave the ridiculous dogmas developed by Stalin to justify himself — “socialism in one country” (i.e. the USSR), and “workers’ and peasants’ parties” in place of workers’ parties — into some show of Marxist orthodoxy.

“All my preconceptions and prejudices were exploded out of my mind” by Trotsky’s criticism, wrote the American revolutionary Max Shachtman in the account which we reprint here from *Socialist Appeal*, 22 October 1938. Shachtman was one of those who — together with James P Cannon and Martin Abern — founded the American Trotskyist movement in 1928.

This is the first of two parts. The second part deals with how the Communist Party expelled and harassed the pioneer Trotskyists.



Leon Trotsky

THERE ARE very few examples of the power and influence that can be exerted on the movement by forceful ideas than the “document”, as we called it.

I refer to comrade Trotsky’s criticism of the draft programme of the Communist International written by Stalin and Bukharin for the Sixth Congress in Moscow in the summer of 1928.

In this country we had only a very faint idea of the fundamental issues

involved in the struggle of the Trotskyist Opposition against the ruling clique in the Russian party and the Comintern — and that idea was a very carefully distorted and misrepresented one. Overwhelmingly preoccupied by what we thought were the all-important issues in the factional fight that raged incessantly in the American Communist Party, the comrades of what was then generally called the Cannon group paid very little attention to the truly world-shaking problems that were being debated in the Soviet Union.

Our one consolation was that we were always somewhat uneasy about the savage fury with which the organiser of the October [1917] Revolution and his comrades were assailed and the extreme measures that were taken against them; as a result, we allowed the Lovestoneites and Fosterites, especially the former, to distinguish themselves in the notorious campaign of Trotsky-baiting, and we confined ourselves to a passive acceptance of what was being done without joining in, either in writing or in speeches, with the attacks upon our Russian comrades.

Our general dissatisfaction with the “American decisions” of the Comintern, which were to us, so utter-



In Moscow, then the headquarters of world revolution although the bureaucracy was already getting a grip, around 1925: Bill Dunne, Tom O’Flaherty, Bill Haywood, James P Cannon. Cannon and O’Flaherty became pioneer Trotskyists (O’Flaherty dropped out in 1931 and died in 1936); so did Bill Dunne’s brothers, though Bill himself became a Stalinist. Bill Haywood had been a leader of the revolutionary trade union movement, the Industrial Workers of the World. Forced into exile in Moscow by US government persecution, he died there in 1928.

ly and perversely wrong and “incomprehensible,” formed the background for the attendance of our delegate, comrade Cannon, at the Sixth Congress. It was there that Trotsky’s masterful criticism of the Stalin-Bukharin programme, writing in his Alma-Ata exile, was carefully circulated among picked delegates — members of the programme com-

“How cruelly we had been victimised into ignorance, into going by the official line, by the Kremlin machine which was to accentuate its course in the years to come to the point of unprecedented monstrosity.”

mission and heads of the delegations. There is no doubt of the tremendous effect which the “document” had on all the delegates. But only Cannon, and Maurice Spector who was delegated from the Canadian party, decided to make the convictions which the unassailable logic of the criticism aroused in them, the basis for their future revolutionary activity.

They decided to bring the “document” back to America and use it as the basis for organising the struggle at home in solidarity with the Russian

Bolshevik Opposition.

More easily said than done. For not only was each copy numbered, but the strictest instructions had been issued for the return of all copies to the Comintern Secretariat. What an eloquent commentary on the state of affairs in the Comintern as early as 1928 that responsible delegates of the Congress decided to steal and smuggle out of the country one of the most precious documents of Marxian thought.

They found it necessary to purloin a document which, from any point of view, was rightfully theirs, and which they had a duty to communicate to those revolutionists in their own party (not to say all parties) who had delegated them to Moscow.

It was through these two comrades, aided by an old Bolshevik militant then resident in Moscow, that the first copy of Trotsky’s magnificent critique was brought out of Russia and made available to the vanguard revolutionists who laid the first solid stones in this country of the movement now united in the Fourth International.

Apart from our general background in the principles of communism and our repugnance for bureaucratism, chicanery and opportunism which we had up to then considered to be mainly a phenomenon of the American party, we had nothing to start with save the “document”. But it proved to be more than enough.

I was the first or second comrade in this country to have it presented to me to read — out of a hidden corner in one of Cannon’s cupboards at home! — and I shall always remember the excitement with which I read through for the first time, and then a second and third time and the stunning effect

with which all my preconceptions and prejudices were exploded out of my mind. And the shame I felt to think that in the five years of the dispute this was the only important writing of Trotsky that I had read. How frightfully provincial we had been all this time; how cruelly we had been victimised into ignorance, into going by the official line, by the Kremlin machine which was to accentuate its course in the years to come to the point of unprecedented monstrosity — a point which we simply could not conceive of ten years ago.

I cannot think of any single document that served its purpose better. Marty Abern, Jim Cannon and I — members or alternates of the party Central Committee — and our first associates, Rose Karsner and the late Tom O’Flaherty, did not need many discussions among ourselves to decide, after a thorough reading of the “document” to carry on the fight for our newly-acquired convictions regardless of the immediate outcome. Of the final outcome we have never had any doubts.

Part two in the next issue

The Third International After Lenin

Includes Trotsky’s Critique of the Draft Programme of the Communist International!

£4.95 plus £1 postage from: Workers’ Liberty Book Service, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Three murderous friends fall out



Matt Cooper
reviews

Shallow Grave

Directed by
Danny Boyle

THOUGH uneven and flawed, *Shallow Grave* is, nevertheless, a competent thriller. At times brutality is used artificially as a shortcut to building up the tension on which it relies.

This British film, which compares unfavourably with some of the recent American thrillers, begs comparison with one of the best films of last year, John Dahl's nasty and violent *Last Seduction*. Dahl's film succeeds as both a thriller and as an entertaining film because Dahl mined a rich seam of black humour. But where Dahl held nastiness in check, *Shallow Grave* is at times overwhelmed by it. The film often curdles into the constituent parts — social satire, black comedy, thriller — that the makers have tried to blend: it is not a coherent whole.

