

Socialist Organiser

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PUBLIC ORDER BILL

YOUR RIGHTS AT RISK

Police to have new powers to ban protests



Police occupy Broadwater Farm. Photo: Andrew Moore.

The Public Order Bill, which receives its first reading in Parliament this week, is a grave threat to our democratic rights.

Demonstrations — both marches and 'static' protests — will become subject to new rules that will make them almost impossible. The police will have the power to ban demonstrations, virtually at will, on a host of pretexts.

Participation in a banned demonstration will of course be an offence.

And organisers of demonstrations will have to give a week's notice — making spontaneous protests impossible.

Forced

Further, the organisers of demonstrations may be forced to pay the policing costs. With the huge police presence at marches and mass pickets, these costs will be enormous. The CND demonstration of June 9 1984 cost £720,000 to police. Few organisations could put on demonstrations at such expense.

And the idea that a union should have to pay the police to prevent its picket lines from being effective is as absurd as it is undemocratic. It represents a further attack on the right to picket, and therefore the right to strike.

The bill proposes new crimes. Common law offences — like the vague and unspecific charge of 'riot' — would become statutory offences and carry heavier sentences.

And a new catch-all offence, 'disorderly conduct', is proposed — which would apply to anyone on the scene at a mass picket, riot or demonstration.

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Rights at risk

Continued from page 1

This is the legal backdrop to current steps towards increasing the police's armoury of repression in the shape of plastic bullets, CS gas, 'flail' truncheons and so on.

It is the Tory answer to inner-city social deprivation, to the struggles of the working class to resist unemployment and recession, and to anger at the war drive or apartheid. They only know one kind of law and order: that of the mailed fist and the boot.

We have a right to demonstrate — to march, organise pickets, protest. Even now British law explicitly recognises no right to demonstrate. The law outlines what is not permitted: it does not grant positive rights. Our democratic rights exist by default. But the new proposals go much further.

The labour movement must mobilise against the Public Order Bill, to defend democratic freedoms.

But to do so effectively, it must spell out a working class, socialist alternative to Tory policy.



The labour movement must recognise that the police are a cause not a cure of inner-city street fighting. The youth are responding to a brutal and racist police force. 'Public order' is merely a code for repression.

We can and should try to establish more democratic control over the police, to limit their power and authority to repress.

But the police are precisely a force for repression, to uphold a 'law' that serves the interests of the ruling class, and to impose the 'order' of capitalism.

We need an alternative to the police: democratic self-policing by working class communities themselves; self-defence by those communities, or by picket lines against racist attacks, scabs and the police themselves.

DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST MAIRE O'SHEA!

Demonstration, Saturday 9 November, 11am from Sparkhill Park (Park Rd, by Stratford Rd), Birmingham. Rally 2pm at Digbeth Civic Hall.

Maire O'Shea was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in January 1985 and has been charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. Sponsors of the demonstration include ASTMS, NUPE, CoHSE, Kent NUM, South Wales NUM.

Contact: Maire O'Shea Support Committee, c/o 448 Stratford Rd, Birmingham 11 (021-773 8682).

CHILE: TOWARDS A SHOWDOWN?

By Maria Hernandez, a Chilean socialist now living in Britain.

Twelve years ago, on 11 September 1973, the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende was overthrown in Chile after a bloody coup and replaced by a military junta.

Hundreds of left-wing activists were killed, thousands were imprisoned and tortured and many simply 'disappeared'. The violation of democratic rights was systematic with political parties banned, opposition press censored and trade union activity forced underground. Over one in four academics and one in five students were purged from Chile's universities. Thousands of Chileans were forced into exile.

Such military repression was designed to underpin IMF/World Bank economic strategy. Foreign banks drained the lifeblood from the economy as inflation soared to 200%. Oil import costs rose from \$598 million to \$1.4 billion in less than a decade. Multinationals and Chilean capitalists alike applied the principles of laissez-faire economics and left women and children oppressed in all political, educational and economic spheres.

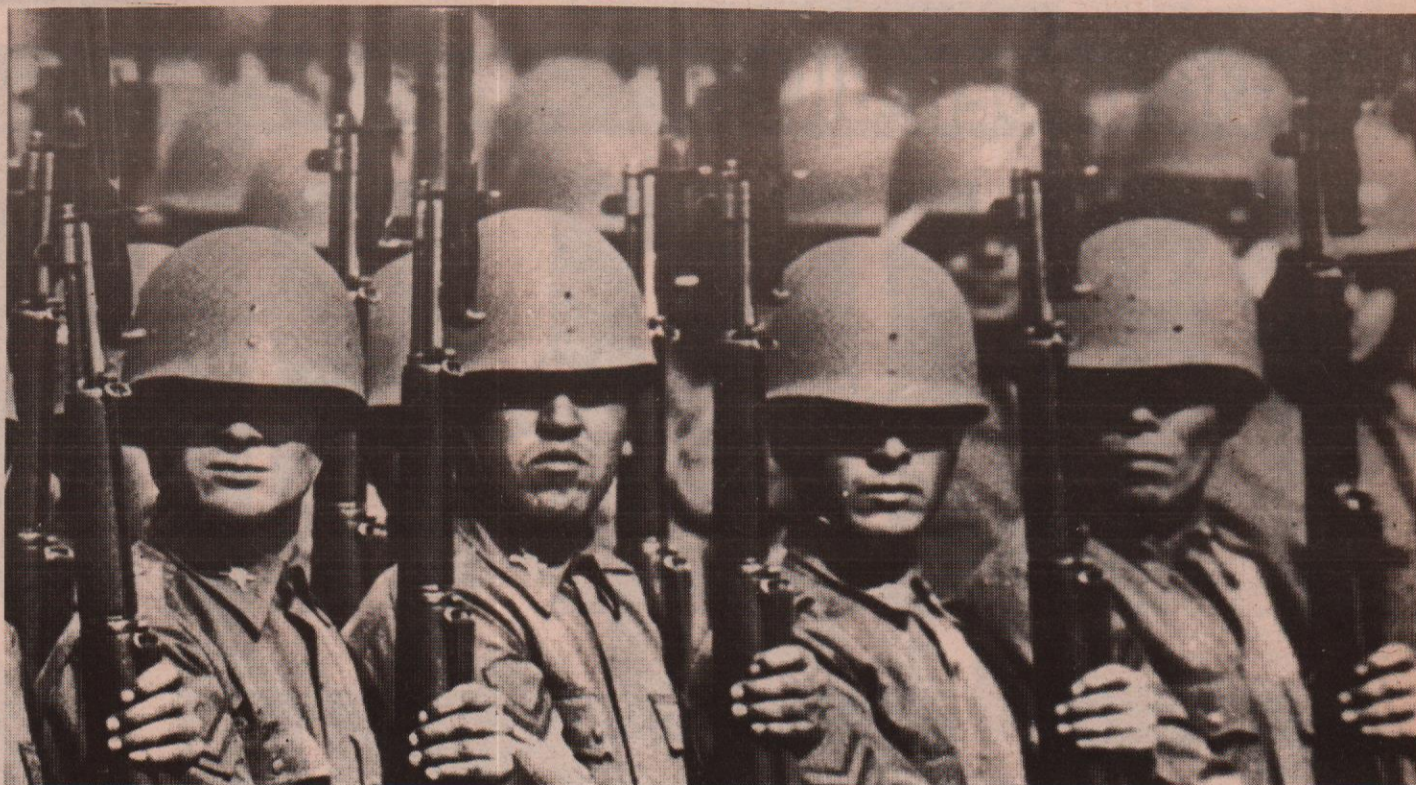
World Health Organisation indices show that among 300 million Latin Americans, 15% are unemployed, 30% illiterate, 50% are under 18 years of age. 150 million live in shanty-town conditions. Every year half a million people die of poverty. The total foreign debt for Latin America is \$320 billion.

Today, as a direct result of Pinochet's indefinite austerity measures, over three million of Chile's ten million population are unemployed and living in desperate poverty. If job security is minimal then so are wage levels. Press reports show that 2 1/2 million workers are earning less than \$160 a month, with 1.8 million workers taking home less than \$100 a month. The so-called minimum wage has fallen by 44.2% in just four years from \$60 a month (\$33 at present US exchange rates).

To meet this situation people have adopted desperate strategies. In agricultural regions shanty-town cooperatives have sprung up — over 700 in the Santiago suburbs alone — as the poorest sectors try to secure a degree of control over communal welfare and survive. Within these ghettos bread, tea and vegetables provide the staple diet.

Health and educational facilities are few and far between and infant mortality is fast rising even by Latin American levels; illiteracy is very high with barely 8% of students finishing secondary school. Even in the (relatively) affluent urban areas a majority of working class homes lack basic amenities such as running water and sewage systems.

In Chile the events of the last two years are testament to a dramatic rise in working class combativity directed against a capitalist system that offers super-exploitation in exchange for miserable wages and conditions. State repression has been intense. Nationwide strikes and mass social agitation took place throughout July-August 1983 led by the Socialist Bloc (a coalition of left-wing parties), the



Rising mass struggles threaten the regime

Democratic Popular Movement (Popular Front), and civil rights groups (Vicaria de la Solidaridad), with conditional support given by the bourgeois Democratic Alliance (CDP).

During the months of defiance hundreds of demonstrators were shot down by state carabinieri. Eyewitness reports suggest that scores of people were killed. In a bid to defuse determined popular resistance the junta announced its so-called apertura, or political reform. Leaders of the bourgeois Democratic Alliance were lured into talks with the regime although it was obvious that Pinochet had conceded nothing and retained intact his most draconian powers.

In the event the apertura proved little more than an elaborate camouflage for greater suppression of Chile's two left-wing coalitions.

The forceful re-emergence of working class struggle coupled with the deepening economic crisis has rapidly polarised the political conflict. The tempo of mobilisation increased sharply during 1984, culminating in a nationwide general strike on 30 October.

Wave

Pinochet launched yet another fierce wave of repression accompanied by the imposition of a 'state of siege' on 6 November, and directed at three opposition groups specifically: civil rights activists, trade unionists and students. In this respect the use of terror tactics is reminiscent of the 1973 coup.

Civil rights groups have monitored a 4:1 increase in killings and cases of torture and an 8:1 increase in political detentions for the period starting 1983.

In recent months 'death squads' have been responsible for a whole series of political assassinations, bombings, sadistic torture and multiple abductions.

The coordinated attacks follow a uniform pattern — firstly, the carabiniero police single out activists for interrogation and detain them for days on end before sudden release. Within weeks many of those so detained fall victim to armed civilian gangs who possess precise intel-

ligence about their targets and are able to strike with total impunity. Clearly such death squads are comprised of, and commanded by members of the security force.

The 'state of siege' was lifted on 17 June this year after eight months in force. Its replacement by a 'state of emergency' was due to US pressure applied during IMF/World Bank talks on the rescheduling of Chile's huge \$28 billions of foreign debt.

In this context Pinochet has been struck an important blow. On 2 August the junta's own state investigator accused the carabiniero police of complicity in recent assassinations of civil rights activists.

General Mendoza, head of the carabinieri and junta hatchetman since 1973 was sacked. His replacement, one General Strange, in a resultant purge engineered by the equally brutal CNI secret police, accounted for a further six police generals plus 23 ranking officers.

Street demonstrations erupted spontaneously against both the regime and carabinieri. More organised protests were held on 9-11 August followed by the expected backlash. Mass raids were carried into the shanty towns while in a further series of dawn raids a score of civil rights activists and trade union leaders were seized — including construction union president Sergio Troncoso — all since exiled to Chiloe island some 1200 kilometres south of Santiago.

Nonetheless, public defiance mushroomed and with it the determination to celebrate the anniversary of the Chilean independence (18 September). In a futile attempt to curb street demonstrations the junta ordered the closure of all schools and universities from 4-26 September under its 'state of emergency' powers.

Despite the curfew nationwide protests were achieved on 6 September, this time with a balance of 11 people killed, 150 injured and more than a thousand detentions. Mass protests continued to be mobilised throughout last month.

At this level of struggle occurs

the real strength of working class resistance to savage military rule, and the only prospect for a return to democratic and civil rights in Chile. It is axiomatic that a strategic united front be forged between the left wing Socialist Bloc, Democratic Popular Movement and radical trade unions as the political and organisational basis for revolutionary opposition to the regime.