While it has its moments, *Shallow Grave* is too much of an uneven hotch-potch, at times close to Michael Winneresque sadistic voyeurism.

The film follows three Edinburgh yuppies in their search for a fourth flatmate: journalist Alex (Ewan McGregor), the straitlaced accountant (Christopher Eccleston) and the doctor Juliet (Kerry Fox). The three eventually settle for the urbane Hugo (Keith Allen) purporting to be a novelist. But Hugo is not what he seems. Soon dead of a drug overdose, he leaves the flatmates with a dead body and a suitcase full of money.

"While it has its moments, Shallow Grave is at times close to Michael Winneresque sadistic voyeurism."

In interring Hugo in the shallow grave of the title are the three also digging their own? The late Hugo's gangster acquaintances come after the money, and the friendship of the three soon starts to disintegrate under the pressures of greed and paranoia.

Sadly these two strands are not integrated, existing largely as two separate subplots, although the plot does manage to twist and surprise with some originality. The refreshing thing about modern thrillers is that nemesis is by no means univer-



The terrible trio

sally guaranteed. Christopher Eccleston chillingly portrays the emergence of a brutal killer from the interior of the quiet accountant, under the pressure of the horror of what he had done.

Those with a strong constitution will find a lot in this film, particularly the thoroughly tough, unsentimental and subtle shift of the three's friendship into murderous hate.

In the end, the film fails, undermined by its unsettling use of violence as a substitute of tension. The threat of violence is always trumped by the premature and overly graphic actuality.

Legal /illegal

By Peggy Seeger and Euan McColl

Every time you pick up a newspaper,
Every time you switch on the TV
You can bet your old boots that at some point you'll see
A top ranking copper or else an MP
Calling on all who are British and free
To stand up and defend law and order.

It's illegal to rip off a payroll,
It's illegal to hold up a train,
But it's legal to rip off a million or two
That comes from the labour that other folk do:
To plunder the many on behalf of the few
Is a thing that is perfectly legal.

It's illegal to kill off a landlord
Or to trespass upon his estate,
But to change a high rent for a slum is OK
To condemn adults and three children to stay
In a hovel that's rotten with damp and decay,
Is a thing that is perfectly legal.

If your job turns you into a zombie
It's legal to feel some despair,
But don't be aggressive, that is if you're smart,
And for Christ's sake don't upset the old apple cart:
Remember, the boss has your interests at heart
And it pains him to see you unhappy.

If you fashion a bomb in the kitchen

You're guilty of breaking the law,
But a bloody great nuclear plant is OK
Though platinum processing hastens the day
When this tight little isle may be blasted away,
Nonetheless, it is perfectly legal.

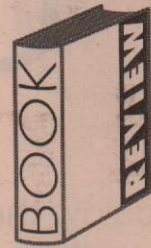
It's illegal if you are a gypsy
To camp by the side of the road,
But it's proper for the rich and the great
To live in a mansion and own an estate
That was got from the people by pillage and rape:
That's what they call a tradition.

It's illegal to carve up your missus
Or put poison in your old man's tea,
But poison the rivers, the seas and the skies,
And poison the mind of a nation with lies,
If it's done in the interests of free enterprise,
Then it's proper and perfectly legal.

It's legal to join a trade union
And to picket is one of your rights,
But don't be offensive when scabs cross the line,
Be nice to the coppers and keep this in mind:
To picket effectively, that is a crime,
Worse than if you had murdered your mother!

It's legal to sing on the telly,
But they make bloody sure that you don't
If you sing about racists and fascists and creeps,
And thieves in high places who live off the weak,
And those who are selling us right up the creek —
The twisters, the takers, the conmen, the fakers,
The whole bloody gang of exploiters.

Whose politics
needs
creeps?



Martin Thomas reviews
Socialism by Michael
Meacher MP, Peter Hain MP,
Alan Simpson MP and
Clare Short MP

£3
Tribune

CLARE SHORT'S contribution is a shoddy attempt to make Tony Blair's attempt to scrap Clause Four look radical. As Short remarks, in a revealing aside, "politics needs creeps".

She calls on us to "think afresh", but her "fresh" thinking just repeats very old thoughts. Socialism, she claims, "is an ethical and not an economic system... When it is clear that socialism is an ethical system it follows that it will never be built".

A very convenient view, especially for Labour Party leaders trying to wriggle away from rank-and-file demands for building socialism!

Peter Hain denounces the huge power of the big financial institutions in the City, and demands "democratic direction of the huge resources of finance capital", but proposes not public ownership but "decentralisation of control, ownership and decision-making".

Michael Meacher points out what is wrong with such rhetoric. "Unless the big wielders of institutional power can be brought into line with the objectives sought on the ground... the latter won't happen". But Meacher has no idea of how the bankers and bosses can be "brought into line", still less of how capitalist hierarchies of power could be scrapped altogether, not just restrained.

"Clare Short's contribution is a shoddy attempt to make the Tony Blair's attempt to scrap Clause Four look radical."

Alan Simpson's contribution is livelier, but not, I think, one of his better articles. Like the others, his article suggests that Labour should coax and cajole big business, not take it over: "a Labour government... must shift its favouring from the transnational corporations towards smaller nationally, regionally or locally based enterprises".

He draws hope, unjustified I think, from Tony Blair's talk of "community". An attachment to "community" can mean conformism, hostility to misfits or outsiders, parochialism, nationalism, even racism, as easily as it can mean anything positive.

Peter Hain tries to give a radical gloss to his weakness on public ownership by claiming to look to a "libertarian socialist strand [which] goes back to the Levellers.... Robert Owen, William Morris, and G D H Cole".

Labour activists would be better advised to go back to the real William Morris, the revolutionary Marxist William Morris. "What I mean by Socialism is a condition of society in which there should be neither rich nor poor..."

Is screen violence

We continue below the debate about screen violence. Further contributions to this debate are welcome, but please keep them short! Write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Ubiquitous but not uniform

By Clive Bradley

THE DEBATE in *Socialist Organiser* about film violence seems to me to confuse a number of different issues.