By definition the pacifist liberation theology of the Vicaria de la Solidaridad precludes it from becoming such a vehicle.

The treacherous bourgeois CDP has shown it is capable of peaceful coexistence with the 'moderate' wing of the junta.

Herein lies the danger for Chilean people of history repeating itself as tragedy.

General strikes in Greece

Greek trade unionists are conducting a campaign of industrial action including one-day general strikes, in opposition to Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu's recently announced austerity measures.

On 21 October 900,000 workers in 18 towns and cities stopped work. Factories, transport, banks and shops were all affected. This was followed on 29 October by a strike of post office and hospital staff and on the 30th by a strike of 300,000 civil servants, which closed state schools, public services, courts and ports.

The austerity measures announced by Papandreu, leader of the Greek socialist party PASOK, include a two-year wage freeze; a reduction in the wage indexation system so that workers receive even less to compensate for inflation, now running at over 20%; and a 15% devaluation of the currency, pushing up further the price of imported goods bought by Greek workers.

Addressing the PASOK Parliamentary Group Papandreu claimed that the government's measures to restructure the Greek economy had to be judged not at the time, but in perspective. The party did not serve the interests of capital but those of the working class, farmers and small to medium sized businesses, he claimed. Protecting real incomes of working people

remained a primary concern, he said.

But it's the same old story. Whenever reformist leaders attempt to restructure capitalist economies it is always the working class that foots the bill.

Papandreu was elected on one of the most left wing programmes advanced in recent years by a socialist party. Now the working class are making it clear in no uncertain terms that they won't foot the bill so that Papandreu can create a more efficient capitalist economy to exploit them.

The huge response by Greek trade unionists has split the Greek TUC leadership down the middle. Under pressure from the rank and file one section has been pushed into backing action against the austerity measures while Papandreu loyalists led by TUC president Rastopoulos are working strenuously to limit the damage.

Two weeks ago a motion for a nationwide general strike was defeated by the casting vote of Rastopoulos. Subsequently a censure motion against him was passed and a general strike call issued for 14 November.

Eight senior trade unionists have now been expelled from PASOK for supporting the industrial action and have joined leading CP trade unionists in an attempt to depose Rastopoulos as President of the TUC.

Building Fund

We're on the move!

Socialist Organiser is moving. Year after year, the production of the paper and the growth of our campaigning work has come closer and closer to bursting the seams of our central resources. For some two years we've been negotiating for new offices. Now the move is definitely on.

Meanwhile a lot of our equipment is on its last legs, compelled to deliver more work than it was ever designed for - in particular our process camera (which does the last-but-one stage between page layout and the printers' plates) and our typesetting equipment. We don't have a functioning printing press of our own.

So we are coupling the move with a programme of re-equipping ourselves: a small printing press for pamphlets, magazines and broadsheets, a new process camera, and new typesetting equipment. We are making it a comprehensive re-launch.

The new premises consist of two floors above a shop in South London, previously used as a clothing factory. They are no luxury offices! But they will give us the space to organise ourselves properly.

On one floor we'll have a darkroom; a library, an editor's office, a typesetting room, and a lay-out room for the paper; and a print room.

Upstairs there'll be three large organisers' offices - two of them divided by a movable partition which can be taken down to create a sizeable meeting room - a creche, and a kitchen.

Paper

Since the paper was launched in 1978, we have depended, with minor additions, on the equipment and facilities bequeathed by Workers' Action, the major group which helped to set up SO. The Workers' Action stock, in turn, was essentially that built up by Workers' Fight in the early '70s.

We've gone from a small

group producing a small-format fortnightly, to a 12-page weekly at the centre of a big range of activities, mainly by stretching the same resources further and further. Those resources are now also used by the youth paper Class Fighter and the women's paper Women's Fightback.

Re-launch

The re-launch will give us adequate resources for what we're already doing, and a basis for expansion which just wouldn't be possible with our present facilities.

One problem: money.

Equipment costs a lot. The new premises are on a relatively low rent, but they need a lot of work to get them in shape and fit them out: removal of asbestos, partial re-wiring, new plumbing, replacement of rotten plaster and woodwork, erection of new partitions and shelving, painting, etc.

Altogether we'll need £15,000.

On the scale of our regular finances it's a lot. On the scale of our tasks and ambitions, or even on the scale of the support and appreciation that we know the paper has in the labour movement, it's not much at all.

The working class can have its own papers, its own alternatives to the bosses' media, only if we're willing to raise funds for the job. If we sit back as passive consumers, content only to choose within the variety that accumulated wealth offers us, then the fight for socialism is impossible.

So we ask all our readers for support. Do you agree that Socialist Organiser did a useful job during the miners' strike? Do you think our current coverage on South Africa is worthwhile? Do you appreciate our weekly fight for socialist politics?

If so, help us move. Give what you can, whether it be £500 or £5 or 50p a week. We'll be reporting on progress each week.



£15,000

£10,000

£5,000

Moving costs	£450	Floor covering	200
Removal of asbestos and waste	520	Office equipment	500
Re-pointing brickwork, roof repairs	300	Installing telephones	750
Carpentry (doors, windows, partitions &c)	1620	Renovation and repair of outbuilding	2000
Glazing	100	Deposit on printing press	1800
Plastering and painting (inside & out)	450	Process camera	1400
Electrical repairs and rewiring	300	Deposit on typesetting machine	1800
Plumbing work	200	Initial payment of rent	560
Installing heating and hot water	2000		
		Total	£15,000

Local group	Target	Raised so far (since June 22)	Per cent
Central/general	£5000	£407	8%
Aberdeen	£20		
Basingstoke	£560		
Birmingham	£100		
Canterbury	£90		
Cardiff	£600	£254	42%
Colchester	£100	£23.80	24%
Coventry	£350	£15	4%
Durham/North-East	£200		
Glasgow/Edinburgh	£560	£16	
Leeds	£60		
Manchester	£1000		
Merseyside	£500	£100	20%
Nottingham	£1000	£183.97	18%
Oxford	£40		
Sheffield	£400	£15	4%
Southampton	£60		
Stoke North	£200		
Stoke South	£200		
York/Harrogate	£300		
East London	£760	£182.70	24%
North London	£1600	£118.05	7%
South London	£800	£155	19%
West London	£500	£100	20%
Total	£15000	£1700	11%

* I enclose a donation of £.....

* I pledge a weekly contribution of over the next six months

* I will contribute £..... each month for the next six months by standing order

To bank branch
Please make payments to the debit of my account as follows:

Name Account no.
Payee: Socialist Organiser, account no.50424830 at the Co-op bank, 1 Islington High St, London N1 9TR (08-90-33).

Amount: £..... Payment to be made on 1985, and thereafter monthly for six months

Date..... Signature

* I am prepared to help with fund-raising activities in my locality. Please put me in touch with the local SO group.

Delete as appropriate and send to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

DON'T RECOGNISE THE SCAB UNION!

Paul Whetton's diary

We have now established NUM branches at every pit in Notts with acting secretaries and officials until such time as proper elections are held.

The delegates attended a meeting on Saturday to discuss the situation.

The main problem is non-recognition by the Coal Board.

We cannot allow a situation to continue whereby they will talk to the NUM at national level and yet ignore the whole of the Notts coalfield, when they readily gave recognition to less than a thousand miners in Durham.

The National Executive have got to tell the Coal Board that if they refuse to recognise Notts NUM they are refusing to recognise the

union nationally and that is not on.

The pit management have refused to meet us or even talk to us. I wrote a letter informing the colliery manager of the officials elected and the committee, and requesting a meeting and asking for a written reply as soon as possible. He refused even to answer my letter.

UDM

The UDM are trying to make a lot of mileage out of the so-called substantial pay rise, but it's ludicrous. They've got £5.50 and 50p

on the bonus. Some of their biggest support comes from pit-top men, and while the pay increase is across the board, they're still only going to get 40% of the 50p bonus.

I don't know why it is that the pit-top men can't see that they are going to be the first to suffer and they are going to be among the hardest hit.

I think the pay deal has given the UDM a bit of a boost insofar as they've now got something to shout about. In the past all they could do was slag off Scargill. Now they've got something else to shout about.

Although we've been recruiting to the NUM and are still recruiting, people are hanging back to see what exactly the Coal Board is going to do with the NUM in Notts. That's a problem for us and that is why the Coal Board are being as awkward as they can towards us while making the UDM a pay offer.

Agecroft

I think in the early days the UDM are bound to attract some attention in other coalfields. I'm not particularly upset by the outcome of the Agecroft vote - it was not a

real threat to the NUM.

But the National Executive needs to get out and do some campaigning about it before it does spread.

I think it will fade away over the next year or two, but the National Executive has got to be seen to be making positive moves.

Labour

In August Larry Whitty wrote to my CLP, Newark, saying the Party would not recognise a breakaway union. He was trying to persuade us then not to push our resolution on the scab organisation at Labour Party Conference. Now the conference is over, they want to get back on the fence again.

They are hinting that

UDM members should remain individual members of the Party. But in Newark we have always made very clear that Party members must be members of their TUC-recognised union.

I'm chair of the CLP, and as far as I'm concerned UDM members will not get their Labour Party membership cards renewed - and I would resign from that office before seeing that policy changed.

I don't know yet the attitude of other CLPs in the area - Sherwood, Ashfield, Mansfield and Bassetlaw. But a few weeks ago the County Labour Party condemned the scab breakaway. We do need, though, a campaign among Party members to explain the issues.



Overwork

"The overwork", wrote Karl Marx in 'Capital', "of the employed part of the working class swells the ranks of the reserve; while, conversely, the

increased pressure which through competition the members of the reserve exert upon those who are in work, spurs these latter on to overwork, and subjects them more completely to the dictatorship of capital.

"The condemnation of one part of the working class to enforced idleness by overwork of the other portion, and the converse, become means for enriching the individual capitalist..."

And so the latest figures from the Manpower Services Commission prove. While unemployment rises, at least 750,000 people now take a second job to get a decent wage — and the MSC thinks this figure is probably an underestimate. Overtime working is at its highest level since early 1980.

And, despite the abrupt decline of major shift-work employers like steelworks and car factories, more workers are working shifts. Between 1974 and 1982 the percentage of white employees in Britain working shifts rose from 15% to 23%, and of blacks from 31% to 35%.

Beneficial?

18 million people in Britain currently depend on some form of social security benefit. Over nine million of them are pensioners.

The largest group dependent upon social security is women: 13 million child benefit payments are made to women, and two-thirds of supplementary pensions are collected by women.

8 million people depend on Supplementary Benefit, originally intended as a "safety net" for the few who did not qualify for national insurance benefits. The number dependent on Supplementary Benefit has doubled since 1979.

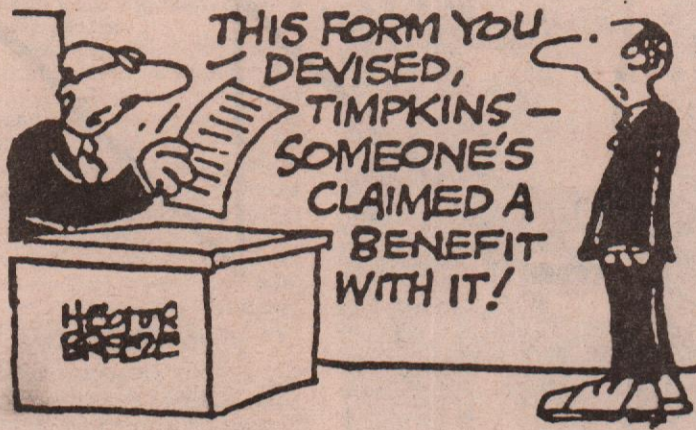
More than a third of the adult workforce receives less than £107 gross per week. 69% of low-paid workers outside of the home are women. (In the home, women are virtually 100% of the unpaid domestic workforce!)

Two out of three pensioners live on or below the poverty-line, and a million live below it. Three quarters of pensioners on supplementary benefit have no savings at all.

Women

Three quarters of a million women over 60 receive no pension at all because their husbands are still working, and 1.9 million women receive a reduced pension.

In the past two decades the number of people living below the official poverty line has doubled to around 30% of the total population. Nearly a third of all children in this country, about four



millions, live in poverty.