First of all, it's important to establish exactly what we are arguing about. There are different kinds of film violence. The *Home Alone* movies are very violent. There's the violence of action/adventure movies of the *Die Hard/Terminator* type; of horror, like the *Hellraiser* movies;

of the martial arts films which were popular a decade ago; and of largely satirical movies like Quentin Tarantino's. These types of screen violence range from the cartoonish, which nobody could possibly take seriously, to the utterly gratuitous and sadistic.

There's also a distinction to be made between what you might call 'thematic' violence — storylines about violent events — and violence as a special effect — the graphic, explicit portrayal of injury and death. Thematic violence is as



Romper Stomper: many socialists called for it to be banned. But did it just show how nasty Nazis can be?

old as film. Cowboys, war movies, gangster movies and so on were all about violent people doing violent things. What's different these days is the way their violence is shown on the screen. People no longer simply get shot and die; their guts spill out over the props.

And it is this latter type — violence as special effect — which upsets people most. This matters, because it seems to me screen violence can be judged not only by moral criteria, but by dramatic ones. Is the violence there for a reason? It's not fair to judge all films by the standards of the worst, where violence serves no function except to enhance the movie's supposed commerciality.

It's not just in 'arthouse' movies where violence might be dramatically justified. The opening scene of *Speed*, which I recently saw, has Dennis Hopper plunge a metal object through a janitor's skull, shown very graphically. It's horrific, obviously. But it serves a purpose. It shows us that the Dennis Hopper character is a maniac who is extremely dangerous, which then makes us afraid on behalf of the movie's hero, Keanu Reeves, which helps us to identify with him in the ensuing conflict. If we didn't know quite how crazy and dangerous Dennis Hopper is, the film would be a lot less exciting and engrossing. It wouldn't work as well dramatically.

Certainly, the best movies of this type rely on tension more than explicit violence. But there has to be some pay-off for the tension to work. *Silence of the Lambs*, for example, is not a particularly bloody film — certainly it could have been a lot bloodier when you consider that there are two serial killers in it. But I think if we never saw anything at all on screen to show what Hannibal Lecter is capable of, the character would be less effective.

Alan Johnson in *SO620* quotes approvingly Brett Easton Ellis, whose book *American Psycho* is, I

believe, being made into a movie. *American Psycho* is a horrendously violent novel and could only be a horrendously violent film. But the (sadistic, misogynistic, homophobic) violence has to be there. The book is a vicious satire on Donald Trump Yuppie New York, where the main character's brutal murders serve to show the utter soullessness and dehumanisation of corporate capitalism. If the violence was more muted, the satire wouldn't have any impact.

If it's wrong to judge films by these criteria, if the only criteria are moral ones, we need to know exactly what the moral criteria are. Alan Johnson writes movingly of the descent of his family's community in North Shields into violence and crime over recent years. But what exactly is he saying? That screen violence is responsible for it? He says "it plays its part". Almost certainly, some of it does. Kids undoubtedly are influenced by what they see on their videos.

But a much bigger part is played by boredom and/or drugs. Society has become more violent over the last decade. It's not surprising if popular culture — film, TV, music — reflects that change. It would be absurd, and indeed in a different way just as disturbing, if popular culture was safely sanitised, free of nasty people doing nasty things, when everybody knows that the streets in the real world are more dangerous places to walk.

Studies on young people who have been involved in crime have suggested that they watch no more videos or TV than young people who haven't: indeed, maybe less, because they often come from families who can't afford video recorders, or sometimes they have been institutionalised in places with no access to videos. And it's pretty obvious that plenty of people watch violent films without becoming violent criminals.

A bigger question than what role screen violence plays in making society violent, is what it is about

society which makes people want to watch violence on screen (or listen to gangsta-rap, etc).

This is not to say that we (as socialists, or as human beings) should not be critical of amoral or gratuitous film violence, any more than we should be uncritical or anything else which simply reflects abhorrent aspects of society without challenging them. But it does demand of us a sense of proportion.

Alan is dismissive about the issue of censorship. But this is the only political matter which this discussion raises. Unless we intend to make our own movies, with different values, there isn't much we can do about the unpleasantness of the movies we get, except agitate for them to be censored. As I'm sure most *SO* readers would agree, censorship is a dangerous weapon, because it would inevitably affect a lot more film-makers or other artists than we intended it to. It wouldn't just put a stop to gratuitous films with no artistic merit: film-makers who want to make original, challenging movies would also end up getting banned — as Oliver Stone has recently found out under our existing censorship laws. I don't particularly like Oliver Stone's films, but I think I have a right to see them.

In Hollywood, the main voices against film violence want to replace it with a return to old-fashioned American family values. In Britain, the movie mainstream is endless Merchant Ivory-type things set in a prettified English past designed for the American market. (Whatever you think of Quentin Tarantino, he's got to be more interesting than that).

These are things over which we can have no influence. It could be that in the future, more than now, our influence is needed to defend the artistic freedom of film-makers. Blanket condemnation of screen violence, drawing no distinctions between different films and their merits, won't help us do that.



Last Action Hero: good guy violence any better than bad guy?

Force deadly?



Just like in real life... Tim Roth (Mr. Orange) bleeds slowly and painfully to death in *Reservoir Dogs*

Showing it like it is

By Mark Sandell

I AGREE with much of what Alan Johnson says in "The Muck of Ages" (*SO620*).

I used to travel regularly by a bus which went from outside a book shop. The whole window display of this shop was made up of books and magazines devoted to 'real life crimes', serial killers, rapists, murderers etc. I found this sickening. I also found the voyeuristic blanket coverage of the Bulger case so offensive that I avoided the TV news in order to escape the lurid presentation of details of the crime.

Much popular culture does glorify violence, but as Alan points out, we live in a violent society. Where I live in South London, shootings are becoming a regular event. Is this escalation of violence a result, as many argue and as Alan seems to imply, of TV, films and books promoting violence?

The roots of the violence in society are deep in the material conditions of people's lives. Obviously, there is a cultural element — an element of ideology — in people's responses to their conditions, but the connection is not a simple one.

If violence in popular culture leads directly to a violent society, Japan

would be one of the most violent countries in the world. But it is not. It has to be said that if violent art did lead directly to violence, it would be hard to oppose some censorship of violent art.

In fact, violence in art is one small reflection of the violence in society (though the relationship is not just one way). Art has to deal with the reality of the world, and this means dealing with the fact of violence in society.

The debate over violence in films has raged most fiercely recently over Quentin Tarantino's films. One result has been the banning of the video release of *Reservoir Dogs*. Having seen both *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* I think the targetting of Tarantino is unfair.

Neither of these films glorifies violence. Despite the snappy images and stylish camera work, both films seem to me to condemn violence and ridicule the gangsters they depict. The characters — especially in *Pulp Fiction* — are not cut-out heroes or anti-heroes. They are violent thugs, who talk about their lives in an everyday fashion. These thugs are not the brilliant and warped body-shredding serial killers of *Silence of the Lambs*. Nor are they the cool 'men of steel' of the *Godfather* films. And they certainly are not the heroic supermen of the fantastically violent

action films that continually come out of Hollywood.

Much of the fuss about the Tarantino films is about the depiction of violence. Here I strongly disagree with the censors. In most action films the body count is vast, the hero emerges only slightly scathed, having finished off innumerable cardboard bodies who obediently drop dead, fall-off buildings and die in time, circus-style. What crap this is! If you shoot someone in the stomach they will die slowly and in agony — just as the character in *Reservoir Dogs* does. If film is to depict violence, at least it should show the real horror of the violence in American inner-city life with its gun law and agony.

Reservoir Dogs and *Pulp Fiction* seem a lot less objectionable than many movies. *Reservoir Dogs* ends with the

really rather stupid thugs killing each other. The finale of *Pulp Fiction* involves one gangster giving up the killing game, another being shot by his intended victim, the gangster boss being raped and the 'hero' and his lover escaping against impossible odds.

So why is there all the fuss about Tarantino films? Perhaps it's because he does quite a good job of showing just how violent and nasty inner-city America is — with no sign of the white hero cop coming to save the day.

I do not claim Tarantino has a great message, or that he has much integrity. Perhaps because he does not want to carry any message — including the message of the American Dream — his films are a better and more honest reflection of the gangsterism of American society than most other action films.

Copy cats!

By Ian Hollingworth

THANK-YOU TO Alan Johnson (*SO620*) for taking Matt Cooper to task over his laid-back attitude to film violence. What Matt sees may have little or no effect on him because, a. he is adult and, b. he has the advantage of an educated viewpoint, i.e. violence in film is only one influence among many in his comparatively rich and varied life.

Contrast this to the impact of screen violence on children whose lives are blighted to the extent that its influence assumes major proportions by virtue of the absence of countervailing experiences.

Observe these kids in the playground acting out the fantasies they have watched for want of anything better to do the previous night, and then tell us all to "loosen up."

It all depends on the audience, Matt.

Pamphlets from Workers' Liberty and Socialist Organiser

| | |
|---|-------|
| How to save the Welfare State | 95p |
| New problems, new struggles: a handbook for trade unionists | 90p |
| We stand for Workers' Liberty | £1.50 |
| A workers' guide to Ireland | 95p |
| The lies against socialism answered | 50p |
| How to beat the racists | 95p |
| Socialism and democracy | £1.95 |
| 1917: how the workers made a revolution | 60p |
| Israel/Palestine: two nations, two states! | 30p |
| Magnificent miners: the 1984-5 strike | 75p |
| The case for socialist feminism | £1.50 |
| Socialists answer the New Right | £1.50 |
| Organising for socialism | 60p |
| Lenin and the October Revolution | 50p |

Issues for socialists

| | |
|---|-----|
| Socialists and the Labour Party: the case of the Walton by-election | £1 |
| Why Labour lost | 80p |
| Arabs, Jews and socialism | £3 |
| Ireland: the socialist answer | £2 |
| Reassessing the Eastern Bloc | 60p |
| Why Yugoslavia collapsed | 75p |
| East Europe: towards capitalism or workers' liberty? | 60p |
| The Gulf War: issues for Labour | 75p |
| Malcolm X | 80p |
| Marxism, Stalinism and Afghanistan | £2 |
| Solidarity with the South African socialists | £1 |

The AWL and the left

| | |
|--|-------|
| Is the SWP an alternative? | 75p |
| Open letter to a supporter of Militant | 20p |
| Why the SWP beats up its socialist critics | 80p |
| A tragedy of the left: Socialist Worker and its splits | £2 |
| Seedbed of the left: the origins of today's far-left groups | £1.50 |
| Workers' Power: a tale of kitsch Trotskyism | £2 |
| The "Worker Leadership" against Marxism | £2 |
| Their polemics and ours: excerpts from Socialist Organiser and Socialist Outlook | 90p |
| Liverpool: what went wrong? | 20p |

AWL education bulletins

| | |
|---|-------|
| Building the AWL: decisions of the third AWL conference | £1.50 |
| Lenin and the Russian Revolution | £1 |
| Marxism and black nationalism | £1.50 |
| Why did working class militancy collapse in the face of Thatcherism? | 50p |
| The collective organiser: revolutionaries and the revolutionary paper | £1.50 |
| Study notes on <i>Capital</i> | £2.50 |

Discussion papers on economics

| | |
|---|-------|
| Exporting misery: capitalism, imperialism and the Third World | 80p |
| Why does capitalism have crises? | 75p |
| The tendencies of capital and profit | £1 |
| Imperialism and the Marxist classics | £1.50 |
| Time's Carcase: value and the Sraffian criticism | £1 |

Order from WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Add 20% for postage. Orders over £10 post free.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty dayschools

NEWCASTLE

Saturday 28 January

Day school: "Can revolution happen in Britain"

Rossetti Studios, Leazes Lane

SHEFFIELD

Saturday 11 February

Day school: "Questions for socialists"

SCCAU 11am-4pm

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy AGM 1995
Saturday 11 March 1995
Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London
11am to 4.30pm
Open to individual supporters, observers and delegates
 More details: CLPD, 10 Park Drive, London, NW11 7SH

A WORKERS' GUIDE TO IRELAND



The pamphlet is dedicated to all the workers of the British Empire and the divided Irish Republic — Change, Green, and Green in White and Change all — all by possessing Ireland in 1922. It is dedicated to the Irish labour movement on both sides of the ocean, which must fight its way out of the bourgeois state capitalism that has made Ireland and built the only republic that is not a gross and cynical mockery of the long struggle of the Irish people for freedom — the workers' republic.