Three million people cannot afford to properly heat their homes. Six million go without essential clothing. Five and a half million regularly go without an essential food item.

According to the latest comprehensive figures, 1% of shareholders own 80% of all privately held shares; 5% own 98% of all privately held shares. Only 7% of adults own any shares at all. The British Telecom sell-off has widened shareholding a bit, but not much.

5% of the population own 41% of all marketable wealth. The bottom 50% of the population own 4% of the wealth.

Since 1979, over £8 billion has been cut from the social security budget. In the same period £9 billions has been paid out in tax cuts to the wealthiest 5% of the population.

Equal value

Last year Julie Hayward, a cook at Cammell Lairds shipyard, Birkenhead, became the first woman in Britain to win an 'equal pay for work of equal value' case at an industrial tribunal. But, according to the latest Labour Research Bargaining Report, she still isn't getting the £30 increase which the tribunal said she should have. Julie Hayward and her union, the GMBU, are pursuing the issue.

Meanwhile, the publicity given to Julie Hayward's tribunal victory has encouraged other women workers and their unions. Some cases have failed, but more have succeeded, and others are going through tribunals. GMBU, TASS and APEX are particularly active.



Profits...

Roy Hattersley has followed up his speech to the Institute of Personnel Management, advocating wider share-ownership, with one to West Midlands industrialists supporting high profits.

He declared his belief in the "importance of high profits and the need to make those profits more acceptable"; and he claimed that Labour was more responsive to capitalist interests than the Tories. "Although the government will not listen to industry, Labour will", he said in his speech to the West Midlands CBI on 25 October.

Perhaps Hattersley's next speech should be to the editorial staff of Tribune. Obviously nothing less than the word from the horse's mouth will disillusion them. On 11 October Tribune editorialised: "The Left has never been stronger, and the prospects of a radical, Left-wing Labour government have never been greater".

...More profits

Britain's profit rates in 1984 were the highest on record. The real rate of return on capital in industry and commerce was 11.99%, the highest figure since the government started compiling statistics in 1960.

The figures are skewed a bit by North Sea Oil, which is much more profitable than other industries. But even for manufacturing the rate-of-return figure in 1984 was the highest since 1973.

The share of profits in national income has risen from 13% in 1980 to 18½% in 1984, while the share of wages (in manufacturing) has fallen from 80% to 73%.

(Source: Labour Research Bargaining Report)

Police run riot in Brixton

By Trudy Saunders

At 3.00 a.m. on Sunday 30 September, over 100 police in full riot gear invaded Brixton's Angell Estate. For ten hours they rampaged over the estate, smashing up flats and terrorising the residents.

Yesterday Angell Tenants Association handed in an official complaint to the police.

Jan Clive, a member of Angell TA lives on the estate with her five year old daughter. She told me about what happened.

In the early hours eleven full police vans drew up near the estate. Police poured onto the estate, banging their riot shields, shouting "come out you black bastards".

The police concentrated their attack on Pym House where most of the residents are black. They charged around this part of the estate smashing in windows and kicking down doors, shouting racist and sexist obscenities.

A 65-year old woman and her semi-invalid husband were woken by the police smashing down their front door. When the woman went to investigate she was greeted with a torrent of racist and sexist abuse. When she rang Brixton police station to complain and demand a new door she was given the number of Lambeth Council emergency repairs service — and no explanation.

The police smashed down the door of a 60 year old woman living alone. They entered the flat,

called the woman a "black slag" and took a photo of her with a riot camera (equipped with an ultra-bright flashlight).

As two terrified women and their children attempted to leave the estate, police forced them back into the flat — smashed the front door down, again shouting racist and sexist abuse at them.

As one woman was waiting outside her friend's flat to be let in, police grabbed her by the hair, telling her "you're nicked". Her friend opened the door and pulled her in.

Obscenities were yelled at them by the police.

The caretaker of the estate was pinned against the wall by a policeman in riot gear as he did his rounds at 10 am on Sunday morning. The copper told him "get inside, you black bastard", and hit him with his truncheon.

Nearly all the incidents involved woman, almost all of them black.

It is a frightening example of what the police can get away with. Yet these same police are officially supposed to be protecting black people in places like Newham from racist attacks by the National Front.

Having suffered on the streets of Brixton, the police obviously decided to take their revenge on a section of the population least able to defend itself. No rioting had taken place on the Angell Estate, and the police had no reason to go on it. It proves more than ever that they are indeed Maggie Thatcher's Boot Boys.

Battle of Brittan

ior officers' knowledge and consent it is not known.

The film of the event screened in 'Brass Tacks' was clear as an indictment of police actions — although the programme itself was marred by its attempt to establish the validity of the students' case through demonstrating the respectability of their social backgrounds.

Official police video recordings of the 'Battle of Orgreave' at the height of the miners' strike was equally clear. The police have been adopting the riot-control techniques of British colonial police. Contrary to the supposed tradition of the British police, the colonial police used (and still do in places like Hong Kong) high levels of physical violence to disperse 'seditious' crowds.

An instructor to the Hong Kong police gave the flavour of this style of policing. Telling his students that they should warn the crowd of any impending attack, he commented that it was up to them how loudly they gave the warning...

These methods are being introduced into Britain, with all the hardware, like CS gas and plastic bullets.

What is certain is that the 'battles' of Brittan and Orgreave are no more than dress rehearsals for war to come — unless new police powers can be stopped and the growth of their power rolled back.



Amnesty for terror

Amnesty for people who have broken the law? We know that the Tories, the party of Law and Order, rejects any such thing on principle.

Or at least they reject it for British miners. But listen to what Margaret Thatcher says about Nicaragua.

One of her conditions for an agreement with the Sandinista

government is a full amnesty for the 'contras' — who have killed and wounded thousands in their US-backed war against the government supported by the majority of the Nicaraguan people.

Many 'contras' are also former members of the National Guard, responsible for countless crimes under the Somoza dictatorship.

Little to offer but repression

AFTER OVER a year of 'secret' negotiations between top British and Eire civil servants, a new Anglo-Irish agreement on Northern Ireland will probably be announced this week.

The deal is likely to consist of the following:

* A joint 26 County/British commission or Council of Ministers to oversee the running of Northern Ireland. Sovereignty will still lie completely with London.

* The establishment of a permanent secretariat consisting of representatives from London, Dublin and Belfast.

* Some reform of the RUC and of the locally-recruited — and almost entirely Protestant — British Army regiment, the UDR.

Following from the deal could come devolution of power to a local assembly in Belfast — if the Protestants accept the deal.

Behind the negotiations is a promise of massive US aid. Figures ranging from \$200 million to \$1 billion have been talked about.

Republicans and Loyalists alike oppose the deal — the Loyalists more fiercely than the Republicans, who plausibly claim that any concessions to the Catholics contained in the deal have been won not by talk but by their military campaign over the last 14 years.

Both Republicans and Loyalist paramilitaries expect that the deal will be accompanied by increased repression in Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein expects that a concerted move will be made by Dublin and London to ban the Republican party. The leaders of the Protestant UDA have announced that they are going into hiding for fear that selective internment will be introduced to stifle opposition to the deal.

Internment is probably unlikely because of the sympathy it would evoke from the Republicans. The banning of Sinn Fein — legalised only a decade ago — is far more likely, though that too would carry a high political price for both the British and Dublin governments.

It would also bring great advantages. When Sinn Fein was illegal, the only nationalist Catholic party was the cooperative SDLP, at whose expense Sinn Fein has gained enormously since the hunger strikes of 1981.

The British government have other pressing reasons for banning Sinn Fein. 15 district councils in the Six Counties have now adjourned

John O'Mahony looks at the forthcoming Dublin-Westminster deal on Northern Ireland.

indefinitely because Unionists refuse to tolerate their elected Sinn Fein colleagues. The feeble structures of Northern Ireland local government are being wrecked.

Unionist delegates who have met Tory minister Tom King have come out announcing their impression that 'something' will be done.

If Orange opposition to the Dublin/London deal is not to wreck it before anything can be done to implement it, then the authorities must do something to sweeten the Orange population. A concerted Dublin/London drive against the political wing of the IRA would be such a sweetener, as would any agreement on additional joint Dublin/Belfast military-police action against the IRA.

The government's chances of sweetening the Orangeists are not good, however. They threaten to 'go all the way' in opposition to the deal, beginning with a challenge in the British courts as to its legality and going on to strikes and military resistance.

Thatcher has pledged to 'stand up to' an Orange backlash, and she may have to. The two main Unionist parties, the DUP and OUP, have formed a united opposition movement to resist. The Protestant paramilitary UDA claims 10,000 members, and has set up a specialist fighting force, the Ulster Defence Force.

Veto

Listen to some of the Orange representatives:

Peter Robinson of the DUP says: "The day the Republic of Ireland is given any role in the governance of Northern Ireland, that same day I cease to recognise or respect the validity or authority of the United Kingdom government". To Dublin he declares: "All the time you are in that role, Unionists will be planning your destruction".

DUP chief whip Jim Allister states: "Unionists demand a veto over any changes in the structures and processes of Northern Ireland, and if we are denied that veto, then we will implement it ourselves".

The UDA — a legal and almost entirely working-class

body which shelters assassination gangs like the outlawed 'UFF' — has called on the powerless assembly in Belfast, elected three years and boycotted by the Catholic parties, to set up a provisional government. "Those who encourage or protect [26 County] involvement will become the enemy, no matter who they are or whose orders they obey".

Civil war

John McMichael of the UDA declares bluntly that "... more and more people believe that there cannot be a political solution. It may be that this country has to go to the very verge of civil war before a compromise is reached.

"There is a belief that Loyalists must get together, plan and organise. There is general recognition of the need for a strong army, a defence militia, and our emphasis is now more and more on the paramilitary side rather than the political side".

The UDA wants a written constitution, guaranteeing the Border and with a two-thirds majority needed for any change, and a Bill of Rights.

The politicians, Molyneux and Paisley, wrote to Thatcher in August: "Any proposal to increase Anglo-Irish cooperation must be suspect given the Republic's claim to the territory of Northern Ireland which is a repudiation of Northern Ireland's right to self-determination.

"This being so, we call upon Her Majesty's Government to challenge the government of the Republic to withdraw its territorial claim and recognise Ulster's right to self-determination as an essential prerequisite to greater friendship, cooperation and understanding".

Thatcher's reply stated: "I mean first that Northern Ireland will remain part of the United Kingdom for as long as the majority in the province so wish; and secondly that whatever may emerge from our discussions with the Irish authorities, responsibility for the government of Northern Ireland will rest with United Kingdom ministers accountable to parliament".

But the Orangeists are not reassured. Paisley promises to fight to the death.

The slump has hit the Protestant working class terribly hard, and the effect may be to weaken the combativity of the Protestants and make any repeat of the 1974 Orange general strike difficult. The prospect of massive US aid may placate some of the Unionists. But all the signs are that they will resist fiercely.

There is resistance in the South too. The constitutional nationalist Fianna Fail is in opposition, and its leader Charles J Haughey has denounced the government for preparing to sell out the cause of a 32 county Ireland. In fact the government has done nothing of the sort.

Foreign minister Peter Barry states: "We would not now accept any new obstacles which might make the achievement of Irish unity more difficult... in the future".

But Barry has also said to the Unionists: "We accept and acknowledge your Britishness. We respect your reasons for opposing Irish unity".

Blaney

This is one of the two sharply contrasted approaches to Irish unity which exist within constitutional nationalism. It says that unity is desirable, but unity by consent as a result of a growing-together of the peoples of Ireland.

The other view, that of crude 'territorial nationalism', has been brutally put by Neil Blaney, an independent Fianna Fail TD [MP].

"Beware of any sell-out on our claim to the territory of all this country, because that is what our forefathers and patriots fought and died for, and their struggle has continued for 800 years".

Others in the South, like Labour senator Mary Robinson, have called in connection with the Anglo-Irish deal for guarantees for the rights of minorities in the South.

But Charles J Haughey seems set to win the next 26 County elections, and therefore if Fianna Fail is serious about scuttling the deal it will be able to.

What the deal proposes is an extremely limited concession to the demand of the Northern Ireland Catholics and the all-Ireland majority for a united Ireland — no more than a say in the affairs of the North for the Dublin government. But to the Orange diehards even that is the beginning of the end.