Workers' Liberty special 95p

800 years of history in words and pictures
95p plus 28p postage from WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Why socialists say scrap the monarchy!

Up the Republic!

SOcialists ARE democrats. You can not have socialism, collective ownership and administration of the economy and society, without democracy.

Socialism is self-rule in the economy; democracy, self-rule in politics. You can not do without political democracy if you are to have economic and social democracy.

Much that has to be decided about economy and society can only be decided at the level of the overall administration of society, that is, politically. Democracy is indivisible. Democracy can not exist in the economy and society if it is not part of an overall political democracy. You can not have self-rule that is not... self-rule.

Socialists have to be the best democrats here and now. We know and say that the democracy we have under capitalism is at best shallow political democracy. Most of the decisions that shape our lives are, under this system, taken by capitalist individuals or by groups of capitalists in the boardrooms of companies that are often as powerful as states were a hundred years ago. We fight to extend democracy.

For this reason, a recent opinion poll about attitudes to the monarchy

A B C

of socialism

By Prometheus

is good news. 27 per cent of those polled no longer want an unelected hereditary monarch to head the British state. Almost as many more, while not repudiating the monarchy, don't care much for it, and do not expect it to last much longer.

For the issue here is democracy. The Windsor royal family are worthless drones, but the principle would be the same if they were all of them fine specimens of humanity.

To have the members of any family as successive heads of the British state on the grounds of who they are, or who their ancestors were, is to enshrine at the heart of the British constitution a deep insult to the rest of us. It is a stark denial of key principles of political democracy: equality, and the right to elect officials.

The Queen as Head of State has reserve powers that could be used even against Parliament in conditions of sharp social and class conflict. In Australia, in 1975, a Labour government was sacked by the Governor-General acting on the Queen's authority.

The growth of republican sentiment in Britain in the last decade has been promoted by sections of the capitalist Establishment intent on cutting the monarch down to size. The great inflated monstrosity we have now, with its very expensive pomp and glitter is, in fact, only about 100 years old.

It was designed to be the head of a vast world-wide empire. The British monarch was also Empress of India. All that is gone now. So some in the Establishment was a scaled-down

monarchy on the lines of Holland, Belgium, or Scandinavia. Prince Charles may agree.

We need the monarchy not to be cut down to a smaller scale, but cut to ribbons and flung on the scrap heap of history. The growth of popular republicanism indicates an increasing unwillingness by the British people to look on anyone as their "natural betters". It shows a decline of deference, a growth in democratic sentiment.

Despite the power now of bourgeois ideas, and the weakness of explicit socialism, this change of opinion is a force on the side of socialism. Real popular democratic sentiment always is.

General democratic sentiment — "I'm as good as you" — is, of course, not enough. Socialists need to bring into the mixture the idea that a five-yearly vote for president or parliament is still far from effective self-rule.

Only socialism can structure society for real democratic self-rule at every level.

Even so, the dying groans of age-old deference — even when they come with the confusing yelps and barking of the tabloid press — are music to the ears of socialists.

Socialist Worker and Clause Four

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Gerry Bates

"EVERY TRADE unionist should join the campaign to keep Clause Four... Send the motion to the Labour Party..."

Yes, indeed! Who says so? Socialist Worker (7 January)! The same Socialist Worker which spends a lot of space telling socialists to get out of the Labour Party and leave it to the likes of Tony Wardrobe Blair.

So what are they saying now? "Join the campaign to keep Clause Four". The SWP is telling people to join the Labour Party? Certainly that would be the sensible way to "join the campaign to keep Clause Four".

In fact, though, the SWP's conclusion is that their supporters should move "defend Clause Four" resolutions in their trade union branches, and "send the motion to the Labour Party and your union office".

The SWP leaders, who have the instincts of heat-guided missiles, have seen that there is new life in Labour's left wing and a lot of activity around Clause Four, and want to get close enough to... to do what? To persuade people to leave the Labour Party and join the SWP! That's their game, always and everywhere.

If Blair wins on Clause Four, they

will take up Blair's right-wing cry from the "left" — socialists should get out of the Labour Party!

Yet to "get in on the act" here they have to expose the absurdity of Socialist Worker's usual pretence that the Labour Party is something radically different from the unions. They wind up combining their denunciations of Labour Party activity with a proposal that their supporters should do Labour Party work — but only halfway, only through the unions, not through the wards and constituencies.

Not only the irresponsibility, but also the incoherence, of the SWP is very plainly indicated here. Serious socialists, recognising that the Labour Party is still the political wing of the unions, should indeed "fight to save Clause Four" — by joining the Labour Party not only as trade-union levy-payers, but also as individual members.

Is the SWP an alternative?
 75p plus 19p postage from WL Publications, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Unity is strength

LETTER

I READ YOUR paper for the first time over Christmas. Over the last couple of years I have also read Socialist Outlook, Socialist Worker, Militant and Newline newspapers. I have also seen a magazine called Living Marxism.

What I cannot understand is why there are so many different papers and magazines. I know I have not read all of them, not by a long chalk!

I agree with most of what I have seen in all these publications. All of you are committed socialists.

All of this division seems crazy to me. I hate the Conservative Government and I hate the capitalist system.

Needless to say the Labour Party, led by Tony Blair, has nothing to offer working-class people. I think we need one big socialist organisation. If only all the different groups, papers and magazines could unite, we would have a real start. You all have more in common with each other than you do with either the Conservatives or Labour.

Unity is strength, so let's have one paper and one organisation!