The deal's practical meaning will most likely be a big stepping-up of repression against the Republicans. And even then the Orange backlash may scupper it — if Haughey doesn't.

Over the last weeks gardai posts have been heavily strengthened along the border in the expectation that Orange paramilitaries will strike at the South. A bomb set off without warning by Orangemen in Dublin in 1973 killed 22 people and wounded scores of others.

Perhaps the last word should go to Enoch Powell, a bitter opponent of the deal. He says it is a multiple double cross.

Britain, he says, promises constitutional change that it cannot deliver. Dublin offers cooperation against the IRA that it cannot deliver. Each is out to cheat the other, and both are out to cheat the US of its money.



A Provisional IRA volunteer. (Photo: Camerawork)

Racist backlash in South Africa

By Clive Bradley

The decision by the Botha regime in South Africa to ban foreign reporting on the 'unrest' — except under very strict conditions — is transparent in its intent.

The racist state neither wants us to see what it is already doing every day to black people in South Africa; nor — even less — wants us to see what it has got in store.

It indicates the extent to which Botha is running scared of international opinion, which despite Mrs Thatcher's sterling efforts is against him; of the mass resistance to apartheid; and of his own white supremacist base, who want yet firmer action.

Last week's by-elections were bad news for Botha. His National Party scraped through in four of them, but with big losses to the far right; and it lost in one to the ultra-bigoted Herstigte Nasionale Party. (The HNP is not just in favour of 'unleashing' the army against blacks. They are also against Jews, Catholics and English-speakers). The results suggest that Botha is failing to convince the Afrikaner whites that his policy of attempting to buy off the revolution will pay off.

The HNP, and the similar Conservative Party, represent the base for mass-scale white racist reaction in South Africa. They are firmly opposed to even the slightest concession to the blacks.

The ultra-reactionary laager mentality of the far right makes a mockery of proposals by the liberal Progressive Federal Party and Zulu chief Buthelezi

that all parties to the conflict get together round a table. Such negotiations are utopian in the extreme.

Of course white South Africa is not a single, reactionary force. The editor of the Cape Times has risked imprisonment by illegally publishing an interview with Oliver Tambo, the exiled ANC leader. It is illegal even to quote ANC members in South Africa — though prosecutions are erratic: while the Johannesburg 'Star' was recently successfully prosecuted for quoting Tambo, Botha himself has publicly got away with it...

The Cape Times editor, Tony Heard, has stressed the ANC's willingness to discuss peaceful solutions — if the apartheid state first renounces its violence.

The South African National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), the largest of the country's independent, non-racial trade unions, last week won a case in the Industrial Court for the reinstatement of workers sacked during its legal strike in September.

For the first time, South African workers now have legal protection against victimisation for strike action. Before now, workers could be sacked with impunity even for legal strikes.

This follows a legal wrangle over the Industrial Court's right to judge in such matters. Anglo Vaal mining company, taken to court by the NUM last month for the dismissal of four workers unsuccessfully challenged the Industrial Court's right to judge.



Troops and Catholic youngsters in Northern Ireland. (Photo: Camerawork)

The roots of Labour

By Arthur Bough

Tony Benn and others talk about the need to re-found the Labour Party. So what went wrong the first time? What lessons can be learned?

Black trade unionists in South Africa are discussing the project of a workers' party based on the non-racial unions there. Some socialists say that such a party would inevitably end up like the Labour Party in Britain, with its own Kinnocks and Hattersleys. What truth is there to this argument?

It was in 1905, eighty years ago, that the TUC Congress voted to support the Labour Representation Committee in the 1906 General Election, and thus effectively establish the Labour Party in its modern form. There had already been a long struggle for labour representation in Parliament.

MPs

The first working class MPs were elected in 1874. Thomas Burt, MP for Morpeth and Alexander MacDonalt, MP for Stafford, were both miners. The number of working class MPs rose to three in 1880, 11 in 1885 and 10 in 1886. All of them sat with the Liberals — then a major party — and were known as "Lib-Labs".

In 1892, Keir Hardie was elected to Parliament, and in the following year he established the Independent Labour Party. The ILP stood 28 candidates at the 1895 General Election, but every single one was defeated.

At this time, the trade unions supported the Liberals. Hardie set out to win the trade unions away from the Liberals. It was not easy. The nature of the trade unions was changing. From being rank-and-file based organisations, with a fairly ramshackle organisation, they had become large organisations with full time officials and offices.

Especially after the defeat of Chartism, the trade unions had reconciled themselves to the existence of capitalism, and their main emphasis was on bargaining within the system. The result was a strength-sapping search for respectability. This especially affected the older craft-based unions like the Engineers. Frederick Engels wrote scathingly of the desire for acceptance in bourgeois society that affected even the best of them, like Tom Mann and John Burns. Top hat, frock coat and waistcoat were the uniform of even the most left-wing engineers' leaders.

Unions

The new general unions — like the Gas and General, forerunner of the GMBU, in which Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor played a leading role — were more radical. But even they were beginning to succumb to the conservatising influence of British imperialism in its heyday.

As Richard Bell MP said at the opening of the 1905 Congress, seconding a motion of thanks to the Mayor:

"There was a time when trade unions were not respectable enough to be welcomed by the Mayor". Bell looked forward to the day when they would be "respectable enough to be welcomed by the Lord Chancellor".

Most trade union leaders preferred to stick with the 'respectable' Liberals rather than associate with socialists. Socialist theory was seen as something strange and foreign.

But the socialist minority persisted. In 1900 a meeting in London with representatives of the ILP, some trade unions, the Fabians and the Social Democratic Federation established the Labour Representation Committee. Two of its candidates, including Keir Hardie, were elected to Parliament that year.

The LRC sent reports on its progress to the TUC Conference



The 1912 transport strike each year after its foundation. Increasingly, there was pressure for unity between the TUC, the General Federation of Trade

Unions, and the LRC, in order to put forward candidates for the next General Election, which everyone knew could not be far off.

Attacks on the trade unions by the bosses, and the response to these attacks by the Liberals in Parliament, were forcing the cautious, respectable union officials to re-think their politics.

In 1901 the Taff Vale Railway Co. sued the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (forerunner of the NUR) for the loss it had suffered as a result of a strike by the union. The Courts decided that the union must pay large damages. The decision — overturning what had generally been understood to be the legal position until then — put every strike at risk. Any union calling action could be crippled by the courts.

The Liberals, wanting to conciliate the unions, introduced the Trades Disputes Bill into Parliament in 1905. But, as James Sexton said, opening the second day's business of the 1905 TUC Congress:

"The fate of the Trades Disputes Bill throws a lurid light upon the boasted, but absolutely fraudulent representative character of the House of Commons. For can there be a greater satire than is represented by the fact that a measure of this character, carried by a substantial majority of 122 in the House itself, was at the mercy of, and consequently destroyed by, 21 Members, most of them employers, interested in the Committee stage of the Bill?"

Offensive

Battered by the bosses' offensive, and disillusioned with the Liberals, the TUC threw its weight behind the LRC. On 16 February 1905 a joint conference between the TUC, the General Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour Representation Committee set up a permanent co-ordinating committee known as the Joint Board.

The conference also established an agreement on standing candidates in the next General Election. All candidates approved by the TUC Parliamentary Committee and by the LRC would receive the full backing of both organisations, and that the LRC would not be con-

sidered disloyal if it refused to support a Labour candidate adopted on any other platform.

However, the LRC had to make it clear that their national constitution did not require the abstention of any Labour voter where a Labour candidate was not standing.

Unaffiliated

This agreement was necessary because there were still a large number of unions — including the miners, then by far the biggest single union — that were still unaffiliated to the LRC and determined to support Lib/Lab candidates.

The February agreement was ratified by the TUC Congress in autumn 1905 and the LRC then changed its name to the Labour Party.

The debate at the Congress, however, foreshadowed problems. A resolution was put by the Stevedores' Union calling on the Parliamentary Committee to convene a conference of the TUC, GFTU, and LRC for the purpose of amalgamating into one body in order to be more powerful and effective. The idea was basically a sound one i.e. to fuse the industrial and political wings of the labour movement.

However, the Builders' Labourers' Union, who seconded the motion, had other motives. They voiced the opposition of a number of union leaders to the socialists in the Labour Representation Committee. They wanted unity in order to bring the LRC under the complete control of the TUC.

The majority of delegates were satisfied with the agreement reached at Caxton House and rejected the motion.

This led to the worst of both worlds. On the one hand the separation of the industrial and political wings of the labour movement was established. This has been a major problem for socialists ever since. Political discussion is often rejected in trade union meetings, and Labour politicians often sidestep trade union struggles by claiming that they are a "trade union" issue.

On the other hand the trade unions were still able to determine the basic objectives of the Labour Party, and part of their conditions for supporting the

Labour Party was that it should not have socialism openly stated as one of its objectives. (Clause IV, part 4, calling for public ownership, was not adopted until 1918).

What the trade union leaders wanted, and got, was a political party which would act on the political plane in the same way as they did on the industrial plane. That is to say they wanted a party which accepted capitalism, and which reconciled itself to bargaining for reforms and improvements as and when available within the system.

But it need not necessarily have been so.

One of the organisations which participated in setting up the LRC in 1900 was the Social Democratic Federation, a supposedly Marxist organisation established in 1881 under the leadership of H.M. Hyndman.

As one of the founding organisations of the LRC, the SDF could have played a large part in developing a significant Marxist current in the Labour Party. The upheavals over Taff Vale were only the start of a growing militancy in the British labour movement which increased right up to World War 1, with industrial struggles reaching a very high level and battles for votes for women and Home Rule for Ireland contributing to the ferment.

Unfortunately, the SDF, like most British Marxists since, adopted a sectarian attitude towards the Labour Party. The SDF presented their Marxist programme to the Labour Party with an attitude of take it or leave it. When the Labour Party, not unexpectedly, decided to leave it, the SDF wrote off the Labour Party as politically bankrupt and withdrew.

As a result they not only cut themselves off from the organised working class and left the field open to the Liberal-reformist trade union leaders and the pacifist-socialists like Ramsay MacDonald, to determine the political direction of the Labour Party.

The stance of the SDF went completely against the method of Marx and Engels. In 1886 Engels wrote to the American Marxists:

"Our theory is not a dogma, but the exposition of a process of evolution, and that process involves successive phases. To expect that the Americans will start with the full consciousness of the theory worked out in older industrial countries, is to expect the impossible.

"What the Germans (emigre German Marxists) ought to do is to act up to their own theory if they understand it as we did in 1845 and 1848 — to go in for any real general working class movement, accept its actual starting point as such, and work it gradually up to the theoretical level by pointing out how every mistake is made, every reverse suffered, was a necessary consequence of mistaken theoretical views in the original programme.

Grievous

"I consider that many of the Germans there made a grievous mistake when they tried, in the fact of a mighty and glorious movement, not of their creation, to make of their imported and not always understood theory a kind of 'only saving dogma', and to keep aloof from any movement which did not accept that dogma."

Engels could equally well



Keir Hardie

Labour's politics



Communist Party militants protest outside Bow Street Court while CPGB members were tried for sedition.

have been writing about the attitude of the SDF in the Labour Party.

In 1906 the TUC Parliamentary Committee endorsed 51 Labour candidates, 15 of whom were not supported by the LRC mainly because they were representatives of the Miners' Federation. The Parliamentary Committee issued a manifesto for the election which was followed fairly closely by the LRC, with 10 points:

- 1) The principles embodied in the Trades Disputes Bill.
- 2) A Workmen's Compensation Act to make payments from the date of the accident.
- 3) A Truck Amendment Act to prevent all deductions from wages.
- 4) A new Unemployment Act to provide work at Trade Union rates of pay.
- 5) Abolition of Chinese labour in South Africa.
- 6) State pensions at age 60.
- 7) An extension of the Housing of Working Classes Act.
- 8) Adult Suffrage.
- 9) Payment of Returning Officers' fees by the Exchequer.
- 10) Establishment of an 8 hour day.

At the election the Tories were routed. The Liberals won

an overall majority, but Labour won 29 seats. In addition to these Labour had the support of 24 more MPs including 14 elected from mining districts with the backing of the Miners' Federation who finally adhered to the Labour Party in 1909.