P Jackson, London W4

Subscribe to Socialist Organiser

Name

Address

Enclosed (tick as appropriate):

- £5 for 10 issues
- £25 for a year
- £13 for six months
- £ extra donation

Cheques/postal orders payable to "WL Publications"
 Return to: **Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA**
 Australia: \$70 for a year, from WL, PO Box 313, Leichhardt 2040. Cheques payable to "Workers' Liberty"
 USA: \$90 for a year, from Barry Finger, 153 Henderson Place, East Windsor, NJ 08520. Cheques payable to "Barry Finger"

SOCIALIST Issue this week
MAHEOLM
 Behind the hype
see page 12

STRIKE TOGETHER!

Unite to beat sackings, sell-offs, cuts

INDUSTRIAL

Tyneside workers plan cuts strike on 1 February

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By Kenny Bell

FACED with projected cuts of £20 million over the next three years - £7 million in the next financial year - the workers of Newcastle City Council and across Tyneside have decided to take action.

The GMB, TGWU, UCATT and AEEU have joined UNI-

SON and the teachers' unions in planning a Day of Action on 1 February. UNISON, with over 7000 members in the city, the NUT, and the NASUWT, are all balloting for strike action on that day.

We are calling on other workers across Tyneside to stop work — the FBU and NUCPS are among unions that have already indicated support. Tenants'

associations, the Northern Region TUC, the local Trades Councils, and UNISON regionally are joining those looking to bring Tyneside to a standstill.

Our struggle is being supported by the District Labour Party and the council Labour Group itself — they've had enough as well. They will be releasing Labour councillors to go round to workplace meetings and rally support. We're talking to the neighbouring authorities within Tyne and Wear, Northumberland, Durham — this movement is seen as a springboard for national action.

We are suggesting 22 March as a focus for discussion around a date for coordinated national action, right across UNISON and the NUT, against local government cuts.

The message to the Tory government is: we've had enough of cuts. We don't want any more cuts. This is our area. We live here, we work here — or we want to. We've had enough.

● Abridged with thanks from an article for "Trade Union News".

● Newcastle City UNISON have also organised a national meeting on 14 January for branches in other local authorities facing cuts to discuss a joint strategy. The meeting is at Sheffield Town Hall, 12 noon to 3pm. Further details from Newcastle UNISON, 091-232 8520 ext 6980.

Left scores in RMT vote

RAILWAYS

THE VOTE for president of the rail union RMT has shown increasing support for the left.

In the first round Rob Dawber, whose platform included renationalisation of the railways without compensation, Clause Four, a fighting union, and officials on a worker's wage, got 2,995 votes, while the sitting right-winger got 6,128.

Rob, having entered the contest late because there was no satisfactory left candidate, has shown what a fighting campaign can do. The left in the RMT can make major advances in the next election if it prepares properly.

Wandsworth Fightback

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By a Wandsworth UNISON member

WANDSWORTH COUNCIL are announcing cuts almost daily. The latest proposal includes 22 redundancies for administration workers in Social Services. There is a members' meeting to discuss the response. There will also be a lobby of the Social Services Committee on Wednesday January 18th organised by Wandsworth Fightback.

Pensioners from all over London will be joining them

because of Wandsworth's recent outrageous action. It is the only London borough opposing extending the present free pensioners travel passes to British Rail services. As such it will block the scheme — unless it is made to change its mind.

Wandsworth Fightback have also taken imaginative, peaceful direct action such as laying a wreath at a councillors door and leafleting the neighbours.

Lobby: Wednesday January 18th, 6.30pm at Wandsworth Town Hall. For more details contact: Wandsworth Fightback, 248 Lavender Hill, London, SW11

NUT right wing try to ditch SATs boycott

SCHOOLS

By Ian Murch, NUT executive

THE EXECUTIVE of the NUT effectively decided to abandon the SATs boycott at a special meeting on 16 December.

The decision is to be dressed up as not meaning an end to the boycott. It will be said that we are cooperating with the assessment and testing arrangements only where they do not result in excessive workload. However, the decision on what constitutes excessive workload will not be made by the members affected. They will have to approach the National Union on a casework basis for support.

Teachers are united in their concern about workload and continue to reject the use of league tables and national comparators.

Of over 40,000 teachers surveyed by the NUT on the 1995 testing arrangements, 93 per cent

said that teachers' concerns had not been met, while over 95 per cent opposed league tables. More than 90 per cent of respondents rejected the government's package which included allowing tests to be administered by external markers.

It is hard to find anything new in what Sheppard is saying other than a promise that the Union will be consulted when the 1995 tests are evaluated — a very small price for agreeing to take part.

McAvoy and the Broad Left were almost certain to call off the boycott whatever Gillian Sheppard said, so long as she did not publicly slap them in the face. To call, in advance of the meeting with her, a Special Executive for the day after, indicated this.

Loss of negotiating rights in 1987 was a bigger issue for the leadership of the Union than for the membership. Having to cover for absent colleagues, having to teach bigger classes, having to do SATs,

only affect members, not senior Union officials. For the latter, having no-one to negotiate with removes a lot their *raison d'être*, their prestige and their West End dining opportunities.

Being allowed to see Government Ministers is not negotiating. It doesn't bring agreements that can protect members. But it does mean that the feet are back under the table. The Union is behaving as though it is the person slipping off the cliff edge reaching for a rescuing hand from Ms. Sheppard.

In fact the situation ought really to be much nearer the opposite. The Government needs to rescue itself from the complete loss of credibility of its education reforms. Yet so complete has been the Union's capitulation that the Secretary of State has denied in the media making any of the concessions to the NUT that it claims.

● (Abridged from CDFU Bulletin)

Keep up the boycott!

By Liam Conway, Central Notts NUT.

NUT ACTIVISTS up and down the country have got to do everything they can to win the maximum possible vote in favour of keeping up the boycott. We should link the issue of SATs to that of cuts, jobs and class sizes.

10,000 teachers jobs are threatened by an average cut of 4% in school budgets. In Notts we will lose about 300 teachers if it is not resisted. At the same time class sizes will rise by about 2 pupils per class as a consequence of job cuts and the increasing pupil population.