Result

As a result of the election the Trades Disputes Bill was passed in 1906, protecting union funds from the threat of legal action by employers for losses incurred during a strike — the law whose provisions the present Tory government's anti-union laws have been gradually eroding.

The Labour platform in 1906 was not socialist. Yet in some ways the political arguments in the movement then — when the hold of bureaucracy was substantial, but not as strong as today — can teach us lessons.

Take for example the issue of immigration. Labour's record in recent decades has been disgusting. Harold Wilson's 1964-70 Labour government introduced the first set of post-war immigration laws in 1968 and the 1974-79 Labour government administered the Tories' 1971 Immigration Act without any attempt to repeal it.

1905 was the year of Britain's first-ever immigration law, the Aliens Act, directed against Jewish immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe. Some trade union leaders were equivocal on this issue, but the 1905 TUC Congress opposed the Aliens Bill. TUC President James Sexton described it as an "appeal to stupid blind prejudice" to gain votes at the next election. "It is claimed," he said, "that this Bill will relieve the sweated workpeople by prohibiting the introduction of cheap labour from other countries."

"The political dishonesty of the measure needs no other argument than the fact that while the promoters profess to shut out undesirables from the UK in order to help the British workmen here, they rushed a measure through to introduce the most undesirable kind of cheap labour into South Africa." Indentured workers from China had been imported to the South African gold mines to make good the shortage of cheap black labour after the Boer War.

The trade unions attitude towards protectionism contrasts more starkly with today. Protectionism versus Free Trade was a

major issue in the 1906 General Election. The Tories wanted protection, the Liberals, free trade. The Tories represented certain branches of industry concerned about competition from the US, Germany, etc.; the Liberals, other branches of industry and finance capitalists.

The TUC refused to be drawn towards either panacea. At the TUC the argument was put by Sexton as follows. "Protection will but bind our fetters closer, and give the monopolist greater advantage than ever. Free Trade can only be developed in the true sense of the word when the freedom of produce has been secured, not for the benefit of the few, but for the benefit of mankind."

War

After the First World War the Labour Party expanded massively, adopted a statement of socialist aims, and rejigged its structure in response to ferment in the working class. Lenin advised the British Communists to join the Labour Party and to work within it for their ideas in an organised way, as an affiliated party.

The CP's main forerunner — the British Socialist Party, form-

ed by a left-wing split from the SDF in 1916 — had been affiliated to the Labour Party. But many enthusiastic young Communists could not see the point of affiliation. They finally conceded Lenin's argument, but the Communist Party's request for affiliation was phrased in such a manner that was guaranteed to create opposition, and it was turned down.

Even so, many Communists held dual membership of the CP and the Labour Party for many years, and were able to build support through the National Left Wing Movement which had the support of a quarter of all Constituency Labour Parties before they were expelled.

The young CP's sectarian attitude to the Labour Party has been copied by numerous other 'Marxist' groups since, like the SWP today, who, having built a small following inside the Labour Party, have developed illusions of grandeur, written the Labour Party off as bankrupt, and gone off to proclaim themselves as saviours of the working class.

A warning against this kind of sectarianism was sounded by the Communist International at its Second Congress when it was

still a revolutionary organisation.

Zinoviev commented:

"As the experiences of the Russian Revolution teach us — remember this in England and America! — the most important thing is to stay in the midst of the masses of workers. You will often go wrong with them, but never leave the mass organisations of the working class, however reactionary they may be at any given moment."

What the sectarians fail to understand, and what must be understood by anyone seeking to re-found the Labour Party, is that the Labour Party was created by the trade unions as a political extension of their already developed reformist ideology and practices. It was not the Labour Party that created reformism, but the trade unions.

In setting up the Labour Party the trade unions shaped it around its own reformist ideology.

Leon Trotsky, commenting on Stalin's support for the Anglo-Russian Committee between Russian trade unions and the leaders of the TUC during the General Strike, said:

"the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee was based on the fiction of trade union autonomy: the party of MacDonald and Thomas is one thing taught Stalin, but the trade unions of Thomas and Purcell quite another." The trade unions and the Labour Party, insisted Trotsky, were 'not two principles but a division of labour'.

"In England more than anywhere else, the State rests upon the back of the working class which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population. The mechanism is such that the bureaucracy is based directly on the workers, and the State indirectly through the intermediary of the trade union bureaucracy."

Obviously the trade union bureaucrats and Labour Party leaders are not identical to the bosses, they do not have the same immediate interests. The top trade union officials and the Labour leaders balance between the bosses and the workers — forced to defend the working class to the extent that attacks on it threaten their own status and bargaining power, but at the same time doing their utmost to retain control over any working class action for fear that it will go beyond the level of just seeking reforms and compromises.

Re-found

To re-found the Labour Party we must first of all fight for the same kind of reforms in the trade unions as were won in the Labour Party in 1978-82, and to open up the trade unions to political discussion.

We also need to build non-sectarian rank-and-file organisation with a revolutionary class struggle basis, using the Minority Movement of the 1920s as a model. Had such an organisation existed during the miners' strike it could have co-ordinated solidarity action that would have made the difference between victory and defeat. Such an organisation could also fight to ensure that the trade union block votes at Labour Party Conference really reflected the rank and file of the trade unions and that they were cast against the right wingers and soft lefts rather than being their base of support.

Why the WRP went bad

For most Marxists active in the labour movement, the latest revelations about the WRP are no surprise at all.

Groups and shades of opinion on the left regularly criticise and even denounce each other. But implicitly anyway many people on the left have long recognised that the WRP was something different.

Practically all other shades of left-wing opinion were able to work together in the miners' support groups during the 1984-5 strike. Not the WRP. It pursued alien, bizarre politics, as remote from Marxism as alchemy is from modern metallurgy.

How did the WRP become like that? Its pre-history dates back to the 1940s, when Gerry Healy became prominent in the then-unified British Trotskyist movement as an advocate of work in the Labour Party.

In the late '40s and early '50s — with the cold war, a capitalist boom, and the expansion of Stalinism — the Trotskyist ranks were drastically thinned. Healy became the leading figure in the decimated movement because of his flair and energy as an organiser — unhindered by the theoretical scruples which paralysed many comrades in those difficult days.

For political theory the Healy group depended heavily on the US Socialist Workers' Party, led by James P. Cannon; and, despite a viciously undemocratic regime from the start and a correspondingly crude and primitive level of argument on many issues, it did some good work.

In the early 1960s it recruited fast in the Young Socialists. This success set it off on a sectarian binge.

At the same time it broke its international connections with the US SWP, thus losing any restraint on Healy's characteristic use of 'theory' as an



instrument to be manipulated arbitrarily according to the organisational needs of 'building the party'.

The Healy group pulled out of the Labour Party. It became more and more self-deluding and sectarian, presenting all of politics as a single combat between itself and the rest of the world. Its proclamations of the collapse of capitalism became more and more hysterical.

Vietnam

Milestones along this road were the 'Tate affair' — when a socialist selling literature outside a Healy group meeting was badly beaten up — and Healy's denunciation of the big October 1968 demonstration against the Vietnam war as a plot to divert people from 'building the party'.

James P. Cannon once remarked that small, isolated groups of socialists, closeted together in a room, can easily talk themselves into the wildest notions. The entire activity of the Healy group — from 1973 it was called the WRP — became like that closed room.

A whole ideological and organisational system cut it off from checking its ideas against reality. If the world looked different to you from what the WRP said, that was because you didn't think 'dialectically'. If things went wrong, that was because of the relentless conspiracy against the WRP of the Stalinists, reformists and 'revisionists', or maybe because of lack of zeal by WRP members.

From 1969 the Healy group had a daily paper, the

Workers Press. But what was once the most serious group of the far left was becoming increasingly marginal to the labour movement. By the mid-'70s it was no longer a factor in industry and the trade unions (except in the actors' union Equity!)

Workers' Press

In 1976 Workers Press mysteriously folded, and shortly afterwards Newsline appeared. Although the WRP's once-impressive army of paper-sellers had dwindled to a scrappy battalion, the new paper was fatter and more lavish.

How was it done? The WRP's politics had also changed. In the early '70s they had denounced Libya's ruler Gaddafi (inaccurately) as a fascist. Now they hailed

him as a great revolutionary. The new WRP press printed Libyan publications. The WRP-made film, 'The Palestinian', toured Arab countries. Many concluded that the WRP's ample funds came not from any working-class support but from its relations with oil-rich governments.

Is it all the logical conclusion of sectarian, self-righteous, self-isolating politics? Yes — up to a point. A sect, however, may have serious and worthwhile ideas; what has distinguished the WRP is that ideas are utterly secondary to organisational self-promotion.

Addled

Rather than being the polar opposite to the broad labour movement's machine politics, its indifference and

sloppiness about socialist ideas, the WRP has been an addled version of it. And its internal atrocities are no more than an addled version of the bureaucratic domination and privilege which cripples the respectable mainstream institutions of the labour movement.

Rebound

Indifference and sloppiness allowed the WRP to make a limited re-entry into the labour movement in recent years. Socialist Organiser sounded the alarm when the WRP turned up in force at a cuts conference in early 1981. The WRP through Vanessa Redgrave sued us for libel. Many on the left advised us to make an apology. 'We know about the ted on the WRP presses on terms which have allowed it to survive as a full-colour weekly with no visible organised network of sellers, and with a managing editor long associated with the WRP. Many prominent figures on the left — Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill — have chosen to shut their eyes to the evidence of the Herald's links with the WRP, and to speak at its rallies.'

In 1982 the WRP in alliance with Ted Knight hijacked the Labour Campaign for Palestine: Socialist Action went along with the WRP WRP, they said, 'but it's not worth making a fuss'.

Soon afterwards 'Labour Herald' was launched — printing those who fought to maintain a genuine Palestine campaign as Socialist Organiser sectarians.

Split

Such behaviour by people on the left will rebound on them now, and will help our common enemies use the WRP scandal to smear the whole left. When we insisted on branding the WRP as a group alien to the labour movement, it was not 'sectarian' but a necessary hygienic task.

The way to rid the labour movement of the poison of bureaucratism — in both its mainstream and its addled WRP forms — is clarity, honesty and courage in the battle of ideas.

Standing up to the millionaire 'Marxists'

The WRP's attempt to use the courts against SO is an attack on free speech, on free comment and on free debate within the labour movement. It shows what little confidence the WRP has in its ability to make a political response to our comments on them (SO 33).

Why does the WRP choose this course of action? Because SO's outspoken comments on them threaten their central project of the moment.

They are making a concentrated effort to rebuild support for the WRP in Lambeth. In an effort to regain some credibility they have entered the service of the right wing and of Ted Knight who leads a big section of the Left in Lambeth.

They swung what weight they have behind Ted Knight's foredoomed policy of trying to fend off the Tory cuts drive by hiking up the rates and rents. Now they support Knight's 10% general cut — the proof positive of the bankruptcy of Knight's anti-Tory policy.

Meanwhile Newsline, snarling at the left, makes its characteristic contribution by spitting the slander that we are 'Thatcher's people'. A Newsline editorial seriously equated the Socialist Workers Party with the National Front because both

oppose rate rises in Lambeth. The WRP has set up one of their so-called Youth Training Centres in Lambeth.

But the Youth Training Centres are run by a political party which for the last 20 years has gained its only (transitory) successes from recruiting politically raw young people to its ranks. Politically the WRP is today an unknown force to most labour movement activists, who would naturally incline towards toleration of it. The SO article argued against toleration of the WRP, especially as people fit to offer 'training' to vulnerable young people.

The result was a writ against the printer and against Sean Matgama (who usually writes for SO under the anglicised version of his name, John O'Mahony).

Apology?

Why not make a formal tongue-in-cheek apology? For a number of important reasons. In the first place SO values its own reputation as a responsible and serious non-sectarian socialist paper.

In the second place, it is an important matter of principle for a working class newspaper like

SO not to allow itself to be bludgeoned into silence by Ms Redgrave's money, which is being used on behalf of the WRP leadership, even though her money gives her an enormous advantage in litigation.

Equal?

Redgrave and ourselves are, of course, equal before the courts. But the libel laws are a rich person's option. No libelled striker or victimised shop steward ever has, in reality, such an option, though it does exist in law. It is part of the general problem of formal equality under capitalism encapsulated in Anatole France's apt description: 'The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to steal bread, to sleep under bridges and to beg for food'.

Free speech and free comment are vitally important for the labour movement. They are irreplaceable where its own affairs and the affairs of those who claim to be part of it are concerned.

Thirdly, the original article was a blow in a necessary and unavoidable political conflict with the WRP arising out of the struggle in Lambeth. That conflict continues: the political health of the labour movement

in Lambeth and perhaps other areas will be affected by whether or not the point of view of SO can be expressed and heard by the labour movement. We are not prepared to abandon our viewpoint or be silenced because the WRP is richer than we are.

And while a tongue-in-cheek apology would provoke a cynical wink from those in the know, it would add considerably to the problems of the uninitiated — young people in the Youth Training Centres, for example — in getting to know what's what. They are the people who most need the benefits of free comment.

Honesty

Fourthly, given that our real opinion is that SO should in honesty defend the article in court, to make an insincere apology would be to allow ourselves to be forced to tell lies under the compulsion of Ms Redgrave's wealth.

We are not prepared to tell lies to the labour movement or to the youth. That is in general a rock-basic rule. It is urgent to preach it and to live by it because for fifty years deliberate and systematic lying and other falsifications of truth have been

By Sean Matgamna

KENNINGTON Park Road, South London, last Saturday, 2nd. Four people are selling 'Newline' as they wait for the anti-apartheid march to come by. Two men and two women; all of them are in their late 20s or early 30s.

Suddenly a half-brick comes whizzing through the air from the other side of the road and lands at their feet. It has been thrown by a burly man, also about 30.

The brick is only the start. A steady rain of stones follows the brick across the road, and soon the intrepid four take refuge in the rhododendron bushes.

Triumphantly, the bombardier then jumps on a wall, raises both hands above his head after the fashion of football fans, and chants 'Healy! Healy! Healy!' Then he drops back into the housing estate.

After the events of the WRP's week, it's a wonder they haven't been going for each other with guns and knives! The picture of what has happened in the WRP is now reasonably clear.

The organisation has split down the middle. The Healy faction's claim that they have the majority of the members of the old organisation on their side may even be true. The bourgeois press credits the old WRP with five to seven thousand members, but it was probably not more than one-tenth of that.

So when the Bandaistes jeer that Healy only has 250 supporters, they are admitting that he has something like half the organisation.

The Healyites have declared their expelled Central Committee minority to be the WRP, and claim to have held a special conference which 'rejected' Gerry Healy's expulsion and instead expelled Michael Banda and the other 'conspirators' who raised their hands against the great leader.

Their resolution explicitly gave Healy a special place in the WRP, making it an article of faith to believe Gerry Healy to be "the outstanding leader of the world Trotskyist movement in the post-war period". They have brought out one issue of their own 'Newline' (eight pages and without any sports section — which undoubtedly points to a propagandist deviation by them away from mass work) and an issue of 'Young Socialist'. They have launched an appeal for £250,000 to bring out their 'Newline' daily from next January.

Gerry Healy is accused of sexual abuse of 26 and more women. This salacious 'red-in-the-bed' stuff has been spread all over the tabloid press for the last week. But by far the most important and interesting developments have been the other charges that the Bandaistes have laid against Healy and implicitly against their own organisation and its entire history.

In 'Newline' and in interviews with the bourgeois press, WRP general secretary Michael Banda has repeated SO's comments on the WRP — phrase for phrase and sometimes word for word.

Banda has:
1. Denounced Healy's followers such as the Redgraves as people who have the attitude of religious cultists towards their 'guru' Healy. We were sued for saying that.

2. Denounced Healy for systematic and routine violence and brutality against members of the organisation. We were sued for saying that.

3. Denounced Healy for using pressure, intimidation



Gerry Healy

The WRP proves us right

and violence to coerce young women comrades into sexual activity with him. We were sued for saying that the organisation 'exploited' raw young people.

4. Newline now denounces the Healy faction for having the morality of 'anything goes for the organisation'.

5. They challenge the Healy-Redgrave faction to sue them if what they say is not true. "In the days when they dominated the Workers' Revolutionary Party, newspapers, political opponents, trade unionists and individuals who happened to cross them were showered with writs" ('Newline' 5.11.85). You can say that again!

Paranoid

6. Banda describes Healy as "a classic case of schizoid paranoia". Classic case or not, he has been publicly paranoid for at least a quarter of a century.

7. Banda denounces Healy's works on dialectical materialism, long the bible on which WRP members were trained, as "an outrageous piece of charlatanism".

8. Banda denounces Healy for justifying the execution of Communist Party members by the vile Ba'athist regime in Iraq. Reports have appeared in one bourgeois paper that militants from Iraq who came to the WRP school were later turned over to the Iraqi regime, which killed them. Banda is quoted as saying that the motive was to get "bags of money".

It is not clear whether this is true or not, though people

within the WRP claim to have evidence that at least one person was so denounced to the Iraqi government.

Explosion

There are also political shifts by the Bandaistes, adding up to a small move away from the lunacy of Healy and towards a slightly more realistic appreciation of the world they actually live in. It is still too early to assess this, because many things are obviously being said for effect, and the anti-Healy WRP has not settled down politically yet.

The probable reasons for the explosion and its dynamics are now pretty clear also. Healy had agreed to take a

back seat or retire, no doubt under pressure, but apparently with the agreement of some who are now his supporters. But Healy is a half-crazy — and sometimes completely crazy — old man, who would not find that congenial.

There may have been political differences or nuances in play, but that would have had no autonomous weight. Healy seems to have been forced to sign a written agreement to retire. But the Political Committee bloc that had pushed for his retirement then began to break up.

Two prominent WRP leaders, Mitchell and Torrance, seem to have changed sides, and perhaps others did too. The Political Committee

reversed the decision that Healy would retire. A minority led by Banda revolted and appealed to the Central Committee, whose majority backed them.

They decided on drastic action against Healy, and grabbed the weapons to hand. Hence the charges.

For the Bandaistes it was probably a matter of survival. There is a world where nobody has the right to disagree with the caliph, where disagreement is heresy against the leader in his capacity as pontiff and treason against him in his capacity as monarch. To 'conspire' and lose, or to usurp and be overthrown, is to lose your head.

Healy has politically 'executed' other long-time associates for a lot less than forcing him to retire. For example, Tim Wohlforth, leader of the US clone group for a dozen years, was purged because he was slow to join Healy when Healy denounced Wohlforth's wife as a CIA agent.

If Healy regained control, his defeated opponents would not have lasted long. So Banda and his allies acted as Healy had long taught them to act: brutally and without concern for decency, credibility or consistency.

The WRP's atmosphere was saturated with incipient or actual violence, intimidation and terror. The organisation was a cult, built on the leader principle around Healy. Within it Healy did more or less what he liked.

It is as certain as anything is that in that organisation sexual exploitation, and where necessary harassment, intimidation, or worse, would be part of the great leader's way of life.

In one notorious case — I know the people involved — Healy beat up a woman comrade, a full-time organiser, because she wanted an abortion rather than to have his baby. (This is probably the case that got to the Control Commission in 1964 — she had two brothers and a husband in the organisation, one on the Central Committee).

But nevertheless it is also true that a considerable part of the ballyhoo against Healy's sexual antics is both frame-up and an appeal to backwardness. Insofar as anything was voluntary in the WRP, many of the 'harems' must have acted voluntarily.

Revolutionary

Despite the political and personal weaknesses and inadequacies that over 20 years ago turned Gerry Healy into a bitter enemy of the Trotskyism he set in in his youth to fight for, Healy was once a revolutionary. He was one of a small group at the end of the '40s and the beginning of the '50s who had the courage to set out to rebuild the Trotskyist movement when it col-

lapsed and fell apart under the leadership of Ted Grant and Jock Haston.

If today there is poetic justice in his treatment at the hands of his pupils, as well as essential truth in what they say against him, that is the measure of how degenerate Healy had become.

Machiavelli might draw the lesson for him thus: 'He who rules by fear and terror should not live to get old and feeble'.

Politically the Bandaistes are in a hopeless situation. Everything they say against Healy condemns them too. They were not rank and file activists or raw youth, but Healy's close associates for many, many years.

And what WRP tradition exists apart from the one Gerry Healy made and shaped for three decades? What do they know about politics except what he taught them? What have they ever been but Gerry Healy's stooges, deferring when they felt inclined to take a view different from his?

Teeth

Some of them may have gritted their teeth at various times — but if so, that's all they did. Whether or not the WRP turned would-be communists over to the Ba'athist execution squads in Iraq, the WRP's public justification of the execution of CPers by the Iraqi government was there in black and white in 'Newline'.

And 'party discipline' is no excuse for going along with Healy and the WRP across the class line — in glorifying the Iraqi regime, or Gaddafi for example.

Banda's attempt to 'blame Healy' is already going to preposterous lengths. Did Michael Banda and others beat up a Central Committee member in the north-west last June? Yes. 'But Healy told me to', says Banda!

Nobody who went through Healy's 'machine for maiming militants' will fail to find some satisfaction in the present explosion. Public vindication for Socialist Organiser's stand against the WRP is, of course, satisfying.

But if the Healyites and Bandaistes eat each other up like the Kilkenny cats, that won't undo the damage they have done to the Marxist movement and to the name of Marxism in the British labour movement.

We can only undo the damage by building the Marxist movement.

Honest members of the WRP can take the word of the Banda faction leaders for nothing. They should study the record, debate the issues that have divided the WRP from other leftists — like those who support Socialist Organiser — and break out of the WRP ghetto and into discussion with other socialists.

A letter from Michael Banda, 1981

You have signed a statement sponsored by the 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.

In January this year Mr Sean Matgamna wrote an article in his 'Socialist Organiser' which made seriously defamatory and completely unfounded allegations against the Workers Revolutionary Party. Indeed, nothing like it had ever appeared in the pages of our major enemies in the capitalist press.

Its publication coincided with the launch of the Youth Training movement which is chaired by Vanessa Redgrave, a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party Central Committee. The success of Youth Training is dependent upon the support and technical assistance of the trade

unions and the broad labour movement.

Mr Matgamna's article in Socialist Organiser notably alleged that:

1. The WRP is 'a pseudo-Marxist gobbledegook-spouting cross between the Moonies, the Scientologists and the Jones Cult which committed mass suicide in the Guyana jungle three years ago'.

2. The WRP 'recruits and exploits mainly raw, inexperienced, politically, socially and psychologically defenceless young people'.

3. 'It employs psychological terror and physical violence against its own members (and occasionally against others)'.

You will no doubt agree that

these statements have nothing whatever to do with legitimate differences of opinion. The Workers Revolutionary Party sees no reason to tolerate the publication of such unwarranted statements, whether in the capitalist press or the labour movement press.

A request was made to Mr Matgamna to withdraw these false allegations. He countered with a proposal to publish a statement by the WRP in Socialist Organiser, if, but only if, the WRP's daily newspaper News Line published an article by critics of the WRP. This cannot have been intended to be considered seriously for acceptance since it did not involve the complete retraction and an apology

to which Vanessa Redgrave is entitled.

Recourse to the capitalist courts was undertaken only when it was clear that Mr Matgamna had no intention of withdrawing his statements.

It is to be sincerely hoped that your efforts will be directed towards persuading Mr Matgamna of the difference between political argument and non-political libels that can be exploited by the capitalist state, and I invite you to take the principled step now of publicly dissociating yourself from his 'fund'.

Yours fraternally,
M. BANDA,
General Secretary

Fusing art and action?

What is the relationship between art and politics, between an artist and political activity? 'Mishima: a life in four chapters' examines one artist's answer.

In 1970, Yukio Mishima, a Japanese writer, occupied a military headquarters with four members of his private army, and then committed ritual suicide.

Edward Ellis reviews 'Mishima: a life in four chapters', now showing at the Lumiere cinema.

Through this act, Mishima fused art and action: death to prevent the decay of his own 'beautiful body', and so symbol-

ically preserve an achievement far greater than 'mere words', and a gesture of traditionalist revolt at the moral decay of post-war Japan.

Ideologically, and in practical politics, Mishima was fascist, if not plainly fascist (I know too little about him to judge). He believed that Japan had lost its 'spirit'; that the army should be its spiritual salvation; and that the route to spiritual salvation lay through a revival of the cult of the Samurai and worship of the Emperor.