Gillian Sheppard's response? There is an increase in budget of 1.1% — New tone, willing to listen? Rubbish!!

Fight the new FE contracts!

FURTHER EDUCATION

By Colin Waugh

TO THE surprise and disgust of the College Employers' Forum (CEF) and the leadership of NATFHE, the struggle by further education lecturers against the new contracts is still going on, after nearly two years.

To win, we need to form a national rank-and-file movement, that can fight for rank-and-file power in the union, something broader than the existing Socialist Lecturers' Alliance.

Up to now, the incompetence of the dominant elements in our

union's leadership, their inability to fix a deal with the CEF, has shielded us from the full impact of their treachery towards the interests of members. This treachery is the mirror image of that displayed by the NATFHE activists turned principals who are leading the struggle for the contracts and for the marketisation of FE. But there is a difference. Management are capable of leading a struggle if they perceive this to be in their interests, whereas the union leadership though equally unprincipled, are not. So how have they come to wield power within what is supposed to be our union?

NATFHE is dominated by the so-called Broad Left, the electoral machine composed of the few remaining Stalinists, Maoists and their periphery of spineless fellow-travellers.

An effective rank and file movement cannot be just a coalition of lecturers who belong to left groups. It must draw in people who would not identify themselves as being on the left, but who are — or want to become — union activists.

Also, whether or not it is serviced (for example for printing facilities) by one or more left groups, this majority must be able to adopt a line of action

against the preference of such groups without these facilities being withdrawn. It must not be merely a recruiting ground, still less a front organisation, for any group.

And it must have democratically elected officers.

It must not be an electoral machine aiming simply to replace rightwing bureaucrats with leftwing ones. It must be about fighting for a programme of demands which a majority of NATFHE members will support.

All in the mind?



CLAIMS of psychic powers, of paranormal events, such as the "spoon-bending" of Uri Geller, have nearly always been shown to be false or have not been able to be reproduced for scientific study. Nevertheless, there have been a few scientists willing to countenance the claims of the paranormal, several of them physicists. It is as if their experience of the bizarre world of the quantum theory and the uncertainty principle makes claims for the influence of the mind over matter seem more possible.

Their involvement has led to the setting up of more scientific experiments to try to detect psychic powers. These have included "spoon-bending" and telepathy (identifying pictures being looked at by someone in another room). Some experiments have purported to show an effect; others have not. Of the former, the effect was usually not significantly different from that expected by chance or could be explained by experimental error.

In the last twenty years, scientists have tried to design experiments without the drawbacks of previous ones. Several experiments have been set up to try to detect psychokinesis (PK) or "mind-over-matter" occurrences. These have involved attempts to influence the throw of a die, the decay of a radioactive atom, the diffraction pattern of a beam of light, and other random events. Incredibly (to a scientist), these have shown a deviation from chance which, though just 0.1% (1 part in 10,000), is statistically significant, taken over the millions of trials performed.

The most important of these studies is being carried out under the guidance of an engineering lecturer at Princeton University, Robert Jahn. Jahn, a rocket propulsion expert, recently featured in the BBC2 TV series *Heretic*. His experiment uses a diode as a random event generator. This produces "white noise", like the interference produced by a radio not tuned in. This is sampled by a computer a thousands times a second and gives a value above or below the average, each being equally likely.

This is similar to tossing an unbiased coin, with heads or tails equally likely. Jahn then gets subjects to sit in front of the generator and "will" it to deviate in one

direction. They can see how they are doing by watching the line of the cumulative total rising or falling on a VDU.

The diode random event generator has been extensively studied and behaves perfectly normally in the absence of a subject. Occasionally, by chance, it throws up deviations which are apparently significant, like a run of ten heads. However, these are always found to be within the bounds of what is expected from time to time.

The subjects are left alone to try to influence the generator but there are safeguards to prevent tampering. They are asked to try to move the cumulative line up for one third of the time, down for another third, and to just sit with the generator for the rest of the time. There were several other safeguards to eliminate any possibility of bias.

The result of a quarter of a million trials, hundreds of times more data than collected in other "micro-PK" experiments, shows a deviation from chance of one part in ten thousand. Because of the large number of trials, this effect, though minute, has only a 1 in 5,000 possibility of being produced by chance.

There are some strange features of Jahn's findings. The effect seems to be of the same size, regardless of what exactly is the source of the random events, or indeed of how far away are the subjects. People in England, New Zealand, Kenya and Russia had exactly the same influence on the machine as people in Princeton.

If the effect is a real one, the question urgently requiring an answer is "How does it work?" Jahn thinks the subjects are subtly distorting the laws of probability. He subscribes to the view, held by some physicists, that the mind is a sort of quantum mechanical device. Consciousness has both particle and wave properties, the latter property allowing it to penetrate physical barriers. This, known as quantum tunnelling, is a well-attested phenomenon in physics.

Just because this sounds like twaddle doesn't mean it isn't true. Lots of scientific discoveries seem highly implausible. However, quantum consciousness is not a widely held theory. Nevertheless, Jahn has discovered something that needs explaining. As a materialist, I expect that an explanation for Jahn's findings will be found that does not overthrow the laws of physics. In the meantime, I am exerting my brain cells to try and make his future experiments obey those laws!

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

talking point

Tony Blair and the "Murder Machine"

By Sean Matgamna

The story of Tony Blair's son and the flash school Blair chose to send him to has, it seems, done the jumped-up little middle-class pipsqueak a lot of damage in the labour movement.

So it should. We must, however, be clear on what exactly is wrong with what Blair has done.

Why shouldn't Blair get the very best he can for his child? The answer depends on what you feel about children whose parents have no such option. That is, the big majority of children.

Last autumn I attended the graduation ceremony for 16 year olds at an East London school. It was an emotional occasion, and one which, I think, sheds some light on the Blair affair.

The big assembly hall — the walls almost completely hidden behind hundreds of drawings and paintings and sculptures which students had produced in their last year — was packed tight with parents and school-leavers.