He created a private army, the Shield Society, bonded together by a mystical cult of masculinity. And the purpose of his final dramatic action, at the overtly political level, was an attempt to rouse the army into revolt.

Focus

It is possible to infer also that Mishima's ideology included a typically fascist 'anti-capitalism', based in his case in defence of the imperial state.

Mishima's view of art shapes this ideological persuasion, shown in the film through dramatisations of three of the writer's novels. One story follows an attempted 'anti-capitalist' plot by a group of young soldiers. The plot fails, and the main character kills himself in the traditional way.

Another story concerns the discovery by its central character of 'art' via a brutally masochistic relationship with an older woman, who buys his life and body in return for writing off his mother's debts.

The film skilfully weaves

these stories into an account of Mishima's own life. From a childhood weakling he transformed himself into a healthy adult through body-building, which became a preoccupation fed both by his fascination with martial art, and his homosexuality — fascination with the male body. There is some hint of childhood repression as the source of later preoccupations, artistic, political and sexual.

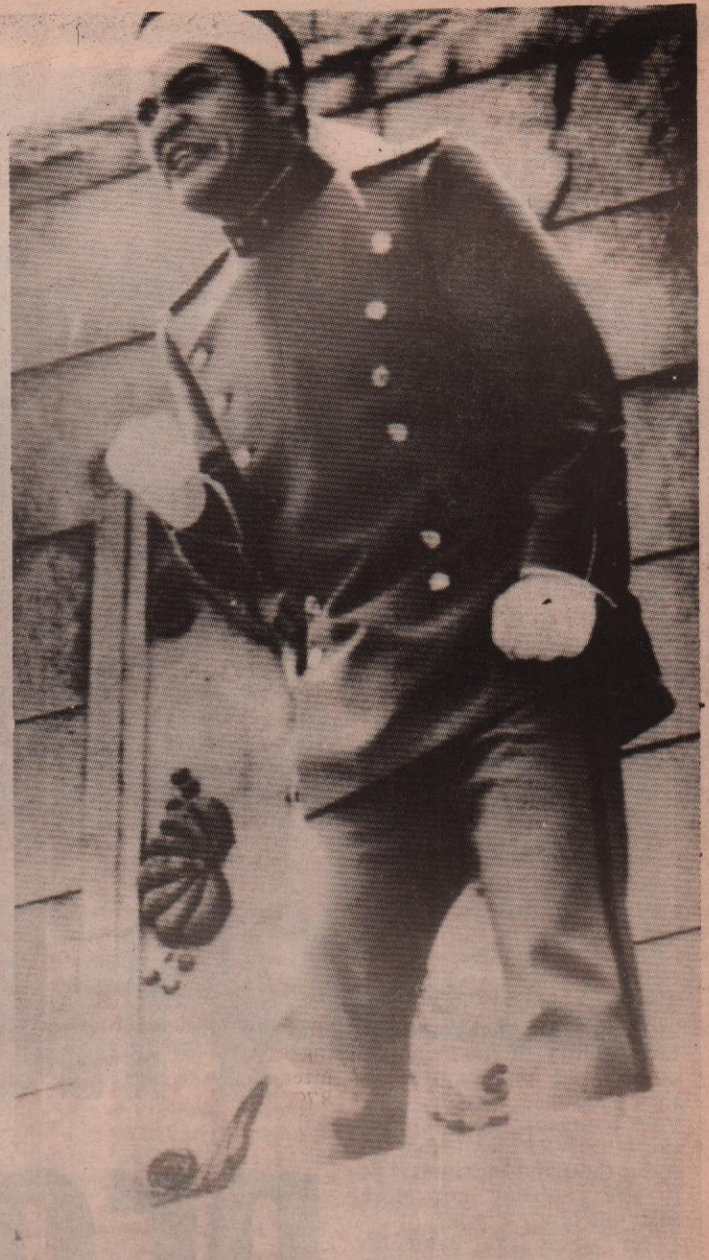
Scant

Unfortunately, Mishima's widow insisted as a condition for the film to be made, that scant reference only be made to Mishima's sexuality. As a result it is an obviously central theme that remains unexplored.

A clear danger with such subject matter would be to glorify it, to portray Mishima as the noble hero surrounded by spiritual mediocrity. I have read criticisms to the effect that both Schrader and his producers who include Francis Coppola and George Lucas are over-sympathetic to Mishima. They may be: I don't know. But this is not the impression left by the film.

It keeps a distance from Mishima and his ideas. The dramatisations of Mishima's stories are highly stylised theatre pieces. Flashbacks to his own life are filmed in black and white.

The film attempts to unravel Mishima's concerns and obsessions, to uncover the rationale behind his bizarre death. But it attempts to explain Mishima's actions at the artistic, rather than political level. The political



Mishima addresses the army

conclusions flow from a preoccupation with the relationship between 'art' and 'action'; a relationship that for Mishima could only be consummated in death. His political ideas were infused with, and inseparable from these philosophical ponderings on aesthetics.

Imperial

It is this artistic focus that explains the film's political detachment. And in terms of this focus, it is successful. Mishima's ritual suicide is convincingly portrayed as an artistic triumph (though a political fiasco).

Perhaps Mishima's apparent derangement can be explained in the context only of his art. I am not qualified to judge. But I

am not convinced.

'Mishima' gives little insight into the social and political background in post-war Japan. The social conditions that gave rise to the Shield Society — which, apparently, was at least tolerated by the Japanese establishment — are not explained. It is all posed at the exclusive level of the artist's individual psychology. And especially given that the film, despite its Japanese cast, is made for an English-speaking audience who will not know much about these conditions, this is unsatisfactory.

But it is an impressive film visually stunning and with an excellent score by Philip Glass. It is to be hoped that it will be shown in cheaper cinemas than London's 'Lumiere'. It deserves to be.

Science More than just lip service?

By Les Hearn

Most political parties pay lip-service to the environment these days — including the National Front ("Grey squirrels go home!"). More interesting to us is Labour's claim that its "commitment to the environment is well-known".

As I pointed out last week, this isn't saying much. However, all that could change following the Labour Party Conference.

Most important was the historic break with nuclear power (see below), but the party discussed and decided other important environmental policies.

SERA members must claim much credit for raising and pushing these policies in CLPs and trade unions, as well as arguing for them at Labour Party conference.

Policy

For example, there was a large number of motions on fuel policy which were composed to make a strong statement against nuclear power, for measures to remove sulphur from coal (reducing the acid rain problem); for research into oil-from-coal; for research into alternative renewable energy; for energy conservation and recycling of waste and for planning alternative employment for workers in the nuclear industry. This got nearly four million votes (over 60%).

Conference voted for an Environmental Protection Agency to coordinate and enforce environmental laws (and for a Minister for Conservation).

It also voted for a commitment to cut acid rain by 75% by the year 2000 and for a "hazard" enquiry into the Sellafield nuclear waste reprocessing plant.

The most momentous change of direction for Labour was over nuclear power. Hitherto, while Labour Party conferences have rejected the Pressurised Water Reaction design from the USA, they have supported the British-designed Magnox and Advanced Gas-Cooled Reactor designs.

The key to the change may have been the growing realisation in the labour movement of the difficulties of coping with

radioactive waste. The policy of dumping it into the sea (particularly the Irish Sea) has become more and more unpopular and at times it has seemed as though Sellafield was incapable of even getting the waste that far, dropping it instead on nearby beaches.

The National Union of Seamen has led the trade union wing of the attack on sea-dumping of radioactive waste, with land transport workers following. However, trade unions have generally supported the nuclear power industry on grounds of defending jobs. Revelations of higher rates of deaths from radiation-linked diseases among nuclear workers has weakened that support.

The links between the civil nuclear industry and bomb production have also weakened that support.

At the TGWU's September conference, SERA supporter Colin Aherne moved a resolution calling for the closure of nuclear power stations on the grounds that nuclear power was dangerous, expensive, unnecessary, required infringements of civil liberties and was intimately bound up with production of nuclear weapons. It also called for alternative work for nuclear workers.

Carried

As in previous years, the NEC opposed, but the resolution was carried by a two to one majority.

At the 1984 Labour Party conference, TGWU votes helped defeat an anti-nuclear motion by half a million votes. This year its votes went the other way.

SERA supporters moved and seconded the crucial composite which was carried by 3,902,000 to 2,408,000, missing a two-thirds majority by only 300,000 votes.

Thus, despite an emphatic vote, the policy will not necessarily feature in the next election manifesto. We need to campaign and argue and insist that it be included and also that Labour's environment spokesperson, pro-nuclear John Cunningham, be replaced.



Young plotters prepare for action in one of Mishima's stories

CPSA's real left meets

This weekend, 9-10 November, the CPSA Broad Left meets in Manchester for its annual conference — a year after the walk-out by members of the Communist Party and soft Labour left to form a separate organisation: "Broad Left '84".

The Broad Left itself now consists principally of three political groups: Militant (the largest and most influential); the SWP (who ironically only joined the original Broad Left in time to see it split) and the Socialist Caucus (an umbrella group of 'hard left' activists, including SO supporters). There are also, of course, individuals who don't belong to any of the main groups.

Militant grew rapidly in CPSA during the early '80s, until they were in a position to dominate Broad Left conferences in terms of voting strength. This domination was the rationale given by the leaders of "Broad Left '84" for walking out to form a

By Mike Grayson

new group. They insisted they were not an "anti-revolutionary" organisation, merely anti-Militant. However, their actions since the split have given the lie to that statement.

By the May 1985 CPSA conference, "BL '84" had ditched policies such as non-compliance with the Tory anti-union laws and regular elections for all full-time union officials. They had 'left' witch-hunter George Galloway (ex-general secretary of the Scottish Labour Party) address their fringe meeting to urge more vigorous "Trot-bashing".

However, now divisions seem to be developing within BL '84 itself, particularly at present on whether or not to stand a candidate against Alistair Graham when CPSA's 'new realist' General Secretary comes up for re-election.



The true Broad Left has survived the split relatively well. Its conference has well over a hundred motions before it, submitted from regional groups to the annual

national conference. The Socialist Caucus will be pushing for the Broad Left to take up the fight to extend union democracy — with annual election of all CPSA full-

timers, workplace election of the union's representative on the TUC General Council, and positive action to get more women onto Broad Left election slates.

While the NUT and AMMA would probably favour some compromise, the NAS, supported by the reactionary Head Teachers' Association, are holding out for outright victory. By this they mean the overturning of the sub-committee's decision.

This stand is making it difficult for the other unions to agree a settlement for fear of losing face, and probably members as well.

But a settlement there needs to be. The longer the dispute goes on, the more the right wing influences will come to the fore and the more the unions will lose control of it. The education authority is well aware of the legitimate concerns that teachers have, in attempting to do their job in the current economic climate. Things are unlikely to get better in the coming years so it is not only vital that teachers are paid the rate for the job but get the back-up to enable them to do it.

In choosing to make their stand around the Poundswick pupils, they have chosen the wrong issue and increasingly the standards that they are being asked to save, won't be theirs, but those of the Tories and their allies.

The LEA has offered to begin talks with the unions on a wide range of issues from future procedures on disciplinary issues, to providing support facilities for schools under pressure. It has also agreed that in the circumstances, the teachers named in the graffiti need not teach the five boys and that all teachers at Poundswick School would be reinstated with no mention of the affair on their records.

What is not negotiable is the original decision of the sub-committee.

At the moment that approach does seem to be the best way forward.

It seems that now the teachers have two options. Either they can accept the offer and stand shoulder to shoulder with the Labour Council against the Tories, in defence of jobs and conditions, or they can stand with the Tories against the Council. The choice is theirs.

Viraj Mendis

Stop the deportation of Viraj Mendis to Sri Lanka. Picket the Home Office in London on Wednesday 6 November at 1.00 p.m.

Viraj has lived in Manchester for 12 years. He has been under threat of deportation since May 1984. Since then he has had constant harassment. In September the DHSS stopped Viraj's benefit. After a week of campaigning they backed down and paid Viraj his benefit — a day before a planned picket of the local DHSS.

On August 9, Viraj received notice from the Home Office of their intention to deport him: he has lodged his appeal.

Because of his support of the Tamil people Viraj would face certain persecution if deported to Sri Lanka.

Contact: VMDC, Box 38, 434 Corn Exchange Buildings, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

York hospitals

Strike action by domestic staff in York hospitals has been stepped up, against the planned cuts in hours and wages proposed by York District Health Authority.

Originally the action was timed to take place in one hospital at a time. However, after a week on strike, domestics at Bootham Park Hospital decided to stay out indefinitely. Last week, they were joined by domestics at the two largest hospitals in the area, Clifton and the District.

The main stores of the District Hospital have been picketed very effectively and the Health Authority are beginning to worry. They have already talked about suspending the implementation of new contracts at Bootham Park, where the 35 domestics have now been on strike for three weeks.

The planned cuts in wages and hours are part of the in-house tender made for hospital cleaning by York DHA in response to the privatisation process.

Scottish teachers

The lobby of Parliament this Thursday, 7 November, organised by the Educational Institute of Scotland jointly with the National Union of Teachers, provides an opportunity to strengthen the links between Scottish and English teachers in a common pay campaign.

Whatever the differences in organisational structures, precise demands and tactics employed, the overwhelming issue is the need for a united struggle on pay against the Tory government. Despite the seeming obduracy of "Mad Monk" Joseph, such a campaign can force the Tories to retreat on this front.

It would be arrogant for Scottish teachers to read lessons to their counterparts south of the border on how to conduct their campaign.

Nevertheless, we think there are useful indicators in the EIS methods, such as rais-

ing monthly levies to finance intensified strike action, our 87% vote in favour of an exam boycott and our total ban for over a year now on curricular development and on all activities outside the strict terms of our contract.

One black cloud looms near, in the shape of Joseph's determination to alter the structure of the Burnham Committee so as to reduce the voting power of the NUT. This could lead to the other unions combining to accept a wholly inadequate offer, leaving the Scottish teachers fighting alone. Whilst that would be a setback, it would not, in our opinion, be sufficient to undermine the determination of Scottish teachers to continue to take action until a just settlement is achieved.

Neasden hospital

"When Leamington Park patients were moved to Neasden two years ago, there were 25. Only 11 have survived.

"None of them were ill: their cause of death lies in their feeling of being rejected, as they are separated from familiar surroundings and stuff," a nurse at Neasden hospital told us.

"About 30% of geriatric patients die within six months of being moved".

But now Brent Health Authority wants to close Neasden, in turn. They say the closure is necessary to pay for the nurses' pay rise.

Workers at the hospital have taken it over, locked out the Administration, and are now running the hospital themselves through an occupation committee.

At least 35 of the 145 staff will be made unemployed, and those who do retain their jobs, will be split up and have their lives disrupted as they are re-located.

Neasden Hospital provides accommodation for 60 health service workers. These 60 will lose their homes too.

The occupation, which started three weeks ago, has grown from strength to strength. The hospital is being regularly picketed by people from Brent Health Emergency — a group set up three years ago to defend Brent's health services.

According to NUPE shop steward John Hider, "These people cannot be disciplined and therefore intimidated by the

management. "the workers have declared the occupation, but they are not seen to be implementing it, therefore they cannot be singled out for disciplinary action".

"Ambulancemen have refused to take part in any attempt to break the occupation. This commitment was made even before we asked them.

"And if the management beat us by dirty tactics — i.e. using the police — then the Brent Health Authority won't just have an occupation on its hands but will have strikes in all of Brent's hospitals.

"We are prepared to keep going until the next general election."

Patients' relatives have also actively supported the occupation, and local GPs are still referring patients to Neasden Hospital.

The occupation needs support.

1. More people on picket duty.
2. Publicity. Get your Labour MP, Labour council leader, or trade union leader down onto the picket line at Neasden to publicise the case against closure and boost the morale and confidence of the workers and their supporters.
3. Most of important of all, argue for industrial solidarity action. COHSE has made the occupation official, although NUPE is still to do so.

If you want to contact the occupation committee phone 459 2251 bleep no. 107.

To contact Brent Health Emergency phone Maria on 459 8388.

Tories at Poundswick

By Pete Keenlyside

In a move which underlines the reactionary aspects of the Poundswick dispute, the far right Freedom Association has offered to give £1000 to the Poundswick Parents Action Group, a virtual Tory front organisation.

At a press conference arranged by the Tory Group on the City Council, they announced their offer to launch a fund for the parents to take the education authority to court for "failing to provide education for Poundswick pupils."

The fund has also attracted support from big business in the city.

That the right wing find themselves enthusiastically

supporting what is supposed to be an industrial dispute is not all that surprising. The Tories and Liberals have had an abysmal record in local government elections in Greater Manchester over the past few years and are likely to do just as badly in 1986. They clearly hope that the Poundswick issue, directed as it is against the left-wing council, will bring them in a few extra votes.

And those votes won't be got on the basis of fighting to improve teachers' conditions, still less through fighting racism and sexism.

The right wing recognise clearly, even if others don't, that the dispute now has little or nothing to do with those issues.

The fact that the education authority has consistently supported the teachers' pay claim, while the Tories and Liberals have opposed it, is an irony lost on those now backing strike action. Neither have they supported efforts to improve teachers' conditions, such as employing extra teachers this year to protect the curriculum at schools with falling rolls.

Manchester now has the lowest pupil-teacher ratio in secondary schools outside London.

The support service at schools has also recently been reorganised and improved.

Even the release of new information about the five pupils involved doesn't bother those whose motto is 'never let the facts get in the way of a good story'.

It now seems that the head teacher at Poundswick named the five as being responsible for the graffiti and urged their expulsion the day before three of them had even been questioned about it.

He also suppressed for six weeks evidence of 13 other young people being involved in the writing.

One girl was recently suspended for her involvement and then quietly reinstated.

Much is being made of the "confessions" made by the five boys. The head has claimed that "the five boys under consideration admitted being there and taking part. They also confirmed that the list of five boys was complete and no other pupils were involved".

This simply isn't true. Despite an interrogation process which in some cases lasted all

day, and according to some of the pupils involved, consisted of bullying tactics, and statements such as 'your mates have all admitted it' there are no signed statements from any of the boys admitting anything, nor is there any evidence connecting them to any of the obscene or racist graffiti.

Because of the pressure of the interrogation, one of the boys admitted to writing a comment about a teacher's beard.

Another admitted to writing: "Pitty and Wham". For that they were recommended for expulsion. A third boy has not admitted to writing anything. No evidence exists to prove that he wrote anything. Yet he too was to be expelled.

Few people have seen the evidence available. Those who haven't are in no position to say whether the boys were guilty or not, still less to pronounce them guilty.

Most of those who have seen the evidence, including myself, are convinced that the decision of the sub-committee to return the boys to the school was a correct one and should not be reversed.

Over the past two weeks there have been several meetings with the unions involved to try and resolve the issue. Although there is now an agreement to go through a conciliation process, progress has been painfully slow. This is partly due to the number of unions involved which means that it takes a long time just to get them all in one room, never mind agree anything.

But it is also due to the different stand on the issue taken by the different unions. In a reversal of the position on the pay negotiations, it is the NAS/UWT who are taking the tough line on this one.

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Socialist Organiser

Showdown at the Mirror

The print union leaders are running scared. On Monday 4 November Robert Maxwell announced that he would shut down all the Mirror Group newspapers for 18 months unless the unions agreed to 2000 sackings. He has given all 6000 Mirror workers in London formal notice of dismissal, and told them that as from 1 December the printing of Mirror newspapers will be transferred to a subsidiary of his British Printing and Communications Corporation.

Only 4000 workers will be re-employed under the new arrangements — and only if they give a guarantee of 'no disruption'.

Union officials condemned this outrageous ultimatum. But the only real answer to such confrontation tactics — and indeed to the whole union-busting policy of Murdoch and Shah as well as Maxwell — is concerted industrial action. The union officials did not call for that.

The print union leaders feel that their position is weak because of new technology, and they are partly right about that. The NGA, probably the strongest of the unions, was heavily bruised by the courts during its struggle against Eddie Shah at Warrington, and is reluctant to take risks again.

But only by using the strength they have now in a united way will the unions be able to get decent terms for the introduction of new technology. Their present ultra-cautious policy is likely to divide and demobilise, with unions competing among themselves for what jobs will be left after the press millionaires have done their worst.

Mersey on the brink

AS WE go to press on Tuesday 5 November, the city of Liverpool is on the brink.

Labour local government finance experts, led by the GLC's Maurice Stonefrost, have produced proposals for the council to return to financial respectability, including a 24% rate rise (in place of the present 9%), a freeze on recruitment, a rent rise, and (according to Liverpool councillors' analysis of the proposals) cuts in house-building.

Derek Hatton, deputy leader of the council and a prominent representative of the Militant grouping which dominates the Liverpool District Labour Party, has rejected the Stonefrost proposals. If no scheme is sorted out within the next few days, Liverpool will (so councillors say) run out of cash on the basis of the unbalanced budget it adopted in March this year.

Leaders of GMBU and NALGO council workers have called for a strike if the cash does run out, but as yet there is an air of unreality about this talk of a strike. There are no signs of a campaign of the breadth required to prepare for what would develop into a virtual local general strike.

Statements by Hatton and other Militant representatives seem to hint that a modified version of the Stonefrost proposals may be accepted.

If the council does stand firm and a strike goes ahead, socialists must fight to make sure it is directed against central government and not against the council. And the labour movement should give the strike full support: the issue will be protection of jobs, services and houses against Tory cuts.

DEFEND SINN FEIN!

ADAMS WARNS OF BAN

Speaking in Dublin last weekend, Irish Republican leader Gerry Adams claimed that Provisional Sinn Fein could be banned as part of a Westminster/Dublin deal on the future of Northern Ireland.

According to the Guardian (4 November):

"Proscription of Sinn Fein might be judged as an acceptable political risk after an Anglo-Irish agreement, because international criticism would be diluted if Dublin and London acted in unison.

"It would also enable the British Government to soothe Unionists in the North who are fearful about plans designed to give Dublin a say in Ulster affairs.

Another measure being mentioned is the possible banning of

Republican News, the movement's mouthpiece which carries a column entitled "War News".

Criminals

Sinn Fein is closely linked to the IRA. The IRA, which exists to wage armed struggle against the British state for Irish independence and reunification, is illegal. Indeed, the British government's line is that the IRA are just a gang of criminals. (On the other side of the communal divide, not only the violence-preaching Democratic Unionist Party but also the paramilitary

UDA are legal).

To make the IRA illegal and Sinn Fein legal has so far been the best way for the British state to accommodate itself to reality. For Sinn Fein has the electoral support of 40% of Northern Ireland Catholics, and sympathy from many of the other 60%.

The truth is that the IRA are not a gang of criminals but a movement rooted in the oppression suffered by the Six County Catholic minority and in centuries of Irish nationalist struggle.

Logically, a British government has two choices: to recog-

nise the irrepressibility of Irish nationalism and the unviability of the Six County state; or to try to beat down by force not only the IRA but also the entire Northern Catholic community.

Britain can either abandon its claims to rule in Ireland, and negotiate with the different communities in Ireland to allow the reunification of the country with safeguards for the Protestant minority; or use force to try to beat down the rebellious Catholics and restore stability.

In fact successive British governments have tried to combine repression with feeble attempts at remoulding Northern Ireland.

A ban on Sinn Fein — that is, a ban on the politics of a very large part of the Six County Catholic community — will either be completely fictional or part of a whole package of increased repression.

Repression

Northern Ireland is already a testing ground for the technology of repression, a trial area for methods now being used against the miners' strike and against the riots in Britain. Increased repression in Northern Ireland will also feed back to Britain.

The government may not yet have taken a final decision to ban Sinn Fein. Now is the time for the British labour movement to raise the loudest possible outcry against such an attempt to stifle political life out of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland.

Get your labour movement organisation to demand of Neil Kinnock and the Labour shadow cabinet that they immediately declare their opposition to any interference with the political rights of Sinn Fein and pledge the Labour Party to fight it all the way.



Gerry Adams: banning of Sinn Fein could form part of a Dublin-Westminster deal

Arrests on big South Africa march

This arrest took place outside South Africa House last Saturday, 2 November, at the end of the 100,000-strong anti-apartheid demonstration.

The Metropolitan Police are more interested in protecting the South African embassy than in doing anything about preventing racist attacks in East London.

Photo: Adrian Franklin.