After the ceremony, in which there was a lot of razzamatazz and self-congratulation by officials, a big crowd of young people stood around for ages talking.

As they said their goodbyes, hugging each other, at this first great disembarkation point in their grown-up lives, the scene reminded me of emigrants and their relations and friends taking leave of each other at the dock side.

Walking around looking for people to say goodbye to, some of them were, intermittently, in tears. I watched this scene, waiting for what seemed a very long time for my son to satisfy his need for contact with those who had been his schoolmates — and I too was more than once close to tears.

Tears for those wonderfully fresh and eager young faces. Tears at the thought of what awaited many, perhaps most, of those youngsters, and for what capitalist society and the school had done to almost all of them.

For this was a "sink" school. In terms of exam results, and therefore future prospects, it is one of the worst schools in a borough which is one of the worst in the country.

Not so long ago, serious race conflicts had erupted there. One boy was stabbed and almost died.

Teachers did their best, in vain, in impossible conditions, with crippling underfunding — which, for example, had ruled out *all* science experiments for the two years before GCSE. The results were what you would expect.

Of 180 of the school's boys and girls who took GCSE examinations, only 11 per cent got five or more passes at grades that would allow them to continue their education. That means that only about twenty young people emerged from that school last year with the minimally necessary education! For most of the rest it is YT schemes, dead-end jobs, or worse.

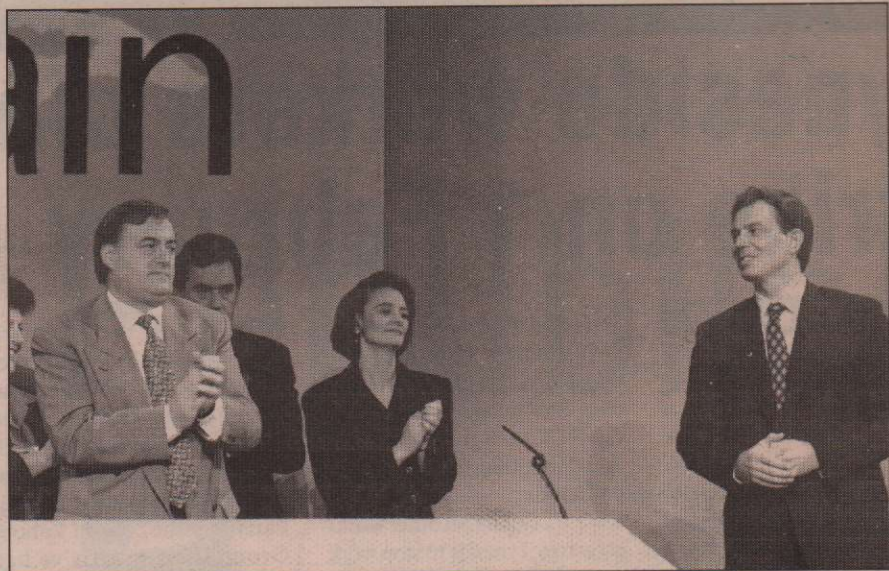
Worse than that. The 160 exam "failures", and the dozens who did not get as far as the end exam, will have come out of this process seriously damaged. Youngsters who are at the peak of their intelligence and receptivity have had an education which sends them out to face life convinced by their experience at school that they are "not bright", or are "limited" — or that they are seriously stupid. Above all — that books, and all they represent, are not for them.

A lot of those children will have had the idea hammered into their personalities that the subjects they did at school are *beyond* them. They will blame themselves, not the school system, for their lack of basic education.

Their schooling has thus in large part been an inoculation against even the possibility that they will in the future try to educate themselves.

Those children have been intellectually mutilated!

So too some of those who "did well" emerge damaged, for they carry a load of



Blair: spitting in the faces of the vast majority who have no access to posh schools

guilt about their friends who never had a chance.

"The Murder Machine" was Patrick Pearse's title for a famous indictment of education in Ireland early this century. Those words describe the British education system now. For vast numbers of working-class children it is nothing but a bourgeois murder machine!

The school I describe is close to the very bottom, but many working-class children have the same sort of experience, all over the country.

That parents should try to get the best education possible for their own children seems to me to be both natural and proper. Faced with a good City Tech college at the end of the road, it would be perverse to opt instead for the Sixth Form equivalent of the school I have described. You are forced to play the education system as it exists now, when your children need it, however loathsome you may find it. The alternative is deliberately to penalise your own children.

What is wrong with what the Blairs have done is that only a handful of people are in a position, because of chance, wealth, or education, or a combination of these, to play the system. For the leader of the Labour Party ostentatiously to indulge in educational "conspicuous consumption" like this is to spit in the faces of all those who can't.

And it was to add to the spit a raucous yuppie jeer for Blair, immediately afterwards, to slap down Labour education spokesperson David Blunkett for daring to talk of taxing the school fees of the rich. Blair thereby seemed to line up the Labour Party with those who happily work this privilege-oriented and class-divided education system of ours, and *against* those who say that in education we need one integrated system, with equal treatment for all our children.

The Oratory School, where Blair has sent his son, is not only an opted-out school. It is also, as a religious school, a school which can arbitrarily select its pupils. Its head teacher is a leading Thatcherite. According to Doug McAvoy of the National Union of Teachers, it is the *only* school in the country which has opted out of the statutory arrangements on teachers' pay and conditions.

Where the unions are concerned, of course, Blair is no different from an outright Tory, even though he is trying to line up the unions to get rid of Clause Four of the Labour Party constitution.

I don't know all the alternatives open to Blair, but I'll bet his options included many schools better than the schools which most working-class children in East London go to! Or any other part of London.

We need Labour leaders who, unlike Blair, are committed to breaking up the murder machine through which working-class children are now fed in the course of being educated to take their destined places in capitalist society. A Labour leader, right or left, with decent human instincts would be a great improvement on Mr Tony Wardrobe Blair.

Having a Tory leading the Labour Party is bad enough. This guy lacks the instincts you would still — even now — find in an occasional decent Tory!



VAT on snob school fees? Too radical, says Blair